

Master of Arts (English)

(M.A. English)

First Year

Shakespeare

Paper-II



दूरवर्ती अध्ययन एवं सतत् शिक्षा केन्द्र
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M.A. English (Paper-II)

Shakespeare

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Inspiration :

Prof. Naresh Chandra Gautam

Vice Chancellor

Mahatma Gandhi Chitrakoot Gramodaya Vishwavidyalaya, Chitrakoot (M.P.)

Author: Dr. Siddhartha Sharma

Associate Professor of English

Mahatma Gandhi Chitrakoot Gramodaya Vishwavidyalaya, Chitrakoot, Satna (MP)

Editor: Prof. V. S. Shukla (Rtd.)

Dept. of English

T. R. S. College, Rewa (MP)

Contact :

Director, Distance Education

Center for Distance Learning & Continuing Education

Mahatma Gandhi Chitrakoot Gramodaya Vishwavidyalaya Chitrakoot (MP)

Phone : 07670-265460, e-mail : distance.gramodaya@gmail.com, website: www.mgcvchitrakoot.com

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Naresh Chandra Gautam'.

(Naresh Chandra Gautam)

SHAKESPEARE

SECTION A: Texts for Detailed Study

UNIT I:

Hamlet

UNIT II:

Twelfth Night

The Tempest

UNIT III:

Henry IV, Part I

SECTION B: Texts for Non-detailed Study

UNIT IV:

A Midsummer Night's Dream

UNIT V:

Sonnets in Peacock's edn. English verse, Vol. I

Shakespearean Criticism

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In Unit I we shall introduce you to Shakespeare. For special consideration we have chosen one of his four tragedies entitled *Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark*. We shall further discuss some of the ticklish problems arising from this play.

In Unit II the aim is to make you acquainted with Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*. We have not only discussed their outline story, but also further into their detailed analysis. During the discussion of these plays we have brought out their salient features as well.

In Unit III the objective is to familiarize you with Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I*, a history play. Besides giving the outline story and the theme, some of the important features of the play have also been brought into discussion for further analysis.

In Unit IV we have chosen Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for study. The chief characteristics of the play have been discussed and analyzed as well for you.

In Unit V we have selected Shakespearean Sonnets and Shakespearean Criticism for your study. The objective here is not only to give a brief account of the sonnet writing in England but also to discuss the themes of Shakespeare's Sonnets. The other topic for study is Shakespearean Criticism, wherein we have discussed the views of Dr. Samuel Johnson, Ben Johnson and G Wilson Knight on Shakespeare.

Structure

1.0 Objectives

1.1 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

1.1.1 His Works

1.1.2 *HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK*

1.1.3 The Character of Hamlet: Its Infinite Variety

1.1.4 Hamlet's Madness: Different Interpretations

1.1.5 Hamlet as a Tragic Hero

1.1.6 The Love-story of Hamlet and Ophelia

1.2.7 Some Important Explanations

1.2 Comprehension Exercises

1.3 Let Us Sum Up

1.0 OBJECTIVES

In Unit I we shall tell you about the life and works of Shakespeare in general. For special consideration we have chosen one of his four tragedies entitled *Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark*. We shall further discuss some of the ticklish problems arising from this play.

It will enable you to:

- Discuss Shakespeare and his works in general.
- Offer an outline of the work
- Critically appreciate the play in detail.

1.1 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Birth and Upbringing

Shakespeare is definitely the greatest name in English Literature. Yet his biography is, "built upon doubts and thrives upon perplexities". Only the bare outlines are known for certain. We only know that he was born in April 1564 at Stratford-on-Avon, in the county of Warwick. His mother, Mary Arden, came of a noble family, and his father, John Shakespeare, was a prosperous farmer, wool and timber merchant, and butcher of the village. He took enthusiastic interest in municipal affairs and rose to the position of justice of the Peace and High Bailiff of the town. He was often involved in litigation, and our dramatist, as the eldest son, is believed to have assisted him, and in this way acquired that legal knowledge which has surprised his readers.

At School

About the age of nine he was admitted to the Grammar School of the village. As history has it he was not a good student, and it was half-heartedly that he attended the school, where he learned, "Small Latin and less Greek". He often played truant, took part in the village games which receive honourable mention in his plays. The landscape around his native village is beautiful which certainly have made a deep impression upon the boy, for the memory colours many of his best nature-pieces scattered all up and down his works. All his critics have praised his "astonishing store of natural knowledge".

In Financial Difficulties

When William was only twelve years of age, his father's fortunes began to decline, and he had to be withdrawn from school at this early age. He now began helping his father in his business, and he may also have worked for sometime as a schoolmaster in the village school. The family, a large one, was passing through a crisis. The head of the family withdrew himself from the affairs of the town, lost

his position as the leading citizen and became an insolvent debtor. William, it is believed, must have tried his best to pull the family through difficult times.

His Marriage

When he was hardly nineteen years of age, he contracted a hasty and unwise marriage with Anne Hathaway, some eight years his senior. On the basis of some passages in his dramas, critics have tried to show that the marriage was an unhappy one, but nothing can be said for certain. Only six months later was born his eldest daughter, Susanna, and in 1585 the marriage was blessed with twins, Hamlet and Judith. About this very time, Shakespeare left Stratford for London to seek his fortunes there, the immediate cause of his departure was the trouble he had with the police as a result of his participation in a poaching affray. Financial difficulties, dissatisfaction with his domestic life, the lure of the city and an innate dramatic tendency, might have been some of the contributory causes. There are records to show that a company of wandering players, such as were already becoming popular, visited Stratford at this time, and it was as a member of this Company that Shakespeare left his village.

Early Career: London

We next hear of him only about the year 1591, and find that the other playwrights of London are already beginning to find him a formidable rival. It is said that at first he got only mean and menial kind of employment and worked as a holder of horses at the doors of some London theatres. He passed his dramatic apprenticeship, as Raleigh puts it, "working at the odd jobs given to him by the theatrical companies, dining at the ordinary taverns, gazing on courtly processions and spectacles, seeing new types of characters and hearing new stories day by day". Then he tried his hand at acting and was soon a successful one. The coarse and worthless plays of the time disgusted him, and he began his dramatic career by re-casting existing plays and changing them beyond recognition. He was an intelligent and observant man, and soon impressed the theatre-managers, and his rise was phenomenal.

Success and Recognition

The success of his "Venus and Adonis" 1593, which he dedicated to the Earl of Southampton brought him into the notice of the royalty, and thenceforth, he constantly enjoyed court favours and soon reached the top of the ladder of fame. He had much practical ability and managed his business well in 1597, we hear of his purchasing a big house, New Palace, at Stratford. He had great love for his native village and paid visits regularly at least once every year.

His Last Years and Death

Around the year 1612, he retired from business and settled fully at Stratford. He had worked hard producing, on an average, two plays a year, and now his health was failing him. Whatever may be the exact cause of his death, overwork, or, as some say, a drinking bout, certain it is that he died on 23rd April 1616, and was buried in the Stratford Church. His house, New Palace, has been preserved as a national museum, and Stratford-on-Avon remains up-to-date, the most important place of pilgrimage for all lovers of English literature.

1.1.1 HIS WORKS

His Works

Or

Development of His Mind and Art

His Career

Shakespeare's dramatic career spreads over a period of nearly twenty-two years, from 1590 to 1612. During this period, the dramatist worked hard producing, over most of the time, about two plays a year, besides two poems—"Rape of Lucrece", and, "Venus and Adonis"—and a sequence of 154 sonnets. His plays gained instant success; he rapidly rose to eminence, and died a rich and prosperous man.

Its Four Parts

A close study of his plays in chronological order reveals a steady development of his mind and art. Shakespeare in 1590 is much different from Shakespeare in 1600. To stress the gradual growth of his art, Prof. Dowden has divided his dramatic career into four parts, each revealing a definite progress over the previous one.

NOTES

(a) **Apprenticeship (1588-94)**-- This is the period of his apprenticeship.

The dramatist was learning his craft. He was revising old plays, working in collaboration with the other contemporary dramatists, and imitating them. He was, to use Dowden's words, "in the workshop". The plays are immature and reveal superficiality in theme, subject matter, treatment and characterisation. The work is, on the whole, experimental in nature, as the poet was still groping in the dark. Some of the important characteristics of the early plays are:

- i. Excessive use of rhymes, puns, conceits, and other forms of wordplay.
- ii. Artificiality in treatment and style.
- iii. Frequency of classical allusions
- iv. Boisterous and farcical themes
- v. Excess of wit and imagery.
- vi. Greater importance is attached to the clown than in later plays.
- vii. Symmetry in the grouping of persons, As Prof. Dowden remarks, "the works of this period are all marked by the presence of vivacity, cleverness, delight in beauty, and a quick enjoyment of existence". This early work consists of early comedy, early Tragedy, and work on History. The most important of them are:

1. *Love's Labour Lost*—said to be the first independent and original work of Shakespeare.
2. *The Comedy of Errors*—a farce full of boisterous fun and laughter.
3. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*—a delightful romance,
4. *Richard III*—His first successful attempt at Historical drama, revealing the influence of Marlowe.
5. *Romeo and Juliet*—a lyrical love tragedy, later revised and perfected.
6. *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*—a fantasy, marking the close of his apprenticeship.

(b) **"In The World" (1595-1600)**- This is the period of mature, joyous comedies and mature Histories. Shakespeare now finds himself. By this time he has gained experience of the world as well as mastery over his craft. He is now, as Dowden remarks, "In the world". His powers have matured, and he writes with full confidence and sureness of touch. The works of this period are entirely original and independent creations and can easily be recognized as Shakespeare's own. His style now becomes wholly free from the crudeness and affectations of the earlier plays, and he writes with perfect ease and felicity. The use of rhyme is discarded and his blank verse shows greater ease and elasticity. He is at the fullness of his powers, and his work is robust and strong. The most important works of this period are:

1. *Much Ado About Nothing*—this delightful romance is in the manner of his early comedies, but reveals a higher level of wit and humour.
2. *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*- The atmosphere of these comedies is one of mirth and gaiety and they are marked with a frank enjoyment of life. There is perfect blending of humour and romance. They are the best comedies of Shakespeare.

3. *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*—farical comedies, largely in the vein of early comedies, yet revealing a maturity of Shakespeare's powers.
4. *The Merchant of Venice*—a comedy "hovering on the brinks of tragedy, or a tragi-comedy.
5. *Richard II*, *Henry IV* and *Henry*—the great English Histories, which unroll before our eyes the splendid panorama of the history of the nation, and reveal the secret springs of human action.

(c) **"Out of the Depths"(1600-1608)**- This is the period of the dark comedies, the Four Great tragedies and the Great Roman Plays. Prof Dowden calls this phase as "Out of the Depths". It seems as if some change has come over the poet and he is ill at ease and depressed. He writes out of the depths of his mind and heart and probes the hidden recesses of human nature. Frustration in love, treachery of some trusted friend, death of his father or son, seems to have cast a shadow over him, and the plays of this time partake of the gloom and bitterness of his life. His attention is now occupied with the darker side of human life and human nature, to the total exclusion of all that is sunny and bright. The style is characterised by the powerful overflow of thought and passion and is sometimes obscure. The plays of the period may be classified as:

1. **The Dark Comedies**- *All is Well That Ends Well*; *Measure for Measure*, and *Troilus and Cressida*. They are comedies only in name, as they partake fully of tragic pain and intensity.
2. **Roman Plays**- *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*.
3. **The Four Great Tragedies**—*Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Othello*. They are the four greatest tragedies of the world, and the supreme creations of Shakespeare.

(d) "**On the Heights**"(1608-1612)- This last period is the period of the great dramatic Romances. Shakespeare was now at the height of his career. He was at the top of his profession, and was no longer forced to follow accepted convention. He now wrote with perfect liberty and cared only to indulge his whim. The darkness and burden of tragic suffering had passed away and the dramatist had acquired perfect serenity and calm of mind. He "seeks refreshment in irresponsible play" as he needed relaxation after the strain of the great tragic period. The style of these last plays is a further development of the tragedies, and, as Raleigh puts it, "the very syntax is the syntax of thought rather than of language; constructions are mixed, grammatical links are dropped, the meaning of many sentences is compressed into one, hints and impressions count for as much as full blown prepositions".

The plays of this period are:

1. *Pericles*
2. *Cymbeline*
3. *The Winter's Tale*
4. *The Tempest*
5. *Henry VIII.*

1.1.2 ***HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK***

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

Act I.

This is Shakespeare's longest play and the play responsible for the immortal lines "To be or not to be: that is the question:" and the advise "to thine

own self be true," begins in Denmark with the news that King Hamlet of Denmark has recently died.

Denmark is at the present in a state of high alert and preparing for possible war with Young Fortinbras of Norway. A ghost resembling the late King Hamlet is spotted on a platform before Elsinore Castle in Denmark. King Claudius, who now rules Denmark, has taken King Hamlet's wife, Queen Gertrude as his new wife and Queen of Denmark.

King Claudius fearing that Young Fortinbras of Norway may invade, has sent ambassadors to Norway to urge the King of Norway to restrain Young Fortinbras. Young Hamlet distrusts King Claudius. The King and Queen do not understand why Hamlet still mourns his father's death over two months ago. In his first soliloquy, Hamlet explains that he does not like his mother marrying the next King of Denmark so quickly within a month of his father's death...

Laertes, the son of Lord Chamberlain Polonius, offers his sister Ophelia some brotherly advice. He warns Ophelia not to fall in love with Young Hamlet; she will only be hurt. Polonius tells his daughter Ophelia not to return Hamlet's affections for her since he fears Hamlet is only using her. Hamlet meets the Ghost of his father, King Hamlet and follows it to learn more. Hamlet learns from King Hamlet's Ghost that he was poisoned by King Claudius, the current ruler of Denmark. The Ghost tells Hamlet to avenge his death but not to punish Queen Gertrude for remarrying; it is not Hamlet's place and her conscience and heaven will judge her... Hamlet swears Horatio and Marcellus to silence over Hamlet meeting the Ghost.

Act II.

Polonius tells Reynaldo to spy on his son Laertes who is in Paris. Polonius learns from his daughter Ophelia that a poorly dressed Hamlet met her, studied her face and promptly left. Polonius believes that Hamlet's odd behaviour is because Ophelia has rejected him. Polonius decides to tell King Claudius the reason for Hamlet's recently odd behaviour.

King Claudius instructs courtiers Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to find out what is causing Hamlet's strange "transformation," or change of character. Queen Gertrude reveals that only King Hamlet's death and her recent remarriage could be upsetting Hamlet.

We learn more about Young Fortinbras' movements and Polonius has his own theory about Hamlet's transformation; it is caused by Hamlet's love for his daughter Ophelia. Hamlet makes his famous speech about the greatness of man. Hamlet plans to use a play to test if King Claudius really did kill his father as King Hamlet's Ghost told him.

Act III.

The King's spies, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern report to King Claudius on Hamlet's behaviour. Hamlet is eager for King Claudius and Queen Gertrude to watch a play tonight to which Hamlet has added some lines.

King Claudius and Polonius indulge in eavesdropping on Hamlet's and Ophelia's private conversation. Hamlet suspects Ophelia is spying on him and is increasingly hostile to her before leaving.

King Claudius decides to send Hamlet to England, fearing danger in Hamlet since he no longer believes Hamlet is merely lovesick. The King agrees to Polonius' plan to eavesdrop on Hamlet's conversation with his mother after the play to hopefully learn more from Hamlet. The play Hamlet had added lines to is performed. The mime preceding the play which mimics the Ghost's description of King Hamlet's death goes unnoticed.

The main play called "The Murder of Gonzago" is performed, causing King Claudius to react in a way which convinces Hamlet that his uncle did indeed poison his father King Hamlet as the Ghost earlier had told him. Hamlet pretends not to know that the play has offended King Claudius. Hamlet agrees to speak with his mother in private.

King Claudius admits his growing fear of Hamlet and decides to send him overseas to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern so as to protect himself. Alone, King Claudius reveals in soliloquy his own knowledge of the crime he has

committed (poisoning King Hamlet) and realizes that he cannot escape divine justice.

Queen Gertrude attempts to reprimand her son but Hamlet instead scolds his mother for her actions. Queen Gertrude cries out in fear, and Polonius echoes it and is stabbed through the arras i.e. the subdivision of a room created by a hanging tapestry, wherefrom he was eavesdropping. Hamlet continues scolding his mother but the Ghost reappears, telling Hamlet to be gentle with the Queen. For her part, Queen Gertrude agrees to stop living with King Claudius, beginning her redemption.

Act IV.

King Claudius talks to his wife, Queen Gertrude. He learns of Polonius' murder which shocks him, as he realizes that it could easily have been him. Queen Gertrude lies for her son, saying that Hamlet is as mad as a tempestuous sea. King Claudius, now scared of Hamlet, decides to have Hamlet sent away to England immediately. He also sends courtiers and spies Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to speak with Hamlet to find out where Hamlet has hidden Polonius' body so they can take it to the chapel.

Hamlet refuses to tell Rosencrantz and Guildenstern where Polonius' dead body is hidden. He calls Rosencrantz and Guildenstern lapdogs revealing his true awareness that they are not his friends. Hamlet agrees to see King Claudius.

Hamlet continues to refuse to tell Rosencrantz and Guildenstern where Polonius' body is. Hamlet is brought before the King. The two exchange words, clearly circling each other, each aware that the other is a threat. Hamlet tells King Claudius where Polonius' body is. King Claudius tells Hamlet to leave for England supposedly for Hamlet's own safety. With Hamlet gone, King Claudius reveals his plans for Hamlet to be killed in England, freeing King Claudius from further worry from this threat.

Young Fortinbras marches his army across Denmark to fight the Polish. Hamlet grieves over the fact that he does not have in him the strength of Young Fortinbras, who will lead an army into pointless fighting, if only to maintain

honor. Hamlet asks himself how he cannot fight for honor when his father has been killed and his mother made a whore in his eyes by becoming King Claudius' wife.

The death of Polonius leaves its mark on Ophelia who becomes mad from the grief of losing her father. Laertes storms King Claudius' castle, demanding to see his father and wanting justice when he learns that his father, Polonius has been killed. King Claudius remains calm, telling Laertes that he too mourned his father's loss.

Horatio is greeted by sailors who have news from Hamlet. Horatio follows the sailors to learn more... King Claudius explains to Laertes that Hamlet killed his father, Polonius. Deciding they have a common enemy, they plot Hamlet's death at a fencing match to be arranged between Laertes and Hamlet. Laertes learns of his sister Ophelia's death by drowning.

Act V.

Hamlet and Horatio speak with a cheerful Clown or gravedigger. Hamlet realizes that man's accomplishments are transitory (fleeting) and holding the skull of Yorick, a childhood jester he remembered, creates a famous scene about man's insignificance and inability to control his fate following death.

At Ophelia's burial, the Priest reveals a broadly held belief that Ophelia committed suicide, angering Laertes. Hamlet fights Laertes over Ophelia's grave, angered by Laertes exaggerated emphasis of his sorrow and because he believes he loved Ophelia much more than her brother.

Hamlet explains to Horatio how he avoided the death planned for him in England and had courtiers' Rosencrantz and Guildenstern put to death instead. Hamlet reveals his desire to kill King Claudius.

He is summoned by Osric to fence against Laertes. Hamlet arrives at a hall in the castle and fights Laertes. Queen Gertrude drinks a poisoned cup meant for Hamlet, dying but not before telling all that she has been poisoned.

Hamlet wins the first two rounds against Laertes but is stabbed and poisoned fatally in the third round. Exchanging swords while fighting, Hamlet wounds and poisons Laertes who explains that his sword is poison-tipped. Now dying, Hamlet stabs King Claudius with this same sword, killing him. The dying Hamlet tells Horatio not to commit suicide and to tell his story. Hamlet recommends Young Fortinbras as the next King of Denmark. Young Fortinbras arrives, cleaning up the massacre. Horatio promises to tell the entire story we have just witnessed, ending the play.

1.1.3 THE CHARACTER OF HAMLET: ITS INFINITE VARIETY

The Character of Hamlet: Its Infinite Variety

OR

"Hamlet" as a Problem Play

OR

"Hamlet: a very Complex Character"

OR

"Others abide our Question, Thou art free" Its Applicability to 'Hamlet'

Hamlet is a world-character, a figure so complex and intricate that more has been written about him than about any other figure in the whole range of literature. The defining features of his character are complexity and mystery, and even a hundred years of Hamlet criticism have failed to evolve any solution to the Hamlet-riddle. The intricacy of his character defies analysis, and as Verity puts it, "The chemistry of criticism has evolved no Hamlet formula." Innumerable books have been written on him and most contradictory and conflicting views have been expressed. Prof. Williamson in his monumental *Readings on the Character of*

Hamlet has collected some thousand opinions from diverse sources that reveal his complex character.

The character of Hamlet shows the infinite variety and complexity. We see him when he is with the girl he loves, and with the mother whom he had adored. We see him with his closest friend and confidant as well as with his schoolfellows. He is an entirely different person with Claudius, with Laertes, and with Polonium. We laugh with him at Osiric, and hold our breath with him in the august presence of his father's Ghost. He interests us most when he is with the common people, the players and the gravediggers. Every situation and circumstance reveals a new aspect of his intricate nature, and it is for this reason that he has come for many to have an almost independent existence.

Every reader and every critic of Shakespeare has turned Hamlet into material for his own imaginings and speculations. Every one has seen in him a reflection of himself. He is both individual and universal. Hamlet is a courtier, a soldier, a scholar—the Elizabethan ideal man of action—which combined the chivalry of another day with the intellectual curiosity of the Renaissance. Most varied influences and infinite Knowledge of human nature have gone into the making of his character, and that is why he continues to be an enigma, a mystery, and a riddle, which baffles understanding and defies analysis.

