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DRAMA – I

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Semester -I Paper-III

LESSON WRITER

Vijaya Babu, Koganti
Senior Lecturer in English
Govt.Degree College, Chebrole,

EDITOR

Dr.B.Varalakshmi (Retd.),
Reader in English
Government Degree College for Women
Guntur.

DIRECTOR

Dr. Nagaraju Battu

M.H.R.M., M.B.A., L.L.M., M.A. (Psy), M.A., (Soc), M.Ed., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Centre for Distance Education

Acharya Nagarjuna UniversityNagarjuna Nagar-522510

Phone No.0863-2346208, 0863-2346222

0863-2346259 (Study Material)

Website: www.anucde.info

e-mail: anucdedirector@gmail.com

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FOREWORD

Since its establishment in 1976, Acharya Nagarjuna University has been forging ahead in the path of progress and dynamism, offering a variety of courses and research contributions. I am extremely happy that by gaining 'A' grade from the NAAC in the year 2016, Acharya Nagarjuna University is offering educational opportunities at the UG, PG levels apart from research degrees to students from over 443 affiliated colleges spread over the two districts of Guntur and Prakasam.

The University has also started the Centre for Distance Education in2003-04 with the aim of taking higher education to the door step of all the sectors of the society. The centre will be a great help to those who cannot join in colleges, those who cannot afford the exorbitant fees as regular students, and even to housewives desirous of pursuing higher studies. Acharya Nagarjuna Universityhas started offering B.A., and B.Com courses at the Degree level and M.A., M.Com., M.Sc., M.B.A., and L.L.M., courses at the PG level from the academic year 2003-2004 onwards.

To facilitate easier understanding by students studying through the distance mode, these self-instruction materials have been prepared by eminent and experienced teachers. The lessons have been drafted with great care and expertise in the stipulated time by these teachers. Constructive ideas and scholarly suggestions are welcome from students and teachers involved respectively. Such ideas will be incorporated for the greater efficacy of this distance mode of education. For clarification of doubts and feedback, weekly classes and contact classes will be arranged at the UG and PG levels respectively.

It is my aim that students getting higher education through the Centre for Distance Education should improve their qualification, have better employment opportunities and in turn be part of country's progress. It is my fond desire that in the years to come, the Centre for Distance Education will go from strength to strength in the form of new courses and by catering to larger number of people. My congratulations to all the Directors, Academic Coordinators, Editors and Lesson- writers of the Centre who have helped in these endeavours.

Prof. P. Raja Sekhar
Vice-Chancellor
Acharya Nagarjuna University

DRAMA-I

SYLLABUS

UNIT – I

Comedy of Humours, The Revenge Play, Comedy of Manners, Political Satire, Restoration Drama, Sentimental Drama, the Problem Play, Theatre of the Absurd, Drama of Ideas.

UNIT -2

Christopher Marlowe : *Doctor Faustus*

UNIT -3

Ben Jonson : *Every Man in His Humor*
William Congreve : *The Way of the World*

UNIT -4

T. S. Eliot : *Murder in the Cathedral*

UNIT -5
George Bernard Shaw : *Pygmalion*
Harold Pinter : *TheBirthday Party*

SUGGESTED READINGS:

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DRAMA –I

CONTENTS

Lesson - 1

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH DRAMA

Objectives

After going through this unit, you will

- Understand the nature of drama as a literary genre
- Develop knowledge about the different kinds of drama
- Know about different ages and playwrights
-

Structure of the Lesson

1.1 Drama as a Literary Genre

Unlike all other literary forms, drama is a multiple art. Though it is a part of literature, it is not meant for reading and it is more for its performance. It is a complex art form using words, scenic effects, music, action and stage. It is objective in nature because it deals with the problems of society. The greatness of the dramatist is known and appreciated through the study of language, expression of emotions and feelings, style, and the art of plotting and characterization. The action of the play will have exposition, rising action, crisis, falling action and denouement.

Unlike the novelist, the playwright has a limited scope because a novel is self-contained. The drama has to convey the message within a limited period of time and on the stage, before the audience. The novelist has immense freedom which the playwright cannot enjoy. The dramatist speaks through his characters and he does not have the freedom of the novelist to intervene and comment frequently. On the other hand, the playwright has to deliver his message within a few hours, before the closing of the performance.

1.2 Kinds of Drama

Based on the nature and closing of a play, drama is broadly divided into two kinds: tragedy and comedy. Tragedy inspires us through pity and awe and comedy, on the other hand, aims at evoking our laughter. The ending of a tragedy is unhappy where as a comedy ends on a note of happiness. A comedy deals with people of less importance and aims at laughter through depiction of comic excesses and correction of follies. The atmosphere in a tragedy is somber and serious, but in a comedy it is mirthful and light. But, both 'tragedy' and 'comedy', as art forms give us pleasure.

With reference to 'form' (structure) and 'subject matter' (theme), a tragedy can be classified as *Classical Tragedy* and *Romantic Tragedy*.

1.2.1Classical Tragedy

The 'Classical Tragedy' observes the 'three unities', i.e, the 'unity of time, the unity of place and the unity of action'.

Unity of Time: The action of the play must get completed within a few hours. It does not mean that a life can be presented within a few hours.
Unity of Action: The action of the play should be either comic or tragic. It should not be a combination of the two.
Unity of Place: It is a natural corollary of Unity of Time. The play should limit itself to a particular place.

Another feature of a Classical tragedy is its 'chorus'. The Greek theatrical tradition did not favour the representation of violent physical action on the stage. The chorus did this job through narration. The chorus would also comment on the action, the reasons for the fall of the protagonist and would make the audiences leave the theatre with a 'strengthened conviction of the might of the gods'.

1.2.2 Romantic Tragedy

The *Romantic tragedy* is built on a different plan. It does neither follow the concept of 'three unities' nor that of the 'chorus'. Shakespeare is known for the creation of 'romantic tragedies'. In the coming sections you will come to know more about the 'romantic tragedies'.

1.2.3 Comedy – Its Kinds

Like 'tragedy', comedy is also both 'classical' and 'romantic'. The 'classical comedy' was attempted by Ben Jonson and the Restoration playwrights. Ben Jonson invented the '*comedy of humours'*, satirizing eccentricity, which was supposed to be due to the excess of one of the four 'humours' or natural fluids of the body – blood , phlegm, choler and

melancholy or black bile. The '*comedy of manners'* was the invention of the Restoration Period and the late eighteenth century presented a new type of comedy with 'tears in the place of laughter, melodramatic and distressing situations in place of intrigue'.

Tragi-Comedy, as suggested by its name, is a combination of tragedy and comedy. *As You like It, Much Ado about Nothing, Cymbeline, Winter's Tale and The Tempest* are some examples. This tragi-comedy stands on a different plane in the treatment of the plot. It contains fantastic, supernatural and even pastoral elements. The other lighter forms of drama are:

- Farce
- Melodrama
- The Masque
- The One-Act play
- The Dramatic Monologue

and you will read more about these in the next coming units.

An Outline History of the English Drama

1.2.4.1 Origins -The Role of the Church

As observed by Ifor Evans, the beginnings of the drama in England are obscure. The Romans, during the stay in England established vast amphitheatres for production of plays but with their departure the theaters also left. The 'minstrel' played a greater role on the stage during Middle Ages. Though the hand of the Church was against him , the clerics imitated his techniques and tried to attract people for their religious gatherings. For its religious purposes, the Church brought back drama into England. The priests of the Church started playing the stories of the Bible in Latin. They brought in words, stage props etc., to make their presentations more attractive. Gradually the Church observed the dominance of the dramatic element over the religious one. Between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, the drama became secularised. The ecclesiastical authorities found drama embarrassing and they removed it from the church compounds.

Then there appeared some other changes - like the appearance of English dramatic script in the place of liturgical speeches and secularised presentations. The actors from the clergy gave way to actors from the medieval guilds and the guilds through cooperative effort produced religious plays. Drama became a genuinely social activity with amateurs as members. It became widespread through four 'cycles' namely: Chester, York, Wakefield and Coventry.

1.2.4.2 The Miracles and Mysteries

The plays enacted by the clergy or the cycles under the supervision of the Church were called 'miracles ' or 'mysteries' as they depicted the Scriptural events from the creation of man to the resurrection of Christ. But as Alardyce Nicoll points out in *British Drama, '* there is a distinction between the two, Miracles dealing with the life of saints and Mysteries with themes taken from the Bible.' These plays were shown at separate 'stations' in the town, on wheeled theatres, drawn by horses.

A special feature of these early performances was the humorous element, provided by Noah's shrew wife and the ridiculous gestures of Satan.

1.2.4.3 The Moralities and Interludes

About the middle of the fifteenth century the religious instruction was substituted by moral teaching. The characters also underwent a change: the Biblical figures were replaced by personified virtues and vices. Humour continued to be present on the stage. Towards the close of the fifteenth century a different kind of a play appeared, called the Interlude. Though it was not properly defined, it was 'a play that appeared in the *midst* of other festivities or business' (Nicoll). Interlude is a transitional form between the Morality and the Elizabethan Drama.

1.2.4.4 The Beginnings of Regular Drama and Senecan Influence

Tragedy could not grow directly from the 'Miracles' and the 'Moralities' and a new start was made with the help of Latin models. Inspiration was drawn from the Latin comedies by Terence and Plautus and this influence could be seen in Nicholas Udall's *Ralph Roister Doister* (1553). Udall was able to develop a full length play only due to the classical models. A stronger native element could be seen in *GammerGurton's Needle* of Gascoigne (1550), the first native English comedy. The play dealt with the theme of the loss and discovery of a needle.

The University Wits, Kyd, Marlowe, Greene, Peele and Nash modeled their plays on the works of Seneca, a philosopher of Nero's time, who was also the author of a series of 'closet' dramas. Seneca had employed the Greek mythological stories, but had eliminated the religious element and for the conception of Fate, he had substituted the 'human motive of revenge' (Evans, 84).

Senecan plays contained long rhetorical speeches displaying his taste for moral discourse as a philosopher. The English writers liked the crime, violence and other sanguinary aspects of his plays. They converted the 'Senecan speeches, the skeleton of his dramatic structure and his sanction for violence into a drama that would stand the test of performance in the theatre' (Evans, 85). Between 1559 and 1581, Seneca's plays were translated and published.

In 1562, the first English tragedy, *Gorboduc* was produced by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton. This was followed by the greatest plays by the University Wits, Shakespeare and others.

1.3. Elizabethan Drama

1.3.1 The University Wits

Thomas Kyd (1557 – 95), Christopher Marlowe (1564 – 93), John Lyly (1554 -1606), Greene (1560 – 92), George Peele (1558 – 98) and Thomas Nash (1567-1601) paved the way for Shakespeare through their plays which showcased their contribution to the English theatre.

Kyd's discovery of the blank verse as a theatrical medium and his play *The Spanish Tragedy* became a model for Shakespeare.

Though Christopher Marlowe's career as a dramatist was brief, his four great plays written between 1587 and 1593, (*Tamburlaine the Great* in two parts; *Dr. Faustus, The Jew of Malta)* proved the quality of Marlowe's imagination.

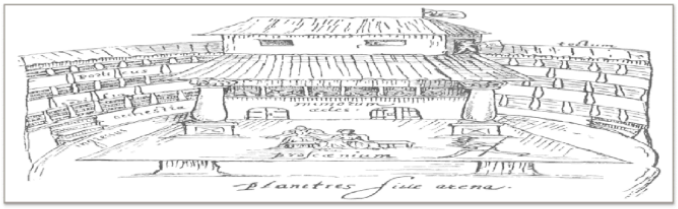
John Lyly's plays, excepting one, are in prose. Though his achievement was masked by Shakespeare's greatness, his originality and invention are remarkable.

Robert Greene was a versatile person. He discovered his dramatic identity in his comedies and George Peele's merit is found in his lyrical poetry.

1.3.2 The Conditions of Theatre and Stage

By the nineties of the sixteenth century the theatre in England was fully established but certain complicated conditions governed the activities of the dramatists. The court favoured the drama, but it was not encouraged by the civic authorities due to scruples and social reasons. Those who wanted to produce plays performed them outside the city walls. The actors were treated as vagabonds and rogues. To overcome this, the players wore the livery of retainers of some Lord or a high official. So in the Elizabethan age, the companies of players are known as Queen's men, the Lord Admiral's men, or the Lord Chamberlaine's men, according to the great name that gave them legal status.

The theatre was open to the sky without artificial lighting and the players had to perform by daylight. The stage was roofed and was on a raised platform, with a recess at the back supported by pillars. On the top of the recess was a turret, from which a trumpeter could announce the beginning of a play and a flag would indicate the progress of a play. There was no curtain and the main platform was surrounded on three sides by the audience. At the rear of the main stage, there was a background with a door at each side for the entrance of the actors. The auditorium was oval shaped and ordinary spectators stood in this space. There were galleries around the theatres and the lower galleries near the stage were occupied by the musicians. In the 17th century, private theatres on the model of Black Friars, the only permitted theatre in the city, were developed with artificial lighting and more elaborate stage devices.



(http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Renaissance_theatre#/image/File:The_Swan_cropped.png)

1.3.3 Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)

Shakespeare needs a special reference when the English theatre is thought of for discussion. His poetic spirit, universal vision and art of characterization surpassed all other great artists of his age. He gave drama its soul for performance. He wrote tragedies, comedies, tragic-comedies and histories. His canvas is vibrant with a variety of themes and characters.

1.3.4 Other Playwrights

Shakespeare's contemporary was Ben Jonson (1573-1637), a combative and powerful personality.' He developed the 'Comedy of Humours'. He was the most original of the dramatists of Shakespeare's age.

The Elizabethan age had other great playwrights like Thomas Dekker (1570 – 1632), Thomas Heywood (1575 – 1641), John Fletcher (1579 – 1625), Francis Beaumont (1584 - 1616), John Webster (1580 – 1625), Cyril Tourneur (1575 – 1626), Thomas Middleton(1570 – 1627), Philip Massinger (1583 – 1640) and John Ford (1586 – 1639).

1.4 The Restoration and the 18th Century Drama

With the Civil Wars, the greatest period in English drama came to a close. There was a change in the attitude of the people. The new commercialism was spreading with its gross values.

With the restoration of Charles II in 1660, the theatres were reopened. The old writers were not forgotten but their plays were modernized to suit the tastes of the day. As Ifor Evans observes, 'the Restoration was not only the period of Charles's court, but the age of Bunyan, of the Royal Society, and the philosophy of Locke' (Evans,110). Comedy became the norm of the stage. A new comedy, 'Comedy of Manners' evolved in the work of three writers, Etherege, Wycherley and Congreve. The formula was discovered by Sir George Etherege (1635 – 91) in *The Man of Mode*. He gave a witty portrayal of high society ladies and gentlemen of the day in their 'conversations and their amorous intrigues.'

William Wycherley (1640 – 1716) resented the same scene but through mockery and satire. He combined his knowledge of Ben Jonson and the world of Moliere.

William Congreve (1679 – 1729) combined the depths of Wycherley and the 'surface gaiety' of Etherege. He made his sudden reputation with *The Old Bachelor* (1693) and his three comedies which followed it. *The Double Dealer, Love for Love* and *The Way of the World* established him.

Congreve's portrayal of a shallow world, which found his vision, is complete and he never allows sentiment to rule his plays. Witty and elegant people only win on his stage.

In spite of the success, the restoration stage was indecent. The indecencies of the Restoration Comedy were criticized by many people. Jeremy Collier in his scholarly and elaborate work brought out the vulgarity of the Restoration Stage.

The period also witnessed a heroic drama by John Dryden, a famous poet and critic.
The drama of the 18th Century does not reach the same heights as the novel. This period witnessed writers of sentimental comedy like John Gay, Oliver Goldsmith (1730 – 74) and R.B.Sheridan (1751 – 1816).

1.519th Century Theatre

The nineteenth century was more for poetry and fiction than for drama. Though the romantics attempted drama, they were not successful. There were a number of reasons for the stunted growth of drama. The two houses, Covent Garden and Drury Lane monopolized the performances of serious plays. This prevented the new writers to produce their plays. The

middle-class society also did not favour drama. The actors were looked down. The audiences also lacked the intelligence and the imaginative ability of the Elizabethan audiences. On the whole, the State – neither the Court nor the Queen encouraged drama.

The dramas that were produced failed to reflect the life of the society. T.W.Robertson (1829-71) reflected this condition through his play *Caste*. Though sentimental and melo-dramatic, the play was successful on the stage.

This period was deeply influenced by the Norwegian playwright Ibsen with his thought provoking social and psychological plays like, *The Doll's House* and *Ghosts.* After Ibsen, the descent to Henry Arthur Jones and A.W.Pinero was very steep. Though theirs was not a very great drama, they prepared the audience for the comedies of Oscar Wilde and G.B.Shaw.

Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900) is known for a great verbal wit which has been dead on the English stage since Sheridan. His four comedies, *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892),*A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895), and *The Importance of being Earnest* (1895) display his brilliance.

1.6Twentieth Century Theatre

The twentieth century was marked for its production of great plays. H.Granville Barker and Vedrenne produced plays at the Court Theatre and it brought a discipline. Barker's unyielding realism is found in his plays *The Voysey Inheritance* (1905) and *Waste* (1907). John Galsworthy (1867 - 1933), who is more a novelist than a dramatist, based his plays on social and contemporary problems. His success in the theatre began with *Strife* (1909) and *Justice* (1910).

After Galsworthy, the other noteworthy dramatists are St. John Ervine, John Masefield, W.B.Yeats and J.M.Synge.

W.B.Yeats, who is more a poet than a dramatist brought in the mysticism and folk-lore of Irish imagination through his plays *The Countess Cathleen* (1892) and *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894). J.M.Synge's*Playboy of the Western World* (1907), *Riders to the Sea* and *Deirdre of the Sorrows* show his mastery of dramatic art. When he died at the age of forty, the theatre suffered a lot. The continuation of the Irish theatre was found only in Sean O' Casey. Sean O' Casey portrayed the Irish peasant life vividly and beautifully.

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) had the longest career as a playwright in English dramatic history. Beginning with *Widower's Houses* in 1892, he produced till 1939 with *In Good King Charles's days.* Apart from G.B.Shaw it was difficult to find an influencing dramatist during this age. He started his career as a theatre critic. Like Ibsen, he felt that his plays should be the vehicles for ideas. As observed by Ifor Evans,

'His temperament had nothing of Ibsen's grimness. If he saw, with unusual clarity, the ills of the world, he possessed an inalienable Irish capacity for jest and a verbal wit equal to that of Congreve and Wilde' (Evans, 123).

The other dramatists that followed Shaw were Noel Coward, T.S.Eliot, W.H.Auden and Christpoher Isherwood, Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter. There were various movements and new trends on the stage.

1.7 Summing Up

In this unit, you studied briefly about 'drama' as a literary genre, how drama originated, different kinds of drama, the nature of tragedy and comedy, the conditions of the English stage, an outline history of the English drama and about the different playwrights in different periods. Though brief, it should have given you a comprehensive idea. The following links and references will enlighten you in a better way. Also, you will come to know about certain playwrights and their prescribed works in a critical and detailed fashion.

1.8 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Mention the names of dramatists who produced 'sentimental comedy'?
2. Who wrote the play 'The Way of the World'?
3. What is the contribution of Christopher Marlowe?
4. What is the first tragedy on the English stage?
5. Who wrote the play ' GammerGurton's Needle'?
6. Write about 'Mysteries' and 'Miracles'.
7. What is 'Comedy of Humours'?
8. Write about the 'three unities'.
9. What is the difference between a 'novel' and a 'drama' as genres of literature?
10. Comment on the features of a Shawian Play?

1.9. References

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1.9.1Additional Sources

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2. http://youtu.be/lF4NJrxu5Xo (The Elizabethan Age)
3. http://youtu.be/P0SBg-KG4C4 (Elizabethan Theatre)
4. http://youtu.be/YYfM0RFZ5cs (Elizabethan Theatre: Shakespeare)
5. http://youtu.be/dmBDfl9YJY4 (Development of Classical Greek Tragedy)
6. http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nadrama/content/review/shorthistory/antiquity-18c/welcome.aspx (The Norton Anthology of Drama)

LESSON 2
A STUDY OF *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

This lesson offers a brief introduction about the nature of tragedy, the biographical details of the playwright, Christopher Marlowe and a brief act – wise and scene – wise summary of the play *Doctor Faustus*.

(Source: http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/culture/literature-and-creative-writing/literature/christopher-marlowe-doctor-faustus/content-section-3.1)

Objectives

After going through the lesson you will be able to

- Understand the nature of tragedy
- Know about Christopher Marlowe and his works and
- Appreciate the play Doctor Faustus through its summary.

Structure of the Lesson

2.1 Nature of Tragedy:

A tragedy is a representation of serious and important actions which turn out disastrously for the chief characters. Aristotle defined "tragedy as the imitation of an action i.e, serious and also as having magnitude complete in itself with incidents arousing pity and fear wherewith to accomplish the catharsis of such emotions". Aristotle's *catharsis* signifies 'purgation' in Greek.

2.2 Qualities of a Tragic Hero:

A tragic Hero is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly bad but a mixture of both. He is led by '*hamartia*'.('*Hamartia*' in Greek means the error of judgment.) He is a man of higher moral worth. His misfortune is greater than he deserves. He evokes tragic pity and fear. One common form of '*hamartia*' in the Greek tragedies was '*hubris*', that pride or over veining self-confidence which leads a man to disregard a 'divine warning' or to violate a 'moral law'.

2.3 Drama before Marlowe:

You can recall what you already read about the origin and development of the English drama in the previous lesson.Drama before the university wits was shapeless. It had its origins in religion. It grew out of the liturgy of the church. The early religious plays were broadly of two types, the *mysteries* and the *miracles*. The 'mysteries' were based upon subjects taken from the Bible and the 'miracles' dealt with lives of the saints. The mystery plays introduced abstractions and symbolical characters. They abandoned scriptural and legendary persons. The detachment of vice and virtue from their religious atmosphere appeared in a new form as the 'morality plays'. After the reformation movement the 'mysteries' and the 'moralities' seized to please the public.

The audience wanted actual human life to be presented in the drama on the stage. These demands were, met in the 'interludes'. 'Interlude' means a play interposed in-between two other things. Other forms of enjoyment that were in vogue in England were 'the pageants and masques'. These are the plays full of scenic representation and the splendor of costume. Thus the drama moved from the church compounds to the places of common people. Comedy became more popular than tragedy. The brilliant light of Renaissance cast its rays upon the distant North. Senecan drama was brought into light. The first product of

this school of the English playwrights was a tragedy '*Gorboduc*' and its authors were Sackville and Norton.

The Elizabethan dramatic stage gave expression to the spirit of the age in various types of plays. This brilliant age was dominated by the University wits. Peele, Green, Nash, Lodge, Kyd and Marlowe. The University wits made a distinct contribution to the English drama towards the closing years of the 16th century. Kyd and Marlowe did much for the tragedy. Lily, Green and Peele did their bit for the comedy. Kyd wrote the 'Spanish Tragedy' and It was modeled on Senecan revenge tragedy. Murders, bloodshed, suicides, horrifying incidents and ghosts dominated the Senecan plays.

2.4 Life and Works of Christopher Marlowe:

Christopher Marlowe was born in February 1564 in the city of Canterbury, in Kent. His father John Marlowe was a shoemaker by trade. Christopher Marlowe won scholarships and attended King's Grammar School and Corpus Christi College in the University of Cambridge. He joined M.A degree but was away from the university due to some secret service for the government of Queen Elizabeth. But he met his untimely death in a mysterious way in a drunken brawl.

Christopher Marlowe is the most talented of the pre-Shakespeareans. He is a great poet and a talented playwright. His contribution is vital. He gave a new direction to the English tragedy on the stage. If ***Gorboduc*** taught blank-verse how to speak on the stage, Marlowe taught it how to sing. Revenge is replaced by ambition: *Tamburlaine* deals with over ambitious power, *Dr.Faustus*, over ambitious knowledge and *Jew of Malta* lust for gold. From 'jigging veins of rhyming mother wits' he takes us to the grand theme of war – war of the psychological forces. He revives the Aristotelian concept of a tragic hero by introducing a certain flaw - *hamartia*. His Heroes are supermen bitten by overmastering ambition. They want to achieve the impossible and in the process they perish. Besides the outer conflict, there is conflict in the hero's mind as is shown in *Dr. Faustus*.

2.5 Works of Marlowe

1. *Tamburlaine the Great* (1587 and 88): It is about the story of Timur, the tartar. He began his life as a shepherd chief and finally became a great conqueror.
2. *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1588? /1592): It is about the life of a medieval scholar who sells his life to a devil for a life of power and pleasure in return.
3. The Jew of Malta (1589): It centres around Barabas, a greedy money lender.
4. Edward II (1592): It is considered as the masterpiece of Marlowe. It is a tragic study of the king's weakness and misery.

Besides these plays, Marlowe wrote a poem *Hero and Leander* (1592). This half-finished poem was completed by George Chapman. Certain other plays and poems are also credited to Marlowe.

2.6 Sources of the Play *Doctor Faustus*

There was an old legend that one could attain supernatural powers by selling one's soul to the devil. This came into manifestation in the person of Doctor Faustus, a sixteenth century scholar. Doctor Faustus practiced black magic and achieved success temporarily. After his death a book called *Faustbuch (Faust Book)* was written in German in 1587. It was translated into English under the title: *The History of the Damnable life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus.* There were a number of plays based on this story. Goethe produced

his play *Faust* based on this story and it inspired a number of painters and composers. Goethe's work was not based on Marlowe's and they have little in common. Marlowe's work has close resemblances to *Faust Book* and critics observe that the comedy scenes were created by Dekker. Marlowe created the character of Doctor Faustus at a greater and higher level than it was in the original.

2.7 A Synopsis of *Doctor Faustus* (Act and Scene wise)

The Chorus introduces the theme of the play. We are informed that the dramatist will not deal with the subject of war or depict scenes of love in royal courts or present "proud audacious deeds" in this play. Faustus, we are told, was born in Germany. He belonged to a low family. He was chiefly brought up by his relatives in the city of Wittenberg. He grew up to be a great scholar, acquiring extensive knowledge in the fields of divinity and theology. But, becoming too-proud of his knowledge and learning, he tried to over-reach himself and thus met his downfall. He took to the study of necromancy, and launched upon his career as a magician. Magic became dearer to him even than the salvation of his soul.

2.7.1 ACT I, Scene i

Faustus is shown in his study, examining various fields of learning in order to decide upon his choice of a particular field for specialisation. He is attracted by 'analytics' or 'logic' but finds that he has already attained great proficiency in it. He then thinks of 'medicine' but finds that his skill as a physician is already widely recognized. He also deplores the fact that the study of medicine has not enabled him to make human beings immortal or to bring dead men back to life. He says that legal studies are suited to a man who is merely money-minded. He thinks that divinity would perhaps be the best choice, but even divinity teaches a doctrine – the doctrine of fatalism, which is totally unsatisfactory. The study of magic makes a great appeal to him. Magic will bring him not only wealth, but power and glory. Magic will enable him to extend his authority as far as the mind of man can go.

Faustus's servant, Wagner, enters and Faustus asks him to go and request his friends, Valdes and Cornelius, to visit him. Wagner goes to bring the two men. Then the Good Angel and the Evil Angel appear before him. The former asks Faustus not to read the book of magic but to study the scriptures. The Evil Angel encourages Faustus to study magic and to become as powerful as God on the earth.

The two Angels then make their exit, and Faustus is again left alone. In a soliloquy, Faustus dwells upon the power and the pleasures that he will be able to enjoy by means of magic. Valdes and Cornelius now appear on the stage. Faustus tells them that their advice to him to practice magic has proved effective. But he makes it clear that it is not only because of their advice, but because of his own free choice, that he has decided to study and practice magic. "Magic", he says, has "ravished" him. He recalls his victories in the discussions he has had with the priests of the German church and says that he has resolved to become as great a magician as Agrippa used to be. Valdes encourages Faustus and says that the spirits of every element will be at the service of Faustus. Faustus assures Valdes of his firm resolution. Cornelius says that, as Faustus is fully qualified and equipped for the study of magic, he will in course of time, be held in greater reverence than the Delphian oracle, Valdes then gives Faustus the necessary guidance and asks him to go to some solitary grove in order to conjure. Faustus decides to conjure the same night, no matter what happens.

2.7.2 ACT I, Scene ii

Two scholars appear feeling worried about Faustus, whom they have not seen for some time at the university. They ask Wagner, the servant of Faustus, his whereabouts. Eventually these scholars learn that Faustus is at dinner in the company of Valdes and Cornelius, who are notorious because of their active interest in the study of the black magic. The scholars, feeling sad about Faustus's future, decide to inform the president of the university about the matter in an effort to dissuade Faustus from his plans to practice magic.

2.7.3 ACT I, Scene iii

It is night time. Faustus is now seen in a dark grove, ready to conjure. Faustus has drawn a circle within which he has written the name of Jehovah, "forward and backward anagrammatized", with the abridged names of holy saints, and figures of various stars and planets. Advising himself not to be afraid but be resolute, he proceeds to recite the spells which will bring Mephistopheles. When Mephistopheles appears, Faustus commands him to go back and return in the guise of an old Franciscan friar, because he does not like to see him in his real shape which is too ugly to be tolerated.

Mephistopheles immediately departs, and Faustus feels very happy at the devil's compliance of his order. Faustus is pleased with Mephistopheles' obedience and humility, and calls himself a "conjuror laureate" for having been able to summon Mephistopheles with the force of magic and his spells. The next moment Mephistopheles re-appears in the guise of a Franciscan friar and asks what Faustus would have him do. Faustus wants Mephistopheles to promise to serve him during his whole life and to carry out all his commands. Mephistopheles, however, says that he will not be able to carry out Faustus's wish without the orders of the great Lucifer. On being asked whether Mephistopheles has not come in response to Faustus's conjuring speeches, the devil's emissary replies that the servants of Lucifer are always on the look-out for persons who have decided to renounce God, Christ, and the scriptures.

The agents of the devil do not waste time in rushing to a man who is willing to let his soul be damned and who, for that reason, discards the holy Trinity and offers worship to Lucifer. Faustus tells Mephistopheles that he has already fulfilled this condition and that he recognizes no chief but the Devil to whom he has dedicated himself. He adds that he is not afraid of damnation.

He then asks Mephistopheles to go to Lucifer and tell him that Faustus is willing to surrender his soul to him (Lucifer) on a condition that Lucifer will spare him for twenty four years and will provide all voluptuous pleasures to him, and place Mephistopheles at his disposal to carry out all his commands. Mephistopheles agrees to go and obtain Lucifer's sanction to the proposal. Left alone, Faustus says that, even if he had "as many souls as there be stars", he would give them all for Mephistopheles. He foresees a great future for himself. With the help of Mephistopheles, he hopes to become a great emperor of the world, "build a bridge through the moving air" in order to "cross the ocean with an army of men", and so on.

2.7.4 ACT I Scene iv

This is another comic scene. Faustus's servant, Wagner, tries to befool the clown for whom, however, he feels a genuine sympathy. The clown is unemployed and is not only semi-naked, but semi-starved. Wagner would like to employ the clown as his errand-boy, but

the clown has no desire to serve Wagner. Wagner tries to nag the clown by summoning two devils with magic words he has picked up from Faustus's magic books. The clown is scared into submission.

2.7.5 Act I Scene v

This is dramatically a very important scene. Here Faustus signs the crucial bond. However, before signing the bond, Faustus experiences a mental conflict which clearly shows that his conscience is neither dead nor asleep. In fact, he wavers between the two ideas - turning to God or seeking the patronage of the devil. The Good Angel and the Evil Angel make their second appearances and aggravate Faustus' mental conflict, though Faustus yields, of course, to the Evil Angel.

The congealing of Faustus' blood and the inscription that appears on his arm are also important for observation in this episode. These two incidents are supernatural manifestations from which Faustus could have taken a warning had he not been intoxicated by his visions of the power that he hopes to acquire.

Mephistopheles does not speak of hell as a localized place or region. Although Mephistopheles refers to himself as an example to prove that hell is a state of everlasting torture, Faustus proudly dismisses this information as old wives' tales. When Faustus asks for a wife, Mephistopheles refuses. Mephistopheles' refusal to get a wife for Faustus is understandable. Marriage is a sacred Christian ritual. The devil cannot tolerate anything that has the sanction of Christianity. Mephistopheles therefore offers an alternative, namely a 'mistress'. This is undoubtedly one of the great scenes in the play and marks another climax in it.

2.7.6 ACT II, Scene ii

An interval of a few years separates this scene from the one preceding. Faustus is once again shown to us experiencing a mental conflict. When he thinks of heaven, he repents of his contract with the devil and curses Mephistopheles whom he blames for having instigated him to choose the path of evil. He wants to renounce magic and repent for his sins, and once again the Good Angel and the Evil Angel make their appearance, pulling Faustus in opposite directions.

Mephistopheles has made blind Homer appear before him and sing to him of the love of Paris for Oenone and of Oenone's death. He has made the great musician, Amphion, appear before him and produce ravishing music from his harp. The thought of these pleasures again strengthens Faustus' resolve not to repent but to continue his practice of magic.

Faustus now questions Mephistopheles regarding the nature of this universe. He asks if there are "many heavens above the moon" and if all heavenly bodies constitute "one globe". Mephistopheles says that all the spheres are "mutually folded in each other's orb" and all jointly move upon one axle-tree whose terminus is known as the poles of the Zodiac. All the spheres, he goes on to say, move jointly from east to west in twenty-four hours upon the poles on the world.

Faustus feels impatient with this information because it is elementary knowledge known even to his servant, Wagner. He asks Mephistopheles to tell him who made the

world. Mephistopheles refuses to answer this question, whereupon Faustus feels greatly annoyed with him. Mephistopheles warns him not to ask him questions which are against the kingdom of hell. The Good Angel whispers into Faustus' ear to think of God who made the world. Mephistopheles reminds Faustus that, being already damned, he must think only of hell. Faustus calls Mephistopheles an "accursed spirit" and complains that it is he who has damned "distressed Faustus' soul". He feels that it is now too late for him to retrace his steps. The Good Angel and the Evil Angel again appear. The former tells him that it is not too late for repentance but the Evil Angel warns him that, if he repents, the devils will tear him into pieces.

Faustus, in his distress, calls upon Christ to save his soul. At this he immediately finds himself confronted with Lucifer, Beelzebub, and Mephistopheles who tell him that, in appealing to Christ, he is acting contrary to his promise. They warn him not to think of God, but to think of the devil. Feeling scared, Faustus begs the devil's pardon and vows never to look to heaven, never to name God or pray to Him. Lucifer then summons the Seven Deadly Sins to entertain Faustus.

When the Seven Sins have departed, Faustus expresses a desire to see hell and then come back. Lucifer gives him a magic book by means of which Faustus will be able to turn himself into any shape he likes.

2.7.7 ACT III. THE SPEECH OF THE CHORUS

The Chorus in its speech informs us that Faustus has been learning the secrets of astronomy by studying "the clouds, the planets, the stars, the Tropic Zones, and quarters of the sky". Faustus has ascended to the top of the Mt. Olympus. Seated in a chariot drawn by dragons, he has been carried all over the universe in eight days. After that, seated upon the back of a dragon, he has travelled to make his investigations into cosmography (the science of the construction of the universe). He is now about to arrive in Rome to see the Pope and his court and to witness St. Peter's feast.

2.7.8 ACT III, Scene i

Faustus is now in Rome in the company of Mephistopheles. Before arriving here, he has seen the stately town of Treves, and he has also visited Naples, the golden tomb of Virgil, the tunnel of Posilippo, the cities of Venice and Padua, and so on. Mephistopheles describes to him the city of Rome which stands upon seven hills, with the Tiber running through its midst. Mephistopheles also describes a castle within whose walls is a huge store of weapons of war. Faustus feels greatly impressed by Mephistopheles' description of the city and expresses a strong desire to see the monuments and lay-out of "bright-resplendent Rome". Mephistopheles would, however, like him to see the Pope's court first.

Faustus, at his own request, is made invisible by Mephistopheles and he then proceeds to play a few tricks on the Pope who is at a feast in the company of the Cardinal of Lorraine. Faustus snatches away the dishes and drinks from the hands of the Pope, much to his chagrin and dismay. Faustus then goes so far as to hit the Pope on his ear. Under the orders of the Pope, the friars perform a ritual whereby they call down a curse on the sinner who has had the audacity to offend the Pope. At the end of this ceremony, Mephistopheles and Faustus beat the friars, and throw fire-works among them.

