


B.A. English
ENMJ 303/ ENGM 309
Introduction to Literary Form:
Drama/ Study of Drama



*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood*

*And looked down one as far as I could
To where it beat in the undergrowth
— Robert Frost*

Message for the Students

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University is the only state Open University, established by the Government of Gujarat by the Act No. 14 of 1994 passed by the Gujarat State Legislature; in the memory of the creator of Indian Constitution and Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar. We stand at the seventh position in terms of establishment of the Open Universities in the country. The University provides more than 70 courses including various Certificates, Diplomas, UG, PG, as well as Doctoral degree, to strengthen Higher Education across the state.



On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Babasaheb Ambedkar, the Gujarat government secured a quiet place with the latest convenience for university, and erected a building with all the modern amenities named 'Jyotirmay' Parisar. The Board of Management of the University has greatly contributed to the making of the University and will continue to this by all the means.

Education is the perceived capital investment. Education can contribute more to improving the quality of the people. Here I remember the educational philosophy laid down by Shri. Swami Vivekananda:

"We want the education by which, the character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expand and by which one can stand on one's own feet".

In order to provide students with qualitative, skill and life oriented education at their threshold, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University is dedicated to this very manifestation of education. The university is incessantly working to provide higher education to the wider mass across the state of Gujarat and prepare them to face day to day challenges and lead their lives with all the capacity for the upliftment of the society in general and the nation in particular.

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Prof.(Dr.)AmiUpadhyay

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Introduction to Literary Form: Drama/ Study of Drama (ENMJ-303/ ENGM 309)

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Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Open University
(Established by Government of Gujarat)

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Paper -
ENMJ 303/
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Unit 1 Introduction to Form of Drama	01
Unit 2 Components and Types of Drama	13
Unit 3 As you like It: 1 - Shakespeare	22
Unit 4 As you like It: 2- Shakespeare	31
Unit 5 As you like It: 3 -Shakespeare	43
Unit 6 Waiting for Godot: I - Samuel Beckett	54
Unit 7 Waiting for Godot: II - Samuel Beckett	63
Unit 8 Waiting for Godot: III - Samuel Beckett	73
Unit 9 Look Back in Anger: I John Osborne	86

Unit 10	93
Look Back in Anger: II- John Osborne	
<hr/>	
Unit 11	101
Look Back in Anger: III- John Osborne	
<hr/>	
Unit 12	118
Ghashiram Kotwal: I - Vijay Tendulkar	
<hr/>	
Unit 13	128
Ghashiram Kotwal: II -Vijay Tendulkar	
<hr/>	
Unit 14	138
Ghashiram Kotwal: III - Vijay Tendulkar	
<hr/>	
Unit 15	145
Hayavadana: I - Girish Karnard	
<hr/>	
Unit 16	157
Hayavadana: II - Girish Karnard	
<hr/>	
Unit 17	166
Hayavadana: III - Girish Karnard	
<hr/>	

:: STRUCTURE ::

- 1.1 Objectives**
- 1.2 Introduction**
- 1.3 Definitions**
- 1.4 Characteristics of Drama**
- 1.5 Difference between Novel and Drama**
 - **Check your progress 1:**
- 1.6 Brief History of the Development of English Drama**
 - 1.6.1 The Beginnings: Greek Drama**
 - 1.6.2 From Chaucer to Spenser**
 - 1.6.3 The Age of Elizabeth**
 - 1.6.4 The Age of Milton**
 - 1.6.5 The Age of Dryden**
 - 1.6.6 The Age of Pope**
 - 1.6.7 Return to Nature**
 - **Check your progress 2**
 - 1.6.8 The Victorian Age**
 - 1.6.9 Modern Age**
 - 1.6.10 Post-1920s English Drama**
 - **Check your progress 3**
- 1.7 Let Us Sum Up**
- 1.8 Key Words**
- 1.9 Books Suggested**
 - ❖ **Answers**

1.1 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we shall

- Know a few definitions of drama.
- Discuss characteristics of drama.
- Discuss drama as a form of literature which will include a comparison between novel and drama as literary forms, which would help you to understand the form of drama.
- Talk about brief history of the development of English Drama

After completing the Unit, you should be able to

- Understand the term 'drama' as a form of literature
- Understand its history and its development
- Understand the form of Drama during various periods of English Literature

1.2 INTRODUCTION

Drama is one of the literary forms through which dramatists can directly speak to their readers or audience as well as they can receive instant feedback of audience. Drama is a mode of fictional representation through dialogue and performance. A few dramatists use their characters as a vehicle to convey their thoughts, values such as poets do with personae, and novelists do with narrators. In drama the characters live out a story without any comments of the author, providing the audience a direct presentation of characters' life experiences.

Drama is a distinctive fictitious form because it is intended to be performed out on a stage. The word 'drama' comes from the Greek word 'dran' meaning 'to act' or 'to do'. Drama brings a story to life before our eyes, the story of a play or drama is told through dialogue and action and is combined with the setting that the audience perceives essentially from scenery and props.

1.3 DEFINITIONS OF DRAMA

Here are some of the definitions of drama that I would prefer to discuss:

- In general any work meant to be performed on a stage by actors. A more particular meaning is a serious play; not necessarily tragedy.
- The form of composition designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors take the roles of the characters, perform the indicated actions, and utter the written dialogue. (The common alternative name for a dramatic composition is a play.)
- Drama is intended to replicate human behaviour and action in the midst of tragedy and everyday life. A number of genres exist within drama, each with their own storytelling methods, character types and dramatic approach. There are four main genres of drama: the tragedy, comedy, melodrama and tragicomedy.

1.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF DRAMA

Aristotle in his *Poetics*, the first systematic treatise of Western dramaturgy, talks about six constituent parts of tragedy which are applicable to drama in general. These are: Plot, Character, Thought, Diction, Music and Spectacle. Plot is the arrangement of incidents in the play. Characters are the actors who play different roles. Thought means what the characters think and feel. Diction is the language of the play. Music is the sound effects and songs. Spectacle is the theatrical effect including scenery and props used as setting.

1.5 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NOVEL AND DRAMA

The novel is self-contained; that is, it provides within its own compass everything that the writer deemed necessary for the comprehension and enjoyment of his work. The drama, on the other hand, when it reaches us in the form of print, and when we read it as literature, in the same way as we read a novel, is not in this sense self-contained. It implies everywhere the co-operation of elements outside itself, and for the moment these elements are lacking. What we read is, in fact, little more than a bare outline which the playwright intended to be filled in by the art of the actor and the “business” of the boards—a literary basis for that stage-representation upon which he calculated for the full execution of his design. In the mere perusal of a play, therefore, we labour under certain drawbacks and difficulties, for much of its effect is likely to be lost upon us for want of those continual appeals to the imagination, those descriptions, explanations, and personal commentaries, which in a novel help us to visualise scenes, understand people, estimate motives, grasp the ethical import of actions. For this reason, the comprehension and enjoyment of a play as a piece of literature must always make immeasurably greater demands upon us than the comprehension and enjoyment of a novel. We have to supply for ourselves the external conditions from which it derives much of its life, and the whole machinery of actual performance; in countless cases of detail, where, had we been spectators, we should have relied upon the “reading” of the actor, we must as students have recourse to our own powers of apprehension and interpretation; our imagination must be so alert that every scene may be conceived as if it were passing before us in action. In ordinary practice—and particularly in our study of Shakespeare, whose works we persist in treating as “pure” literature, and rarely regard in their primary qualities as plays written expressly for the stage—we are too apt to neglect these simple but far-reaching considerations. It is worthwhile, therefore, to insist that in our study of any drama we should do our utmost to recreate its proper theatrical circumstances and surroundings, and thus to make our private reading of it so far as possible an adequate substitute for public performance.

Check your progress 1:

Q.1 Answer the following questions.

1. What is drama?

2. Which are the characteristics of drama?

3. How does a drama differ from a novel?

1.6 HISTORY OF ENGLISH DRAMA

1.6.1 The Beginnings: Greek Drama

The origins of Greek drama are obscure, but it seems to have grown out of choral performance. We have only the words of choral lyrics, but the Greek word *choros* (chorus) itself refers to dancing, and the original experience was a combination of movement, words and music. Later Greeks believed that drama began with a single actor in dialogue with the chorus; Aeschylus was said to have introduced the second actor and Sophocles to have been the first to use a third. Supposedly there were never more than three speaking actors, dividing all the roles between them.

Dramas at Athens were performed in festivals. At the biggest of these, the Great Dionysian, performances were spread over four days. The last part of it was devoted to comedy; for the festival's earlier part three playwrights were selected and each produced four plays which they directed themselves; three tragedies and a satyr play. Tragedy was the first form of drama that was produced and performed. Thus, drama originates from religious practice.

1.6.2 Drama from Chaucer to Spenser:

The ancient classical drama had long ceased to be a vital force, and the only trace of it was in the mimes or professional strolling players to be found throughout the middle ages in all parts of Europe. To them

medieval drama owes little or nothing. Popular mummings at great festivals, a crude survival of ancient pagan ritual, developed into more elaborate amusements, with morris dancing and simple dramatizations of the feats of such heroes as Robin Hood and St George. These festivities were the occasion of much popular fun and licence, particularly at the election of the 'Abbot of Unreason', with his attendants, the hobby horse and the clown.

The Miracle Play: It is in the church and its liturgy that we find the stimulus which leads to the rebirth of drama. The commonly used antiphonal singing had in it the elements of dialogue, while the obvious dramatic possibilities in the Roman Catholic ritual, especially in the Mass, were gradually developed as part of the elaborate ceremonial of the great religious feasts like Easter. As early as the tenth century we hear of Easter representations of the empty tomb of Christ, with dialogue between one figure sitting out side and the three others who come in as if seeking something. The authorities were quick to appreciate the instructional value of such presentations as an addition to the Latin liturgy, and to this dramatization of the *quem quoritis* (whom seek ye?) rapid additions seem to have been made, both at Easter and at other feasts.

The writers seem to have turned next to other New Testament stories, Such as the Annunciation and the Nativity, and then to the Old Testament, where the Fall and the stories of Noah and Daniel were among the most popular. By the fourteenth century we have the evolution of complete cycles of plays, covering the history of the world from the Creation to the Day of Judgement, and there is a common tendency to incorporate into them material from legend and the saints' lives. It has long been the fashion to call the Biblical plays 'mysteries' and those dealing with saints' lives 'miracles,' but there is no evidence to justify this distinction in England, though it seems to have been used in France. We hear of no play being called a 'mystery' in England before the eighteenth century, and it seems probable that all out-of-door liturgical dramas in this century were known as 'miracles.'

From the eleventh century onward monastic and cathedral records frequently mention properties used in such dramatic representations. The performances were still part of the liturgy, spoken in Latin by clerics, and their role was a subordinate one. Slowly, however, the vernacular crept in to usurp the place of the Latin, minor clerics and then laymen were introduced as actors, and numerous episodes began to be found in single performances. This growth necessitated the moving of the presentation from the choir (its original place) to the nave of the church, and rapidly the liturgical drama grew to overshadow the ritual of which it had been a very small part. By the twelfth century the dramas, in quest of still more space, seem to have moved into the open, and the organization had begun to pass from ecclesiastical to lay hands. The vernacular was by now the

usual medium, and the growing secularization of the drama is reflected in an edict of 1210 forbidding clergy to take part in the plays.

From the clergy, control passed first to the religious and social guilds, and then to the trade guilds, under the general control of the council of the town. The guilds, which were wealthy, and keen rivals in public show, became responsible for the productions. Each guild took on a separate episode from a cycle—often an episode suited to its own interests. Thus at Chester the water-leaders and drawers of the Dee performed Noah's Deluge. The growing elaboration of presentation, stimulated by guild rivalry, and the extension of the cycles led to the evolution of the ambulatory cycle, in which each episode was performed on a two-decked cart, or pageant. This pageant consisted of one enclosed room, which served both as Hell and as a tiring room, and a second storey open to the sky, on which the action was performed. It was towed round the town so that the play could be performed at fixed points, and at York we read of twelve places at which each play was given in a sequence which began at 4.30 A.M. and went on until the light failed. In London, about 1500, the plays, which were presented very elaborately, lasted from four to seven days.

For such elaborate cycles presented out of doors only summer festivals were really suitable, and after the creation, in 1311, of the feast of Corpus Christi, which fell in May or June, when weather was likely to be good and the hours of daylight were long, most of the play cycles began to attach themselves to that feast. Here and there however, and notably at Chester, the plays were associated with Whitsuntide. The cycles, some of which were performed annually, and some only at intervals of several years, made Corpus Christi a great public holiday. Soon the licence and revelry of the crowds congregated in the great religious centres on this occasion were arousing strong ecclesiastical opposition and leading to deterioration in the religious significance and spirit of the plays. Though their composition probably remained in clerical hands, a growing secularization of tone is clearly discernible. \

1.6.3 The Age of Elizabeth:

The opening of the Elizabethan period saw the drama struggling into maturity. The early type of the time was scholarly in tone and aristocratic in authorship. An example of the earliest type of playwright is Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke (1554-1628), who distinguished himself both as a dramatic and lyrical poet.

Next came the work of the university Wits, Peele, Greene, Lodge, Kyd, and, greatest of all, Marlowe. In their hands drama first began to realize its latent potentialities, and the exuberance and vitality which typify Elizabethan drama first made themselves felt.

To this stage succeeded that of Shakespeare, which covered approximately the years 1595 to 1615. Of this drama all we can say here is that it is the crown and flower of the Elizabethan literary achievement, and embodies almost the entire spirit both of drama and poetry. This Age

produced tragedies, comedies, tragi-comedies and romances. It is called the Golden Age in the history of English drama.

The decline begins with Jonson, and continues with Beaumont and Fletcher, Dekker, Heywood, and the other dramatists mentioned in this chapter. The decline is made clear in several ways: in the narrowing of the ample Shakespearian motive, local, and fragmentary importance; in the lack of creative power in the characterization, resulting sometimes in mere types or 'humours,' or (as in Dekker and Fletcher) in superficial improvisation, or in ponderous tragical figures (as in Webster and Tourneur); and, lastly, in the degradation of the style, which will be noted below. Sometimes the decline is gilded with delicate fancy, as in Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess*, or in the exquisite *The Parliament of Bees* (1641) by John Day (fl. 1606); but the grace and charm of such plays cannot conceal the falling off in power and imagination.

With regard to the development of the different dramatic types, we have already noted that tragedy developed first; in Shakespeare all kinds received attention, tragedy most of all. In post-Shakespearian drama light comedy was a very popular species, partly because the tragic note of exalted pity had degenerated into melodrama and horrors.

A special word is perhaps necessary on the *masque*, which during this time had a brief but brilliant career. The masque is a short dramatic performance composed for some particular festive occasion, such as the marriage or majority of a great man's son; it is distinguished by ornate stage-setting, by lyrics, music, and dancing, and by allegorical characters. It finds a place in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and other plays; it is strongly developed in the works of Jonson, Fletcher, and other poets of the time; and it attains its climax during the next age in the *Comus* (1637) of Milton.

1.6.4 The Age of Milton:

There was decline and temporary collapse of drama in 1642. The plays of Massinger sustain the expiring spirit of the great Elizabethans; those of Ford follow the tragical school of Webster and Tourneur. Other playwrights are James Shirley (1596-1666), who wrote some pleasing comedies of London life, such as *The lady of Pleasure* (1635), and the feebler writers Suckling and Davenant.

1.6.5 The Age of Dryden:

During this age, the development of drama became evident in the form of heroic tragedy. The tragic faculty is weakening all through the period, even in comparison with the post-Shakespearian plays. Some of the significant heroic tragedies are Dryden's *All for Love* and Otway's *Venice Preserv'd*. Based on the theme of epics and love, such plays are written in rhyming pentameters couplets where characters are of almost superhuman stature.

In comedy the advance is noteworthy. The comedy of humours, popular during the time of Ben Johnson is now mostly replaced by the comedy of manners during the Age of Dryden. Comedy has acquired a new snap and glitter, and the almost universal medium is prose. Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700), Wycherley's *The Country-Wife* (1673), and Farquhar's *The Beaux Stratagem*(1707) are good examples of Comedy of Manners.

1.6.6 The Age of Pope:

Here there is almost a blank. The brilliant and exotic flower of Restoration comedy has withered, and nothing of any merit takes its place. In tragedy Addison's *Cato* is almost the only passable example. In comedy Steele's plays are a survival of the Restoration type, but they have a sentimental, didactic piety quite alien from their models. The only advance in the drama is shown in *The Beggar's Opera*, whose robust vitality, sprightly music, and charming songs make it stand alone in its generation.

1.6.7 The Return to Nature:

Drama was written as freely as ever, but rather as a form of literary exercise than as a serious attempt at creating a new dramatic standard. Tragedy almost monopolized the activities of the major poets. Of all the tragedies Shelley's *The Cenci* came first in power and simplicity. Byron's tragedies had little merit as dramas; and Wordsworth's *The Borderers* and Coleridge's *Remorse* added little to the fame of their authors. The comic spirit in drama was in abeyance. Shelley's *Oedipus Tyrannus*, or *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, is almost the only instance of it worth mention, and this was a poor specimen of that writer's creative power.

- **Check your progress 2**

Q.1 Answer the following questions

1. How did drama originate?

2. Write a brief note on Elizabethan Drama.

..

1.6.8 The Victorian Age:

Several of the major poets of the period wrote tragedy on the lines of the accepted models. Few of these attained to real distinction; they were rather the conscientious efforts of men who were striving to succeed in the impossible task of really reviving the poetical drama. Of them all,

Swinburne's tragedies, especially those concerned with Mary Queen of Scots, possess the greatest warmth and energy; and Browning's earlier plays, before he overdeveloped his style, have sincerity and sometimes real dramatic power. As for comedy, it was almost wholly neglected as a purely literary form.

A development to be noticed is the popularity of the dramatic monologue. In *Ulysses*, *Tithonus*, and other pieces Tennyson achieved some of his most successful results; and Browning's host of monologues, wide in range and striking in detail, are perhaps his greatest contribution to literature. The method common to this kind of monologue was to take some character and make him reveal his inmost self in his own words.

1.6.9 Modern English Drama:

English Drama during the Modernist Period (1845-1945 A.D.) can be categorized into three phases:

- The first and the earliest phase of Modernism in English Drama is marked by the plays of G.B. Shaw and John Galsworthy, which constitute the category of social drama modelled on the plays of Ibsen.
- The second and the middle phase of Modernist English drama comprises the plays of Irish movement contributed by some elites like Yeats. In this phase, the drama contained the spirit of nationalism.
- The third and the final phase include plays of T.S. Eliot and Christopher Fry. This phase saw the composition of Poetic Drama inspired by the earlier Elizabethan and Jacobean tradition.

Characteristics of Modern Drama:

- **Realism:** It was the most significant feature of this time. Dramatists of early Modern age were keen to capture realistic picture of life including social problems. Henrik Ibsen was the chief exponent of realistic drama. Dramatists of this time wrote Problem Plays, plays dealing with problems of marriage, justice, law, administration and strife between capital and labour.
- **Plays of Ideas:** Plays written during this period were more of ideas having less action. Dramatists wanted to bring reform in the society and they used plays as mediums to convey their ideas.
- **Irish Movement:** W.B. Yeats thought it important to revive Irish past through dramatic representation. With efforts of Yeats, J.M. Synge, Murrey and Lady Gregory, Irish revival which was known as Celtic revival. Abbey Theatre was established in Dublin, Ireland in 1904 and plays dealing with Irish folk tradition were performed there. Drama in hands of these dramatists ceased to be realistic and became an expression of hopes and aspirations of Irish peasantry.

1.6.10 Post-1920s English Drama:

The arrival of the cinema constituted a new threat to the theatre. Its precise effect on the older form is difficult to determine. Certainly it has become the entertainment for the masses. Theatre considered, and still considers cinema as an immensely powerful competitor. Along with this,

there was also the emergence of Radio and Television. All this affected the popularity of drama as a literary form. Few other characteristics are as follows:

- Decline in Realism
- The Revival of Poetic Drama
- Expressionism
- Experiments in Technique
- Complete Blackout after the World Wars
- Theatre of Absurd
- **Check your progress 3:**

Q.1 Fill in the gaps using appropriate options from the given below.