The Hamlet-problem is one of the many problems that confront the men of letters. "Why does Hamlet delay? What is the cause of his irresolution"? ask the critics, and the most opposite and contradictory answers are given. Goethe takes a sentimental view of Hamlet and considers him, "a beautiful, fair, and most moral nature". In short a sheltered idealist who sinks under the too heavy burden imposed upon him by the impervious circumstances. Coleridge, on the other hand, considers him a brave man and unafraid of death, sensibility, and procrastinates from thought, and loses the power of action in the energy of resolve". A. C. Bradley, on the contrary, traces the cause of his inaction to his morbid melancholy which is caused by the shock of the indecently hasty and incestuous second marriage of his mother. Hamlet's nature is too complex to be catalogued under any one heading.

Then there is the problem of problems, or the problem of Hamlet's madness. The question arises if he is really mad, or does he merely feign

madness? The 'mad doctors' are almost unanimous in their opinion that Hamlet is really mad, and not mad only in craft. Thus Dr. Ray asserts that in Hamlet, "the integrity of every train of reason is marred by some intrusion of disease". Dr. Buckall regards Hamlet's lunacy a mixture of feigned and unfeigned madness, to some extent he is really insane. Dr. Conolly and Dr. Kellogg both marshal impressive evidence in support of their view that Hamlet is really mad. On the other hand critic after critic, including K. Deighton, Furness and Bradley, hold the view that Hamlet is, "mad only in craft". As Cardinal Wiseman put it, "Hamlet feigns madness and baffling the critics. There can be no greater testimony to the consummate skill of the dramatist. Shakespeare has a profound, knowledge not only of normal human nature but also of the abnormal".

Hamlet is very complex and enigmatic and the mystery that surrounds him, is the mystery of life itself. He is the measure of his creator's intricate and profound knowledge of human nature.

1.1.4 HAMLET'S MADNESS: DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS

Is Hamlet really mad or does he merely feign madness?

Or

Hamlet's Madness: Different Interpretations

Or

"Hamlet is neither mad, nor does he feign madness"

Or

Madness of Hamlet is less than madness and more than feigned

At least four different views have been expressed in the connection of Hamlet's madness:

1. That Hamlet is sane throughout, but feigns insanity;

2. That he is more or less insane after his interview with the ghost
3. That he is neither insane, nor does he really feign to be so
4. That his madness is less than madness and more than feigned.

The "mad doctors", as they are called, like Dr Buckall, Conolly, Kellogg, etc., are unanimous in believing Hamlet as insane in reality. His bad dream, restlessness, imperfect sleep, unusual hysterical excitement at some moments, almost the excitement of delirium, etc, are all pointed out as evidence of his insanity. Prof. Nicoll is one of those critics who agree with the "mad doctors" in regarding Hamlet as really mad, if not throughout, at least at some points in the play. Prof. Dover Wilson enumerates at least seven such instances when Hamlet is insane.

Secondly, there are those who believe that Hamlet is neither mad nor does he feign madness. Furness is the most important critic who holds this view. He points out that Hamlet's declaration of putting on an "antic disposition" is merely an unintended and unassimilated survival from the old Hamlet play, and too much should not be made of it. The learned critic ignores Hamlet's declaration to the queen that he was, "mad only in craft", and his success in convincing her of his sanity. There were definite and sound reasons for his feigning insanity.

Thirdly, T.S. Eliot holds the opinion that, "Hamlet's madness is less than madness, and more than feigned." According to his view, Hamlet's insanity is less than madness for he is never completely out of his senses. He may be thrown off his balance momentarily, but he soon regains his senses and restraint. But it is more than feigned, for there are particular scenes in which Hamlet betrays almost delirious excitement and does act as if he were really mad. For the modern psychologists, there is something morbid and diseased about Hamlet's thought processes, and he is aware of this. His feigning of madness is a kind of defence mechanism. He pretends to be mad so as to protect himself from the approach of real madness.

This brings us by a natural transition to a consideration of the view, held by most critics, that Hamlet's insanity is feigned and that he is not really mad at

any moment in the play. He himself tells Horatio and Marcellus that his intention is to put on an "antic disposition", and later on he offers to convince his mother and succeeds in doing so that he is "mad in craft" only. Moreover, there are some definite reasons for his feigning madness. Edward Dowden fittingly points out. "He assumes madness as a means of concealing his actual disturbance of mind."

It is for sound and convincing reasons that Hamlet chooses to feign madness, and he follows his plan of action consistently throughout the play. He is mad only with those he wants to deceive, but never with those whom he loves like as when he is with Horatio or alone by himself. He talks sensibly and logically and shows great intellectual power in conversation with Horatio, his schoolfellows, the players, or with himself. As Granvill-Barker aptly puts it, "When he is alone, we have the truth of him, but it is his madness which is on public exhibition."

Cumberland Clark is right when he points out that much depends on the definition of madness. If by madness we plainly mean intense nervous excitement and agitation then Hamlet is certainly mad. On the other hand, if by insanity we mean that the person in question is not responsible for his actions, then Hamlet is certainly not mad. At no time in the play can he be regarded as irresponsible. To take him to be mad and, so, irresponsible, would be to go against the whole concept of Shakespearean tragedy.

A.C. Bradley goes to the root of the matter and points out that Hamlet is not mad, he is fully responsible for his actions, but he suffers from melancholia, a pathological state which may well develop into lunacy. It accounts for much that is wrong with him. That even the most discerning critics have taken him for a mad man, is another proof of Shakespeare's genius.

1.1.5 HAMLET AS A TRAGIC HERO

Hamlet as a Tragic Hero

Or

"Hamlet": a Tragedy of Reflection and of Moral Idealism

Similar to other tragic heroes of Shakespeare, Hamlet, too, is a conspicuous and prominent person as he is socially eminent, and also because he is endowed with exceptional qualities of head and heart. According to Prof. Dover Wilson, he is the dispossessed heir to the throne of Denmark. He belongs to the royal family and so is popular with the people who, "love but with their eyes". The King, Claudius, does not dare harm him due to his popularity.

But, like the other tragic heroes of Shakespeare, Hamlet, too, has a distinct obsession or clear tendency to act in a particular way. A.C. Bradley calls it the tragic flaw in the character of the hero. It is the tragic flaw which brings about his downfall and drives him to his disaster. The tragic flaw in the character of Hamlet is that he thinks too much and also feels too much. As Coleridge puts it, his intense intellectual activity prevents action, and he loses the power of action in the energy of resolve. Bradley has his own explanation for Hamlet's delay and irresolution. According to this scholarly critic, he suffers from melancholia, a pathological state only a step removed from insanity. His thought processes are diseased and it is not logical or rational thinking in the real sense of the word, but mental dissipation. That is why instead of making him see his way clearly, it makes him confused and muddle-headed, and incapable of thoughtful action.

The trouble with Hamlet is that he not only thinks too much but also feels too much. As a tragic hero, he is slave to his passions. In the words of Verity, he is a man, "with terrible capacities of feeling, one in whom emotion

gains an ascendancy that at times upsets the whole equilibrium of his being". He is an idealist he feels the hasty and incestuous second marriage of his mother too intensely. His moral idealism receives a terrible shock, his faith in human nature is shaken and his melancholy sits, "brooding like a dove", over the frailty, disloyalty and gross sensuality of his mother. As a result, he is exhausted and depressed and becomes incapable of resolute and prompt action. He fails to act, and the delay and irresolution prove fatal to him and the others as well.

Like other tragic heroes of Shakespeare, Hamlet, too, has to undergo great conflicts, both external and internal. The external conflict takes the form of conflict, first with Claudius, and later on with Laertes and Claudius combined. Of much greater interest is the internal conflict which rages in the soul of the hero. The internal conflict is between his moral nature and the act of revenge, which he is called upon to carry out. Love of his father, the dishonour of his mother, and the villainy of his uncle are dominant promptings to swift revenge, while his nobility of soul, his idealism, his principles, his religion, all revolt against such a brutal act. The outcome is he becomes torn within and suffers great spiritual torture.

In all these respects Hamlet is a typical tragic hero of Shakespeare. But he is different from the other tragic heroes in certain vital respects. He is the only one of the tragic heroes who does not lose our sympathies even for a moment. It is through the soliloquies again that the dramatist enlists our sympathies for the hero. Secondly, as Bradley remarks, Hamlet is the only one of the tragic heroes of Shakespeare who displays, "a sense of humour". Again, he is the only one whom we do not see in the day when life smiled upon him. But all through the play we are made to realise that he is the noblest of them all, one who knows no equal either in the other tragedies or in the present one.

1.1.6 THE LOVE-STORY OF HAMLET AND OPHELIA

The Love-story of Hamlet and Ophelia

Or

The Brutality of Hamlet towards Ophelia

Or

Hamlet's Relationship with Ophelia

Or

Its Dramatic and Psychological Significance

Ambiguity surrounds the exact nature of Hamlet's feelings towards Ophelia. A number of mixed views have been uttered regarding the love of the prince for the, "fair rose of May" sweet Ophelia:

1. That Hamlet truly loved Ophelia, never lost his love, but was compelled to suppress it due to circumstances
2. That he never truly loved her, but merely lusted after her. He might even have seduced her, and she might have committed suicide by drowning because she had become pregnant; and
3. That he loved her in the beginning, but became suspicious of her as her father's agent, and then treated her cruelly.

Undoubtedly, in the beginning, i.e. before the opening of the play, Hamlet loved Ophelia truly and sincerely. As she tells Laertes and Polonium he, "had made many tenders of his affection", to her. We get in the play a love-letter written by the Prince to her. The view that he did not really love her, but was

merely trying to seduce her does not hold much water. It is only Laertes, Ophelia's brother, who thinks so. Conversely, such a conclusion is unjustifiable and unwarranted, for the Prince is much too noble a person, and the Queen looks with favour upon their marriage.

Thus Hamlet's love for Ophelia is genuine and deep in the beginning, but he is obliged to put aside all thoughts of love and marriage by the pressure of circumstances. His father unexpectedly dies, and while he is yet grieving over his death, when hardly a month or so has elapsed since his father's death, there takes place the hasty and incestuous marriage of his mother with his uncle. His soul is filled with repulsion and hatred for womankind and he indulges in the generalisation, "frailty thy name is woman". All women must be alike and Ophelia can be no exception. This to some extent explains his subsequent brutality toward Ophelia.

As a product of these distressing events that follow close on each other, Hamlet is troubled and perplexed. He is torn within. He finds himself called upon to do an act essentially repulsive to his noble and sensitive nature. He becomes melancholic and depressed, and apathy, world-weariness, and disgust with life grow upon him. The result is that his love, too, like his other healthy emotions, is, to use Bradley's words "weakened by his melancholy". It is no longer, says Bradley, "an absorbing passion: it does no longer occupy his thought."

Ophelia too is partly responsible for Hamlet's treatment of her. Ophelia herself, by her conduct, aggravates the situation. All would have been well, had she only stood by the Prince in the hour of his crisis. But she deserts him, when he most needs her love, sympathy and understanding. She might be good at heart, but she is surely weak and colourless. She spurns him, rejects his advances and returns the little tokens of love given by him. She is too meek and obedient to her father, and agrees even to play the part of a decoy or spy. She must have played her part badly, and Hamlet must have at once understood that she was playing the part of spy at her father's behest.

But, the love relationship between Hamlet and Ophelia may not be concluded yet. There is one more incident which confuses the whole issue and which requires explanation. Ophelia goes mad as a result of the shock received

first by the madness of her lover, and then by the sudden death of her father. She dies of drowning. On the day of her funeral, Hamlet is present in the graveyard. Laertes jumps into the grave of her sister in a state of excess grief, wishing to be buried with her. Hamlet follows suit exclaiming:

I loved Ophelia; forty thousand brothers,

Could not, with all their quantity of love

Make up my sum.

Many critics disagree as to the significance of his speech. Some believe that Hamlet is here ranting like Laertes, and that the exaggeration shows that he is being insincere. Others assume that it is a genuine expression of his former feelings for Ophelia. Dr. Bradley goes to the heart of the matter when he writes that Hamlet's exclamation is sincere, "of the inner healthy self which doubtless in time would have re-asserted itself; but it was only partly true of the Hamlet whom we see in the play."

1.1.7

SOME IMPORTANT EXPLANATIONS

Lines: But, soft, behold! lo, where it comes again!

I'll cross it, though it blast me.--Stay, illusion!

If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,

Speak to me:

If there be any good thing to be done,

That may to thee do ease, and, race to me,

Speak to me:

Explanation: These lines occur from Act I, scene I of Hamlet by Shakespeare. Hamlet said that the appearance of the ghost is a strange thing. It is an indication of some great calamity which shall befall on the state of Denmark. He gives an instance of Julius Caesar, the Emperor of Rome. Before his murder some ominous signs were seen in the earth and sky.

Horatio becomes conscious at the arrival of the ghost. He tells to Marcellus to be quiet and just see how the spirit is appearing again. He will ask him questions although it may be harmful to him or it may also destroy him. He intends to obstruct the free moment of the ghost. The sceptical Horatio still refuses to acknowledge the reality of the apparition. He asks the spirit to stay and speak to him.

Lines 129-138. O, that this too too solid flesh would melt
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Act I Scene II in Hamlet. The king becomes pleased with the reply of Hamlet. The king thought it sensible and took it as a sign of love. He says to the queen, “This voluntary consent of Hamlet for staying in Denmark pleases our heart. In order to express that pleasure, there shall be so much of drinking, such a loud canon firing that the sky and clouds will resound the rejoicings of the king of Denmark on Earth.”

Hamlet is left alone after the council scene. He expresses his feelings in his first soliloquy which exposes his real inherent character. He is so much

disgusted with human life, human character and human society that he is tempted to commit suicide. He wishes to put an end to all his feeling of disgust, despair and sorrow.

He asks why does this solid flesh not melt and dissolve like snow and put an end to his agonizing existence. He hesitates to put an end to his life because god has decreed against suicide. He wishes that human body should melt into dewdrops and avoid the penalty prescribed by god for committing suicide.

The world is full of fraudulent and evil persons with only a few good souls. All their deeds are done by evil desires and wicked plot. Hamlet hits at the marriage of his mother to Claudius before the end of two months. She did not mourn the death of her first husband.

Lines 83-88. Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Act III scene I in *Hamlet* by Shakespeare. Nobody is ready to put an end to his life with his own hands because of the horrors of the life after death. A man suffers the insult, the injustice, the humiliation, the disgrace and painful things in the hands of the tyrant. He does not wish to die and go to the unknown world from which nobody returns after death.

Hamlet says that it is due to the fear of horror after death that man becomes a coward and does not have the courage to commit suicide. It is also due to this fear that during many enterprises he becomes weak and loses his energy and courage, he does not have full courage to take revenge and punish the guilty. Hamlet is indecisive whether he should continue to live in the world and take

revenge upon his uncle or commit suicide in order to forget the sorrow. The horror and uncertainty of life after death prevents him.

Lines 150-155. O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!

The courtier's, scholar's, soldier's, eye, tongue, sword,

The expectancy and rose of the fair state,

The glass of fashion and the mould of form,

The observ'd of all observers,--quite, quite down!

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Act III, Scene I in Hamlet by Shakespeare. Hamlet tells Ophelia that women make up their faces by artificial means. They are not contented with the beauty of their face. They dance, walk with short steps, talk in an artificial voice and put many loving names on men. They pretend their innocence when they are indulged in vice.

Ophelia was surprised and shocked to see the sudden change in Hamlet. She expresses her guilt at the strange change in him. She exclaims that a noble mind has been unhinged. He was an object of attention of all people. He possessed all the finest qualities of a courtier, scholar or a soldier. He was the very hope and flower of the state, and was the mirror of fashion. He was a moral of courage and culture on whom all tried to copy. All people observed his conduct and manners in order to copy them.

Lines 109-115. But, in the verity of extolment, I take him

to be a soul of great article, and his infusion of such

dearth and rareness as, to make true diction of him, his

semblable is his mirror, and who else would trace him,

his umbrage, nothing more.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Act V Scene II in *Hamlet*. Osric informs Hamlet that Laertes has just returned to Denmark. He is a perfect gentleman and has the qualities of civility and good manners. He is a model of refinement. He has all the virtues of a gentleman.

Hamlet says that the description about the good qualities of Laertes is perfectly correct. It is not possible to calculate them mathematically. His good qualities defy all such calculations. In truly praising him he is a man of important qualities. He possesses such rare virtues that it is only his looking glass that can truly reflect his virtue—whoever tries to imitate him would fall far behind him just as a shadow is far inferior to the substance, it is his shadow that can be sketched and not his real figure and personality.

1.2 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Draw a character-sketch of Hamlet.
2. Discuss *Hamlet* as a problem play.
3. Is Hamlet really mad or does he merely feign madness? Discuss.
4. Give the different interpretations Hamlet's madness.
5. Give an estimate of Hamlet as a Tragic hero.
6. Discuss "Hamlet" as a tragedy of reflection and of moral idealism.
7. Discuss Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia.

1.3 LET US SUM UP

After having finished Unit I you can tell about the life and works of Shakespeare in general. Now you are in a position to discuss one of his four tragedies entitled *Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark*.

UNIT-II TWELFTH NIGHT, THE TEMPEST

Structure

2.0 Objectives

2.1 TWELFTH NIGHT

2.1.1 The Romantic element in *Twelfth Night*

2.1.2 The title *Twelfth Night* or the Sub-title

2.1.3 The Character of Viola

2.1.4 The dramatic significance of the Clown in *Twelfth Night*

2.1.5 *Twelfth Night*: A comedy of self-deception

2.1.6 Some Important Explanations

2.2 THE TEMPEST

2.2.1 *Summary*

2.2.2 Supernatural Element in *The Tempest*

2.2.3 Dramatic unities in *The Tempest*

2.2.4 Prospero resembles Shakespeare himself.

2.2.5 'Prospero is the representative of art.'

2.2.6 Some Important Explanations

2.3 Comprehension Exercises

2.4 Let Us Sum Up

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In Unit II the objective is to make you acquainted with Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*. We have not only discussed their outline story, but also further into their detailed analysis. During the discussion of these plays we have brought out their salient features as well. It will enable you to:

- Discuss the outline of the works
- Offer commentary on the salient features of the works.
- Analyze the works critically.

2.1 TWELFTH NIGHT

The Shipwreck: The Heroine in Trouble

The scene of the play is Illyria, a country somewhere near Italy. There was a terrible storm and Viola, the heroine of the play, was shipwrecked on the shores of Illyria. She reached the shore safe and sound. But she was exceedingly sad and hopeless, for she thought that her beloved brother, Sebastian, who was also on the ship, had been drowned. However, the captain of the ship told her that he had seen her brother swimming bravely, and it was just possible that he too, had been saved. This encouraged Viola, and now she began to think on her future course of action.

Her Plan of Action

She was alone in a strange and unknown country. She did not know any body in Illyria. She was young and beautiful, and her youth exposed her to great danger. However, she did not lose heart. She decided to disguise herself as a boy and enter the service of duke Orsino of Illyria. The Captain of the ship was a kind-hearted gentleman. He encouraged and helped Viola. He also promised to keep her secret to himself.

The Duke's Love for Olivia

Soon after reaching the shores of Illyria, Viola entered the service of Duke Orsino. She was disguised as a boy servant (page). By her tact and intelligence she was soon able to win the confidence of the Duke. He was passionately in love with Lady Olivia, a rich Countess of the country. She was a rich heiress. At the time, she was grieving over the death of her brother, and had vowed that nobody, not even the sky, would see her face for full seven years. For this reason all the messengers of the Duke had to return without seeing her. She would admit nobody to her presence.

Viola sent as the Messenger of Love

NOTES

The Duke now discloses to Viola about the secret of his love for the Countess. He asked her to go to Olivia with his message of love, and not to return without seeing her. Viola was now in a very difficult position. Unfortunately, she had herself fallen passionately in love with the Duke. She wanted him for herself. It is very difficult for a lady to court another when she herself is in love. But Viola decided to perform her duty towards her master with honesty and sincerity. She would leave no stone unturned in the service of her master.

Her Tact and Determination

Accordingly, she went to the home of Olivia. Her attendants tried to turn her away from the door. But she could not be put off so very easily. She had a ready reply for everything. She could succeed where others had failed. On having been admitted into the presence of Olivia, she first praised her beauty in the most poetic language. Then she told her of the deep love of the Duke for her. Olivia at once rejected his love, and asked her to tell her master that he should not send his messengers to her in future. She would never be able to love him. But before departing Viola rebuked her for her pride and cruelty. She tried to reason out with her. Her master was young, handsome and rich. He was a noble and generous man. What else could she expect in a husband? It was unreasonable in her to reject his sincere and true love.

The Episode of the Rings

Viola's beauty played havoc with the heart of Olivia. She took him to be a handsome young man and lost her heart to him. Her love was so violent that she wanted to see the youth once more and at the earliest. So she thought of a clever plan, she gave a ring to her steward, Malvolio. She told him that the youth, the messenger of the Duke, had brought it from his master. He had left it there against her will. She asked the Steward to run after the young man and return the ring. He should also ask the Duke's messenger never to come to her again with his messages of love. Though, in case he liked he could come again to tell her how the duke took her rejection.

The Love-tangle

According to the commands of his mistress, Malvolio returned the ring to Viola. She at once understood the truth. She had left no ring behind. It was love that had compelled the Countess to send her own ring to him. This was a clever plan to make her come to her home once again. Thus there is a further complication in the play. Earlier, a maiden loved a man, but could not tell him of her love since she was disguised as a man. Now a maiden loves another maiden thinking her to be a man. Thus Viola's disguise is responsible for this love triangle in the play.