2.7.9 ACT IV. THE SPEECH OF THE CHORUS

The Chorus tells us that, after his journeys to various places including the royal courts of kings, Faustus returns home where he is cordially received by his friends and "nearest companions" who feel greatly impressed by his accounts of what he had seen and by his learned answers to their questions. Faustus' fame has now spread to every land. He has performed at various places, the court of the Emperor, Charles V, being one of them.

2.8 ACT IV, Scene I

Robin, an ostler (an inn-keeper), has stolen one of Doctor Faustus's magic books. He proposes to learn some spells by which he can exercise magic power. Robin warns Ralph, his attendant, to keep away from the magic circle that he has drawn. Robin claims that, with the magic that he has learnt from Doctor Faustus' book, he can supply any quantity of spiced wine for Ralph from any tavern in Europe and that he can even procure the Kitchen-maid for Ralph's pleasure. Ralph feels very happy at this offer.

2.8.1ACT IV, Scene ii

Robin and Ralph have been drinking at a wine-bar and have stolen a silver wine-cup. They are, however, chased by the bar-man who demands the wine-cup. Robin pretends to be very offended with the bar-man at being accused of theft. Robin now wishes to punish the bar-man for his presumption in accusing him and his friend of theft. He makes use of a few spells to summon Mephistopheles who actually appears in response to the magical incantations of Robin.

2.8.2 ACT IV Scene iii

The scene now shifts to the Emperor's palace at Innsbruck. The Emperor has heard of Faustus' great reputation as a magician. He would like to see with his own eyes some proof of Faustus' magical skill. Faustus is ready to satisfy the Emperor. The Emperor speaks of the greatness of his ancestors among whom was Alexander the Great, the most heroic of them all. The Emperor would like Faustus to raise Alexander the Great from the tomb in which he lies buried. The Emperor would also like Faustus to raise Alexander's beautiful mistress, Thais. It is the most cherished desire of the Emperor that he should be able to see Alexander and Thais as they used to be during their life-time.

The emperor is wonder-struck to see them and remarks that surely they are no spirits but the "true substantial bodies of those two deceased princes".

When a Knight is skeptical of Faustus' powers, he makes antlers sprout from his head and warns him to be more respectful towards scholars in future. The Emperor promises a generous reward to Faustus for his magic display.

2.8.3 ACT IV, Scene iv

Faustus is now getting ready to return to Wittenberg. However, before he sets out on his journey, a horse-dealer comes and offers forty dollars for Faustus' horse. Faustus demands fifty dollars for the horse. The horse-dealer pleads that he has only forty dollars with him. Faustus accepts the forty dollars but warns the horse-dealer that he should never ride this horse into water under any circumstances.

The horse-dealer thinks in a different way and rides intentionally into water. The horse disappears and the horse-dealer finds himself sitting on a bundle of hay, about to be drowned.

The horse-dealer is now looking for Doctor Faustus in order to get his money back. Mephistopheles tells him that the Doctor is asleep and should not be disturbed. The horse-dealer, anxious to recover his money, shouts in Faustus's ears to wake him up. When Faustus does not move, the horse-dealer pulls him by the leg, and it so happens that the leg comes off in his hands. The horse-dealer feels scared and runs away. Faustus feels happy that he has tricked the horse-dealer into parting with another forty dollars (besides the forty dollars which he had taken from the horse-dealer as the price of the horse).

Faustus receives a message that the Duke of Vanholt wants him at his court to give a display of his magic powers, and Faustus is ready to go there.

2.8.4 ACT IV, Scene v

Faustus gives a magic performance at the court of the Duke of Vanholt who feels much pleased with Faustus. Faustus offers to procure for the Duchess of Vanholt (who is pregnant) any eatable for which she may be having a longing or a craving. The Duchess of Vanholt says that, if it had not been the coldest time of winter, she would have loved nothing better than a bunch of ripe grapes (which are available only in summer). Faustus obliges and the Duke and his Duchess feel pleased.

2.8.5 ACT V, Scene i

The twenty-four years of Faustus' life of power and pleasure are now drawing to a close. As his end is getting near, Faustus tries to forget himself in merry-making and in the company of the scholars. This scene brings out Faustus' essential humanity and his genuine friendly feelings towards the scholars who are greatly attached to him. He recognizes their attachment as "unfeigned". It is because of this feeling of friendship that Faustus agrees to use his magic power to summon Helen whose beauty and majesty the scholars would like to see.

The Old Man is introduced in order to show us how Faustus' mind is working at this time. The Old Man seeks to awaken Faustus' conscience which has never been asleep. The Old Man tries to make Faustus realize his sins through his sharp and bitter words. He refers to Faustus' misdeeds as "most vile and loathsome filthiness, the stench whereof corrupts the inward soul with crimes of heinous sin as no commiseration may expel". Faustus is at this time most miserable and he expresses his misery thus:

> Where art thou, Faustus? Wretch, what hast thou done?
> Damned art thou, Faustus, damned ; despaire and die!
> Hell calls for right, and with a roaring voice
> Says, "Faustus, come; thine hour is almost come" ;
> And Faustus now will come to do thee right.

This speech is indicative of the inner conflict that has always been going on in Faustus. Although he has been enjoying the power and the pleasure which is made available to him by his magic, he has never known real peace of mind. His conscience has continually been pricking him. Mephistopheles catches this opportunity to aggravate Faustus' sinfulness by trying to make him commit suicide, but the Old Man saves Faustus from ending his life in this manner. His words do have a consoling effect on Faustus who now tries to repent. Repentance is, however, not easy at this late hour:

> I do repent; and yet I do despair:
> Hell strives with grace for conquest in my breast:
> What shall I do to shun the snares of death?

Mephistopheles immediately suppresses Faustus's desire for repentance, and Faustus feels compelled to renew the bond with his blood.

2.8.6 ACT V, Scene ii

The Old Man appears again and announces that Faustus has not listened to him and has been expelled from the grace of heaven for his practice of black magic. The devils appear and try to torture the Old Man physically as ordered by Mephistopheles. The Old Man still keeps his faith in God and tries to hurl defiance at the devils.

2.8.7 ACT V, Scene iii

Faustus is now seen in the company of the scholars. He is feeling miserable and, on being asked by the scholars what ails him, he says that he has committed a sin for which he will never be pardoned. He recalls the wonders that he has performed and says that because of those wonders he has lost everything. He tells the scholars that he is doomed to live in hell forever because he renounced God and went so far as to blaspheme against Him. He would like to weep, but the devil does not permit him to shed tears. He would like to lift his hands. He goes on to tell the scholars that, in order to enjoy the pleasures of life, he signed a bond with the devil pledging his soul to him. When one of the scholars asks him why he did not tell them about his condition earlier, Faustus says that he wanted to do so but that the devil threatened to tear his flesh into pieces if he ever named God or if he "once gave ear to divinity ". He tells the scholars that his end is now near and asks them to leave him and move into the next room in order to pray for him. The scholars make their exit, and Faustus is left alone.

The second half of this scene reveals the excruciating pain that Faustus undergoes just before his death. He is now alone, and he gives expression to his state of mind in a final soliloquy. This monologue is remarkable as a piece of psychological self-revelation. This monologue is the greatest passage in the play, and it is greater even than Faustus' apostrophe (address to an imaginary person) to Helen. This great scholar wishes that he did not have a soul or that his soul were not immortal. The following lines especially contribute to the atmosphere of horror:

> My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!
> Adders and serpents let me breathe a while!
> Ugly hell, gape not! Come not, Lucifer!
> I'll burn my books! Ah, Mephistopheles!

The keynote of this final monologue of Faustus is the feeling of pity and terror which a great tragedy is expected to arouse in the audience. We have already known Faustus' poetic temperament, and this speech is yet another proof of his poetic capacity.

The final speech of the Chorus contains the moral of the play. "Faustus is gone", says the Chorus, "regard his hellish fall…..", calling upon the wise people "only to wonder at unlawful things" and not to practice necromancy.

2.9 Summing Up

I think you have gone through the act/scene wise summary of the play. Your enjoyment and appreciation will be greater if you go through the original text. The following link will take you to the play. Source: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/779/779-h/779-h.htm#note-10
One may be a great scholar but if one's desires for knowledge and power are not controlled, one will meet death in a tragic way like Faustus. In the next lesson you will be able to study the critical analysis of issues related to the play.

2.10 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Who is Faustus?
2. What are the major plays of Christopher Marlowe?
3. When was Doctor Faustus written?
4. What is the theme of *Jew of Malta*?
5. Who is Mephistopheles?
6. Who is Lucifer?
7. Who is the Old Man and what does he represent?
8. Describe how Faustus sells his soul.
9. Write about the final phase in the life of Faustus.
10. Write a brief note on the character of Doctor Faustus.

2.11. References

1. The Tragical History Of Doctor Faustus A Play Written By Christopher Marlowe Edited with a Preface, Notes And Glossary By Israel Gollancz, M.A. J. M. Dent And Co. Aldine House: London 1897
2. Una Ellis Fermor. Christopher Marlowe .Methuen &Company Ltd. 1927.
3. M. C. Bradbrook Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy.. Cam- bridge: Cambridge University Press; New York: Macmillan, 1935

2.12 Additional Resources

1. http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/culture/literature-and-creative-writing/literature/christopher-marlowe-doctor-faustus/content-section-0
2. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4DXV8OTUEk

LESSON - 3

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE PLAY *DOCTOR FAUSTUS*

The present lesson will guide you to develop a critical appreciation about the play written by Christopher Marlowe.

Objectives:

After going through this lesson you will

- Develop critical insights in to the terminology of criticism about a play
- Understand how Doctor Faustus is an important play
- Appreciate its Structure and different devices employed

Structure of the Lesson

3.1 The Form and Structure of the Play

Judith O Neill says that the Play *Doctor Faustus* aroused much discussion and controversy among critics. If James M.Smith looks at the allegorical implications of the play, Arthur Mizenar deals with the implicit dualistic world of it. W.W.Greg and Leo Kirschbaum like it as a morality play.

It is observed that Doctor Faustus is a tragedy by nature. It is about the rise and fall of a great scholar. It is about a single man and the conflict is within his mind between good and evil. He surrenders himself to evil forces and thus brings his fall. His overvaulting desire for knowledge forms his *hubris* or *hamartia* and he dies pitifully at the end.

The play also has the features of a *morality* play. It uses (i) a narrator (Chorus), (ii) the Tempting/Resisting forces (Good and Evil angels), (iii) the presence of an adviser (the Old Man), (iv) the images of Heaven (orthodox Christian forces) and Hell.

The play's Renaissance features are seen in the inquisitive nature of Faustus who is never satisfied with his existing knowledge. His determination and his pleasure oriented dynamism stand as examples.

The play is not a serious tragedy in the conventional sense. There are some comic scenes to provide some comic-relief. Marlowe might not have written them but they serve the purpose of interludes. Some of these scenes are farcical and some are slapstick.

The focus of the play is about the 'self-destruction of a man who is full of sinful pride.' In strict religious terms of Christianity, it is about an account of sin and retribution. It is also a warning against atheistic tendencies.

3.2 Tragic Conflict

The tragic conflict in Dr. Faustus is the struggle between God and Devil through the soul of Faustus. It is the psychological struggle within the mind of the protagonist. It is the conflict between a Christian conscience and a desire of worldly desires of power and pleasure.

His desire for limitless knowledge forms the *hamartia* in Faustus. Nicoll remarks in British drama, "… in Dr. Faustus, Marlowe attempted something new – the delineation of a struggle within the mind of the chief figure. The struggle is certainly somewhat primitive in its expression, but it is a fore taste of those inward characteristics toward which drama in its development inevitably tends. Faustus in this respect is unquestionably the greatest tragic figure in 16th century literature outside the work of Shakespeare."

This drama is not only about the external action but also about a spiritual combat within the soul of a man. It is waged according to the laws of Christian world order. Faustus is exposed by his intellectual pride and it leads him into a bargain with the devil.

3.3 Faustus and the Renaissance Spirit:

It is the Renaissance Spirit that became the soul-cause of the tragic conflict in this play. The desire for limitless knowledge forced Faustus to bring his own doom. Faustus is disappointed with his own knowledge. He is swollen with the knowledge of Analytics, Logic Philosophy, Physics, Medicine, Theology and many other sciences. He is after power, pleasure and beauty, which is a true sign of Renaissance. He knew that the wages of sin is death; yet he turns to necromancy. Faustus is courageous. He discards knowledge for power and pleasure. He mistakes disappointment with knowledge and he turns to magic.

3.4 Tragic Conflict in *Doctor Faustus:*

Faustus is seen in the opening scene among his books undecided to what study he should devote himself. He turns to Necromancy for mean, earthly pleasures. He thinks that a sound magician is a mighty God. We see the two internal forces that struggle in the heart of Faustus in the form of Good and Evil Angels. Good Angel

advises not to read the books of Necromancy. Evil Angel encourages him to go forward. At last, Faustus is tempted by it, when Valdes advises him to enter upon the study of Necromancy. He starts conjuring after being instructed into the ritual. He further reassures himself.

"Then fear not Faustus but be resolute
And try the utter most magic can perform"

His spirit wavers like a tide. In his first flush of his success, he utters his 'conjurer laureateship'.

"Now Faustus thou art conjurer laureate
That canst command great Mephistophilis".

He will enjoy all the powers of the art of Magic. For Faustus, the defiance of God is wisdom. The devil, which is a progressive Evil, conquers him through flattery. He completely accepts the idea of damnation, which is his fall. After having studied the art of Magic and also having seen some of the wonders that Magic can perform,he fails to write the pact with his blood. His blood congeals. His conscious mind of Christianity does not allow him to do so. However, he makes a pact with the devil Lucifer for twenty four years. As soon as he signs the bond with the Devil, he begins to feel the pain of his conscience. Though he enjoys all the fruits of his study of the art of magic, the pricks of conscience goad him in the guise of Good and Evil Angels.

The tragic conflict in *Doctor Faustus* reaches its peak when he completes the twenty four years of enjoyment. Yet, we see the poor scholar craving for Helen's Hellish beauty. Helen's soul is nothing but a trick of the Devil. Soon he recognizes his false steps and repents for not hearing the Good Angel's advice. He cries to God for help, sympathy and consolation. His ambitious soul now begins to moan but it is too late.

Faustus is also timid. He submits himself to Lucifer in utter despair. The mighty man, who shook the world with his magical power, trembles. He pleads time to move at a slower pace. He wants to repent and save his soul but it is already lost. Now he prays for mercy. He wants himself to be purified. He pleads for even half- a - drop of Christ's blood. He wants to leap up to his God but he cannot. He feels that something is pulling him down into the nether world. Faustus cannot bear the heavy wrath of God. He wants nature to cover him to save from God's anger. He worries. He swears and pleads Lucifer to spare him. The clock strikes and his hurry quickens. He rushes here and there. His mind loses control. He does not know what to do and where to go. He wants to perform Pythagoras' metamorphosis if possible. His pain is incessant and unbearable. He suffers completely for his sin. He envies the happy beasts whose souls dissolve in elements. Faustus realizes that he is damned. His soul is to live in the Hell for a many thousand years. He curses Lucifer. The clock strikes twelve. He wants to vanish from the presence of Lucifer.

Then he is dragged by devils down into the Hell. Faustus cries and screams pitifully and shrieks with pain. He completely recognizes sin. He cries for God but it is of no use. He vanishes from our sight cursing the Devils. He mistakes Hellish venom for Heavenly elixir. Yet, he wants to repent more. He is to say something but he is dragged in the midst of his incomplete utterances.

The well learned scholar Faustus, has brought his doom with his own hands like Macbeth. His limitless desire for knowledge made him die so pitifully. It is the tragic conflict in Faustus. Had he repented earlier, he would have surely gone to Heaven. His espousing the Necromancy is the first fall that threw him into the Hellish fires.

3.5 Importance of a Soliloquy

Soliloquy is the act of talking to oneself. It was a very important dramatic device used by the early dramatists of England. It is a speech made by a person to himself/herself. It is a convention by which a character (alone on the stage) utters his thoughts aloud. This device is used by the playwright, as a dramatic device to convey directly to the audience about a character's motives, feelings and intentions.

The soliloquy is thus an expression of secret thoughts and feelings. A soliloquy may produce comic or tragic effect. It may be amusing or tragically intense. However, the function of a soliloquy is self revelation. It is very difficult to understand the motives of some deeply contemplative persons or characters. Under such circumstances the dramatist makes them to speak out their inner most thoughts so that the consistency between the characters may be well perceived by the audience.

Hudson says, "The soliloquy is a dramatist's means of taking us down into the hidden recesses of a person's nature and of revealing those springs of conduct which ordinary dialogue provides him with no adequate opportunity to disclose". The dramatist's business is more difficult than a novelist's. He cannot directly involve himself on the stage. A.C. Bradley observes, "It will be regarded that in listening to a soliloquy we ought never to feel that we are being addressed. And in this respect as in others many soliloquies are master pieces. But certainly, in some, the purpose of giving information is bare and in one or two the actor openly speaks to the audience-".

There is much difference between a *formal soliloquy* and *incidental aside*. Soliloquy is one of the ways of understanding a character. The credit of mastering the soliloquies ultimately goes to Shakespeare. His leading persons speak soliloquies. They inspire us with their direct and confidential utterances. They make us participants of their intimate thoughts and desires. They exhibit the motives by which their conduct is governed. And finally, they define their true relations to the progress of events about them. Shakespeare adopts this course in particular with his more complex characters who are engaged in internal conflicts. The best known of all soliloquies is Hamlet's speech, 'to be or not to be'. Macbeth's soliloquy, 'tomorrow and tomorrow' and King Lear's "the ripeness is all'.

3.6 Purposes of Soliloquies:

In Renaissance and Elizabethan dramas every dramatist has made fulluse of the technique of soliloquy. It is usually put to the following uses:

(1) To give information about the past. It may be incidents in the past, or thoughts or feelings which developed in the past that form the theme of a soliloquy.
(2)The Soliloquy gives information about incidents that can't be shown on the stage.

(3)To give information about the motives of a character, that is to describe the speaker himself or other characters.
(4)To reveal a character in an indirect and suggestive manner. It makes the reader to understand the soul of the character.
(5)To reveal the experience and the state of the mind. For this direct transparence of experience the soliloquy with its lyrical powers is the best media.
(6)To expose the sudden changes of the heart in a character as these can't be shown through action. These changes thicken the organic texture of the drama.
(7)To reveal the moral psychology of a character.
(8)As a device for telling the story.
(9)For producing an amusing or tragic effect.
(10) To uncover the false pretensions of the antagonists.

3.7 Shakespeare's Use of Soliloquies:

Soliloquy has many purposes. Shakespeare has employed soliloquy

(1) As a device for telling the story
(2) As a means of analyzing the psychology of a character
(3) For producing an amusing effect
(4) And for tragic effect .

Soliloquies in a Shakespearean drama serve many purposes. One must observe that soliloquies are put into the mouth of a complex character only. In his soliloquies the character struggles with his or her innermost heart and mind very often. Certain characters like Hamlet are seen in heart searching. Sometimes the soliloquies pluck out the pasted mask of honesty and reveal the original darker side of the double faced villains. Those soliloquies act as the real eye openers. Bradley says "Shakespearean soliloquy generally gives information regarding the secret springs as well as the outward course of the plot. And more over it is a curious point of technique with him that the soliloquies of the villains sometimes read almost like explanations offered to the audience "soliloquies have been employed to contribute to characterization and action and are not merely lyrical out bursts introduced by way of ornamentation".

3.8 Soliloquies in *Doctor Faustus*

Soliloquies are created when the hero is a philosophical thinker. They throw light on the plot. Soliloquy is the result of the inner conflict of a person. Marlowe also makes use of this dramatic device in his plays. Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* contains six soliloquies in which the first, the fifth and the sixth are the most important. The Seventh carries Marlowe's mighty line. (The 1st, 5th, and 6th are the most important with the view of the dramatic movement of the plot).

The first soliloquy opens the plan and introduces Dr. Faustus. The opening soliloquy is not merely a moment's outburst, but it telescopes Faustus' mental process of a much longer duration. He examines each subject he has studied and finds it as useless. He does not find interest in any of them.

"The sweet Analytics" had ravished him. But he has already attained its end of good argumentation. He bids farewell to 'Oncaymaeon' and welcomes Galan. He wanted to become a physician and to reap gold. But he has attained that end too. So, now, he wants to attain perfection. He is not a low man who runs after smaller things. He is the man who wants the impossible, though he might perish in that process. He feels that long years of hard work are turning into ashes. He has to achieve something which is not yet touched by any one else. He has that supreme zeal. Paltry things had deluded him for many years. He says 'Philosophy is odious and the obscene Theology is the basest of all.' He knows that the reward of sin is death yet he considers necromantic books as heavenly. He discards knowledge for power and pleasure. He is disappointed with his own knowledge. He mistakes disappointment with knowledge and turns to magic. He craves for earthly pleasures.

In the first soliloquy the Wittenburg scholar, Faustus, expresses his disappointment and dissatisfaction with all his achievements. He has mastery over every subject, yet he feels that he lacks some thing more. Thus the first soliloquy introduces Faustus and his disappointment with his knowledge.

The second soliloquy follows the first soliloquy in the same scene.

The Good and the Evil angels appear. They are not outward. But they are the two forces that struggle in his heart. The Good angel prevents him from that blasphemy. The Evil Angel encourages him. Faustus is tempted by the necromancy. He boasts about his magical power.

It is a power over elements, persons and sprits. His imagination catches fire and many other things are only his fancy pictures. It is a progressive evil. It makes him powerful first and leads him to his downfall. His power is illusionary and not real.

The third scene opens with the third soliloquy of Faustus. He conducts the act of conjuring all alone. This soliloquy is deeply personal. He is resolute and tries to perform magic.

In the first scene of the second act Faustus is seen speaking to himself. This fourth one is also personal. It throws light on the inner conflict of Dr. Faustus. He feels his heart is hardened to repent. He tries to divert the attention of his mind. He studies Astronomy and Astrology. He takes a journey abroad in a chariot pulled by dragons to prove Cosmography. He plays cheap tricks with the ecclesiastical dignitaries. He keeps the Holy Roman Emperor dumb founded by raising the spirits of the late historical personages.

The fifth soliloquy carries Marlowe's mighty line. There are the most rapturous, exquisite lines that ever came from the pen of Marlowe. This is like an epic piece bristling with the Greek Mythology. Faustus exclaims when Helen appears before him.

"Was this the face…….!"

He addresses Helen as sweet. He prays to immortalize him with her kiss. He sees Heaven in her lips. He wants her to be his paramour. Now Faustus' soul is corrupted as the devil sucks his soul.

The next scene is the scene of pity and poignancy. Faustus, the fallen scholar recognizes his sin. He knows that his offence can never be pardoned. Now he wants help, sympathy and consolation. He sees blood gushing from his eyes instead of tears. He is not even capable of lifting his hands without the permission of the Devil. He realizes that he has wasted his life for vain pleasure of twenty four years. He says to his friends about his past deeds of writing a bill with his own blood.

Faustus' final soliloquy is the most lyrical and intense. This soliloquy starts with a note of despair.

'Ah! Faustus
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then thou must be damned perpetually!"

Within this one hour, mad thoughts flash through his mind. They are his own thoughts and feelings. Marlowe comprises this one hour into a soliloquy of fifty nine lines. We see different moods of Faustus' character. He earnestly entreats the "ever moving spheres of Heaven" to stand still, so that "the time may cease and mid-night never come". He requests the sun, "the fair Nature's eye to rise again and make a perpetual day". He longs for the elongation of the last hours to "a year, a month, and a natural day", so that Faustus "may repent and save his soul". Faustus is absolutely powerless. All his requests fall on deaf years. Then comes the scream of the sinner for whom the Crucified has died to save.

Oh! I'll leap up to my God-who pulls me down?
See,see,where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!

He prays for half a drop of Christ's blood to save him. He can't bear the heavy wrath of God. He wants mountains and hills to cover him and fall on him to save him from the heavy wrath of God. He is confused with the distressing thoughts of his doom.

He turns to Nature again. He pleads her to save him. But it is too late. It is the soul that is lost, but not the body. The clock strikes, spent with agony, he pleads for a respite; the voice dies away into a moan.

"Oh God, If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
……..incessant pain".

But it is beyond his will. There is no escape from death. Dauntless ambition is now guided by despair. He cannot dismiss the eternal damnations as a trifle. He curses himself, and his master Lucifer. He tells his soul that it should rest in hell for a hundred thousand years. He says "O, no end is limited to damned souls". Now his mind wanders off to Pythagoras' metempsychosis. Here Marlowe's poetry goes on its highest imaginative flights. He wants himself,

"to be changed into little water-drops
And fall into the ocean, ne'er found"

He wishes his body to be turned into air.

When the devils come to claim their victim, he vainly pleads that he will burn all his books. He says,

"My God, my God……Ah! Mephistophilis!"

This is the final struggle between God and Devil through the soul of Faustus. There is an underlying contrast between eternity and transience. Faustus' note of Jesus Christ is only a vision, but not real. This is a conflict between a Christian conscience and a Pagan passion of external conflict. The pitiful death of the learned scholar moves every heart and provides a sympathetic light on the character of Faustus. Faustus confounds hell with Elysium. His ignorance and the incapability of his self-realisation together brought his doom.

Marlowe makes the dramatic device, soliloquy, suggestive and powerful. In all Marlowe's plays, the death-scenes are especially memorable. Here through Faustus, Marlowe deals with the terrible and tremendous situation of man, struggling with death for a little place in this wide world.

The final soliloquy in Dr. Faustus is an agonized shriek of pain. It depicts the changing attitude of Faustus' mind. In it the subtle psychology of desperate pains is described in the most fearful terms. It contains two purgative emotions, pity and fear. This is one of the best pieces of poetry in the whole range of English literature. Marlowe showed stupendous power in picturising the terror and pity. He uses the greatest power of poetic creation and imagination. The play ends with the moving epilogue of the chorus.

"Cut is the branch……learned man".

3.9 Aspects of Elizabethan Poetry and Poetic Drama:

The Elizabethan age is the age of thought, feeling and action. It finds its best expression in the drama and poetry. It is considered as the golden age. Drama developed fast and culminated in Shakespeare. The poetry of this age is known for its variety, freshness and its youthful and romantic feeling. Both poetry and drama were influenced by the Italian Renaissance literature.

There was a lyrical and dramatic outburst. After Chaucer, English poetry became anemic. Then the Renaissance brought humanism into England. Wyatt, Surrey and Sidney chose either the lyric or the sonnet. The lyric became the most popular form of the Elizabeth verse. The main themes of the Elizabethan lyric are love, good life and disillusionment. In Italy Surrey used blank-verse in English Literature.(82to84) lines.

Marlowe has been called the 'father of the English drama' and the 'morning star' of the Drama. Marlowe saved the English drama from its buffoonery and the ghastly scene of bloodshed. He turned to the national romantic drama. He used blank-verse and he made it a suitable medium for dramatic expression. It was the first revolutionized step in the dramatic form and in the medium. He used 'blank verse' with Iambic pentameter without rhyme. His poetry was with powerful images, dramatic speech and rhythm. He used the conversational language of that age. His poetry was sublime in nature. It was highly subtle and psychologically modulated. He always used blank-verse for the major characters. He was the first to divide the drama into acts and scenes. He thus gave a shape to the dramatic form. He introduced a new class of heroic subjects. He presented life-like characters to the stage.

Blank-verse is a verse in which the rhymes are blank. It consists lines of five accents, each of two syllables, of which the second is accented. Surrey first used blank-verse in his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Sackville and Norton used it in *Gorboduc*. Blank verse before Marlowe was dull and monotonous. It was mechanical. There was no melody or rhetorical force. They used the end stopped lines. Marlowe gave it a native English rhythm. He divided it into five feet. He gave it melody and rhetorical force. He gave it the double force of unity and contrast. He maintained the fixed march of his chosen rhythm. He gave it expression, cadence with architectonic plan and design. The Blank-verse became Marlowe's 'mighty line'. Frederic T. Boasremarks about Marlowe's blank-verse thus: "The introduction of blank-verse was absolutely essential if romantic art was to attain a rich and untrammeled development. Marlowe breaking through conventional restraints altered the structure of metre, varied the pauses and produced an entirely new rhythm of surpassing flexibility and power".

All the heroic plays were written in blank verse, they are also called poetic dramas. In a poetic drama, the dialogue is written in verse, in English it's usually in blank verse.

3.9.1 Aspects of Poetic Drama in Faustus:

Dramatic poetry is one of the divisions of objective poetry. Dramatic poetry is essentially dramatic in principle, though it is not intended for the stage. In the dramatic poetry the poet merges himself in his personal feelings and emotions as in a subjective poem. Dramatic poetry may be divided into many kinds, such as Dramatic lyric, Dramatic story, Dramatic Monologue etc., Marlowe's major characters speak poetry. His minor characters speak prose. His dramatic poetry is packed fully with rhetorical force and it is conversational in its run. Marlowe's genius was more lyrical than dramatic. This is not to disparage him as a dramatist. His greatness as a dramatist depends largely on his poetic excellence. So *Doctor Faustus* is not merely a poem or a drama. It is a poetic drama. There are episodes and internal conflicts as in a drama but they are presented through alternating moods of repentance, despair, recklessness etc., There are many intensely emotional passages in which we find the dramatist rising to the loftiest heights of poetry. As a vehicle for such flights, Marlowe used blank-verse, which is the vehicle of a poetic drama.

The poetic elements in this drama are found mainly in the utterances of Doctor Faustus: his soliloquies and addresses. Among his addresses, his address to Helen is the most inspiring one. Faustus' address to Helen is not merely an expression of the vulgar desire of the flesh. It is not Faustus, but it is Marlowe that addressed Helen so beautifully in his verses.

"Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss"

It shows Marlowe's mighty line in handling the blank-verse in a supreme fashion. Every syllable in this address to Helen is significant. It is thoroughly conversational.

The final soliloquy of Dr. Faustus is the most prominent one with a magnificent portrayal of Dr. Faustus' psychological inner struggle. There is no break in the chain of emotions though they are expressed about varying and different feelings. Such poetic statements make this play a poetic drama.

3.9.2 Summing Up

This lesson offered you the necessary elements of criticism like structure of a tragedy, how Doctor Faustus has several features of the Renaissance tragedy, the importance of soliloquies and Marlowe's use of them in his play with a focus on poetic element. Other critical inputs as will be suggested under 'references' will develop your critical observation.

3.9.3 Comprehension Check Questions

1. What are the forms of 'dramatic poetry'?
2. How can you prove that Doctor Faustus is a morality play?
3. What are the features of Renaissance in the play?
4. Do you agree with the view that Faustus is a 'tragic hero'? Explain.
5. Why does a playwright introduce soliloquies in his plays?

3.9.4 References

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LESSON - 4
MODEL ANNOTATIONS (DOCTOR FAUSTUS)

Objectives
After going through this lesson, you will be able to

- Understand how to explain a passage from the play with reference to context

Structure of the Lesson:

4.1 Explanation of Model Annotation

Eg: 1. "Till swoll'n with cunning, of a self-conceit,
His waxen wings did mount above his reach" (Prologue, 19-20)

4.1.1 Introduction

These lines are taken from the play 'Doctor Faustus' written by Christopher Marlowe. Christopher Marlowe was the predecessor of Shakespeare. He introduced 'Blank verse' on the English stage. This is one of his greatest plays.

4.1.2 Brief Summary of the Play

The Chorus introduces the theme of the play. Faustus, we are told, was born in Germany. He belonged to a low family. He was chiefly brought up by his relatives in the city of Wittenberg. He grew up to be a great scholar, acquiring extensive knowledge in the fields of divinity and theology. But, becoming too-proud of his knowledge and learning, he tried to over-reach himself and thus met his downfall. He took to the study of necromancy, and launched upon his career as a magician. Magic became dearer to him even than the salvation of his soul.

4.1.3 Context

The Chorus introduces the theme of the play and the protagonist. Doctor Faustus is seen in his study. They speak about the childhood of Doctor Faustus. He was born to parents of low rank in a town called Rhodes in Germany. He went to Wittenberg and he excelled in philosophy. He was also awarded a Doctor's degree. He could argue about anything related to theology. He got proud and wanted to master necromancy. Heavens got angry and decided to teach him a lesson. He wanted to rise above mortal limits with his arrogance and over vaulting ambition, i.e, with his wings of wax.

4.1.4 Explanation

These lines are spoken by the Chorus and they describe the intellectual condition of Doctor Faustus. Doctor Faustus is intelligent but not wise. He became proud of his knowledge and wanted to be the master of the universe. With all his pride and over vaulting ambition, he developed vanity and to achieve his goal he started practicing black magic. These lines explain the theme of the play and also suggest the fall of Doctor Faustus.

4.2 List of Annotations

1. "Till swoll'n with cunning, of a self-conceit,
His waxen wings did mount above his reach" (Prologue, 19-20)

2. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and there is no truth in us.
Why, then belike, we must sin, and so consequently, die" (I, i., 40-43)

3. "'Abjure this magic, turn to God again.'
Ay, and Faustus will turn to God again.
To God? He loves thee not;
The god thou serv'st is thine own appetite" (II, i, 8-11)

4. "All places shall be hell that is not heaven!" (II, i, 131)

5. "But Faustus, in hell is all manner of delight" (II, ii, 179)

6. "Pope Adrian, let me have some right of law: I was elected by the Emperor" (III, i, 126-27)

7. "How now! Must every bit be spiced with a cross?
Nay then, take that!" (III, ii, 85-86)

8. "Go horse these traitors on your fiery backs
And mount aloft with them as high as heaven,
Thence pitch them headlong to the lowest hell.
Yet stay, the world shall see their misery,
And hell shall after plague their treachery.
Go, Belimoth, and take this caitiff hence
And hurl him in some lake of mud and dirt:
Take thou this other, drag him through the woods
Amongst thou pricking thorns and sharpest briars:
Whilst thou my gently Mephostophilis
This traitor flies unto some steepy rock
That rolling down may break the villain's bones
As he intended to dismember me.
Fly hence, dispatch my charge immediately!" (IV, iii, 80-93)

9. "Sith black disgrace hath thus eclipsed our fame,
We'll rather die with grief than live with shame" (IV, iv, 24-25)

10. “What art thou, Faustus, but a man condemned to die?” (IV, v, 25)

11. “Thanks master doctor, for these pleasant sights.
Nor know I how sufficiently to recompense your
Great deserts in erecting that enchanted castle in the
Air, the sight whereof so delighted me,
As nothing in the world could please me more” (IV, vii, 1-5)

12. “Ha, ha, ha, dost hear him Dick? He has forgot his leg.”
“Ay ay, he does not stand much upon that.”
“No, ‘faith, not much upon a wooden leg” (IV, vii, 83-87)

13. “No, truly sir, I would make nothing of you” (IV, vii, 106-107)

14. ‘ Was this fair Helen, whose admired worth
Made Greece with ten years’ wars afflict poor Troy?”
“Too simple is my wit to tell her worth,
Whom all the world admires for majesty” (V, i, 27-30)

15. “O gentle Faustus, leave this damned art,
This magic that will charm thy soul to hell
And quite bereave thee of salvation.
Though thou hast now offended like a man,
Do not persever in it like a devil.
Yet, yet, thou hast an amiable soul
A Teacher’s Guide to the Signet Classics Edition of Christopher Marlowe’s
If sin by custom grow not into nature.
Then, Faustus, will repentance come too late!
Then, thou art banished from the sight of heaven!
No mortal can express the pains of hell!
It may be this my exhortation
Seems harsh and unpleasant. Let it not.
For gentle son, I speak it not in wrath
Or envy of thee but in tender love
And pity of thy future misery:
And so have hope that this my kind rebuke,
Checking thy body, may amend thou soul” (V, i, 35-51)

16. Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?” (V, i, 95-96)

17. “God forbade it indeed, but Faustus hath done it.
For the vain pleasure of four and twenty years
hath Faustus lost eternal joy and felicity. I writ
them a bill with mine own blood. The date is expired.
This is the time. And he will fetch me” (V, ii, 67-71)

18. Fools that will laugh on earth, most weep in hell” (V, ii, 105)

19. “The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike:

The devil will come, and Faustus must be damned!" (V, ii, 150-51)

20. "Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight
And burned is Apollo's laurel bough
That sometime grew within this learned man.
Faustus is gone: regard his hellish fall,
Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise
Only to wonder at unlawful things,
Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits
To practice more than heavenly power permits" (V, iii, 1-8)

4.3 Act-Wise Summaries

4.3.1 ACT I, Scene i

Faustus is shown in his study, examining various fields of learning in order to decide upon his choice of a particular field for specialisation. He is attracted by 'analytics' or 'logic' but finds that he has already attained great proficiency in it. He then thinks of 'medicine' but finds that his skill as a physician is already widely recognized. He also deplores the fact that the study of medicine has not enabled him to make human beings immortal or to bring dead men back to life. He says that legal studies are suited to a man who is merely money-minded. He thinks that divinity would perhaps be the best choice, but even divinity teaches a doctrine – the doctrine of fatalism, which is totally unsatisfactory. The study of magic makes a great appeal to him. Magic will bring him not only wealth, but power and glory. Magic will enable him to extend his authority as far as the mind of man can go.