1. Drama is intended to be _____.
a. recited b. performed c. sung d. only read
2. The first and earliest form of drama was _____.
a. tragedy b. comedy c. tragic-comedy d. melodrama
3. Drama differs from novel. How?
a. Novel has a plot. b. Novel has characters.
c. Novel is self-contained. d. Novel has themes.
4. _____ is a significant characteristic of Modern drama.
a. Realism b. Romanticism c. Classicism d. Surrealism
5. There was temporary collapse of English drama in the year _____.
a. 1635 b. 1642 c. 1646 d. 1660
6. _____ developed after World War II.
a. Symbolism b. Theatre of the Absurd c. Abbey Theatre d. Expressionism
7. _____ is an element of Drama.
a. Plot b. Theme c. Narrative d. Imagery
8. Which period is known as the Golden period for English drama?
a. Age of Dryden b. Age of Pope c. Victorian Age d. Elizabethan Age
9. When was Abbey Theatre established?
a. 1904 b. 1907 c. 1910 d. 1918
10. *The Way of the World* is a famous comedy written by _____.
a. Dryden b. Wyckerly c. Farquhar d. Congreve

1.7 LET US SUM UP

After going through the meaning, origin and development of drama, we may say that drama is a composite art. It has its roots in ancient time. In course of time it has remarkably changed. The changes can be seen both in structure and theme of the plays. With the development of film industry, we can see a decline in theatrical activities. Now plays rather scripts are written for TV and films. But we still do have theatre companies and audiences who appreciate stage performances.

1.8 KEY WORDS

Comprehension	Thorough understanding, totality of intensions in a context given for discussion
Chorus	A group of singers distinct from the principal performers in a dramatic or poetical performance
Melodrama	Song-drama, a form of sensational drama
Monologue	A single person speaking alone with or without audience
Satyr	Man with horse's tails and ears
Personae	Characters in a drama

1.9 SUGGESTED BOOKS

- Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012.
- Cuddon, J.A. and Habib, M.A.R. *Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory*. Penguin Books, 2014.
- Albert, Edward. *History of English Literature*. Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Hudson, William H. *An Introduction to the Study of English Literature*. Maple Press, 2012.
- Jenkyns, Richard. *Classical Literature: A Pelican Introduction*. Penguin, 2015.

❖ Answers:

Check Your Progress 1

Answer:1 Drama is the form of composition designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors take the roles of the characters, perform the indicated actions, and utter the written dialogue. (The common alternative name for a dramatic composition is a play.)

Answer:2 There are six characteristics/elements of drama: Plot, Character, Thought, Diction, Music and Spectacle.

Answer:3 The novel is self-contained; that is, it provides within its own compass everything that the writer deemed necessary for the comprehension and enjoyment of his work. The drama, on the other hand, when it reaches us in the form of print, and when we read it as literature, in the same way as we read a novel, is not in this sense self-contained. A novelist can make the readers visualize each scene or incident through description, use of symbols and imagery etc. While a dramatist can't put everything in his text of drama, we can get the whole idea about it only through watching it performed.

- **Check your progress 2:**

Answer:1 The origins of Greek drama are obscure, but it seems to have grown out of choral performance. We have only the words of choral lyrics, but the Greek word *choros* (chorus) itself refers to dancing, and the original experience was a combination of movement, words and music.

Dramas at Athens were performed in festivals. At the biggest of these, the Great Dionysia, performances were spread over four days. The last part of it was devoted to comedy; for the festival's earlier part three playwrights were selected and each produced four plays which they directed themselves; three tragedies and a satyr play.

Answer:2 The opening of the Elizabethan period saw the drama struggling into maturity. The early type of the time was scholarly in tone and aristocratic in authorship. An example of the earliest type of playwright is Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke (1554-1628), who distinguished himself both as a dramatic and lyrical poet.

Next came the work of the university Wits, Peele, Greene, Lodge, Kyd, and, greatest of all, Marlowe. In their hands drama first began to realize its latent potentialities, and the exuberance and vitality which typify Elizabethan drama first made themselves felt.

To this stage succeeded that of Shakespeare, which covered approximately the years 1595 to 1615. Of this drama all we can say here is that it is the crown and flower of the Elizabethan literary achievement, and embodies almost the entire spirit both of drama and poetry. Tragedies, comedies, tragi-comedies, history plays and romances made this age rich.

Check your progress 3:

Q.1 Multiple Choice Questions:

1.(b) 2.(a) 3.(c) 4.(a) 5.(b) 6.(b) 7.(a) 8.(d) 9.(a) 10.(d)

:: STRUCTURE ::

- 2.0 Objectives**
- 2.1 Introduction**
- 2.2 Various Definitions of Drama**
 - **Check your progress 1:**
- 2.3 Chief Components of Drama**
 - 2.3.1 Plot**
 - 2.3.2 Character**
 - 2.3.3 Action**
 - 2.3.4 Theme**
 - 2.3.5 Music/Song**
 - 2.3.6 Dialogue**
 - 2.3.7 Setting**
 - 2.3.8 The Three Unities**
- **Check your progress 2**
- 2.4 Types of Drama**
- 2.5 Historical Perspective**
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up**
- 2.7 Key Words**
- 2.8 Books Suggested**
- ❖ **Answers**

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we shall be

- Familiar with the drama form, its components and the types of drama.

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Explain what the drama is
- Understand what goes into the making of a drama
- Identify how many types of drama are prevalent today
- Understand the historical background of the drama form

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The word drama is very much familiar with almost all. But, if we were to ask the layman what a drama is, perhaps, he/she would not be able to explain the word. However, a student of literature should be able to explain it well. In this unit we shall try to explain what a drama is, and what goes into making of a good drama and various types of the drama form. We shall also try to answer questions like: what is a drama? What are its main ingredients/components? How many types of drama are there? What is the difference between a play and a drama? How old is the form? How does it exist in the context of Indian literature? etc...

Moreover, we shall also make you familiar with the main characteristics of a drama that may help you in appreciating and analysing the drama that you read.

2.2 VARIOUS DEFINITIONS OF DRAMA

Some standard dictionaries explain drama thus:

“a composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character or to tell a story usually involving conflicts and emotions through action and dialogue for theatrical performance...”

(Merraim-Webster)

“a play for acting on stage or for broadcasting”

(DK Illustrated Oxford Dictionary)

How do literary theorists look at drama? To begin with, Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, should be considered the pioneer in elaborating the meaning of a drama. During his times the prevalent form of the drama was tragedy. Therefore, he has described tragedy, in his *Poetics* in the following manner:

“Tragedy is a [representation](#) of a serious, complete action which has magnitude, in embellished speech, with each of its elements [used] separately in the [various] parts [of the play] and [represented] by people acting and not by [narration](#), accomplishing by means of pity and [terror](#) the [catharsis](#) of such emotions.”

([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetics_\(Aristotle\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetics_(Aristotle)))

Dryden defines Drama as:

“Just and lively image of human nature, representing its passions and humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind.”

(<https://sites.google.com/site/nmeictproject/reflections/2-2-1-definition-of-drama>)

The students of literature may explore various definitions on their own and they need to understand finer points of the world of drama.

Did you come across any other dictionary meaning of a drama or a definition by any other author? If so, write your response here below:

- **Check your progress 1:**

Q.1 Answer the following questions in approximately 250 to 300 words.

1. What similarities do you find in the above given definitions?

2. What is Aristotle speaking about in his definition?

3. According to Dryden, what should be the function of a drama? What does a drama represent?

2.3 COMPONENTS OF DRAMA

Drama is, thus, a particular mode of fictional literature presented in a specific manner, with the help of the performances either in theatres or elsewhere. Now, let us think about how a drama is made or what goes into the making of a drama. You must have seen some performances on stage (or in a movie or TV programme). What do you see there? Some actors present themselves as particular characters. They present a story (fiction, with or without a message) through a closely-knit plot with the help of their actions and dialogues, as they come and go on and from the stage. They are dressed (mostly) in a typical costume suitable to their characters. Like stories, too, they have a suspense and conflict in them.

Thus, the chief components of drama that we come across are character, plot, action, conflict and dialogue. As all the literary artists write their genre, the dramatist prepares his script in dialogues with intermittent breaks and instructions for performers. Initially dramas were written in verse form. Therefore, music is also considered to be the important element. But as they progressed through centuries, the form has seen many changes evolving either in characters, plot construction diction etc. However, the form remained the same and its components, with little variations, have borne through rough and good times together and have

remained, more or less the same. Aristotle's components of a drama such as, plot, character, thought, diction, spectacle, and song, have been upheld by almost all. Therefore, taking cue from the old masters let us discuss all of them, besides a few others at length.

2.3.1 Plot:

The plot in a drama is plan of action (design or scheme of things to tell a story) or arrangement of events in such a manner so that interest of the spectators and readers, loosely speaking. Well-knit story always sustains interest. Clumsily arranged events in the story, howsoever great, may not attract the attention of the readers. A good author always *conspires* to tell the secret in the end of the story. So, in a way, the writer or the dramatist is a conspirator.

2.3.2 Character:

Dramatis Personae, or (the list of) characters in a drama, is a typical practice every dramatist undertakes to enlist when presenting his/her drama to the readers or spectators. These personalities or characters make the stage alive with performances. Characters are the ones who represent the persons there in the minds of the dramatists. They may be belonging to a class of people, or, typically, to individuals for that matter. After all, characters are performers to carry out the fictional varieties the dramatist wants to convey. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus rightly said, "Character is destiny." What becomes of a person is mostly because his or her actions in relations to other characters in life. Drama is just a representation of life. So are the characters.

2.3.3 Action:

A drama is a presentation of people/characters in action. The term play itself suggests some kind of action in it. Here, the action does not only mean physical action but it also involves the action from 'within'. The inner working of a character is also put on stage through various techniques like soliloquy, monologue, declamation etc. Physical action is also very important as it takes the larger share of actors performing on the stage. However, the modern-day drama has come up with many experimental techniques. The theatre of the absurd is one such thing.

2.3.4 Theme:

The central idea or a leitmotif is the theme in a drama. Tragedies, comedies and other dramatic renderings are often propelled by some subject matter that may appeal to the reader or the spectator. However, a good dramatist leaves the theme to be interpreted by the respective audience. The direct theme may not carry that much weight as would a theme interwoven with other dramatic art and performance. Many times it becomes interesting to watch what the readers think the theme to be and how the treatment of the subject matter may change his/her final verdict about theme.

2.3.5 Music/Song:

To heighten the dramatic effect the dramatists have been using this element in drama lavishly. The Greek masters and the subsequent writers all have effectively used music or songs in their plays. Shakespeare became popular because of his love songs and music. Our own Bollywood movies are power packed drama of music and songs combined. The melancholy and the happy, both get representation in drama.

2.3.6 Dialogue:

Conversations between characters/actors on the stage are dialogues. This becomes a medium for the author to pass on his idea/theme/subject-matter to the reader. The dialogue exposes a character and at the same time it also tells us what a character feels or wants others to feel is often conveyed through dialogues. The writer makes use of realistic conversational styles to make it look authentic. Sometimes slangs and swear words also take place in modern day drama. Spoken words propel us to actions. So, the words used on stage are also the vehicle for actions by the characters. A lot depends how a writer chooses his words. The dialogue should show us the tension/feelings/situations in the drama instead of telling us about. Sometimes poetry and songs are also incorporated in the drama to make the work more effective or sometimes as a means to give a breather to the characters on the stage.

2.3.7 Setting:

Setting refers to the arrangement on the stage or off the stage whether the drama is to be performed or not. The writer normally suggests the properties to be brought on the stage and how and when they should be displayed. At the same time, each and everything that is shown on the stage must have the important use in context of the drama. If there is a window displayed on the stage, it is argued, that it should have a purpose. The play requires many-fold preparations beforehand. The setting thus becomes an important element of the drama.

2.3.8 The Three Unities:

Every dramatist has to consider these elements of drama i.e. three unities, such as the unities of time, place and action (movement). These classical unities became guiding principles for the dramatists following Aristotelian and post-Aristotle theories of drama. They may be explained thus:

- **The unity of Time:** A play should have a time-frame of a day so that reader/spectator does not have to time-travel with the story of the drama as it may happen in a story or a novel.
- **The unity of Place:** Geographically speaking, the play should be performable within one single place requiring not many changes of place, so that **Settings** are not disturbed much.
- **The unity of Action:** A play should have a singular action culminating into a whole story that avoids sub-plots. The Unity of Action limits the supposed action to a single set of incidents which are

related as cause and effect, "having a beginning, middle, and an end." No scene is to be included that does not advance the plot directly. No subplots, no characters who do not advance the action. (<https://sites.google.com/site/nmeictproject/home/unity-of-action>)

The students of this unit must study, in detail, these unities and how the ancient and the modern-day drama differ in their treatment of applying these unities. There have been many experiments going on in the modern-day drama, which, incidentally, defy all the classical rules of writing drama.

• **Check your progress 2:**

Q.1 Answer the following questions.

1. Enlist the six main components of a drama and describe them in one sentence each

2. Why, do you think, setting is important in a drama?

3. Explain, in your own words, the three unities in a drama.

Q.2 State whether following statements are true or false in the context of the components of drama as described above.

1. The components of a drama have undergone many changes since the ancient times.
2. The plot is to generate interest in the story or suspense of a drama.
3. There can be a play/drama without the element of characters.
4. A play comprising multiple sub-plays is considered a good play.
5. *Settings* is just the other name of stage decorations.
6. Addressing the ills of society can be a theme of the drama.

2.4 TYPES OF DRAMA

Though many types of drama exist today, previously, there were, largely, two types i.e. Tragedy and Comedy, depending on the treatment of the theme. The Greek tragedies and Roman comedies are most popular examples of the types available from our ancient masters. The formation of the drama chiefly consisted of five or three acts (parts) and the drama till the Shakespearean age was written in verse. The prose drama is the relatively a modern variant.

Tragedy is a play dealing with the serious themes which cause distress, destruction, and devastation either in the life of a (important) person or the state. Again, we need to remember the Greek masters who pioneered in writing of the tragedies and of course, Shakespeare, who, in his turn culminated the tragedy to new heights. There were gripping tragedies written during ancient and medieval times. In contemporary time period, the shift that is visible in tragedy is in the treatment of the subject. The common man and mundane things have become the subjects of tragedy on place of an important or stately persona in contemporary tragedies.

Comedy, the second type here, is just opposite to what we have said about tragedies. Its principle function is to make the audience laugh. The trivialities and follies of a man are presented in a manner which is not serious. World famous playwright Shakespeare was not just a known figure for tragedies but also wrote some of the best comedies ever.

Tragicomedy is the third type of drama known to the world. As the name suggests, it is a queer mixture of serious and light elements, and all the early masters of this genre have attempted this type, as the life is not only a matter serious nor it is made only of laughter.

Farce, Melodrama, Musical Play, Kabuki, Kitchen Sink, Kathakali, Morality Play, Mystery Play, Shadow Play, Theatre of the Absurd, Bhavai and Street Theatre among many others, are the types of plays very famous around the globe, and the students need to study them as per their choice.

2.5 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The western world welcomed the drama through their Greek and Roman masters. It was Aristotle first, who differentiated between epic and lyrics from the drama genre in his *Poetics*. This work is considered to be the first ever systematic work for the drama form, which was primarily divided in two masks; namely, tragedy and comedy. The Roman classical drama followed the footsteps of its predecessor, i.e. the Greek drama (mostly, rendered into a comic genre). Plautus and Terence pioneered the Roman classical comedies followed by tragedians Quintus Ennius, Marcus Pacuvius, and Lucius Accius. From among the tragedians, the

best known is the work of Seneca, and his *Phaedra* was based on Euripides' *Hippolytus*.

The Church also helped in spreading and popularising the drama form as it acquired the status of being a Moral Play, the favourite medium for spreading the messages of the church in the whole of Europe, and it prepared the base of early Elizabethan English drama. The 16th and 17th centuries saw the rise of English drama with the playwrights like all-time master Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Christopher Marlow among others. Shakespeare indirectly tells us, in one of his plays, that a drama is a "tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." The Restoration comedy or the Comedy of Manners was also on the rise during this period magnifying social ills and taboos in the manner suited to a satirist or a caricaturist. The modern and the post-modern drama had a novel idea to propagate, i.e. the drama of the absurd or a realist or a modernist.

The rise of the drama right from the time of its Greek masters till date may have a kind of interrelatedness or the otherwise, a student must study the history of the drama in its totality to develop the understanding of the form in its entirety.

2.6 LET US SUM UP

In the above discussion about the drama form, you could have noticed the following:

- The discussion about drama as a literary genre
- Various definitions of a drama
- Various dictionary meanings of the form
- The components or elements like plot, character, theme, music and dialogue, among others, which go into the making of a drama and the three unities to be observed by the dramatists
- Tragedy, Comedy and Tragicomedy and many other types of drama as propagated by the classicists and neo-classicists as well as the modern-day play-writes, and
- The historical perspective looking into the background of the drama form.

2.7 KEY WORDS

Drama	In Greek the term meant simply to act or perform, and the definition is still valid; all others are derivative and of limited historical significance.
Comedy	It arouses and vicariously satisfies the human instinct for mischief. The playing of tricks on unsuspecting victims, whether by other characters (e.g. Palaestrio in Plautus's <i>Miles Gloriosus</i>) or quirks of chance (e.g. Goldoni's <i>I due Gemelli veneziani</i>) or both, recurs continually in comedy.
Subplot	A separate storyline or strand of narrative that runs alongside the main plot

2.8 BOOKS SUGGESTED

- Nicoll, Allardyce. *British Drama*. New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1978. Print.
- Kennedy, Dennis (Edt.). *The Oxford Companion to Theatre and Performance* London: OUP, 2011. Print.
- Abrams, M H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999. Print.

Answers:

Check your progress 2:

Q.2 False, True, False, False, False, True

:: STRUCTURE ::

- 3.0 Objectives**
- 3.1 Introduction**
- 3.2 History and Development of English Drama**
 - 3.2.1 Origin of the English Drama**
 - **Check Your Progress – 1**
 - 3.2.2 The Elizabethan Drama**
 - **Check Your Progress – 2**
- 3.3 Life and Works of Shakespeare**
 - **Check Your Progress – 3**
- 3.4 Let Us Sum Up**
- 3.5 Key Words**
- 3.6 Books Suggested**
 - **Answer**

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall

- discuss history and development of English Drama in brief and
- study life and works of Shakespeare.

On completing this Unit, you should be able to

- know the history and development of English Drama in brief and
- know life and works of Shakespeare in brief.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Performing Arts is one of the oldest forms of human entertainment. In fact, the art of performing plays is older than the written literature. The history of performing arts, also known as ‘drama’, is inseparable from the history of religion around the world. In fact, the origin of performing arts, in general, is originated from the religious dispositions of mankind. English drama is also originated from ancient Greek and Roman drama, which were also almost always concerned with some religious

ceremonies or others. From religious preaching, dramas started getting performed in the marketplaces as a form of entertainment and indirect moral teaching as well. The art of composing and performing dramas on stage is known as 'Dramaturgy'. There are a number of authors, composers and performers around the world who developed the form of drama. Elizabethan Age in 16th century England is considered to be a turning point in the development of English Drama. William Shakespeare is one of the most notable authors, among others of the Elizabethan Age, who developed English Literature and Language in the Western world. His contribution to the English language in general and English Drama Writing, in particular, is unique and unmatched. William Shakespeare is a significant chapter in the history and development of English Dramaturgy who made it available to the masses. In the present chapter, we are going to study the history and development of English Drama in the first half of the Unit. In the second half of the Unit, we are going to discuss the life and works of William Shakespeare.