Sebastian: Further Complications

Further complication in the play is brought in, and also resolved, by the arrival of

Sebastian on the scene. A brave and kind sailor, Antonio, had saved him. They also came to Illyria. As Antonio had once offended the Duke, he could not enter Illyria with safety. So he stayed behind in his inn, but gave Sebastian his purse to meet his expenses. Sebastian very intimately resembled his sister Viola. They were twins and if Viola were to wear a man's dress, one could easily be mistaken for the other. That is what actually happened to further complicate matters.

The Foolish Sir Andrew

Olivia had a kinsman, Sir Toby—a carefree person given to drinking and gambling. He, too, lived with her and often caused her much annoyance. At present, he had with him a friend, Sir Andrew Aguecheek by name. He had brought him there, promising that, if he were adequately daring in lovemaking, he would be able to marry his niece, the countess. He was a fool; Sir Toby exploited him and befooled him in different ways. Very cleverly, they made him believe that the young man, the messenger of the Duke, had come there to love Olivia. She too loved him, and that was why she cares the least for Sir Andrew. If he wanted her love, he should challenge his rival to a duel. Olivia would thus be convinced of his courage and would marry him, as in her heart of hearts she loved him.

The Arrival of Antonio

The foolish Sir Andrew at once fell into this trap. He challenged Viola to a duel, and sent the challenge through Sir Toby. The challenge was not delivered, but Viola was frightened through invented stories of Sir Andrew's ferocious nature. She escaped from Olivia's residence in great terror. Sir Andrew and others followed her. Overtaking her, Sir Andrew tried to strike her with his sword. However, just at the moment Antonio reached the scene and mistaking Viola for Sebastian intervened on her behalf. Viola was thus saved, but just then the officers of the Duke arrived at the spot and arrested Antonio. He was now in a big trouble and asked Viola to return the purse that he gave her. Viola was much surprised. She could understand nothing. When she told Antonio that he gave her no purse, he abused her as false and treacherous.

Marriage of Olivia and Sebastian

Meanwhile, Olivia had been informed of the attack on the young messenger of the Duke. She immediately met Sebastian, and thinking him to be the young man he was searching for, carried him to his mistress. Sebastian was greatly surprised when Olivia expressed her passion for him and asked him to marry her secretly that very moment. However, he did not refuse, and so the two were married then and there by a priest. Sebastian then left her. It is the duel-episode that links the main plot with the sub-plot. It is through the duel that Olivia is married to Sebastian, and thus the way is opened for the marriage of Viola and the duke.

Happy Ending

Now Antonio was brought before the duke. Even now he was cursing Viola. Viola also followed him, and reached the palace. Countess Olivia also came there and claimed Viola to be her husband. When Viola denied having married her, the priest was called as a witness. The Duke as now convinced that the youth, his messenger, was mean, gutless and treacherous, poor Viola had to countenance the anger of all. However, kind Goddess Fortune came to her rescue. She was saved from a very difficult situation by the arrival of Sebastian.

Everything was now explained and matters were put right. Thus the comedy ends on a happy note with the ringing of marriage bells.

2.1.1 THE ROMANTIC ELEMENT IN TWELFTH NIGHT

The Romantic element in *Twelfth Night*

Or

Mingling of romance and realism in the play

Or

***Twelfth Night*: A Typical Shakespearean Comedy**

Romantic Theme: Love

A Shakespearean comedy is a romantic comedy. It is a tale of love ending with the ringing of marriage bells. It is a tale of love at first sight; this love is romantic, intense and passionate. It has nothing to do with reason. Not one or two but all the characters in the play are in love; the entire atmosphere is surcharged with love. The characters have no other business but that of lovemaking. This aspect of the Shakespearean comedy is well illustrated by *Twelfth Night*. It opens on a note of love. Duke Orsino is lovesick. The Duke is in love with Olivia, (disguised as Cesario) and Viola is in love with the Duke Sir Andrew and Malvolio both love lady Olivia and want to marry her. Olivia marries Sebastian thinking him to be Viola, and we are told that Sir Toby has married Maria. This kind of comedy we find in the other comedies of Shakespeare also.

Romantic Setting

The background of a Shakespearean comedy is romantic, i.e. it is unfamiliar, remote and distant, it exists only in the imagination of the dramatist. The scene of action is not laid in familiar and realistic London, but in Venice or

the forest of Arden. The scene of action of *Twelfth Night* is Illyria, a country having no reality, and existing in the imagination of the dramatist only.

The Evil of Disguise

Love between the two is true, but the course of true love does not run smooth. Difficulties arise in its way. There may be the opposition of parents and relatives, there may be the jealousies and suspicions, and the lovers may temporarily quarrel. The eternal triangle of love is often there to complicate matters: in *Twelfth Night* it is the disguise of Viola that creates complications. She loves the Duke at first sight, but cannot disclose her love. Instead, she has to woo another lady on his behalf. Another complication arises when Lady Olivia falls violently in love with her. Disguise is thus seen to be wickedness.

Chance and Fortune: Their Role

These complications are removed from the way of the lovers, not by their own efforts, but by the intervention of Chance and fortune. Thus Viola trusts Time to clear away all the difficulties. It is only by chance that Sebastian arrives on the scene and all the difficulties are gradually removed in the course of time.

Music and Melody

As, "music is the food of love", a Shakespearean comedy is intensely musical. Sweet, musical songs are spread all over his comedies. The Clown or the fool provides most of the songs. Thus *Twelfth Night* opens with music and we find Duke Orsino feeding his love with music. Music heightens the romantic atmosphere of the comedy.

Disregard of the Classical Rules

A Shakespearean comedy is also romantic in the sense that it does not observe the rules of the classical unities of time, place and action. There is also a free fusing of the tragic and the comic, which the classic critics, like Aristotle, disapproved. In *Twelfth Night*, only the unity of place has been observed. But there is no unity of time or action. There is not one plot, but two plots. The tragic

and the comic are also mingled together. The main plot is serious and tragic in tone, while the sub-plot is completely comic.

Innocent Fun and Laughter

The aim of a classical comedy is corrective in nature. It aims at ridiculing and exposing human follies and vices with a view to correcting them. The romantic comedy of Shakespeare has no such aim. Its aim is merely to provide innocent, good-natured amusement. The whole atmosphere is full of fun and merry-making. Thus in *Twelfth Night* the entire atmosphere is surcharged with revelry. There is mirth from beginning to end of the play. Feste, the fool, Maria, Sir Andrew and Sir Toby, all contribute to the spirit of gaiety and mirth in this comedy.

Predominance of Female Characters

Women invariably hold the front of the stage in a Shakespearean comedy. It is a world made safe for women, a world in which a girl can grow and come to flowering. In the romantic comedies of Shakespeare, the masculine element drops its voice and recedes into the background. Thus, in *Twelfth Night* it is Viola who is the life and soul of the comedy. "To think of *Twelfth Night* is to think of Viola".

Conflict of Realism and Romance

Hence a Shakespearean comedy is romantic. But he does not forget reality altogether. The reality of life is not completely absent from his comedies. His romantic lovers are reminded of the reality of life at every step. Thus Viola suffers, is shipwrecked, and has to solve the very practical and real problem of her existence in a strange, unknown country. The difficulties, which come in the way of the lovers, are also so many reminders to them of the reality of life. Often the fool is the representative of real life. Shakespeare's realism is also seen in his characterisation, and the reflections on life which are speckled all over the comedy, too numerous to be pointed.

Conclusion

Such are the important characteristics of a Shakespearean comedy, and *Twelfth Night* represents them all. The words of Charlton on Shakespearean comedy in general are completely applicable to this comedy: "Shakespearean comedy is not finally satiric, it is poetic. It is not conservative, it is creative, the way of it is that of imagination rather than that of pure reason."

2.1.2 THE TITLE TWELFTH NIGHT OR THE SUB-TITLE

**The title *Twelfth Night* or the Sub-title
Or**

"What you Will": Its Aptness

Shakespeare's Usual Practice

Shakespeare was rather casual in the naming of his comedies. He called his History plays by the name of the king in whose reign the action of that particular play took place. Thus we have *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Richard II* etc. He named his tragedies after the name of the hero, with whose suffering, disgrace and death they were concerned. Thus we have *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, etc. He named his love-tragedies both after the hero and heroine, for both have the same importance. Thus we have *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Romeo and Juliet*, etc. But he was especially careless about the naming of his comedies. He gave them, in an indifferent manner, any name that comes to his mind. They were meant purely to beguile a leisure hour, and it did not matter by what name they were called. As a result we get fantastic names as *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Love's Labour Lost*, *Comedy of Errors*, and *As You Like It*. Nonetheless, the present comedy has been named more appropriately.

Appropriateness of the Title

We have plenty evidence to suggest that the present comedy was written with the definite purpose of enacting it at the court of Queen Elizabeth on the night of 6th of January, which is the Twelfth Night after X-mas. Hence the dramatist called it *Twelfth Night* to signify the night on which it was first staged. Secondly, the Twelfth Night is traditionally celebrated in England, and other Christian countries, as a merry-festival. It is celebrated with singing, dancing, joking and laughing. This spirit of *Twelfth Night* corresponds well with the spirit of fun and merry-making, which pervades the whole play. Therefore, the dramatist was justified in naming it *Twelfth Night*.

Significance of the Sub-Title

However, the dramatist added another title to it, "What you will". Probably he wanted to suggest the readers were free to call it by any other name they liked, if they were not satisfied with the first title. As far as he was concerned he had written the play for their entertainment, and given it to them. He had also given a title to it. However, they were free to modify it as they pleased. For him the rose would smell equally sweet by any other name.

Emphasis on the Variety of the Play

Moreover, the sub-title also refers to the theme of the comedy. 'Will' also means 'wish' and in the play every one of the characters gets what he or she wishes. Viola gets the Duke and Olivia gets her Cesario, though in the form of Sebastian. Maria gets Sir Toby and his rank and position as well. Malvolio also gets what he desired most—the authority to punish his tormentors. The play has great variety, and so the readers also would get in it what they wished. None should depart disappointed. Every one of them would get something or the other to suit his or her tastes. Thus the second title emphasises the great variety of the play.

Deliberate Vagueness of the Title

There is another reason why Shakespeare added a subtitle to the play and called it, "What You Will". It does not fall into any of the recognised divisions of

the drama. It is not a tragedy, nor a history, nor a masque. It is also not a pure comedy. Hence the dramatist left his readers free to consider it what they liked, and name it accordingly.

The Title: Its Aptness

Thus the dramatist was right in giving it the title that he has given it. He has rightly avoided giving it any definite name, for a more definite title would have implied that any single element in the play is more important than the others. This would have been a mistake, since *Twelfth Night* is a pleasant blending of most varied and divergent elements, all of which have their own significance. By calling it vaguely "What You Will", the dramatist has emphasised this immense variety of the drama.

2.1.3 THE CHARACTER OF VIOLA

The Character of Viola

Or

“To think of *Twelfth Night* is to think of Viola.”

Or

"Viola is both the hero and the heroine of the play."

Viola: The Leading Source of Interest

Viola is the heroine of *Twelfth Night*. To think of this comedy is to think of Viola. It is of her adventures, her love and her modesty, her charm and her endurance, that we think when the play is mentioned. The other serious characters—Olivia, Orsino, Sebastian—derive what interest they possess primarily from their connection with Viola. Without her the play, "would have neither a beginning, nor a middle, nor an end." Viola is exceptionally beautiful.

Her youth and beauty attract all the characters in the play. Olivia no sooner sees her in a man's disguise than she falls head over heels in love with her. Viola's heart is full of the milk of human kindness. Her compassion extends to all her sex and to all her lovers. She knows, she says, "Too well what love women to men may owe." With a woman's insight she immediately sees that Olivia loves her, and her heart goes out to her rival in womanly pity:

As I am a woman-now alas the day,

What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe

She can forget her own deep love for the Duke in pity for his hopeless love for Olivia.

A Modest Lady

She is a modest lady. Her modesty is made known in all her speeches and actions. She assumes the disguise of a boy for her protection, but she takes no pleasure in it:

Disguise, I see, thou art a wickedness,

Wherein the pregnant enemy does much

She is no Amazon who delights in playing a man's part. Although filled with the deepest love for Orsino, "she never told her love"; only she dropped a hint of it with the utmost gracefulness, by telling him of the deep and silent love of her imaginary sister.

Her Deep and Self-sacrificing Love

She represents Shakespeare's ideal of love. The following lines aptly describe her deep and self-sacrificing love:

She never told her love,

But let concealment, like a worn in the bud,

Feed on her damask cheek; she pined in thought,

And with a green and yellow melancholy

She sat like patience on a monument

Smiling at grief.

Being a woman, she could just suffer and be patient. Her love for her brother is as deep as that of Olivia, but she makes no demonstration of it. It is as deep and as silent as her love for Orsino.

Her Determination

Viola is a woman of much tact, determination and courage. Though a young and inexperienced maiden, she does not lose heart even when she is shipwrecked on an alien shore. Immediately, she makes plans for her future conduct. She disguises herself as a page and enters the service of the Duke. In three days, she becomes his favourite and he confides to her his secret love for Olivia. As a messenger of love, she achieves success while all other attendants had been returned from the door. Her tact and determination take her to the presence of Olivia. She fully justifies John Ruskin's comment that Shakespeare's comedy "has no heroes, but only heroines". By her determination, tact, and resourcefulness, she succeeds in achieving what no man could do.

Her Wit

She is ready-witted and has a reply ready for all the excuses suggested by the attendants of the Countess. It is her quick wit which enables her to hold her own against heavy odds. To Maria's remarks, she replies wittily:

No good swabber; I am to hull here a little longer. Some mollification for your giant, sweet lady.

Her Sincerity and Honesty

She is true, faithful and sincere in the service of her master, the Duke. She loves him and wants to marry him herself, and yet when he employs her as a messenger of his love, she performs her duty loyally, even though she is torn within.

Nor does she perform her duty half-heartedly. She does the assigned task with remarkable honesty. In fact, she is ever ready to help and cheer others, and whenever she is faced with difficulties and misfortunes, she is always ready to put her complete faith in fate to bring her out safely.

Conclusion

In short, Viola is the heart and soul of the play. She is both its hero and heroine. We can sum up her character in Gervinus words: “She is of her brother's harmless nature; enterprising even in misfortune, free and cheerful in spirit, quick in intelligence, when the occasion demands it; but far more conspicuous is her compassion and the quiet modesty of her womanly nature. *Twelfth Night* owes much of its fascination to Viola; to think of *Twelfth Night* is to think of her.”

2.1.4 THE DRAMATIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CLOWN IN TWELFTH NIGHT

The dramatic significance of the Clown in *Twelfth Night*

Or

The Character of Feste, the fool: His Role

Or

"Feste is the highest wisdom of the play and its lowest buffoonery"

Feste: His Vital Role in the Play

Shakespeare consistently introduces the fool or the Clown in his plays with the intention of satisfying the demand of the audience for fun and laughter. People came to the theatre to have a hearty laugh at the jokes and tricks of the Fool in a particular play. Shakespeare has introduced Feste in *Twelfth Night* largely to amuse the readers and the audience by his witticism and tricks. He

offers great fun and laughter in the comedy. Also he is an integral part of the play, and performs many useful roles in it, for example, he is used as the clergy, Sir Topas, to administer religion to the soul of Malvolio. It is he who informs Olivia of the attack on her favourite Cesario and thus brings her onto the stage. Further, he comments at various places on character and action and so helps the readers to have a better consideration of the play. Thus he may be taken to be the mouthpiece of the dramatist. Many pure gems of wisdom fall from his lips. In a way, he is the link between the main plot and the sub-plot. He is the favourite of Olivia who enjoys his wit, he is also often at the court of Orsino who rewards him liberally, and he also takes part actively in the merry-making of the other comic characters of the play, and he does much to further their plot against Malvolio. Hence he is an integral part of the comedy, which would be impossible without him.

Provides Music

Besides providing fun and humour in the play, the fool also provides music. He is very musical and he has sung nearly all the songs in the play. Feste possesses a melodious voice, in which he can sing with equal skill love-songs, and song "of food life", comic jigs and melancholy dirges. He informs us that he takes pleasure in singing and appears before Viola carrying a tabor. Singing is no pain to him, rather a great pleasure. Towards the end, he stays behind to sing his last song, whereas all the other characters go in. It is worth noting that his songs are all appropriate to the occasion, the context in which they are sung.

His Wit and Wisdom

He is, "a wise fool among the foolish wise." "He wears not motley in his brain." He is conscious of his own importance and superiority. He is a shrewd judge of character and his remarks on the various characters reveal his great intelligence and insight. He sees through the disease, both of Malvolio and of the Duke, and prescribes superb remedies for both of them. He has wisdom enough to perform the difficult functions of the professional Fool. Feste is very witty. We see an example of his wit in the clever way in which he proves Olivia to be a fool:

Clown: Good Madonna, why mournest thou?

Olivia: Good Fool, for my brother's death.

Clown: I think his soul is in hell, Madonna.

Olivia: I know his soul is in heaven, Fool.

Clown: The more fool, Madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul being in heaven. Tame away the fool, gentlemen.

All through the play he demonstrates himself very adept at repartee. No other character in the play can beat him in this respect. In the war of words, he can hold his own against anybody. Viola praises his wit when she remarks,

I warrant thou art a merry fellow and carest for nothing.

In a witty manner he uses hard words, long names and quotations from Latin and Greek, to the great amusement of his readers. He does so to impress others, and also to impart weight and authority to his own views. It is a device, which has constantly been used by great writers and orators. All the characters in the play adore him and admire his wit. It is only Malvolio who does not like him and thinks him to be a very fool. However, Feste is able to have his revenge upon him towards the end of the play.

His Varied Tastes and Abilities

Like the fools of Shakespeare, as a general rule, Feste is loyal and faithful to his mistress, he cares much for her good opinion and it is clear from the play that he would be sorry to lose it. He also cares much for money and has many clever devices for begging it from others. He is adept at flattery, and easily wins the friendship and good will even of strangers. In short, he is a man of varied tastes and abilities. He tells us, he is, "good at all waters", good at anything. He is merry but clever. He is the highest wisdom of the play as well as its lowest buffoonery. His essential wisdom is well brought out through contrast with such simpletons and natural fools as Sir Andrew and Sir Toby. He is a fool only by profession, but is the wisest man in the company.

2.1.5 TWELFTH NIGHT: A COMEDY OF SELF-DECEPTION

Twelfth Night: A comedy of self-deception

Or

Twelfth Night: A drama of deception and of the deceived

Or

Twelfth Night as a comedy arising from mistaken identity

Two Forms of Deception

Twelfth Night has fittingly been called a drama in which the comedy arises from deception and delusion. The deception in the play takes two forms:

1. Self-deception
2. Deception resulting from disguise. Duke Orsino, Olivia, Malvolio, and Andrew Aguecheek are victims of self-deception. Viola's disguise deceives others, and results in the comedy of mistaken identities.

The Duke's Self-deception

Duke Orsino of Illyria is the victim of self-deception. He thinks that he is passionately in love with Olivia, but in reality he is in love not with any person but with love itself. He enjoys the luxury of being in love. He listens to music "with a dying fall", or lies comfortably, "canopied in bower", instead of going to his beloved and courting her. His love of her is merely a delusion, for no true lover would court his beloved through another person. He would like to go to her himself, and make love to her in his own person. That his love is merely a delusion is also seen in the fact that he easily, and without any regret, transfers it to Viola.

Olivia's Delusion

Olivia, on her part, is equally self-deceived and deluded. She is in love with grief just as the Duke is in love with love. She fancies that she will remain grieved for full seven years. But very soon we find her violently and aggressively in love with Viola disguised as Cesario. She forgets all about her brother, and by the end of the play we find her marrying Sebastian with indecent haste.

Malvolio and Sir Andrew: Their Delusion

Malvolio and Sir Andrew are also victims of self-deception. Malvolio is in love and deludes himself into believing that he has such excellent qualities that anybody would fall in love with him. It is due to this delusion that he falls an easy victim to the conspiracy of the comic characters. He is 'gulled' and made a Laughing-stock by them. Sir Andrew too is deluded enough to suppose that a rich and cultured lady like Olivia, much sought after by the best man in the country, will ever love him and carry him. The result is that Maria and Sir Toby easily befool him and we have the very comic episode of the duel.

Viola's Disguise: a Source of Universal Delusion

Besides such self-deception, another source of deception in the play is the masculine disguise assumed by Viola. The Duke is deceived by her disguise, takes her to be a boy and employs her as his messenger of love, Countess Olivia is deceived by her disguise, and falls in love with her violently and so wants to marry her. Her disguise also deludes other characters in the play. Thinking her to be a youngman, Sir Andrew challenges her to a duel. Antony mistakes her for Sebastian, and so fights on her behalf and gives a, "bloody coxcomb", to Sir Toby. When he is put under arrest, he abuses her for ungratefulness, and calls her hard names. Poor Viola has to suffer all the insults heaped upon her innocent head.

The Comedy of Mistaken Identities

Viola is mistaken for Sebastian and Sebastian is mistaken for Viola. The clown takes him to be Cesario(Viola disguised) and so takes him to her mistress who mistakes him for Cesario, and so marries him in indecent haste. However, the

truth is revealed in the end, and then it is realised that it has all been a comedy of mistaken identities.

Conclusion

Thus *Twelfth Night* is a drama of self-deception and delusion. It is a comedy of mistaken identities. Most of the characters in it are deceived in one way or the other. John Masefield is, therefore, right when he says, "*Twelfth Night* presents images of self-deception and delusional sentimentality."

2.1.6 SOME IMPORTANT EXPLANATIONS

Lines 31-36.