Faustus's servant, Wagner, enters and Faustus asks him to go and request his friends, Valdes and Cornelius, to visit him. Wagner goes to bring the two men. Then the Good Angel and the Evil Angel appear before him. The former asks Faustus not to read the book of magic but to study the scriptures. The Evil Angel encourages Faustus to study magic and to become as powerful as God on the earth.

The two Angels then make their exit, and Faustus is again left alone. In a soliloquy, Faustus dwells upon the power and the pleasures that he will be able to enjoy by means of magic. Valdes and Cornelius now appear on the stage. Faustus tells them that their advice to him to practice magic has proved effective. But he makes it clear that it is not only because of their advice, but because of his own free choice, that he has decided to study and practice magic. "Magic", he says, has "ravished" him. He recalls his victories in the discussions he has had with the priests of the German church and says that he has resolved to become as great a magician as Agrippa used to be. Valdes encourages Faustus and says that the spirits of every element will be at the service of Faustus. Faustus assures Valdes of his firm resolution. Cornelius says that, as Faustus is fully qualified and equipped for the study of magic, he will in course of time, be held in greater reverence than the Delphian oracle, Valdes then gives Faustus the necessary guidance and asks him to go to some solitary grove in order to conjure. Faustus decides to conjure the same night, no matter what happens.

4.3.2 ACT I, Scene ii

Two Scholars appear feeling worried about Faustus, whom they have not seen for some time at the university. They ask Wagner, the servant of Faustus, his whereabouts. Eventually these Scholars learn that Faustus is at dinner in the company

of Valdes and Cornelius, who are notorious because of their active interest in the study of black magic. The Scholars, feeling sad about Faustus's future, decide to inform the president of the university about the matter in an effort to dissuade Faustus from his plans to practice magic.

4.3.3 ACT I, Scene iii

It is night time. Faustus is now seen in a dark grove, ready to conjure. Faustus has drawn a circle and within it he has written the name of Jehovah, "forward and backward anagrammatized", with the abridged names of holy saints, and figures of various stars and planets. Advising himself not to be afraid but be resolute, he proceeds to recite the spells which will bring Mephistophilis. When Mephistophilis appears, Faustus commands him to go back and return in the guise of an old Franciscan friar, because he does not like to see him in his real shape which is too ugly to be tolerated.

Mephistophilis immediately departs, and Faustus feels very happy at the devil's compliance of his order. Faustus is pleased with Mephistophilis's obedience and humility, and calls himself a "conjuror laureate" for having been able to summon Mephistophilis with the force of magic and his spells. The next moment Mephistophilis re-appears in the guise of a Franciscan friar and asks what Faustus would have him do. Faustus wants Mephistophilis to promise to serve him during his whole life and to carry out all his commands. Mephistophilis, however, says that he will not be able to carry out Faustus's wish without the orders of the great Lucifer. On being asked whether Mephistophilis has not come in response to Faustus's conjuring speeches, the devil's emissary replies that the servants of Lucifer are always on the look-out for persons who have decided to renounce God, Christ, and the scriptures.

The agents of the devil do not waste time in rushing to a man who is willing to let his soul be damned and who, for that reason, discards the holy Trinity and offers worship to Lucifer. Faustus tells Mephistophilis that he has already fulfilled this condition and that he recognizes no chief but the Devil to whom he has dedicated himself. He adds that he is not afraid of damnation.

He then asks Mephistophilis to go to Lucifer and tell him that Faustus is willing to surrender his soul to him (Lucifer) on a condition that Lucifer will spare him for twenty four years and will provide all voluptuous pleasures to him, and place Mephistophilis at his disposal to carry out all his commands. Mephistophilis agrees to go and obtain Lucifer's sanction to the proposal. Left alone, Faustus says that, even if he had "as many souls as there be stars", he would give them all for Mephistophilis. He foresees a great future for himself. With the help of Mephistophilis, he hopes to become a great emperor of the world, "build a bridge through the moving air" in order to "cross the ocean with an army of men", and so on.

4.3.4 ACT I Scene iv

This is another comic scene. Faustus's servant, Wagner, tries to befool the Clown for whom, however, he feels a genuine sympathy. The Clown is unemployed and is not only semi-naked, but semi-starved. Wagner would like to employ the Clown as his errand-boy, but the Clown has no desire to serve Wagner. Wagner tries to nag the Clown by summoning two devils with magic words he has picked up from Faustus's magic books. The Clown is scared into submission.

4.3.5 Act I Scene v

This is dramatically a very important scene. Here Faustus signs the crucial bond. However, before signing the bond, Faustus experiences a mental conflict which clearly shows that his conscience is neither dead nor asleep. In fact, he wavers between the two ideas - turning to God or seeking the patronage of the devil. The

Good Angel and the Evil Angel make their second appearances and aggravate Faustus's mental conflict, though Faustus yields, of course, to the Evil Angel.

The congealing of Faustus's blood and the inscription that appears on his arm are also important for observation in this episode. These two incidents are supernatural manifestations from which Faustus could have taken a warning had he not been intoxicated by his visions of the power that he hopes to acquire.

Mephistophilis does not speak of hell as a localized place or region. Although Mephistophilis refers to himself as an example to prove that hell is a state of everlasting torture, Faustus proudly dismisses this information as old wives' tales. When Faustus asks for a wife, Mephistophilis refuses. Mephistophilis's refusal to get a wife for Faustus is understandable. Marriage is a sacred Christian ritual. The devil cannot tolerate anything that has the sanction of Christianity. Mephistophilis therefore offers an alternative, namely a 'mistress'. This is undoubtedly one of the great scenes in the play and marks another climax in it.

4.3.7 ACT II, Scene ii

An interval of a few years separates this scene from the one preceding. Faustus is once again shown to us experiencing a mental conflict. When he thinks of heaven, he repents of his contract with the devil and curses Mephistophilis whom he blames for having instigated him to choose the path of evil. He wants to renounce magic and repent for his sins; the Good Angel and the Evil Angel make yet another appearance, pulling Faustus in opposite directions.

He (Mephistophilis) has made blind Homer appear before him and sing to him of the love of Paris for Oenone and of Oenone's death. He has made the great musician, Amphion, appear before him and produce ravishing music from his harp. The thought of these pleasures again strengthens Faustus's resolve not to repent but to continue his practice of magic.

Faustus now questions Mephistophilis regarding the nature of this universe. He asks if there are "many heavens above the moon" and if all heavenly bodies constitute "one globe". Mephistophilis says that all the spheres are "mutually folded in each other's orb" and all jointly move upon one axle-tree whose terminus is known as the poles of the Zodiac. All the spheres, he goes on to say, move jointly from east to west in twenty-four hours upon the poles on the world.

Faustus feels impatient with this information because it is elementary knowledge known even to his servant, Wagner. He asks Mephistophilis to tell him who made the world. Mephistophilis refuses to answer this question, whereupon Faustus feels greatly annoyed with him. Mephistophilis warns him not to ask him questions which are against the kingdom of hell. The Good Angel whispers into Faustus's ear to think of God who made the world. Mephistophilis reminds Faustus that, being already damned, he must think only of hell. Faustus calls Mephistophilis an "accursed spirit" and complains that it is he who has damned "distressed Faustus' soul". He feels that it is now too late for him to retrace his steps. The Good Angel and the Evil Angel again appear. The former tells him that it is not too late for repentance but the Evil Angel warns him that, if he repents, the devils will tear him into pieces.

Faustus, in his distress, calls upon Christ to save his soul. At this he immediately finds himself confronted with Lucifer, Beelzebub, and Mephistophilis who tell him that, in appealing to Christ, he is acting contrary to his promise. They warn him not to think of God, but to think of the devil. Feeling scared, Faustus begs the devil's pardon and vows never to look to heaven, never to name God or pray to Him. Lucifer then summons the Seven Deadly Sins to entertain Faustus.

When the Seven Sins have departed, Faustus expresses a desire to see hell and then come back. Lucifer gives him a magic book by means of which Faustus will be able to turn himself into any shape he likes.

4.3.8 ACT III. THE SPEECH OF THE CHORUS

The Chorus in its speech informs us that Faustus has been learning the secrets of astronomy by studying "the clouds, the planets, the stars, the Tropic Zones, and quarters of the sky". Faustus has ascended to the top of the Mt. Olympus. Seated in a chariot drawn by dragons, he has been carried all over the universe in eight days. After that, seated upon the back of a dragon, he has travelled to make his investigations into cosmography (the science of the construction of the universe). He is now about to arrive in Rome to see the Pope and his court, and to witness St. Peter's feast.

4.3.9 ACT III, Scene i

Faustus is now in Rome in the company of Mephistophilis. Before arriving here, he has seen the stately town of Treves, and he has also visited Naples, the golden tomb of Virgil, the tunnel of Posilippo, the cities of Venice and Padua, and so on. Mephistophilis describes to him the city of Rome which stands upon seven hills, with the Tiber running through its midst. Mephistophilis also describes a castle within whose walls is a huge store of weapons of war. Faustus feels greatly impressed by Mephistophilis's description of the city and expresses a strong desire to see the monuments and lay-out of "bright-resplendent Rome". Mephistophilis would, however, like him to see the Pope's court first.

Faustus, at his own request, is made invisible by Mephistophilis and he then proceeds to play a few tricks on the Pope who is at a feast in the company of the Cardinal of Lorraine. Faustus snatches away the dishes and drinks from the hands of the Pope, much to his chagrin and dismay. Faustus then goes so far as to hit the Pope on his ear. Under the orders of the Pope, the friars perform a ritual whereby they call down a curse on the sinner who has had the audacity to offend the Pope. At the end of this ceremony, Mephistophilis and Faustus beat the friars, and throw fire-works among them.

4.4.0 ACT IV. THE SPEECH OF THE CHORUS

The Chorus tells us that, after his journeys to various places including the royal courts of kings, Faustus returns home where he is cordially received by his friends and "nearest companions" who feel greatly impressed by his accounts of what he had seen and by his learned answers to their questions. Faustus's fame has now spread to every land. He has performed at various places, the court of the Emperor, Charles V, being one of them.

4.4.1 ACT IV, Scene I

Robin, an ostler, has stolen one of Doctor Faustus's magic books. He proposes to learn some spells by which he can exercise magic power. Robin warns Ralph, his attendant, to keep away from the magic circle that he has drawn. Robin claims that, with the magic that he has learnt from Doctor Faustus's book, he can supply any quantity of spiced wine for Ralph from any tavern in Europe and that he can even procure the Kitchen-maid for Ralph's pleasure. Ralph feels very happy at this offer.

4.4.2 ACT IV, Scene ii

Robin and Ralph have been drinking at a wine-bar and have stolen a silver wine-cup. They are, however, chased by the bar-man who demands the wine-cup. Robin pretends to be very offended with the bar-man at being accused of theft. Robin now wishes to punish the bar-man for his presumption in accusing him and his friend

of theft. He makes use of a few spells to summon Mephistophilis who actually appears in response to the magical incantations of Robin.

4.4.3 ACT IV Scene iii

The scene now shifts to the Emperor's palace at Innsbruck. The Emperor has heard of Faustus's great reputation as a magician. He would like to see with his own eyes some proof of Faustus's magical skill. Faustus is ready to satisfy the Emperor. The Emperor speaks of the greatness of his ancestors among whom was Alexander the Great, the most heroic of them all. The Emperor would like Faustus to raise Alexander the Great from the tomb in which he lies buried. The Emperor would also like Faustus to raise Alexander's beautiful mistress, Thais. It is the most cherished desire of the Emperor that he should be able to see Alexander and Thais as they used to be during their life-time.

The emperor is wonder-struck to see them and remarks that surely they are no spirits but the "true substantial bodies of those two deceased princes".

Faustus, warns the Knight who slights him to be more respectful towards scholars in future. The Emperor promises a generous reward to Faustus for his magic display.

4.4.4 ACT IV, Scene iv

Faustus is now getting ready to return to Wittenberg. However, before he sets out on his journey, a Horse-dealer comes and offers forty dollars for Faustus's horse. Faustus demands fifty dollars for the horse. The horse-dealer pleads that he has only forty dollars with him. Faustus accepts the forty dollars but warns the horse-dealer that he should never ride this horse into water under any circumstances.

The horse-dealer thinks in a different way and rides intentionally into water. The horse disappears and the horse-dealer finds himself sitting on a bundle of hay, about to be drowned.

The horse-dealer is now looking for Doctor Faustus in order to get his money back. Mephistophilis tells him that the Doctor is asleep and should not be disturbed. The horse-dealer, anxious to recover his money, shouts in Faustus's ears to wake him up. When Faustus does not move, the horse-dealer pulls him by the leg, and it so happens that the leg comes off in his hands. The horse-dealer feels scared and runs away. Faustus feels happy that he has tricked the horse-dealer into parting with another forty dollars (besides the forty dollars which he had taken from the horse-dealer as the price of the horse).

Faustus receives a message that the Duke of Vanholt wants him at his court to give a display of his magic powers, and Faustus is ready to go there.

4.4.5 ACT IV, Scene v

Faustus gives a magic performance at the court of the Duke of Vanholt who feels much pleased with Faustus. Faustus offers to procure for the Duchess of Vanholt (who is pregnant) any eatable for which she may be having a longing or a craving. The Duchess of Vanholt says that, if it had not been the coldest time of winter, she would have loved nothing better than a bunch of ripe grapes (which are available only in summer).

4.4.6 ACT V, Scene i

The twenty-four years of Faustus's life of power and pleasure are now drawing to a close. As his end is getting near, Faustus tries to forget himself in merry-making and in the company of the Scholars. This scene brings out Faustus's essential humanity and his genuine friendly feelings towards the Scholars who are greatly attached to him. He recognizes their attachment as "unfeigned". It is because

of this feeling of friendship that Faustus agrees to use his magic power to summon Helen whose beauty and majesty the Scholars would like to see.

The Old Man is introduced in order to show us how Faustus's mind is working at this time. The Old Man seeks to awaken Faustus's conscience which has never been asleep. The Old Man tries to make Faustus realize his sins through his sharp and bitter words. He refers to Faustus's misdeeds as "most vile and loathsome filthiness, the stench whereof corrupts the inward soul with crimes of heinous sin as no commiseration may expel". Faustus is at this time most miserable and he expresses his misery thus:

> Where art thou, Faustus? Wretch, what hast thou done?
> Damned art thou, Faustus, damned ; despaire and die !
> Hell calls for right, and with a roaring voice
> Says, "Faustus, come ; thine hour is almost come" ;
> And Faustus now will come to do thee right.

This speech is indicative of the inner conflict that has always been going on in Faustus. Although he has been enjoying the power and the pleasure which is made available to him by his magic, he has never known the real peace of mind. His conscience has continually been pricking him. Mephistophilis catches this opportunity to aggravate Faustus's sinfulness by trying to make him commit suicide, but the Old Man saves Faustus from ending his life in this manner. His words do have a consoling effect on Faustus who now tries to repent. Repentance is, however, not easy at this late hour:

> I do repent; and yet I do despair:
> Hell strives with grace for conquest in my breast:
> What shall I do to shun the snares of death?

Mephistophilis immediately suppresses Faustus's desire for repentance, and Faustus feels compelled to renew the bond with his blood.

4.4.7 ACT V, Scene ii

The Old Man appears again and announces that Faustus has not listened to him and has been expelled from the grace of heaven for his practice of black magic. The devils appear and try to torture the Old Man physically as ordered by Mephistophilis. The Old Man still keeps his faith in God and tries to hurl defiance at the devils.

4.4.8 ACT V, Scene iii

Faustus is now seen in the company of the Scholars. He is feeling miserable and, on being asked by the Scholars what ails him, he says that he has committed a sin for which he will never be pardoned. He recalls the wonders that he has performed and says that because of those wonders he has lost everything. He tells the Scholars that he is doomed to live in hell forever because he renounced God and went so far as to blaspheme against Him. He would like to weep, but the devil does not permit him to shed tears. He would like to lift his hands. He goes on to tell the Scholars that, in order to enjoy the pleasures of life, he signed a bond with the devil pledging his soul to him. When one of the Scholars asks him why he did not tell them about his condition earlier, Faustus says that he wanted to do so but that the devil threatened to tear his flesh into pieces if he ever named God or if he "once gave ear to divinity ". He tells the Scholars that his end is now near and asks them to leave him and move into the next room in order to pray for him. The Scholars make their exit, and Faustus is left alone.

The second half of this scene reveals the excruciating pain that Faustus undergoes just before his death. He is now alone, and he gives expression to his state of mind in a final soliloquy. This monologue is remarkable as a piece of psychological self-revelation. This monologue is the greatest passage in the play, and it is greater ever than Faustus's apostrophe to Helen. This great scholar wishes that he did not have a soul or that his soul were not immortal. The following lines especially contribute to the atmosphere of horror :

My God, my God, look not so fierce on me !
Adders and serpents, let me breathe a while !
Ugly hell, gape not ! Come not, Lucifer !
I'll burn my books ! Ah, Mephistophilis !

The keynote of this final monologue of Faustus is the feeling of pity and terror which a great tragedy is expected to arouse in the audience. We have already known Faustus's poetic temperament, and this speech is yet another proof of his poetic capacity.

The final speech of the Chorus contains the moral of the play. "Faustus is gone", says the Chorus, "regard his hellish fall…..", calling upon the wise people "only to wonder at unlawful things" and not to practice necromancy.

4.5 Summing Up

This lesson gives you guidance how you can attempt the annotated passages in the examination. It is really difficult to answer these passages correctly unless you read the original text thoroughly. For your convenience a list of often quoted passages also has been provided along with the act / scene summaries. Hope you will make use of these and fare well in the.examinations.

LESSON - 5

BEN JONSON'S *EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOUR*

"Ben Jonson appeared at a time when the University Wits and Shakespeare, their hated follower, were establishing upon the stage the romantic comedy and the flamboyant tragedy…Boldly as was his way he set himself to cure the theatrical evils of the time by establishing a comic and a tragic form based on the classical example." - A. Nicoll

In the previous lessons you studied about a great tragedy by Christopher Marlowe. In the present lesson you are going to know about a play written by one of the greatest playwrights in English Literature, a contemporary of Shakespeare and a playwright who devised a new kind of comedy i.e., Ben Jonson. Though written five centuries ago, the play holds its significance to the present times as it holds a mirror to the everyday life of the world in a realistic way.

Objectives

After going through the lesson, you will know about

*the life and works of Ben Jonson
*Understand his contribution to the world of English literature
*Appreciate the play *Everyman in His Humour* and
*Understand the habits of people and conditions of his contemporary society

Structure of the Lesson

5.1 Elizabethan Drama and Ben Jonson

Elizabethan comedy in the hands of the University Wits and Shakespeare had been purely romantic in character. Its scene was generally laid in some imaginary land where its characters passed their time in love making or other adventures. Their plots at times were borrowed from sundry sources. These comedies did not follow the classical principles-either of the genres or the three unities. Ben Jonson did not like this type of romantic comedy and in the prologue to '*Every Man out of his Humour*' he laughed at the conventions of romantic comedy in the following words. It very strangely consisted 'of a duke to be in love with a countess and that countess to be in love with the duke's son, and the son to love the lady's waiting-maid; some such cross-wooing with a clown to their serving man'.

5.2 Life of Ben Jonson and His Works

Ben Jonson was born in 1573, a month after the death of his father. Little is known of Jonson's father except that he was a gentleman from the Border Counties, who for his zeal on behalf of the religion of the Reformers was imprisoned and all his property confiscated, when Queen Mary came to the throne. As he was forced to leave his home, he came to London and became a minister in Westminster.

When Jonson was two years old, his mother married a builder who did his utmost for the education of his stepson. He was first sent to the parish school of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, Charing Cross and afterwards to Westminster school, through the kindness of Camden, the scholarly historian and then second master. He did not join any university. But he received honorary degrees from both the Universities later.

On leaving school he was apprenticed by his stepfather to his own trade-that of a builder-but he "could not endure"that work. He, therefore, joined the army as a soldier and served in the Low Countries. On returning to London about the year 1592, though only twenty, he married a lady whom he described "a shrew yet honest". About this time Jonson turned to the stage for employment both as an actor and as a play wright. He was not a successful actor. He fought a duel with Gabriel Spencer leading to his death. He was arrested but escaped the punishment of death by pleading the benefit to clergy.

In 1698, Jonson produced his first play "*Every Man in His Humour*". In the Prologue to the play he explained his theory of comedy. The very title of the play shows us Jonson's aim of characterization. He endeavoured to harmonise a medieval medical conceit with the methods employed in the Latin Theatre. According to him an excess of humour created some eccentricity in a man and so he became a fit subject for comic portraiture. According to the critics of the day the object of comedy was to ridicule vices of men, put folly in a foolish shape before the audience, and so change the spectators into good behavior.

According to Herford, "*Every Man in His Humour* is assuredly not Jonson's greatest comedy. Nor is it that which bears the strongest and clearest stamp of his mind. But is, in an intelligible sense, his best. Among the other plays, all those which might compete with it for this distinction, evade, in one way or another, purely comic standards".

This was followed by his second comedy, "*Every Man out of His Humour*". In this comedy he has given his well-known definition of a humour. He has also opened a discussion on the nature of comedy and his detestation of the romantic comedy in the dialogue between Mites

and Cordatus. "The plot of this comedy is at one and the same time of the most subtle and delicate structure and of the most mechanical form". The play has both fine verse and fine prose and there is satire on the word "humour".

In his third play, "Cynthia's Revels", he has attempted to follow Lyly but with direct satire on Euphuism itself, and in a harsher and harder tone than that of the author of *Midas*. According to A. Nicoll: -"With *"Cynthia's Revels"*,Jonson shows a certain decadence in his art. His treatment of the allegorical and mythical material is uninspired and uninteresting, although the opening with its pleasant little ditty sung by Echo is charming enough. Again satire of literary oddities and of literary rivals fills almost the entirety of the play."

His next play was *"The Poetaster "*. In it the characters are those of Augustus and his court but it was recognized to be a direct assault on his own rivals-specially Marston and Dekker, while Tucca, the principal comic character was drawn from an actual parasite of the time, one Captain Hannam.Jonson himself is presented as the poet, Horace.

This was followed by three comic pieces-"*Volpone, or the Fox*""*Epicoene" or "the Silent Woman"*andthe*"Alchemist"*. The genius of Jonson as a dramatist finds fullest scope in them. *"Volpone"* does not display his personal bitterness but instead of it there is a marked deepening of his hatred at the follies and vices of his time. There is not a single virtuous or honest character in the play. "The Silent Woman"*(Epicoene*) is a study in the humour of silence and hatred for all noise. The interest of the play continues from act to act till the final surprise of the denouement the revelation of the true sex of Morose's newly wedded wife. *"The Silent Woman* was unsparingly admired by its own and the following generation for the cunning of its plot, the satisfactory adjustment of contributory humours, and the admirable character of Morose, the best of all the misanthropes of the modern stage"(Saintsbury). *"The Alchemist*"is the best and the last important comedy. It deals with the practice of alchemy and how subtle, the alchemist along with Dol Common and Face try to cheat and befool a number of persons.The Plot of the play is the simplest and observes all the three unities. It is also full of realism. The story of the play moves with a combination of exactness and alacrity rare in any writer and particularly rare in Ben Jonson. According to Saintsbury these three comedies" present a gradual crescendo of excellence".

His next play, *"Bartholomew Fair"* is a satire directed against Puritanism and hypocrisy. Along with this Jonson wrote two Roman plays-"Catiline"and "Sejanus". These were followed by "The Devil is an Ass". It is a satire on monopolists and projectors on the one hand, on witch-finders and sham demoniacs on the other.

After this, there appears to be a very long gap in Jonson's productions for the stage, though he was fertile in masques. Jonson was compelled to return to the stage in 1625 with the "Staple of News"and again in 1629 with *"The New Inn"*. This last play was a failure as it did not survive a first performance.

In 1612 Jonson went to Paris as a tutor to the son of Sir Walter Raleigh. In 1618 he went to Scotland where he was given a warm welcome by the Literary Society of Edinburgh. Then he went to Hawthornden and remained as the guest of William Drummond for three weeks. In 1620 the University of Oxford conferred the M.A. degree on him. Jonson was promised the reversion of the office as 'Master of Revels' after the death of Sir John but he did not get it as the latter outlived him. King James appointed him Laureate. In 1628 he was appointed Chronologer to the city with a salary of 100 marks which was raised to £100 by Charles I.

During the last few years of his life he was confined to the house with ever-recurring attacks of palsy and dropsy that made it difficult for him to move about. So death came as a relief to him on August 6, 1637. He was buried in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. By some misfortune, though money had been given to raise a monument to his memory, this was not done, and it was left for a stranger to inscribe "O Rare Ben Jonson"on the bas relief placed upon the Abbey Wall.

5.3 Introduction to Jonson's 'Comedy of Humours'

According to Ben Johnson comedy should not provoke thoughtless laughter. It does not mean buffoonery. Comedy, for Ben Jonson, had a high and serious purpose. It also does not mean a romantic love story with comic interludes. According to Johnson's translation from Heinsins in his *Discoveries*"the parts of a comedy are the same as in a tragedy and the end is also partly the same. Comedy should not create thoughtless laughter. Both comedy and tragedy provide delight and also teach. Laughter is only a means but not the end. In other words the purpose of comedy is to make men's lesser faults appear ridiculous and to make people avoid such. Thus the purpose is not only to amuse but to correct. Johnson wanted to produce a realistic comedy - a 'comedy of humours'.

Realism is the first quality of his comedy. He ridicules the London manners, fashions and foibles. Hence he introduced the device of 'humours'. The idea was drawn from the medieval concept of the human body. According to this, the human body consists of four humours - namely ' blood, phlegm,choler and melancholy '. A proper proportion of these would make a person balanced and any imbalance will create imbalance in his behaviour and attitude. Dryden explains this in a clearer way:

> "Among the English by humour it is meant some extravagant habit, passion or affection , particular to some one person, by the oddness of which he is immediately distinguished from the rest of men ..."

Jonson's best comic characters are specimens of such humours, gathered from his contemporary society.

The last quality of his comedy is satire. As G.G.Smith observes, "he chose in most of his plays the more corrosive affectations of hypocrisy, rather than the more 'hatband' affectation to vanity." Right from *Everyman* to *Bartholomew Fair*conforms to this type. Thus all his comedies do not only give a realistic picture but also satirise it.

Ben Jonson also follows the classical rule of the three unities-the unity of time,place and action. His characters fall into two groups namely 'the gulls' and 'the gullible'. The conflict is between 'victims' and 'victimisers'. Jonson portrays the underworld of Jacobean London along with the humble and gentle.

5.4 A Critical Study of *Everyman in His Humour*

The play was acted by the Lord Chamberlain's men in 1598. It was an immediate and continued success. It was first printed in Quarto in 1601 and was published a second time in the Folio of 1616. It also underwent many changes and the famous prologue appeared in the edition of 1616.

5.4.1 Characters in the Play

Kno'well

Old Kno'well is the father of Edward Kno'well. He worries about the loss of decorum among the people of the younger generation. He disdains his son Edward Kno'well's interest in poetry. He

keeps a watchful eye on his son and follows him to the city. Edward and Brainworm plot to gull him. He is finally understood by Edward for his well-meaning and over bearing concern.

Edward Kno'well
He is the son of Old Kno'well. He is an intelligent and cultured young man who loves poetry. He loves Bridget and his friend Wellbread arranges their marriage. He learns from his servant Brainworm that he is followed by his father. Edward employsBrainworm to gull his father.

Brainworm
Brainworm is the mischievous servant to Edward Kno'well. He informs Edward about his father's spying and is employed to gull the old man. He is finally praised by Justice Clement at the end.

Wellbread
A young gallant and a friend of young Edward. He sends his friend a provocative invitation, which is read by Old Kno'well. Wellbread mingles with the young group at Kiteley's home. Edward and Wellbread make fun of the folly and stupidity of Stephen and Matthew.

Master Stephen
Master Stephen is a dim-witted country gull and a cousin to Edward. He aspires tobe a gentleman of culture and valour. He admires Bobadill and buys a rapier from Brainworm. His foolishness as well as his rusticity is put to task for fun by Edward and Wellbred.

Captain Bobadill
Captain Bobadill is a military soldier who always brags about his career. He is good natured and has a vast knowledge about warfare. He wins the admiration of Stephen and Matthew.

Downright
Downright is a choleric country squire and half-brother to Wellbred. He grows violent at Wellbred's disrespectful behavior.

Master Matthew
Matthew is a melancholic poet and lover. He recites plagiarised verses of bad poetry and tries to woo Bridget. Like Stephen, Matthew admires Bobadill and tries to imitate him.

Oliver Cob
Oliver Cob is a simple witty water- bearer. He gets confused that his house is being used as a brothel by Edward, Kitely and Dame Kitely for their illicit rendezvous. When Kitely accuses Cob's wife Tib of being a bawd, he believes his words and begins to beat her. He is reconciled to her at the end.

Thomas Kitely
Thomas Kitely is a newly married merchant. He doubts that his wife is cuckolding him. He is almost ready to leave his sociable wife and employs his servant Cash to watch her behaviour when he is away.

Justice Clement
Justice Clement is a "city magistrate, a justice and an excellent lawyer and scholar." He adores Brainworm's witty acts and reproaches the pretenders like Matthew.

Ms. Bridget, DameKitelyand **Tili**are the three women characters.

5.4.2 Summary of the Play

Young Kno'well and Wellbred are friends. Wellbred sends an invitation to Kno'well to come to the tavern called Windmill. This letter is read by Kno'well's father and he wants to follow his son. Young Kno'well's mischievous servant Brainworm, in order to win the favour of his young master, informs him about his father's plans and disguises himself as a soldier and enlists himself in the service. He misleads Old Kno'well and sends him to Cob's house saying that Young Kno'well has an appointment there with a courtesan.

Young Kno'well takes his cousin Stephen to the house of Kitely with him with the aim of making fun. Wellbred,his friend also brings Master Matthew and Bobadill there with the same aim to show off to the ladies Bridget and Dame Kitely. Kitely,who is a suspicious husband, does not like the presence of so many young men in his house to meet his wife and sister. Out of jealousy he drives them all away from his house.

As young Kno'wellis in love with Bridget, Wellbred plans their marriage. When Kitely and his wife are away to Cob's house, Wellbred arranges their marriage.

Bobadill and Downright quarrel with each other and Bobadill gets him arrested. Cob is beaten by Bobadill and for that Bobadill is arrested. Master Stephen is arrested by Downright for stealing his cloak. All these mischievous things are done by Brainworm who disguises himself as the clerk of the justice and also as a sergeant.

Old Kno'well, Kitely, and Dame Kitely all meet at Cob's house. Old Kno'well suspects Dame Kitely to be his son's paramour. Dame Kitely suspects Cob's wife to be the mistress of her husband. Kitely suspects Old Kno'well as the paramour of his wife. Recriminations follow and they all decide to go to the house of Justice Clement.

Brainworm reaches there and explains about all his disguises and the mischievous plot. Young Kno'well, Wellbred and Bridget also reach there. The judge solves the problems and invites all to the wedding supper of Kno'well and Bridget. Kitely and his wife are reconciled. Cob and Tile are reconciled and Old Kno'well appreciates the youngsters.

5.4.3 A Note on the Characters of *Everyman in His Humour*

As in the other plays of Ben Jonson, there are 'gulls' and 'gullibles'. The gulls include Young Kno'well, Wellbred, Brainworm and also Bridget. But these are not villainous as the other 'gulls' of his other plays. These are not selfish. They play mischief only for entertainment. The extravagances of the victims are contrasted with the urbanity of these characters. They are cultured and polished and they expose the follies of other characters. Bridget is not shaped properly and she cannot be included in this list in the real sense of the word 'gull'. Though Brainworm is only a servant, he dominates the show with his mischief.

Old Kno'well, Kitely, Bobadill, Matthew and Stephen belong to the other group. Old Kno'well is a representative father who suspects the free thinking of their children. He mistrusts the ways of the new generation and supports the morals and manners of the past. Kitely is the most important character because he represents the jealous husbands. Jonson has succeeded in the presentation of

Kitely. Bobadill is the best of Jonson's creation. Matthew and Stephen are the gulls of the town who try to behave like gentlemen but who end up ridiculously.

R.S.Knox observes," Bobadill is indeed, far more than a mere 'humour'. There is life in this lean,hungry figure,who,despite his arrogant and condescending airsand all his bravery,can never rise above his cup of small beer."

The other minor characters like Cob offer comments on others and provide laughter. The two characters, Cob and his wife show Jonson's intimacy with the people of the working class. Justice Clement serves the purpose of *deux- ex- machina*.

5.4.4 *Everyman* as a Mirror of Contemporary Fashions of London

The 1596 version of *Everyman* had its contemporary scene in Florence. The characters were all Italian. But Jonson changed the scene to London keeping his sense of realism in view. He reflected London life and its manners. All the characters are drawn from the middle and lower classes. Kitely and his clerk Thomas, Justice Clement and his clerk Formal, Cob and his wife Tili and Brainworm are from real life. Edward Kno'well, Wellbred, Matthew and Stephen are from contemporary London. Jonson comments on his contemporary fashions like hunting,hawking,fencing,eating and drinking. He also makes fun of the habits of swearing and using powders and perfumes.

Young men were more interested in hawking and hunting. They led immoral lives and visited suspicious places. They had no respect for old men. Old Kno'well talks about the changes in manners and habits of young and old generations.

5.5 Summing Up

This lesson has provided you with the details of the life of Ben Jonson, his contribution to the English drama and his theory of 'the Comedy of Humours'. We have provided you the summary of the play along with brief character outlines. The critical aspects discussed along with the other information hinted under 'references' and 'additional sources' will enable you to develop a critical perception about the play.

5.6 Comprehension Check Questions

1. When was Ben Jonson born?
2. What are the works of Ben Jonson?
3. What is the contribution of Ben Jonson?
4. Write about the theory of 'comedy of humours'?
5. Write about the two groups of characters in the play.
6. What does not Old Kno'well like?
7. What is the role played by Brainworm?
8. What does Kitely stand for?
9. What have you observed about the women characters in the play?

10. Write about the different humours embodied by the characters of the play. Group them in the following table:

5.7 References:

http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/pdf/emh105b2777740.pdfhttp://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/jonson/benbio.htm
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http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/jonson/benbio.htm

5.8 Additional Sources:

http://www.bibalex.org/libraries/presentation/static/Jonson_Ben_eng_1302.pdf
https://www.grcc.edu/sites/default/files/docs/shakespeare/contemporary/poetomachia_and_the_early_jonson.pdf
http://users.unimi.it/dickens/essays/Craft/martino.pdf

Blood	Phlegm	Choler	Melancholy

Lesson 6: A Close Study of the Text Paradise Lost Book I

6.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson, you will

- Know about the different divisions of the First Book of *Paradise Lost*
- Understand the theme of the poem
- Know about the reasons for the fall of Man and of Satan
- Appreciate the poetic style of John Milton as an epic poet

Structure of the Lesson

Expansion of the Structure

6.1 Guidelines for a better understanding of the text.

In this lesson we will deal with the first four sections.

You might have developed a basic idea about the age of Milton, his life and works after going through the fifth lesson. This lesson will provide you the scope for understanding the text in a detailed way. This lesson will provide you section wise summary which helps you for better reading and for attempting annotations in your examination. We advise you to read the original poem before reading this lesson. The following link will take you to the poem:

http://www.paradiselost.org/lmg/Book-1.html

For your convenience we divided the text into the following sections:

1. Invocation and Introduction of the Theme of the Poem: Lines 1 to 26

2. The Account of Satan's Revolt and his Expulsion from Heaven: Lines 27 to 83

3. Satan's Speech to Beelzebub:Lines 84 to 127

4. Beelzebub's Reply and Satan's Second Speech:Lines 128 to 191

5. Satan and Beelzebub leave the lake of fire: Lines from 192 to 282

6. Satan Rallies his Subjects: Lines 283 to 621

7. Satan's Speech to the Devils:Lines 622 to 669

8. The Building of Pandemonium: Lines 670 to 798

6.1.1Section: 1. Invocation and Introduction of theTheme of the Poem: Lines 1 to 26

In the opening section, like all epic poets, Milton invokes the muse and seeks for divine assistance. Milton states that his purpose is to "justify the ways of God to men".