3.2 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH DRAMA

3.2.1 Origin of the English Drama:

The term 'drama' can be broadly defined as a piece of writing that tells a story and is performed on a stage. It is derived from the Latin term 'dramat', which meant 'deed' or 'to do'. W. J. Long defined drama as 'an old story...put into action by living performance'. Hence, drama is an artistic composition designed to be performed by actors on a stage in front of a live audience. It is, thus, a performing art. There are many theories of the origin of English Drama. Many historians believe that drama came to England with Norman Conquest during the 11th century. At the same time, others believe that it was Roman who brought drama and theatre with them. They had established a huge amphitheatre for the performance of the plays. However, when Roman's left England, they took theatre also with them.

In England, drama developed prominently with the Church as the part of religious services. Thus, the development of drama has a strong religious connection. However, the Latin Church had opposed Roman theatre and advocated repressing it for many reasons. It is only after the 10th century that the Church began to use dramatic elements as part of its services. Nevertheless, these performances were strictly limited to preaching and didactic themes. One of the oldest known church dramas was *Quem Quarritis*. The drama dealt with the conversion of three Marys and an angel at the empty tomb of Christ. The entire drama was limited to four Latin sentences in the form of questions and answers, including the title of the drama: *Quem Quarritis*, which literally means – 'whom are you seeking?' These Latin sentences were adapted and performed at the Church by the clergy in quite a straightforward manner. Gradually this drama was elaborated, and more details were added to it. These dramas

were called liturgical dramas. These dramas-cum stories taken directly from scripture were performed inside some churches by the clergy in the Latin language.

Later on, the liturgical drama Miracle and Mystery plays came into existence. In France, in Miracle plays, the lives of the saints were represented, whereas in Mystery plays, any scenes used to be adapted from the scripture and performed. However, in England, there was no such distinction between these two kinds of play.

In the later stage, the English drama evolved more towards artistic performance and less towards a moral point of view. In this stage, the English drama was influenced by Greek and classical Roman drama. In 1556, Nicholas Udall wrote *Ralph Roister Doister*, which is considered to be the first English Comedy. It was divided into acts and scenes and was written in rhyming couplets. Most English comedies followed the same pattern in the later period. Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton wrote the first English tragedy *Gorboduc* around 1562. It was also divided into acts and scenes. Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton had written the play in the blank verse, which was followed by their contemporaries and predecessors. The English drama flourished immensely during the reign of Queen Elizabeth in the 15th century. Therefore, the Elizabethan period was considered to be the golden period of English literature in general and English drama in particular.

• **Check Your Progress : 1**

Q.1 State whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE:

1. English dramas originally were religious in nature and context.
 1. Latin Church always supported the performance of drama.
 2. Initially, the plays were performed by the clergy inside the Church.
 3. English drama started becoming more lenient towards morality under the Greek and Roman influence.
 4. English drama flourished greatly during the period of Queen Elizabeth.

Q.2 Match A with B.

- A**
1. *Gorboduc*
 2. *Quem Quarritis* of Saints
 3. *Ralph Roister Doister*
 4. Mystery Plays
 5. Miracle Plays

- B**
- a) a play adapted from scriptures
 - b) a play based on the lives of Saints
 - c) the first English tragedy
 - d) the first English Comedy
 - e) the liturgical drama

3.2.2 The Elizabethan Drama

As discussed in the previous section, Elizabethan Age was the Golden Period for English Drama. Queen Elizabeth ruled England and Ireland from 1558 to 1603. This period was also referred to as European Renaissance, where Europeans were breaking the traditional restrictions enforced by the mediaeval Church. The great thinkers of the time were fearlessly turning away from Church and shifting towards mankind in an enormous humanistic movement. This humanitarian approach to life led to a novel flowering in every area of human efforts such as art, music, architecture, religion, science, philosophy and literature.

The Renaissance influence was spread across Europe but had different flowering in the different European cultures. In Germany, it was manifested in religion and philosophy, whereas in Italy, it was expressed in the forms of art, architecture and sculpture. However, in England, it was seen greatly voiced through drama. Throughout the Middle Ages, English drama was exclusively religious and didactic in nature and theme. Miracle Plays were adapted from the Biblical stories and lives of the saints that were performed in and around the Church. They were primarily concerned with the divided life and not the ordinary lives of the people.

However, by the time the Elizabethan era came to an end, there were as many as twenty theatres in London. All theatre used to house the plays that were quite worldly in nature and theme concerning the lives of common people. Thus, there was a thorough revolution in theatre. People started going to the theatre for seeing the reflection of their lives and for laughing and crying and not for receiving any moral or religious lessons. This new Elizabethan theatre and drama attracted many talented writers who tried their luck and started getting names and fame. Many writers, like Shakespeare, also became rich. It was for the first time that human life and experience were presented on stage. It was also for the first time that, unlike the great Greek godlike heroes, the heroes of the Elizabethan plays were more human characters with human qualities such as hate, anger, jealousy and so on. And unlike the great Greek tragedy where the fall of the hero was caused by fate, the fall of the Elizabethan hero was due to a flaw in their character. Thus, the rise and fall of an Elizabethan tragic hero are more human and realistic compared to its Greek counterpart. Dr Faustus, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* are some of the immortal Elizabethan heroes created by Christopher Marlow and William Shakespeare. Although most of the Elizabethan plays have primary pro-Christian supposition of the time, they all have an underlying secular humanitarian spirit of the Renaissance period.

As Elizabethan drama was more leaning towards people than God, there can be seen a lot of emphasis on humour. Elizabethan comedies, too, were based on Greek comedies. However, they were modified by William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson. It should be noted here that Greek

tragedies strictly consisted of tragic elements, and comedies strictly consisted of comic elements. In Elizabethan tragedies, especially of Shakespeare, there were comic elements even in the gloomiest tragedies, such as *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello* or *Kind Lear*. On the other hand, his comedies too consist of tragic undertone in it, for example, his *As you Like It*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*. In fact, the credit of inventing a blended form of drama goes to Shakespeare. This blended form of drama was condemned by contemporary critics as a corrupt form of art fit only for the pit class. Nevertheless, his predecessors followed Shakespeare greatly and regarded him as an immense source of inspiration.

• **Check Your Progress: 2**

Q.1 Answer the following questions in brief:

1) What were the salient characteristics of the Elizabethan Age?

2) Which are major Shakespearean tragedies and comedies?

3) How were Greek dramas different from Elizabethan dramas?

1.3 LIFE AND WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Elizabethan age is considered to be the most prolific period of English literature in general and English drama in particular. As discussed in the previous chapter, Shakespeare has occupied a unique position in the Elizabethan period, and therefore the period is also known as the Shakespearean Age. There are other Western poets and novelists such as Homer, Dante, Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens, who also became famous internationally. Nevertheless, there is no literary artist whose name and fame could be compared to Shakespeare. There are dramatists who were, in fact, more popular during their own time but later on, their popularity die out with the passing of time. Shakespeare's contemporary, Ben Johnson, for example, was more popular than Shakespeare himself.

But there are not dramatists whose plays are still today read, performed and adapted in more than one country and in more than one language. Thus, it has turned out to be true what Ben Jonson had stated about Shakespeare that he “was not of an age, but for all time.”

Shakespeare was born in the year 1564 at Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England. He had been an actor, poet and dramatist during his long and diverse career. Shakespeare did not receive any formal education beyond school. He wrote more than 150 sonnets and around 37 plays during his lifetime. His plays consist of comedies (also known as tragic-comedies), tragedies, and history plays. Some of his famous history plays include *Henry VI - Part I, II and III* (1592), *Henry V* (1598), *Richard III* (1592), *Richard II* (1595) and *King John* (1595-96). Some of his most popular comedies include *The Comedy of Errors* (1594), *Love's Labour's Lost* (1594-95), *Romeo and Juliet* (1595), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595-96), *The Merchant of Venice* (1596-97), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597-98), *Much Ado About Nothing* (1598), *As You Like It* (1599-1600), *Twelfth Night, or What You Will* (1601), *Troilus and Cressida* (1602), *Measure for Measure* (1601), *All's Well that Ends Well* (1604-05). At the same time, his most popular tragedies of all time include *Hamlet* (1600-01), *Othello* (1603-04), *Timon of Athens* (1605), *King Lear* (1605-06) and *Macbeth* (1606). Thus, we can see he was extremely productive as a dramatist and a sonneteer.

At the age of 18, Shakespeare was married to Anne Hathaway, who was eight years elder to him in the year 1582. They had a daughter Susanna and two – twin sons Hammet and Judith. Around 1590, he shifted to England and started working as an actor initially. Within one decade he became every popular and successful dramatist of his time. He received a severe blow in his personal life when his 11 years son Hammet died. He spends his later life at his native Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, England. He died in the year 1616. His birth and death anniversary falls on the same day that is 23 April. Years after his death, his friends published the *First Folio* in 1623, the first authorized collection of his works which is one of the main sources for the texts of his plays.

Though William Shakespeare was writing 16th century England, his plays have been translated, adapted and performed in almost all languages and countries of the world. His popularity has kept on increasing years and centuries after his death. It is due to the fact that his works appeal to all kinds of masses of all time around the world.

• Check Your Progress : 3

Q.1 State whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':

- 1) Shakespeare was a university graduate and a scholar.
- 2) We can say Shakespeare was quite productive during his career.
- 3) Ben Jonson was not as popular as Shakespeare during their time.
- 4) Shakespeare got married to Anne Hathaway, who was eight years younger than him.
- 5) Shakespeare's date of birth and death are the same.

- 6) Apart from plays, Shakespeare wrote novels and short stories.
- 7) Shakespeare's plays include comedies, tragedies, and history plays.
- 8) Ben Jonson praised Shakespeare by calling him 'not of an age, but for all time'.
- 9) Shakespeare wrote more than 150 sonnets.
- 10) Anne Hathaway published the collection of Shakespeare in the *Frist Folio* in 1623.

3.4 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, you have learnt

- about the history and development of English Drama in brief and
- about life and works of Shakespeare in brief.

3.5 Key Words

Clergy	people such as priests who are the leaders of religion and who perform religious services, particularly in Church
Comedy	a play that is meant to make people laugh and that has a happy ending
Conquer	to take control of a country, city etc. through the use of force
Drama	a piece of writing that tells a story and is meant to be performed on a stage
Dramaturgy	the art and technique of composing a drama and theatrical representation
Medieval	of or related to the Middle Ages
Middle Age	the period of European history from about AD 500 to about 1500
Norman	one of the people from northern Europe and France who conquered England in 1066
Norman Conquest	conquering of England by Norman people in 1066
Novel	a long written story usually about imaginary characters and events
Predecessor	someone of something that comes before something else
Prose	writing that is not poetry
Protagonist	the main character in a novel, play, film etc.
Renaissance	the period of European history between the 14 th and 17 th centuries when there was a new interest in science and in ancient art and literature, especially in Italy
Tragedy	a play that is serious in nature and theme and has a sad ending (such as the death of the main character/s)
Tragic Verse	comedy: a play that has both tragic and comic element writing in which words are arranged in a rhythmic pattern; a part of a poem or song

3.6 BOOKS SUGGESTED

- Abrams, M H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999. Print.
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- Hudson, W. H. *An Outline of English Literature*. New Delhi: Rupa Publication, 2015. Print.

❖ ANSWERS:

- **Check Your Progress – 1**

State whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE:

1.5.1.1 English dramas originally were religious in nature and context.

TRUE

1.5.1.2 Latin Church always supported the performance of drama.

FALSE

1.5.1.3 Initially, the plays were performed by the clergy inside the Church. **TRUE**

1.5.1.4 English drama started becoming more lenient towards morality under the Greek and Roman influence. **FALSE**

1.5.1.5 English drama flourished greatly during the period of Queen Elizabeth. **TRUE**

Join A with B:

A

1. *Gorboduc*
2. *Quem Quarritus*
3. *Ralph Roister Doister*
4. Mystery Plays
5. Miracle Plays of Saints

B

- a) the first English tragedy
- b) the liturgical drama
- c) the first English Comedy
- d) a play adapted from scriptures
- e) a play based on the lives of Saints

- **Check Your Progress – 2**

Answer the following questions in brief:

1) What were the salient characteristics of the Elizabethan Age?

Answer: Elizabethan Age was the Golden Period for English Drama. This period was also referred to as European Renaissance, where Europeans were breaking the traditional restrictions enforced by the mediaeval Church. The great thinkers of the time were fearlessly turning away from Church and shifting towards mankind in an enormous humanistic movement. This humanitarian approach to life led to a novel flowering in every area of human efforts such as art, music, architecture, religion, science, philosophy and literature. Thus, Elizabethan Age marks the new beginning for humanism, and more and more emphasis is given to mankind than the Church and religion. All forms of literature in general and drama in particular flourished.

2) Which are the major Shakespearean tragedies and comedies?

Answer: Shakespeare's major tragedies are *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *King Lear*. At the same time, his major comedies are *As you Like It*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest*.

3) How were Greek dramas different from Elizabethan dramas?

Answer: Greek tragedies were strictly consisting of tragic elements, and comedies were strictly consisting of comic elements. In Elizabethan tragedies, especially of Shakespeare, there were comic elements even in the gloomiest tragedies and comedies consist of tragic undertone in it.

• **Check Your Progress – 3**

State whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':

- 1) Shakespeare was a university graduate and a scholar. **False**
- 2) We can say Shakespeare was quite productive during his career. **True**
- 3) Ben Jonson was not as popular as Shakespeare during their time. **False**
- 4) Shakespeare got married to Anne Hathaway, who was eight years younger than him. **False**
- 5) Shakespeare's date of birth and death are the same. **True**
- 6) Apart from plays, Shakespeare wrote novels and short stories. **False**
- 7) Shakespeare's plays include comedies, tragedies, and history plays. **True**
- 8) Ben Jonson praised Shakespeare by calling him 'not of an age, but for all time'. **True**
- 9) Shakespeare wrote more than 150 sonnets. **True**
- 10) Anne Hathaway published the collection of Shakespeare in the *Frist Folio* in 1623. **False**

:: STRUCTURE ::

- 4.0 Objectives**
- 4.1 Introduction**
- 4.2 *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare**
 - 4.2.1 Sources of *As You Like It***
 - **Check Your Progress – 1**
 - 4.2.2 Setting and Themes of *As You Like It***
 - **Check Your Progress – 2**
 - 4.2.3 Plot Construction of *As You Like It***
 - **Check Your Progress – 3**
 - 4.2.4 Characters of *As You Like It***
 - **Check Your Progress – 4**
 - 4.2.5 Style and Language of *As You Like It***
 - **Check Your Progress – 5**
- 4.3 Let Us Sum Up**
- 4.4 Key Words**
- 4.5 Books Suggested**
 - ❖ **Answer**

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall

- Study the plot and theme of the play *As You Like It*
- Study the characters, language and style of the play *As You Like It*.

On completing this unit, you should be able to

- know the plot and theme of *As You Like It* and
- the characters, language and style of *As You Like It*.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the previous unit, Elizabethan Age was a golden period for English plays. English Literature owes a lot to Elizabethan Age as it has provided great literary heritage for the following generation. Along with others, William Shakespeare too was a gift of the Elizabethan Age not only to English literature but to the world. William Shakespeare was one of the most prominent contributors to the English language and literature. In the previous unit, we had also discussed his life and works along with a brief history of English drama. In this chapter, we are going to study one of the plays of Shakespeare, namely *As You Like It* (1599). It is one of the finest plays by William Shakespeare. It has some of the most memorable characters, speeches, themes etc. The play has been performed, adapted and translated into many languages and countries around the world. In this unit, we will study the characters, theme, plot and style of the play.

4.2 AS YOU LIKE IT BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

4.2.1 Sources of *As You Like It*

As You Like It was written by William Shakespeare somewhere around 1599, but it was not published until 1623 in the *First Folio*. It is a pastoral comedy that was quite popular during the Elizabethan period. Whether the play was performed in England or not is not clear. However, after 1603 it started getting performed at various stages such as Wilton House, among others. *As You Like It* depicts the adventures of its heroine Rosalind runs away from the persecution of her uncle's court. She takes shelter in the Forest of Arden with her cousin Celia. In the forest, both the sisters come across a variety of extraordinary and enchanted characters. After a series of ups and downs in the play, both Rosalind and Celia eventually find their love in the Forest of Arden.

William Shakespeare is known to be a plagiarist who gets inspiration from a variety of his predecessors and contemporaries as well. However, it is interesting to note that he improvised the original sources beyond recognition. *As You Like It* was also not any exception in it. The story and plot of *As You Like It* was almost entirely taken from the popular work of Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* (1590). Shakespeare added a wide range of dramatic characters in the play, which was not there in the original work. Further, Shakespeare also added wit and humour to the play as well which is his unique contribution to the English language. The play offered a wide range of Shakespearean poetic language and love poetry. The play depicted a marvellous comedy on love and life with intertwined narratives with a variety of elements. *As You Like It* offers a wide range of buffets to its viewers to pick and choose from, and thus, it stands by its title. Although the play is adapted from an older story, it offers a whole

new perspective to the plot and story with its freshness and spontaneity. Shakespeare has changed the original story to another level and elevated it beyond recognition with his unique poetic treatment.

• **Check Your Progress – 1**

Q.1 State whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':

1. *As You Like It* was originally written in 1623 by William Shakespeare.
2. Shakespeare took the story and plot of *As You Like It* from Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde*.
3. Rosalind and Celia escaped to an island for their shelter.
4. Unique freshness, loving poetry and spontaneity are some of the features of *As You Like*.
5. Rosalind and Celia met many enchanting characters in the Forest of Arden.

4.2.2 Setting and Themes of *As You Like It*

As You Like It is also entitled as a pastoral comedy because Shakespeare has employed the traditional elements of pastoral literature quite popular during the Elizabethan Period. Pastoral literature has its origin in the third century BC. In typical pastoral literature, an enchanted world is created by the author with mysterious elements in it. The world of a pastoral story is usually created in stark contrast with the real world. The characters of a pastoral story seek refuge in such an enchanted world from real-life fears, anxieties, uncertainties, and tensions. They are transported into some imagined, mythical place such as an island or forest where peace, endurance, satisfaction, and fulfilment are prevailing. In every age, some unique manners or devices are invented to describe their lost happiness. Usually, such devices are found in some far-removed land away from the everyday existence of ordinary human life. The pastoral was one such device identified and practised in late sixteenth-century England.

In a pastoral setting, some mythic and lost world is depicted as a humble, rural atmosphere that houses desirable and honest people. Hence, a typical pastoral setting has two contrasting worlds: a real and world of insecurity, deception and disloyalty, and another world is a mythical world where the lost innocence, loyalty and simplicity are found. *As You Like It* is a typical pastoral story that puts forward two contrasting worlds. The harsh real world is represented by the court of Duke Frederick and Oliver. Rosalind runs away from the persecution of her uncle's court to the forest. Here, the rural and mythical world is represented by the Forest of Arden, where Rosalind takes shelter with her cousin sister Celia. The court is depicted as a natural habitat of immoral and degenerated men such as Duke Frederick and Oliver. It is interesting to note that the gentle Duke Orlando is banished from the court, whereas Rosalind and Celia had to escape to save themselves from the persecution of the court. All these gentle folks have gone away from the court who used to once reside

there. Thus, the court is depicted as a natural home of corrupt and ruthless people. On the other hand, the Forest of Arden stands for an abode for the innocent and gentle folks.

The theme of a story means its underlying idea or a message that an author wants to convey to the readers or the viewers. A theme of a novel, play, short story or poem is that critical belief or understanding of life that the author attempts to convey. Usually, this belief, idea or understanding of an author transcends the socio-cultural barriers. In *As You Like It*, Shakespeare wants to convey various themes such as love, usurpation of justice, court life and country life and above all, the theme of forgiveness or reconciliation. We shall see these themes in the following section.

Love is the central theme of most of Shakespeare's romantic comedies. *As You Like It* is not an exception as per the tradition of a romantic comedy, *As You Like It* depicts a series of parallel love stories in their varied forms. As common in many Shakespearean romantic comedies, in many of the love stories, lovers instantly fall in love with their first meeting. Thus, this theme of 'love at first sight' can be seen in the love stories of Rosalind and Orlando, Celia and Oliver, and also in Phebe and Ganymede. On the other hand, Shakespeare presented a parody of romantic love with the love story of Audrey and Touchstone. Another form of a bond of love is shown between women, as in the profound understanding between Rosalind and Celia.