That say thou art a man: Diana's lip
 Is not more smooth and rubious; thy small pipe
 Is as the maiden's organ, shrill and sound,
 And all is semblative a woman's part.
 I know thy constellation is right apt
 For this affair

Explanation: These lines have been taken from *Twelfth Night*. The Duke Orsino speaks to Viola the innermost secrets of his heart. He asks her to go to lady Olivia and try to get admittance to her. She should tell her about his deep love and affection for her. She should listen to the tale of his love more attentively from her lips as a youth than of a more sober looking man. Cesario has greater chances of success than an older messenger. The Duke says that Cesario has greater ability to impress the countess and please her, for he looks more like a woman than like a man. His physical features resemble a fair maiden his lips are red and smooth like the lips of Diana, the goddess of chastity in classical mythology. Her voice is shrill and clear like that of a woman; he resembles a fair woman in appearance and voice. He feels very confident that the star under which he was born and

which governs his nature and temperament has favoured him to be the best messenger of love. Everything in him bears a semblance to the fine qualities of a woman.

Lines:

Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness
Wherein the pregnant enemy does much.
How easy is it for the proper-false
In women's waxen hearts to set their forms!

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Act II scene II of Shakespeare's comedy *Twelfth Night*. Olivia asks Malvolio to go after the messenger of the Duke and return the ring she had left behind. Viola disguised as Cesario actually leaves no ring there. She does not like to accept the ring. Malvolio throws the ring before Viola in a street near Olivia's house. Viola at once realises that her male disguise has deluded Olivia, and it was a clever device to call her back.

Viola realised that disguise or concealment is a sin and wickedness. It deceives others and confuses them. It is through disguise that Satan harms the people. Disguise is a forceful means to serve the evil purpose of Satan. The heart of woman is soft like wax. A beautiful appearance may be deceptive enough to influence the soft heart of a maiden. An apparent handsome person can easily impress the susceptible hearts of woman. If a handsome face deceives a woman, it is the defect in her nature which is weak. A woman is weak and susceptible because the stuff of which she is made is defective. It is the fault of God who has created woman so weak, so delicate and so readily impressed and deceived by beauty.

Lines140-145.

O what a deal of scorn looks beautiful
In the contempt and anger of his lip!

A murd'rous guilt shows not itself more soon

Than love that would seem hid: love's night is noon.

Explanation: *These lines have been taken from Act III scene I in Twelfth Night. Olivia honestly confesses her trick of sending her ring to Viola. She can use his intelligence and understanding to know the secret of his heart, when her intelligence would come to maturity. She would choose her partner well. Olivia says that Cesario looks more beautiful when he is scornful. Contempt and anger sit well upon him. Cesario knowing his real position checks the advances of love of Olivia. She becomes furious at Cesario's indifference towards her deep sense of love. Which she bore secretly for so long a time. the passion of love cannot be concealed. Even the guilt of murder cannot be exposed so quickly as the passion of love. The greatest secrecy that love can maintain is as open and clear to onlookers as the noonday.*

Lines 52-56

Fare thee well. Remain thou still in darkness: thou shalt

hold the opinion of Pythagoras ere I will allow of thy wits; and

fear to kill a woodcock, lest thou dispossess the soul of thy

grandam. Fare thee well.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Act IV scene II in *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare. Malvolio's is confined in a dark room. The clown visits him in the garb of Sir Topas, a clergy, who has come to drive out the devil responsible for his insanity. Malvolio asks the minister of the church to open the door and then test his sanity. The clown asks him about Pythagoras doctrine of the transmigration of soul.

Malvolio replies that he cherishes a good opinion about the soul, but does not approve of his doctrine. The clown bids farewell to Malvolio and says that he

deserves to be kept confined in darkness. He would believe in the opinion of Pythagoras before he redeems his wit. The clown was not willing to declare him out of influence of insanity until he takes faith in the theory of transmigration of soul. If Malvolio shares such faith, he is afraid in killing a woodcock lest he might kill his grandmother.

Lines 330-333.

Why have you suffer'd me to be imprison'd,
Kept in a dark house, visited by the priest,
And made the most notorious geck and gull
That e'er invention played on? tell me why.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Act V Scene I of *Twelfth Night* by Shakespeare. The Duke along with Olivia visits the proclaimed mad Malvolio. Olivia asks him about his condition. Malvolio complains that she had done great wrong to him. He gives the letter to Olivia. He charges him with writing such a letter, in his own hand writing and sealed.

Malvolio asks in the name of her modesty and honour shy she gave out such an expression of false love and instructed him to wear cross garters and yellow stockings. She gave a false hope to him to get her love and thus change his fortune.

Malvolio asks that he acted according to the instructions given to him by her. He did not expect such a rude return to be kept in a dark room and treated as a madman. It was undesirable to send the priest to test his madness. He was made the greatest fool according to a clever plot. He desires to know the reason for all these injustices to him.

2.2

THE TEMPEST

The Date of Composition

Some critics consider early 1611, as the date of composition of the play. In May 1609, George Somer's ship was wrecked in mid-Atlantic near the Bermudas. The Tempest was staged in 1613 on the occasion of the marriage of Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of King James I.

The Setting of the Play

The action of the play takes place in a far-off land. It was a fanciful country which did not exist. Some consider it to be near Malta, while others identify it with 'the Bermuda'.

The Source of the Play

Shakespeare took the theme from a German play Fair Sides. He added humour and poetry to it. The Tempest belongs to a group of plays known as Dramatic Romances which include the Winter's Tale, Pericles and Cymbeline.

Its Form and Substance

In form it is romantic, in substance classical. The action takes place in an unknown remote land. It is a tale of magic and enchantment. The classical form has the unities of time, place and action. 'Retrospective narration' has been made use of in this play.

The Characterization

Prospero is magician who is omnipotent. His daughter Miranda is an innocent child. Caliban is the son of a witch, who is a huge monster. Ariel is the spirit of the air, refined and delicate.

As a Social Document

The play shows travel, adventure and colonization. It is full of wondrous tales of the adventures of English Sailors. In it we find relationship between the colonized and the colonized as shown by Prospero and Caliban.

Theme of the Play

The theme of the play is forgiveness and reconciliation. Prospero instead of punishing his enemies, Alonso and Antonio, forgives them after reconciliation. It also shows that the true freedom of man consists in service. Ariel gets freedom through service. Caliban considers service to be slavery.

Element of Love

The love of Ferdinand and Miranda shows the idea that true love consists in service. Ferdinand, a born prince takes logs of wood to get the hand of Miranda, and she too shares his labour due to love for him.

Symbolism in the Story

In *The Tempest* Prospero is the symbol of providence and Ariel the symbol of imagination. Ferdinand and Miranda symbolize the fertility and continuity of nature. Caliban is the symbol of wickedness and evil in nature as well as in poetry and beauty. Prospero is also the symbol of inspired artist.

Evil and Conflict

The conspiracy of Sebastian and Antonio against Alonso is counter-balanced by the conspiracy of Caliban, Trinculo and Stephano against Prospero.

2.2.1 SUMMARY

Prospero's Island

Prospero was a magician who lived in a far-off island. His daughter Miranda was a beautiful young girl. She had not seen any human face except her father's for several years. They lived in a cell made of a rock. Prospero had a separate room for study, where he kept the books of magic. He got hold over Sycorax, an evil spirit by the help of magic. Prospero by virtue of his art had released many spirits, which Sycorax had imprisoned in the trunks of a large tree. Among these, Ariel was the chief spirit, Prospero's favourite.

Ariel's Past

NOTES

Ariel took great pleasure in teasing an ugly monster Caliban, the son of dead witch Sycorax. Prospero brought him to his cell and taught him to speak. He worked there as a slave to fetch wood and do odd jobs. He had inherited bad nature from his mother, and could not learn good things. He was given in the charge of Ariel. Whenever he was lazy and neglected his work, Ariel pinched him or tumbled him down in the mire.

The Shipwreck

Prospero had a lot of spirits under his control. He could command the woods and the waves of the sea. The spirits could raise violent storms. Prospero showed his daughter a large ship carrying living beings like themselves. It was caught by a furious storm. Miranda's heart was full of pity. She requested her father to save the ship. Prospero told her that he has already taken steps to protect the ship and no person in the ship would have been harmed. He has instructed the spirits already.

A Misfortunate Tale

Prospero told Miranda about his past life. He was the Duke of Milan with Miranda as her daughter. She was his only heir. He had a younger brother Antonio by the name who looked after the state of affairs. Prospero was fond of retirement and deep study. Antonio began to think himself the real Duke. He cherished a dream of becoming the duke himself by depriving Prospero of his dukedom. He sought the help of the king of Naples. Antonio had managed to send Prospero in a small boat without any sailor mast. He was saved by a lord named Gonzalo.

The Anxiety of the Prince

Prospero was carried by the sea waves to a desert island. He has been living there since in the Island with his daughter. Prospero told Miranda that the king of Naples and his cruel brother fell asleep by his magic work. Ariel informed the king that he has accordingly disposed of the ships company. Ariel told him about the storm and the terror of the mariners. The king's son, Ferdinand had leapt

into sea, and his father was worried at his loss. He is saved and lying in a corner of the Island he thinks his father to have drowned.

The Song of Ariel

Ariel sang a sweet song and telling him that his father was drowned. He roused from sleep and followed the sound of Ariel's voice. He reached near the cell of Prospero and saw Prospero and Miranda sitting under the shade of a tree.

Love at First Sight

Miranda and Ferdinand were greatly pleased to see each other. Miranda thought him to be a holy spirit and Ferdinand considered Miranda to be the goddess of the enchanted Island.

Prospero had secretly perceived that the two had fallen in love with each other. But he tried to throw some difficulties in the way. He told him that he would drink seawater.

Ferdinand drew his sword and ran up to Prospero, who fixed him to the spot by his magic wand. Miranda tried to favour the cause of the youth, but Prospero rejected her proposal. Prospero ordered Ferdinand to pile up some heavy logs of woods. The prince felt fatigue soon and Miranda came to share his work. Prospero had put Ferdinand in a trial of his love. He secretly observed their talks.

King of Naples and Antonio

Ferdinand asked her name. Miranda told him in spite of her father's command not to expose it. Prospero did not become angry with his daughter. He heard the exchange of their love talks. He called the spirit Ariel and asked him about Antonio and king of Naples. He offered them a good feast. He reminded them of their cruelty in driving Prospero from his dukedom. These terrors and punishments were inflicted on them for this crime. They repented the injustice they had done to Prospero. Prospero sent Ariel to bring the king and his brother before him. They could not recognize him. There was Gonzalo who had kindly provided Prospero with books and provisions.

Repentance and Forgiveness

Prospero revealed himself to old Gonzalo. Then the king and Antonio recognized him. Antonio with tears and sad words of sorrow with true spirit of repentance, implored for forgiveness. The king expressed his remorse for having aided Antonio to deprive his estate. Prospero forgave them open heartedly. Antonio promised him to restore his dukedom. Prospero showed them Ferdinand, playing chess with Miranda. The King came to know that she was the daughter of Prospero. He at once agreed to their marriage.

The Happy Marriage

Prospero told them that their ship was safe in harbour with the sailors waiting for them on the board. Prospero dismissed Ariel from his service. He started the next morning with his daughter towards Naples. He took possession of his dukedom and arranged the wedding of Miranda with Prince Ferdinand. He buried deep in earth his magical books and wand. He resolved never to make use of his magic.

2.2.2 SUPERNATURAL ELEMENT IN THE TEMPEST

Supernatural Element in *The Tempest*

Chief Characteristics

Shakespeare's fairyland is the product of his fancy. Stanley Wood describes the characteristics of fairies in the plays of Shakespeare thus:

1. They have a court, a king and queen.
2. They have great influence over the lyrical powers of the nature. They can overcast the night.
3. They are small in size.
4. They can move with extreme rapidity.

5. They can see all that the mortals cannot see.
6. They occupy and amuse themselves in various ways.

C. Clark says: "The pictures conjured up in our minds today by the word 'fairy' is as different as could be from the repulsive fairy of the Elizabethans.

The Fairies in The Tempest

Shakespeare has used the fairies, magic spells and enchantment in *The Tempest*. In the early plays he employed the fairies for fun, and they could control the mortals. In *The Tempest* they are under the control of man. Prospero by his magic power controls them. Ariel has all the superhuman powers, but he is under the control of Prospero.

Pardon master

In will be correspondent to command

And do my spiriting gently

Ariel can perform wonder at the orders of his master. He can make himself invisible and change his shape. He misleads right wanderers.

Ariel is very fond of music. The magic island is made more mysterious by the music of Ariel.

C. Clark says: "His appearances are nearly always accompanied by melodramatic strains a technique that reveals how closely Shakespeare connect music with supernatural manifestation." Ariel sings:

Where the bees sucks, there suck I

In a cowslip's bell I lie,

On the bat's back I do fly.

After summer merrily.

2.2.3 DRAMATIC UNITIES IN THE TEMPEST

Trace dramatic unities in *The Tempest*.

Or

Examine the dramatic value of Ariel's songs.

Or

Write a note on the supernatural element in *The Tempest*.

Introduction

Elizabethan period was associated with magic and witchcraft. Shakespeare, like Marlowe, tried to introduce supernatural elements in *The Tempest*. He observed dramatic unities in the *Tempest*—the unity of time, place and action. Ariel's songs, too, exhibit the elements of supernatural and have their dramatic value.

A.W. Verity says: "But Ariel is creation of fancy, using the old belief in spirits or demands of the elements, Shakespeare has created a being whose character and relation to man are essentially original."

Supernatural Agents

The Supernatural elements in *The Tempest* are the spirits. Ariel is the supreme spirit and is the chief of the spirits of air. Prospero controls all the supernatural agencies as the commander. Ariel has all the supernatural powers and can perform wonders while making himself invisible. Prospero says:

Go make thyself like a nymph of the sea be subject

To no sight but thine and mine, invisible

To every, eyeball else. Go, take this shape

And hither come in it.

Supernatural Agents Active

In *The Tempest* various supernatural agents perform numerous functions, some create storm in the sea and toss Alonso's ship; some dance like flames of fire before the crew, some torture Caliban, some sing songs, dance, bowl and create visions of feast and banquet. All spirits serve him well but are unwilling agents. Prospero delegated some of his powers to Ariel.

The spirits of earth are employed by Prospero to torture Caliban into submission. Ariel sings:

All hail, great master, Sir, hail, I come

To answer thy best pleasure: be't to play

To swim, to dire into the clouds to thy.

Strong bidding task

Ariel and all his quality.

Role of Supernatural Agents

Shakespeare has introduced supernatural agents in *The Tempest* to serve as means of redressing the wrong done to one mortal by another. Miss Helen H. Steward says: "Ariel is the quintessence of the highest laws of nature, the forces, which, invisible but irresistible, work in all material things." In fact Ariel gives some idea of his own form and character:

Where the bees suck, there suck I;

In a cowslip's bell I lie;

There I couch where owls do cry,

On the bats back I do fly

After summer merrily

In *The Tempest* Shakespeare uses the supernatural agents partly to create a romantic atmosphere and partly to perform certain deeds which cannot otherwise

be performed by any other means. Prospero could not chastise his enemies without the help of these agents. He could not fulfil his desire to marry his daughter to Ferdinand without the help of Ariel, and other spirits of fire, air, water and earth. Shakespeare was able to create romantic atmosphere of music with the help of supernatural agents.

Dramatic Worth of Ariel's Songs

The songs of Ariel have much dramatic value. Ariel expresses the reason of his cruel suffering at the hands of Sycorax,

For thou hast a spirit too delicate

To act her earthly and abhorred commands

In *The Tempest* the music is closely connected with the supernatural. Ariel's music serves as a mechanism of harmony and brings the lovers together by his first two songs. In the first song "come on the land from the sea," reveals character and thwarts villainy. It is Ariel's music which awakens Gonzalo and prevents Antonio and Sebastian from striking deathblows at Alonso and Gonzalo. Ariel has imagination, and enters into the feelings of humanity through his songs.

Dramatic Unities in *The Tempest*

The unity of time is strictly observed in *The Tempest*. The action is spread over a much longer period of time. There is only slight breach of the unity of place. After the storm all the action takes place on the same spot. The unity of action demands the main motive of the play. In *The Tempest* the main interest is Prospero's exercise of his magic power which controls all the events in the play. The action depends on Prospero's will. Here unity of action is followed in reference and not in form.

2.2.4 PROSPERO RESEMBLES SHAKESPEARE HIMSELF

Prospero resembles Shakespeare himself. Discuss.

Or

How far is Prospero, Shakespeare. Discuss.

Or

Why is it that Prospero has often been identified with Shakespeare?

Introduction

Prospero plays the role of Shakespeare in *The Tempest*. His speech in the Epilogue is just the conception of Shakespeare himself. Prospero now intends to throw the magic wand into the earth and aspire to return to Milan. Shakespeare wishes to retire to Stratford.

Luce says: "*The Tempest* may be regarded as an autobiography of Shakespeare. He is now approaching his fiftieth year, and his life as been all this time devoted to literature in the way of strenuous effort and ceaseless production." He wishes to leave his work.

The Tempest: an Autobiographical Play

Many critics have compared Shakespeare's dramatic act with Prospero's magic art. The last few years of Shakespeare's life show feelings, thoughts and attitudes which are akin to that of Prospero. Prospero drowns his book of necromancy, while Shakespeare drowns the books relating to the theatre. Both have a longing for leisure and retirement. Shakespeare asks for pardon from the audience that he has so far been producing a magic spell upon them by means of his plays. He intends to throw the magic wand of his dramatic art into the sea just

like Prospero who throws his book of magic. He wishes to dissolve atmosphere of enchantment that was created by him for several years over the stage of London. He frankly realises that he does not hold the same magic power of composing plays. Prospero says in the Epilogue:

*Now my charms are all o'erthrown
And what strength I have's mine own
Which is most faint, now, 'tis true,
I must be here confined by you
Or sent to Naples.*

Prospero as Shakespeare

The Tempest is among the last plays of Shakespeare. It has some autobiographical touch. Many critics identified Prospero with Shakespeare. Prospero's island was like the London theatre. Prospero performed magic practice in this island and had controlled the spirits, in the same way Shakespeare performed great feats in the world of theatre and controlled the audience. Prospero says:

*Graves at my command
Have waked their sleekee, often, and let them forth,
By my repentent art.*

Shakespeare was the singular master in the stage and Prospero was all in all in his island. Wilson Knight writes: "Prospero is automatically in the position of Shakespeare himself, and it is accordingly inevitable that he should often speak as with Shakespeare's voice. Ariel, Caliban and Miranda are all artist of Shakespeare himself. Prospero renounces magic when he became successful in reconciling Antonio and Sebastian and forgave his enemies. Shakespeare renounces his dramatic art after he had received ample fame. Prospero sees:

*I will break my staff
Bury it certain fathoms in the Earth,*

And deeper thou did ever plummet sound

I'll drown my book.

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Prospero and Shakespeare

Prospero had Ariel under his command, and Shakespeare had his imagination under his will. Prospero tried to conquer his enemies through his magic, and Shakespeare tried to win the favour of his stage opponents who rejected him at the first instant. Prospero created the storm and made a trap to catch his enemies, similarly Shakespeare drew the hostile elements within his kingdom of drama. Shakespeare left his native place and came to London to focus his attention upon dramatic art; while Prospero was forced to leave Milan and take shelter in the enchanted island. The years spent at this enchanted island by Prospero resemble the dramatic cover of Shakespeare which was started with *Hamlet* and culminated in *The Tempest*.

Morton Luce writes: "Let us rather think of him, as returning to scenes of youth, where his heating mind will be open to the sweeter influence of earth, and heaven, were all event he may know the delight of contemplation where every third thought shall be of his grave." Prospero says:

And thence retire me to my Milan, where,

Every third thought shall be my grave.

But Stratford A. Brook disagrees with this analogy. Shakespeare was a dramatist, and the art of a dramatist must be impersonal.

2.2.5 'PROSPERO IS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF ART.'

'Prospero is the representative of art.' Discuss.

Prospero and Miranda had seen the tempest. Prospero tells his daughter of his past life. Antonio becomes the Duke of Milan in place of Prospero.

Prospero becomes the lord of the island. He controls the good and evil spirit that is Ariel and Caliban. It seems that Miranda and Prospero have been witnessing the shipwreck in progress. The sky having become dark, lowering clouds look like an expanse of pitch. The ship was destined to pieces and passengers have been all drawn overboard.

Miranda is extremely hurt by the shipwreck and she recalls the favour of her father to save them from the miseries. It was due to the Miranda that the ship was considered to be safe. Prospero tries to relate the so-called story of his past life which is intimately associated with the shipwreck. Prospero was the Duke of Milan about twelve years ago. He was not interested in the affairs of his state and took to his studies. His brother Antonio performed the functions of the state were performed on behalf of Prospero. He enjoyed the powers of Prospero, and the latter had no idea that with his daughter he would be removed from the state and carried to some remote island.

After the departure of Prospero, his brother Antonio became the Duke of Milan altogether. Prospero had passed the last twelve years in some remote island with his daughter. He had acquired some supernatural powers from his studies and he came in a position of controlling the spirit, good as well as evil. One of the spirits was Ariel which he had taken under his control. He had saved his life and liberated him from some curse, and thus Ariel had come under the command of Prospero. There was one monster whose name was Caliban and was known to all for his wicked tricks.

Prospero had got some change to take revenge from his old enemies, like a Antonio and the king of Naples, who were then returning from the marriage of the daughter of Alonso from Tunis. Prospero had created the tempest in its most fearful form which had caused shipwreck. Now Ariel informs Prospero that the passengers have been saved from the shipwreck and their fleet was moving aimlessly along the island. The ship was also saved from destruction and is lying on the harbour, while the sailors were enjoying over their safety. The other ship in the king's fleet has also been saved from the storm and was moving backwards.

Now Ariel wants to take leave of Prospero and the latter becomes angry over this request. He reminds his kindness to Ariel that he had saved him from the

curse of the witch, who ruled over this very island formerly. Prospero had liberated Ariel from the bondage of Sycorax who was the witch in this island. The witch had turned Ariel in the form of a cloven pine and Prospero with the power of his magic had brought him back to his original position.