Milton prays to the Heavenly Muse to inspire him to write of Man's first act of disobedience to God, which was committed by eating the fruit of the forbidden 'tree of knowledge'. This act of disobedience made man mortal and introduced death into the world. This act also led to many other miseries including expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Man will continue to suffer till Jesus Christ, by his sacrifice on the cross, would regain for him God's favour and his old blessed abode, the Garden of Eden. Milton writes about the theme of the poem like this:

"Of man's first disobedience and the fruit

Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the World, all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, Heavenly Muse, that, on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed
In the beginning how the heavens and Earth
Rose out of Chaos."

More particularly, the poet invokes the Holy spirt, who prefers to dwell in the heart of a righteous and pure man rather than in any Temple of God, to guide him in his bold attempt, because she knows everything. She was present when the universe was created and with her mighty angelic wings outspread, she sat on the vast vacant space, as a dove sits over its eggs to hatch them. She should throw light on whatever is unknown to the poet and elevate whatever is low in him, so that he may be able to do justice to his lofty theme, and prove the wisdom of God, and justify His ways to men.

"Thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That, to the highth of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men."

It was the wicked Satan (in the form of a serpent), who, moved by the feelings of envy and revenge, deceived Eve (the mother of mankind). He did so after he had been thrown out of Heaven for his pride. Filled with pride he had incited many other angels to revolt against God, for he wanted not only to become the chief of those angels, but also to rise above them and become the equal of God. He had the courage to set himself against God and his monarchy in Heaven. Filled with unholy ambition, he took up arms against the Almighty and fought an impious war on the plains of Heaven, but without any success. As punishment, he (along with his companions) was bound in unbreakable chains and thrown headlong into hell. He came down flaming through the vast chaos and finally landed in hell, a place always in flames, created for the punishment of those who dare challenge the Omnipotent to arms.

"Him the Almighty power
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion, down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamantine chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms."

6.2 Section II: The Account of Satan's Revolt and his Expulsion from Heaven: Lines 27 to 83

Milton describes the fall of Satan and the reasons that led to the fall of man. Satan was hurled into the lake of fire along with his “horrid crew” for revolting against God and for trying to spoil his creation. He tried to deceive 'the mother of mankind'.

“He trusted to have equalled the Most High,
stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived
The mother of mankind, what time his pride
Had cast him out from Heaven, with all his host
Of rebel Angels..."

This place (hell) was entirely different from Heaven from which the rebel angels had fallen. Here all the companions of the defeated Satan were overwhelmed by floods and storms of fire which made them confused and unconscious. Satan sadly observed his companions in all their misery. He also noticed waiting near him, his next in command, one who was second to him both in glory and evil, and who was later called Beelzebub by the people of Palestine. Satan, the greatest adversary of God, then, addressed Beelzebub in bold words. In this way, he broke the frightful silence of hell.

6.3 Section III: Satan’s Speech to Beelzebub:Lines 84 to 127

Satan addresses Beelzebub and assesses their conditions but explains that they are still united in their fall. He recognizes the superior strength of God. He explains that he is still unchanged in his attitude to the Son of God. He does not want to submit himself to God’s authority. His pain and profound despair and his courage are seen from his words. He feels happy that, though they could not defeat Him, they could give a jolt to His authority.

He continues to say: "It does not matter much if we have lost the battle. All is not lost. We still have with us our unshakable determination to carry on the fight, our persistent desire for revenge and planning for it, our undying hatred of our enemy, and our courageous resolve never to surrender. If this is not invincibility, what else is? Neither His anger nor His force can ever take away this glorious virtue (of firmness and constancy) from me."

What though the field be lost

All is not lost –the unconquerable will,

And study of revenge, immortal hate,

And courage never to submit or yield

And what is else not to be overcome?

"We have also seen that our physical strength is in no way lesser than that of God. With all these advantages, we can now decide with greater hope to launch another war against God, whether openly or secretly- a new unending war which would keep our grand enemy always disturbed. He is now triumphant and over-joyous at His present victory, and is ruling as the undisputed monarch of Heaven"

We may with more successful hope resolve

To wage by force or guile eternal war,

Irreconcilable to our grand Foe,

Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy

Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven".

Rebellious Satan spoke these words in severe pain. He boasted loudly, although, at the same time, he was tortured by deep despair.

"Our mind and spirit are still invincible,

and our strength will soon return,

though the past glory is no more,

and our happy state is here changed into endless misery."

6.4 Section IV: Beelzebub's Reply and Satan's Second Speech :Lines 128 to 191

Beelzebub mourns about the loss of heaven and about the punishment faced by the fallen angels. Satan replies that devils should not do anything good but should always turn God's good actions to evil.

Satan, the chief enemy of God, quickly replies to Beelzebub with the following words:"O fallen angel, weakness in any form causes misery, whether it is in doing something actively or suffering some punishment passively. But be sure of this that it will never be our task to do any good. On the contrary, we shall ever find delight in doing evil, because this is against the will of our enemy whom we are fighting."

Whereto with speedy words the Arch-Fiend continues:

"Fallen Cherub, to be weak is miserable,
Doing or suffering: but of this be sure
To do aught good never will be our task,
But ever to do ill our sole delight,
As being the contrary to His high will
Whom we resist."

Satan chalks out a plan: "Let us go there, away from the fiery waves of the lake on which we are being tossed about at this time. We would rest there, if any rest is possible in these regions.. After that we would reorganize our battered forces, and consult and discuss as to how we can inflict greatest possible injury on our foe and how we can repair the loss we have suffered and end our dreadful misfortune. There we can also consult as to how we can gain strength and courage from hopes of future victory, or if there is no hope for us, how we can resolve to fight our enemy and derive that courage which results from frustration".

Satan is very resolute and he is supported by Beelzebub. Satan leaves the lake of fire and all the devils try to reassemble their forces.

6.5 Summing Up

In this section you learnt how Milton takes up his epic theme through invocation. His attempt of dealing with the religious theme in a grandiloquent style

can be observed. Also you should have observed the treatment of the subject on a larger canvass. Like a great artist with a lot of patience, Milton deals with even the minutest things in a detailed way. You should have observed the reasons for the fall of Man and for the fall of Satan. Milton deals with this theme in twelve books and in this lesson you understood how Satan was hurled and how Satan, the Arch Angel, gathers his army of fallen angels for a revolt against God.

6.6 Comprehension Check Questions

1. What is the theme of the poem?
2. Explain the two terms 'Oreb' or 'Sinai'
3. Why is this an 'adventurous song'?
4. Who is invoked and why?
5. Who is Beelzebub?
6. Why is Satan hurled? And to where?
7. Do you think Satan is heroic? If 'yes' or 'no', why?
8. What does Milton say about the 'ways of God'?
9. What is the suggestion of Beelzebub?
10. Is the theme suitable to modern times? Justify your answer.

6.7 References

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3. Alastair Fowler, ,*Paradise Lost,* Orient Longman

6.8 Additional Sources

1. http://literature.org/authors/milton-john/paradise-lost/

2. http://www.paradiselost.org/lmg/Book-1.html

3. http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/ENGL402-Milton-Paradise-Lost-Book-1.pdf

Details of the Lesson Writer

Dr. VijayaBabu, Koganti

Senior Lecturer in English

Government Degree College

Chebrole.

koviba@gmail.com

8801823244

LESSON - 7

CRITICAL ASPECTS OF *THE WAY OF THE WORLD*

Hope you have enjoyed reading the play thoroughly. The previous lesson introduced the theme through act-wise summary and provided the necessary background for a comprehensive study. This lesson offers the critical aspects of the play.

Objectives

After reading the lesson, you will be able to

- Understand the characters through an analytical study
- Analyse the different critical aspects related to the play

Structure of the Lesson

7.1 Character Analysis

7.1.1Mirabell

Mirabell means Mr. 'Good looking'. He looks like an adaptation of 'admirable'. He is the embodiment of wit. He is a shrewd person and he has practical foresight, strong commonsense and worldly wisdom. He is a man of the world and knows well the ways of the world. He knows how to accept the ways and use the weapons of the world. He is charming and helpful. He is unequal to Mrs. Millamant in wit. He is a typical coxcomb.

Mirabell is the cohesive force that keeps society together. Mirabell draws people towards himself. He is highly magnetic. Mirabell and Milamant form a central unit. They

never acknowledge defeat. They are the true realists of the play and they represent the real ways of the world. Mrs. Fainall is a former mistress of Mirabell and she is his staunch supporter.

Mrs. Fainall's amour with Mirabell is a thing of the past. Mirabell pursues her to marry Mr. Fainall. Mirabell and Millamant love each other. The play puts the seal of betrothal on their love. Mrs. Fainall's past affair with Mirabell brings disaster on her. But Mirabell's responsible action of safe-guarding the wealth of his former mistress saves the situation. Mirabell has a generous heart and he saves the estate of Mrs. Fainall from the rapacity of her husband. He is a likable fellow.

Even the evil genius, Lady Wishfort, is ultimately won to his side by Mirabell. Mirabell is so clever and charming. Mirabell and Millamant have no defeatism in them. They are realists. The play revolves round the pivot of marital relationships. Mirabell and Millamant are the ideal pair of lovers. Their love pursues an independent court and is unconnected with the property angle. Mirabell, the urbane gentleman, is the master mind behind the plots and counter plots. He is a man of character. He is successful and glamorous. He has the wit, the polish and the grace demanded by the sophisticated society in which he lived. Mirabell's wit dazzles but doesn't hurt. He is hated by Mrs. Marwood and Wishfort. Mirabell has a moral sense, so he avoided Mrs. Marwood. He is also tricky, depending on the situations. When Mrs. Marwood reveals his plan to Lady Wishfort, he changes his old plan immediately and makes a subtler plan.He has practical foresight. He confides in Mrs. Fainall. He has a devoted servant called Waitwell. He gets his servant Waitwell married to Foible,the servant of Lady Wishfort. He is a good judge of others' characters. Mirabell wins the loyalty of Foible, the bride of Waitwell. Mirabell wins Sir Wilful also to his side. Petulant and Witwoud witness his legal document. His wit is ruled by his morality. His nature is serious. He doesn't like revolt and irresponsibility. He never loses his balance of mind. He has the sense of decorum. His judgment is also passionate.

Millamant takes care to see that her Mirabell doesn't become a complacent husband which will reduce her to a mere wife. She fights for her survival and for the survival of the rights of women. But Millamant loves Mirabell violently inside, though outwardly she gives him a daze by her behavior. Mirabell is a rational human being. He is not emotional. The binding nature of marriage is not built an emotion but on reason. He has a deft hand in argument. He has practical ability. The love of Mirabell and Millamant is a legal contract. Mirabell doesn't want to be enlarged into a husband. Millamant doesn't wish to dwindle into a wife. Their contract of marriage is full of legalistic jargon. Their betrothal is 'artificial and legal'.

Mirabell is a discerning lover who took Millamant to pieces, sifted her and separated her failings. His love stands the test of time. He is capable of true love. He loves Millamant not without her faults but with her faults and even for her faults.

For Mirabell money is as important to the viability of matrimony as love. So he wants to have Millamant with her rightful share of inheritance. Mirabell is a Restoration beau. He is not unscrupulous. He is not a cynic. He is optimistic. He is not a Restoration rake. He represents the commonsense attitude to morality. Before he married, he had sowed his wild oats. His love for Millamant changes him completely. His expression is elegant. He had been a libertine in his youth, but he has discrimination. It is not Mr. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood that gain at the end, but it is Mirabell. We can estimate by his words that Mirabell

is a master creation of Congreve. He is successful and glamorous. He is a man of the moment and a man of the world. As said above he is a typical Restoration dandy.

7.1.2Millamant

Millamant is the crown of Congreve's creation. She is a well-proportioned and well portrayed character in this drama. She is practical, magnetic and elegant. She is a many sided and perfectly carved picture. She has an ever winning practical foresight with a powerful practical ability. She is not sentimental. She is the dominating personality in this drama. She is socially elegant. She is prudent and she has a complex character. She outwits Lady Wishfort, Mrs. Marwood and Mr. Fainall. She even dominates Mirabell, the protagonist, at times. Her character is realistically drawn. She is respected by and respects others. She is sweet but she speaks harshly; but at sometimes so sweetly. She is sweet enough to attract the attention of Mirabell. She is the embodiment of ready wit. She is both pretty and witty.

By a clever artistic stroke, the dramatist doesn't present her on the stage till the second act. By then the audiences are prepared for her entry by Mirabell's description of her qualities. Mirabell likes Millamant with her faults and for her faults. The reader along with Mirabell hails her in "faithful sail, with her fan spread and streamers out and a shoal of fools for tenders". Mirabell cries for her mercy. The fools hover around her like the moths around a candle. She is witty and she causes wit in others. She decorates her hair with the colourful love-letters of the fools who write in praising her. She is sophisticated and nonchalant. She is sincere and she admires plainness and sincerity. She loves Mirabell profoundly. She says to Mrs. Fainall"...if Mirabell should not make a good husband, I am lost thing for I find I love him violently." (Act 4 307-308). Her love for Mirabell is ideal.

She is better witted than Mirabell. In a combat of wit she easily beats Mirabell. The lovers' scene is a very interesting episode in this drama. But it is not as romantic as in Shakespeare. Millamant, like Mirabell, also knows the ways of the world. She is not sentimental. The two lovers are involved in plots. She knows the plot of Mirabell. Millamant also reads others so easily. She is a sweet woman but at the same time she is also tough. She deals with Mrs. Marwood cleverly. She even dominates. Mrs. Marwood and her every attempt is snubbed by Millamant. She doesn't welcome any impudent, ignorant and illiterate man into her life to make love. She is not a common, third rate person.

Millamant and Mirabell bargain with each other on the basis of mutual honesty. The famous bargaining scene in the 4th Act reaches its peaks with the art of Congreve. It is brilliant, profound and deeply emotional. We cannot find a scene like this one in any of the Restoration plays. She doesn't want to be dwindled into a wife. She doesn't't desire a complete surrender. She wants to keep her identity and individuality. She eludes Mirabell and dazes him. She laughs at him in his seriousness. She declares her rights and puts forth her demands. This is no coquetry and she is not a professional coquet. And this is not feminine vanity. Here she wants to fly from Mirabell to make him follow her to the marital altar. She admits that she loves him violently. Both are dumbfounded by cupid. They come to terms and bargain. They face each other not as lovers but as rational human beings. Millamant asks for her privacy and her previous liberty. The bargaining scene is brilliantly artificial where the artistic couple artfully haggles. She gets Mirabell's obedience in a hurried moment before Mrs. Fainall. Mrs. Fainall doesn't feel jealous for Millamant's marriage with Mirabell. Millamant treats the witty characters as they should be treated. She is pure hearted and somewhat pedantic. She has no hand in the plot of Mirabell. Her gaiety

is sparkling and it delights all. She is exuberant by nature. She,like her talk is plain. She is very intelligent and is highly practical. She wants to dominate others and she dominates. Above all, she is a typical lady of the Restoration Era.

7.1.3Lady Wishfort

Lady Wishfort represents that class of women, who, though past their middle age, desire to appear young. The author cavils at and ridicules such women through this character. She is credulous and she often runs in tantrums. She is "superannuated". She is stupid enough to marry at the age of fifty five. Lady Wishfort is a foolish, innocent, gullible old woman. She is jealous of her niece and she is deceived by Mirabell, Fainall, Rowland and even by her servants. She is weak and helpless in her crisis. She is a weak character and she yields easily to sycophants. She becomes a helpless pawn in the hands of Mr. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood. But she is helped by Mirabell whom she had suspected.

Lady Wishfort feels flattered by the false addresses of Mirabell. Lady Wishfort muses a furtive passion for Mirabell, which when frustrated turns to jealousy and enmity. Lady Wishfort's un-extinguished sensuality in middle age is exploited by Mirabell to secure his beloved with her fortune. She falls an easy prey to his plan. But at a crucial moment Mirabell rescues the old Lady's honour and is blessed by her. She could not see through the fake courtship of Mirabell. Lady Wishfort is a foil to Millamant. Lady Wishfort is the butt of the dramatist's ridicule. Her hatred grows out of wounded female pride.

She longs for matrimony in advanced middle age.The toilet scene describes her desperate attempt to hide the ravages of time. Peg's remarks heighten the poignancy of her pride. She is a figure of satire. She is also an object of our pity. The "shock treatment'given to her helps her to gain discretion and moral balance. Lady Wishfort, whatever be her faults, really loves her daughter and is much pained, when her daughter is threatened about the 'loss of reputation'.

In this play Lady Wishfort is the controller of the wealth. Money is power. But it becomes an effective power only when it is controlled and handled carefully. A fool and his money are soon parted. Similarly Lady Wishfort misuses her power and ends up by becoming a helpless pawn in the hands of more clever men.

She plays a central role controlling everyone's fortune. She has money. But she lacks beauty and youth. In her illusionary search for beauty and youth, she loses money by pursuing a 'will of the wisp'. She is not stupid. She speaks in metaphors. She has energy and imagination. She describes London life truly. But her self-deception and her refusal to accept both the reality of her age and the decay of her charms have robbed her of intelligence and made her weak. "She dares not frown desperately because her face is none of her own"is the apt remark of the author through Sir Willful.

She doesn't admit her weakness and her frustration turns full sail against Peg. Peg is inferior to her. Her secret envy of Millamant's beauty and poise leads her to the incredible statement that her portrait makes her more beautiful than her niece. In spite of all the negative elements, she is also good. Her goodness is revealed in her words to Sir Rowland. "But as I am a person, Sir Rowland, you must not attribute my yielding to my sinister appetite, or indigestion of widow-hood, nor impute my complacency to any lethargy of continence". Lady Wishfort eludes classification and is in a category all by herself.

7.1.4Witwoud and Petulant

These two characters remind us of Ben Jonson's characters. Witwoud is known for his wit and he snaps out on every opportunity. Petulant competes with him and is only provocative. Though Mirabell snubs Witwoud, he does not take any offense. Fainall praises him for his repartee. On the other hand Petulant has neither manners nor much of wit. Petulant thinks he is an important fellow but nobody cares for him. He suffers from inferiority complex.

7.1.5Sir Wilfull Witwoud

Sir Wilfull Witwoud is a man without pretensions. He is blunt and plain-spoken. He has neither wit nor refinement. But he has commonsense to see through the pretensions of his half-brother. Though Lady Wishfort wants to make him the husband of Millamant, he has little inclination for it. He is rather embarrassed in her company. Also he helps Mirabell and Millamant in their desired union. In brief, Sir Wilfull Witwoud is a good soul.

7.1.6Waitwell

Waitwell is Mirabell's servant. He plays a dual role as Waitwell and also as Sir Rowland as suggested by Mirabell. He dupes Lady Wishfort and speaks the language of a gentle man. He is also witty. He does not want to be a slave to anybody. He marries Foible. He doesnot like to play the role of Sir Rowland

.

7.1.7Mr.Fainall andMrs.Marwood

Mrs.Marwood is well matched to Mr.Fainall in lying and hatching evil plots. She outwits him in villainy. Fainall and Mrs.Marwood are two vicious characters in the play. She makes friendship with Lady Wishfort and misleads her from time to time. Her jealous anger against Mirabell makes her his enemy. She reveals Mirabell's plans to Lady Wishfort from time to time and follows, guides and helps Mr.Fainall as they are in relationship. Finally she is convicted of her illicit alliance with Fainall by the evidence of Foible and Mincing.

Speaking about the characters, George Saintsbury observes, "The *Way of the World*, though in some points it returns to the mixed and semi-tragic or at least serious, cast of *The Double Dealer,* is a better knit play than *Love for Love,* and contains in Millamant, the coquettish heroine, the queen of all her kind. Congreve has indeed borrowed the lay figure for her -- and something more -- from an excellent play,which nobody reads, Dryden's *Marriage a la Mode,* but he has given her a tenfold portion of air and fire and indeed left nothing to be done in the same direction. Lady Wishfort, too, is another masterly personage, and the more sinister figures of Fainall and Mrs.Marwood are full of power, which indeed, in one way or another, few of the characters lack. What none of them lack is wit,the mere writing of the play being better than that of *Love for Love* itself."

7.2 The Play as a Reflection of Contemporary Society

It was an age when sensuality ran riot, with all its manifold vices, and decency and virtue seemed to have gone underground. The best or the worst representatives of society were gallants and fine ladies. They figure in every restoration comedy, and on the other hand, heroic figures with exaggerated chivalrous ideals, having little meaning in that age, are portrayed in restoration tragedy. License seemed to rule the life of these ladies and

gentlemen ; they were unconscious of any moral value or standard ; marriage seemed to have lost all its sanctity and free love became the fashion. These ladies and gentlemen could talk brilliantly and cultivated wit to perfection. Gossip and scandal were the staple food of their conversation.

We have a picture of such a society in *The Way of the World.The Way of the World* provides all details for the reconstruction of the restoration society. There is the course of free love, all intrigues attending it, as we find in Mrs. Marwood and Mrs. Fainall, all the spice of gossip and scandal adds zest to these love affairs. The rapacity of Fainall, who wants to get hold of Millamant's fortune and his wife's property, is an interesting sidelight. There is the old, faded, Lady Wishfort, suffering from "indigestion of widowhood "or"lethargy of continence"- is an inimitable picture. We may imagine that all these characters are drawn from life. In the play there are references to the fashions of the society--and they are quite true of the age, for example, the use of paints and rouge.

7.3 The Play as a Satire

The Way of the World is a comedy of manners, though of a new type, and so it is a satire upon contemporary life. Congreve portrays in the play the upper class society of the Restoration period. Laxity of morals, debauchery, promiscuous love and mimic gallantry, general degeneracy of character manifested themselves in this class and these supplied the material theme to Restoration comedy. The fashionable gallants and ladies flocked to the play-houses. They went there to talk, to flirt, to show themselves in their finery, to study the latest fashions and hear the latest scandal. They were entertained with their own portraits or caricature in the characters on the stage. "It is the business of the comic poet", says Congreve, "to paint the vices and follies of human kind". So Congreve satirizes the vices and follies of the upper class in the Restoration period in *The Way of the World*. It is very subtly done by his delicate wit and incisive conception of characters. He designed characters to ridicule their affectations of wit. He confesses too that it is far from an easy matter.

7.4 Wit in the Play

Dr. Johnson says, "In this play Congreve's wit is so exuberant that it ever informs its tenement". It is a play of a high intellectual level. It is true that Congreve ridicules affectation of wit, particularly in Witwoud and Petulant. But there are characters which possess true wit, such as Millamant and Mirabell; even Fainall seems to have a fair portion of wit. Congreve must have had a more serious aim than ridiculing affectations of wit. This is to depict a generalized picture of the upper class of the Restoration period, as we have discussed above. The question is whether he singles out any particular follies and vices. The characters in *The Way of the World* may have little of moral consciousness. Affectation of wit is ridiculed in Witwoud and Petulant. But there are vicious characters like Fainall and Mrs.Marwood. They have some portion of wit, but wit is less prominent in them than the passion for grabbing the wealth of others in Fainall and gross sensuality in Mrs.Marwood, Fainall may have wit, but shows little of it; Mrs. Marwood has a sort of caustic wit which is chiefly manifested when she talks with Millamant, trying to probe into her feeling for Mirabell. Nor is Lady Wishfort without wit, but it is of a pedantic kind. And Lady Wishfort is certainly put into ridicule. There is genuine wit too which Millamant possesses, but if there is little of folly going with her wit, she seems to show it off in her argument with Mirabell when they come to terms about their future. Foible has wit too and it is unaffected wit, and it is not meant to be ridiculed. It is true that Congreve ridicules the affectation of wit in

marking off the difference between characters, but he goes far beyond it. His scope is wider than exposing affected wit.

7.5 Prof. Cazamian on Congreve and his Style

Congreve is capable of imbuing characters with life. He is a master of dialogue and style. In this perhaps lies the weak point of an author who by virtue of several merits is equal to the greatest. But if nonchalance of his temperament, and the lightness of his art, do not allow his comedy to penetrate very deeply into the study of the human heart, it proves very far below the surface. Without having the value of revelations the analysis he gives us of the feminine soul, and of a certain conscious and seductive coquetry, are of a very precious quality. And from all his art there emanates, like a discreet suggestion, a softened, and almost indulgent pessimism. With much less brutality, Congreve is more of the true cynic than Wycherley; in his more sober tints he has depicted a deeper vice, which sinks to the very conscience, and snaps the spring of all moral indignation. The only virtue which is held up to us-and it is perhaps in itself a sufficient antidote-is sincerity.

Congreve excels all his English rivals in his literary force, and a succinctness of style peculiar to him. He had a correct judgment, a correct ear, a readiness of illustration within a narrow range. He has a fine style and is natural in dialogue. He is at once precise and voluble. If you have ever thought upon style you will acknowledge it to be a single achievement. In this he is a classic and is worthy of treading a measure with Moliere.

7.6 Summing Up

This lesson provided you with a detailed analysis of characters along with the other aspects like the play as a reflection of contemporary society, as a restoration play, as a satire, and the role of wit etc., The links provided under references and additional sources will enhance your critical vision.

7.7 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Write briefly about the relationship of Mirabell and Millamant.
2. Sketch the character of Lady Wishfort.
3. How can you say that *The Way of the World* is a Restoration Comedy?
4. Justify Waitwell as a loyal servant?
5. How is Mrs.Marwood different from Mrs. Millamant?

7.8 References

1. http://howard.samford.edu/uploadedfiles/wide_angle/entries/volume_1/humanityshortcomings.pdf
2. http://www4.nac-cna.ca/pdf/eth/0708/the_way_of_the_world_guide.pdf
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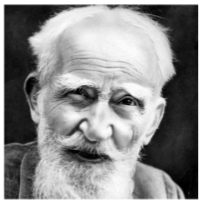
7.9 Additional Resources

http://www.online-literature.com/congreve/
http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/William_Congreve.aspx

LESSON -8

PYGMALION BY GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



(http://www.anneowenconsulting.com/blog/?p=27)

In the previous lessons you studied comedies and now you are going to read a new genre of drama created in the 20th century, termed problem play and promoted by many European dramatists in the form of modern theatre. Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion is the best known play of the writer as it's one of the widely watched and admired films of his time, with the title 'My Fair Lady'that won the Oscar, the most coveted academy award of Motion Pictures.

Objectives

After going through the lesson, you will

•Understand the aspects of the 'Shavian Play'

•Know about the life and works of George Bernard Shaw and

- Understand the theme of the play through its act-wise summary

Structure of the Lesson

8.1 Late 19th and early 20th century British Drama

Victorian drama in the early 19th century, appealed to the uneducated audience who were interested in emotional excitement and not so much in intellectual subtlety thus making it more of a popular art form. Allardyce Nicoll, author of History of Late Nineteenth Century Drama, states that at this time theatres became very popular with masses (The Audience) as the Theatrical environment and ambience was not particularly restricted to certain classes of the society. Moreover the Queen's encouragement of the theatre brought a fresh lease of life to the London theatre. But these melodramas could not, hold their sway on the stage for long. By the middle of the 19th century a new realist drama was pioneered with the lively comedies by Dion Boucicault and Tom Taylor and playwrights like T.W. Robertson. Further the Late 19th century, especially the last decade, turned out to be a decade of dramatic innovation with Oscar Wilde, one of the most prominent playwrights of the Victorian era, writing brilliant plays. Wilde's easy wit ensured promising success for the series of dramas that he wrote which began with "Lady Windermere's Fan"that appeared at the St James' Theatre bringing instant fame for the author. His other Plays such as "Salome"followed by "A Woman of No Importance", "An Ideal Husband"and "The Importance of Being Earnest", were filled with wit and brilliant paradoxes. Other important writers include John Millington Synge, who wrote famous plays like "Riders to the Sea"and "The Playboy of the Western World". Nearly all the writers mentioned above have tried to introduce laughter in their work. One of the most famous comedies of the Victorian era was "The Importance of Being Earnest", a social satire showing a world where no character has the slightest responsibility or can be counted to say or do the usual thing. At the same time, the influence of Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen was helping to produce a new genre of serious "problem plays,"such as Pinero's The Second Mrs. Tanqueray (1893). J.T. Grein founded the Independent Theatre in 1891 to foster such work and staged there the first plays of George Bernard Shaw and translations of Ibsen.

During the early 1900s the British society was facing a crisis in the economic, political and social fronts with many of the trade unions involved in agitations against the government over huge unequal wealth divide between the haves and have-nots; the Irish nationalist movement; and the suffragette movement demanding for the right to vote for women. These upheavals of the social fabric entered the drama of the time such as in "The Voyesy Inheritance"(1905) by Granville Barker, and Strife (1909) by John Galsworthy. Theatre in these Edwardian times was London based and it was judged, as expressed by a contemporary Italian visiting England, as a reflection of the 'special aristocratic conception of its status, and the point of view of its patrons'. Exactly at this time plays like "Ghosts"and "A Doll's House"of the Norwegian writer Henrik Ibsen challenged the existing moral fiber of the Victorian European Society and his work heralded the modern European drama,establishing a serious drama based on moral and social issues. This theatre was called "the minority theatre"where the plays were written for small play houses and repertory theatres. Bernard Shaw was influenced by Ibsen and similar themes were presented by him though not overtly critical of the social ailments but with humour and comic sarcasm. With this use of biting wit he succeeded in making the minority theatre very popular in London. Shaw himself defined his plays as problem plays or argumentative plays.

Problem plays are a type of drama which deals with controversial social issues in a realistic manner, exposing social ills as well as stimulating thought and discussion on the part of the audience. These plays had their origins in the work of the French dramatists Alexandre Dumas and Émile Augier, who created simple didactic plays on subjects like prostitution, business ethics, illegitimacy, and female emancipation. The problem play matured in the

works of the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, who wrote with artistic merit as well as topical relevance. He uncovered the pretense, greed, and hidden corruption of his society through brilliant plays. Ibsen's influence helped encourage the writing of problem plays throughout Europe. In England, George Bernard Shaw elevated the problem play to an intellectual height with his plays and with their long and witty prefaces.

8.2 Shavian Drama

Though Shaw belongs to the late Victorian age, his era is named as Shavian era because he is one of those writers of English, who has created a special place for himself in the history of English drama, by writing such plays which have clearly demarcated themselves with unique themes as well as their presentation. According to Shaw, his dramas fall in the category of problem plays, argumentative plays or plays of ideas and all the plays employ society as the basic theme. His depiction of society in its various hues is carried out through discussion of the problems prevalent in society in his plays. He uses drama as an adept tool to communicate with common people and to guide them in terms of moral issues. Shaw emphasizes on the point that the social problems such as equal rights for women, matrimonial relationships, parental relationships, social welfare and many other concerns of society needed moral development. He also claims that "primarily, [his plays] are not plays: they are tracts in dramatic forms."

The purpose of his plays is not so much to make people laugh but to make them comprehend the ludicrousness of certain prejudices and reassess their ideas and attitudes. His dramas revealed different aspects and truths concerning a problem of society with the help of characters of the dramas. The plot is always static but is enlivened by mental actions with the vigorous and brilliant dialogues. His plays can be divided into a specific format that is exposition, complication and discussion. The situations and characters, although not always lifelike, are often used to embody an idea or point of view that the play wants to illustrate. Most of his plays are informed as having no end as the reader is left free to originate his own ending that he/she thinks suitable to attach to the drama while some of his plays have endings that give messages related to social problems prevalent in society.

8.3 Social Background of the Drama "Pygmalion"

Nineteen-fourteen, the year of Pygmalion's London premiere, marked tremendous changes in the British society. Within two weeks of the murder of The Archduke of Austria, in that year, a world war broke out by the end of which 8.5 million people had been killed and 21 million were wounded. The war constituted the most severe physical, economic and psychological assault on the European society. The war brought out Shaw's compassion, as well as his disgust with the European societies that would tolerate the destruction of so many lives. To Shaw, the war only demonstrated more clearly the need for human advancement on an individual and social level, to reach a level of understanding that would prevent such tragic devastation.

In 1914, Great Britain was a strong colonial power and the war hastened the development of nationalism. British pride in its Empire had reached a climax, prior to the death of Queen Victoria in 1901. In addition to providing a symbolic unity to the Empire, the long reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) also gave unity to British society through a set of values known as Victorianism. Victorian values revolved around social high-mindedness, domesticity and a confidence in the expansion of knowledge and the power of reasoned

argument to change society. By the time of Victoria's death, many of the more traditional mid-Victorian values were already being challenged, as was the class structure upon which many of these values depended. Victorianism, however, survived in a modified form through the reign of Victoria's son, Edward. “Pygmalion”and the Great War brought a social change, though symbolically.

The growth of industrialization throughout the nineteenth century had a tremendous impact on the organization of British society, which had a tradition of a landed aristocracy and a more hierarchical class system. Industrialization brought about a demographic shift throughout the nineteenth century, with more and more agricultural laborers coming to seek work in the cities. Unskilled laborers like the Doolittles who competed for limited employment were largely at the mercy of employers. *Pygmalion* suggests the subjectivity of class identity, and the rapid deterioration of many pre-industrial social structures.

8.4 Life and Works of George Bernard Shaw

George Bernard Shaw was born into a poor Protestant family in Dublin, Ireland, on July 26, 1856. He changed schools several times as he grew older, and developed a strong dislike of schools and formal education. He experienced problematic parentage as his father was an alcoholic. When he was a teenager, his mother moved to London and he remained in Dublin with his father for some time. But in 1876, he moved to London to join his mother. His mother introduced him to music and art at an early age. Shaw wrote five unsuccessful novels and It was only in the 1880s that Shaw turned to drama. He became politically active, an ardent supporter of socialism and with a strong background in economics and politics, Shaw rose to prominence through the socialist Fabian Society, which he helped organize in 1884. He also established himself as a persuasive orator and became well known as a critic of art, music, and literature.

An articulate nonconformist, Shaw believed in a spirit he called the ‘Life Force’ that would help improve and eventually perfect the world. This hope for human and social improvement gave a sense of purpose to much of Shaw's work and had a broad range of effects across many facets of his life, from his vegetarian diet to his satirizing of social pretensions. It also led to his rebellion against the prevailing idea of "art for art's sake".

Shaw was a very prolific writer, writing over 50 plays in addition to articles, reviews, essays, and pamphlets. His plays were frequently banned by censors or refused production, so he sought audiences through open readings and publication. He published his first collection, Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant, in 1898, which included the combative, "unpleasant" works *Widowers' Homes, Mrs. Warren's Profession, and The Philanderer*; and the milder, more tongue-in-cheek plays *Arms and the Man, Candida, The Man of Destiny, and You Never Can Tell.*

Throughout his long life, his work expressed a mischievous delight in outstripping ponderous intellectual institutions. His subsequent plays include *Man and Superman* , a complex idea play about human capability; John Bull's *Other Island* (1904), a satire of British opinions concerning his native Ireland; *Major Barbara* (1905), a dazzling investigation of social conscience and reform; *Pygmalion* (1914); Heartbreak House (1920), an anguished allegory of Europe before the First World War; *Back to Methuselah* (1922), a legend cycle for Shaw's "religion" of creative evolution; Saint Joan (1923), a startling historical tragedy;

The Apple Cart (1929), one of three later plays Shaw termed "political extravaganzas"; and *Buoyant Billions* (1948), his last full-length play.
Commenting on Shaw's plays, the Royal court stated that his works mark the most important event in the history of the British stage since Shakespeare and Burbage ran the Globe theatre on Bankside.
Shaw received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1925, which was considered to be the high point of his career (although he was still to write seventeen more plays). In later life, he remained a vigorous symbol of the ageless superman he proclaimed in his works, traveling extensively throughout the world and engaging in intellectual and artistic pursuits. In September, 1950 he fell from an apple tree he was pruning, and on November 2nd of that year he died.