Usurpation of justice is yet another common theme in Shakespearean comedies. This is also one of the significant themes of *As You Like It*. The new Duke Frederick takes away his position from his elder brother Duke Senior. Oliver, on the other hand, treats his younger brother Orlando with similar injustice and compel him to seek his fortune somewhere else. Thus, both Senior Duke and Orlando have to take refuge in the forest. It is through nature that justice is restored in a mysterious way.

Court life and country life are compared in *As You Like It*, and country life is shown to better place to be. Life in the country is celebrated in most parts of the play. The people ruled by the court of Duke Frederick undergo the fears of capricious injustice and even death threats. In the second Act, the first scene, the courtiers who followed the old duke into forced exile feel liberated in the 'desert city' in the forest despite the discomfort of the forest. This is in stark contrast with the comfortable but unjust court life. In a conversation between the court jester Touchstone and a shepherd, Corin tries to establish that satisfaction and peace of mind can be found in the country life and not in the perfumed, mannered life at court. Thus, the play highlights two contrasting worlds of court and country life where the county of forest life is highlighted to be superior. Finally, forgiveness and reconciliation are two of the most common themes in Shakespearean comedies. *As You Like It* depicts the theme of usurpation and injustice of the property of the other that provides the

rising action. However, as a comedy has to end happiness and reconciliation, both Senior Duke and Orlando are served justice as Duke Frederick and Oliver undergoes the change of heart. Both Senior Duke and Orlando forgive their brothers, and thus, reconciliation is restored. Thus, the play ends happily, and celebration and joy prevail.

- **Check Your Progress – 2**

Q.1 Answer the following questions in brief:

1) What is the setting of the play *As You Like It*?

2) What are the characteristics of a typical pastoral story?

3) What are the major themes of *As You Like It*?

4.2.3 Plot Construction of *As You Like It*

The plot is some logical sequence or structure given to the events of the narrative in a story. Usually, the author conceived the plot of his story in very simple terms, a sentence that encompasses the entire canvass of the narrative: for example, the plot of *Christmas Carol* (1843) of Charles Dickens can be described as “a misanthrope is reformed through certain magical visitations on Christmas Eve,” or the plot of Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) can be conceived as “a young couple destined to be married have first to overcome the barriers of pride and prejudice.” The plot of *As You Like It* has two parallel stories running. The first story is of Oliver and his brother Orlando and the second of a Senior Duke and his brother Fredrick. In both the stories, a brother is ill-treated by his own brother. When Oliver inherits the property after the death of his father, he kept his brother Orlando uneducated and bereft of any manners and training befitting to a gentleman. Orlando leaves the court and starts living in the Forest Arden. On the other hand, Fredrick usurps the court of Senior Duke and compels him to exile to the Forest Arden. In order to ensure safety, Rosalind disguised as a young man and assumed the name Ganymede and Celia disguised as a common shepherdess. Nevertheless, Fredric allows Rosalind, the daughter of Senior Duke, to stay in the court, avowing to the bond she has with his own daughter Celia. However, later

he changed his mind and banished Rosalind from the court and hence, Rosalind also takes refuge in the Forest Arden. Thus, three parties: first, Senior Duke and his loyal courtiers, second, Rosalind, Celia along with a court jester Touchstone and third Orlando started living in the forest. During the course of time, a series of couples fall in love that includes Rosalind and Orlando, Celia and Oliver, Phoebe and Silvis and last but not least, Audrey and Touchstone. Oliver heart changes as he meets a hermit and gives the Senior Duke his through the back. Oliver, too realizes his mistake and welcomes his brother Orlando to the court. Thus, the play comes to an end with forgiveness and reconciliation.

- **Check Your Progress – 3**

Q.1 State whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':

1. *Oliver treats his brother fairly after the death of his father.*
2. Fredrick usurps the throne of his brother Senior Duke.
3. Rosalind and Celia are real sisters.
4. Celia disguised as a young man to ensure safety in the forest.
5. Fredrick's heart changes as he meets a hermit.

4.2.4 Characters of *As You Like It*

Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of novels: 'novel of character' and 'novel of incident'. The novel of incident deals with the external conflict of the characters, whereas the novel of character deals with the internal conflict, dilemma struggle and ultimate enrichment of a character. The novel of character is therefore considered to be of greater value compared to that of an incident. The portrayal of vivid characters and their development is considered to be of higher-order writing skills in the world of fiction. According to E. M. Foster, there are two types of characters, namely 'round' and 'flat'. Round characters are the ones that show transformation in their personality and way of thinking. They may show a transformation from good to bad or bad to good. These round characters are also known as 'complex' or 'dynamic' characters. On the other hand, 'flat' characters remain unchanged and unmoved throughout the narrative. They undergo all the situations and hardships without displaying any change in their personality. If they are good, they remain good throughout the narrative, and if they are bad or below average, opportunist or any other type, they remain as they were at the beginning of the narrative. These flat characters are also known as simple characters. The variety of characters are also referred to as 'black', 'white', and 'grey' characters depending on the personality traits they possess. For instance, 'black' characters are villainous characters that display the darker and baser sides of human characters. 'White' characters are bright, pure, flawless and embodiment of good qualities. Interesting characters are 'grey'; they may be predominantly 'black' characters with some 'white' tint in their personality, or they may be predominantly 'white' characters with some 'black' or dark tint in their character. There may be a huge variety of 'grey' characters in creative writing.

In the play *As You Like It*, we come across a wide variety of characters. These characters are:

- Duke Senior: Duke Frederick's older brother and Rosalind's father
- Duke Frederick: Duke Senior's younger brother and his usurper, also Celia's father
- Rosalind: Duke Senior's daughter
- Celia: Duke Frederick's daughter and Rosalind's cousin
- Oliver de Boys: the eldest son and heir
- Jacques de Boys: the second son
- Orlando de Boys: the youngest son
- Adam: a faithful old servant who follows Orlando into exile
- Dennis: Oliver's servant who called Charles
- Touchstone, a court fool or jester
- Le Beau, a courtier
- Charles, a wrestler
- Lords and ladies in Duke Frederick's court
- Phebe: a proud shepherdess
- Silvius: a shepherd
- Audrey: a country girl
- Corin: an elderly shepherd
- William, a countryman
- Sir Oliver Martext, a curate
- Hymen: God of marriage

According to the aforesaid divisions of the characters, there can be two broad divisions of the characters: 'flat' and 'round'. In *As You Like It*, the character that falls under the characteristic of flat characters are: Orlando, Rosalind, Celia, Duke Senior, Touchstone, Jacques among other. These characters remain as they are throughout the course of the narrative of the play. Their goodness, wit, stupidity, melancholy etc., remain the same throughout the play. On the other hand, the characters that fall under the characteristic of round characters are Fredrick, Oliver and Phebe, among others. These characters show the change of their heart and mind. There can be seen a change of heart in the characters of Fredrick and Oliver, whereas Phebe's attitude towards Sulvius can be seen changing. Thus, we can see that there is a wide range of characters in the play *As You Like*.

- **Check Your Progress – 4**

Q.1 State which are the characters and characteristics of 'Round' characters and which are not:

Characteristics:

1. One who remains the same throughout a narrative? [**Flat / Round**]
2. One who displays no change of heart, mind or point of view? [**Flat / Round**]
3. One who changes from good to bad person? [**Flat / Round**]

4. One who has more than one dimension to his/her character? [**Flat / Round**]
5. One who changes from good to bad person? [**Flat / Round**]
6. One who remains simple and straightforward throughout a narrative? [**Flat / Round**]
7. One who plays various roles with various characters in a story? [**Flat / Round**]

Characters:

1. Orlando [**Flat / Round**]
2. Oliver [**Flat / Round**]
3. Rosalind [**Flat / Round**]
4. Celia [**Flat / Round**]
5. Fredric [**Flat / Round**]
6. Phebe [**Flat / Round**]
7. Senior Duke [**Flat / Round**]

4.2.5 Style and Language of *As You Like It*

Shakespeare has produced some of the most memorable lines in *As You Like It*. The language of Shakespeare in *As You Like It* is predominantly verse. There can be seen a general pattern in Shakespearean plays. The characters of nobility, such as Duke Senior, will use poetry while they talk. At the same time, characters from an ordinary backgrounds such as Audrey or Phebe will use prose. According to G. B. Shaw, Shakespeare has used prose language for just about 55% of the text in the play that appears more poetic to the reader or a viewer. As discussed above, the dramatic convention that Shakespeare used as such the characters of nobility used to converse in verse, and the characters of ordinary background would prose. However, Shakespeare deliberately overturned this convention in *As You Like It* this convention is deliberately overturned. For example, Rosalind, although coming from a noble background, is supposed to think and behave in a high poetic style. Nevertheless, she actually uses the prose while expressing the directness of her character as this is 'natural and suitable'. The love scenes in Act III, scene two, between Rosalind and Orlando are in prose. On the contrary, Silvius, an ordinary shepherd, expresses his love for Phebe in verse in Act II, Scene five. Further, the language of characters changes along with their mood. For example, Jaques, who is from a noble background, was using verse while expressing his 'melancholy' to Rosalind. He shifts to a prose dialogue as Orlando enters. Remember, Orlando is noble, but he is kept uncultured and uneducated by his brother Oliver.

Thus, there can be seen a mixture of prose and verse in the play. Shakespeare experimented a lot with the conventional usage of language of the time. However, the fact remains that some of the immortal dialogues are coming from this play, such as:

*"All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;*

*They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts."*

Jacques, (Act II, Scene VII)

"The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool."

Touchstone, (Act V, Scene I)

"Do you not know I am a woman? When I think, I must speak."

Rosalind, (Act III, Scene II)

"I pray you, do not fall in love with me, for I am falser than vows made in wine."

Rosalind, (Act III, Scene V)

Check Your Progress – 5

Q.1 State whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':

- 1) *Almost half of the play As You Like It is in verse.*
- 2) Shakespeare used the fixed pattern for the language of nobility and others.
- 3) *As You Like It* has some memorable lines in it.
- 4) The speech "*All the world is a stage*" is spoken by Touchstone.
- 5) The line "*The fool doth think he is wise*" is also spoken by Touchstone.

4.3 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt about the famous Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*. We have studied in detail about the plot and theme of the play. We have also understood the characters, language and style of the play.

4.4 KEY WORDS

Comedy	a play that is meant to make people laugh and that has a happy ending
Conquer	to take control of a country, city etc. through the use of force
Disguise	to change one's usual dress, appearance, voice etc. so that people will not recognize who the real person is
Drama	a piece of writing that tells a story and is meant to be performed on a stage
Enchanted	influenced by or as if by charm, attraction or magic
Medieval	of or related to the Middle Ages
Middle Age	the period of European history from about AD 500 to about 1500
Norman	one of the people from northern Europe and France who conquered England in 1066
Norman Conquest	conquering of England by Norman people in 1066
Novel	a long written story usually about imaginary characters and events

Pastoral	of or related to the countryside (village) or to the lives of people such as shepherds or herdsmen who live in the country
Plagiarism	Act of using another person's words or ideas without giving credit to that person
Plagiarist	someone who uses another person's words or ideas without giving credit to that person; one who is involved in the Act of plagiarism
Predecessor	someone of something that comes before something else
Prose	writing that is not poetry
Protagonist	the main character in a novel, play, film etc.
Renaissance	the period of European history between the 14 th and 17 th centuries when there was a new interest in science and in ancient art and literature, especially in Italy
Setting	the time, place and circumstances in which something (here story or a narrative) occurs or develops
Tragedy	a play that is serious in nature and theme and has a sad ending (such as the death of the main character/s)
Verse	writing in which words are arranged in a rhythmic pattern; a part of a poem or song

4.5 BOOKS SUGGESTED

- Bloom, Herold. *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1998. Print.
- Shakespeare, William, and Juliet Dusinberre. *As You Like It*. London: Arden Shakespeare, 2006. Print.
- Abrams, M H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999. Print.
- Booth, Wayne C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983. Print.

❖ ANSWERS:

• Check Your Progress – 1

State whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':

1. *As You Like It* was originally written in 1623 by William Shakespeare. **False**
2. Shakespeare took the story and plot of *As You Like It* from Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde*. **True**
3. Rosalind and Cilia escaped to an island for their shelter. **False**
4. Unique freshness, loving poetry and spontaneity are some of the features of *As You Like*. **True**
5. Rosalind and Cilia met many enchanting characters in the Forest of Arden. **True**

• Check Your Progress – 2

Answer the following questions in brief:

1) What is the setting of the play *As You Like It*?

Answer: The setting of *As You Like It* is pastoral, which was quite popular during the Elizabethan period. A pastoral story deals with a story where country life is depicted as simple, humble and the purest form of life.

2) What are the characteristics of a typical pastoral story?

Answer: In typical pastoral literature, an enchanted world is created by the author with mysterious elements in it. The world of a pastoral story is usually created in stark contrast with the real world. The characters of a pastoral story seek refuge in such an enchanted world from real-life fears, anxieties, uncertainties, and tensions. They are transported into some imagined, mythical place such as an island or forest where peace, endurance, satisfaction, and fulfilment are prevailing.

3) What are the major themes of *As You Like It*?

Answer: Shakespeare has employed various themes in *As You Like It*. Major themes employed by Shakespeare in *As You Like It* are romantic love, usurpation of justice, contrasting lives of court and country and last but not least, the theme of forgiveness or reconciliation.

• Check Your Progress – 3

State whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':

1.0 Oliver treats his brother fairly after the death of his father. **False**

2.0 Fredrick usurps the throne of his brother Senior Duke. **True**

3.0 Rosalind and Cilia are real sisters. **False**

4.0 Cilia disguised as a young man to ensure safety in the forest. **False**

5.0 Fredrick's heart changes as he meets a hermit. **True**

• Check Your Progress – 4

State which are the characters and characteristics of 'Round' characters and which are not:

Characteristics:

1. One who remains the same throughout a narrative? [**Flat** / **Round**]
2. One who displays no change of heart, mind or point of view? [**Flat** / **Round**]
3. One who changes from good to bad person? [**Flat** / **Round**]
4. One who has more than one dimension to his/her character? [**Flat** / **Round**]
5. One who changes from good to bad person? [**Flat** / **Round**]
6. One who remains simple and straightforward throughout a narrative? [**Flat** / **Round**]
7. One who plays various roles with various characters in a story? [**Flat** / **Round**]

Characters:

1. Orlando [**Flat** / **Round**]
2. Oliver [**Flat** / **Round**]

3. Rosalind [**Flat / Round**]
4. Cilia [**Flat / Round**]
5. Fredric [**Flat / Round**]
6. Phebe [**Flat / Round**]
7. Senior Duke [**Flat / Round**]

• **Check Your Progress – 5**

State whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':

- 1) *Almost half of the play As You Like It is in verse.* **True**
- 2) Shakespeare used the fixed pattern for the language of nobility and others. **False**
- 3) *As You Like It* has some memorable lines in it. **True**
- 4) The speech “*All the world is a stage*” is spoken by Touchstone. **False**
- 5) The line “*The fool doth think he is wise*” is also spoken by Touchstone. **True**

:: STRUCTURE ::**5.0 Objectives****5.1 Introduction****5.2 Shakespearean Comedy****5.3 Characteristics of Shakespearean Comedy****5.3.1 The Theme of Love and Usurpation of Justice****5.3.2 Complex Plot****5.3.3 Women Disguised as Men and Mistaken Identity****5.3.4 Shakespearean Fools**

- Check Your Progress – 1

5.4 *As You Like It* as a Shakespearean Comedy**5.4.1 The Theme of Love and Usurpation of Justice in *As You Like It*****5.4.2 Complex Plot in *As You Like It*****5.4.3 Women Disguised as Men and Mistaken Identity in *As You Like It*****5.4.4 Shakespearean Fools in *As You Like It***

- Check Your Progress – 2

5.5 Let Us Sum Up**5.6 Key Words****5.7 Books Suggested**

- ❖ Answer

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall

- Study in brief the characteristics of Shakespearean Comedy

- Discuss *As You Like It* as a Shakespearean Comedy
- On completing this unit, you should be able to
- know what are the characteristics of Shakespearian Comedy
 - Discuss *As You Like It* as a comedy and specifically Shakespearean Comedy.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the previous two units, William Shakespeare has a unique place in English Literature. He composed around 150 sonnets and wrote about 37 plays. His plays have a variety of themes, characters and subject matters. Shakespearean plays are by and large categorized into three viz. Comedies, Tragedies and Histories. These categories are not watertight compartments. As a result, some of his plays can fall into more than one category. Unlike his predecessor, Shakespeare did not follow a strict definition of tragedy and comedy. Hence, his tragedies often have comic elements in them, and his comedies often have some tragic elements in them. Shakespearean Comedies are not necessarily what a modern audience would expect from a comedy. There are obviously, many funny moments and hilarious characters that can certainly justify themselves as a comedy with some very dramatic unfolding of a story. Usually, a Shakespearean play can be defined as a comedy when it has a happy ending, often involving marriage or marriages.

In this unit, we are going to study the characteristics of Shakespearean Comedies briefly. We shall also see how *As You Like It* is a Shakespearian Comedy.

5.2 SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDY

William Shakespeare's contribution to English Literature is unprecedented. He wrote about 150 sonnets and about 37 plays during his lifetime. His plays have such a wide range of characteristics that it is difficult to define them under a few categories. However, on the basis of certain salient features, Shakespearean plays can be put into three categories, namely Comedies, Tragedies and Histories. A typical Shakespearean comedy has a happy ending, usually involving marriage or marriages as the last scene.

5.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDY

After having the brief introduction of the term Shakespearean Comedy, let's understand the characteristics of a Shakespearean Comedy.

5.3.1 The Theme of Love and Usurpation of Justice

The dominant and prevalent theme in Shakespearean Comedy was love. There can be seen a set of lovers who usually fall in 'love at first sight'. These pairs or pairs of lovers are separated and unite at the end. Thus,

here we can see the separation of lovers who ultimately overcome obstacles and reunite and happily live ever after in harmony. There is a clear conflict between the values of reason and control - Apollonian and values such as freedom and lust - Dionysian. It is interesting to note that most of the lovers, especially the male protagonists have no occupation or job but to fall in love. There are no details given whatsoever of their source of income or what do they do to earn their living. The world of Shakespearean comedies is a dreamlike reality that is quite 'romantic' and not 'realistic'. The full-time job of the young characters is to fall in love, get separated and ultimately get united at the end. Thus, love is one of the major themes of Shakespearean Comedy.

Usurpation of justice is yet another common theme in Shakespearean comedies. This is also one of the significant themes that leads to the rise of tension between good and evil characters. Usually, a rightful king or duke is removed from his position by a foul game of some conspirators. Such victim king or duke would exile to some forest, island or some far off land. However, followed by a series of events, the wrongdoers are punished, and the rightful kings or dukes are restored to their positions. Thus, in the end, justice is served, and as one of the titles of Shakespearean comedies says, 'all's well that ends well'.

Therefore we can say that 'love' and 'usurps of justice' are major themes of Shakespearean comedies. These comedies almost always end with a restoration of a rightful king or duke and a reunion of lovers leading to their marriage or marriages. In Shakespearean comedies, marriages are shown as the achievement of contentment and the promise of everlasting happiness.

5.3.2 Complex Plot

A complex plot construction is yet another characteristic of Shakespearean comedies. A typical plot of a Shakespearean comedy begins with the introduction of protagonist characters. This leads to some forms of conflict or tragic events, such as the usurpation of justice, as discussed in the previous section. These conflicting events compel the protagonist characters to an adventurous journey of self-discovery. After much dramatic sequence of action, introspection and reflection, some form of reconciliation is achieved. The third act of the play usually serves the purpose of the climax and the final reconciliation. Finally, in the last act of the play, the conflict is resolved in a happy ending with a celebration of love and togetherness, mostly leading to marriage or marriages.