Prospero and his daughter go towards the den of Caliban, the evil spirit, who had tried to rape the daughter of Prospero, who was very much irritated by his mistake and confined him in a rock. Prospero shows his kindness to Caliban and the latter becomes satisfied.

Ariel with the help of his power takes Ferdinand in the presence of Miranda, and she falls in love with him.

Ariel tries to persuade Ferdinand to win the heart of Miranda and thereby marry her. But Ferdinand considers her to be some goddess and promises to marry her. But Prospero comes in the way of their love and considers Ferdinand to be a spy of his enemies. Ferdinand being angry at the charge of Prospero attacks Prospero with his sword, but the latter is saved with the help of his magic. Miranda is not pleased with the attitude of his father and shows her anger.

Dramatic Significance

The scene illustrates the exposition and accomplishment of the action of the play. The duel between Prospero and Miranda shows chances of fate of the ship and passengers. Miranda expresses pity over the sad condition of the passengers of the ship and asks her father to calm the tempest and save the lives of the people. Prospero tells her that the ship and the passengers are saved and this is confirmed by the arrival of Ariel who tells that the ship and its passengers are safe. The retrospective discussion of Prospero is very interesting and convincing. The dialogue between Prospero and Ariel is full of curiosity and suspense. Prospero feels happy at the information of Ariel that he has disposed of the ship and its passengers. But at the same time, Prospero is angry when Ariel expresses his desire to be free. This outburst is the way of telling in retrospect the history of Ariel. The talk between Prospero and Caliban shows that the action becomes faster and is the complicated part of the play. It seems to develop in quick succession. We are soon brought in a mood of romance. This scene shows the first experience of love between Miranda and Ferdinand.

The plot develops in peculiar situations and shows Prospero's attitude towards Ferdinand. There is some obstruction of the flow of love between them and the situation becomes complex. This makes us spellbound and leaves us lost in the realms of romance and the dream. The retrospect is presented here and shown in a dignified way and described in a very artistic way. The salient features of the play are presented here in a dramatic way. The long narrative becomes very interesting and these show flow of action in a dignified manner.

This scene is the finest example of retrospective narration of the purpose of beauty and suspense and this tries to impress the readers in an ingenious manner.

This scene serves the purpose of prologue. It tells the events that produce the crisis in the play. The action of the play increasingly becomes complex and the situation becomes very strange. This scene is full of narration and the dialogues show the salient features of the characters. The spell of magic is probably predominant in this scene and makes us very much pleased. This scene also shows the atmosphere of enchantment.

2.2.6 SOME IMPORTANT EXPLANATIONS

Lines:

Lie there my art.--Wipe thou thine eyes; have comfort.

The direful spectacle of the wrack, which touch'd

The very virtue of compassion in thee,

I have with such provision in mine art

So safely ordered that there is no soul--

No, not so much perdition as an hair

Betid to any creature in the vessel

Which thou heard'st cry, which thou saw'st sink.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Act I, Scene ii of The Tempest. Miranda feels very dejected at heart when she sees the shipwreck and the pitiable sight of the crew. Prospero consoles Miranda and mentions his past history. Miranda appeals to her father to exercise his magical powers to save the crew and the ship.

The crew was threatened by storm with the magic spell of Prospero. But he assures Miranda that he had already exercised his magical powers to save the ship and his crew. He has the knowledge that not the least injury has been done to any of the passenger. Miranda was very unhappy at heart to see the ship being torn by the storm. Here the humanity of Miranda and the affection of Prospero are well-expressed.

Lines:

He being thus lorded,
 Not only with what my revenue yielded,
 But what my power might else exact,--like one
 Who having, into truth, by telling of it,
 Made such a sinner of his memory,
 To credit his own lie,--he did believe
 He was indeed the Duke; out o' the substitution,
 And executing th' outward face of royalty,
 With all prerogative

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Act I Scene ii from the play The Tempest. Prospero tells Miranda how his brother Antonio took unjustified advantage of his aloofness from the state affairs. Antonio gradually gained power and became the Duke of Milan. Prospero had delegated his powers to Antonio to attend the state affairs on his behalf.

The over-confidence of his brother on Antonio turned him to become evil person. Like the wicked sons of good father, Antonio became a wicked figure.

Like a liar considering this lie to be the truth, Antonio began to see himself to be the real Duke of Milan. He gradually became the real Duke by telling lies and believing such lies and deceiving himself. He was encouraged to commit certain act of treachery. He exercised the power on behalf of Prospero and became the real Duke of Milan.

Lines :

I' the commonwealth I would by contraries
 Execute all things; for no kind of traffic
 Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
 Letters should not be known; riches, poverty,
 And use of service, none; contract, succession,
 Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
 No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil;
 No occupation; all men idle, all:
 And women too, but innocent and pure;
 No sovereignty,

Explanation: These lines occur in the Act II Scene I in *The Tempest*. Gonzalo explains the type of government he would like in the ideal state over the island where he landed. He describes the ideal Commonwealth of Plato, modelled on a passage in Montaigne's essay on "Cannibals". If Gonzalo becomes the king of that island, he would establish an ideal Commonwealth there.

Lines:

The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
 Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
 Leave not a rack behind.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Act IV, Scene I of *The Tempest*. Prospero entertains Ferdinand and Miranda to the Masque of Juno. He recalls the plot of Caliban and his associates against his life. Ferdinand is amazed to see his agitation. Prospero says that the spirits have returned to the invisible air. Their diversions are now finished.

Prospero compares the impermanence of life with the impermanence of the show which is finished. These spirits have no material existence. They take shape and after performing the task are dissolved in the air. Just as this vision has faded, so the whole world with all its contents are unsubstantive, the lofty towers, the stately palaces, the sacred temples, the universe itself shall melt away like the illusion, without leaving a trace behind. Human life is very transient.

Lines : We are such stuff

As dreams are made on, and our little life

Is rounded with a sleep.--Sir, I am vex'd:

Bear with my weakness; my old brain is troubled.

Be not disturb'd with my infirmity.

If you be pleas'd, retire into my cell

And there repose: a turn or two I'll walk,

To still my beating mind.

Explanation: These lines occur in Act IV Scene I of *The Tempest*. Prospero gives a picture of the story of humanity as the show, called up by his magic art. He says that those who participated in the masque were all spirits and are dissolved in the air after exhibiting their values. Life is like a masque which has no substantial reality. The whole world shall one day melt away into nothing.

Prospero tells Miranda and Ferdinand that human beings are like dream and are made of the elements of dream. These are not losing realities. When the circle of human life has been drawn to the full it rounds off with the sleep of

death. Prospero became apologetic to Ferdinand. He begs to be excused for his want of self-control. He is troubled and expects that they must show patience for his weakness. His mind is full of worries and it must have been disturbed by his weakness.

2.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Examine the Romantic element in *Twelfth Night*.
2. Discuss the aptness of the title *Twelfth Night* or the Sub-title "What you Will".
3. Draw a character-sketch of Viola.
4. Give a critical opinion on the character and role of Feste, the fool in *Twelfth Night*.
5. *Twelfth Night* is a comedy of self-deception. Discuss
6. Examine the Supernatural element in *The Tempest*.
7. Give the outline story of *The Tempest*.
8. Write a note on the supernatural element in *The Tempest*.
9. How far is Prospero, Shakespeare. Discuss.

2.4 LET US SUM UP

Unit II has acquainted you with Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*. We can not only discuss their outline story, but also further go into their detailed analysis. You have further become enlightened regarding their salient features.

UNIT-III**HENRY IV, PART I**

Structure

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Henry IV, Part I

3.1.1 *Henry IV, as a History Play***3.1.2** The Morality-Structure of the Play**3.1.3** Falstaff as a Comic Character**3.1.4** Some Important Explanations

3.2. Comprehension Exercises

3.3 Let Us Sum Up

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In Unit III the objective is to familiarize you with Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Part I, a history play. Besides giving the outline story and the theme, some of the important features of the play have also been brought into discussion for further analysis. It will enable you to:

- Present an outline of the work.
- Offer commentary on the salient features.
- Analyze critically the real worth of the work.

3.1 HENRY IV, PART I

The Double Story

Henry Bolingbroke becomes King Henry IV of England after deposing and killing Richard II. As the play opens, we find that he is plagued for his sins with the revolt of his nobles, and an unworthy Prince of Wales who sows his wild oats and moves in low company. The play thus falls into two parts -- a comic part and a serious part -- with the madcap Prince Henry or Hal constantly moving and uniting them together. The story of the rebellion against the authority of the king forms the main, serious plot of the play, while the doings of the Prince and his associates, Falstaff and others, form the comic under-plot. The action constantly shuttlecocks from one to the other, and in this way the dramatist brings in all strata of English society within the range and scope of his inimitable story.

Revolt by the Percies

The very first scene of the play shows the King in council in his palace in London. He plans to go to the crusades in the Holy Land, but bad news compels him to postpone his intention. The Percies are discontented and thinking of revolt, Mortimer, the brother-in-law of Percy Hotspur, has been defeated and captured by the Welsh Chieftain, Glendower; this is followed by tidings of Hotspur's victory at Homildon against the Scots. The Percies, Hotspur, and his father and uncles, refuse to surrender their Scottish prisoners, unless the King agrees to ransom Mortimer. But Henry refuses to do so, for he suspects Mortimer of plotting to usurp the throne. Thereupon Hotspur with his father, the Earl of Northumberland, and his uncle, the Earl of Worcester, plot to organize a great rebellion against the king by joining forces with Glendower, gaining the support of Archbishop of York, and securing the services of Douglas, the leader of the Scots, and at the moment a prisoner of Hotspur.

The Prince and His Companions

In the meantime, the madcap Prince of Wales agrees to join his merry and fat companion, Sir John Falstaff, and other roisterers, to rob some travellers at Gadshill, near Rochester. The robbery is a success, but while sharing the booty with his friends, Falstaff is attacked by the Prince and Poins in disguise and forced to flee. Later on, at The Boar's Head Tavern, Sir John boasts of his exploits against an ever-growing number of men, until the Prince discloses the practical joke that he had played upon him. Soon their merriment is rudely interrupted by the news of the Percy revolt. Prince Henry at once decides to go to the help of his father.

The Rebels: Their Difficulties

While the rebels in Wales plan the tripartite division of the country after their expected victory. King Henry reproves Prince Hal for wild life and unworthy companions. The King is touched by the Prince's promise to mend his ways and places him in command of one of the forces which is to march against the rebels. The rebels themselves are in difficulty. Gathered near Shrewsbury, Hotspur and Douglas find that their army is smaller than they had anticipated. Northumberland is ill and Glendower is unable to join them for another two weeks; however, they resolve to meet the royal army under the madcap 'Prince of Wales', Prince John of Lancaster, his brother, and the Earl of Westmoreland, who are marching towards them.

Their Defeat

King Henry himself turns up at Shrewsbury and offers to pardon the rebels, if they will surrender. The suspicious Earl of Worcester, however, does not deliver these gracious terms to Hotspur, and the battle of Shrewsbury takes place. Prince Hal rescues his father from the sword of Douglas and then kills Hotspur. Falstaff, in charge of a company of miserable foot soldiers, saves his skin by pretending to be dead. However, the rebels are at last defeated. Worcester is executed, but the generous Prince of Wales releases the noble Douglas. The play ends with the victorious King resolving to complete his triumph by sending Prince

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John against Northumberland and the Archbishop of York, while he and Prince Hal are to march for Glendower and Mortimer in Wales.

3.1.1 HENRY IV, AS A HISTORY PLAY

Henry IV, as a History Play

Henry IV, Part I belongs to the second tetralogy (group of four plays) of Shakespeare's history plays, the other three plays of the group being Richard II, Henry IV Part II and Henry V.

Deviations from History

For his historical material Shakespeare went to Holinshed's Chronicles, but he selected, arranged and ordered this material with all the freedom of a master. He has treated history imaginatively and artistically, and has freely altered, compressed and concentrated his material in the interest of dramatic effectiveness, so that the dry bones of history become alive once again in the pages of the play. The Hotspur of history, for example, was twenty-three years older than Hal and two years older than the King himself, who, at the date of the battle of Shrewsbury, was only thirty-seven, his eldest son being then sixteen, and Prince John thirteen. Shakespeare made Hotspur a youth, in order to create dramatic rivalry between him and Hal.

In short, in the play Shakespeare has deviated from the facts of history in order to heighten the human interest of his drama.

A Story of Royal and Noble Crimes

His history plays are not associated with the life of the nation, but offer a pageant of kingship in war and peace. They may be interpreted as stories of royal and noble crimes, treachery, and broken oaths and allegiances. Thus the main plot of the play is the story of the rebellion of the barons against the usurping King

Henry IV. He was treacherous to his own King (Richard II) and his nobles, who were instrumental in helping him to ascend the throne, turn against him. At every step there is a shifting of loyalties and breaking of promises.

Violence and Bloodshed

Crime, treachery and double-dealing make the world of Henry IV, Part I, as of other history plays, a world of outrage, violence and bloodshed, culminating in the battle of Shrewsbury in which such heroes as Hotspur and Douglas are killed, and thousand others are left dead on the battlefield. The play opens with bloody news. In the West, a thousand of Mortimer's men have been "butchered", and afterwards mutilated. In the North, ten thousand Scottish corpses were seen by Sir Walter Blunt, "baked in their own blood". Throughout the play, we hear continually of this sort of thing.

Presentation of the People's History

It is through Falstaff and his companions that he has realistically given a picture of contemporary England, the England of bawdy houses, cheap taverns, waylaid merchants and highway robberies, of the merry England given to eating and drinking, and jokes and jests of all sorts.

It is in this way that Shakespeare no longer remains a mere historian of the bygone Kings and their wars, but becomes a historian of the people and their day-to-day life, in the real sense of the word.

Medieval View: The King as God's Deputy

Shakespeare's view of history or his political philosophy is candidly Tudor, Elizabethan or medieval. According to the Tudor myth or the Tudor view of history the king was god's deputy on earth. He was sacred or holy, and so the deposition of a king or the usurpation of his throne was a sin, sure to bring in divine punishment in the form of rebellion, civil war, chaos and bloodshed. This view is clearly stated by Bishop Carlisle at the close of Richard II.

The violence forecasted by Carlisle comes to pass in both Henry IV Part I and Part II. This view of history is borne out by the suffering of England from the murder of Richard II in 1399 to the accession of the first Tudor monarch in 1485.

Secular View of History

Such was the medieval or religious view of history and it hangs loosely over the play and is often referred to in it. But Shakespeare takes a more secular and renaissance view of history in the play. History is interpreted in human terms. As one eminent critic puts it, in the play the interest has shifted from, "the interpretative moral and theological scheme", to "the complexities and cross-currents of human beings as they act and re-act on one another". This view is plainly stated in Richard II by King Richard in his warning to the Earl of Northumberland.

The Ambivalence in the Play

Maynard Mack writes, "The Tudor theme of the harsh wages of usurpation by no means vanishes from the play. Minimizing it as doctrine, Shakespeare makes it part of the poetic and dramatic texture, while he complicates it by presenting to us in Henry a capable and even admirable king -- one who, though never granted the security and peace he longs for, maintains his crown by a combination of strength, sagacity, severity and leniency, and passes it on to an eventually deserving son. The ambivalence of his position is brought out by continual questioning of his title. The rebels question it on many occasions verbally and, subsequently, by force of arms. The King himself seems to cast a doubt on it when he dresses others, "in his coats", to confuse the enemy at Shrewsbury, "as if royalty were a costume or blazon to be laid on at will".

3.1.2 THE MORALITY-STRUCTURE OF THE PLAY

NOTES

The Morality-structure of the Play

Or

The Theme of the Play: "Contention between Vice and Virtue for the Soul of a Prince"

The Morality-structure

Most critics agree that Henry IV has a morality structure. Thus both Dr. Tillyard and Quiller-Couch are of the view that the play has a morality-pattern and that it represents the contention between vice and virtue for the soul of Prince Hal. Let us first consider the nature of a Morality play, and then determine how far the present play follows the basic pattern of a morality play.

The Morality Play: Its Theme

The Morality plays of the middle ages were intended to give moral and religious instructions to the people. It was a play in which the human soul was treated as the battle-ground for the forces of good and evil, struggling for the possession of the soul. As one critic puts it, the Morality play exhibited the process of salvation in the individual soul on its road between birth and death, beset between the temptations of the world or the wiles of the Evil one. Characters in it were symbols of the various human qualities, both good and bad. The devil and the vice were the representatives of the forces of evil. Finally the powers of darkness were defeated, and the human soul was saved.

'Henry IV': The Choice

A close scrutiny of the play shows that it has an underlying morality pattern. Its theme is the conflict between vice and virtue, the forces of evil and of good, for the soul of Prince Hal. As Dr. Tillyard puts it, the Prince has to choose Morality fashion between Sloth, Disorder and Vanity, to which he is drawn by

Falstaff and his companions, and Chivalry, Order and Honour to which he is drawn by his father and Hotspur, and he ultimately chooses Chivalry and Order.

Symbolic Value of the Characters

The chief characters in the play have a symbolic value and stand for various human qualities, as in a Morality play. The characters stand for various human qualities, as in a Morality play is constantly emphasised. He is referred to as, "that villainous, abominable misleader of youth, that old white-bearded Satan", "That reverend Vice", that, "gray Inequity", that, "Father Ruffian", that, "Vanity in years". Falstaff represents Sloth, Sensuality, Lechery, Gluttony, and the other Seven Deadly Sins. He is also the lord of Misrule and Disorder. Hotspur stands for Chivalry and Honour. As Tillyard puts it, "Hotspur and Falstaff stand for honour exaggerated and dishonour". The King and his sons stand for Order and Justice, for good government and self-control. The Prince is the Magnificence of the Morality Plays, as well as Aristotle's middle quality between the two extremes.

The Temptation

The play illustrates the various stages through which the Prince makes his choice, and is transformed from a madcap Prince and roysterer into a capable and competent King, so much so that it would not be an exaggeration to say that the theme of the play is the education of a Prince. The play opens with high themes of Crusades, Chivalry and Civil War, but the Prince is not there, and his father, the King, regrets that he has not the chivalrous Hotspur for his son. The wild life which he has been leading is hinted at. In the scenes which follow, we see the Prince with the Eastcheap roysterers, who are presently his companions. Apparently he seems to be possessed by the forces of evil, and shows an inclination to idleness and vanity. This inclination is confirmed when the robbery is planned. But soon after the Gadshill robbery, the Prince hears of the rebellion and the King's plans of suppressing it, and decides to play his part in it.

The Prince: His Salvation

The King rebukes him. And he promises amendment, resolves to rob Hotspur of his military honours. But Falstaff is still there.

The answer is soon provided when, just before the battle of Shrewsbury, in the presence of Falstaff, the Prince offers to settle the matter through a single fight with Hotspur. The Prince's choice of Chivalry and Order is final. The forces of Evil have been defeated, and the Good has asserted itself. The soul of the Prince has been saved.

Conclusion

Tillyard writes, "But though Henry IV is built on the Morality-pattern, it is quite without the mental conflict that marks that pattern, as, for example, in Marlowe's Dr. Faustus. When the play opens we find that the Prince has already made his choice. This becomes quite clear from his soliloquy at the end of Act I, Scene II of the play. He understands quite clearly the nature of his companions, and is determined to give them up at the right time. His mind is already made up, and pricking of conscience that he may feel at his delay in putting his resolution into action are minor affairs. The play lacks that element of tragic intensity and tragic conflict which characterises a Morality Play."

3.1.3 FALSTAFF AS A COMIC CHARACTER

Falstaff as a Comic Character

A Great Comic Figure

Falstaff is an immortal figure of fun, a unique creation of Shakespeare's genius. He is the greatest comic character not only in Shakespeare, but also in the entire range of English literature. An eminent critic puts it, "He is a legacy of laughter to the world of men, generations before have, like ourselves, been made merry with his exploits; generations to come will laugh like-wise". Falstaff differs

from other clowns and jesters. He is, "a humorist of genius, witty in himself, as well as a cause of wit in others." We both laugh at him and with him.

A Compound of Opposites

The essence of the comic is contrast and Falstaff is one such object of mirth because his character is a compound of a number of incongruous or opposite qualities. In him are united, an unwieldy bulk and nimbleness of spirit, infirmities of age and youthful lightness of heart, enormous lies and suddenness of their exposure, etc. We laugh at him because of such incongruities, and we laugh at his extra-large physic and his excessive addiction to sack. The dramatist has fully exploited the comic possibilities of his huge size, by constantly placing him in difficult situations in which his abnormality becomes a cause of hilarious laughter.

His Zest for Life

We not only laugh at Falstaff, but we are made happy by him and laugh with him. We are so happy with him, and so entirely at our ease with him, because he himself is so happy, and so entirely at his ease. He has an immense zest for life, and his conduct all through is marked with a cheerful enjoyment of the good things of life. He is always in his bliss, always taking his ease at his inn, always eating, drinking, and enjoying himself, and he enjoys with such a good-tempered zest that the readers and the audience enjoy themselves with him.

A Genius Humorist

Bradley writes, "Falstaff's ease and enjoyment are not simply those of the happy man of appetite; they are those of the humorist, and the humorist of genius". Instead of being comic to you and serious to himself, he is more ludicrous to himself than to you; and he makes himself out more ludicrous than he is; so that he and others may laugh. Prince Hal never made such sport of Falstaff's person as he himself did. It is he who says that his skin hangs about him like an old lady's loose gown, and that he walks before his page like a sow that hath overwhelmed all her litter but one. And he makes fun of himself when he is alone, just as much as when others are by.