8.5 Pygmalion: A Study
8.5.1 List of Characters

Men:

Henry Higgins, Professor of phonetics who studies the pronunciations of people, challenges to transform Eliza Doolittle into a lady

Colonel Pickering, A colonel, an academic who studies Indian dialects

Freddy Eynsford Hill, comes from a wealthy family and admires Eliza

Alfred Doolittle, Eliza's father who sells away his daughter to Prof Higgins in exchange for some money

Ezra D. Wannafeller, A wealthy American who leaves money in his will to Mr. Doolittle

Women:

Eliza Doolittle A flower girl who becomes the subject of Prof Higgins'Challenge

Mrs. Higgins, Henry Higgins's mother

Mrs. Eynsford Hill, friend of Higgins'mother and mother of Freddy Eynsford Hill and Clara Eynsford Hill

Clara Eynsford Hill, young lady from a wealthy family

Mrs. Pearce, Higgins's housekeeper

Parlour maid to Mrs. Higgins

8.5.2 Act-1

Its 11.15 p.m. and people get into the shelter of the portico of St. Paul's Church in Covent Garden, London, as rain lashes at them. Mrs. Eynsford-Hill and her daughter Clara also seek shelter there after watching a play at the theatre and her son Freddy has gone to get a cab for them to reach home. The women wait and are impatient as Freddy takes a long time to get the

cab but returns with none. Both the women are disappointed and insist on his getting one. As he dashes out in rain he knocks a flower girl, who was rushing into the shelter, spilling all her flowers on the floor. As the flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, expresses her despair in her cockney English and makes the mother, Mrs. Eynsford Hill, pay for the spoiled flowers, though she pays rather willingly taking pity on the young poor woman, a gentleman too gets under the shelter and the flower girl approaches him to buy the flowers and he refuses to buy because he had no change. Meanwhile there has been a stranger, who has been noting down something in his note book. The other bystanders think that he is a spy and that he is noting down something about the flower girl. This observation throws her into jitters and she goes on wailing loudly and making loud rant of her innocence and her good character. The note-taker correctly identifies Eliza's neighborhood simply by listening to her speech. He does the same for various bystanders and amazes all, including the gentleman who is none but linguistics expert Colonel Pickering, who has coincidentally traveled to London to meet the famous note taker, phonetics expert Henry Higgins. Professor Higgins admonishes Eliza for her "kerbstone"English, and jokingly asserts to Colonel Pickering that "in three months (he) could pass that girl off as a duchess at an ambassador's garden party."Pickering and Higgins leave to discuss phonetics over dinner, and Freddy arrives with a cab only to discover his mother and sister have gone home on the bus. Eliza, still reeling from Higgins's insults, decides to treat herself to Freddy's cab with the money Higgins threw into her flower basket.

8.5.3 Act- II

The next day, Professor Higgins demonstrates his phonetics equipment to Colonel Pickering at his laboratory which is in his home. In a while Mrs. Pearce, the housekeeper, announces the arrival of a young woman. Higgins asks Mrs. Pearce to send the visitor thinking that it's a good opportunity to show the linguist, Colonel Pickering, how he records the sounds. But It's Eliza Doolittle, a little better in her appearance. Eliza asks him to teach her good accent so that she can be a lady in a flower shop instead of a street corner flower girl. As Higgins mocks at her she says that she has come prepared to pay him. Mrs. Pearce chides Eliza for her ignorance and poor manners, but Higgins begins to consider Eliza's proposal. Pickering reminds Higgins of his boastful proposal and offers to pay for the lessons and all expenses if Higgins can really transform her into a lady that could attend the party of the Governor. Higgins accepts the challenge excitedly and asks Mrs. Pearce to take care of Eliza's appearance by cleaning her and dressing her up properly. Mrs. Pearce warns Higgins that he has to keep in mind details like Eliza's social background and family, before he makes any conclusive decision about training her. She insists on the point that he must also think about Eliza's future life once he completes the experiment of training her. Higgins is very assured that he is doing Eliza a favor, and with a mixture of chocolates and harsh scolding he coaxes her into staying for the language training. Mrs. Pearce shows Eliza to a lovely bedroom and bath, and scrubs her clean despite Eliza's protests. When Pickering warns Higgins of the consequences of his keeping Eliza at home, Higgins assures Pickering that he has only a professional, not a personal, interest in Eliza, as he does not believe in romantic relationships. Mrs. Pearce warns Professor Higgins that he must be on guard about his language and manners now that a young woman is around and if he really wishes to make Eliza a proper Lady. Around this time Eliza's alcoholic and spendthrift father, Alfred Doolittle arrives enquiring about his daughter. Very soon he comes out open with his real intention that he should be paid in cash in return for Eliza's stay at Higgins's home. Professor Higgins calls Alfred a bluff, but is then impressed by Doolittle's tirade against middle class morality. After a brief encounter with Eliza, whom he does not recognize, Doolittle leaves, pocketing the money paid by Higgins.

8.5.4 Act-III

Several months later, the action takes place in Mrs. Higgins's home where she expects visitors. She has a tastefully decorated house quite the opposite of her son's unorganized cluttered quarters. Higgins arrives and his mother is surprised at his unannounced visit at one of her "at home day"occasions when she would have her guests for some small talk and asks him to leave before embarrassing her in front of the impending visitors. Higgins tells his mother about his experiment with Eliza, and asks Mrs. Higgins to accept Eliza at this "at home day"so that she can exhibit her new skills in front of his mother's guests. As the mother and son converse about his affairs of work and life Mrs. and Miss Eynsford-Hill, Colonel Pickering, and Freddy arrive one after the other in short intervals. Proving his mother's apprehensions about his behaviour with her friends right, he comments acidly on small talk, the very purpose of at-home days. When he replies to Miss Eynsford's observation that she prefers people to be out- rightly frank, he gets into a tirade on the ignorance of people. At this moment Eliza arrives and her audience is impressed. She is exquisitely dressed and appears quite well-bred. Freddy is particularly fond of her and expresses it openly. The talk of weather turns to illness, and Eliza forgets her training when she says her aunt was "done in."Eliza shocks and amuses her audience with her cockney expressions. Higgins attempts to come to Eliza's rescue by telling them that Eliza's language is the "new small talk,"the guests admire it even more. Higgins signals Eliza it is time she leaves, and Clara Eynsford-Hill admires the "new small talk", criticizing "this early Victorian prudery."Higgins anxiously enquires with his mother about her opinion on Eliza and she tells him Eliza is not yet presentable, for although her appearance is impeccable; her language still gives her away. Professor Higgins and Colonel Pickering are united in praising Eliza about her quick acquisition of dialect and her natural talent on the piano. Mrs. Higgins echoes the feelings of Mrs. Pearce when she questions the duo whether they thought about what would happen to Eliza once the "pretty pair of babies"is done "playing with (their) live doll."Both of them reply that she need not worry about it as Eliza will be able to get some employment. They leave planning to take her to a Shakespearean drama and how she would imitate different accents. Mrs. Higgins tries to work, but stops, feeling miserable about the way men think and behave.

8.5.5 Act IV

With the six-month deadline approaching, Eliza is presented at a London Embassy. Professor Higgins is surprised to see one of his former pupils, a man who now makes his living as an interpreter and an expert placing any speaker in Europe by listening to his speech. The interpreter speaks to Eliza, and deems her English too perfect for an English woman. The interpreter is further struck by her impeccable manners and announces Eliza must be a foreign princess.The trio returns to Higgins's laboratory after a hectic day of parties and opera where Eliza had successfully presented herself a proper lady. The men talk very contented of their achievement. When Higgins remarks, "Thank God it's over,"Eliza is hurt. She tries her best to control her emotions when they talk about her as an object and not as a human being with feelings. Suddenly she loses control over herself and hurling his slippers directly at Higgins, Eliza accuses him of selfishness and inhumanity. She questions him if he has ever thought about what would be her position, once he accomplishes his challenge. Higgins suggests finding a husband for Eliza, and she is further insulted. He tries to console her saying that Pickering would help her set up a flower shop with his money. She grieves over the fact that she could at least sell flowers in her past state and her present 'lady state'doesn't allow her to be what she wants. She hints to Higgins that she is leaving him as his experiment is over. The scene comes to an end with Higgins'retiring to sleep Storming

out of the house, Eliza encounters Freddy, who has been pacing, lovelorn, outside her window. Freddy expresses his love.

8.5.7 Act V

The next morning, Pickering and Higgins arrive at Mrs. Higgins's home to inform her of Eliza's absconding from home. Though she knows about this and has Eliza at her home, she feigns that she doesn't know anything about it. She reproaches the men for their treatment of Eliza. At this moment Alfred Doolittle enters, dressed like a gentleman, and informs them that he is on his way to his own wedding. Alfred tells Higgins how his letter to the recently deceased Ezra D. Wannafeller led to Doolittle's share in the wealthy man's trust. Mrs. Higgins announces that Eliza is upstairs and presents her to them. Eliza thanks Colonel Pickering for treating her like a lady and tells him that she could be like a lady because he presented himself a model with his gentleman behaviour but accuses Professor Higgins of always thinking of her as a flower girl. Asserting her need for self-respect, Eliza says she will not return home to Higgins. Higgins admits that he has not treated Eliza kindly, but reminds her that he is like that in his behaviour with everyone, with no emotional attachment. Admitting that he has "grown accustomed"to her, Higgins tells Eliza that he wants her to return, not as a slave or a romantic interest, but as a friend. When Eliza asserts that she has always been as good as Higgins despite her upbringing, the professor is truly impressed. Though the play ends ambiguously, with the possibility of Eliza marrying Freddy, she and Higgins have admitted their non-conventional need for each other.

8.6 Summing Up

This lesson has offered a brief overview of the early 20th century drama with a focus on problem plays as presented by the modern theatre. It has discussed the characteristic features of Shavian drama and historical background to the present selection. It also has summed up the life and works of Gorge Bernard Shaw and a brief act-wise summary for better understanding of the play. But we advise you to go through the play for better appreciation. In the next lesson you will study the critical aspects about the play.

8.7 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Write about the 'Victorian Theatre'.
2. What is a 'problem play'?
3. What are the features of a 'Shavian play'?
4. What is the focus of the play *Pygmalion*?
5. What are the themes of the play *Pygmalion?*
6. Why is the play titled as *Pygmalion* ?
7. What is the idea of Prof. Higgins?
8. What does Eliza Doolittle represent?
9. What aspects of culture does Shaw project?
10. Comment on the theme of the play.

8.7 References

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LESSON – 9

CRITICAL ASPECTS OF *PYGMALION*

Hope you have enjoyed reading the play thoroughly. The previous lesson introduced the theme through act-wise summary and provided the necessary background for a comprehensive study. This lesson offers the critical aspects of the play.

Objectives

After reading the lesson, you will be able to

- Understand the characters through analytical study
- Analyse the different critical aspects related to the play

Structure of the Lesson

9.1 Character Analysis

9.1.1 Eliza Doolittle

Eliza Doolittle, introduced as the flower-girl of around 18 or 20 years of age, and called variously Liza, Eliza, and Miss Doolittle, is the subject of Higgins and Pickering's experiment in the play because of her cockney language. She is from the slums of London. Though not formally well-educated, she is quick-witted and is a strong character, generally unafraid to stand up for herself. Eliza is 'streetwise' and energetic. She is an intelligent and quick learner, and under the teaching of Pickering and Higgins she quickly learns to act like a lady and pass as a member of the upper class.

Eliza approaches Higgins to teach her suitable English for a lady selling flowers in a shop. As she presents herself in her "shoddy coat" at Higgins's laboratory, Shaw describes the "pathos of this deplorable figure, with its innocent vanity and consequential air." Beneath the crude visage and behind the horrible speech sounds lies the potential Duchess and a great "work of art."

The Pygmalion-Galatea theme in which a crude piece of marble is transformed into a beautiful statue is presented through Higgins and Eliza. It's quite ironic that Eliza wants to adopt middle-class manners that both Higgins and her father despise. Eliza's ideal is to become a member of the respectable middle class, and in order to do so, she must learn proper pronunciation and manners.

Living apart from her father, Eliza is an independent, strong-minded girl full of vitality. Eliza repeats again and again, "I am a good girl, I am," which is how she voices her self-respect. She is poor not just in terms of money but is also poor in pronunciation, social manners and her ability to express herself. Fortunately, as Higgins and Pickering report to Mrs. Higgins, she has a good ear and plays the piano beautifully at the first hearing and these aptitudes help her make enormous progress.

In spite of her tremendous success at the embassy-ball where she was accepted to be a Duchess without an iota of doubt, Eliza becomes aware of her loss of identity. She cannot sell flowers with her newly-acquired refined English, nor can she go on playing the lady at the Royal Court. Neither Higgins nor Pickering pays attention to her after they come home from the Royal Court. No wonder "Eliza's beauty becomes murderous". She has now realized she has been treated as a guinea pig in an experiment. After throwing his slippers at him, she confronts Higgins saying, "What's to become of me? What's to become of me?" Eliza has awakened as a human being, but Higgins can never be sensitive to her despondent soul. Moreover, he irresponsibly suggests that she should get married. To this suggestion she emphatically retorts: "I sold flowers. I didn't sell myself. Now you've made a lady of me, I'm not fit to sell anything else. I wish you'd left me where you found me."

Eliza's predicament reflects that of Nora at the end of Ibsen's *(A)Doll's House*. Nora leaves her home in order to be a human being. Higgins has no idea what Eliza is angry at. It is not until she leaves his house that he realizes how important this "squashed cabbage leaf" has become to his life. *A Doll's House* ends with Nora's departure from her house; a generation later, *Pygmalion* offers an opportunity for the woman to elaborate her case. Eliza tells Pickering, intentionally ignoring Higgins, "… the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves but how she's treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will." What she means by being a "lady" is not class distinction but the decent treatment of other human beings, or warmer human relationships.

Finally Eliza declares her independence saying she will marry Freddy, and will teach phonetics, in order to support Freddy and herself. This enrages Higgins, who finds it blasphemous of her to steal the secret of his methods and discoveries and teach them to the public. So far Higgins has towered over Eliza as the creator of a "perfect lady." However, when she has grown into an independent woman, Eliza deprives him of his god-like status and demands they be equal human beings. At first Higgins is outraged at the audacious pupil's declaration of independence, but he accepts their new relation: "Five minutes ago you were like a millstone round my neck. Now you're a tower of strength: a consort battleship.

You and I and Pickering will be three old bachelors together instead of only two men and a silly girl."

The character of Eliza is best seen by the progression which she makes from "a thing of stone," "a nothingness," a "guttersnipe," and a "squashed cabbage leaf' to the final act where she is an "exquisite lady" — totally self-possessed, a person who has in many ways surpassed her creator.

9.1.2Henry Higgins

Higgins is a brilliant linguist, who studies phonetics and documents, different dialects and ways of speaking. He first appears as the suspicious man jotting down notes on everyone's manner of speech. Shaw describes him as "… scientific type, heartily, even violently interested in everything that can be studied as a scientific subject, and careless about himself and other people, including their feelings". His manner varies from "genial bullying... to stormy petulance" but he is so entirely frank and void of malice that he remains likeable even in his least reasonable moments."
Higgins is so focused on his academic interest that he lacks compassion and fails to consider other people's feelings or concerns. Instead, he sees people mainly as subjects of study. He views Eliza, for example, as an experiment and a "phonetic job." Higgins is rude not only to Eliza, but generally to everyone he meets. He is impatient with class hierarchy and the Victorian obsession with manners. As he tells Eliza, he treats everyone in the same way (i.e., rudely) regardless of social class. Thus, while an insensitive character—often a misogynist—Higgins sees through the hypocrisy and fallacies of the Victorian social hierarchy, and savours the opportunity to beat high society at its own game by making Eliza pass as a lady.

Higgins is a bundle of paradoxes. He is a combination of "lovable eccentricities, brilliant achievements, and devoted dedication" to improving the human race. Yet he is completely socially inept; his manners are so bad that his own mother does not want him in her house when she has company, and his manners are so offensive that she will not attend the same church at the same time. His housekeeper, Mrs. Pearce, observes of Higgins that "when you get what you called interested in people's accents, you never think of what may happen to them or you." Higgins gives no thought to Liza's future after his experiment, and he gradually loses interest in it. He is shaken by the independence Liza demonstrates and by the end of the play is able to show a kind of respect to her.
Higgins is a complex yet admirable persona. He rejects middle-class moralities. He admires 'Doolittles' for their honesty in asserting that they are the undeserving poor. He will devote his scientific skill to changing a flower girl into a duchess. He is ultimately interested in the soul of his creation,Eliza and not in her pronunciation.

We cannot deny his charm: Mrs. Pearce, his housekeeper, has often threatened to leave because of Henry's atrocious manners (improper language, improper dress, bad table behavior, etc.), but she is always charmed into remaining with him. Ultimately, Eliza is also charmed by her association with Higgins and Pickering. Higgins is charismatic, he is also a tyrannical bully; he is amazingly intelligent yet rudely insensitive to the feelings of others; he is god-like in his achievements but childishly petulant in pressing hard for his own way; Thus, his appeal remains partly in the many contradictions that he is heir to. The habit of swearing, losing his temper at the slightest provocation, his consciousness of himself as a

Professor of Phonetics, his love for his mother and his devotion to his profession, all these make Higgins a living personality, whom the readers love as well admire.

9.1.3Alfred Doolittle

Alfred is Liza's father, whom Shaw describes as "an elderly but vigorous dustman. ... He has well marked and rather interesting features, and seems equally free from fear or conscience. …a habit of giving vent to his feelings without reserve." Doolittle describes himself as the "undeserving poor," who needs just as much as the deserving but never gets anything because of the disapproval of middle-class morality. Nevertheless, he is a skilled beggar who is capable of finessing loans from the most miserly of people.

When we first meet Doolittle, he comes to Professor Higgins' house in the hypocritical role of the "virtuous father" in order to rescue his "compromised daughter." It is soon discovered, however, that he made her to earn her own living over two years and was never married to Eliza's mother. When the trick of the virtuous father fails, Doolittle quickly changes his pitch and becomes the fawning pimp as he tries to sell his own daughter to the men for almost any price they are willing to pay. Higgins and Pickering are not taken in by his sickening suggestions, however, but they are delighted by Doolittle's poetic use of the English language, by his use of rhetoric that could only be used by a Welshman and by his ingenuity as he tries one method after another until he assumes a philosophical pose.

Eliza doesn't trust her father, and he doesn't seem to show very much fatherly love. When Higgins sarcastically mentions Doolittle's name as Britain's most "original moralist" to a wealthy American named Ezra Wannafeller,he leaves Doolittle a substantial amount of money. However, his newfound wealth and social standing irritate Mr. Doolittle, who thinks little of "middle class morality" or the responsibilities brought on by having any significant amount of money, though at the same time he doesn't have the courage to give up his newfound money. In the last act, Doolittle's character does not essentially change. He has now been forced into the role of a lecturer on moral reforms, and he must now adopt middle-class morality.

Doolittle is not so much a character as he is a vehicle which Shaw manipulates for his own dramatic purposes. Through Doolittle, Shaw is able to make many satirical thrusts at middle-class morality and to make additional comments on class distinctions and on class manners.

9.1.4Colonel Pickering

A phonetics expert like Higgins, this "elderly gentleman of the amiable military type," meets the latter in a rainstorm at the St. Paul's Church. The author of "Spoken Sanskrit," Pickering excels in the five Indian dialects because of his experience in the British colonies there. While he shares Higgins' interest in linguistics, he is not as extreme in his devotion to his intellectual pursuits. Courteous and generous, as well as practical and sensible, he never views Liza as just a flower girl and treats her with the respect due a lady of society. While he gives Higgins the idea for the bet involving Eliza, he treats Eliza kindly and considers her feelings. It is his calling her ‘Miss Doolittle’ that actually encourages Eliza to really change. Open-hearted,he finds it easy to sympathize with others and, decidedly unlike Higgins, is conscience-stricken when he fears he's hurt Liza. At the end of the play, he apologizes to Eliza for treating her like the subject of an experiment, unlike the selfish Higgins who never apologizes.

9.1.5Mrs. Higgins

Henry Higgins' mother, who hosts the Eynsford Hills at her wealthy home, is a generous and gracious woman. She is frequently exasperated by her son's lack of manners. She is initially upset by Eliza's intrusion into her polite company, but is kind to her and completely sympathizes with Liza when the girl leaves Higgins and takes shelter with her. She tries to tell her son not to treat Eliza like an object or possession, but instead he must consider Eliza's feelings. She is perceptive and intelligent, and capable of putting Henry in his place. It is indicative of Mrs. Higgins's character that after the conflict between her son and Liza, both characters choose to come to her for guidance. While Higgins doesn't listen to her, she does her best to resolve things at least patching things up with Mr. Doolittle, Eliza, and Pickering. She plays an important role and exerts some agency in the play even while constrained by the oppressive gender roles of Victorian society.

9.1.6Mrs. Pearce

Mrs. Pearce is Higgins's middle-class housekeeper.She is very practical. She can be severe and is not afraid of reproaching Higgins for his lack of social graces. She is conscious of proper behavior and of her position, and quite proud. She is taken aback by the seeming impropriety of Liza coming into the Higgins household but quickly develops a bond with the girl, often defending her from Higgins. She equals Mrs. Higgins in the maturity of her thinking when she warns Higgins of the consequences of training Eliza into a lady and then abandoning her. She shows foresight and wisdom when she expresses that Eliza rather be left to be her present self than putting her in a predicament where she belongs to no identity either of a flower girl or a lady.

9.1.7 Clara Eynsford Hill

Clara,who is from a wealthy family, is fed up with all of the rules of proper manners for her class. She enjoys Eliza's inappropriate conversation (and tells her mother that it is a new, fashionable form of small talk). She comments that manners are simply a matter of habit, and that there is no such thing as right or wrong manners. Though she exhibits a strange impatience at every situation that she is found in, she becomes interesting to the readers with her candid remarks on false class distinction and her rejection of Victorian prudery. She is a typical representative youth of her times rejecting everything outdated and welcoming the 'in thing' in social manners.

9.2 The Play as a Satire on Social Manners

The play ‘Pygmalion’, though written in the late Victorian period, mocks at the decadent Victorian values and satirizes the prudery. Good manners are mostly associated with the upper class at this time and thus they are a marker of class divisions. Higgins's style of treating everyone like dirt, though he says that he is democratic in that, is not satisfactory unlike that of Pickering who treats every one with due respect. It is a touching moment at the end of Pygmalion when Liza thanks Pickering for teaching her manners and pointedly comments that otherwise she would have had no way of learning them. Manners is one of the central themes in Pygmalion. It is related to many of the other themes of the play and highlights the fundamental political and social message Shaw is trying to convey in this work.

Higgins makes a distinction of extent of politeness and subtly expresses the idea that Eliza is from lower class and therefore is not worthy to be treated in a polite manner. Higgins teaches her purely linguistic facets of behavior. But this is a limited achievement for two reasons: first, for Higgins it is simply a job, and secondly, being a lady is much more than simply being perfect in linguistic form, it is a question of one's whole mode of behavior which is what Pickering has unconsciously taught Eliza. Eliza furnishes several examples of Pickering's good manners: he calls her 'Miss', he stands up, he takes off his hat, he opens doors, and he never takes off his boots in the dining room when Eliza is present.

Pickering naturally and quite casually treats everybody in this way. He does not act in this way only because he is in Eliza's presence; he would act in this way with everybody. He is egalitarian as he treats everybody with same respect. A fundamental point Shaw makes is that 'the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated. I shall always be a flower Girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you [Pickering] because you always treat me as a lady, and always will."What a person is,is based on how that person is considered to be. Just as Eliza learnt to be a guttersnipe, she also learns from Pickering 'really nice manners', i.e., how to be a lady.

9.3 Language and Class:

Language, Culture and the society which possesses them are a complex structure supporting and critiquing one another. British society generally associates language closely with class and consequently with manners and status. From a person's accent, one can determine where the person comes from and usually what the person's socioeconomic background is. Higgins believes that the accent of one is shaped by the environs and it can certainly be transformed. He uses his teaching,radical in his times, to undo this social marker, paving way for greater societal growth. In an age of setting standard parameters for language such as "the Queen's English," *Pygmalion* pointsto a much wider range of varieties of spoken English. Shaw thought that characteristics of social identity such as one's sophistication of speech were entirely subjective ones. Though the play overtly comments on the lowly use of language and disparages these varieties of language there's an undercurrent of thought that there cannot be any societal inferiority or superiority to be associated with any language variety. The language barriers visible are erased with his able training. The play indicates that the language inferiority or superiority is not inherent but mastery can be acquired quite ably by any one even by one from the "gutter". As for the dialect or vocabulary of any one English variety, such as Cockney, its social value is determined in *Pygmalion* completely by the context in which it is assessed. While Liza's choice of words as a Cockney flower merchant would be thought as absurd as her accent, they are later perceived by the mannered Eynsford Hill family to be the latest trend, when they are thought to emanate from a person of noble breeding.

9.4Theme of Education

The contribution of Bernard Shaw to the modern English drama is noteworthy. In writing plays, Shaw had the decisive intention of transforming the society to his views and ideas. G.K. Chesterton says: "Bernard Shaw has much affinity to Plato in his instinctive elevation of temper, his courageous pursuit of ideas as far as they will go; his civic idealism, and also, it must be confessed, in his dislike of poets and a touch of delicate inhumanity." (GeorgeBernard Shaw: 53)

In *Pygmalion*, education is used as a tool for liberating working class individuals. Language is linked up with identity through education. Eliza's transformation displays that social distinctions such as accents, age, class barriers can be surmounted by language training. However Eliza painfully observes that language can never form the base of one's character. She understands that better education is connected with social progress. Eliza's problems show that language provides just a superficial transformation.

Pygmalion is a complex work of art with a number of themes. But its central theme is the education of Eliza Doolittle. She rises from ignorance and obscurity to light through successive stages of desolation, self-realization, illumination and social identity. Eliza Doolittle is introduced in the play as an illiterate ignorant girl selling flowers in Convent Garden. She speaks the kind of Cockney which only the native Londoners can understand. At this stage, she is crude, ill-mannered and saucy but still she is ambitious. She wants to grow in life, at least to become a salesgirl in a flower-shop by learning to speak like a lady.

Higgins decides to transform the shabby flower-girl into a lady. Initially the process of education seems difficult to Eliza. Since Eliza has courage, talents and strength of mind, she faces the trial boldly. Higgins teaches her to pronounce English correctly and also to dress elegantly and cultivate fine manners. After a few months, Higgins invites Eliza to Mrs. Higgins'home to check how she conducts herself and what impression she leaves on his mother's friends from the fashionable society. She is dressed like a lady, behaves like a lady and all are impressed. Though she learns how to talk like a lady, thatdoes not prepare her for the real talk which is determined by appropriateness. After some months of training, Eliza is taken to the party of an ambassador and is accepted as a Duchess by the society.

During the course of her education in pronunciation she realizes that the difference between a flower-girl and a lady is not in how she behaves but in how she is treated. She has been awakened and she progresses from darkness to light — and that is the real education. She now seeks social identity. She cannot return to her old position and at the same time cannot belong to the middle class society. She is filled with despair. Eliza begins to seek for emotional fulfillment. She requests Higgins to tell her what belongs to her and what does not belong to her. There is much difference between Higgins and Pickering in their attitude towards Eliza. Prof. Higgins has taught her language but always treats her as a flower-girl. From the very beginning, Pickering treats Eliza like a lady and it is from him she has learnt real manners, attitude and conduct of a lady.

Eliza's education has made her a lady, and so she cannot go back to her former environment and sell flowers as she used to do. She has become a lady and has lost her earlier identity. Eliza is confronted with the problem of loss of identity and alienation. She must search for belongingness in the new social environment to which she has been raised by her education. Eliza is inherently intelligent and Higgins trained her in language. Even before she met him, she possessed intelligence, dignity and individuality and they have been shaped by education that she acquired from Higgins and Pickering.

Eliza, Mrs. Higgins, and Mr. Doolittle lack the kind of education that Higgins and Pickering have, yet they are smart in their own ways. Eliza, for example, turns out to be a quick learner and a very good pupil, easily winning Higgins' bet for him. Mrs. Higgins displays a kind of social savvy in integrating Eliza with her other guests and in helping to resolve things between Higgins and Eliza. Higgins may ridicule at the lowly Mr. Doolittle but he is the only character who voices criticisms of "middle class morality" and expresses

some of the problems with the Victorian social hierarchy. Thus, while Higgins and Pickering might appear to be the play's two educated, intelligent men,different characters exemplify different forms of intelligence.

9.5 Summing Up

This lesson provided you with a detailed analysis of characters along with the other aspects like the play as a satire on social manners, its views on language as social tool, and the theme of education and development. The links provided under references and additional sources will enhance your critical vision.

9.6 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Write briefly on the training of Eliza by Higgins and her evolution into a Lady..
2. Sketch the character of Eliza Doolittle.
3. How can you say that Pygmalion is a satire on social manners?
4. Discuss the theme of education in Pygmalion.
5. How is Pickering different from Higgins?

9.7 References

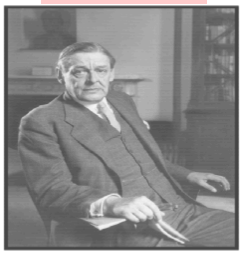
http://www.online-literature.com/george_bernard_shaw/
http://www.rcwalton.com/Pygmalion.pdf

9.8 Additional Resources

http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pygmalion_(play)
http://vishwanathbite.wordpress.com/2012/08/17/g-b-shaws-pygmalion-study-guide/
https://depot.ceon.pl/bitstream/handle/123456789/1206/Operatic%20Motives%20in%20G.%20B.%20Shaw%27s%20Works.pdf?sequence=1
http://www.wakayama-nct.ac.jp/gakka/ippan/ippan-staff/morikawa/GBS_Japan/mythslegendsinPygmalion.pdf
http://www.penguin.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/Pygmalion.pdf

LESSON - 10

THE MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL BY T.S.ELIOT



Objectives

After going through this lesson, you will be able to

- Understand the conditions of modern age
- The Life and Works of T.S.Eliot and
- The Historical background of the theme of Martyrdom

Structure of the Lesson

10.1 Aspects of Modern Age: Revolt against Authority and International Feeling

After the First World War revolt against authority was clearly obvious. There is an Increasing demand of intellectual rights and liberty. The same disbelief in power and authority is seen in the political held also. Socialism and internationalism have come in place of the old Victorian idea of the supremacy of the Whites. The older imperialistic tendencies are looked down with hatred. Most of the colonies in different parts of the world which were at one time under the rule of the British Empire, have now become free and independent states. It is now believed that nationalism alone is not enough; it should be united and combined with an international feeling. The supremacy of the Whites was questioned. E.M. Forster, in his *Passage*

to India, expresses the idea that the relationship between nations as well as individuals should be based on equality, co-operation and .mutual sympathy. It is the duty of the developed nations to support and help the under-developed ones, so that people living in any part of the world may lead a more comfortable and happy life. Such ideas have been expressed by thinkers and social philosophers like Bertrand Russell, who strongly advocated the need for world unity in the modern age.

10.2 The Literary Tendencies of the Modern Age

The literature of the modern age is governed more by realism than by romance. The present age is essentially an age of realism in life and literature. The modern writers, instead of dealing with the times of King Arthur and the Middle Ages, have concentrated their attention on the problems of modern life. The realism of the modern age has further been accentuated by the growing upsurge of scientific discoveries. The new scientific inventions and discoveries have brought about a transformation in the old romantic values of life and have given a materialistic twist to whatever is considered sacred and valuable in life. This rapid growth of science and materialism and deification of machine has brought about a commercialization of art, literature and music, and the modern age is rightly branded as the commercial age of the world.

In the world of to-day, religion and spiritualism are on the wane and everywhere materialism is on the ascendancy. Many poets and novelists have felt disgusted with the growing cult of materialism, and their works are marked with a note of revolt against this advancing tide of the modern times, Butler and Huxley are the prominent writers of the twentieth century who have attacked the modern craze for materialism and machinery.

The age of machinery has brought about not only a feeling of revolt among the writers of our times but has also created a feeling of pessimism and frustration in them. Gissing felt awfully disgusted with the modern industrial life and his novels are an attack upon the industrialism of the age. Being disgusted with the humdrum existence of modern life, many writers have chosen to retire to the countryside where they seek to find refuge from the rattle and bustle of modern cities. In modern literature there is a growing attack on the dirtiness, seediness and squalor of cities. The seediness (shabby condition) of modern life has found expression in the novels of James Joyce and Graham Greene. John Masefield has given expression to the dirtiness of modern trade and commerce in his famous poem Cargoes. He contrasts the beauty and romance of the past with the dirtiness and squalor of modern life in the last stanza of the poem.

In modern literature the novel has become the dominant literary form and has been used to deal with the modern social problems. The novel is admirably suited as a vehicle for the sociological studies which attracted most of the great artists of the period. The modern novelist is not only interested in social problems but is also equally well-inclined to discuss psychological problems of the modern age.

In modern literature drama has once again witnessed a remarkable revival after an age-old slumber and obscurity into which it had fallen after the eighteenth century. In the hands of Galsworthy, Bernard Shaw, Barker and T. S. Eliot, drama has made rapid progress in the twentieth century.

The pre-war years were the years of the novel and the drama and there was a relative eclipse of poetry. Modern poetry is not as significant and rich as modern novel and drama. A.C.Ward characterizes modem poetry as ‘puerile’. Poetry was revived after an early period of

stagnation by Yeats and a few other poets of the age. "The demand, long before expressed by Yeats, for a new and living poetical tradition was met between the wars in his own work and in that of the new poets, T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, Cecil Day Lewis and Louis Macniece. Poetry again became a vital literary form in close touch with life, and if it did not outset the novel from its primacy, it certainly outstripped the drama."

New experiments were tried in all branches of literature. The traditional forms were thrown out and in their place new literary experiments were made in the field of poetry, drama and novel. "It is doubtful whether any period of English literature saw experiments so bold and various as those of the inter-war years. A natural corollary of the quest for new Values and for a new vital tradition was the desire for new ways of presentation and all the major literary genres of the age produced revolutionary developments." Many poets like Stephen Phillips, Oscar Wilde, John Davidson, J.L.Flecker, John Masefield, R.L.Binyon, John Drinkwater, W.B.Yeats, J.M.Synge, T.S.Eliot, W.H.Auden, Christopher Isherwood, Stephen Spender, Sean O'Casey, Norman Nicholson, Christoher Fry and others produced plays in verse.

10.3 Life and Works of T. S. Eliot

Thomas Stearns Eliot, one of England's most outstanding-figure of modern times was born in the U.S A. in 1888. He was educated at Harvard, Paris, Oxford and Germany. After being a schoolmaster, and later on, a banker for some time, he entered the field of literature as the editor of a literary magazine. He settled down in London in 1914. He became a naturalized Englishman in 1927. He won great respect as a literary figure and passed away in 1964. Eliot's first book of verse, "*Prufrock and Other Observations*", published in 1917, caused a sensation by its daringly experimental verse form and rhythm. This was followed by *Ara Ves Prec* (1919) and Poems (1920) His reputation was established with the publication of *The Waste Land* (1922) which gives powerful expression to the barrenness and frustration of life in modern times.

10.4 Works of T.S.Eliot

Eliot was an outstanding Critic. His critical works include *The Sacred Wood* (1920), *Homage to Dryden*(1924, *For Lancelot Andrews* (1928) *Dante* , *The Use of Poetry and Criticism* (1933), *The Strange Gods and the Elizabethan Essays* (1934) He was the recipient of Order of Merit and the Nobel Prize for Literature.

T.S.Eliot is, beyond doubt, England's outstanding literary figure of modern times. He was a great poet, critic and scholar of amazing range and versatility and his critical opinions and poetic practices have influenced modern literature profoundly. More information can be obtained from the following source:

http://salempress.com/store/pdfs/eliot.pdf

10.5 T.S.Eliot as a Verse Playwright

T. S. Eliot is one of the greatest dramatists of the twentieth century. His plays have received international recognition, and have brought a radical innovation in European drama. His dramas mark the beginning of a movement towards poetic drama and an experiment in a new dramatic form. Eliot was the greatest dramatist who re-established the tradition of poetic drama in England, and made it really a force to reckon with *vis-a-vis* the naturalistic drama of the earlier twentieth century. Eliot was considerably influenced in this revival of poetic drama by the example of Claudel, the French poetic dramatist. T. S. Eliot, however, went a step ahead of Claudel in his art. Claudel cared for poetry in drama without bothering about the theatre or the audience, but Eliot was not such an infatuated admirer of poetry in drama to neglect the needs of the theatre. "The work of Claudel and Eliot cannot be compared, the one in terms of the

other. Both are among the greatest poets of their age, but whereas Claudel was primarily a poet and only reviewed the theatre as a medium for his poetical expression whether audiences were there, ready to accept his work, or not, Eliot is a poet who has turned a dramatist, willing to "discipline his poetry and put it on a very thin diet in order to adapt it to the needs of the stage."

T. S. Eliot has employed the theme of religious as well as secular life for his dramatic works and he has used verse in drama both for the production of heightened effects as in *Murder in the Cathedral* and the ordinary effect on a common place life as in *The Family Reunion* and *The Cocktail Party*. Eliot has gone more than half-way to meet the public, and while keeping the theme of religion and Catholic rituals in *Murder in the Cathedral,* he has also given a place to the claims of polite naturalist comedy in his dramatic art, in such plays as *The Family Reunion*, *The Confidential Clerk* and *The Cocktail Party*. "While Eliot wishes his plays to appeal at all levels, there is a danger that naturalism is driving poetry and poetic vision right out of his plays ; it is naturalism, not poetical drama triumphant."