Complex and mixture of main plot and sub-plot are some of the trademark characteristics of Shakespearean Comedy. There are almost always more than one parallel narrative running throughout the play. This leads to complex plot construction and overlapping of sub-plots and the main plot. However, ultimately all the tension and confusions of subplots

and main plots are resolved, and by the end of the play, every plot 'ends well'. Thus, unlike tragedy, where reconciliation leads to death, a typical Shakespearean comedy ends with a comic and happy solution that almost always leads to marriage.

5.3.3 Women Disguised as Men and Mistaken Identity

Another peculiar characteristic of Shakespearean comedy is characters disguised as the opposite gender, especially women disguised as men. This was very popular in Shakespearian times mainly due to the fact that the actors who used to perform the role of women were young male actors. This was used as a device to generate curiosity and excitement among the audience of all time. This also leads to the revelation and confession of lovers to their beloved in disguise without knowing that they are their beloveds.

Women disguised as men also lead to mistaken identity, which is yet another characteristic of the plot of a Shakespearean comedy. Due to the mistaken identity, it sometimes leads to love for a character who is not a real man, e.g. Phebe, a shepherdess in *As You Like It*, falls in love with Rosalind, a duke's daughter, who was disguised as a young man. On the other hand, sometimes these misunderstandings are intentionally planned by a villain to misguide the protagonist, for instance, in *Much Ado About Nothing* when Claudio is made to believe that his fiancé has been unfaithful to him by Don John's trick of mistaken identity.

Thus, female characters disguising as males is one of the most common characteristics of Shakespearean comedies. And it is due to this characteristic that mistaken identities occur that prolongs the narrative of the play. At the end of the play, the real identities of the disguised characters are revealed, and confusions are resolved.

5.3.4 Shakespearean Fools:

The Shakespearean fool is a recurrent character in tragedies and comedies alike. These characters are usually court jesters or servants who are very clever and full of wisdom. Some of the most memorable dialogues of the Shakespearean plays are uttered by these fools. In fact, Shakespearean fools serve the purpose of a mouthpiece of Shakespeare to convey some of the most revolutionary ideas. These fools express their views on a wide range of themes, including human nature, philosophy of life, and meaning of love, among others. In Shakespearean tragedies, a fool provides comic relief, for example, the Gravediggers in *Hamlet* and the Porter in *Macbeth*. Whereas in comedies, a fool serves many purposes apart from amusing the audience, for instance, to introduce other characters or themes of the play as well. Feste, in *Twelfth Night*, not only introduces the theme of the play but also provides the closing remarks at the end of the play. Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Launcelot Gobbo in *The Merchant of Venice*, Touchstone in *As You Like It*, The Gravediggers in *Hamlet* and The Fool in *King Lear* are some of the most popular fools and clowns of Shakespearean plays.

• **Check Your Progress – 1**

State whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':

1. The setting of the Shakespearean comedies used to be 'dreamlike'.
2. All the women characters in the Shakespearean comedies were played women, actresses.
3. Almost all the Shakespearean comedies end in celebration and marriages.
4. The male protagonist in Shakespearean comedies was engaged in employment.
5. Love and usurpation of justice were not some of the major themes of Shakespearean comedies.
6. In Shakespearean comedy, reconciliation also results in death.
7. The Shakespearean Fool provides 'comic relief' to the audience in tragedies.

5.4 AS YOU LIKE IT AS A SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDY

In the previous section, we have seen some of the major characteristics of Shakespearean comedies. As discussed above, a typical Shakespearean comedy has a happy ending usually involving marriage or marriages as the last scene. In the following section, we are going to study *As You Like It* with reference to the characteristics of a Shakespearean Comedy.

5.4.1 The Theme of Love and Usurpation of Justice in *As You Like It*

As discussed in the previous section, that one of the dominant and prevalent themes in Shakespearean Comedy was love. The world of Shakespearean comedies is a dreamlike reality that is quite 'romantic' and not 'realistic'. The full-time job of the young characters is to fall in love, get separated and ultimately get united at the end. Thus, love is one of the major themes of Shakespearean Comedy.

Love is the central theme of most of Shakespeare's romantic comedies, and *As You Like It* is not an exception. As per the tradition of a romantic comedy, *As You Like It* depicts a series of parallel love stories in their varied forms. As common in many Shakespearean romantic comedies, in many of the love stories, lovers instantly fall in love with their first meeting. Thus, this theme of 'love at first sight' can be seen in the love stories of Rosalind and Orlando, Celia and Oliver, and also in Phebe and Ganymede. On the other hand, Shakespeare presented a parody of romantic love with the love story of Audrey and Touchstone. Another form of a bond of love is shown between women, as in the profound understanding between Rosalind and Celia.

Usurpation of justice is yet another common theme in Shakespearean comedies. This is also one of the significant themes that leads to the rise of tension between good and evil characters. Usually, a rightful king or

duke is removed from his position by a foul game of some conspirators. Such victim king or duke would exile to some forest, island or some far off land. However, followed by a series of events, the wrongdoers are punished, and the rightful kings or dukes are restored to their positions. Thus, in the end, justice is served, and as one of the titles of Shakespearean comedies says, 'all's well that ends well'.

Usurpation of justice is also one of the significant themes of *As You Like It*. The new Duke Frederick takes away his position from his elder brother Duke Senior. Oliver, on the other hand, treats his younger brother Orlando with similar injustice and compel him to seek his fortune somewhere else. Thus, both Senior Duke and Orlando have to take refuge in the forest. It is through nature that justice is restored in a mysterious way.

Thus, both the primary characteristics of Shakespearean comedies are clearly present in *As You Like It*. Therefore we can say that 'love' and 'usurps of justice' are major themes of Shakespearean comedies, which can be seen in *As You Like It*. Further, a reunion of lovers leading to their marriage or marriages can also be seen in *As You Like It*. Thus, *As You Like It* depicts the theme of usurpation and injustice of the property of the other that provides the rising action. However, as a Shakespearean comedy has to end happiness and reconciliation, both Senior Duke and Orlando are served justice as Duke Frederick and Oliver undergoes the change of heart. Both Senior Duke and Orlando forgive their brothers, and thus, forgiveness and reconciliation prevail. Thus, the play ends happily and celebration and announcements of marriages.

5.4.2 Complex Plot of *As You Like It*:

A complex plot construction is yet another characteristic of Shakespearean comedies. A typical plot of a Shakespearean comedy begins with the introduction of protagonist characters which leads to some forms of conflict or tragic events such as usurpation of justice, as discussed in the previous section. Complex and mixture of main plot and sub-plot are some of the trademark characteristics of Shakespearean Comedy. There are almost always more than one parallel narrative running throughout the play. This leads to complex plot construction and overlapping of sub-plots and the main plot. These conflicting events compel the protagonist characters to an adventurous journey of self-discovery. After much dramatic sequence of action, introspection and reflection, some form of reconciliation is achieved. The third act of the play usually serves the purpose of the climax and the final reconciliation. Finally, in the last act of the play, the conflict is resolved in a happy ending with a celebration of love and togetherness, mostly leading to marriage or marriages.

The plot of *As You Like It* has two parallel stories running. The first story is of Oliver and his brother Orlando and the second of a Senior Duke and

his brother Fredrick. In both the stories, a brother is ill-treated by his own brother. When Oliver inherits the property after the death of his father, he kept his brother Orlando uneducated and bereft of any manners and training befitting to a gentleman. Orlando leaves the court and starts living in the Forest Arden. On the other hand, Fredrick usurps the court of Senior Duke and compels him to exile to the Forest Arden. In order to ensure safety, Rosalind disguised as a young man and assumed the name Ganymede and Celia disguised as a common shepherdess. Nevertheless, Fredric allows Rosalind, the daughter of Senior Duke, to stay in the court, avowing to the bond she has with his own daughter Celia. However, later he changed his mind and banished Rosalind from the court and hence, Rosalind takes refuge in the Forest Arden. Thus, three parties: first, Senior Duke and his loyal courtiers, second, Rosalind, Celia along with a court jester Touchstone and third Orlando started living in the forest. During the course of time, a series of couples fall in love that includes Rosalind and Orlando, Celia and Oliver, Phoebe and Silvis and last but not least, Audrey and Touchstone. Oliver heart changes as he meets a hermit and gives the Senior Duke his through the back. Oliver, too realizes his mistake and welcomes his brother Orlando to the court. Thus, the play comes to an end with forgiveness and reconciliation and hence, due to its complexity of structure and intermingling of the sub-plots and main plots, we can that *As You Like It* is out an out example of Shakespearean Comedy.

5.4.3 Women Disguised as Men and Mistaken Identity in *As You Like It*:

Another peculiar characteristic of Shakespearean comedy is characters disguised as the opposite gender, especially women disguised as men. This was very popular in Shakespearian times mainly due to the fact that the actors who used to perform the role of women were young male actors. This was used as a device to generate curiosity and excitement among the audience of all time. This also leads to the revelation and confession of lovers to their beloved in disguise without knowing that they are their beloveds.

In *As You Like It*, there are many instances of women disguised as men for various reasons. In order to ensure safety, for instance, Rosalind disguised as a young man and assumed the name Ganymede and Celia disguised as a common shepherdess. They meet Orlando and Oliver as men. Orlando, who's in love with Rosalind, reveals his feelings to Ganymede (who is actually Rosalind herself in the guise of a man). On the other hand, Celia also meets Oliver with revealing her identity as a woman. It was at the end of the play that both Rosalind and Celia as women and accept the proposal of Orlando and Oliver, respectively.

As discussed in the previous section, women disguised as men also lead to mistaken identity, which is yet another characteristic of the plot of a Shakespearean comedy. Due to the mistaken identity, it sometimes leads

to love for a character that is not a real man, e.g. Phebe, a shepherdess in *As You Like It*, falls in love with Rosalind, a duke's daughter, who was disguised as Ganymede, a young man. On the other hand, Phebe declines the proposal of Silvius, a shepherd who was in love with her. Thus, we can see the mistaken identity leads to confusion. Phebe, a shepherdess, declines a proposal of a real man, Silvius, for she is in love with a disguised man who's actually a woman, i.e. Rosalind.

Thus, female characters disguising as males is one of the most common characteristics of Shakespearean comedies that can be seen in *As You Like It*. And it is due to this characteristic that mistaken identities occur that prolongs the narrative of the play, which is also apparent in Phebe, Ganymede and Silvius love triangle. Nevertheless, by the end of the play, the real identities of the disguised characters are revealed, and confusions are resolved, and Rosalind and Orlando, Celia and Oliver, Phebe and Silvius and also Audrey and Touchstone are shown united in love and marriage.

5.4.4 Shakespearean Fools in *As You Like It*:

The Shakespearean fool is a recurrent character in tragedies and comedies alike. These characters are usually court jesters or servants who are very clever and full of wisdom. Some of the most memorable dialogues of the Shakespearean plays are uttered by these fools. In fact, Shakespearean fools server the purpose of a mouthpiece of Shakespeare to convey some of the most revolutionary ideas. These fools express their views on a wide range of themes, including human nature, philosophy of life, and meaning of love, among others.

Touchstone in *As You Like It* is one of the most popular fools of Shakespearean plays. Touchstone is a court jester of Duke Fredrick. He has a vivid sense of humour and intelligence. Touchstone is portrayed as a selfless character, as he accompanies Celia to the forest in order to serve her and also to provide security to his mistress. He also serves the purpose of a mouthpiece of the author as he comments about almost all the characters. It is through his comments about the other characters that we come across the insight of the author as well. He falls in love with Audrey, a rustic goad-girl and ultimately gets married to her. Touchstone has uttered some of the most memorable dialogues of the Shakespearean comedies, e.g. "*The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool.*" (Act V, Scene I).

Thus, Touchstone is one of the most famous fools of Shakespearean Comedy. He serves many purposes that include an amusing audience, providing additional information about the other characters and sharing the world view of the author.

• **Check Your Progress – 2**

Join A with B:

A	B
1) Rosalind	a) falls in love with Phebe
2) Fredrick	b) falls in love with Ganymede
3) Celia	c) disguises as Ganymede
4) Touchstone Duke	d) usurps the position of Senior
5) Phebe	e) disguises as a common shepherd
6) Orlando	f) accompanies his mistress to the forest
7) Silvius	g) falls in love with Rosalind

5.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt

- about the characteristics of Shakespearean Comedy and
- *As You Like It* as a Shakespearean Comedy

5.6 KEY WORDS

Apollonian	of or relating to the Greek god Apollo; a philosophical and literary concept advocating rational thinking and order
Comedy	a play that is meant to make people laugh and that has a happy ending
Comic relief	a relief from the emotional tension, especially of a drama that is provided by the interposition of a comic episode or element
Conquer	to take control of a country, city etc. through the use of force
Dionysian	of or related to the Greek god Dionysius; a philosophical and literary concept advocating irrational, emotional and instinctive thinking
Disguise	to change one's usual dress, appearance, voice etc. so that people will not recognize who the real person is
Enchanted	influenced by or as if by charm, attraction or magic
Hilarious	marked by or causing hilarity; extremely funny
Hilarity	boisterous merriment or laughter
Norman	one of the people from northern Europe and France who conquered England in 1066
Pastoral	of or related to the countryside (village) or to the lives of people such as shepherds or herdsmen who live in the country
Plagiarism	an act of using another person's words or ideas without

Plagiarist	giving credit to that person someone who uses another person's words or ideas without giving credit to that person; one who is involved in the act of plagiarism
Predecessor	someone of something that comes before something else
Prose	writing that is not poetry
Protagonist	the main character in a novel, play, film etc.
Reconciliation	the act of causing two people or groups to become friendly again after an argument or disagreement
Salient	very important or noticeable
Setting	the time, place and circumstances in which something (here story or a narrative) occurs or develops
Tragedy	a play that is serious in nature and theme and has a sad ending (such as the death of the main character/s)
Unprecedented	not done or experienced before
Usurp	to take and keep (soothing, such as power) in a forceful or violent way and especially without the right to do so
Usurpation	an act of usurping
Verse	writing in which words are arranged in a rhythmic pattern; a part of a poem or song

5.7 BOOKS SUGGESTED

- Bloom, Harold. *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1999. Print.
- Dusinberre, Juliet, ed. *AYL Arden 3 Shakespeare*. London: Thomson Learning, 2006. Print.
- Booth, Wayne. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961. Print.
- Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Mason: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012. Print.

❖ ANSWERS:

Check Your Progress – 1

State whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False':

1. The setting of the Shakespearean comedies used to be 'dreamlike'.
True
2. All the women characters in the Shakespearean comedies were played women, actresses. **False**
3. Almost all the Shakespearean comedies end in celebration and marriages. **True**
4. The male protagonist in Shakespearean comedies was engaged in employment. **False**
5. Love and usurpation of justice were not some of the major themes of Shakespearean comedies. **False**

6. In Shakespearean comedy, reconciliation also results in death. **False**
7. The Shakespearean Fool provides 'comic relief' to the audience in tragedies. **True**

Check Your Progress – 2

Join A with B:

A

- 1) Rosalind
- 2) Fredrick
Duke
- 3) Celia
- 4) Touchstone
forest
- 5) Phebe
- 6) Orlando
- 7) Silvius

B

- c) disguises as Ganymede
- d) usurps the position of Senior
- e) disguises as a common shepherd
- f) accompanies his mistress to the
- b) falls in love with Ganymede
- g) falls in love with Rosalind
- a) falls in love with Phebe

:: STRUCTURE ::

- 6.1 Objective**
- 6.2 Introduction**
- 6.3 What is Absurd?**
- 6.4 Theme of the play**
- 6.5 Significance of Time**
- 6.6 Characters in the play**
 - 6.6.1 Vladimir and Estragon**
 - 6.6.2 Pozzo and Lucky**
 - 6.6.3 Boys**
 - 6.6.4 Godot**
- 6.7 Conclusion**
- 6.8 Key words**
- 6.9 Books Suggested**
- ❖ Answers**

6.1 OBJECTIVE

In this unit we shall,

- Analyse *Waiting for Godot* as an absurd play
- Understand various aspects of the play like theme, language, etc.
- Interpret various characters

After completing the Unit, you should be able to

- Describe absurd play and how *Waiting for Godot* is an absurd play
- Discuss about the characters
- Discuss about theme, plot and language of the play

6.2 INTRODUCTION

Waiting for Godot is the play written in English by Samuel Beckett. Samuel Beckett is the Irish playwright. This play is Beckett's translation of his own original play, *En attendant Godot*, written in French language. The play in English is subtitled as "a tragicomedy in two acts". The original French text was written between 1948 and 1949 and was published in 1952. The play was directed by Roger Blin and was performed at the Théâtre de Babylone in Paris in 1953. The English-language version was first performed in London in 1955.

Waiting for Godot is perhaps the best example of the theatre of absurd which promotes philosophy of the genre. The play presents a world full of uncertainty. It also presents a world into which daily actions are almost meaningless, language fails to communicate, and the characters reflect a sense of artifice in that they are unable to act in any meaningful way and even are uncertain of the consequences borne of their actions.

6.3 LANGUAGE OF THE PLAY

Beckett seems to be greatly influenced by structuralism which emphasises on the importance of language. That seems to be one of the reasons why *Waiting for Godot* uses language and speech to create confused realities. The confusion in the structure of the play, the characters, dialogues spoken by these characters, never compassable time, repetitive nature of action and stage directions and setting of the play, are presented very effectively throughout the play with the help of various symbols.

Since the beginning of the play, it is established that Estragon is dependent on Vladimir when he tells Estragon that without him, Estragon would be "nothing more than a little heap of bones". This is presented by the fact that Estragon cannot even take off his boot without help from Vladimir. Both, in fact, seem interchangeable. For instance, one of these characters repeats a line that the other has just said. For example, one asks the other, "It hurts?" The other responds by saying, "Hurts! He wants to know if it hurts!" Such repetition indicates repetitiveness of life in general. Such repetitiveness is best illustrated by Estragon's repeated requests to leave. But they cannot leave as both are waiting for Godot. Such repetition emphasises the idea that similar actions occur over and over again in a person's life without any apparent meaning generated or attached to it. Moreover, the playwright perhaps uses repetition over and over again to ensure that the readers / audience also feel the same monotony and confusion as experienced by the characters on the stage. Such repetition and meaningless dialogues again and again emphasise the existentialist nature of the play.

This play is written in very simple language. Simplicity language helps in creating illusion and confusion required for the theme of the play. The setting of the play in itself is intriguing. The playwright describes “A country road. A tree. Evening”(2). Such straightforward setting is aimed at serving a more complex purpose. In Act II, only five leaves are seen on the tree, yet this over-night change in the tree makes the entire landscape an unrecognizable place for Estragon. The playwright creates a striking contrast through a fully blossomed tree with the hopelessness apparent through both the characters. The philosopher-dramatist perhaps wants to establish despair prevalent during the war time.

Language in *Waiting for Godot* highlights meaninglessness, inefficiency and inadequacy of language in itself. Dialogues and speeches fail to clearly express the idea. That is the reason why characters use repetitive dialogues, which also fail to explicitly express themselves. Interestingly, dialogues are reduced to broken and fragmented phrases, words and expressions leading readers / audiences to believe that language as a tool is ineffective to communicate. Such an idea that language is ineffective contradicts popular belief that language is the tool for subjugation. In fact, the play ushers the idea that silence is often helpful to convey desired effect as well is an escape from external forces reflected by language.

The playwright effectively uses dialogues to form a mundane, static and dull atmosphere where almost nothing happens and nothing changes. Dialogues are forced through characters to indicate the passing of time and to establish that the characters do exist. Through repetitive dialogues, through contradictory dialogues, through meaningless dialogues, the playwright creates desired confusion within the reader about the reality of the situation and the meaning of life.