A Stock of Laughter for Others

Repeatedly in the play, Falstaff provides cause of amusement to others with what he says and what he does. Poins and the Prince delight in him; they get him into corners for the pleasure of seeing him escape in ways that they cannot even imagine; but they often take him much too seriously. Poins, for instance, hardly sees, the Prince does not always see, and moralising critics never see, that when Falstaff speaks ill of a companion behind his back, or writes to the Prince that Poins spreads it abroad that the Prince is to marry his sister, he knows quite well that what he says will give him an opportunity for laughter. It is the same with his lying, and almost the same with his cowardice, the two main vices laid to his charge even by his sympathisers.

Cause of Wit in Others

Falstaff is not only witty himself but also a cause of wit in others. The Prince is witty only in his presence, and the fat knight provides him with ample opportunities for sharpening his wit. The Prince constantly laughs at him, and makes fun of his abnormalities. Falstaff's own wit takes a variety of forms. It can be seen in his puns, jokes and jests, repartees and retorts. He uses language like a master, turns words upside down, plays with them, and twists and distorts their meaning. His wit is also seen in parody, and in the clever ways in which he escapes from difficult situations. At other times, his wit assumes the form of fertility of inventions, and he invents lies for the amusement of his companions.

Parody and Burlesque

Falstaff believes in the enjoyment of life, and so he is an enemy of the serious concerns of life which come in the way of enjoyment. Wittily he ridicules and makes fun of them. A.C. Bradley says that he reduces the serious things of life to sheer absurdity, sometimes by his words, and sometimes by his actions. "He makes truth appear absurd by solemn statements, which he utters with perfect gravity and which he expects nobody to believe; and honour, by demonstrating that it cannot set a leg, and that neither the living nor the dead can possess it; and law by evading all the attacks of its highest representative and almost forcing him pocket with the bribes offered by skilled soldiers who want to escape service,

while he takes in their stead the halt and maimed and the gaol-birds; and duty, by showing how he labours in his vocation of thieving.

These are the wonderful achievements which he performs, not with the discontent of a cynic, but with the gaiety of a boy. And, therefore, we praise him and we laud him.

Conclusion

In short, Falstaff is the prince of humourists in English literature, an immortal creation of the world's immortal dramatist. He is not of an age but of all ages, not of one country, but of all countries. Wherever the fat knight comes, he brings the spirit of gaiety with him, and one sally of wit on his part is worth all the gaiety in the world. He is the personification of untainted mirth and hearty comradeship. The secret of Falstaff's wit is a masterly presence of mind, an absolute self-possession that nothing can disturb.

3.1.4 SOME IMPORTANT EXPLANATIONS

Lines :

Indeed, I am not John of Gaunt, your grandfather; but yet
no coward, Hal.

Explanation: This is an extract from Act II, Scene II of Henry IV. At the enquiry of Peto about the number of the passengers, Gadshi answers, that the number of them may be 8 or 10, and explains the significance of it. Falstaff is not concerned with the large number of the robbers. He asks if the travellers themselves could not take courage to rob the robbers in their turns, or take back from them the goods taken by them. The prince gives Falstaff the title "coward" who has no courage to resist the robbers. He calls him as Sir John 'Paunch'.

Falstaff is amazed at the words of the Prince. He tries to take exception to the 'Paunch', which means a fat-bellied person. Falstaff was himself a fat man, and he takes the remark of the prince on himself. He presumes that he is not like Sir John Gaunt. By the word Gaunt means a lean person, and he uses this word as opposed to the meaning of the word 'Paunch' used by the prince. He tries to flatter the prince by praising the father and the grandfather of the prince. He avoids standing in comparison to his grandfather. He maintains that he is coward in the least sense, as the prince believes him to be. He does everything at the time of danger cleverly, and it does not seem that he is a coward man.

Lines:

Away,
 Away, you trifler! Love? I love thee not,
 I care not for thee, Kate: this is no world
 To play with mammets and to tilt with lips:
 We must have bloody noses and crack'd crowns,
 And pass them current too.

Explanation: This is an extract in Act II, Scene iii of Henry IV. Lady Percy is very much annoyed at the behaviour of her husband, who is always busy in war affairs and neglects his wife. She tries to find out the cause of worry of her husband. She threatens her husband to break his little finger, if he does not tell her about his secrets and the cause of his worry.

Hotspur does not like the playful attitude of his wife. He is not willing to tell the secret of his plans to her. He is very much annoyed at the suggestion of alliance of his wife. His mind is always agitated by the affairs of war and in this mood he does not like the remarks of his wife. He is not interested in making love with his wife, and tells her that he does not love her at all. The wife is very much annoyed at his answer.

He asserts that the world is not the right place for love-making or exchange of kisses. The world is very hard and very careful and requires stern action. It demands serious adventure on the part of the brave person and does not allow him to spend his time in love affairs. He will be occupied in the affairs of the battlefields. There are seen in the battlefield broken heads and bloodshed very frequently.

Lines:

Indeed, you come near me now, Hal; for we that take purses go by the Moon and the seven stars, and not by Phoebus,--he, that wandering knight so fair. And I pr'ythee, sweet wag, when thou art king,--as, God save thy Grace--Majesty I should say, for grace thou wilt have none,--

Explanation: This is an extract in Act I, Scene ii of Henry IV. Shakespeare shows Prince Hal with his companions Falstaff and Poins. Falstaff is the fattest of them all. He is not only witty in himself, but is the cause of wit in others. The Prince says that Falstaff is an idle pleasure seeker whose existence is made up of eating and drinking. Time may be of some value to him if hours are turned into cups of racks, and minutes into aeons.

Falstaff says to the prince that he has rightly described his humour and habits. He admits that he and his follower are the revellers of the night and their adventure have nothing to do with the day. They rob at night, tell the time and work by the moon and the stars. They have nothing to do with the sun. He is a splendid wondering knight. He is guided by the seven stars who are the companions of the moon. He makes an appeal on behalf of robbers to the king heir. He considers the prince as heir-apparent to the throne. He addresses him as 'God can save his majesty' or God would save his grace, but the prince is devoid of all graces or virtues.

Lines:

I will redeem all this on Percy's head,
And, in the closing of some glorious day,
Be bold to tell you that I am your son;
When I will wear a garment all of blood,
And stain my favour in a bloody mask,
Which, wash'd away, shall scour my shame with it:

Explanation: This is an extract from Act II, Scene ii of Henry IV. The king rebukes his eldest son for his bad society and disagreeable habits. The dissolute life of the Prince is not pleasing to the king. He says that the Prince has lost his share in the state affairs due to his bad conduct. It is presumed that he would favour the rival forces of Hotspur and oppose his father. The prince assures the king that he would support the king against Hotspur and would prove his worth. He says that he is not so worthless as he is supposed to be. Someone has produced the wrong impression on the mind of the king. The Prince says that in future he would try to remove the wrong impressions on the mind of the king. He would show his worth in the battlefield against Hotspur, and his enemy and get victory over the rebels. He would wash away the blood which had produced stigma and bad name on his character.

Lines: I like not such grinning honour as Sir
Walter hath: give me life; which if I can save, so; if not,
honour comes unlooked for, and there's an end.

Explanation: *This is an extract from the third scene of Act V of Henry IV. There is seen a serious battle between the rebels and the royal forces. Douglas kills Sir Walter Blunt, who was in disguise of the king. Falstaff seeing the dead body of Blunt lying on the ground remarks that he has obtained honour after his death.*

The prince comes and asks Falstaff to give him his sword. Falstaff replies that he can lend him his pistol instead of sword. He gives the prince a case to his great disappointment and thus injures his feelings. He had given him the false impression that he is not loyal to the king. If the prince had not helped the king, he would have been killed.

He helped his father at the critical hours, and thus proved his loyalty to the king. He gave proof of his being devoted to his father and thus redeems himself of his insensitive past. There was danger of his own life, but he did not care for himself at all and tried to save the life of the king from Douglas.

3.2 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Give the outline story of *Henry IV*, Part I.
2. Discuss 'Henry IV' as a History Play.
3. Examine the Morality-structure of the Play.
4. **Examine the theme of the Play as "Contention between Vice and Virtue for the Soul of a Prince".**
5. Discuss Falstaff as a Comic Character.

3.3 LET US SUM UP

Having finished Unit III, you have become familiarized with Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, Part I. Besides giving the outline story and the theme, you can easily discuss some of the important features of the play and also bring into discussion their salient features for further analysis.

UNIT-IV A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Structure

4.0 Objectives

4.1 A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

4.1.1 The Theme: Conflict of the Old and Young

4.1.2 The Play: A Dramatized Lyric

4.1.3 The Play: Harmonious Blending of Different Elements

4.1.4 Shakespeare's Fairy-world: Chief Characteristics

4.1.5 "Midsummer Night's Dream": Its Masque-like Character

4.2 Comprehension Exercises

4.3 Let Us Sum Up

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In Unit IV we have chosen Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for study. The chief characteristics of the play have been discussed and analyzed as well for you. It will enable you to:

- Discuss the work.
- Give an outline of the work.
- Offer critique on the work.

4.1 A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

The play opens in the palace of Theseus, the Duke of Athens, who has defeated the Amazons in a war, and taken into custody their Queen Hippolyta. He has fallen in love with her, and is now eager to marry her as soon as possible. It is decided that he would marry her after four days when the new Moon shines in the sky. He asks his Manager of revels, Philostrate, to make a public announcement for some suitable entertainment for the occasion. At this point there arrives Egeus with his daughter Hermia, Lysander, and Demetrius. He wants his daughter to marry Demetrius but she loves Lysander and is not prepared to give him up. The Duke clearly tells her that according to the law of Athens, she must either marry the man of her father's choice or be prepared to die or become a nun. She must tell him her decision in four days, i.e. on the day of his own marriage with his beloved Hippolyta. The Duke then goes away along with Hippolyta, Egeus, Demetrius and his retinue.

Left alone Lysander and Hermia decide to elope the next night and go to his aunt's house who lives beyond the boundaries of Athens. They make a decision to meet the next night in the wood about a mile from Athens. Helena, whom Demetrius loved and was to marry, now arrives. She still loves Demetrius, though he has jilted her. As she has been a close girlhood friend of Hermia, she is told of their plans and she decides to inform Demetrius of it. Like this, she would get his thanks, and also be able to enjoy his company to the wood, and then on the way back to Athens.

According to the public announcement some workmen of Athens -- Bottom, Quince, Snout, Snug, etc. -- plan to stage the tragedy of "Pyramus and Thisbe" on the occasion of the royal wedding. They decide to rehearse the play in the wood near Athens, the next night.

Now the action shifts from Athens to the wood nearby. As planned, Lysander and Hermia come to it on their way to Lysander's aunt, the workmen of Athens also come there, and Demetrius also following him. He does not love her,

does not want to see her face, and would never marry her. The Fairy King, Oberon, who is invisible to mortals, overhears this and who has come to the wood as usual for their nightly revels, though presently he and his Queen Titania have quarrelled over a changeling boy. He takes pity over the plight of poor Hermia, and asks his mischievous attendant Puck to apply the magical juice of the love-flower to the eyes of a young man in Athenian dress, so that he may fall in love at first sight with the maiden near him.

Unluckily, Puck mistakes Lysander for Demetrius, applies the juice to his eyes so that on waking he falls in love with Helena, who, exhausted with the journey, has fallen asleep near him. In this way complication is created, and we get the eternal love-triangle with two young men loving the same maiden, Helena. Besides we get the comic scene of the quarrel between Helena and Hermia. Abuses are freely hurled. Violent language is used, and with difficulty they are prevented from coming to blows. Lysander and Demetrius leave them to decide the matter through a duel.

There is one more complication also. In order to punish his Queen, who is asleep in another part of the wood, Oberon squeezes the love juice in her eyes also, so that when she wakes up she falls in love with Bottom, who had earlier been transformed into a monster -- a man with the head of an ass. We get the comic sight of the delicate and refined fairy Queen making love to an ass.

By this time, the night is well-advanced and the dawn is at hand, when the spirits must withdraw to their own fairy-world. So Oberon decides to set matters right and remove all complication. He instructs Puck to apply the antidote of the love-juice to the eyes of Lysander, so that he begins to love Hermia again as before. He himself squeezes this antidote in the eyes of Titania so that she becomes her usual self, and looks upon Bottom turned into ass with abhorrence. She gives the changeling boy to Oberon, as was desired by him. Puck removes the ass-head from Bottom and he returns to Athens to rejoin his companions. The love-juice is applied to the eyes of Demetrius also so that he begins to love Helena. In this way the lovers are rightly and happily paired. Theseus who has also come to the wood with Egeus and Hippolyta to perform the traditional

Mayday rites, makes the decision that they would all be married together in the temple that very evening. The three marriages are performed accordingly.

From the wood the action now shifts once again to Athens and to a hall in the palace of Theseus. In honour of the royal marriage, the 'comical tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe' is staged by the workmen of Athens to the great amusement of all concerned. It is followed by a rustic dance. When the three married couples retire for the night, Oberon, Titania, and the other Fairies arrive and go from room to room to bless the married couples, and their offspring. The play ends with peace and prosperity, and Puck speaks the Epilogue.

4.1.1 THE THEME: CONFLICT OF THE OLD AND YOUNG

The Theme: Conflict of the Old and Young

The Age-old Conflict

Revolt against parental authority is one of the significant aspects of the treatment of love in the present comedy. The play opens with this note of revolt and this eternal conflict between the old and the young is resolved satisfactorily only through the intervention of the fairy king Oberon and his love juice. This conflict between the young and the old is an age-old one and Elizabethan literature is filled with references to it.

Hermia's Revolt

In *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Egeus is the old father and Hermia is the young daughter who revolts against the authority of her father. Her father wants her to marry Demetrius, the man of his choice, while Hermia is in love with Lysander and is determined to marry him. She does not obey her father and he approaches Theseus, the Duke of Athens, with his complaint. He regards Hermia's revolt as the result of Lysander's calculated playing on the inexperience of her youth. He has misguided her.

Many of the things mentioned here were the stock-in-trade of Elizabethan love poetry. The singing by moonlight is the traditional way of wooing a mistress, and the writing of love-poems, exchanging of locks of hair, and giving of small, sentimental presents, are still part of the courtship of young lovers. Egeus, however, regards them as part of an elaborate pretence of love, he expresses his disbelief in Lysander's sincerity by the repetition of feigning voice and feigning love, and he dismisses them with contempt.

Theseus : His Attitude

Theseus is not so old as Egeus (he is himself about to be married) but neither so young as Hermia and Lysander, and seems to support the view of Age. As his later behaviour shows, this is not really so. He acts as the upholder of the law -- a law perhaps made by old men. He has some sympathy with Youth, but must carry out the duties that go with his position.

The Young People: Their Attitude

But neither authority nor the law can make Youth teachable or 'look' with the eyes of Age. Youth must see things its own way and exercise free choice. Consequently, Hermia would rather become a nun, or even die, than give herself to him "whose unwished yoke, my soul consents not to give sovereignty". Both she and Lysander, lamenting that it is the fate of young lovers ever to find themselves crossed in love, agree that it is hell 'to choose love by another's eyes' and it is their situation, rather than the authoritarianism of Egeus, which commands the audience's sympathy.

Pyramus-Thisbe Story: Its Implications

The presentation of the play Pyramus and Thisbe shows that they were thwarted by parents. In Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the text reads:

And if that rite had taken place they had been man and wife

But still their Parents went about to prevent which for their life

They could not endure, for both their hearts with equal flame did burne.

Love, in other words, cannot be prevented. It will find a way out (as happens ultimately with Hermia and Lysander). "But the way that Pyramus and Thisbe find leads to disaster which in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is made by Shakespeare intentionally ridiculous. One effect of this is to give Youth's insistence on looking with its own eyes quite a different colour. The freedom of love becomes self-deception, and the subject for hilarious farce. The loves' plan for a secret meeting leads to Pyramus' misinterpretation of the blood-stained mantle, and so to his suicide and Thisbe's. He is deceived by appearance, the tragedy is all a mistake; and the version of it presented by the Athenian workmen, who are themselves ludicrously anxious lest the audience be misled by appearances, throws the whole business of illusion into the greatest possible relief. The result is that a famous tale of youthful, romantic love is turned into an anti-romantic burlesque (Draper).

Conclusion

The dramatist's attitude to the freedom of lovers to choose with their own eyes seems to be ambiguous. Undoubtedly, the rigid exercise of parental authority is tyrannical and cruel, but if the lovers are free to choose for themselves, they may commit errors as is shown by the example of Pyramus and Thisbe. By providing this instance of age and youth conflict from classical sources, the dramatist has universalised it and enabled us to view the whole situation with a dispassionate eye. Further, it should be kept in mind that the assertion of parental authority on the part of Egeus would not look so very tyrannical and unreasonable to Elizabethan audiences, for in those days parents exercised far greater authority on their children. Arranged marriages were frequent and young ladies were disposed of in marriages in accordance with the sweet will of their parents, as if they were so many items of property. Such is exactly the attitude of Egeus towards Hermia, and it is exactly in this way that he wants to dispose her off.

4.1.2 THE PLAY: A DRAMATIZED LYRIC

The Play: A Dramatized Lyric

NOTES

A Dramatized Lyric

A lyric was originally a song intended to be sung to the accompaniment of the lyre or some other musical instrument. The term has come to signify any song which is composed under a strong impulse of emotion or inspiration. Shakespeare has not only given to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a lyrical character, by interspersing songs throughout the play, but, as Coleridge has said, the whole of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is one continual specimen of the dramatized lyric. Verplanck writes: "Its transitions are as rapid, and the images and scenes it presents to the imagination as unexpected and as remote from each other, as those of the boldest lyric: while it has also that highest perfection of the lyric art, the pervading unity of the poetic spirit -- that continued glow of excited thought -- which blends the whole rich and strange variety in one common effect of gay and dazzling brilliancy."

As Brandes observes that, in "A Midsummer Night's Dream, it is not in its dramatic elements that we recognise the master hand, but rather in the rich and incomparable lyric-poetry with which Shakespeare embroiders a thin dramatic canvas. It is idle to dwell upon the slightness of the characterisation, for the poet's effort is not after characterisation; and the poem as a whole is one of the tenderest, most original, and most perfect Shakespeare ever produced. It is Spenser's fairy poetry developed and condensed; it is Shelley's spirit poetry anticipated by more than two centuries. And the fairy dream is shot with whimsical parody; the borders of Elf-land and Clown-land meet and mingle."

A Great Fairy Poem

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a poem, a dream, rather than a play. It is a fairy poem-one of the loveliest ever conceived by the human brain. Allan Poe rightly points out, "When I am asked for a definition of poetry, I think of Titania and Oberon of the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. The fairy king and queen with their attendants, dancing and playing upon banks of flowers in silvery moonlight, open before us wonderful vistas of romance and beauty. And there are Puck and Pease-blossom, Cobweb and Mustardseed. There are pigmies, who hunt the

worms in a rose-bud, tease bats, chase spiders. Perfumes are the elements of these tender spirits; they assist nature in embroidering her carpet with green leaves, many coloured flowers and dazzling insects. The play, where such creatures move and act, is more a poem than a drama; it is an elfin play, a fairy carnival of inimitable mirth and melody, steeped in a Midsummer atmosphere.”

Poetic Description of Nature

To read this play is like wandering in a grove by moonlight. Its descriptions breathe sweetness like the odours of a violet bed. The world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a wonderland of beauty and romance. The woodlands are carpeted with thick primrose-beds, and its fields are aglow with the dewdrops liquid pearl. Every wood is decked with the very spring of romance, where lovers meet and whisper into each other ears the secrets of their souls. Such a lovely land can well be the haunt of fairies, who flit about in the moonlight, and enter for a time into the human world, straightening out things that have gone away. Here in this play we have a feast of the mind in the beautiful play of the dramatist's fancy. “We have here no pathos. The hurricane of passion does not as yet sweep through Shakespeare’s work. No, it is only the romantic and imaginative side of love that is here displayed.”

Conclusion

In a nutshell, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a lyrical fantasy, full with the loveliest poetry and romance.

4.1.3 THE PLAY: HARMONIOUS BLENDING OF DIFFERENT ELEMENTS

The Play: Harmonious Blending of Different Elements

Classical Element

Shakespeare’s Mid-summer Night’s Dream is a harmonious blending of different elements. "There is the strangest mingling in ‘Midsummer Night's Dream’ of Grace and Faerie, of the survivals of romance and the impulses of the

Renaissance." The life of Theseus, told in *Plutarch's Lives* supplied Shakespeare with the framework of the play. Theseus was legendary hero of ancient Greece, believed to have performed many heroic feats. The story of his marriage with Hippolyta, the queen of the Amazons, forms the setting of the plot of the play. Besides, there are frequent references to gods and goddesses of classical mythology, and to classical legends and literature. But that is all. The background, no doubt, is classical, but the substance of the play is romantic through and through. Shakespeare wanted a suitable background for his romantic play, and pressed the story of Theseus into his service. Any duke or kin, for that matter, would have served his purpose; he made use of the story of Theseus because classical stories were popular at that time.

Note of Romance

Shakespeare has set in a romantic picture within this classical framework. The story of the two pairs of lovers is romantic, and the very essence of romance is to be found in the fairy-element of the play. The very names of Oberon and Titania bring to our mind the most romantic associations. The conception of the fairies is one of the most beautiful, that ever came to the mind of poet, "The fairy king, with his court, the queen with her attendants, their quarrel over a handsome boy, the little western flower causing all sorts of complications, and last but not least, the mischievous pranks of Puck. These are some of the dishes of the rich romantic repast, served to us in the comedy." Most of the action happens at night under moonlight. All the magic of moonlight is in the play. Oberon, Titania and Puck are the poetic emblems of this magic beauty. Besides, to the ethereal beauty of moonlight is added the romantic beauty of woodland scenery.