10.6 Historical Background of the Play: A Note on Martyrdom

The New Catholic Encyclopaedia defines a martyr as "a person who has given or exposed his life in testimony to the truth or relevance of the Christian faith." The Word "martyr" is derived from a Greek Word "*uap Tvp*" (maarthus), which means a 'witness'. A martyr is a witness in the sense he has 'to witness' (uapTvps - maarthus) the redemptive action of Christ, the first martyr. The theological concept of the term is made precise by St. Augustine- *"martyrem non facit poena, sed causa*." (It is the reason why not the suffering that constitutes a martyr, Epistle Sq : 2). In other Words, it is the cause and not the blood that makes a martyr. According to the Christian theology," a martyr is one who becomes a witness to Christ, even at the cost of his life. In doing so, he should not be motivated by any personal interest.

Tennyson's "St. Simeon Stylites" inflicting tortures upon himself, ponders: "Who may be made a saint, if I fail here? Show me the man who 'hath suffered more than I." He is not a martyr and anyone that sheds blood to become a saint, is damned. It is a kind of spiritual suicide. Becket never wants to become a martyr when he is spiritually educated of his mission. He explains the real meaning and significance of martyrdom in his Sermon in which he says "A Christian martyrdom is never an accident, for saints are not made by accident. Still less, a Christian martyrdom; the effect of a man's will to become a saint, as a man by willing and contriving may become a ruler of men. Martyrdom is always the design of God 'for HIS love of men', to warn them and to lead them and to bring them back to His ways. It is never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of being a martyr." Christ, Himself has said to the disciples: "You shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts I: 8) The Bible says again:"Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice's sake, theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Math. V: 10). Clement I uses the same Greek word in his Epistles (c. 96) to describe the endurance of St. Peter and St. Paul, in their sufferings. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 116) uses the word "imitator" for a martyr (Phil. 72, Rom. 6: 3) to show that a martyr is one who imitates Christ in his life even to the extent of suffering and death. Yet, martyrdom is not achieved by but given to. The doctors of the early church believed that the superhuman courage of the martyrs and the greatness of their sacrifice could be explained only as a manifestation of the power of God acting in and through them. Thomas Becket is a martyr and this play deals with the martyrdom of St.Becket.

10.7 Summing Up

This lesson has introduced the conditions of modern age and how playwrights like T.S.Eliot focused on verse dramas. T.S.Eliot has chosen a religious theme and has portrayed it on the stage in a thought provoking style. This is presented in two parts separated by an interlude. The next lesson will offer you the summary of the play, an analysis of characters and themes. But you will be able to appreciate the play only when you go through the original text.

10.8 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Write about the conditions of modern age.
2. What is the contribution of T.S.Eliot to modern drama?
3. What did the writers represent during the modern age?
4. Name the playwrights who attempted verse drama?
5. What is theme of the play, *The Murder in the Cathedral?*

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LESSON -11
THE STRUCTURE AND THE ANALYTICAL OUTLINE OF '*THE MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL*'

Objectives

After going through the lesson, you will

- Know about the structure of the play
- Understand the plot of the play

Structure of the Lesson

11.1 The Structure of the Play: A Play in Two Parts with an Interlude

The play is skillfully divided into two parts, connected with an interlude. They illustrate the three phases of the theme. In part I, Becket undergoes rigorous spiritual exercise and moulds up his creed, and in the Interlude, he gives expression to his creed, and in part II he executes what he has preached. Thus we get the exercise, the expression and the execution of the spiritual career of Becket from these sections. In this respect the Interlude is highly significant,and bearing this in mind, T. R. Barnes observes:"It is,I think in this sermon, that the theme of the play is given most clearly" (Scrutiny Vol. IV. p. 189). It is, in fact, the node of the theme,Grover Smith finds the relevance of the division in yet another way. In his view, part I presents the motif of suffering through Becket's decision not to act, part II presents the motif of action through Becket's suffering the acts of others. The categories of action and suffering constitute the internal rationale of the drama.

11.2 Coherent Dramatic Pattern

The structure of *Murder in the Cathedral* has coherence. The play opens with the exposition providing us with information such as the names of important characters, their relationships, the location of the action and so on. Even at the beginning, we are well informed of 'prior action' and the events that occurred before. Moreover, the theme of the play, 'to bear witness'is suggested even in the opening 'Chorus.' Then the play leads to the conflict, chorus or crisis or climax, the temptation. The conflict is internal and intellectual. Now the action falls and resolves with the resolution of Becket and thus forms the 'denouement'. All these repeat themselves in Part II in the same way.Eliot has put the theme into a"well-wrought"dramatic pattern. An analysis of the structure involves three steps: (1) identification of the principal parts to the work; (2) examination of the relations of the parts to one another;and (3) examination of the relations of the parts to the whole.

11.3 Becket in History and Becket on the Stage:

The historical Becket is indeed a man of much worldly interest and is even sensual. But Eliot's Becket is almost a "flat character."Still there are occasions when the prelate proves mundane. He shows a keen sense of duty when he leaves all the papers signed ready before his death. An evolution in his character from the material level to the spiritual is suggested through various anecdotes of his past life.

There is no proper action on the stage and everything that happens is psychological. It is this static quality of the play that makes it difficult for the stage or screen. Becket is an intellectual being. Perfecting himself, instructing others, taking decisions, preaching and drawing near to his end. His spiritual education is complete when he makes the correct choice. He is a zealous champion of the church and a devoted defender of his faith. At the same time, he is as shrewd as a serpent and as innocent as a dove. This makes him even spiritually proud. Becket stands adamant, asserting his rights and privileges.

Apart from a personal feud between Henry II and Becket, or a political conflict between the state and the church, the theme has much relevance to every one of us. There exists the same relation between Becket and the Chorus, the Chorus and the audience, as there is between the clergy and the choir, the choir and the congregation.

The crisis of the play is intellectual, and Becket has to take a moral decision. Therefore, he is less human, and more of an ideal. There is less human interest in his character. Very often we feel him an ideal rather than a man of flesh and blood. We do not notice a rapid and thorough change in his character as we find in the character of Lear or Macbeth. The play is, in fact, a religious drama, dealing with a religious theme, written for the religious minded audience. They may go to the theatre, as they go to church, and receive proper instruction there.

11.4ANALYTICAL OUTLINE OF THE PLAY

11.4.1 Part I

The play opens with a scene in the Archbishop's Hall, Canterbury. The date is 2nd December, 1170. Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has been in self-imposed exile in France for seven years, as a result of a quarrel with King Henry II on the rights of the Church to full autonomy and freedom from State control. There are now rumours about his

return to England. The Chorus, is formed by a group of women of the city. They have heard rumours that the Archbishop may be returning and this fills them with a vague sense of dread. These poor women constitute the Chorus in the play. It is their feeling that God has prompted them to approach the cathedral to see something unique that is going to happen.

The poor women of the Chorus love and venerate their Archbishop. But they do not want him to return. For, that may mean conflict with the King of which they are afraid. Will Becket become a new martyr? This seems to be a thought at the back of their minds, not clearly expressed even to themselves. But, instinctively they feel they have had a glimpse of the future, and it is full of both danger and promise.

Three priests now appear. They discuss the endless negotiations between King Henry II and the Archbishop. A messenger now arrives with the news that the Archbishop has returned to England and is, in fact quite near Canterbury. The messenger explains that enthusiastic crowds are welcoming the Archbishop who is supported by the Pope and the King of France. But his relations with King Henry have not become cordial once again. There is only a kind of nominal peace between them.

One of the priests is apprehensive about the safety of the Archbishop and the interests of the Church. Another priest feels happy at the return of the Archbishop who will support the church against the barons. The third priest comments that events are moving after seven years. It is no use guessing whether the result will be pleasant or unpleasant.

The Chorus continues to feel disturbed. Everything seems to indicate to them that a disaster is bound to take place if the Archbishop stays on in England. They wish that he must at once return secretly to France. Otherwise he may be killed at Canterbury. This is such a horrible crime that they do not wish to be involved in it even as silent, helpless spectators.

One of the priests criticizes the poor women for expressing such sentiments. The Archbishop arrives at this moment. He overhears the last part of the priest's admonition. Referring to it, he says that the women are perhaps revealing truths they do not fully understand. Even the priest may not be able to grasp them. "The designs of God will be fulfilled, whatever we may try to do. Our duty is to surrender our will to the will of God, even though it may involve suffering."

The Archbishop tells the priests that it is likely that he may be left in peace for a little while. "However, something may happen soon and, when it happens, it will be sudden and unexpected."

Now the Four Tempters visit the Archbishop one by one. Each one advises Becket on what he should do. The advice given in each case is different. But each of them wants him to do something positive, make his peace with the King and accept the post of Chancellor again or ally himself with the barons in his fight—with the King or deliberately invite martyrdom for the spiritual glory that it will be conferred on him. Their arguments are persuasive, but Becket manages somehow to remain uninfluenced by their advice and resolves to act "according to the will of God" as it may become manifest to him.

The poor women of the Chorus describe the mood of restlessness that has come over them and the people, induced by a fear of imminent disaster. There follows a brief series of exchanges among the Chorus, the Priests and the Tempters. All of them refer to natural

phenomena and routine activities and find in them some hidden sinister significance. They also comment that "death can come to one in many unexpected ways." The poor women of the Chorus plead with the Archbishop to save himself in order to save them. They feel that God is leaving them and that the forces of Hell are taking possession of the earth.

All this while, Becket has been pondering over the subtle arguments of the Fourth Tempter, that martyrdom should be deliberately sought, either because it will "bring fame on earth and glory in heaven or because life is meaningless." Now he has reached a decision about where his duty lies. To allow oneself to be martyred may be right, but it should not be done "for the wrong reason."

Becket now reviews his life. He recalls his youth when he pursued pleasure and power. He feels that it is natural for men, even while accepting religion, to love God less than He deserves. Power is sought under the pretext that it enables one to help the people. But this may lead in the end to forgetting God altogether. Becket realizes that even his life of religion has provided him with the temptation of glorifying himself in the name of service of God.

Turning to the Priests and the Chorus (the group of women), he says that he proposes to stay where he is, neither seeking martyrdom nor avoiding it. But martyrdom seems inevitable. They may think that he will be practically committing suicide out of foolish pride. However, if a sacrilege should be committed, they will all be involved in it. He does not propose to offer any provocation. And he prays to God that his guardian angel may watch over and determine any attack that may be made on him.

11.4.2Becket's Sermon as the Interlude in the Play

The scene now shifts to the Cathedral. Several days have passed and it is the 25th of December. The Interlude is taken up with the sermon that Becket preaches on the morning of the Christmas day in 1170. The text for it is the praise of God by the angels and the assurance given by them of peace on earth and good will among men when announcing the birth of Jesus to the shepherds.

Becket declares that this Christmas sermon will be very brief. He asks the people to think over the significance and mystery of the masses celebrated on the Christmas day. The mass is in commemoration of the Last Supper. It therefore recalls the sufferings of Jesus on the Cross during his crucifixion on the day after the Last Supper. Yet the mass is held in celebration of the joyous occasion of the birth of Jesus. Thus, simultaneously, they give expression to their joy at the birth of Jesus and offer him immediately as a sacrifice to atone for the sins of mankind. The birth and death of Jesus are thus celebrated at the same time.

The celebration of the birth and death of Jesus at the same time may seem paradoxical. But these paradoxes can be understood, if we think over what Jesus meant by peace. This was not peace as the world would understand it. They must also remember that on the day after Christmas, they will be celebrating the martyrdom of St. Stephen, the earliest of the martyrs. On the Christmas day, Christians are invited both to rejoice in the birth of Jesus and grieve over his death. Similarly, they should feel both joy and grief in the death of martyrs. The grief is for the crime and sin committed by those who killed the martyr and the joy is that the soul of the martyr has attained heaven.

Becket now reflects on the nature of martyrdom. Martyrdom should not be regarded as taking place by chance or by the efforts of the martyr. Becket declares that martyrdom is always the design of God. Divine love uses this design to warn men who have gone astray and persuade them to return to the straight and narrow path. Thus the martyr is one who has become the instrument of God by surrendering his will to the will of God. He does not want anything for himself, not even the honour of martyrdom. This humility on the part of the martyr raises him to the rank of a saint. In suffering he finds joy. This explains the paradox why Christians rejoice in the birth of Jesus and also grieve over his death.

Becket concludes his sermon with an exhortation that the people should remember the martyrs of the past particularly St. Elphege of Canterbury. This is especially appropriate on Christmas. Becket adds that he does not want to deliver any more sermons to them. Very soon they may see 'another martyrdom', and it will not be the last. So let them remember and ponder over what he has said.

Thus the Interlude is taken up with the sermon that Becket preaches on the morning of the Christmas day in 1170.

11.4.3Part II

The scene shifts again to the Archbishop's Hall. The action of the scene stretches over four days, 26th to 29th December, 1170. The culmination of the action is in the murder of the Archbishop by four knights on the 29th December. The poet indicates the passage of three days 26th to 28th, through the display of banners commemorating the significance of each of these dates according to the religious calendar, and the singing of appropriate songs and hymns.

The scene opens with the Chorus expressing their fears about something dreadful that is to happen. The forebodings of the opening scene are now intensified. They feel that the disaster is imminent. Still the suspense seems to be unbearable. Christmas has passed and the poor women of the Chorus look forward to the next great festival of Easter. If the former reminds us of the birth of Jesus, the latter commemorates the crucifixion and resurrection. They feel that a great crime will be committed in the interval between these two festivals.

A priest now arrives on the stage and announces that it is St. Stephen's Day, the 26th of December. He states that this day is the one cherished by the Archbishop. Then another priest enters carrying a banner of St. John, the Apostle. The day is identified as that commemorating St. John and the succeeding day, of St. Stephen. Now a third priest enters with the banners of the babies massacred by Herod. He announces that it is the 28th of December, intended to commemorate the Holy Innocents. He calls upon God to avenge the murders of saints and recalls the soul of Rachel weeping near her tomb over the fate of her descendants.

All the three priests then gather together and announce the advent of the 29th of December. Two priests think that the day is going to be one in which nothing significant or unexpected is likely to happen. But their companion points out that any passing moment may be significant. It is not unlikely that God may reveal a great design even at that moment.

Even as the words are spoken, four knights rush in and the banners are put away. The knights introduce themselves as the King's servants. They want to meet the Archbishop

immediately. They decline the invitation to dinner extended by the priests. The Archbishop himself now comes to meet the knights. He observes that even what is long anticipated has a way of happening suddenly, when one is thinking about the other things. The knights demand a private conference with Becket and the priests are sent away.

The knights demand that Becket should revoke the excommunication that he had passed against the bishops who had conducted the coronation of the Crown Prince. But Becket tells them that the excommunication of the bishops had been ordered by the Pope and the aggrieved persons must approach him to get the order cancelled. One of the knights then demands that Becket and his followers should leave England, this being the King's order. But Becket points out to him that he has been separated for seven long years from those whose spiritual welfare has been entrusted to him. He is not prepared to allow himself to be separated from them once again. The knights now threaten to kill Becket for treason. They leave the Cathedral, promising to return with their swords.

The women of the Chorus give expression to the panic that they experience at the threat of the knights. They foresee the sacrilegious murder of the Archbishop as imminent. They feel that everything in Nature has turned topsy-turvy. They experience a nameless fear all around them which is about to fructify in a deed of horror. They can take no steps to avert the disaster, and they experience a spiritual death. They entreat the Archbishop to pardon them and pray for them.

The priests urge Becket to leave for the secure sanctuary of the Cathedral. They request him to remain in front of the altar when the knights come back with their sword. Becket's answer is that he has been waiting for God to work His will on him. If God is pleased to make a martyr of him, it will be because he has been made for that purpose. In that case he need not have any fear. What he should do is that he should surrender his will to the will of God. Becket has had a glimpse of the unalloyed joy of heaven. He does not want to lose the opportunity of gaining it. Death for him will be the gateway to bliss. This stubbornness makes the priests use physical force to push the unwilling Archbishop into the Cathedral.

Becket and the priests are now in the Cathedral. The priests close the door and bolt it. They feel a temporary sense of security. But Becket orders the doors to be opened. The Cathedral is not a castle, but a place where the pious offer their prayers. Even enemies should not be denied entry into the church. Becket tells the priests that they should not take into consideration the immediate effects of what the knights may do to him. He may be killed, but his death will be the result of a decision of God in which he is acquiescing.

In surrendering his will to that of God, Becket is obeying a higher law. The knights should not be resisted by the use of force or tricks of diplomacy. They may be beasts, but there is a beast in every man. The Archbishop feels that he and the priests have triumphed over their animal instincts. A further triumph awaits them, if he allows himself to be dealt with as God wills. This will be a fresh testimony to the victory achieved by Jesus on the Cross.

Becket's command to open the door is obeyed. Immediately, the knights appearing somewhat drunk, walk in. The priests at once drag the Archbishop up a staircase and down to the crypt. The knights demand to know where Becket is. They abuse him as a low-born traitor and a priest who interferes in affairs with which he ought not to concern himself.

Becket comes forward to meet them. The knights demand the revocation of the orders of excommunication on the bishops, the surrender of powers wrongfully claimed for the church, return of the money due to the King and a declaration of his acceptance of the authority to the King in all matters. Becket's reply is that he is willing to sacrifice his life for the sake of the freedom and authority of the church. If they kill him, they will be only injuring themselves. They are free to do so. But, in the name of God, he solemnly calls on them not to hurt anyone else, whether he is an ordinary citizen or a priest.

The knights shout that he is a traitor. They now attack and murder the Archbishop who is unarmed and who does not try to resist them. While the murder is taking place, the chorus gives expression to the feeling that the whole world is guilty of the Archbishop's murder and stained with his blood. "Everything, whether living or lifeless, has been soiled with sin. They feel that they are in a strange country where the trees have no leaves. But if any of the branches are broken, blood gushes out. The stones spout blood on being touched. Never again will the recurrent seasons bring them their distinctive pleasures and comforts." They pray that time should stand still, so that the further misfortunes awaiting them may hold back.

The dramatist now introduces a technical innovation. He makes the knights justify the murder by addressing the audience. The language used is modern and the arguments advanced are also such as have been raised in the centuries subsequent to Becket's martyrdom.

The four knights try to justify the murder of Becket in different ways. The killing of Becket was a regrettable necessity in the interests of good government. Such a necessity may not recur in the future when milder measures like passing of bill for treason against the Archbishop by Parliament or enforcement of allegiance to the state from the church may prove sufficient. However in the present circumstances, Becket had to be killed.

The knights now depart and the priests begin to comment on the death of Becket from a point of view which is directly opposed to that of King's champions. One of the priests says that the church has sustained a loss which suffered sacrilege. He foresees the return of the Heathen religion to England. There is none to offer them council or give them the strength of mind to bear the tribulations that lie ahead. But another priest tells him that the death of Becket is really a victory of the church. If it can inspire men to martyrdom, it gets strengthened. To the murderers he sees no rest on the earth and no prospect in heaven. They will fail miserably even in creating false justifications for their heinous crime. The priests entreat Becket, now in heaven, to bless them and offer thanks to God for giving them a new saint in Canterbury.

The play now concludes with the Chorus. When the Chorus speaks, the audience can hear choral singing of the "Te Deum"off the stage. The women of Canterbury, who constitute the Chorus, are now reconciled to the death of Becket. They have overcome the shock of their guilt in allowing the murder to take place. The glory of the Archbishop's martyrdom exalts them, and its sanctity purifies them.

The poor women of the Chorus thank God for the manifestation of His power and splendor in all living creatures as well as in lifeless things. Those who persecute and those who suffer, those who preach atheism are alike sustained by the power of God. Without Him nothing can exist. Denial itself is an indirect affirmation of His existence, even as sin is of His holiness. Of all living things, man alone has the capacity to realize that God exists and to follow the moral law promulgated by him. It is therefore man's duty to pray and praise, and bear testimony to his faith in speech and action.

Even the members of the Chorus who perform the menial work of sweeping and scrubbing and who suffer from oppression of all kinds, have sufficient knowledge to praise God. Jesus sheds his blood for saving men from their sins. Every martyr is doing this service

for mankind to some extent or the other. Sanctity invests the places where they are killed. Wherever and whenever martyrdom takes place, it exercises its purifying and vitalizing effects. The poor women of the Chorus specially thank God for blessing Canterbury with another martyr.

The members of the Chorus are afraid of surrendering themselves fully to the will of God as Becket did. They cannot love God exclusively, for such love requires renunciation and suffering. They prefer the tyranny of the world to the rigors of the religious life. They do not want to love God too much, nor to be loved by Him beyond measure. They know that this is their weakness. They also realize that they share the guilt of the murder of the martyr. So they pray for the mercy of God and Christ and entreat St. Thomas, now in heaven, to intercede for them.

11.5 Summing Up

You should have observed that a religious theme was handled deftly by T.S.Eliot, projecting the political angle of the circumstances. The play was written in three parts with an interlude connecting the first and second. You can understand how Eliot has brought in different characters to build the political as well as the religious atmosphere of the play. A detailed reading of the play will help you understand the situation in a better way.

11.6 Comprehension Check Questions

1. What are the different parts of the play?
2. What did Eliot present in the middle part?
3. What is the role of the tempters?
4. Why did the king employ the knights?
5. Write about the role of the Chorus.
6. Write about the saint in ten sentences.

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LESSON- 12

DETAILED ANALYSIS OF IMPORTANT CHARACTERS AND THEMES IN T.S. ELIOT'S 'MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL'

Objectives

After going through the lesson, you will be able to

- Understand the role of different characters in the play and
- Assess and analyse the structure of the plot

Structure of the Lesson

12.1 The Priests

The Priests are representative of the materialistic clergy of the Middle Ages. They are ignorant of the noble motives of their leader. Being too worldly, they want to use the church as a fortress for their own safety. The First Priest is dominated by fear throughout the play. His concern is always to avoid anything disturbing. The noble ideas of the church seem foreign to him. The Second Priest takes an optimistic view of events, but we may doubt his sincerity of that optimism. The Third Priest comes closer to true wisdom than the other two. He even gets a glance into the insights of Becket himself. Like Becket, he uses the same image to refer to the mysterious relation between God and Man. The difference is, he remains an observer while Becket is given to action.

12.2 The Four Tempters

The idea of introducing the Four Tempters was actually suggested by Rupert Doone*, to give the play a deeper meaning and wider dimension. Centering upon the spiritual conflict of the protagonist, it forms the crisis of the play.

The Four Tempters are none but the reflection of the heart of Thomas himself, personified for the stage. They are in fact, the four 'Thomas'es. This technique helps wonderfully to bring out the inner conflict of Becket upon the stage.

The action of Part I starts with the advent of Becket, and reaches the crisis with the Temptation and resolves with the resolution of Becket. In the sermon he gives expression to that resolution. The action of part II starts with the advent of the Knights, reaches the crisis with the murder and resolves with the glorification of Becket. The central event in Part I is the temptation and in Part II, it is the murder. Becket is therein Part I, "to make perfect his will", and in the sermon to express his will, and in Part II to execute his will. And 'to make perfect the will' is never possible without the temptation. It is a touchstone for Becket to test his mettle, to mould his creed, "to shape the still unshapen". Moreover, we the audience watch Becket, the hero at close quarters and get at his real "self,"in the temptation scene. The past, present and future of Becket are centered upon this event. The inner and the outer of his personality meet at the same point, "the still point". The centre and the circumference are juxtaposed, and Becket, that was under the assumption of remaining at the centre, finds himself at the circumference, not moving, but being turned over by the centre.

It is a revelation, an apocalypse for the spiritually elect, and he is qualified for his mission with this test. He is no more the gay Tom, neither the master of policy, nor the rebel, nor the aspirant of martyrdom, but a "will in the Will of God". The broken harmony is restored only through the agony of the Temptation. Therefore, the Temptation is very much important in the scheme of the play. We are faced with terrible forces at conflict with Becket, when we witness this scene. It is "the Garden of 'Gethsemane'for the new saint."

The First Tempter may be regarded as a representative of the happy-go-lucky days of Thomas. Of the Four Tempters, this one is probably the easiest to resist. The First Tempter reminds the Archbishop of the happy times they spent together with the King in parties and dinners. He tells Becket that he may again have such pleasant times, if he becomes friendly with the King. As the First Tempter takes leave of him, Becket realizes that the Tempter has awakened in him nostalgic memories of the past. Though he has outgrown the love of pleasure, their attraction has not wholly disappeared. He must brush them aside as unworthy.

The Second Tempter appeals to Becket's desire for power, to his pride and to his genuine desire to serve others. The Second Tempter suggests that Becket can combine in himself the offices of Chancellor and Archbishop, if he gets reconciled to the King. Becket can help the people and the church by his efficient and just administration. Becket admits that the just exercise of temporal power once attracted him. But now he feels that the people need spiritual transformation more than good government.

The Third Tempter represents the Barons, that, like the church, they seek to check the absolute power of the King. The Fourth Tempter is the most fatal and, therefore, the most important, as he tempts Becket "to do the right deed for the wrong reason". He wants to make Becket wish for the glory of being a saint. The Third Tempter suggests that Becket should join forces with the barons and fight against the king. But Becket tells him that he still has some affection for the King, and he cannot bring himself to make a treacherous alliance with the barons against the King.

The fact that Becket never expects the Fourth Tempter shows that he has not been aware of this weakness in him, the weakness of spiritual pride. This, however, helps in self-realization and self-purification. What is left for Part II begins here, a thread of action thrown into Part ll. What is yet to come hinges on this critical situation. We may well remember the words of G. Wilson Knight, in this context: *"Murder in the Cathedral* dramatises Becket as a type of Christian heroism, conquering pride and attaining martyrdom".

The Fourth Tempter presents to Becket a picture of the glories of martyrdom. If Becket dies a martyr, he will become more famous than any king. His tomb will become a place of pilgrimage. He will have a place in Heaven and the power to perform miracles. But Becket overcomes the temptation presented by the Fourth Tempter also. Becket, on deep reflection, realizes that he must not deliberately invite martyrdom. He must merely learn to make his will serve the divine purpose. He resolves to become a conscious instrument of God's will and to surrender his will completely to God. He will not seek martyrdom, for selfish reasons. Nor will he resist it if it is God's will that he should be a martyr.

In Tennyson's 'Becket,' the temptations like yielding to the King, come from the fellow bishops. But Eliot has made the temptation the turning point in the spiritual career of Becket, and it is only after overcoming the temptations, that Becket learns the full meaning of martyrdom. This idea serves excellently to bring out the theme. About the source of this technique, Grover Smith observes, "Eliot could have borrowed his Four Tempters from Job as easily as from late 15th century drama."But with Eliot this technique takes on deeper significance, and the success of the play depends on both the meaning of the temptation and of the murder.

12.3 THE FOUR KNIGHTS

Four knights figure in the play as the murderers of Becket. The four Knights are equally important. They are (i) Reginald Fitz Urse, (II) Sir Hugh de Morvllle, (III) Baron Willian de Traici, and (IV) Richard Britto. They are at once agents of the King and, although they do not know it, agents of the will of God. They are also the representatives of the merciless ruling class.They are in fact embodiment of evil,ever at war with virtue. They bring death to Canterbury. Their action, the murder, like the action of Sweeney, leads to spiritual death. They stand for action and violence, while Becket is a symbol of passive suffering. Thus Becket, the Chorus and the Knights represent Christ, the people and the powers of darkness respectively.

The First Knight seeks to smooth over the disturbances in people that lead to turmoil in the state. But he has no patience to grasp and resolve them. The Second Knight is the least eloquent. The Third Knight is far more skilled at rhetoric. He has a honeyed-tongue that has a sting in the end. He wants to make others involved in their action, conveniently hiding the terrible consequence of it. The Fourth Knight, like the Fourth Tempter, is the deadliest and the most subtle. He attributes a spiritual suicide to Becket, of an unsound mind, and skillfully escapes the murder.

The First Knight, called, Reginald Fitz Urse, is their leader. It is he, who announces that they represent the king and asks for an immediate interview with the Archbishop. The knights do not conceal their fanatical loyalty to the king. Becket may be the head of the English church, but, in their view, he is a servant of the king. They level against him the charges of disloyalty and treason. Becket's explanation that, 'his differences with the king are due to his higher loyalty to the church', excite their scorn.

The First Knight charges Becket with instigating revolt against the King. The Second Knight refers to the King's magnanimity in restoring the Archbishop to his office. The Third Knight accuses Becket of ingratitude to the King. Becket's ingratitude was found, in his questioning the validity of the coronation of Prince Henry, in his excommunicating the bishops and holding the threat of the denial of spiritual services to the faithful followers of

the King. They order Becket to leave England at once with his followers. When the knights return, they are not merely armed, but they are also slightly drunk. Becket comes down to meet them, saying that he is ready to die for the sake of the church. Once again the knights repeat their demands that the bishops be absolved and the claim for the independence of the Church be withdrawn. Becket disdains to answer the charges made by them. When they call him a traitor, he points out that Fitz Urse deserves that description better. Then, even as Becket commends his soul to God, Virgin Mary and the saints and martyrs, the knights kill him.

After the murder, the knights directly address the audience in justification of what they have done. Fitz Urse, the First Knight, does not make any plea on behalf of himself and his comrades. He merely requests the audience to listen to them before judging them. It is likely that people may be prejudiced against them for killing one who was unarmed, and who did not offer any resistance. Still, the knights have a right to state their case before the jury consisting of the audience.

De Fraci, the Third Knight admits that they are drunk. This is because they could not have otherwise performed the unpleasant duty of killing the Archbishop. He states that they killed the Archbishop not for any personal benefit. On the other hand, they will have to suffer for this deed, as the King will disown them for political reasons.

De Morville, the Second Knight, now speaks about the political, and constitutional aspects of the assassination. He points out that the King, starting his reign after a disastrous civil war, sought to establish a strong central government. For this purpose, the powers of the barons and the church had to be curtailed and the judiciary reformed. Becket, who was the Chancellor, was made Archbishop by the king in the hope that he would combine in himself the highest executive office of the church and the state and give England an ideal government. But unfortunately Becket resigned his post as Chancellor and became a fanatical champion of the rights of the church against the state. In this situation, the only way of bringing the church under the control of the state was by removing him from the scene. It had to be carried out through his murder. In normal circumstances, Parliament might choose to deal with such persons by condemning to death by a special law or by quietly removing them from their office. But, under the present circumstances, assassination became an absolute necessity. In carrying it out, the knights have served the people and the people must commend them for their noble action.

The last to speak is Richard Brito who states that Becket committed suicide and was not really the victim of a murder. He provoked the knights by refusing to answer their charges. He did not try to take any step to protect himself. He ordered the doors of the Cathedral to be kept open and he came forward asking them to kill. All this was due to his personal vanity and spiritual pride. This vanity and spiritual pride made him seek martyrdom for the sake of selfish glory.

After trying to justify their deed, the knights disappear from the play. White justifying their action, the knights make it clear that they have bridged the time gap between the twelfth century when the murder took place, and the twentieth century when the play is being staged. The knights advance political excuses for the murder that can find a ready appeal in our times. They presume to know of constitutional developments and ideas belonging to later ages. The role that Eliot assigns the knights in these speeches is that of a scrutiny of the martyrdom of Becket from the point of view of a skeptical and irreligious age. By introducing the scene in which the knights directly address the audience, Eliot succeeds in

inculcating reverence to the religious ideal embodied in Becket but the speeches appear to be something like lessons in the middle of play. To this extent this device affects the artistic excellence of the play.

12.4 The Character of THOMAS BECKET

The play is not about the murder in the Cathedral but about the spiritual state of a martyr, facing death, the spiritual education of the poor women who are witness to his sacrifice and the willful opposition of secular to eternal power. Becket is the central figure of the play, *Murder in the Cathedral.* All the other characters serve the purpose of showing light on various aspects of his character and on his doubts and temptations. The play concentrates on the last four weeks of his life-from 2nd December to 29thDecember, 1170. The theme is his martyrdom.

The essential affinity between Becket and the other characters is that of the 'redeemer and the redeemed.' Becket is there to bring the folk to the ways of the church. He is to instruct and educate them by his own example. The ignorant women that constitute the Chorus, the materialistic priests and the cruel Knights stand in contrast to the spiritually educated Becket. They form various levels to the Christian idealism which Becket upholds.

The indifferent and ignorant women turn to be the ardent followers of Becket, and consequently of Christ. Because of such a thorough spiritual evolution, Nevill Coghill asserts, "I do not know of any other dramatic Chorus which changes its moral character during the course of play". There is a remarkable change in the tone of the play towards the end, which helps a profound wind-up. The medley is converted into harmony, the chaos gives way to cosmos, and the discord is replaced by concord. The 'fear in the way'is overcome by Becket and his people. Thus it is true 'the play concerns rather what happens through the man than what happens to him" (Grover Smith).

The play starts with Becket's return to England on December 2nd, 1170 and concludes with his death twenty seven days later. However, through various dramatic devices, Eliot enables us to watch the contest between the two from the very beginning.

The tempters and the Knights sketch for us the rise of Becket from obscurity to that of Chancellor of England, and, later on, the Archbishop of Canterbury. The four Tempters may be considered to represent Becket's feelings and aspirations, past and present.

In his Christmas sermon, Becket himself says that martyrs are chosen by God to carryout His mysterious purpose. None can know whether he has been chosen as a martyr. God's purposes will be achieved whether men support or oppose them or remain indifferent. They have however the chance to co-operate with the will of God and become conscious instruments for fulfilling His purpose both by doing things and remaining passive.

After overcoming his temptations, Becket himself reviews his past life. He realizes that he was complacent and he had identified good deeds with spiritual perfection. Now he sees how wrong he was. He now realizes that it is his duty to love God to the exclusion of everything else. If this brings him death, it may taint with sin not merely the actual murderers but also his friends and followers. Nevertheless, his martyrdom will remind them of the passion of Christ and redeem them.

Becket's contemporaries have given detailed accounts of his conflict with King Henry. While the facts maybe the same in all these accounts, the interpretation of the events differs from writer to writer.

Eliot, after studying the records, has given his own interpretation. To him, Becket is a saint in the making. He shows in the play how the strained relations between him and the King were the means for the purification of his soul and the attainment of sanctity.

From the speech of the knight, Sir Hugh De Morville, we learn how King Henry was eager to bring peace to the land which had been torn by a civil war and to maintain law and order effectively. He succeeded in putting down baronial pretensions with the help of Becket as Chancellor. In the hope of subordinating the church to the state, he pressed on Becket, the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury. His expectation was that Becket would continue to be Chancellor and combine in himself the highest offices of the church and the state. The King hoped to bring out in this manner a union of spiritual and temporal administration under the central government. But to the king's chagrin, Becket resigned the post of the Chancellor and devoted himself to his spiritual office. He claimed that his first loyalty was to the church which should be completely independent of the state. On both sides, question of principles were involved. The King and the Archbishop were alike strong-willed and the conflict between them turned serious enough to shake the foundations of the state.

From the speeches of the priests and the tempters we learn about the crises in the relations of Becket with the King at Clarendon, Northampton and Montmirail. Fearing that he might be put in prison, Becket fled to France.

The king now took a step which had the effect of depriving the Archbishop of Canterbury of one of his prerogatives. He called upon the Archbishop of York to conduct the coronation of his eldest son. When this was done, Becket retaliated, by excommunicating all the bishops who assisted in the coronation. His action was upheld by the Pope.

On Becket's return to England, the knights order him, on behalf of the king, to absolve all those whom he had excommunicated. When Becket refuses to do so, they ask him to leave England at once with all his followers. The Archbishop declines to obey this order also. He tells them that his place is by the side of those whose spiritual care has been entrusted to him. The knights leave him for a short time, threatening to come back and kill him. He sees his way clearly before him. He decides to uphold the rights of the church to the last. He is not afraid of the threats made by the knights. When the priests try to save his life by closing the massive doors of the cathedral and bolting them from inside, he orders them to open the doors. He says that the doors of the church should always remain open to friends as well as enemies. When the knights challenge him to come down and face them if he has courage, he boldly comes down to meet them. The knights brutally kill him. Becket thus becomes a martyr. The reactions of the Third Priest and the final speech of the chorus testify to the redemptive power.