6.4 THEME OF THE PLAY

Waiting for Godot presents two men who are unable to move, think or even act significantly during their wait for a mysterious man, Godot. These characters little realize that their act of waiting is a choice. Rather, both consider waiting as compulsory part of their routine. Both men are hardly able to decide on some specific thing or aspect, however, both are not able to convert their decision into action. For instance, more than once, these characters decide to leave the stage, but they find that they are incapable to move even an inch further. All these suggest stagnancy and repetition in apparently endless cycle of their lives. In fact, the very life presented through *Waiting for Godot* seems to be a dismal one. It is hopelessly repetitive and stagnant, without meaning and purpose and leads to constant suffering. Suffering seems to be a consistent and basic aspect of human existence, as is proposed by *Waiting for Godot*. Each and every character suffers and suffers consistently, without any apparent respite. These sufferings vary from physical to psychological. Suffering

leads some men to find companionship, some to abuse their companions, and some to isolate them.

The theatre of absurd deliberately seems to reject all the ideas of realism and naturalism applied to theatre. Setting does not correspond to specific time and place. There is an absence of a logical narrative as well as a well-knit plot. The play intends to transform the real world into a kind of make-believe or almost artificial world. However, this is not an illusionary world, rather this is a real world which makes the readers / audience realize as having their own.

During the course of seemingly endless and boring waiting, the only alternative these characters are left with is talk. Their talk, in whatever incoherent manner, can be interpreted as soothing comfort while agonizingly waiting. The playwright also makes effective use of silences and pauses in the play to create necessity and potency to talk, to remove isolation and solitude silences push them to. Both the characters have become so desperate in the absence of any talk that Vladimir suddenly blares out, "Say something!" and "Say anything at all!" (50) The paradox created by the playwright through silences and desperation to overcome these silences is praiseworthy. This paradox helps the dramatist in establishing the central idea of the play, viz. meaninglessness of everything.

In fact, the characters are so much frustrated while waiting that both have started hearing strange voices. The reason for their conversation with each other is to avoid thinking and hearing such strange voices. So, their only purpose of conversation seems to avoid monotony, self-exploitation and disintegration.

Obscurity presented in the play perhaps highlights illusion and confusion of the post-war time. Similar obscurity is also found in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922). Beckett uses repetition of language to highlight incoherence, incompetence and failure of language, and thus life, to create a meaning. This adds to the obscurity to the theme. Through creation of such language, Beckett's vision of life appears to be pessimistic, bleak, hopeless and full of irony. For instance, Lucky's long speech in Act I appear to be meaningless. However, through such meaningless, the playwright successfully reinforces the theme of the play. Another interpretation of Lucky's speech can be that his incoherent and nonsensical blabbering are Thomas Beckett's reaction and interpretation of war and effect of the war on mankind.

Waiting for Godot presents illusion, confusion, frustration and the fragmentation of an individual. It not only portrays the disturbed and fractured psyche of the post-war individual, but also depicts the most representative task of man, i.e., the futile wait, fragmented memory, and the mundane and unnecessary action. This play is existentialist as the characters are not only indistinguishable from one another, but are also, at times, representatives of mankind. Beckett uses theatrical and literary

devices to create an endless cycle of hopelessness and meaninglessness to represent the post-war situation. The world that the playwright presents seems to be a world where an individual feels stranger, in captivity and into an exile as a person's hopes have vanished, ideals crushed, aspirations vandalized, etc. Thus frustrated individual starts seeing life as meaningless. Such dualism creates a sense of absurdity. The only ray of hope with a person is belief in the existence of God and that the world is driven by God. Such hope once again provides a meaning to life. And hence, absurd plays are not to realize meaninglessness and hopelessness to the world. Rather, they lead towards the acceptance of God as omnipotent supreme authority who ably guides to the world and provides meaning to life. Absurd is not about hopelessness, rather it shows where to find hope and purpose of life.

Vivian Mercier describes *Waiting for Godot* as a play which “has achieved a theoretical impossibility — a play in which nothing happens, that yet keeps audiences glued to their seats. What's more, since the second act is a subtly different reprise of the first, he has written a play in which nothing happens, twice.”

6.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF TIME

Beckett uses time as a device for creating confusion. Worton states that though the characters seemingly are aware of time, “they have no sense of its continuity”. Since the characters are unable to make sense of the past, present, and future, their wait for someone named Godot ends in essentially futile exercise.

The very title of the play unravels its central theme, i.e., wait. Both, Vladimir and Estragon, are compelled to pass their time in utter boredom while waiting for the arrival of a certain person, who surprisingly never comes. Because they have nothing to do in the meantime, time becomes a terrible obstacle and tests their endurance. They indulge in repetition the same actions day after day to pass the time. It is interesting to observe that time loses its meaning when the actions of any specific day has no relevance or effect on to the next day.

6.6 CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

Characters in *Waiting for Godot* seem to be engaged into a prison of their own creations. Each character is imprisoned in passivity and stagnancy because of one's own inability to act. According to Furrugh Khan, “Beckett's characters are not unified rational beings rather, they are portrayed as a product of external influences, lacking the ability to control situations, or effect change”.

6.6.1 Vladimir and Estragon:

The entire play is about conversations between Vladimir and Estragon, who are awaiting the arrival of some mysterious named Godot. Instead of meeting these two, Godot continually sends messages that he will appear but, in fact, never does. In the due course of action, both the characters accidentally stumble upon Lucky and Pozzo. Pozzo is going to the market to sell his slave, Lucky. He pauses for a while to talk with Vladimir and Estragon. Lucky entertains them through dance, and thereafter Pozzo and Lucky leave. Moreover, Vladimir and Estragon discuss their miseries and events in their lives. Both also consider committing suicide by hanging themselves. However, both decide to wait, after a short discussion about their possible death. Often considered tramps, Vladimir and Estragon are a pair of human beings who do not know the meaning of their existence upon this earth. Both try to make out some meaning of their existence and they look to Godot for enlightenment.

According to Ismet Toksoz, “It appears that Estragon is psychologically dependent on Vladimir, Vladimir is spiritually dependent on Mr. Godot, and indirectly Estragon is dependent on Godot. Vladimir implies his commitment to Godot in the scene of the discussion to hang themselves or not: “Let's wait and see what he (Godot) says” (Beckett, 2011, 1. 19).

The playwright has provided no physical descriptions of either of the two characters, Vladimir and Estragon. However, one can gather from reading the text that Vladimir is possibly the heavier of the two. Throughout most of the play, Vladimir prefers to stand, whereas Estragon sits down frequently and even sleeps intermittently. Estragon seems to be preoccupied with useless things, for example, what to eat and how to ease his aches and pains. But he finds extremely difficult to recall things. For example, when Vladimir asks, “Do you remember the Gospels?” Estragon talks about all the nonsensical things. The contrasts between these two characters, one cannot remember anything and the other remembers everything, one is lazy, the other is very smart, etc., create difference in-between them. They become distinct individuals and do merely remain types. As they are two different individuals, their respond to a situation differently and thereby allowing alternative point of view. Both the characters call each other by pet names “Didi” and “Gogo”.

6.6.2 Pozzo and Lucky:

It is often discussed that that Pozzo and Lucky are nothing but alternative manifestations of Didi and Gogo. Pozzo seems to be dominating of the two. Lucky, however, is more influence than two because of his ability to dance and think. When both first appear, Pozzo appears to be a true slave. He appreciated Lucky for making him cultured and attributing him with refinement and reasoning. Otherwise, very less is known about Pozzo. Fewer details like, Pozzo is the landlord and he smokes pipe of the best tobacco merchant “Kapp and Peterson” (26). Pozzo, at times, overdoes

things, perhaps because of the self-generated sense of insecurity within him.

Pozzo controls Lucky with an extremely long rope. He jerks and tugs if Lucky slows down a bit. Lucky appears to be the obedient slave of Pozzo does everything. Lucky speaks only once in the entire play in response to Pozzo's order to "think" (32) for Estragon and Vladimir.

6.6.3 Boys:

The boy works for Mr. Godot. He informs Vladimir that they have never met before in the first act. In Act II, the boy tells Vladimir that he did not meet them the day before. That boy was someone else. Through the boy, audiences / readers learn that Godot possesses white beard. Boys appearing in both the acts are polite and gentle. They hesitate in speaking and mostly answer with short replies only.

6.6.4 Godot:

The identity of Godot has been a matter of great debate. There are various meanings attached to the word 'Godot', and the closest and the widely accepted meaning seems to be 'God'. This character remains absent in the play. However, the wait for this character by Vladimir and Estragon makes this absence god-like.

Waiting for Godot can be considered as a post-modern text as it presents a fragmented view of human in somewhat tragic manner. However, the playwright never complains about fragmentation of life rather wholeheartedly accepts it and rather celebrates it. World War II and its aftermath shattered many previously constructed beliefs and were compelled to reconstruct new ones. For example, the play questions the concepts such as God, religion, nation, etc. At the same time, the play asks us to celebrate life, even though it is full of uncertainty and meaninglessness with a ray of hope for good future just as the characters are waiting for Godot.

Thomas Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* looks like an allegory: a dramatic action in which events, characters, and settings represent abstract or spiritual meanings.

6.8 KEY WORDS

Fragmentation	the disintegration, collapse, or breakdown of norms of thought, behaviour, or social relationship
Frustration	something that causes feelings of anger and annoyance
Mundane	boring and monotonous
Paradox	In literature paradox is a self-contradictory statement which is used as a literary device and the purpose of a paradox is to arrest attention and provoke fresh thought.

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6.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

The questions presented here have answers in the above. Find out answers and write them:

1. Write in detail about Waiting for Godot as an absurd play.

2. Explain the theme of the play

3. Critically analyse Vladimir and Estragon as protagonists of the play

4. Explain the significance of time as discussed in the play.

5. Choose correct alternative from those given below each:

1. Beckett's original play *En attendant Godot* is written in which language ?

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| a. French; | b. English; |
| c. Spanish | d. German. |

2. In which language was *Waiting for Godot* first performed?

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| a. 1957 | b. 1955 |
| c. 1956 | d. 1954 |

3. Who of the following has written *The Waste Land*?

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| a. Mathew Arnold | b. T. S. Eliot |
| c. Eugene Ionesco | d. Alfred Tennyson |

❖ **ANSWERS:**

Check Your Progress 1:

1. a 2. b 3. c

:: STRUCTURE ::

- 7.1 Objective**
- 7.2 Introduction**
- 7.3 What is Absurd?**
- 7.4 Themes**
- 7.5 Playwrights**
- 7.6 Characters**
- 7.7 Language**
- 7.8 Let Us Sum Up**
- 7.9 Key words**
- 7.10 Books Suggested**

❖ Answers

7.1 OBJECTIVE

In this unit we shall

- Study the concept of absurd
- Understand the absurd movement and how is expressed through the form of drama
- Understand how the theme of absurdity is highlighted in life

7.2 INTRODUCTION

Theatre of the Absurd is the post-World War Two phenomenon and is applied to European playwrights of the late 1950s. The style of theatre evolved from their plays resulted into decline in faith in religion, nationalism and political ideologies. Martin Esslin was probably the first to introduce the term 'Absurd' in his essay 'The Theatre of the Absurd' which was written in 1960. However, the mood and dramaturgy of absurdity were practiced as early as 1896 in Alfred Jarry's French play '*Ubu roi*' (Ubu the King).

The ideas that construct these plays decide their structure. Absurdist playwrights, therefore, did never bother about the logical structures offered by traditional theatre. There is little or almost negligible dramatic action which is otherwise found in a traditional drama. However,

characters in these plays seriously play their parts, their seriousness into action emphasises that nothing, which is extraordinary, happens which can alter or bring about change in their existence. In Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952), there is no action in the play and at the same time whatever little action the play presents is almost timeless and of circular quality. The play presents two lost humans, usually played as tramps or vagabonds spend their days waiting, but without any certainty of whom they are waiting for or of whether he, or it, will ever come.

7.3 WHAT IS ABSURD?

Absurd originally means 'out of harmony', as in a musical context. Hence its dictionary definition: 'Out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical'. In common usage, 'absurd' may simply mean 'ridiculous', but this is not the sense in which Camus uses the word, and, in which; it is used when one speaks of the Theatre of the Absurd. In an essay to Kafka, Ionesco defined his understanding of the term as follows: Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose. Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless. (Bijoya Chandra Padhy)

The 'Absurd' in the absurd plays represents a person's reaction to the world, which seems to be without meaning or meaningless. Absurd plays also portray human as a puppet controlled and guided by some invisible external forces. Characters in these plays are caught in hopeless situations and are compelled to indulge in repetitive or meaningless actions. All these things lead to many significant interpretations, which are beautifully discussed by absurd playwrights. It would be incorrect to assume that these playwrights intended to solve the issue of man's meaningless existence. In fact, these writers offer no solution to the problem, which in itself suggests that the question of existence is not answerable at all. And perhaps, therefore, many critics consider these plays as 'anti-plays'.

According to Ali Assi Hussien, the theatre of absurd seems to be a reaction to the "collapse of moral, religious, political, and social structures" following the two World Wars of the Twentieth Century. (History of Theatre of the Absurd in Literature)

Albert Camus propagated a philosophical idea that life essentially is without any meaning. This may be considered as existential philosophy. Camus' philosophy with absurd is experimented in his book *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), first published in French, in which the punishment of Sisyphus, the protagonist, continues for ever. Camus probably wants to establish the situation of mankind through Sisyphus's punishment. However, amidst such ruthless situation lay hope for mankind, hope for ultimate meeting with God. Thus, theatre of absurd not only propagates mankind's hopeless situation and nothingness, but it also believes in the existence of God. Thus, this theatre is an answer to earlier scientists and

philosophers like Frederik Nietzsche who had declared that the world is Godless and if at all there is the one, God is dead. (Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, 1). Writers like Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov etc. presented a world full of struggle, disparity, extremity, hopelessness and endless wait. Martin Esslin comments, "Basically, the theatre of the Absurd expresses the loss of feeling that the world makes sense, and can be reduced into an integrated system of values – which is due to religion – that had been apparent since the end of the First World War ... disillusionment of the period after the Second World War." ('Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf as the Theatre of Absurd', 2)

The Theatre of the Absurd exhibits and shows the absurdity and illogicality of the world we live in. According to this theatre, there is nothing which is settled, pre-decided and fixed, no conclusions can be made and whatever few actions mankind is involved in, are meaningless. Absurdity gets reflected in human actions which are circular and repetitive in nature. For example, in *The Bald Soprano*, the man attempts to tie his shoe, a mundane act, is presented as a fantastic act, whereas the appearance of rhinoceroses is not at all significant. In *Waiting for Godot*, aimless running around and searching by Pozzo and Lucky are least important than Vladimir and Estragon's sitting idly doing nothing and waiting.

In his book *Absurd Drama* (1965), Martin Esslin explains the purpose and meaning of absurd clearly and unambiguously thus:

"The Theatre of the Absurd attacks the comfortable certainties of religious or political orthodoxy... (and) brings (audience) face to face with the harsh facts of the human situation as these writers see it... It is a challenge to accept the human condition as it is, in all its mystery and absurdity, and to bear it with dignity, nobly, responsibly... because ultimately man is alone in a meaningless world. The shedding of easy solutions, of comforting illusions, may be painful, but it leaves behind it a sense of freedom and relief. And that is why, in the last resort, the Theatre of the Absurd does not provoke tears of despair but the laughter of liberation."

The theatre of the absurd shows and proves that the world is an incomprehensible place. The spectators see the happenings on the stage entirely from the outside, without ever understanding the full meaning of these strange patterns of events, as newly arrived visitors might watch life in a country of which they have not yet mastered the language. The confrontation of the audience with characters and happenings which they are not quite able to comprehend makes it impossible for them to share the aspirations and emotions depicted in the play.

In absurd, the world is being shown as complex, harsh, and absurd and as difficult to interpret as reality in itself. The audience is yet forced on to

attempt their own interpretation to wonder what it is all about. In that sense, audience / readers are being invited to school their critical faculties, to train themselves in adjusting to reality. As the world is being represented as highly complex and devoid of a clear-cut purpose or design, there will always be an infinite number of possible interpretations. (www.semanticscholar.org, 13)

If a good play must have a cleverly constructed story, these plays have not story or plot to speak of. If a good play is judged by subtlety of characterization and motivation, these are often without recognizable characters and presented the audience with almost mechanical puppets. If a good play had to have a fully explained theme, which is neatly exposed and finally solved, these often had neither a beginning nor an end. If a good play was to hold the mirror of the mannerisms of the age in finely, there were no such things. If a good play relied on witty repartee and pointed dialogue, the plays of the absurd dramatists consisted of incoherent babblings.

These types of plays pursue ends quite differently from the conventional plays and therefore use quite different methods. They can be judged only by the standards laid down for the theatre of the absurd. The dramatists whose works are considered and categorized as the theatre of the absurd, however, do not form part of any self-proclaimed or self-conscious scholar movement. On the contrary, Bijoya Chandra Padhy argues that each of these writers is an individual who regarded himself as a lone outsider, cut off and isolated in his private world. Each has his own personal approach to both subject matter and form; his own roots, sources, and background. If they have a good deal in common, it is because their work most sensitively mirrors and reflects the preoccupations and anxieties, the emotions and thinking of many of their contemporaries in the Western world.

7.4 THEMES

A wide variety of subject matter is dealt by absurdist plays. However, there are certain themes or ideas which reoccur time and again. The themes which occur frequently in the plays of these playwrights are meaningless world and isolation of an individual. They, in all probability, present the mood, behaviour as well as reaction of the people of the time, mostly Europe. These themes perhaps testify, in the words of Martin Esslin, that the “certitudes” and “assumptions” of previous generations had “been tested and found wanting, that they [were] discredited as cheap and somewhat childish illusions” (Esslin, p 23).

Absurd playwrights were perhaps not conscious of being part of a movement during the course of writing their plays. They each thought of oneself as “a lone outsider, cut off and isolated in [his own] private world” (Esslin 22). This seems to be the reason why most of the plays focus on isolation of the individual, or man’s inability to connect with

others. For example, the best known, appreciated and performed play is perhaps *Waiting for Godot* (1952) by Samuel Beckett. Both the main characters, Vladimir and Estragon, are tramps that while away their time aimlessly on the outskirts of society. Despite in the company of each other, they feel isolated from one another. One of the indications of their potent sense of isolation is their inability to converse with each other effectively.

Meaningless World:

Decline in religious faith is largely responsible for the belief that life is purposeless and that there is no meaning beyond human life. Eugene Ionesco, in *The Chairs*, suggests this meaninglessness through two characters that are busy in preparing chairs for invisible guests. These invisible guests are visiting to learn about the meaning of life. The orator, who ironically is deaf-mute, himself, declares all these things.

Isolation of an Individual:

Almost all the absurd plays focus on isolation of the individual, or in other words, a human being's incapability to connect with others. Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952), excellently explores this idea. The two protagonists, Vladimir and Estragon, are never able to adequately communicate with each other and with the world outside and their conversation becomes repetitive, monotonous and meaningless.

In absurd dramas, repetition, circular structure, static quality, absence of cause and effect, and lack of apparent progression suggest monotony and purposelessness in the modern world. These plays present chaos and basic disorientation of modern man. Works of the writers of the theatre of the absurd are characterized by lack of logic, unconventional dialogue, rejection of conventional characterization and plot. They all express the idea that human existence is essentially meaningless and that in this world true communication is impossible. The idea of the absurd implies that this world is meaningless and that human existence itself is essentially meaningless.

Everything that happens seems to be beyond rational motivation, happening at random or through the demented caprice of an unaccountable idiot fate. Yet, these wildly extravagant tragic farces and farcical tragedies, although they have faced a lot of protests and scandals, do arouse interest and are received with laughter and thoughtful respect.

7.5 PLAYWRIGHTS

Playwrights who practiced the theatre of absurd are Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, Harold Pinter, Luigi Pirandello, Tom Stoppard, Edward Albee, etc. Eugène Ionesco play's *The Bald Soprano* (1950) helped a great deal in popularizing the absurd movement.