Romantic Note

To this romantic substance there is added a realistic story—the story of Bottom and his companions. Mixed up with the heroic personages and fairies, with the classical and the romantic, are the rude mechanic clowns, whose doings form a piece of real life. Shakespeare has got down to the workingmen of the lanes and to Elizabethan London or to those of his native Warwickshire. It is true they are supposed to be Athenians, but they were drawn from life, these poor folk are vitally interested in their play. They are inventors of means, properties and

suggestive pageantry. They have faith in all they do. And they never step out of their own atmosphere. This is a piece of realism. Bottom and his fellows belong to average humanity, with common joys and sorrows, loves and hatreds. They are of the earth. And the homely prose of their dialogue is strongly contrasted with the dazzling brilliancy of those rhymed couplets which speak the eternal language of love through the mouths of the Athenian and their lovers. The homely artisans are the very opposites of the romantic lovers. They seem, in this respective delicacy and coarseness, to mark the two extreme phases of life—the highest and the lowest—and such is the art of the dramatist that the two phases of life—romantic and realistic—have been mingled together in the play with a dexterity that does not disturb the harmony of the piece. In this way is achieved that confrontation of realism and romance which H.B. Charlton regards as a very important feature of Shakespearean Comedy.

4.1.4 SHAKESPEARE'S FAIRY-WORLD: CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS

Shakespeare's Fairy-world: Chief Characteristics

Or

The Charm and Fascination of the Fairies: Its Source

Or

The Characters and Roles of Oberon, Titania and Puck

Shakespeare's Originality: Praises of Critics

Shakespeare's fairies are largely derived from Warwickshire folk-lore and superstition, though Shakespeare might have also got some hints for the form a number of literary sources. They constitute the chief charm and attraction of the play, and critic after critic has praised them highly. Gervinus compares

Shakespeare to Homer and writes: “As the Greek poet has created the abode of the gods and its Olympic inhabitants, so Shakespeare has given form and place to the fairy kingdom, and with the natural creative power of genius, has breathed soul into his merry little citizens.”

Hudson, too, is all praises for these delicate and etherized creations of Shakespeare’s fancy. He writes—“everything that is trim, dainty, elegant, graceful, agreeable, and sweet to the senses, they delight in: flower, fragrance, dew-drops, and moon-beams, honey-bees, butterflies and nightingales, dancing, play and song...these are their joy; out of these they weave their highest delectation; amid them they, “fleet the time carelessly,” without memory or forecast, and with no thought or aim beyond the passing pleasure of the moment”.

Chief Characteristics

Their chief characteristics may be summarised as follows:

1. They have a court, a King and Queen. Their court is located in the farthest steepes of India. Oberon and Titania, the two sovereigns, have been drawn by Shakespeare in a very amiable and pleasing light.
2. They have great influence over the physical powers of Nature. They can "overcast the night", and cover, "the starry welkins" with black fog.
3. They delight in conferring blessings. Oberon makes smooth the course of love for Helena. With Titania he blesses the house of Theseus, "to all prosperity." He averts a duel between Lysander and Demetrius and uses his power in such a manner that in the end, "all things shall be peace."
4. They are small in size. Shakespeare has made them as small as the Scandinavian elves.
5. They move with great rapidity. They can, "Wander everywhere, swifter than the moon's sphere," and Puck can, "Put a girdle round about the wind", swifter, "than the arrow from a Tartar's bow."

6. They occupy and amuse themselves in various ways. They are fond of singing, dancing and merry-making.
7. They are not visible to mortals.

Puck: His Characteristics and Role

Puck, the court-Jester of king Oberon, also referred to as "Robin Good fellow" and "Hobgoblin", is a spirit, "of another sort", having his own peculiar characteristics:

1. Though in the delineation of this character Shakespeare has largely followed popular tradition, he has, "divested his character of most of the malignant characteristics which were popularly associated with this mischievous elf."
2. He has the power of changing his shape at will. He calls after Quince and his friends and remarks:

I will follow you, I will lead you about a round,

Through bog, through bush, through brake, through brier,

Sometimes a horse I will be, sometimes a hound,

A hog, headless bear, sometimes a fire:

He can even assume different voices and make different noises:

And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar and burn

Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire, at every turn.

3. A love of mischief is the most important feature of his character. He takes pleasure in fixing an ass's head over Bottom, in leading Lysander and Demetrius astray, and also mocking, taunting and scoffing at them.
4. There is no malice in his mischief. He is just like a naughty child, naturally happy, laughing and skipping about and indulging in all sorts of mischief.

Oberon: His Character and Role

Thy Fairy King Oberon is domineering and very dictatorial in nature. His very first words are both sharp and authoritative: "we'll meet by moonlight, proud Titania". Titania retorts with, "jealous Oberon", and jealous he is in the sense that he wants Titania's Indian boy, though precisely why is not made clear. It is enough that it is his will, which he is not prepared to have frustrated. He symbolises an elemental force; not vicious, or aloof from human sympathy, for it is he who takes pity on Helena even while he is pursuing his vengeance on Titania, but arbitrary -- to that extent like a arrogant god -- not accustomed to having his wishes debated, and strong in the knowledge that what he wants he has the power to get. And that power is supernatural. He can see, as even Puck cannot, Cupid flying 'between the cold moon and the earth' and be a love to Aurora, goddess of the dawn. He is also acquainted with the mystical powers of herbs.

Titania's Character

Titania, too, is proud, and not easily to be mastered by her lord and King. To his utterance "Tarry, rash wanton; am not I thy lord?" she replies 'Then I must be thy lady'. And she, too, expresses her character most of all in the poetry she speaks, but that character is more sensuous and physical than his. It is evoked, for example, in the speech which describes the consequences of their quarrel on nature and the course of seasons, and especially in her account of her friendship with the mother of the Indian boy.

The Fairy Attendants

The little Fairies, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustard Seed, who attend on Bottom under orders from their mistress, are the products of Shakespeare's fancy alone. Cumberland Clark observes, "Their names suggest beauties of nature personified, and their presence gives an excuse for introducing many of the quaint ideas of the countryside".

Human Touch

Shakespeare has humanised the fairies. Thus the fairy Queen and King quarrel over the Indian boy, and they can also be jealous like mortals. There was a

NOTES

time when Oberon loved Hippolyta, and Titania was in love with Theseus. They are also capable of pity and sympathy, thus Oberon pities poor Hermia and decides to make her happy by setting matters right.

Conclusion

Shakespeare's original and imaginative treatment of this fascinating subject had a great impact on all subsequent fairy literature and dispelled the old ideas of the fairies as malicious, evil, lawless creatures who had to be obeyed and pleased. Shakespeare revolutionised the traditional fairy-lore, to the extent that, to use C. Clark's words, "The picture conjured up in our minds to-day by the word "fairy" is as different as could be from the repulsive fairy of the Elizabethans; and the change can be traced to Shakespeare and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*."

4.1.5 "MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM": ITS MASQUE-LIKE CHARACTER

"Midsummer Night's Dream": Its Masque-like Character

Masques were first introduced from Italy into England in the year 1512-13. They were costly disguising or pageants invented for some special occasion and performed by distinguished amateurs, usually princess or members of the court. The Italian masque in England was at first associated with such festivals as Christmas Day, Twelfth Day, and May Day. The masque was full of witty dialogue, singing and dancing, and its essence was pomp and glory. Movable scenery of the most costly and splendid kind was introduced, and the most celebrated artists and musicians of the day were employed for the purpose. Masques were presented at the court of Elizabeth, but it was in the reign of James I that they attained their highest degree of excellence in the hands of Ben Jonson, whose principal Masques were produced between 1605 and 1630. With a view to diversifying the performance, Ben Jonson frequently introduced what are called Anti-masques. These were usually parodies, or in some sense illustrations, of the main masques, and were performed partly by servants, partly by actors hired for the purpose, whilst the masque itself was performed only for princely amateurs.

These Anti-masques, to which the Interlude in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in some measure corresponds, were probably borrowed from the old interludes with which the people had been long familiar, and which, although fantastic and extravagant, were often made the medium of useful satire.

In a *Midsummer Night's Dream* the masque "imperceptibly glide into comedy," but it still retains many of the distinctive features of the more spectacular form of entertainment. It resembles it in several respects:

1. In its general lyrical character, and in the abundance of music and dances.
2. In the fact that the delineation of character is secondary to action and incident, and that there are no apparent motives for the action that is carried on by external causes.
3. In its adaptability for out-of-door representation.
4. In the predominance of classical and mythical names.
5. In the inclusion of the farcical interlude or anti-masque, the play of Pyramus and Thisbe. The love stories of Theseus and the Athenian youths form a kind of framework into which the anti-masque is inserted, the fairies corresponding to some extent with the choruses and dancers of the regular Masque.
6. In the fact that the play has all the appearance of having been originally intended, like the masques, for a private entertainment, possibly to celebrate the marriage of some rich man.

However, the play differs from a masque in the following respects:

1. It displays none of the profound classical learning which we associate with the regular masque as produced by Ben Jonson. Shakespeare has popularised the subject, and has borrowed from classical mythology, little more than a few names. The fairies themselves are not classical but creatures of medieval fable and folklore.

2. The anti-masque is truly English. Its clowns are no "spirits, witches, pigmies, nymphs," and the like, but common English tradesmen remarkable principally for their lack of imagination and their earnestness of purpose.

4.2 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Discuss the theme of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
2. Give an estimate of the masque-like character of "*Midsummer Night's Dream*".
3. Discuss the conflict of the old and the young in "*Midsummer Night's Dream*".
4. Discuss the lyrical note in the play "*Midsummer Night's Dream*".
5. "It is lyrical poetic fantasy, replete with the loveliest poetry and romance". Discuss "*Midsummer Night's Dream*" in the light of the above statement.

4.3 LET US SUM UP

Unit IV has enlightened you on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for critical study. Now you are capable enough to speak on the chief characteristics of the play.

UNIT-V SONNETS, CRITICISM

Structure

5.0 Objectives

5.1 SHAKESPEAREAN SONNETS

5.1.1 History of sonnet writing in Europe

5.1.2 “The theme of Shakespeare’s sonnet is love”.

5.1.3 Self-effacement of Shakespeare as poet of the sonnets

5.2. SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM

5.2.1 Dr. Samuel Johnson as a Critic of Shakespeare

5.2.2 Symbolical Criticism: G Wilson Knight

5.3 Comprehension Exercises

5.4 Let Us Sum Up

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In Unit V we have selected Shakespearean Sonnets and Shakespearean Criticism for your study. The objective here is not only to give a brief account of the sonnet writing in England but also to discuss the themes of Shakespeare’s Sonnets. The other topic for study is Shakespearean Criticism, wherein we have discussed the views of Dr. Samuel Johnson, Ben Johnson and G Wilson Knight on Shakespeare. It will enable you to:

- Talk on his sonnets and Criticism as well.
- Summarize the significance of his sonnets and Criticism.
- Critically appreciate his sonnets and also offer your own views on his Criticism.

5.1 SHAKESPEAREAN SONNETS

5.1.1 HISTORY OF SONNET WRITING IN EUROPE

Describe the history of sonnet writing in Europe. How far English writers imitated the foreign models in sonnets?

Or

“The sonnet writing in England owes its origin from other countries”. Discuss the statement.

Or

Describe the formative influence on sonnet writing in England?

Introduction

The sonnet is an integral part of English poetry. This concept was imported into England from Italy. It is a little poem with instrumental accompaniment. The sonnets of Lodovico, Pierdellevigne, Guido, Jacapo da Lentins and Guittone were written between 1200 and 1250. But the Petrarchan sonnet has become a model to many sonnet writers, and especially to Shakespeare. A. L. Rowse says, “The fine and famous sonnet is influenced by Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.”

The Early Italian Sonnet Writers

An earliest Italian sonnet writer Fra Guittone d’ Arezzo, preferred the sonnet as an instrument of his feelings. Capel Lofft, the present writer of anthology of sonnets called Arezzo as the Columbus of poetic literature. He earned great fame as a sonnet writer who imparted a certain prestige to the sonnet

form. There was in practice the Guittone's form that was finally replaced by Petrarchan sonnet, a popular form of sonnet.

The Petrarchan Sonnet

The Petrarchan sonnet has its own matter and form. It is a reflective poem on love or demonstrates some mood of love. It has its own unity and expresses a single thought or feeling. This structure has certain significant traits. It has fourteen lines, each possessing fine beats or musical stresses. All the lines must rhyme together. There are two systems in the disposition of rhymes, the first eight lines forming the major system, and the remaining six the minor. The major system of eight lines, or two quatrains is called the octave, and the minor system of six lines, or two tercets is called the sestet.

The Rhyme Scheme

The octave has two rhyme sonnets only. In some Petrarchan sonnets these are arranged in simple alternation (ab, ab, ab, ab); in an octave of the normal type lines 1, 4, 5, 8 will rhyme together; and line 2, 3, 6, 7 will rhyme together upon a different note (abba, abba). The sestet may contain about two or three rhyme sounds. None of these must repeat or resemble any rhyme sound of the octave. The sestet should have the division between its tercets clearly marked. Thus we have cdc, dcd or cde, cde along with other variations.

The sonnet must adopt itself to the intention of its length or structure. The octave must represent the poet's idea, the sestet should apply it, or the octave should introduce and develop an image, the sestet gives back to general reflection suggested by it. There will be a marked abuse between the two. There are two lesser abuses, the first between the two quatrains of the octave, the second between the two tercets of the sestet. A Petrarchan sonnet based on the Platonic idea of perfection has these considerations. The first quatrain introduces the poet's thought or mood. After a slight pause the second quatrain develops it and the concluding tercet sums up the whole matter.

The Italian Sonnet

The second period of great sonnet activity in Italy was legendary. This brought fresh influences in thought and style upon the Elizabethan sonnet writers. The sonnet writers in the 16th century in Italy display notable varieties of theme and style. The main theme in these sonnets was love, in all its aspect of idealism, passion, jealousy, estrangements, entreaty and reconciliation. Some of the sonnets have the elements of friendship and admiration. There were some political and satirical sonneteers whose works contained vigour and pungency. Some sonnet writers were—Bembo, Michelangelo, and Marino. They influenced the Elizabethan sonnet writers. William Drummond wrote many of his finest sonnets after the style of Marino. A few of them wrote dull and merely un-emotive verses. There was a tinge of philosophical mysticism in these sonnets.

French Sonnet Writers

The last decade of 16th century in France witnessed great sonnet writing. The sonnets of Ronsard influenced the English writers. A group of poets wrote sonnets with the name of Lapleiade. Some serious writes reformed the English sonnets by following the example of the classics. They too regard Petrarch as their model. Ronsard wrote ‘Amours de Cassandre’, which reflects Petrarch’s softer moods. The satirical ‘Regrets’ of Joacobim du Bellay and the sonnets of ‘Philippe Desportes were indebted to Italian contemporaries. They wrote on the model of the Italian rhyme scheme. Ronsard wrote many of his sonnets in ten-syllabled lines. Some writers preferred the favourite French Alexandrine of twelve-syllables. The Elizabethan writers imitated this model as well.

Craze for Writing Sonnet in England

The sonnets in the ‘Miscellany’ were written in 1557 during the reign of Queen Anne. These were known as ‘Tottel’s Miscellany’. It marks the opening of an epoch in the history of sonnets. Wyatt and Surrey brought the sonnet into England on the Petrarchan model. Elizabethan poets also followed it. Spenser wrote ‘The Vision of Bellay’ and ‘Ruins of Rome’ by Bellay. He translated from Marot ‘The Vision of Petrarchan’. This shows the French influence on Elizabethan sonnet writing. Spenser wrote another sonnet ‘Amoretti’ in 1595.

These sonnets were written by Spenser and were addressed, for the most part, to Lady Gray. The Spenserian sonnet is a judicious compromise between Petrarchan and Shakespearean model.

English Sonnet Writers

Thomas Watson wrote normal Elizabethan form in the sixty sonnets of 'The Tears of Fancie or Love Disdained'. Sir Philip Sydney wrote after the model of Watson. He wrote 'Astrophel and Stella' which is a collection of his sonnets. He produced a 'sonnet sequence,' narrating the story of love. His sonnets display grace, care, sincerity and a genuine character. Then the following sonnets were written:

Henry Constable's *Diana*

Samuel Daniel's *Delia*

Thomas Lodge's *Phyllis*

Michael Drayton's *Idea's Mirror*

Richard Barnfield's *Sonnet to Cynthia*

Spenser's *Amoretti*

Henry Constable's sonnets have a sensuous charm 'Michael's sonnet'. A parting is a grand piece of work. Richard Barnfield's sonnets are addressed to a lady named Ganymede to whom he loves.

5.1.2 “THE THEME OF SHAKESPEARE’S SONNET IS LOVE”

“The theme of Shakespeare’s sonnet is love”. How far do you agree?

Or

“Shakespeare was a great sonnet writer in English language’. Discuss.

Or

Describe the scheme and style of Shakespearean sonnets in England.

Shakespeare was among the great sonnet writers of his time. In all, he wrote 154 sonnets. The first 126 sonnets are addressed to a handsome youth; while the next 26 sonnets are addressed to a dark mistress, and the last two sonnets are conventional exercises.

A.L. Rowse says, “Here are the accents of sincerity, depicting a situation too familiar, the disparity in love, as well as circumstances and fortune, between the older and the younger man.”

The Intention of the Sonnets

The sonnets of Shakespeare were written for private circulation. Thomas Thorpe published these sonnets in 1609. Shakespeare had friendship with a young aristocrat of quick distillation and disillusion, and the first 126 sonnets reveal this story of brief intoxication and renewal of friendly relation. At that time Shakespeare was economically independent of a gradual decay of the relation. There is also the mention of a rival poet. All these sonnets were addressed to Mr. W. H. the young man may have been Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton or William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke.

Shakespeare was also fascinated by a dark woman of the courtesan type. Her relationship with Shakespeare was solely sexual. The next 126 sonnets are addressed to a dark mistress. Shakespeare became sickened of this sexual relation. It is due to his growing contempt of himself for a sexual enthrallment, that these sonnets display this touch of sexual aversion. The sonnets of Shakespeare reveal a recurring theme in the form of assurance of poetic immortality, love and friendship.

The Rhyme Scheme

The rhyme scheme of Shakespearean sonnets follow the Petrarchan form. The Petrarchan form is found in the two opening quatrains (abba, abba) and the use of three rhymes in the second part of the sonnet. But he did not observe Petrarch's avoidance of couplets in the second part. He closed every sonnet with a couplet.

The style that Shakespeare adopts for his sonnets is unique. The first trait of his sonnets is their being stable. But in his blank verse, Shakespeare showed complicated effects of sound and rhythm. He tried in sonnets to make his verse melodious. There is no line in his sonnets that sounds harsh or awkward. He tried to keep the rhythm pretty close to the metrical one. He rarely uses inversion in his sonnets and avoids the use of tri-syllabic substitution. He uses alliteration as the common musical device. He carefully uses long and short vowels. He shows master of every possible rhetorical device. The reiteration of words with either an identical or a different meaning is quite obvious. He avoids monotony by an artful arithmetical variation of theme or illustration.

The visual imagery is drawn from beautiful natural objects. Every single metaphorical conceit is worked out in a very methodical manner.

The Merit of Shakespearean Sonnet

The sonnets of Shakespeare have some definite qualities that are new to the English literature. Shakespeare has revealed great rhetorical skill in his sonnets. Those sonnets, which display passionate feelings as adoration, anger, grief and disgust, have become forceful due to the rhetorical devices. Shakespeare

wrote many of these sonnets out of recollected emotion. Sir Sidney believes that the sonnets of Shakespeare are the ideal products of poet's fancy, and almost all the ideas are adapted or imitated, borrowed from French, Italian or other foreign writers, many of the themes being commonplaces of Renaissance sonnet writing. In these sonnets Shakespeare unlocked a very different kind of armour.

These sonnets reveal something about Shakespeare, the man. It is also said that these sonnets are conventional pieces. Shakespeare joined the other sonneteers in friendly rivalry. The sonnets to a friend are unique in Renaissance sonnet literature. These are a record of the affection that Shakespeare cherished for his dear friend or towards the dark lady.

The Interpretation of Sonnet

There are three principal theories regarding the interpretations of these sonnets of Shakespeare. They are—Fiction theory, Autobiographical theory, and the Esoteric theory.

Fiction Theory: The sonnets of Shakespeare are the end product of his fancy. All the ideas contained in these sonnets are adapted or imitated ideas which are borrowed from foreign writers. The ideas and themes inherent in these sonnets echo Renaissance sonnets.

Autobiographical Theory: Wordsworth and Schlegel produced the autobiographical theory. They believed that sonnets were sincere records of real events in Shakespeare's life. Some of them are conventions, but most of them are of the personal nature. These were written in a straightforward manner with an immediate and sincere impulse.

Esoteric View: Some critics like R.L. Eagle, Murry have put forward this view. They either discover a single special meaning for the whole collection or else they identify the person as an abstraction to whom allusion is made.

Themes of the Sonnet

The sonnets of Shakespeare are lyrical pieces of friendship and love. There is no parallel in the whole corpus of Renaissance poetry to Shakespeare's

sustained exploration of the theme of friendship. These sonnets are also considered unique in the field of love poetry. The main theme of the sonnets is the poet's immense love for a woman who holds him in its grip. The main contrast in the sonnets is between the two lives, that of 'comfort' and that of 'despair'. These sonnets have thus opened a new world of love poetry in English sonnets.

Shakespeare dislocates in his sonnets the whole conception of romantic love. The dark woman has no beauty or virtue, but simply the power of attraction. The sonnets of Shakespeare contain no small proportion of the highest, the intensest, the most exquisite jewels of English poetry. Their main quality as verse is a steady soaring music. These are more universal, more commanding and more human.

5.1.3 SELF-EFFACEMENT OF SHAKESPEARE AS POET OF THE SONNETS

“The self-effacement of Shakespeare as poet of the sonnets is total and unreserved”. How far do you agree?

Or

Describe the main themes of the sonnets of Shakespeare.