Thomas Becket has such a vision of martyrdom. Intuitively he feels that his destiny is to be a martyr. But his way to martyrdom is strewn with doubts and temptations. He has a conflict with the King over the rights of the church. He has temptations like those of the pleasures of the court, the exultation of temporal power and the excitement of seeking allies in a straightforward political fight with the King. Even his readiness to sacrifice his life may

be a device of the Devil to fill him with spiritual pride. Becket however overcomes gradually all these temptations and attains martyrdom.

The play thus refers to the entire course of the quarrel between the king and the Archbishop. No doubt, full details are not given in the play. But enough is reported to show us the main points at issue. The independence of the church from the state, particularly the right of the church to have its own courts and to exclude the jurisdiction of secular courts over the clergy, the challenge to the King's authority by the excommunication of these who participated in the coronation of Prince Henry, ignoring the prerogative of the Archbishop of Canterbury-all these are referred to more than once in the play. The intimation of the knights rests on them, and as there is no compliance, the Archbishop is killed.

King Henry does not actually appear in the play. But his shadow lies over the action. He, and through him the knights, become the instruments for effecting the martyrdom of Becket.

The primary interest of the play however lies neither in the personal nor in the political conflict between the king and Archbishop. It lies in the spiritual development of Becket culminating in his acceptance with tranquil joy of the role of martyr which appears to him to have been conferred upon him by God.

Though Becket is the central character, there is an intimate relation between Becket and the other characters. They represent various levels of attitude towards the ideal which Becket upholds. This revelation gives the play the coordination and the inner unity. The motivation of Becket and the reactions of the Chorus are the two things that make up the real crux of the play. This is presented effectively and coherently throughout the play.

12.5 THE CHORUS

The Chorus represents the common folk of Canterbury who do not understand the meaning and mystery of martyrdom. They wail when they are drawn up to the Cathedral to witness some presage of an act, and groan under heavy material hardships and suffering. They do not live a full spiritual life, but are simply 'living and partly living'. Like the inhabitants of 'The Waste Land', they take a negative attitude to the spiritual life. Left alone and deserted by their shepherd and in a mood of mounting fear and anxiety, they simply cling to the mechanical and meaningless routine of life. They do not want anything to happen. 'They find danger and death upon the face of the earth. They cannot bear reality. "The women of Canterbury are aware that they are not able to bear, that they do not wish to bear, a new and greater ordeal than the familiar disappointments and setbacks of their simple lives." (W. H. Matson). But towards the end of the play. we find them fully enlightened, spiritually educated, ready to follow Becket in their creed, word and deed. They look upon St. Thomas with ardent devotion and invocation. "They need a leader, just as the builders of the London churches needed leaders… and the leaders are the saints and martyrs". (Nevill Coghill).

12.6 Summing Up

This lesson has offered you a brief analysis of all the important characters and how they are connected to the main theme. They contribute to the development of both religious and political plot in the play. The play has various themes and the next lesson will focus on such discussion.

12.7 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Mention the important characters in the play.
2. Show how the king is represented by Eliot.
3. Who are the 'tempters' and what is their role?
4. Which aspect of the plot is represented by the knights?
5. What is the role played by the women?
6. Sketch the character of Thomas Becket in your own words.

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LESSON 13

THE MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL: AN ANALYSIS OF THE THEMES

Objectives

After reading this lesson, you will be able to:

- Understand the various themes presented in the play and
- Appreciate the play as a whole

Structure of the Play

13.1 The Christmas Sermon of Becket (The Importance of the Interlude)

The play is presented in two parts connected by an interlude. The interlude contains the sermon of the Archbishop, Thomas Becket, who delivers his last sermon on the morning of the Christmas day in 1170 at the Canterbury Cathedral. Its theme is to link up the redemptive mission of Jesus with the role of martyrs in Christian history—during the sermon, Becket makes a hint that he himself may soon become a martyr.

The Archbishop speaks on a text from the gospel of St. Luke. The text deals with the announcement, by the angels, of the birth of Jesus to the shepherds at Bethlehem. The angels

say that it reveals the glory of God and predict that it will bring peace on earth to men of goodwill. Becket asks his audience to consider why masses are said on the Christmas day. They not only celebrate the birth of Jesus, but also mourn his death. This may appear foolish, as one cannot "both mourn and rejoice at once and for the same reason".

The angels promised peace on earth after the birth of Jesus. But we should first understand what the angels meant by peace. It was not peace as understood by the world. The angels meant the peace of God. For this, men must give up selfishness and love of pleasure and power. They must repent of their sins and try to be at peace with God. When this happens, nothing else matters.

Role of a Martyr

In this connection, the Archbishop draws attention to the role of martyrs in history. He points out that the day after Christmas is dedicated to St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr. This seems intended to remind them that the martyr fulfills on a smaller scale the redemptive mission of Jesus. When a martyr is killed, Christians must both mourn and rejoice. The grief is for the sin committed in killing him and allowing him to be killed. The joy arises from the martyr attaining Heaven as a saint.

A martyr is chosen by God to suffer and die for the sake of fulfilling a divine purpose. All that the martyr does is to surrender his will to that of God. He does not want anything for himself, not even the glory of being a martyr. He merely becomes an instrument in the hands of God. Thus he provides occasion for grief and joy on earth and attains Heaven, not in a glow of pride, but in utter humility.

Finally, Becket asks his audience to remember particularly a former Archbishop of Canterbury, St. Elphege, who became a martyr. They may shortly find another martyrdom taking place at Canterbury, and this may not be the last. To indicate that the martyr is himself, he adds that this is very probably his last sermon.

Becket suggests in this brief sermon that a martyr is chosen by God to remind people of the death of Jesus on the Cross. On a small scale, he redeems men from sin by his suffering and death, though they sin in allowing it to happen. Becket expects that he may soon be attacked and killed for trying to uphold their rights of the church. He may become a martyr. It is not a role that he either seeks or tries to avoid. But if he is killed as a martyr, they will all be involved in sin. The killing of a martyr tends to separate men further from God by the added burden of their new sin, but if it makes them repent, it will redeem them. It will help to renew their faith in God and religion.

Placed between the temptation scene and the murder scene, the Interlude containing the sermon is an important part of the play and it reveals the true intent and purpose of the play. It reveals that Becket's martyrdom is the central theme of the play. The sermon shows that Becket has overcome his temptations. It also indicates the course of events to come. God has tried him with temptations. Now God may choose him to be a martyr in order to help the world. The sermon makes us look forward to the death of Becket and the purification effected in the King and the people by that death.

13.2 The Role of the Chorus

Every Greek play, whether tragedy or comedy, contains a chorus which forms an integral part of the play. The chorus is a band of singers and dancers. They remain on the stage throughout the play. They sing and dance between episodes. In classical tragedies, the songs reported events off the stage or between episodes, tendered advice and passed comments on the events that took place on the stage. Modern drama has dispensed with this structural peculiarity of the ancient Greek theatre, regarding it as artificial. But Eliot has introduced it in an attempt not merely to present the martyrdom of Becket, but also to interpret it to the audience.

Eliot himself has stated that the chorus in the play has been introduced mainly to mediate between the action and the audience. The chorus is intended to intensify the emotional consequences of the action to the audience. To this end, he has chosen a group of the poor women of Canterbury, the scrubbers and sweepers, to make up the chorus. They watch with fear the return of Becket to England. They observe him struggling with and triumphing over temptation. They hear his Christmas sermon, they see his murder, experience its horror, listen to the pleas for the justification of the murder advanced by the knights, and finally discover that the martyrdom of Becket is meant to redeem them. Unlike in the classical tragedies, the chorus is formed from within the play.

The play opens with a speech by the chorus. Urged by some instinctive fear that a mysterious danger is threatening them, they have spontaneously gathered at the Canterbury Cathedral on 2nd December, 1170. They love their kind Archbishop. They deplore his exile, but do not want him back home, because, they are afraid of something terrible in store for him, if he should return to England. Thus the chorus builds up the atmosphere of terror and imminent tragedy. They refer to the cycle of seasons which at no stage brings them consolation or comfort. However, the month of December should prove happy because it has the privilege of celebrating Christmas.

When a messenger comes to the Cathedral and announces the return of Becket, the chorus is thrown into a panic. They are anxious that he should return to France, not merely for his sake, but even more for their sake. When the Archbishop arrives, they pray to him to save them by saving himself. For this, they are reprimanded by one of the priests. But, the Archbishop who overhears him as he arrives declares that they speak better than they know. For they seem to have a dim perception of how eternity influences time, and of how God works through the evens in the world. After the tempters have finished their advice to Becket and leave him, the chorus makes a final appeal to the Archbishop to save himself in order to save them.

When the Archbishop preaches his Christmas sermon, the chorus listens to his explanation of how a martyr is made. Every martyr is chosen by God. Becket ends his sermon by expressing his forebodings that Canterbury will very soon witness martyrdom.

The chorus experiences great agony when the four knights come to murder the Archbishop, four days after Christmas. It witnesses with horror the brutal murder of Becket. The chorus feels the stain of the crime on all things in the world. They feel that the order of Nature is subverted and that the sense of time and space is destroyed. The only thing they are conscious of is an all-pervasive evil. It seems that the defiled world can never be cleansed again.

Later on, when the "To Deum" is sung, the chorus too manages to shake off its terror. The chorus too realizes that their Archbishop has become a martyr and attunes itself to the spirit of the Song celebrating the glory of God. It feels that it must be particularly thankful to God for choosing to bless Canterbury with a saint. Till this realization came upon them, the poor women of the chorus clung foolishly to worldly wisdom, feared the blessing of God and rejected His all-demanding love. Now they plead for mercy and confidently hope that their sanctified Archbishop will intercede for them.

Primarily, the chorus in the play is an interpreter of events. The poor women of the chorus help the audience to understand the significance of the various events taking place on the stage. This chorus is a group which learns. Its views are not static, but change in the course of the play. It helps the spectators to rise ultimately to the dramatist's point of view. Though the poor women of the chorus seem to be in need of spiritual guidance at the commencement of the play, they interpret the events to the audience throughout the play. It is the intention of the dramatist that we should look upon the death of Becket as the supreme sacrifice, the contemplation of which purifies the soul and intensifies religious awareness. And this, the chorus helps us to realize.

Thus the chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* is an integral part of the play. Eliot has made artistic use of the chorus to mediate between the action and the audience and project the full significance of the action to the audience.

13.3 The Theme of Martyrdom

Becket's martyrdom is the central theme of the play, *Murder in the Cathedral* . The word "martyr" means one who by his death, bears witness to his belief. By dying, the martyr shows that his faith is absolute and that it cannot be shaken by any suffering or agony or even the deprivation of life itself. Jesus himself is the supreme example of the martyr. He died on the cross to redeem men. The Christian saints, tortured or killed, died for the sake of Jesus and enacted on a lesser scale the grand self-sacrifice of Jesus. Christians believe that the martyr not merely redeems his soul, but also purifies and exalts those who understand the significance of his life and death. Christians believe that faith in Jesus relieves men of their burden of sin. Martyrs serve the same purpose to a lesser degree.

Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, was killed by four knights on the 29th of December, 1170, in the Canterbury Cathedral. He gave up his life to uphold what he regarded as the fundamental rights of the church. Soon after his death he was recognized throughout Christendom as a martyr and was canonized. His tomb became a shrine attracting pilgrims from all over Europe. Eliot's play is an attempt to understand martyrdom in the light of the attitudes of the twentieth century.

Becket's Christmas sermon in the play sets out in a lucid manner what martyrdom means to the martyr and brings out its significance to mankind at large. He points out that on the Christmas day the church celebrates at the same time, the birth of Jesus, his sufferings and death on the cross. There is a similar juxtaposition of joy and grief in the commemoration of the death of the first Christmas martyr, St. Stephen, on the day following Christmas. Thus, Becket links up the purpose of the incarnation of Jesus with the life and death of martyrs. Just as we rejoice and mourn at once in the birth and the passion of our lord, so also, in a smaller measure we both rejoice and mourn in the death of martyrs.

In the later case, the mourning is for the sin and wickedness that brought about the death of martyrs, while the rejoicing is for the exalted spiritual status attained by them and its value for the redemption of men.Becket points out that the primary purpose of a martyrdom is to warn men to bring them back to the path of spiritual progress through repentance and acceptance of the death of the martyr as an act of God intended to purify them.

Saints are made not by chance or human will, but by the design of God. The martyr is chosen by God to fulfill a special mission at a particular time and place. But, of course, his martyrdom has also a timeless and universal significance. The play tests Becket's self-sacrifice in the light of his own theory.

When we view Becket's life in retrospect, we feel that it has been a long preparation for the culminating incident of his martyrdom. Though he was born in poor circumstances, by sheer brilliance he rose to the position of the Chancellor of England and, later on, to the position of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Becket was an outstanding success as Chancellor. King Henry made him the Archbishop of Canterbury in the hope that he would continue as Chancellor also. It was the King's hope to make England an ideal state marked by a union of spiritual and temporal administration under the Central Government. However, Becket resigned as Chancellor immediately on his appointment as Archbishop.

We see in this action the idealistic strain in Becket that led him almost inevitably to martyrdom. Becket affirmed his faith in a spiritual order superior to the state. The church derived its authority from God and Jesus and their representative, the Pope. The church could no more be subordinated to the State than the spirit to the flesh. This realization however came to Becket only after he became the Archbishop of Canterbury and the supreme spiritual authority in England.

When Becket became the Archbishop, he chose to shed the trappings of a secular office in order to devote himself wholly to his spiritual duties. Thus ensued a struggle with the King in order to maintain the independence of the church. Things worsened when the King invited the Archbishop of York to crown Prince Henry. Becket exercised his legitimate powers to excommunicate all those who had participated in the coronation. His action was duly confirmed and ratified by the Pope. Becket now resolved to return home from France where he was in exile. Though fully conscious of impending dangers, with a characteristic courage, he decided to face them.

The Four Tempters play an important part in helping Becket to analyse his own mind and choose the right path. The encounter with the Tempters helped to purify his mind and heart and make him a sacrifice acceptable to God.

Becket now decides to submit himself to the will of God. He will be ready to accept the situation either way. However, he has a conviction that God has elected him as a martyr. This state of mind is reflected in the brief, but impressive Christmas sermon. Finally, when the knights come to attack him, he keeps himself ready, offering no resistance and seeking no escape through flight. He is brutally killed by the knights after he has commended his soul to God. Thus Eliot presents the martyrdom of Becket.

One of the important reasons for the success of the play is its study of martyrdom, not merely from the point of view of the martyr, but also from that of the world. We see how Becket realises in practice, the theory of martyrdom he has set out in his Christmas sermon. The chorus and the priests recognize that Canterbury has become a holy ground through the death of Becket.

13.4 *Murder in the Cathedral* as a Tragedy

As we discussed in the early lessons, a tragedy concerns itself with serious and exalted themes dealing with the mysteries underlying life. Usually, it deals with a man of high position and extra-ordinary qualities brought down to defeat and destruction. In some sense, the hero is the architect of his own ruin, since his downfall is hastened by a defect or weakness in his own character. The hero falls because he faced a situation which is unusually difficult for him. But for this, his defect might not have ruined him. The dramatization of the fall of such a tragic hero tends to excite terror and pity. In spite of these emotions being painful in real life, they have a purifying and calming effect when worked by a tragedy. This is due to their becoming a part of an aesthetic experience. The dramatist achieves this effect through the hero expressing the potentialities of the human spirit in a struggle against terrific odds. The spectator or the reader feels that the ruined hero is in a sense the victor. This forms the vision of tragedy.

Conflict: Political and Religious

Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* tells the story of Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, being killed in the Cathedral, because he stuck to his ideals and would not compromise. Becket occupies a high position and we see this man of high ideals and great ability being brutally murdered, because he would not forsake his ideals. We do not however have a conflict between the hero and the environment. He enters into no fight against the physical forces opposed to him. There is thus no external conflict in the usual sense of the term. Nor is there any internal conflict in the mind of the hero. From the very beginning, Becket has resolved to die for the sake of his cause rather than yield to any threat. The martyrdom of Becket has however a purifying and exalting effect on the audience. We thus undergo a purifying and ennobling experience and *Murder in the Cathedral* is effective as a tragedy in this respect.

From the point of view of the chorus, we can find some nominal external conflict and a very real internal conflict. At the beginning of the action, they seek the sanctuary of the Cathedral in order to find protection from a vague threat that makes them uneasy. They are worried about the return of their beloved Archbishop from France. Should he come home, there would be a conflict between him and the King, in which, they might get involved. Becket's return causes them panic. Till he gets killed, they keep on urging him to flee from Canterbury and save them from all dangers by saving himself. They try by all means within their power to protect themselves against some external dangers which they foresee.

The members of the Chorus are afraid of God's love and blessings at the beginning, fearing that it may demand of them the renunciation of all things they hold dear. While their fears about the safety to the life of the Archbishop prove true, no disaster falls on them in a worldly sense. But, before the death of the Archbishop, they feel an overwhelming sense of shame at having allowed conditions to arise in which their beloved spiritual leader can be threatened and killed.

When the Archbishop is murdered, they are filled with an indescribable horror. Everything in the world, the elements included, seems to be stained with the blood of Becket. They realize that they have been thrown into an experience which is an instant eternity of evil and wrong. They have found themselves at a point where eternity meets time and it has soiled them with a supernatural filth that they cannot wash away.

The final attitude of the chorus is one of thankfulness to God for His abundant mercy. The spiritual progress of the chorus, accompanied by ineffectual action at first, helplessness later on, and final acceptance of God's will, is suggestive of the effects of tragic experience. *Murder in the Cathedral* can be considered to be effective as a tragedy in the transformation that it brings about in the Chorus.

Murder in the Cathedral may not have all the elements of a tragedy as defined by Aristotle. But the action of the play has a purifying and exalting effect on the audience. Moreover it brings about a spiritual transformation in the Chorus. It deals with the serious and exalted theme of martyrdom. In all these respects *Murder in the Cathedral* may be considered to be a very effective tragedy.

13.5 *Murder in the Cathedral* as a Poetic Drama

From the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th century, almost all the plays staged in the English theatre have been written in prose. The estrangement between poetry and drama was further widened by the realistic drama of the modern age. Ibsen showed the way to develop a modern drama which was deeply concerned with social problems as they affected the life and happiness of ordinary individuals. Following in the footsteps of Ibsen, Bernard Shaw wrote a series of brilliant prose comedies dealing with social problems. Other dramatists like Galsworthy also wrote some brilliant plays. Many poets like Stephen Phillips, Oscar Wilde, John Davidson, J.L.Flecker, John Masefield, R.L.Binyon, John Drinkwater, W.B.Yeats, J.M.Synge, T.S.Eliot, W.H.Auden, Christopher Isherwood, Stephen Spender, Sean O'Casey, Norman Nicholson, Christoher Fry and others produced plays in verse.

Through some efforts were made to revive poetic drama by Masefield and Flecker and also by Yeats and others belonging to the Irish Theatre Movement, their efforts failed on the whole. The gap between poetry and drama could not be adequately bridged and a suitable poetic medium for the contemporary stage was not evolved.

It was at this moment that Eliot tried to bring poetry back to the English stage. Eliot believed that there is no antagonism between poetry and drama. He stated that "all poetry leads towards drama and all drama towards poetry". What makes a play most poetic is what makes it most dramatic,

Eliot insists that verse is no more artificial as a medium of dramatic dialogue than prose. He believes that no play should be written in verse for which prose is dramatically adequate. The themes which are proper for poetic drama are more complex and profound than those of prose drama.

Murder in the Cathedral satisfies many of these criteria laid down by T.S.Eliot for a poetic drama. It deals with a profound theme of perennial interest. The martyrdom of Becket is presented along with the inner struggle and temptation undergone by Becket. The chorus and, to a lesser extent, the priests fail to understand in the beginning the causes and consequences of Becket's death. They have to search their souls before realizing their significance. This gives Eliot an opportunity to deal with various aspects of spiritual experience in a poetic manner. Moreover, the plot helps Eliot to illustrate his conviction that poetry and drama at their best should portray religious experience.

One problem confronting the dramatist in this play concerns diction. He could not ignore the fact that Becket had died nearly seven hundred years before the writing of this play. He could not therefore use for his dialogue contemporary conversational English even in a heightened form. At the same time, he knew that he could not communicate effectively through the medium of twelfth century English. He solved the problem by using verse, a style which is neither antique nor modern. And this helped him to bring out the enduring value of his play, in a vocabulary of words in common use with here and there a few examples of archaic usage.

The scene in which Becket delivers his Christmas sermon is entirely in prose. Similarly, a long section of the final scene in which the knights justify their action is also in prose. These scenes serve as foils to the rest of the play which is in verse. While the scenes in prose are full of reasoned arguments and intellectual in appeal, the scenes in verse are rich in emotional content and they form the bulk of the play.

The primary purpose of Eliot in writing this poetic drama was to bring home to his audience the contemporary relevance of a historical incident which has great religious significance. He has treated the theme of martyrdom in a profound manner and brought out its relevance for all times and places. Eliot has really succeeded to a great extent in achieving his objective. *Murder in the Cathedral* has become highly successful as a poetic drama both with the armchair reader and the spectator in the theatre.

13.6 Summing Up

This lesson must have offered you an overview of the themes of the play. As the play is about the twelfth century tragedy, Eliot, in a balanced way, had chosen verse as his medium. In a deft way he brought out the political as well as the religious conflict by introducing interesting characters like the priests, tempters and the knights.

13.7 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Why was the King unhappy with Thomas Becket?
2. What were the women afraid of?
3. What was the role played by the knights?
4. Do you think that the tempters are important on the stage?
5. How can you justify that the play is a tragedy?

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LESSON 14

HAROLD PINTER'S *THE BIRTHDAY PARTY*

Objectives

After going through the lesson, you will be able to

- Understand the aspects of the Twentieth Century Drama
- Know about the Absurd Theatre
- Know the Life and Works of Harold Pinter

Structure of the Lesson

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14.1 History of Twentieth Century Drama

After World War I, Western drama became more internationally unified and throughout the century, realism, naturalism, and symbolism (and various combinations of these) continued to form important plays. Among the many 20th-century playwrights who have written what can be broadly termed naturalist dramas are Gerhart Hauptmann (German), John Galsworthy (English), John Millington Synge and Sean O'Casey (Irish), and Eugene O'Neill, Clifford Odets, and Lillian Hellman (American).

An important movement in early 20th-century drama was expressionism. Expressionist playwrights tried to convey the dehumanizing aspects of 20th-century technological society. The 20th century also saw the attempted revival of drama in verse, but although such writers as William Butler Yeats, W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot, Christopher Fry, and Maxwell Anderson produced effective results, verse drama was no longer an important form in English.

Three vital figures of 20th-century drama are the American Eugene O'Neill, the German Bertolt Brecht, and the Italian Luigi Pirandello. O'Neill's body of plays with naturalistic, expressionist, symbolic, psychological themes won him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1936. Brecht wrote dramas of ideas, usually promulgating socialist or Marxist theory. For Pirandello too, it was paramount to fix an awareness of his plays as theater; indeed, the major philosophical concern of his dramas is the difficulty of differentiating between illusion and reality.

World War II and its attendant horrors produced a widespread sense of the utter meaninglessness of human existence. This sense is expressed in the body of plays that are known collectively as the 'theater of the absurd'. By abandoning traditional devices of the drama, including logical plot development, meaningful dialogue, and intelligible characters, absurdist playwrights sought to convey modern humanity's feelings of bewilderment, alienation, and despair—the sense that reality is itself unreal. In their plays human beings often portrayed as dupes, clowns, who, although not without dignity, are at the mercy of forces that are inscrutable.

Probably the most famous plays of the theater of the absurd are Eugene Ionesco's *Bald Soprano* (1950) and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953). The sources of the 'theater of the absurd' are diverse; they can be found in the tenets of surrealism, Dadaism (see Dada), and existentialism; in the traditions of the music hall, vaudeville, and burlesque; and in the films of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton.

The pessimism and despair of the 20th century also found expression in the existentialist dramas of Jean-Paul Sartre, in the realistic and symbolic dramas of Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, and Jean Anouilh, and in the surrealist plays of Jean Cocteau.After the violence of World War II and the subsequent threat of the atomic bomb, his approach seemed particularly appropriate to many playwrights. Elements of the 'theater of cruelty' can be found in the brilliantly abusive language of John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956) and Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), in the ritualistic aspects of some of Genet's plays, in the masked utterances and enigmatic silences of Harold Pinter's "comedies of menace," and in the orgiastic abandon of Julian Beck's *Paradise Now!* (1968); it was fully expressed in Peter Brooks's production of Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade* (1964).

During the last third of the 20th century a few continental European dramatists, such as Dario Fo in Italy and Heiner Müller in Germany, stand out in the theater world. However, for the most part, the countries of the continent saw an emphasis on creative trends in directing rather than a flowering of new plays. In the United States and England, however, many dramatists old and new continued to flourish, with numerous plays of the later decades of the 20th cent. (and the early 21st cent.),echoing the trends of the years preceding them.Realism in a number of forms like psychological, social, and political continued to be a force in such British works. A witty surrealism also characterized some of the late 20th century's theater, particularly the brilliant wordplay and startling juxtapositions of the many plays of England's Tom Stoppard

The late decades of the 20th century were also a time of considerable experiment and iconoclasm. Experimental dramas of the 1960s and 70s by such groups as Beck's Living Theater and Jerzy Grotowski's Polish Laboratory Theatre were followed by a mixing and merging of various kinds of media with aspects of postmodernism, improvisational techniques, performance art, and other kinds of avant-garde theater.

Thematically, the social upheavals of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s—particularly the civil rights and women's movements, gay liberation, and the AIDS crisis—provided impetus for new plays that explored the lives of minorities and women.Feminist, other women-centered themes and gay themes dramatized by contemporary female playwrights were plentiful in the 1970s and extended in the following decades.

14.2 The Absurd Theatre

(Source :http://www.theatredatabase.com/20th_century/theatre_of_the_absurd.html)

Martin Esslin, the Hungarian-born critic, coined the term,the "Theatre of the Absurd". In his 1962 book with the same title, he refers to a particular type of play which first became popular during the 1950s and 1960s and which presented on stage the philosophy articulated by the French philosopher Albert Camus in his 1942 essay, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, in which he defines the human condition as basically meaningless. Camus argued that humanity had to resign itself to recognizing that a fully satisfying rational explanation of the universe was beyond its reach; in that sense, the world must ultimately be seen as absurd.

Esslin regarded the term "Theatre of the Absurd"merely as a "device" by which he meant to bring attention to certain fundamental traits discernible in the works of a range of playwrights. The playwrights loosely grouped under the label of the absurd, attempt to convey their sense of bewilderment, anxiety, and wonder in the face of an inexplicable universe.

According to Esslin, the five defining playwrights of the movement are Eugène Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, and Harold Pinter, although these writers were not always comfortable with the label and sometimes preferred to use terms such as "Anti-Theater" or "New Theater". Other playwrights associated with this type of theatre include Tom Stoppard, Arthur Kopit, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Fernando Arrabal, Edward Albee, N.F. Simpson, Boris Vian, Peter Weiss, Vaclav Havel, and Jean Tardieu.

Although the 'Theatre of the Absurd' is often traced back to avant-garde experiments of the 1920s and 1930s, its roots, in actuality, date back much further. Absurd elements first made their appearance shortly after the rise of Greek drama, in the wild humor and buffoonery of Old Comedy and the plays of Aristophanes in particular.

The 'Theatre of the Absurd' was also anticipated in the dream novels of James Joyce and Franz Kafka who created archetypes by delving into their own subconscious and exploring the universal, collective significance of their own private obsessions. Silent film and comedy, as well as the tradition of verbal nonsense in the early sound films of Laurel and Hardy, W.C. Fields, and the Marx Brothers would also contribute to the development of the Theatre of the Absurd, as did the verbal "nonsense" of François Rabelais, Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, and Christian Morgenstern. But it would take a catastrophic world event to actually bring about the birth of the new movement.

World War II was the catalyst that finally brought the Theatre of the Absurd to life. The global nature of this conflict and the resulting trauma of living under threat of nuclear annihilation put into stark perspective the essential precariousness of human life. Suddenly, one did not need to be an abstract thinker in order to be able to reflect upon absurdity: the experience of absurdity became part of the average person's daily existence.

Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) rejected realism in the theatre, calling for a return to myth and magic and to the exposure of the deepest conflicts within the human mind. He demanded a theatre that would produce collective archetypes and create a modern mythology. It was no longer possible, he insisted, to keep using traditional art forms and standards that had ceased being convincing and lost their validity. Although he would not live to see its development, The 'Theatre of the Absurd' is precisely the new theatre that Artaud was

dreaming of. It openly rebelled against conventional theatre. It was, as Ionesco called it "anti-theatre". It was surreal, illogical, conflict-less and plot-less. The dialogue often seemed to be completely gibberish. And, not surprisingly, the public's first reaction to this new theatre was incomprehension and rejection.

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is the most famous, and most controversial, absurdist play. The characters of the play are strange caricatures who have difficulty communicating the simplest of concepts to one another as they bide their time awaiting the arrival of Godot. The language they use is often ludicrous, and following the cyclical pattern, the play seems to end in precisely the same condition it began, with no real change having occurred. In fact, it is sometimes referred to as "the play where nothing happens."Its detractors count this a fatal flaw and often turn red in the face fomenting on its inadequacies. It is mere gibberish, they cry, eyes nearly bulging out of their head--a prank on the audience disguised as a play. The play's supporters, on the other hand, describe it is an accurate parable on the human condition in which "the more things change, the more they are the same."Change, they argue, is only an illusion. In 1955, the famous character actor Robert Morley predicted that the success of *Waiting for Godot* meant "the end of theatre as we know it."His generation may have gloomily accepted this prediction, but the younger generation embraced it. They were ready for something new—something that would move beyond the old stereotypes and reflect their increasingly complex understanding of existence.

Whereas traditional theatre attempts to create a photographic representation of life as we see it, the 'Theatre of the Absurd' aims to create a ritual-like, mythological, archetypal, allegorical vision, closely related to the world of dreams. The focal point of these dreams is often man's fundamental bewilderment and confusion, stemming from the fact that he has no answers to the basic existential questions: why we are alive, why we have to die, why there is injustice and suffering. Ionesco defined the absurdist everyman as "Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots …lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless."

The 'Theatre of the Absurd', in a sense, attempts to reestablish man's communion with the universe. Dr. Jan Culik writes, "Absurd Theatre can be seen as an attempt to restore the importance of myth and ritual to our age, by making man aware of the ultimate realities of his condition, by instilling in him again the lost sense of cosmic wonder and primeval anguish. The Absurd Theatre hopes to achieve this by shocking man out of an existence that has become trite, mechanical and complacent. It is felt that there is a mystical experience in confronting the limits of human condition."

One of the most important aspects of absurd drama is its distrust of language as a means of communication. Language, it seems to say, has become nothing but a vehicle for conventionalized, stereotyped, meaningless exchanges. Dr. Culik explains, "Words failed to express the essence of human experience, not being able to penetrate beyond its surface. The 'Theatre of the Absurd' constituted first and foremost an onslaught on language, showing it as a very unreliable and insufficient tool of communication. Absurd drama uses conventionalised speech, clichés, slogans and technical jargon, which it distorts, parodies and breaks down. By ridiculing conventionalised and stereotyped speech patterns, the Theatre of the Absurd tries to make people aware of the possibility of going beyond everyday speech conventions and communicating more authentically." Absurd drama subverts logic. It relishes the unexpected and the logically impossible.

The 'Theatre of the Absurd' was a product of a very specific point in time and, because that time has passed, it has gone the way of the dinosaur. In a revised edition of his seminal work, Martin Esslin disagrees: "Every artistic movement or style has at one time or another been the prevailing fashion. If it was no more than that, it disappeared without a trace. If it had a genuine content, if it contributed to an enlargement of human perception, if it created new modes of human expression, if it opened up new areas of experience, however, it was bound to be absorbed into the main stream of development. And this is what happened with the Theatre of the Absurd which, apart from having been in fashion, undoubtedly was a genuine contribution to the permanent vocabulary of dramatic expression.… [it] is being absorbed into the mainstream of the tradition from which …it had never been entirely absent …The playwrights of the post-Absurdist era have at their disposal, then, a uniquely enriched vocabulary of dramatic technique. They can use these devices freely, separately and in infinite variety of combinations with those bequeathed to them by other dramatic conventions of the past."

14.3 Life and Works of Harold Pinter

Harold Pinter was born on October 10, 1930. He has presented the characteristics of the Absurd theatre in the background of the English ethos.Harold Pinter is in the forefront in bringing forth changes in the British theatre. Whatever forms theatre has taken in the present period, only that theatre has survived which catered to the likes of the audience avoiding all that which the audience does not favour. During the 1950s the verse drama came into vogue, but it did not succeed in refining the tastes of the theatre-goers. The verse drama of Yeats, Eliot and Fry gained limited popularity only. The European drama was given a vital shape by Samuel Beckett, Jean Paul Sartre, Eugene Ionesco. Arthur Adamov, Bertolt Brecht and others, for it emerged with a wider perspective and could deal with a variety of human problems.

His plays include *The Room* (1957), *The Birthday Party* (1958), *The Dumb Waiter* (1959), *The Caretaker* (1960), *The Lover* (1962), *The Homecoming* (1965), *No Man's Land* (1975), *Mountain Language* (1988), *Moonlight* (1993), *Ashes to Ashes* (1996) and *Celebration* (2000).

He was awarded a CBE in 1966, the German Shakespeare Prize in 1970, the Austrian State Prize for European Literature in 1973 and the David Cohen British Literature Prize in 1995, and holds honorary degrees from the Universities of Reading, Glasgow, East Anglia and Bristol, among others In 2001 he was awarded the S T Dupont Golden PEN Award by the English Centre of International PEN His most recent publication, War (2003), is a collection of eight poems and one speech inspired by the subject of conflict Harold Pinter is married to the writer Lady Antonia Fraser and lives in London In 2005, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Pinter has achieved the ultimate distinction for a living dramatist. He has spawned his own adjective: Pinteresque,which is generally applied to a situation fraught with menace in which common speech camouflages a ferocious battle for territory. But there is much more to Pinter than masked conflict and hidden threat.

His pervading theme is memory: the way our existence is haunted by a recollection, however fallible or imaginary, of some vanished world in which everything was secure, certain and fixed In *The Birthday Party*, in Stanley's recollections of his days as a concert pianist, you hear the characteristic Pinter note: a yearning for some lost Eden as a refuge from the uncertain present. But the play is also clearly a political metaphor for the oppression of the individual by the state; and it's no accident that Pinter himself, as a young man, had

risked imprisonment for his conscientious objection to enlistment in war. Harold Pinter passed away on 24 December 2008.

14.4 Summing Up

This lesson has introduced the background of Twentieth Century Drama and the basic history of the 'Theatre of the Absurd'. Harold Pinter was a successful and critical playwright. In the next lesson, you will know more about the playwright and his prescribed play *The Birthday Party.*

14.5 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Name some of the prominent 20th century playwrights.
2. Who attempted verse drama in English?
3. How can you group absurdist playwrights?
4. Whose plays stand for 'theatre of cruelty'?
5. What kind of plays were produced during the late 20th century theater?
6. Write about Martin Esslin.
7. What is the contribution of Antonin Artaud?
8. What made Samuel Becket the greatest playwright?
9. What are the aspects of the 'absurd theatre'?
10. Write about Harold Pinter.

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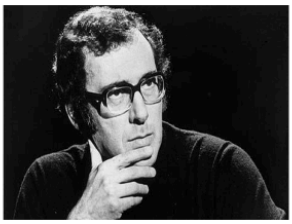
LESSON15

ASPECTS OF PINTER'S PLAYS AND ACT-WISE SUMMARY OF *THE BIRTHDAY PARTY*



Objectives

After going through the lesson, you will be able to

- Understand the aspects of Pinter's plays
- Appreciate and analyse the theme of the play through its act-wise summary

Structure of the Lesson

15.1 Aspects of Pinter's Plays

Pinter’s plays possess a suggestive power which is not found in the works of many contemporary dramatists.Pinter was an outspoken pacifist throughout his adult life. Like the existentialist playwrights, Pinter has given expression to the haplessness and anxiety felt by

the individual in the modern society dominated by despotic groups and crime syndicates. Pinter likes to show the inevitable contradictions faced by people in today's world. The individual is dragged into the mire of corruption and nefarious activities. Hence Pinter's characters are pessimistic and function as tools in the hands of malign powers. The undercurrent of social illness pushes the individual hither and thither and the protagonist loses the sense of direction and purpose in the plays of Pinter. Pinter's plays take the reader directly into the controversial areas of modern life wherein the individual has to follow without any protest the dictates of persons and institutions which have no regard for the aspirations of the common man.