The absurd movement seems to be a Paris-based phenomenon. Some of its exponents, such as Jean Genet, Boris Vian and Jean Tardieu, were born in France. Many other absurdist activists came from other countries to live in France: for example, Samuel Beckett from Ireland; Eugène Ionesco from Romania; Arthur Adamov from Russia; Alejandro Jodorowsky from Chile, Fernando Arrabal from Spain, etc. As the influence of the absurdist playwrights spread to other countries, many playwrights started experimenting with the techniques. In England, exponents of the theatre of the absurd were Harold Pinter, Tom Stoppard, N. F. Simpson, James Saunders, David Campton, and others. In America, Edward Albee, Sam Shepard, Jack Gelber, and John Guare are some of the playwrights who are involved with the theatre of absurd. In Poland, Tadeusz Różewicz, Sławomir Mrożek, Tadeusz Kantor, etc. practiced absurd theatre. In Italy Dino Buzzati and in Germany Peter Weiss, Wolfgang Hildesheimer, and Günter Grass experimented with theatre of absurd.

These playwrights were influenced by certain movements and genres, for example, Elizabethan tragicomedy, formal experimentation, pataphysics, surrealism, Dadaism, and most importantly, existentialism.

Elizabethan Tragicomedy:

Martin Esslin considers William Shakespeare as an important influence on absurd theatre. Shakespeare's tragicomedy has attracted these playwrights. Friedrich Dürrenmatt argues: "Comedy alone is suitable for us ... indeed, many of Shakespeare's tragedies are already really comedies out of which the tragic arises." ('Problems of the Theatre'). Plays like Ionesco's *Macbett* and Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* prove the point.

In *Endgame*, Nell ponders, "Nothing is funnier than unhappiness ... it's the most comical thing in the world".

Formal Experimentation:

As an experimental genre, many absurd playwrights employ techniques borrowed from earlier innovators. Luigi Pirandello, author of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, is regarded as theatrical experimentalist who desired to collapse the fourth wall. According to W. B. Worthen, *Six Characters* and other Pirandello plays use "Metatheatre — roleplaying, plays-within-plays, and a flexible sense of the limits of stage and illusion — to examine a highly-theatricalized vision of identity".

Pataphysics, Surrealism, and Dadaism:

Pataphysics, surrealism, and Dadaism are the three movements closely connected with each other and not easily separable. Pataphysics means "the science of imaginary solutions". Alfred Jarry, the author of *Ubu*, experiments with this technique in 1890s. Surrealist playwright

Artaud's 'The Theatre of Cruelty' is an important philosophical treatise exploring this genre. Artaud believed that the true strength of theatre was in its visceral impact. Dadaism is based on irrationality and negates the accepted laws of beauty. Playwrights who experimented with Dadaism were Tristan Tzara, Adamov, Arrabal, Paul Eluard, André Breton, etc.

Existentialism:

Many absurd playwrights followed Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy presented through *Being and Nothingness* (1956). Sartre believed that good is only an illusion and evil is a nothingness which arises upon the ruins of Good. However, absurd playwrights like Ionesco firmly believed that there is a difference between existentialism and absurd in that the theatre of absurd suggests failure of a human being without suggesting any solution for the failure. Samuel Beckett seems to believe that life is repetitive where end-result of everything is going to be the same and everything is meaningless, whatsoever and howsoever important it may look like.

The plays of Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, and Eugene Ionesco have been performed with astonishing success in France, Germany, Scandinavia, and the English-speaking countries. These plays confront their public with a bewildering experience, a veritable barrage of wildly irrational, often nonsensical events that seem to go counter to all accepted standards of stage convention. In these plays, some of which are labelled "anti-plays", neither the time nor the place of the action are ever clearly stated.

Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is combination of realism and the absurd. The dialogue in these plays consists of meaningless clichés and the mechanical, circular repetition of stereotyped phrase.

7.6 CHARACTERS

Characters in the absurdist plays are hardly recognizable human beings and are not convincingly motivated. The characters hardly have any individuality and often even lack a name. Moreover, halfway through the action they tend to change their nature completely. Pozzo and Lucky in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, for example, appear as master and slave at one moment only to return after a while with reversal in their respective positions.

7.7 LANGUAGE

Absurd playwrights seem to believe that language cannot convey the human situation exactly as it is. They claim that language is empty and communication is meaningless. That is why the dialogues in absurdist plays often seems to be meaningless babble. Martin Esslin suggests that "The theatre of the absurd is to a very considerable extent concerned ...

devoid of meaning. The conversation at the party ... is suddenly revealed as an exchange of mere meaningless banalities. The people talking about the weather... anything at all. In other words, from being a noble instrument of genuine communication ... filling empty spaces”.

Language of these absurd plays is often dislocated, clichéd, full of pun, repetitions and non-conclusive. For example, characters in Ionesco’s *The Bald Soprano* (1950) talk while sitting, repeating everything to the point from where it looks utter nonsense. The purpose of this is to expose incompetency of verbal communication. The outwardly ridiculous and purposeless behaviour and incompetent talk arouse sense of farce. However, inwardly there is a serious message of psychological chaos and suffering. This reflects the influence of comic tradition presented by commedia dell’arte, vaudeville, and music hall along with such theatre arts as mime and acrobatics. Moreover, the impact of ideas as expressed by the Surrealist, Existentialist, and Expressionist schools and the writings of Franz Kafka is evident.

7.8 LET US SUM UP

Thus, theatre of the absurd realized the world about the purposelessness of purpose of life. It also revealed artistically that life is meaningless and there is no purpose in finding a meaning to it. The absurd playwrights deliberately collapsed structure, characters and language to prove that there is no meaning to anything in this life except meaninglessness. Indeed, these were greatly and superbly presented artistic works presented at the time when the questions about existence of God were raised.

7.9 KEY WORDS

Absurd Not in consistent with reason, logic and common sense
Incoherent: Illogical, not meaningful
Collapse Break down, shatter, unconventional
Structure Unity, coherence, construction, meaning, arrangement

7.10 BOOKS SUGGESTED

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- **Check your progress 1:**

Q.1 Answer the following questions based on your reading of the unit.

1. Explain what is absurd with support of various examples.

2. Write in detail about various themes dealt by absurd playwrights.

3. Write a note on the characters presented in absurd plays.

4. Choose correct alternative from those given below each:

Q.2 choose the correct options from the given below.

1. Who is the author of the essay 'The Theatre of the Absurd'?
 - a. Jacob Martins
 - b. Martin Esslin
 - c. Luke Esslin
 - d. Martin Luther

2. Samuel Beckett is known for which famous absurd play?
 - a. Birthday Party
 - b. Bad Soprano
 - c. Waiting for Godot
 - d. Chairs

3. Albert Camus' which work philosophises absurd?
 - a. Letter to Kafka
 - b. The Myth of Pozzo
 - c. Seven Character in Search
 - d. The Myth of Sisyphus

4. Eugene Ionesco's which play has earned fame as an absurd play?
 - a. The Chairs
 - b. Upside Down
 - c. A Doll's House
 - d. Endgame

5. 'The science of imaginary solutions' means.....
 - a. Metaphysics
 - b. Pataphysics
 - c. Metamorphosis
 - d. Tetrphysics

Answers:

Q.2 Key to the MCQ:

1. b 2. c 3. d 4. a 5. b

UNIT : 8**WAITING FOR GODOT : III****- Samuel Beckett****:: STRUCTURE ::**

- 8.1 Objective**
- 8.2 Introduction**
- 8.3 Alfred Jerry**
- 8.4 Albert Camus**
- 8.5 Arthur Adamov**
- 8.6 Bertolt Brecht**
- 8.7 Edward Albee**
- 8.8 Eugene Ionesco**
- 8.9 Eugene O'Neill**
- 8.10 Harold Pinter**
- 8.11 Jean Genet**
- 8.12 Jean Paul Sartre**
- 8.13 Tom Stoppard**
- 8.14 Key words**
- 8.15 Check your progress**

8.1 OBJECTIVE

In this unit we shall

- Discuss various playwrights and philosophers propagating the absurd
- Discuss various plays and theories by these playwrights and philosophers
- Discuss how various elements of absurd are permeated through these writers

After completing the Unit, you should be able to understand

- Absurd Theatre and playwrights involved with it
- Various playwrights and their contribution in the Theatre of Absurd

8.2 INTRODUCTION

Theatre of the Absurd is the post-World War II phenomenon and is applied to European playwrights of the late 1950s. The style of theatre evolved from their plays resulted into decline in faith in religion, nationalism and political ideologies. Martin Esslin was probably the first to introduce the term ‘Absurd’ in his essay ‘The Theatre of the Absurd’ which was written in 1960. However, the mood and dramaturgy of absurdity were practiced as early as 1896 in Alfred Jarry's French play *Ubu Roi* (Ubu the King).

The ideas that construct these plays decide their structure. Absurdist playwrights, therefore, did never bother about the logical structures offered by traditional theatre. There is little or almost negligible dramatic action which is otherwise found in a traditional drama. However, characters in these plays seriously play their parts, their seriousness into action emphasises that nothing, which is extraordinary, happens which can alter or bring about change in their existence. In Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952), there is no action in the play and at the same time whatever little action the play presents is almost timeless and of circular quality. The play presents two lost humans, usually played as tramps or vagabonds, spend their days waiting, but without any certainty of whom they are waiting for or of whether he, or it, will ever come.

Many absurd playwrights have contributed significantly. Some of them are discussed below. However, since Thomas Beckett is discussed separately and exclusively, this playwright has been omitted from the present discussion. Moreover, many absurd philosophers have attempted to explain the absurd. A few significant of these philosophers are also included here. The playwrights are discussed in alphabetical order and hence do not carry order of any sort.

8.3 ALFRED JERRY

Alfred Jarry (1873–1907) was a French writer who is best known for *Ubu Roi* (1896). He has the distinction of coining the term and philosophical concept of [pataphysics](#), which means using absurd irony to portray symbolic truths. He wrote novels, poems, short plays, operas, essays and journalism. His texts are considered examples of [absurdist literature](#) and [postmodern philosophy](#).

Ubu Roi's main character is Père Ubu who is a strange and ugly character. He becomes the King of Poland. Ubu symbolizes absolute stupidity and greed as his lust for power drives him to abuse his authority and commit cruelty in the name of principles.

Jarry has subsequently written *Ubu Roi* sequel: *Ubu Enchained* (1900), *Ubu on the Mound* (1901) and *Ubu Cuckolded* (1944).

8.4 ALBERT CAMUS

Albert Camus (1913–1960) was born in Algeria and then migrated to France. He was a philosopher, an author, and a journalist. He was awarded with the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1957. He is probably one of the youngest recipients of this award.

Albert Camus wanted to establish the absurdity of the human condition in *The Myth of Sisyphus* and *The Rebel*. *The Myth of Sisyphus* examines absurdity of man's condition and an attempt to provide a rationale for not committing suicide in the face of such absurdity. Camus's world appears to be "meaningless" as there is lack of absolute.

Camus questions [human condition](#) and discusses the world as an absurd place. In 1942, he published *L'Étranger*. This is the story of a man living an absurd life. He also wrote a play about the Roman emperor [Caligula](#) who seems to be in the pursuit of an absurd logic. Camus's collection of essays, *Noces* ([Nuptials](#)) and *Betwixt and Between*. In these essays, he reflects his experience of the absurd. All these experiences are reflected through novel *The Plague* also.

Camus explains absurd as "confrontation between human need and the unreasonable silence of the world." (*John Foley*) Camus's *Letters to a German Friend* (1945) are very important explanation of absurdity. *The Revue Libre* (1943), the *Cahiers de Libération* (1944) and *Libertés* (1945) are also important contributions.

Camus cannot see any reconciliation between the existence of God and the existence of unwarranted suffering. In short, reason cannot comprehend how God can exist in the face of such evil. Since there is such evil, God cannot then exist.

8.5 ARTHUR ADAMOV

Arthur Adamov was born in 1908 in Russia. He studied at Geneva and France. Antonin Artaud's influence on Adamov has been tremendous. Arthur Adamov, along with Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco, made efforts to create art of the theatre appealing "histrionic sensibility". (*Carlos Lynes, Jr.* 48)

Adamov's first play *La Parodie* (1947) was produced in June 1952, at the Theatre de Lancry. The play has a prologue followed by twelve rapid scenes. There are sights and sounds like whistles, the roar of motorcars, police sirens, sudden flashes of light from headlights, etc. They all represent disorder in the society. However, in the backdrop of all these, one comes across a variety of characters who appear to be absurd,

grotesque, naïve, living in mechanical rigidity in bearing, action and speech. The play has almost no story as these people meet without seeing one another, they speak but language remains unclear.

L'Invasion (1949) was produced at the Studio des Champs-Elysee, France. The play presents a group of people brought together in a single room which in itself is stuffed heavily with furniture and disorderly piled documents. The play presents an author who is absent and these documents are his manuscript full of illegible notes. At the end of the play, these manuscripts are torn into pieces as they remain unsolved. The characters in *L'Invasion* suffer from solitude and failure of communication. The title “invasion” probably refers to disorder within the characters.

Adamov's third play, *La Grande et la Petite Manuvre* (1950), was produced on November 11, 1950, at the Theatre des Noctambules in Paris. The play presents nightmarish atmosphere of a contemporary police-state city. There is conflict between disorder and brutality, revolutionary action and dictatorial repressive measures etc. The protagonist, representing common human, is caught in the political and social disorder of the day. Such is the human condition.

Le Professeur Taranne (1951) presents a university professor who is unable to live up to the public role assigned to him. This professor tries to conceal his insufficiency by imitating and plagiarizing a scholar's work. He then lives under fear of getting exposed. This fear of exposure unbalances even his reason.

The title of *Tous contre tous* (1952) presents political and human tragedy of the time. Here the inhuman reigns supreme, as the government exercises senseless tyranny and maintains absolute authority using “scientific” propaganda techniques supported by ruthless power.

8.6 BERTOLT BRECHT

Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) was a German theatre practitioner, playwright and poet. The plays written by Brecht during his years in exile have become famous. Some of the important of them are *The Threepenny Opera* (1928), *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1941), *The Life of Galileo* (1943), *The Good Woman of Setzuan* (1943), *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, etc.

Brecht's early plays are anarchic, nihilistic, and antibourgeois. The playwright seems to present antisocial elements such as adventurers, pirates and prostitutes. After converting to Marxism, Brecht wrote didactic or morality plays. His later plays are combination of Marxist beliefs and realistic characters.

Brecht is also known for epic theatre. He has elaborated theory of epic theatre in *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* and in *A Little Organum for the Theater* (1951). Brecht shows difference between epic theatre and the Aristotelian theatre. A dramatic theatre has tightly

constructed plot which helps in creating suspense, whereas in epic theatre there are loosely connected scenes helping the audience focus on the play.

8.7 EDWARD ALBEE

Edward Albee was an American playwright known for absurd plays. He was awarded with prestigious Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Edward Albee's plays are full of sentimentalism. These plays propound an idea that life is very bad and that people are untrustworthy and bad.

Albee's first play *The Zoo Story* (1958) was performed at New York. This established Albee as an absurd playwright. *The Zoo Story* deals with social criticism. The play has themes of isolation, loneliness, miscommunication as anathematization, social disparity and dehumanization in a materialistic world. The characters in this play are just cartoons. The playwright's treatment of romantic theme and gothic violence evade the social issues from which he takes his milieu, his characters and his idiom.

Albee's second drama is *The Death of Bessie Smith* (1959). The play presents a Negro, Bessie Smith, a singer, who is bled to death as Bessie is denied entry into an all-white hospital after an automobile accident. Interestingly, Bessie Smith never appears in the play. Albee's confusion of satire and Gothicism vitiates his characterization and the dramatic events.

The American Dream (1961) satirises contemporary life. The crossed American flags dominates the set. The play opens with three familiar characters: Mommy, a man-eater; Daddy, emasculated; and Grandma, a shrewd vernacular heroine. The play's opening exemplifies Albee's connection between social and sexual themes.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? is probably the most famous of Albee's plays. The play presents a bad marriage. The play concerns battle between George, a humanist, and Nick, a scientist. In an Albee style, against backdrop of bad marriage is presented a larger canvas, that of nightmares caused by fear of science. One of the most outstanding features of the play is Albee's rich use of language.

Apart from these plays, Edward Albee has also written plays like *A Delicate Balance* (1966), *All Over* (1971), *Seascape* (1975), *The Lady from Dubuque* (1980), *The Man Who Had Three Arms* (1982), *Finding the Sun* (1983), *Marriage Play* (1987), etc., just to name a few.

8.8 EUGENE IONESCO

Eugene Ionesco (1909–1994) was a Romanian-French playwright. His plays depict solitude and insignificance of human existence. Ionesco can be considered a traditional playwright. His distinction is in his techniques and in exploration of farce and in combining farce with tragedy.

Ionesco's plays are very innovative. His plays are *The Bald Soprano* (1948), *Jack, or The Submission* (1950), *The Lesson* (1950), *Salutations* (1950), *The Chairs* (1951), *The Future is in Eggs* (1951), *Victims of Duty* (1952), *The New Tenant* (1953), *The Killer* (1959), *Rhinoceros* (1959), *Hunger and Thirst* (1964), *Macbett* (1972), etc. Ionesco's plays are often considered "anti-play" because they express feelings of alienation and the impossibility and futility of communication with surreal comic force, parodying the conformism of the bourgeoisie and conventional theatrical forms.

Ionesco's perhaps most celebrated play *The Chairs* describes the end of a marriage. An Old Man of ninety-five years and his wife, ninety-four, open the play with some verbal uninteresting chat. Gradually the author changes the tone and narrows dialogues until the activity reaches a climax. *The Chairs* is a theatricalized portrait of a death.

8.9 EUGENE O'NEILL

Eugene O'Neill (1888–1953) was an American playwright who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He is one of the firsts to introduce techniques of realism propounded by Anton Chekhov, Henrik Ibsen, August Strindberg, etc. O'Neill's drama *Long Day's Journey into Night* is considered to be one of the finest plays in the 20th century USA.

Eugene O'Neill is often considered as the founder of modern American theatre as well as the founder of serious American drama. He is the first important American dramatist to explore serious themes and experiment with different theatrical techniques. He combined tragic and comic elements.

Eugene O'Neill is influenced by Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's irrationalism which compelled him to limitations of his country and depict absurdity of modern human existence. O'Neill's absurdity is explored with the help of "repetition", "faithlessness" and "incommunicability". However, the playwright seems to be optimistic about human existence. O'Neill's characters display the indefatigable spirit in their fighting for an authentic way of existence.

Some of his important plays are:

Long Day's Journey into Night, *The Hairy Ape*, *Desire Under the Alms*, *The Great God Brown*, *Servitude*, *Anna Christie*, *Strange Interlude*, *Ah, Wilderness!*, *Beyond the Horizon*, etc.

8.10 HAROLD PINTER

Harold Pinter (1930–2008) is one of the most influential British playwright, screenwriter, director and actor. He has written more than 25 plays. His best known plays are *The Room* (1957), *The Birthday Party* (1957), *The Homecoming* (1964), *No Man's Land* (1975), *Betrayal* (1978) and *The Dumb Waiter*.

Pinter presents an individual's fear and explores the cause of disruption developing from emotional crisis. His plays present problem of self and sense of isolation of the human condition. His characters are confronted with the picture of a modern human defeated by societal forces around him/her because of human's inability to communicate with fellow humans. The constant threat of disruption is visible throughout his plays.

Pinter's best known play *The Birthday Party* resembles with Franz Kafka's *The Trial*. An ordinary man is threatened by two strangers for an unknown reason. Harold Pinter does not provide any details about his characters, except age and sex. It is up to readers or audience to learn about relations and motivations of the characters during the play. Uncertain family relationship is one of the often recurring themes in Pinter's plays. Moreover, Pinter extensively uses pauses, silences, repetitions, unusual and illogical talks and linguistic inconsistencies. The fragmented language in his plays makes his drama very intriguing, to the point of making it difficult to interpret plays.

8.11 JEAN GENET

Jean Genet (1910–1986) was a French novelist, playwright, poet, essayist, and political activist. His prominent works include the novels *The Thief's Journal* and *Our Lady of the Flowers* and the plays *The Balcony*, *The Maids* and *The Screens*.

Genet's plays present struggle between outcasts and their oppressors. In his plays, social identities present a more complex layering of the dramatic fiction and its inherent potential for theatricality and role-play. *The Maids* (1947) is about two housemaids who role-play the murder of Mistress. The action of the play reveal that their fantasy of killing their Mistress is actually their desire of doing the same. Action in *The Balcony* (1957) is located in an unnamed city witnessing a revolutionary uprising in the streets. Almost entire action takes place in a brothel which serves as a [microcosm](#) of prevailing threat in the world outside.