Or

“The sonnets of Shakespeare are either conventional imitative and imaginary piece or autobiographical poems”. Discuss the statement.

Introduction:

Shakespeare's sonnets are the expression of the passionate feelings of the poet. These are not merely an imitation of the Italian and French sonneteers. The themes of love, friendship, and affection are found in them.

J B Leishman says, “There are parallels and affinities in the sonnets of Shakespeare, and his predecessors Shakespeare made are of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* in Golding’s English translation, which is the source of the great sonnets on time as devourer”.

Formative Influences

The sonnets of Shakespeare must be understood in the context of the vogue of the sonnets that invaded all the literature of Western Europe for 300 years. They are the product of a purely conventional literary fashion. It is true that Shakespeare was indebted to Ovid and Horace. He derived the small Latin that he used in sonnet 55 from Meres.

E. K. Chambers holds the opinion that Bray’s arrangement separated a large number of sonnets clearly associated both in sense and subject matter. There is growth of images throughout Shakespeare’s work. Baldwin finds perfect continuity from the first sonnet to the last.

J. W. Lever aptly writes, “It is possible to consider the sonnets as a number of groups, line that formed by the first 19 sonnets of the Quarto, each based upon some well defined theme or situation, expressed through all the technical resources of the medium”. There is no finally accepted theory dealing with the arrangement of the sonnets of the first section. A number of scholars have tried to rearrange the sonnets into some more logical order, but such efforts proved less fruitful.

Alden and Rollins observe: “Thorpe’s order has little more authority than its numerous substitutes, but as the traditional arrangement of most editions, it still remains preferable for the sake of convenience.”

All the first seventeen sonnets are addressed to a fair youth, urging him to marry in order to perpetuate his beauty through his offspring.

In the later sonnets the theme is that it is in the poet’s verse that the beauty will remain immortal. There are instances of a separation and a return, of a quarrel and a reconciliation, but the relationship lasted for three years. The young man becomes a rival poet, more alert than the writer at winning the Patron’s favour.

The dark woman, being the writer's mistress at first and then the beloved of the young man, tries to poison the relation between them.

The Themes of these Sonnets

The themes of these sonnets and the ideas are commonplaces of Renaissance sonnet writing. In these sonnets, Shakespeare unlocked a very different kind of armoury. These sonnets tell something about Shakespeare, the man. They also tell us of his passionate affection, of his hopes and fears, its pain and joy; of his pride and his humility.

It is also said that the sonnets are conventional pieces. Shakespeare joined the other sonneteers in 1590 in friendly rivalry. It is wrong to hold the belief that the sonnets are merely imaginary pieces.

A C Bradley writes: "The sonnets to the friend is unique in Renaissance sonnet literature in being a prolonged and varied record of the intense affection of an older friend for a younger, and of other feelings arising from their relations. They have no real parallel in any serious imitative or Virgil's second Eclogue, or in occasional sonnets to patrons or patron friends couched in the high flown language of the time."

The force of the feelings expressed in these sonnets deny, the inference that they are personal and imaginary, these are merely dramatic series of poems and are the products of mere imagination.

The Theories on Sonnets

There are three theories for interpreting these sonnets: Fiction, Autobiographical, and Esoteric.

Fiction theory: According to Sir Sidney Lee the sonnets of Shakespeare are the ideal products of the poet's fancy, and all the ideas are adopted or imitated ideas, borrowed from earlier writers as Plato, Ovid, Horace, and Italian and French sonnet writers.

Autobiographical Elements

The sonnets of Shakespeare have some autobiographical element. Wordsworth and Schlegel brothers put forth the autobiographical theory of these sonnets. These are sincere records of real events in the life of Shakespeare and the other persons concerned. Some of them may be conventional in nature, but most of them are autobiographical in nature. These were written straightforwardly with an immediate and sincere purpose. These are derived from some episode in the life of Shakespeare.

These sonnets show that Shakespeare held some contact with the world of elegance and aristocracy.

A C Bradley says, “These sonnets reveal much about Shakespeare the man, and throw light on Shakespeare’s personality.”

Esoteric Interpretations

The sonnets reveal Shakespeare as a man of great personal devotion. He was very sensitive to beauty in man and woman. His foremost quality is his extreme capacity for self-effacement and humility. His self-effacement as poet of the sonnets is complete and unreserved.

The esoteric interpretations either discover a single special meaning for the whole collection or else they identify the person as abstractions to whom allusion is made. J E C Montmorency says, “The friend is life and goodness, and the Dark Lady is death and evil.”

Murry Krieger adopts the metaphorical system to interpret the sonnets. Shakespeare creates symbols in the sonnet. A creative symbol in one sonnet becomes a sign or part of the raw material in another. Each sonnet in itself is an aesthetic unit. Thus exists oneness in their total symbolic system; the idea of friendship in the sonnets is an idealization, a purified creation of the poet’s experience.

5.2 SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM

Ben Jonson as a Critic of Shakespeare

Ben Jonson is a distinguished classicist. He was born in the Elizabethan period and broke into the romantic stronghold without an apology. He had salutary things to say. And he said them in a very provocative way. He had a distinct and definite programme of reform. In his prologues, prefaces, introductions and inductions he made sharp criticisms of contemporary drama. He had become sick of the romantic extravagances. He had lost all his patience with the improbable plots, impossible events, fantastic episodes and unnatural characterisation.

Jonson did not spare anyone, not even Shakespeare. It is, however, on record that Shakespeare welcomed Jonson's *Every Man in His Humour* for Chamberlain's company. Shakespeare himself had been one among the actors in the play. Shakespeare was a friend of Jonson. In truth, he was everybody's friend. He could not estrange any body. A few days before his death he enjoyed the company of Ben Jonson and Michael Drayton at Stratford-upon Avon.

But the warmth of friendship did not blur Jonson's critical sense, the zeal of the reformer got the upper hand. Jonson claimed originality in his thinking, and his claims are based on truth. Amidst what he called the chaos and anarchy of the Elizabethan stage, Jonson wanted to bring law and order. He was an eminent reformer. Shakespeare's Polonius advised his son to be neither a borrower nor a lender be. But in reality Shakespeare had been both. He liberally borrowed from the accepted dramatic conventions of his age. His masters were Marlowe and Kyd, Greene and Lyly.

Occasionally Shakespeare did smart, but normally he resigned himself to the dramatic tradition with a smile. Shakespeare did not break with the tradition.

But Ben Jonson did. He was an anachronism in this regard. In his ideas, theories and tastes he was almost an iconoclast. He was therefore to cause a flutter among the Elizabethans. Shakespeare was serving his apprenticeship while he modelled his earlier comedies on Plautus and Terence. Jonson remained a lifelong disciple of Plautus, Terence and Aristophanes.

In Jonson's opinion *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale* are both drolleries, and Shakespeare by introducing dances, confused the different types of art. Shakespeare in his *Tempest* observed the unities of time, place and action. Yet he could not escape the scathing criticism of Jonson. The prologue to *Every Man in his Humour* is unmistakably a criticism of Shakespearean plays. According to Stevens, it is a "malicious sneer at Shakespeare."

In *Every Man Out of His Humour*, Jonson referred to Julius Caesar. In his satirical comedy *The Poetaster*, Jonson talks about the quarrels of his contemporary poets and playwrights. Jonson is represented as Horace. Shakespeare is Virgil. Dekker and Marston come in for bitter criticism, which they later on avenged in *Satiromastix*.

The famous conversations of Ben Jonson with William Drummond of Hawthornden are unique among the contemporary records of Jonson. Ben Jonson is said to have told Drummond in 1619 that "Shakespeare wanted art." In another passage Jonson said, "Shakespeare in a play brought in a number of men saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where there is no sea near by some 100 miles." *The Winter's Tale* here comes in for criticism for Shakespeare's lack of knowledge in Geography.

The poem shows itself to be a series of adjectives in the superlative degree, only a Swinburne or a Carlyle could have paid such effusive tributes. Jonson unhesitatingly called Shakespeare the "Soul of the age." Shakespeare was greater than Kyd, Lyly and even Marlowe; Chaucer and Spenser were his inferiors.

But when Jonson said that Shakespeare was in no way inferior to Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides—the favoured children of Melpomene, the muse

of tragedy, the classicist Jonson seemed demonstrably to have suspended his critical faculty. Aristophanes, Plautus, Terence also claim no superiority to the Elizabethan titan.

Jonson had great disapproval for Shakespeare's romantic extravagance and lack of restraint. On an analysis of the poem, prefixed to the folio edition, which is verse criticism of a fine intellect; it will appear that it is a correct judicial estimate of Shakespeare strictly from the classical point of view. He stated the position of Shakespeare in the history of poetry and drama. Compared with the tragedians of antiquity Shakespeare emerged successfully. Shakespeare's reputation did not remain confined to the shores of Albion. Other poets have purely ephemeral appeal. Shakespeare was superior to them, because of his universality. "He was not of an age but for all time". Shakespeare will have his appeal to all ages, and all nations.

To Jonson many of Shakespearean passages were just ridiculous. The passages quoted from *Julius Caesar*, however, can by no stretch of imagination be called ridiculous. But Jonson was so much amused at the passage that he parodied it in the Introduction to *The Staple of News*. To cater to the Elizabethan layman Shakespeare often had to write almost in unseemly haste. That might be the reason for some of the obscurities in his plays. Shakespeare had his inspiration, but mere inspiration, according to Jonson, was not sufficient. Perspiration was of equal importance. Shakespeare, Jonson complained, did not care to chisel his style. A man of Shakespeare's extraordinary genius fails in this respect only because he was in a great hurry.

Jonson was the central contemporary critic of Shakespeare, and Greene's criticism cannot be called criticism. Heminge, Condell and Francis Meres were so very effusive in their expression that they are also not critics worth the name. Entirely different from Shakespeare in tastes, ideas and theories, Jonson's criticism is worthy of serious consideration. Unqualified praise is as harmful as unqualified denunciation.

A critic's job is that of a torchbearer. Without any hesitation he declared that Shakespeare had a wonderful creative faculty. The chief defect in

Shakespeare is that a gentleman of such great name must have at least a smattering in Latin and Greek. And Shakespeare had small Latin and less Greek. Shakespeare in Jonson's opinion had no acquaintance with the ancient models.

He has essentially been considered as the child of fancy. And, therefore he had no idea about literary principle. From this, one can draw an obvious conclusion that a man without literary principles is apt to become erratic. Moreover Shakespearean dramas are full of factual inaccuracies. Without any balance or proportion the plays were like enormous torsos. Undoubtedly, Shakespeare had great felicity of expression but he cannot be a very careful artist. Truly speaking he has breathed new life into the borrowed skeletons. But he cannot lay any claims to original thinking. It might be due not to Shakespeare's lack of creative imagination but a sort of mental lethargy.

Ben Jonson was a very important literary figure of his contemporaries, because he was exceptionally well read. He had, therefore the competence to judge a work of art from a correct perspective. He knew the yardstick with which to measure. The romantic writers of the age lacked literary discipline. Caught in the vortex of unrestrained imagination, they were weaving a fine texture, which was palpably divorced from reality. Bohemian in life, they were bohemian in their pattern of thought. Jonson in sharp contrast passed through a rigid literary discipline which was at once fruitful and rewarding. He could, therefore, be critical and maintain his objectivity. He could be sympathetic and severe as well.

5.2.1 DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON AS A CRITIC OF SHAKESPEARE

NOTES

Dr. Samuel Johnson as a Critic of Shakespeare

Dr. Samuel Johnson as a Shakespearean critic reveals the virtues of his own personal and reasoned approach to Shakespeare keeping in view of the vices of the age. The 18th century was seeking to modify the neo-classical theory of poetry and drama to suit its tradition and taste. The neo-classical school had faith in the unchallengeable authority of the rules derived from the Greco-Roman. A work of art was estimated in the light of those rules. The critic was a kind of judge about to pass a judgment praising or condemning the work according to the accepted standards. Their duty included drawing of our attention to the defects in the work. Johnson points out the shortcomings to show that his praise has been impartial and genuine. The defects he mentioned were the loose construction of some plots, the improbable ending in some plays, and the improper use of quibbles and conceits in some places. Those defects are accepted by one and all to be true. He mentioned many other drawbacks and these are more the result of the critical ideas prevalent in the 18th century.

Being a neo-classicist, he emphasized the fact that poetry must instruct by pleasing. Poetry must have a purpose. Johnson was an uncompromising moralist and he condemns a play if it does not exhibit the so-called poetic justice. But the real criterion of instructing by pleasing also enables him to ignore the use of poetic justice when he is determined to draw his reader's attention.

Johnson follows the neo-classicist in observing that Shakespeare's characters are commonly types and not individuals. But as Hazlitt commented, "He in fact found the general species or didactic form in Shakespeare's characters, which was all he sought or cared for; he did not find the individual traits of the dramatic distinctions which Shakespeare has engrafted on this general nature because he felt no interest in them."

In England the neo-classicists preferred comedy to tragedy. For that reason Johnson saw skill in tragedy and instinct in comedy. Even the tragedies of Shakespeare were rewritten as comedies, in that century.

Besides, there are other problems where Johnson moves along independent lines. The blending of the comic and the tragic was vehemently opposed by the neo-Classicists. Shakespeare has tragic comedies and also comic scenes in tragedies. These plays do please us in spite of the rules. Dryden attempted a defence of these plays on the basis of the principle of contrast, and also on that of the spirit of the times. But it was left to Johnson to vindicate Shakespeare's practice thoroughly and systematically.

The neo-classicists cling fast to the three Unities and Dryden rejected the unities of time and place. Johnson takes up the problems and offers an account of Shakespeare's practice. His arguments have not been improved upon.

It was Dryden who initiated in modern times the historical and comparative approaches to works of art. Johnson develops these points of views. In the *Preface*, he observes: "Every man's performance to be rightly estimated must be compared with the state of the age in which he lived and with his own particular opportunities." He further states: "Shakespeare has more allusions than other poets to the traditions and superstitions of the vulgar which must therefore be traced before he can be understood." A study of these may not be "very illuminating if the emphasis of the reader were to be as with Johnson, on the just representation of general nature." Obviously, there is a contradiction in this approach, and it cannot be determined.

Besides Johnson gave us a full account of the sources of the obscurities in the text of Shakespeare. The duties of an editor of Shakespeare have been determined once for all. Some of the sources of difficulties that crept into the scripts for players, the mistake introduced by the scribes, the mutilations made by the actors in shortening the speeches, and the errors introduced by the printers themselves. Some difficult readings are integral to Shakespeare's perplexed and obscure style. They arise from "the foulness of Shakespeare's ideas," for "the

rapidity of his imagination hurried him to a second idea before he had fully expressed the first.” This is closer to what Shelley said later about the conflicting speeches of inspiration and composition. Shelley would accept Johnson's statement that Shakespeare paid greater attention to the series of ideas than of words, and his language not being designed for the desk, was all that he desired it to be if it conveyed his meaning to his audience.

Johnson's *Preface* also reveals his limitations. To say that Shakespeare's tragedies are the worse for being acted is far from the truth, if we do not consider only *King Lear*. That he does not observe poetic justice is negated at least by the great tragedies. That he made the language corrupt by “every mode of depravation” is fantastic. Johnson’s stress on a historical estimate is sound in principle: “Every man’s performance, to be rightly estimated, must be compared with the state of the age in which he lived and with his particular opportunities.” But he does not follow the principle and asks of us to aim at understanding Shakespeare’s plan.

Johnson insists that Shakespeare has not faithfully observed Poetic justice, that he sacrifices virtue to convenience, and that he seems to write without any moral purpose. But as Leavis pointed out, there are "ways in which all works of art act their moral judgment.” For Johnson, a thing is either stated, or it isn't there. Johnson could not see that a moral idea could be embodied in a myth or in a symbol. But in his candid statement of the so-called defects, we do find Johnson revealing his inability to be intimidated.

Shakespeare is great for the reason that he has been successful in achieving the first objective of a writer. This “first purpose is to excite” him that reads his work, to read it through. This is the result of Shakespeare, offering us not the subjective reactions but the grasp of the living world around, his grasp enabled the dramatist to present the inexhaustible variety of truth. The dramatic and other literary conventions embodied in the rules of the neo-classical criticism are the abstractions and constructions from the living world.

Although Johnson does not like to ‘number the streaks of the tulip’ and even though he is opposed to abstracting from ‘the living world’ he does insist upon unity of impact, selection, economy, and decorum. But propriety, he says,

has a thousand forms. As he said in the *Rambler*: ‘There are qualities in the products of nature yet undiscovered and combinations in the powers of art yet untried.’ The diverse forms of selection are possible and each one has its validity depending on its relations to life. This is the principle invoked in the defence of Shakespeare.

Johnson’s approach offers a prominent place to the structural unity of a Shakespearean play. Though we can collect fine passages replete with moral principles, the greatness of Shakespeare, he says, is “not shown in the splendour of particular passages, but by the progress of his fable, and the tenor of his dialogue; and he that tries to recommend him by select quotations will succeed like the pedant in Hierocles, who when he offered his house to sale, carried a brick in his pocket as a specimen.”

5.2.2 SYMBOLICAL CRITICISM: G WILSON KNIGHT

Symbolical Criticism: G Wilson Knight

G. Wilson Knight and Caroline Spurgeon are two important critics of Shakespeare. G. Wilson Knight may be contrasted with Caroline Spurgeon. Both of them have concentrated upon Shakespeare's poetry, imagery and metaphor. Spurgeon has ignored the other aspects of Shakespeare, viz. characterization, stagecraft and plot. But G. Wilson Knight has emphasized plot and character as well as the symbolic overtone and poetical atmosphere. Knight says: "these investigations can be considered to lie directly in tradition of A C Bradley's Shakespearean Tragedy which is too often wrongly supposed to have been limited to the minutiae of characterization."

Spurgeon does not have any faith in the dictum—Play is the thing. She traces in an image or symbol the entire atmosphere of the play. Wilson Knight's method is one of imaginative interpretation, while Spurgeon is not worried about interpretation.

G. Wilson Knight is a symbolic critic in the true sense of the term. He was at the initial stage as least influenced by Colin Still, John Middleton Murry and T S Eliot. Still's point of view was allegorical, for he had interpreted *The Tempest* in allegorical terms. Middleton Murry's essay on "Metaphor" must also have influenced Wilson Knight. His first work *Wheel of Fire* was introduced by T S Eliot, in which Wilson Knight stated his rationale.

Knight's comments on his own method of interpretation deserve special mention: "Criticism is judgement of vision; interpretation a reconstruction of vision."

Kenneth Muir commendably assessed the contributions of Knight. Knight was greatly indebted to T S Eliot. C J Sisson says, "Mr Knight develops the new approach of poetry and criticism. Poetry, Eliot argues, compels interpretation as

the Universe compels interpretation by metaphysics. And the meaning of poetry to others than the writer, with certain limitations, is as much a part of that poetry as what it means to the writer.”

Sisson’s remark necessitates analysis. In the opinion of Wilson Knight, Shakespeare is essentially a poet. He has started with Eliot’s contention that poetry is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality, “The poet has not a personality to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways.” G Wilson Knight and his camp followers, try to find out the impressions and experiences in images and symbols.

T. S. Eliot does not use the word ‘symbol’, but ‘Objective correlative.’ We are, however, tempted to ask if Wilson Knight could be so impersonal and objective as T S Eliot. He has traced symbols and sought to read meanings into them, but his imaginative interpretation has been eminently subjective. M C Bradbrook’s says about Wilson Knight: “Wilson Knight saw the plays as constituting a singly vast design, held together by certain symbols. Imagery, action and character are all parts of the design. His writings had therefore a unity, and a fiery quality which stimulated readers to enthusiasm or to violent disagreement.”

For Knight each play of Shakespeare had a vision of the mystery of things. Shakespeare was in the exact sense a metaphysical poet, whose last plays were the consummation of all his art. With this heartfelt conviction Knight essayed a close scrutiny of the text, he traced imagery from great central statements like the soliloquies of Hamlet and Macbeth down to passing allusion in the speech of minor characters. His influence has been far-reaching: it is behind much of the work of the so-called ‘Cambridge School’ and much modern American criticism. Few will go all the way with Knight; but in his elucidation of the problem plays and the final romances, he decisively changed the course of critical thought.

To Wilson Knight a play as an “expanded metaphor.” He wishes to analyse the use and meaning of direct poetic symbolism. He believes that even a thorough knowledge and acquaintance with the Elizabethan stage conventions

will not reveal the secret. “Nor will sound knowledge of the stage and the special theatrical technique of Shakespeare’s work render up its imaginative secret.”

5.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Describe the history of sonnet writing in Europe. How far English writers imitated the foreign models in sonnets?
2. “The theme of Shakespeare’s sonnet is love”. How far do you agree?
3. “Shakespeare was a great sonnet writer in English language’. Discuss.
4. Discuss Dr. Samuel Johnson as a critic of Shakespeare.
5. Discuss Symbolical Criticism of G Wilson Knight.

5.4 LET US SUM UP

After having completed Unit V, you are now capable of discussing Shakespearean Sonnets and Shakespearean Criticism as well. You have not only become capable enough to give a brief account of the sonnet writing in England but also discuss the themes of Shakespeare’s Sonnets. The other topic for study i.e. Shakespearean Criticism, has enlightened you with the views of Dr. Samuel Johnson, Ben Johnson and G Wilson Knight on Shakespeare.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Granville Barker | Preface to Shakespeare |
| 2. S. A. Brooke | Ten Plays of Shakespeare |
| 3. Gervinus | Shakespearean Commentaries |
| 4. Quiller-Couch | Shakespeare’s Workmanship |

NOTES

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|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 5. E. Dowden | Shakespeare's Mind and Art |
| 6. Hudson
Characters | Shakespeare, His Mind, Art and |
| 7. Middleton Murry | Shakespeare |