In the plays of Pinter the atmosphere is charged with fear and threat to the natural harmony of life. Though Pinter depends on the form of comedy than that of tragedy, this does not decrease the hidden menace against the characters who want to escape from the forces of evil. Pinter's plays have been rightly called the 'comedies of menace'.

The Swedish Academy in its announcement that Pinter had been awarded the prize,mentioned,

> "Pinter restored theater to its basic elements: an enclosed space and unpredictable dialogue where people are at the mercy of each other and pretence crumbles."

Pinter's plays are not intricate but are easy to grasp. Pinter's strength lies in his dialogue. Brevity is its hallmark and it naturally gives rise to many shades of meaning. "Pinter was without question the most influential English playwright of the postwar," New Yorker magazine critic John Lahr told *The Times* in 2005. "He streamlined the nature of the stage and changed the way we hear language." Following the traditions of the Absurd theatre, Pinter has debunked the excessive stress on language and logic.

In terms of Pinter's language, everyone talks about the pauses, the famous Pinter pauses. Pinter says in the beginning that he makes use of the pauses because "he just didn't want the actors to run on". He has had to admit there is much more to it, that there is as much eloquence in the silences as there is in the language, and what is going on during them is compulsory to understand, and so that's a great challenge for actors--to find out what's being said when they're not speaking. It's a very active play for the audience; it's as if the audience must become a kind of sleuth, piecing together the clues. In Pinter, there's never an extra syllable, there's never an extra word. "He uses language as a weapon; he uses language as a seduction; he uses language as a way to upset or amuse an audience in an altogether new way. His craft is extraordinary, so deft it appears effortless. He's a master."

Early in his career Pinter was compared to Samuel Beckett, the Irish playwright, for the "psychic distress of his characters, their vaudeville-like brutishness and the disjointed dialogue"that conveys their despair. Pinter frustrates the audience's need for the "truth". Pinter himself has denied the presence of allegorical meaning in his plays.

Pinter writes for a proscenium arch stage. Pinter's impact on the theatre and on literature in general has led to his name passing into general use as a byword for his style. Pinter's best-known literary mannerism was the pregnant pause in dialogue between characters who feel vaguely threatened.It became such an acknowledged feature of his writing that the term "Pinteresque"is the label often given to sum up something in English,the tense and ambiguous qualities of the Pinter's plays. It came into usage in 1960, just three years after the first performance of his first play.

"The essence of Pinter's singular appeal is that you sit down to every play he writes in certain expectation of the unexpected," playwright David Hare said in 2005. "You never know what the hell's coming next."

15.2 Nature of 'Pinteresque' Style:

Given below are a few elements of this 'Pinteresque' style:
- Shows a dislike of symbolism and abstraction.
- Avoids communication –expression through silence.
- Mixes comic and tragic, but there is no humour at the end of Pinter's plays.
- Use of pauses / silences.
- Conflict between surface appearance and deeper reality as basis for subject matter and dramatic technique.
- Territory is coveted, but there is always more at stake.
- Characters do not always operate according to reason. The individual is affected by the past which cannot be defined by certainty. The past is a continuous mystery –it leaves us in the present in a state of insecurity.
- Personal insecurity of characters leads them to use language games to protect themselves

15.3Source of the Play:

While on tour as an actor with a traveling repertory company, Pinter arrived in a seaside resort where there were no rooms to be had. Pinter describes his meeting a man in a pub who offered him a place to stay:
He said, "I can take you to some digs, but I wouldn't recommend them exactly."I had nowhere else to go and I said, "I don't care where they are."I went to these digs and found, in short, a very big woman who was the landlady and a little man, the landlord. There was no one else there, apart from this solitary lodger, and the digs were really quite filthy... He later described the boarding house in more colorful terms: "I have filthy insane digs, a great bulging scrag of a woman with breasts rolling at her belly, an obscene household, cats, dogs, filth, tea-strainers, mess..."

He ended up sharing a room with the man from the pub. When he asked him what he did for a living, he said: "Oh well, I used to be...I'm a pianist. I used to play in the concert-party here and I gave that up...I used to play in London, but I gave that up."

That image of the filthy boarding house, larger than life landlady and the ex-pianist lodger stayed with Pinter for a number of years. "Then, I thought, what would happen if two people knocked on his door? The knock was the knowledge of the Gestapo. I'll never forget: it was 1953 or 1954. The war had been over less than ten years. It was very much on my mind."

15.4 About the Success of *The Birthday Party*

Although "The Caretaker" was a major success, "The Birthday Party," which critics now consider one of his finest, was a flop when it opened in London in 1958. Pinter offered few of the expected elements of a traditional theater piece. He gave scant background about his characters, their motives were unclear, and he allowed no easy answers or consoling resolutions. It was left to the audience to form judgments and moral conclusions. He later referred to "The Birthday Party" as "the most universally detested play that London had known for a very long time."

15.5 Summary of the Play *The Birthday Party*

The play was set in a seaside town boarding house with Meg, the proprietress, and her husband, Petey, who is very quiet and sweet. Two strangers, Goldberg and McCann come to town. They arrive in a very snazzy car and decide to stay in this boarding house. They have come to get Stanley who boards there and take him away. We don't know the reason. We don't know if Stanley has either been hiding out there, or has just been living there. In the course of this event there is a birthday party that Meg throws for Stanley. He says it isn't his birthday, but we don't know if that's true or not. In the end McCann and Goldberg fight with Stanley and they take him away.

15.6 Characters in the Play

PETEY - a man in his sixties
MEG - a woman in her sixties
STANLEY - a man in his late thirties
LULU - a girl in her twenties
GOLDBERG - a man in his fifties
McCANN- a man of thirty

15.7 Act-Wise Summary:

15.7.1 Act 1 (Breakfast.)

Petey and Meg, both in their sixties run a boarding house. Petey tells Meg that he was approached by two men last night who want to stay at the house. Meg assumes that they have read about the guest-house on "the list". She calls up to Stanley and addresses him as if he were a child. She returns to the living room, breathless and arranging her hair. Stanley enters in his pyjamas. Petey goes back to work.

Meg is flirtatious yet elderly with Stanley who appears to be in a bad mood. Meg talks about the two men and Stanley does not believe her - "it's a false alarm". Stanley says that he is going on a world tour as a pianist. Meg asks him not to go and she wants him to stay with her. Stanley then suddenly starts to tease Meg. He becomes threatening and she is frightened.

Lulu, a neighbour, enters and accuses Stanley of getting under Meg's feet all the day. Stanley suddenly asks her to come away with him but he has no idea where he should take her. She declares, "You're a bit of a washout, aren't you?"and leaves. Stanley goes to wash his face. He sees Goldberg and McCann and slips out of the back door.

Goldberg and McCann enter. McCann seems nervous about "the job"they have come to do. Goldberg, his superior, is relaxed. Meg enters and they introduce themselves. Meg tells them that it is Stanley's birthday today and Goldberg decides that they will have a party for him. They go up to their room and Stanley enters. He knows Goldberg. Meg presents him with a birthday gift –a toy drum. Stanley begins to play the drum, becoming more and more "savage and possessed".

15.7.2 Act 2 (That evening)

McCann is seen sitting at the table tearing a sheet of newspaper into strips. Stanley enters and they talk about the party planned for this evening. McCann starts to whistle "The Mountains of Mourne"and Stanley joins in. Stanley recognises McCann but McCann denies it. Stanley then denies it is his birthday. He seems desperate to tell McCann that he hasn't

caused any trouble and that it is all a mistake. He grabs McCann's arm and McCann savagely hits him.

Petey enters and introduces Goldberg to Stanley, but Stanley says nothing until Petey has left to go to a chess game. Stanley tells Goldberg to leave and not to cause any trouble. Goldberg and McCann interrogate Stanley and their questions become gradually more ridiculous. Stanley kicks Goldberg in the stomach and they prepare to fight. There is the sound of a drum beating and Meg enters, wearing her evening dress for the party. Goldberg asks Meg to toast Stanley and they switch off the lights and shine a torch in his face. Lulu enters and Goldberg makes a speech. Stanley is silent while Lulu talks with Goldberg and Meg talks nostalgically with McCann. Lulu is infatuated with Goldberg and they become close throughout the scene. They play "Blind Man's Buff". When Stanley is blindfolded, he tries to strangle Meg. The lights go out and he assaults Lulu. As Goldberg and McCann approach him, he backs away giggling uncontrollably.

15.7.3Act 3 (The next morning.)

Meg is seen serving breakfast to Petey. They talk about Goldberg's car which is now parked outside the house. Meg wants to wake Stanley but Petey tells her to leave him - "let him sleep...this morning". Goldberg enters and Meg leaves. Petey questions him about Stanley. Petey is concerned about what happened at the party. Petey wants Stanley to see a doctor. Goldberg assures him that they are going to take him to "Monty". McCann enters with two suitcases. Petey goes out to tend his peas while he waits for Stanley to come down. Goldberg tells McCann that he feels "knocked out". He is not his usual lucid, charming self. He seems lost. McCann wants to leave. Lulu enters after spending the night with Goldberg. She feels used and is outraged to know that he is leaving. McCann insults her and she leaves. Stanley enters. He is now clean-shaven and wearing a suit. He is silent. Goldberg and McCann plan to take him away. He tries to speak but can only make sounds. Petey pleads with them to leave him alone. They go. Meg enters. Petey tells her that Stanley is still in bed and goes back to his newspaper. Meg loses herself in her memories of the "lovely party"last night, where she was "the belle of the ball".

15.8 Summing Up

This lesson has focused on Pinter's style and on what is called 'Pinteresque' in terms of his play-writing. In terms of action, nothing has happened and we do not even know the conclusion of the story. If you can recall, this is how an absurd play is built. The next lesson will discuss various themes that reflect in the play.

15.9 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Write briefly about Pinter's characters.
2. Comment on the atmosphere of the play *The Birthday Party*
3. What is the contribution of Pinter to the absurd stage?
4. Why is Pinter's language so special?
5. What is meant by 'Pintersque' style? Mention some of its features.
6. Briefly summarise the play *The Birthday Party*
7. Mention the male and female characters in the play *The Birthday Party*
8. Why was Stanley upset?
9. What do you understand about the play?
10. What is the role played by Petey?
11. Comment on the roles played by Petey and Goldberg?

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LESSON-16

A STUDY OF THE THEMES AND ISSUES FROM THE PLAY 'THE BIRTHDAY PARTY'*

(*Several online sources used for creating this lesson are all acknowledged under the References section)

16.0 Objectives

After going through the lesson, you will

- Know about the influences on Pinter's writing
- Understand the themes and issues related to the play

Structure of the Lesson

16.1 Background Study of the Play 'The Birthday Party'

Harold Pinter, according to Esslin, is one of the defining playwrights of the absurd movement and like other playwrights at this time, such as Samuel Beckett, Pinter wants to communicate the enigmatic and problematic nature of human existence. Esslin states that however realistic the situations which arise appear to be, "Pinter's plays are" essentially "reflections on, and allegories of, the human condition." (Esslin,1963).

Writing at a time when man was totally exhausted by the trauma of the two World Wars, Pinter presents the human dilemma; about man trying to come out of the horrors of war and accommodate himself in the domestic space. Pinter emphasises this instability and uncomfortable nature of the human condition. At the same time,violence and menace formed part of the social landscape of Pinter's teens (Billington, 18). Gangswere a part of the experience of the youth of many parts of Britain's larger cities. The black market, established during the war but existing also in the period of rationing that followed it, encouraged petty and serious crime. Gangs such as those led by the Kray brothers ruled large tracts of London. Due to his Jewish background, Pinter was also deeply embedded in London's East End, Jewish life. There was significant fascist activity in that part of London and open publication of anti-Jewish sentiment. (Billington, 19) Pinter was not immune from this and got into fights as a result:

> "I went to a Jewish club, by an old railway arch, and there were quite a lot of people often waiting with broken milk bottles in a particular alley we used to walk through." (Thompson, 4–5)

In one incident in a London bar he punched a man who insulted his Jewish identity.

Pinter lived at home until he was twenty five so he had ample experience of 'room as territory'and he would have been acutely aware of the wider territories claimed by the fascists and gangland groups of 1950s London. He would have been influenced by other elements around in the 1950s —the first news of coercive psychiatry being used to 'cure'people of dissident behaviour in the USSR and a diet of films concerning Hollywood hit men and gangsters, for instance (see Billington,77). The evidence indicates then that Pinter was drawing on actual incidents and observations from his life experience, culled from his normal living patterns and from those gained as an actor. These were fed through his fertile imagination to produce such plays as "The Birthday Party". It is possible to identify specific biographical detail that appears in "The Birthday Party". Pinter went to Hackney Downs Grammar School. Its sports field (Pinter was a promising athlete) was at Lower Edmonton, where Stanley plays his only concert.

The play, in its first London run however, bemused and angered most critics:

> "Harold Pinter's first play comes in the school of random dottiness deriving from Beckett and Ionesco and before the flourishing continuance of which one quails in slack-jawed dismay. The interest of such pieces as an accepted genre is hardly more than that of some ill-repressed young dauber who feels he can outdo the école de Paris by throwing his paint on with a trowel and a bathmat; and indeed—to come back to the terms of playmaking —as good, if not a better result might have been achieved by summoning a get-together of the critics circle of the vegetarians unions, offering each member a notebook and pencil and launching thereafter on an orgiastic bout of 'Consequences', with the winning line to be performed by a star-cast midnight matinee at Drury Lane ... The gifted Mr Wood produced, but how the piece claimed the services of anyone is beyond me." **(Granger, D., Financial Times (20 May 1958), reprint in Lloyd Evans, 1985.)**
>
> What all this means only Mr Pinter knows, for his characters speak in non-sequiturs, half-gibberish and lunatic ravings. **(M.W.W., The Guardian (21 May 1958), reprint in Lloyd Evans, 1985.)**

Alan Brien described 'The Birthday Party' as "a Hitchcock movie with the last reel missing"(Billington, 48). In a savage review in The Spectator, he stated:

> 'The Birthday Party' is like a vintage Hitchcock Thriller which has been, in the immortal tear stained words of Orson Welles, 'edited by a cross-eyed studio janitor with a lawn mower.'The London run closed after one week.
>
> **(Brien, A, The Spectator (30 May 1958), reprint in Lloyd Evans, 1985.)**

Only Harold Hobson of *The Sunday Times* recognised the talent and significance:

> [...] Mr Pinter, on the evidence of this work, possesses the most original, disturbing, and arresting talent in theatrical London [...]. Theatrically speaking, 'The Birthday Party' is absorbing. It is witty. Its characters [...] are fascinating. The plot, which consists, with all kinds of verbal arabesques and echoing explorations of memory and fancy, of the springboard of a trap, is first rate. The whole play has the same atmosphere as a delicious, impalpable, and hair-raising terror which makes *The Turn of the Screw* one of the best stories in the world.
>
> **(Hobson, H., The Sunday Times (25 May 1958), reprint in Lloyd Evans, 1985.)**

16.2 "The Birthday Party" as an Absurd Play/ Character of Stanley/ The Concept of Fear of Menace

"The Birthday Party" is a major play in the genre of the Theatre of the Absurd. M. H. Abrams records Albert Camus' observation in the 'Myth of Sisyphus'(1942) in the "Literature of the Absurd"entry of his *A Glossary of Literary Terms*:

> "In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile.... "

The very phrase "birthday party" normally evokes the picture of liveliness, vibrant energy, jubilance and above all happy domesticity, but the beginning of Pinter's play hints at the reverse. This reversal of the world order becomes more prominent as the play proceeds and more characters are introduced.

Pinter takes up this dilemma of existence of modern man mutilated after the war. Pinter does not particularly declare that it is a world after the war, but very subtly projects the difference between the past, present and future. Meg and Petey talk about nothing, there is lack of coherence in their utterances.

Pinter's play centres on the life of the main protagonist Stanley Webber, an unemployed pianist, who, for the last year, has been living as a lodger with Meg and Petey Boles in their sea-side boarding house. Stanley is living in idle seclusion away from the outside world. However, the relatively peaceful, domestic atmosphere of the boarding house is disturbed by the intrusion of two unknown characters, Goldberg and McCann. The two men are "agents"of an "organisation"and have come to claim Stanley (Pinter, 1991). The characters in the play prior to the arrival of Goldberg and McCann are described by Malkin as a representation of domestic banality (Malkin, 1992). The dialogue in the opening scene between Petey and Meg is filled with inane questions asked by Meg followed by Petey's monosyllabic answers:

MEG You got your paper?
PETEY Yes
MEG Is it good?
PETEY Not bad.
MEG What does it say?
PETEY Nothing much.

As the characters attempt to jump from the past to the present the reader is dismayed. The glory is somewhere in the past and the characters ignore their immediate present space to indulge in a nostalgic revisiting of the past; the Past which is gone and shall never return. Meg always fantasizes about her lovely room, a space where she can thrive. But as she comes back to the present, she finds the room turned into a "pigsty"; it becomes an encroached space. .

This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity. (Abrams 1) In 'Godot' there is lack of communication, but in Pinter's play, communication fails. Meg and Petey talk about nothing, there is lack of coherence in their utterances.

When Stanley learns of the two men who will be coming to stay in the boarding house his initial reaction is one of shock and fear of that which is unfamiliar. When speaking to Meg he is quick to try to falsify her claims maintaining that the men will not come (Pinter, 1991). However, Pinter states that in the world we live in, as in the world of his plays, everything is uncertain and we are surrounded by the unknown; it is because of this we are constantly fearful of an invasion from that which is unfamiliar (Esslin, 1980).

The "mysterious and unfamiliar" presents itself in "The Birthday Party" (1958) in the form of the external world, personified by Goldberg and McCann, which intrudes on what seems to be Stanley's safe and secure environment in the Bole's boarding house. Goldberg

and McCann embody the theme of menace in that they threaten to disturb, with language as their weapon, what is familiar and constant in Stanley's life.

Similar are the cases of Stanley, McCann and Goldberg. They too are victims of a changed world order. While Stanley remembers a grand piano concert he had performed in the past, Goldberg reminiscences experiences of adolescence and his happy married life.

It is not just their speeches; their gestures also carry notes of desperation. Stanley, while remembering the past, becomes confused; a sense of fear seems to grip him. The jumbled absurdity gradually moves towards blurring of the borderline –it begins the acute state of paranoia. Just as in a paranoid suspicion the Gentleman in Thirst suspects that the Sailor has water, so Stanley also begins to feel sinister suspicions in "The Birthday Party".Sometimes when we reconsider Stanley's present state, his sense of absurd fear that arises again when he learns that two more boarders would be accommodated in the house he lives in, his past fear also raises questions in our mind.

Stanley is subjected to a strange and disturbing cross-examination by the men. Pinter adopts *stichomythia*, a form of dramatic dialogue, during the interrogation scene where both Goldberg and McCann alternate in asking Stanley questions that range from the sublime to the ridiculous, all of which lack intelligible meaning (Silverstein, 1994). The language of nonsense is used abusively as Stanley is tortured with illogical questions. For example:

MCCANN What about the Albigensenist heresy?

GOLDBERG Who watered the wicket in Melbourne?

MCCANN What about the blessed Oliver Plunkett?

Pinter shows how people try to get recognised in different ways. Goldberg and McCann, we see, are the two "evil"characters in the play. They are made instruments of menace by the society, the institution they work for. They are not villains by nature, but men with a purpose, who are to discharge the orders of the institution. In an effort to obey the institution, their real selves are somewhere lost. When Goldberg thinks about his past days, his mother and wife mingle somewhere and disappear, he could not separate them as two individuals and gets confused and loses his identity. McCann is also an agent of the institution, but he is more crippled and dismayed than Goldberg. He even has no self, requires a Goldberg to discharge the orders and becomes a man of nothingness. If Goldberg molests Lulu, it is his way of getting recognition, the only way of triumph against the repressive social structure, the institution he works for.

Dukore suggests that the fear of menace present in Pinter's "The Birthday Party"(1958) may suggest the absurdity of the human condition, for Stanley, like all of mankind feels insecure and unsafe without certainties in his universe (Dukore, 1982). Stanley, is afraid that what lies beyond the confines of his comfortable environment is "threatening and hostile". Without knowledge man would grow more terrified of the surrounding world and this play highlights just that. Our quest for knowledge has limitations and in a bid to diminish the fear of the strange and unfamiliar, Pinter is seen trying to convey that "there will always be an unknown".

16.3 Language and Dialogue in'The Birthday Party'

The nature of language and dialogue is also central to the theme of menace in '"The Birthday Party"' (1958). The dramatic image of Pinter's play is based on the individual search for security in a world filled with unease, fear, and lack of understanding between people (Esslin, 1963). The uneasiness and anxiety in '"The Birthday Party"' (1958) arise from the threat of invasion from the outside menacing world. The conversations between Meg and Petey, Stanley and Meg, and Goldberg and McCann illustrate this.

Meg and Petey talk about nothing, there is lack of coherence in their utterances.

MEG. Is that you, Petey?

Petey, is that you? *Pause* Petey?

PETEY. What?
MEG. Is that you?
PETEY. Yes, its me.
MEG. What? (Her face appears at the hatch.) Are you back?
PETEY. Yes. (Act I,9)

Language also presents their obscurity with past,present and future. The glory is somewhere in the past and the characters ignore their immediate present space to indulge in a nostalgic revisiting of the past; the Past which is gone and shall never return. Meg always fantasizes about her lovely room, a space where she can thrive. But as she puts her leg in the present, she finds the room turned into a "pigsty"; it becomes an encroached space:

STANLEY (violently). Look, why don"t you get this place cleared up! It"s a pigsty.... ...
MEG (sensual, stroking his arm). Oh, Stan, that"s a lovely room. I've had some lovely afternoons in that room. (TBP Act I 19)

Stanley's words about his piano concert also confuse the audience.

STANLEY. Played the piano? I've played the piano all over the world. All over the country. (Pause.) I once gave a concert.
MEG. A concert?
STANLEY (reflectively). Yes. It was a good one too. They were all there that night. Every single one of them. It was a great success. Yes. A concert.At Lower Edmonton.
MEG. What did you wear?
STANLEY (to himself). I had a unique touch. Absolutely unique. They came up to me. They came up to me and said they were grateful. Champagne we had that night, the lot. (Pause.) My father nearly came down to hear me. Well, I dropped him a card anyway. But I don"t think he could make it. No, I –I lost the address, that was it. (Pause.) Yes. Lower Edmonton. Then after that, you know what they did? They carved me up. Carved me up. It was all arranged, it was all worked out. My next concert. Somewhere else it was. In winter. I went down there to play. Then, when I got there, the hall was locked, the place was shuttered up, not even a caretaker. They"d locked it up. (Takes off his glasses and wipes them on his pyjama jacket.) ... (23)

The men's interrogation of Stanley continues throughout the party itself which finally dissolves into a series of violent acts. Pinter's dialogue is made up of incorrect syntax, tedious repetitions and also contradictions. Goldberg and McCann's questions and statements are a combination of distorted clichés and idioms (Prentice, 2000). Dukore suggests that the linguistic absurdity present in "The Birthday Party" (1958) may suggest the absurdity of the human condition (Dukore, 1982). Through dialogue Pinter displays the inadequacy of the words we use in our everyday speech and how language itself has become an insufficient and defective tool for communication (Malkin, 1992).

Language in Pinter's play seems to have lost all importance and semantic power and instead becomes a weapon of destruction. The play seeks to highlight the limitations of our everyday speech in order for us to understand the often nonsensical nature of our means of communication. Limitations of language become apparent and language becomes insufficient when one is in search for truths surrounding the human condition and that, it seems, is what this play is trying to convey. The "menacing nature of what is unknown" and "man's fear of the uncertainty" in the play also aim to reflect on the nature of man's situation in the world. There will always be evidence of an unknown as our knowledge is limited and there will forever be something which is uncertain. The farcical nature of man's quest for knowledge,

as shown in the play, is that man will never achieve a full understanding of all that is around him. It is apparent also that 'The Birthday Party' (1958) as an allegory of conformity seeks to portray the farcical and pointless nature of man's adherence to social norms, but also to perhaps suggest that conformity is near impossible to avoid. Pinter, as Esslin argues, in his play "The Birthday Party" (1958) successfully portrays the volatility and bleakness which surrounds the human condition.

16.4 'The Birthday Party' as an Allegory / Farcical Nature of the Play

Esslin argues that Pinter's 'The Birthday Party' (1958) may also be interpreted as an allegory surrounding the nature of conformity. By using language as a weapon, Stanley, the pianist, the solitary and individual artist, is forced to confine to the ways of Goldberg and McCann (Esslin, 1980). The morning following 'The Birthday Party' (1958), during which Stanley was subjected to further taunts from McCann, left unable to speak and reduced to a manic state of laughter, the "agents"bombard him with an extensive list of his faults and specify the benefits of submitting to their influence:

MCCANN Now you're even more cockeyed.
GOLDBERG It's true. You've gone from bad to worse.
MCCANN Worse than worse.

Goldberg and McCann are insistent that they bring Stanley to see Monty however Petey is not entirely convinced. He suggests that as Stanley is a guest in his boarding house he should be the one to look after him. However, the "agents"state that Monty is the finest there is and they subsequently offer to take Mr. Boles also. The final line that Petey speaks to Stanley, Pinter has described as being one of the most important lines he has ever written (Merritt, 1995):

PETEY Stan, don't let them tell you what to do!

Perhaps, Pinter is commenting on the farcical nature of society and its blind adherence to conform to social norms. Stanley has lost every ounce of his individuality; he is even dressed like Goldberg and McCann wearing a dark, well cut suit and white shirt (Pinter, 1991). Perhaps Stanley's glasses, now broken in his hands having been damaged at the party by McCann, are symbolic of this blindness. Even Goldberg, in the final moments of the play before taking Stanley away, admits to feeling uneasy. He reflects on his despair and criticises the way he himself was made into the person that he is now by the strict established disciplines of society and the world and also questions his own state of being:

GOLDBERG What do you think, I'm a self-made man? No! I sat where I was told to sit. I kept my eye on the ball.

Goldberg and McCann's obedience to authority reflect that of Stanley's initial rejection of, and rebellion, against it. Both parties automatically attack what does not conform to their sense of self (Prentice, 2000). However, in Act Three of the play we witness a re-birth of Stanley, a man no longer autonomous who has been re-created in the image of the all-powerful Other (Silverstein, 1994). Pinter here is perhaps alluding to the fallibility of man's identity, how each of us lacks the ability to achieve a genuine and unalterable self as we are all products of the environment in which we immerse ourselves. Stanley's once sheltered abode became occupied by Goldberg and McCann and if one views the change in Stanley on an allegorical level it is perhaps commenting on the farcical nature of conformity in society. Stanley's transformation could be a reflection on society itself and how people strive to fit in to social norms, whether it is their true identity or a portrayal of a false façade.

16.5 Summing Up

This lesson has presented the various conditions that led Pinter to choose the absurd mode for his play *'The Birthday Party'*. His use of violence, language and silences, the visits of the characters into the past, future and present, create a mystery in the ambience of the play. Esslin also observes the play as an allegory. A thorough and repeated reading of the original text along with the suggested references will give you a better understanding.

16.6 Comprehension Check Questions

1. Comment on the nature of the absurd theatre.
2. What made Pinter introduce violence in the play?
3. What is the role played by Meg and Petey?
4. Describe Stanley Webber as an absurd protagonist.
5. What does Pinter want to portray?

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http://www.sid.ir/en/vewssid/j_pdf/103120064601.pdf

LESSON - 17
MODEL ANNOTATIONS (MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL)

Objectives
After going through this lesson, you will be able to

- Understand how to explain a passage from the play with reference to context

Structure of the Lesson:

17.1 Explanation of Model Annotation

Eg: 1. For good or ill, let the wheel turn.
The wheel has been still, these seven years, and no good.
For ill or good, let the wheel turn.
For who knows the end of good or evil?

17.1.1 Introduction

These lines are taken from the play 'Murder in the Cathedral' written by T.S.Eliot. T.S.Eliot's verse drama 'Murder in the Cathedral' brings out the pathetic story of Thomas Becket. He brings out the religious as well as the political implications in the murder of Becket.

17.1.2 Brief Summary of the Play

The Chorus introduces the theme of the play. The play opens with a scene in the Archbishop's Hall, Canterbury. The date is 2nd December, 1170. Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has been in self imposed exile in France for seven years, as a result of a quarrel with King Henry II on the rights of the Church to full autonomy and freedom from State control. There are now rumours about his return to England. The Chorus here is formed by a group of women of the city. They have heard rumours that the Archbishop may be returning and this fills them with a vague sense of dread. These poor women constitute the Chorus in the play. It is their feeling that God has prompted them to approach the cathedral to see something unique that is going to

happen. Then three priests appear and speak about the past and the forthcoming issues. They express their fears. Thomas Becket arrives and addresses the people and gets ready for martyrdom. Then Four Knights enter and kill Becket.

17.1.3 Context

The poor women of the Chorus love and venerate their Archbishop. But they do not want him to return. For, that may mean conflict with the King of which they are afraid. Will Becket become a new martyr? This seems to be a thought at the back of their minds, not clearly expressed even to themselves. But, instinctively they feel they have had a glimpse of the future, and it is full of both danger and promise.

Three priests now appear. They discuss the endless negotiations between King Henry II and the Archbishop. A messenger now arrives with the news that the Archbishop has returned to England and is, in fact quite near Canterbury. The messenger explains that enthusiastic crowds are welcoming the Archbishop who is supported by the Pope and the King of France. But his relations with King Henry have not become cordial once again. There is only a kind of nominal peace between them.

One of the priests is apprehensive about the safety of the Archbishop and the interests of the Church. Another priest feels happy at the return of the Archbishop who will support the church against the barons. The third priest comments that events are moving after seven years. It is no use guessing whether the result will be pleasant or unpleasant.

These lines are spoken by the third priest. He feels that things are inevitable and time should run for good or evil.

17.1.4 Explanation

The image of the wheel stands for time. It also stands for the pattern of fate and God's design for man. The priest refers it to fate. Eliot has been influenced by Dante and also Buddhism and uses the wheel to indicate the relation between God and Man.

17.2 List of Annotations

1. For good or ill, let the wheel turn.
The wheel has been still, these seven years, and no good.
For ill or good, let the wheel turn.
For who knows the end of good or evil?
- Part I, p. 18

2. Temporal power, to build a good world,
To keep order, as the world knows order.
Those who put their faith in worldly order
Not controlled by the order of God,
In confident ignorance, but arrest disorder,
Make it fast, breed fatal disease,
Degrade what they exalt., Part I, p. 30

3. Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain:
Temptation shall not come in this kind again.

.
The last temptation is the greatest treason:
To do the right deed for the wrong reason.

, Part I, p. 44

.
4. A Christian martyrdom is never an accident, for Saints are not made by accident. Still less is a Christian martyrdom the effect of man's will to become a aint, as a man by willing and contriving may become a ruler of men. Martyrdom is always the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and to lead them, to bring them back to His ways. It is never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of becoming a martyr.
- Interlude, p. 49

.
5. Every day is the day we should fear from or hope from. One moment
Weighs like another. Only in retrospection, selection,
We say, that was the day. The critical moment
That is always now, and here. Even now, in sordid particulars
The eternal design may appear.
- Part II, p. 57

.
6. It is not I who insult the King
And there is higher than I or the King.
- Part II, p. 65

.
7. But if you kill me, I shall rise from my tomb
To submit my cause before God's throne.
- Part II, p. 66

8. Human kind cannot bear very much reality.
- Part II, p. 69

.
9. You argue by results, as this world does,
To settle if an act be good or bad.
You defer to the fact. For every life and every act
Consequence of good and evil can be shown.

17.3 Part-Wise Summaries

17.3.1 Part I & Part II separated by the Interlude

The poor women of the Chorus love and venerate their Archbishop. But they do not want him to return. For, that may mean conflict with the King of which they are afraid. Will Becket become a new martyr? This seems to be a thought at the back of their minds, not clearly expressed even to themselves. But, instinctively they feel they have had a glimpse of the future, and it is full of both danger and promise.

Three priests now appear. They discuss the endless negotiations between King Henry II and the Archbishop. A messenger now arrives with the news that the

Archbishop has returned to England and is, in fact quite near Canterbury. The messenger explains that enthusiastic crowds are welcoming the Archbishop who is supported by the Pope and the King of France. But his relations with King Henry have not become cordial once again. There is only a kind of nominal peace between them.

One of the priests is apprehensive about the safety of the Archbishop and the interests of the Church. Another priest feels happy at the return of the Archbishop who will support the church against the barons. The third priest comments that events are moving after seven years. It is no use guessing whether the result will be pleasant or unpleasant.

The Chorus continues to feel disturbed. Everything seems to indicate to them that a disaster is bound to take place if the Archbishop stays on in England. They wish that he must at once return secretly to France. Otherwise he may be killed at Canterbury. This is such a horrible crime that they do not wish to be involved in, even as silent, helpless spectators.

One of the priests criticizes the poor women for expressing such sentiments. The Archbishop arrives at this moment. He overhears the last part of the priest's admonition. Referring to it, he says that the women are perhaps revealing truths they do not fully understand. Even the priest may not be able to grasp them. "The designs of God will be fulfilled, whatever we may try to do. Our duty is to surrender our will to the will of God, even though it may involve suffering."

The Archbishop tells the priests that it is likely that he may be left in peace for a little while. "However, something may happen soon and, when it happens, it will be sudden and unexpected."

Now the Four Tempters visit the Archbishop one by one. Each one advises Becket on what he should do. The advice given in each case is different. But each of them wants him to do something positive, make his peace with the King and accept the post of Chancellor again or ally himself with the barons in his fight with the King or deliberately invite martyrdom for the spiritual glory that it will be conferred on him. Their arguments are persuasive, but Becket manages somehow to remain uninfluenced by their advice and resolves to act "according to the will of God" as it may become manifest to him.

The poor women of the Chorus describe the mood of restlessness that has come over them and the people, induced by a fear of imminent disaster. There follows a brief series of exchanges among the Chorus, the Priests and the Tempters. All of them refer to natural phenomena and routine activities and find in them some hidden sinister significance. They also comment that "death can come to one in many unexpected ways." The poor women of the Chorus plead with the Archbishop to save himself in order to save them. They feel that God is leaving them and that the forces of Hell are taking possession of the earth.

All this while, Becket has been pondering over the subtle arguments of the Fourth Tempter, that martyrdom should be deliberately sought, either because it will "bring fame on earth and glory in heaven or because life is meaningless." Now he has

reached a decision about where his duty lies. To allow oneself to be martyred may be right, but it should not be done "for the wrong reason."

Becket now reviews his life. He recalls his youth when he pursued pleasure and power. He feels that it is natural for men, even while accepting religion, to love God less than He deserves. Power is sought under the pretext that it enables one to help the people. But this may lead in the end to forgetting God altogether. Becket realizes that even his life of religion has provided him with the temptation of glorifying himself in the name of service of God.

Turning to the Priests and the Chorus (the group of women), he says that he proposes to stay where he is, neither seeking martyrdom nor avoiding it. But martyrdom seems inevitable. They may think that he will be practically committing suicide out of foolish pride. However, if a sacrilege should be committed, they will all be involved In it. He does not propose to offer any provocation. And he prays to God that his guardian angel may watch over and determine any attack that may be made on him.

17.4 Summing Up

This lesson gives you guidance how you can attempt the annotated passages in the examination. It is really difficult to answer these passages correctly unless you read the original text thoroughly. For your convenience a list of often quoted passages are also provided along with the act / scene summaries. Hope you will make use of these and fare well in the examinations.

(103EG21)

M.A. DEGREE EXAMINATION, APRIL 2022.

First Semester

English

Paper III — DRAMA – I

Time : Three hours Maximum : 70 marks

Answer ALL questions.

All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT I

1. (a) Write short notes on any FOUR of the following:
   (i) Comedy of Humours
   (ii) Political satire
   (iii) The Problem Play
   (iv) Comedy of Manners
   (v) Sentimental Drama
   (vi) The Revenge Play

Or

(b) Bring out the significance of Restoration Drama.

UNIT II

2. (a) How does Greek classical imagery function in *Dr. Faustus*?

Or

(b) *Dr. Faustus* is more a morality than a regular play. Discuss.

UNIT III

3. (a) Examine Ben Jonson's art of characterization in *Every Man in His Humour*.

Or

(b) Discuss the double standard of morality in *The Way of the World*.

UNIT IV

4. (a) Bring out the significance of the chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral*.

Or

(b) Outline the historical background of the play *Murder in the Cathedral*.

UNIT V

5. (a) Discuss the transformation of Eliza in *Pygmalion*.

Or

(b) What is the relationship between Meg and Petey in *The Birthday Party*?

———————

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