The Blacks (1959) exposes racial prejudice while exploring black identity. A troupe of black actors re-enact the trial and murder of a white woman. The play presents a violent assertion of Black identity and anti-white hostility. Jean Genet's *The Screens* (1964) is a political play showing detailed account of the Algerian War of Independence.

Genet's plays are written in the expressionist manner and are designed to shock and implicate an audience of its hypocrisy and complicity. The playwright's Theatre of Hatred attempts to create the maximum dramatic power from a social or political situation without endorsing the political platitudes of either the right or the left.

Jean Genet's other novels are *Miracle of the Rose* (1945–46), *Funeral Rites* (1947) and *Querelle of Brest* (1947).

8.12 JEAN PAUL SARTRE

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was a French philosopher playwright, novelist, screenwriter, political activist, biographer, and literary critic. He was one of the key figures in the philosophy of existentialism. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1964.

Sartre deals with the problem of possibility of human knowledge and describes the world as chaotic, without purpose and irreducible. Sartre has concluded that man is separated from the world she/he lives in. Sartre considers freedom as, "The writer, a free man addressing free men has only one subject – freedom."

A human is merely an object in the world of physical things and is filled with consciousness that automatically separates him/her from this physical world. When a person attempts to view oneself as a thing, he/she is compelled to question one's own existence, and yet by the very nature of his/her consciousness is also compelled, in all integrity, to accept the futility of his/her question. Such is a person's "absurd" situation.

8.13 TOM STOPPARD

Sir Tom Stoppard (b. 1937) is born in Czechoslovakia and settled in England. He has written plays for television, radio, film, and stage. His plays are *Arcadia*, *The Coast of Utopia*, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, *Professional Foul*, *The Real Thing*, *Travesties*, *The Invention of Love*, and *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. His work covers the themes of human rights, censorship and political freedom.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (1966–67) has gained recognition. His comedies *The Real Inspector Hound* (1968) and *After Magritte* (1970) create humour through reframing and juxtaposition. *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour* (1977) is inspired by a meeting with a Russian exile. Apart from *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*, *Dogg's Hamlet*, *Cahoot's Macbeth* (1979), *The Coast of Utopia* (2002), *Rock 'n' Roll* (2006), and two television plays *Professional Foul* (1977) and *Squaring the Circle* (1984) deal with themes of censorship, abuse of human rights and state sponsored repression.

Stoppard's later works like *The Real Thing* (1982) discusses meta-theatrical structure to explore the suffering that adultery can produce and *The Invention of Love* (1997) exposes the pain of passion. *Arcadia* (1993) deals with chaos theory, historiography, and landscape gardening.

Tom Stoppard writes about anxiety and confusion of life, helplessness of the individual caught up in forces beyond reason and the loss of identity

and faith. He describes lack of absolute values, problem of freedom and uncertainty of all knowledge and perception through his plays. The playwright's world is almost unbelievable and irrational filled with cruelty and pain. His characters are victims of calamities which ultimately destroy them.

8.14 LET US SUM UP

After discussing in detail about the absurd play *Waiting for Godot* in previous two units, this unit gives us the idea of Theatre of the Absurd in detail. We have also studied in brief about various playwrights from Briton, U.S.A. and other countries and got the short introduction of their major works.

8.14 KEY WORDS

Epic theatre	According to Britannica, it is a form of drama presenting a series of loosely connected scenes that avoid illusion and often interrupt the story line to address the audience directly with analysis, argument, or documentation.
Aristotelian theatre	Play with tightly constructed plot creating suspense
Illusion	a misleading image

8.15 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1 The questions presented here have answers in the above. Find out answers and write them:

1. Prepare a note on Albert Camus's contribution to absurd.

2. Explain what is metaphysics with reference to Alfred Jerry's plays.

3. Write in detail about Arthur Adamov's absurd plays.

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❖ **Answers:**

Check your progress 2:

Key to MCQ:

1. – d
- 2.- b
- 3.- a
- 4.- C
- 5.- d

:: STRUCTURE ::

- 9.0 Objectives**
- 9.1 Introduction**
- 9.2 Osborne's Life**
- 9.3 Literary Contribution of Osborne**
- 9.4 Let Us Sum Up**
- 9.5 Key Words**
- 9.6 Suggested Reading**
- ❖ **Answers**

9.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit you are going to

- Know the biographical details of the prominent dramatist of mid-20th century: John Osborne and his works
- Understand how Osborne's personal life affected his writing.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

John Osborne, the Oscar-winning screenwriter, has been regarded as one of the most noteworthy dramatists of the 1950s. He along with a group of the playwrights transformed the English-speaking theatre. His life and career had many ups and downs.

9.2 OSBORNE'S LIFE

John Osborne was born on the 12th December, 1929 in a suburb of London. He came of a poor middle class family. His father, Thomas Godfrey Osborne, was a professional artist and a copywriter and his mother, Nellie Beatrice, was a bar-maid. He adored his father and hated his mother. In 1941, his father died. Osborne used the earnings from a life insurance settlement to send himself to Belmont College, a private boarding school. Osborne was thrown out after only a few years for attacking the headmaster. He received a certificate of completion for his upper school work, but never attended a college or university. There, he was unhappy for most of the time. Then, Osborne returned home to his

mother in London and for a short period of time, tried trade journalism. He also worked several odd jobs before he found a niche in the theatre.

In 1948 Osborne worked as tutor to new actors in a touring drama company. He himself acted for the first time at the Empire Theatre, Sheffield. Soon he became an actor-manager and thus managed the staging of plays. The play, *The Devil Inside Him*, written in collaboration with Stella Linden was staged in 1950. He married an actress, Pamela Elizabeth Lane in June 1951. Later, he collaborated with Anthony Creighton and wrote two plays *Personal Enemy* and *Epitaph for George Dillon*. The play, *Look Back in Anger*, written in a short period of only a few weeks, was summarily rejected by the agents and production companies to whom Osborne first submitted the play. Finally, it was picked up by George Devine for production with his failing Royal Court Theatre. Both Osborne and the Royal Court Theatre were struggling to survive financially and both saw the production of *Look Back in Anger* as a risk. After opening night, the play received mixed responses. It received a handful of glowing reviews from some influential theatre critics. And Osborne soon made his noticeable presence in the list of the most promising young playwrights in British theatre.

His play, *The Entertainer* was first performed in 1957 and in July the same year *Look Back in Anger* was staged at the World Youth Festival in Moscow. In New York it won the Drama Critics Award for the Best play of 1957. In August 1957 he ended his marriage to Pamela and married Mary Ure, an actress. With Tony Richardson, he founded Woodfall Films Society and produced a film of *Look Back in Anger*, followed by *The Entertainer*. In 1963 his marriage to Mary Ure ended and he married the critic and journalist, Penelope Gilliatt. In 1964 'Inadmissible Evidence' was staged in London. He received the Film Academy's Oscar Award for his screen play of *Tom Jones* in the same year. He directed a few plays performed at Royal Court Theatre. In 1967 his marriage to Penelope Gilliatt was dissolved and in 1968 he married the actress, Jill Bennett.

Later, Osborne looked seriously interested in films. The film versions of some of his plays including that of *Look Back in Anger* have been quite successful and satisfactory. More and more of his plays are now being televised and appreciated greatly. Osborne continued to work in the artistic and entertainment worlds through the 1970's and 80's. He wrote plays, but also ventured into writing screenplays, television adaptations, and autobiography. Osborne made several appearances as an actor during this period. He starred in several popular Hollywood films including *Get Carter* and *Flash Gordon*. Later in life, he received numerous awards for his work including a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Writer's Guild in Britain.

Osborne remained angry until the end of his life. Many women seem to have found his anger attractive; he had more than his fair share of lovers in addition to wives, and he was not kind to them. He was married five times; the first four ended in divorce, the last in his death:

- 1) Pamela Lane (1951-1957; inspired Alison Porter from *Look Back in Anger*)
- 2) Mary Ure (1957-1963)
- 3) Penelope Gilliatt (1963-1968)
- 4) Jill Bennett (1968-1977)
- 5) Helen Dawson (former arts journalist and critic for *The Observer*, 1978-1994)

The annoyance with women continued even with his daughter as he used to behave cruelly with his daughter, Nolan, born from his marriage with Penelope Gilliatt. He spitefully abused his young daughter and finally drove her out of his house when she was aged seventeen. Then they never met or talked to each other again.

After a serious liver crisis in 1987, Osborne became a diabetic, injecting twice a day. He died from complications from his diabetes at the age of 65 at his home in Clunton, near Craven Arms, Shropshire. He was buried in St George's churchyard, Clun, Shropshire alongside his last wife, the critic Helen Dawson, who died in 2004.

9.3 LITERARY CONTRIBUTION OF OSBORNE

In 1949 Osborne co-wrote his first play, *The Devil Inside Him*, with his married lover Stella Linden. He described it as a 'melodrama about a poetic Welsh loon' who murders a girl when he realises that she is trying to frame him for sexual assault. *Devil* was briefly performed in Huddersfield in 1950 but was largely forgotten about during Osborne's lifetime, as were six other early plays. Osborne, in writing, especially focused on what he knew —the plight of being young, educated, and filled with contempt for the disappointing results of welfare reform, unfair class structure, and living in the harsh aftermath of World War II while being too young to have participated in it. In his writing one may clearly observe his anguish towards his mother, his wives and his children too. Almost all his plays have created controversy. The government censored many of his shows by forcing scenes to be eliminated and shutting some productions down entirely. Finally, with *A Patriot for Me*, a play based on a true scandal involving a British spy, Osborne helped to end censorship that had been imposed by Lord Chamberlain. Osborne truly changed the theatrical landscape and is one of the most important British playwrights of the 20th century.

It was *Look Back in Anger*, Osborne's eighth play (often mistakenly referred to as his first), which brought his work to public attention in 1956. The breakdown of his marriage to actor Pamela Lane was the reason for writing the play *Look Back in Anger* (1956). Having completed the script in the spring of 1955 Osborne submitted it to the newly-formed English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre in Sloane Square, London. George Devine, the Theatre's artistic director, was impressed by the play's unusual outspokenness and decided not only to produce it but

also to help Osborne financially by taking him on as an actor and script reader. *Look Back in Anger* gave the strongest boost to the concept of the 'Angry Young Man'; the tragi-comic depiction of failure, the liar, and the irresponsible showed him strengthened up with optimism and nostalgia for a past that always seemed better than the present. Written in seventeen days, *Look Back in Anger* was largely autobiographical, based on his time living and arguing with Pamela Lane in cramped accommodation in Derby while she cheated on him with a local dentist. It was submitted to agents all over London and returned swiftly with a response of rejection. In his autobiography, Osborne writes:

"The speed with which it had been returned was not surprising, but its aggressive dispatch did give me a kind of relief. It was like being grasped at the upper arm by a testy policeman and told to move on."

Finally, it was sent to the newly-formed English Stage Company at London's Royal Court Theatre. Formed by actor-manager and artistic director George Devine, the company's first three productions had been flops and it urgently needed a success just to survive. Devine was prepared to gamble on this play because he saw in it a fierce and scowling articulation of a new post-war spirit. Osborne was living poorly on a leaky houseboat on the River Thames at the time. Devine was so keen to contact Osborne that he rowed out to the boat to tell him he would like to make the play the fourth production. The play was directed by Tony Richardson and starred Kenneth Haigh, Mary Ure and Alan Bates. *Look Back in Anger* opened in May 1956 and after a slow start became a huge hit. Its electrifying rhetoric and emotional intensity have long been credited with reviving British theatre. Most of the critics opine that *Look Back in Anger*, like his other few plays are an insightful commentary on England's social and political situation during the 1950s. However, later critics consider *Look Back in Anger* to be a conventional and disappointing play, more a cultural achievement than a literary one.

Osborne's second play for the Royal Court was *The Entertainer* (1957) firmly established Osborne's importance in postwar British drama. The play starred Laurence Olivier as faded music hall star Archie Rice. This play, Essentially a deep evaluation of three generations of the Rice family, *The Entertainer* exhibits one more time Osborne's gift for counterblast and his deep compassion for failures. In addition to being a portrait of three generations of an English middle-class theatrical family, *The Entertainer* can also be seen as a depiction of the past, present, and future of contemporary England. Principally, however, this play is Osborne's requiem for the dying music hall and the vital part of English life that it represents. *The Entertainer* has been regarded as Osborne's canon of being his first play commissioned by an actor: Laurence Olivier. Olivier eventually played the part of Archie Rice, a seedy, fifth-rate music-hall comedian. Olivier immediately showed his interest for performing the character after reading a portion of the script. Approximately, after ten years, in an interview with Kenneth Tynan, Olivier described the role of Archie Rice as "the most wonderful part that

I've ever played" in a modern play. Like *Look Back in Anger*, it mourns the passing of English traditions and the British Empire. Most critics praised the development of an exciting writing talent.

Osborne's third play to be produced by the Court, *Epitaph for George Dillon* (1958), was written prior to *Look Back in Anger*. These three successful Royal Court productions were followed by a spectacular flop: a West End musical called *The World of Paul Slickey* (1959) which satirised the tabloid press and upper-class society. It is a bitter musical satire of the London press and an attack on individuals who allow themselves to be influenced and manipulated by the mass media.

Osborne's reputation was restored with *Luther* in 1961, a play about the 16th-century German Protestant reformer Martin Luther which chronicles his struggle with faith. Critics and audiences were impressed with this play. And Osborne won Tony award on Broadway. *Luther* was followed by *Inadmissible Evidence* (1964), regarded by some as Osborne's best play. Many critics consider this play as a result of the themes developed in his earlier plays and his finest dramatic achievement. The play focusses on Bill Maitland, a dishonest London lawyer who is haunted by feelings of guilt and self-doubt that eventually lead to his separation from society and his nervous breakdown. Solicitor Bill Maitland is a typical Osborne anti-hero: a paranoid, self-hating man going through a mid-life crisis. The drama takes place in a courtroom dreamscape where Maitland presents evidence of his failings and disappointments. The style of the play is innovative, using intercut monologues to signal the dissociative, abstract quality of the piece. Three years on, when Osborne was struggling with his own nervous breakdown, he looked back on the play as 'an act of self-prophecy'. Then, *A Patriot For Me*, was premiered in 1965. The play is based on the true story of the gay Austro-Hungarian spy Alfred Redl, who was blackmailed by Russia for hiding his sexuality.

John Osborne's plays in the 1970s included *A Sense of Detachment* and *Watch It Come Down*. Osborne turned in his most famous acting appearance for next few years. He wrote a diary for *The Spectator*. In the last decade of his life, he published two volumes of autobiography, *A Better Class of Person* (1981) and *Almost a Gentleman* (1991). He also collected various newspaper and magazine writings together, in 1994, under the title, *Damn You, England*.

His last play was *Déjà Vu* (1991), a sequel to *Look Back in Anger* was first performed at the Thorndike Theatre, Leatherhead, in May 1992, and subsequently at the Comedy Theatre, London. The play revisits Jimmy Porter after the interval of 35 years.

9.4 LET US SUM UP

Critics have observed disparity in his works, but have declared Osborne's standard as impressive, rich, and vital. Thus John Osborne's legacy was the transformation in the British theatre. Osborne and a group of playwrights whom he influenced made language important. They also

introduced emotional intensity into the theatre. For them, the theatre was a medium to attack the class distinctions. Though Osborne fell out of theatrical fashion, the best of his work will survive. He once depicted his plays as “lessons in feeling”. And his unique gift was to create violently communicative theatrical heroes who represented his own wounded and damaged spirit. He was, to the very last, a man with a talent for conflict.

9.5 KEY WORDS

Royal Court Theatre A non-commercial West End Theatre in London, England.

Angry Young Man Angry Young Man was a term used for a group of mid twentieth century British writers who presented the anger and frustration with Modern British culture.

9.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1 Answer the following questions in detail.

1. Evaluate John Osborne as a playwright with special reference to *Look Back in Anger*.

2. Assess the development of John Osborne as dramatist who transformed the British theatre.

3. Give a brief note on the plays written by Osborne.

Q.1 Choose the Correct option from the given options.

i. John Osborne hated his _____

a. father

b. mother

c. brother

ii. The play, *Look Back in Anger*, finally was picked up by _____ for production after early rejection.

a. George Devine

b. George Eliot

c. George Nashe

- iii. The play, followed by *Look Back in Anger* was _____.
- a. Inadmissible Evidence b. *A Sense of Detachment*
 c. *The Entertainer*
- iv. John Osborne was married _____ times.
- a. two b. four
 c. five
- v. _____ gave strongest boost to the concept of Angry Young Man.
- a. *Look Back in Anger* b. *The Entertainer* c. *Watch It Come Down*
- vi. Osborne won Tony award on Broadway for his play _____
- a. *Look Back in Anger* b. *Luther*
 c. *A Patriot for Me*

9.7 SUGGESTED READING

- Choudhuri, A. D. *Contemporary British Drama: An Outsider's View*. New Delhi: Arnold –Heineman, 1976. Print.
 - Brown, John Russell Ed. *Modern British Dramatists: New Perspectives*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1984. Print.
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 - Burgess, Anthony. *English Literature: A Survey for Students*. London: Longman, 1974. Print.
 - Dubey, Arjun. *The Plays of John Osborne*. New Delhi: Alfa Publication, 2010. Print.
 - Gilleman, Luc *John Osborne: Vituperative Artist*. New York: Routledge, 2002. Print.
 - Radcliffe, J B (John B). *Ashgill: Or, the Life and Times of John Osborne*. London: Sands and Company, 2008. Print.
- ❖ Answers:

Q.1 Choose the Correct option from the given options.

- i. - b ii. - a iii. - c iv. - c v. - a vi. - b

:: STRUCTURE ::**10.0 Objectives****10.1 Introduction:****10.2 Historical and Social Context of the Play:****10.2.1 English Theatre During the Post-World War II
Era****10.2.2 The Kitchen Sink Drama****10.3 The Concept of the Angry Young Man****10.4 Let Us Sum Up****10.5 Check Your Progress****10.6 Key Words****10.7 Books Suggested****❖ Answer**

10.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall:

- Understand the historical and social background that inspired the author to document the turbulent times of the post-war Britain
- Understand the state of the English Theatre after the Second World War
- Understand the concept of “kitchen sink drama” and “angry young man”

At the end of the unit, you should be able to

- Discuss the various concepts such as “kitchen sink drama” and “angry young man”
- Discuss socio political condition of Briton at the end of the Second World War

10.1 INTRODUCTION

As the unit is based on the work of Osborne which was published after the Second World War, it is important to understand the major impact of this war on Europe in general and specifically on Britain. This is the period where Britain was losing its power over its multiple colonies as well as we can see the slow rise of U.S.A. as a global Super power. So, it's interesting here to understand the historical and social background of the play.

10.2 HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE PLAY

John Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* is a work of drama that can also be considered a sort of historical document that encapsulates a significant social tension and the whole approach to life lived during the 1950s. When the play opened at London's Royal Court Theatre on 8 May, 1956, it heralded the 'new movement' in the British drama. The new generation found the play fresh and the British theatre also discovered a significant break with its immediate past and the beginning of a new era. The success of the play and the rave reviews it received put Osborne on the graph of popular British dramatists. The enormous success and popularity of the play aroused English national pride and set the stage for the 'angry young man' movement.

A close look at the industrial society provides some insight into the success of Osborne's play. The British society was deeply divided against itself during the 1950s. There were disillusionment and despair in the British society. World War II had diminished Britain from the position of a great imperial power to that of second class power. This reduced importance had a deep and lasting impact on the British society. Britain had not only lost an empire but also found itself at odds with a fast changing world.

In 1945, in the post-war British election, a new generation of voters felt the need to make a clean, new start. The British national hero during the war, Winston Churchill, was dismissed from office and the Conservative Party gave way to the Labour Party. This significant change brought in fresh hopes for a New Britain among the working classes, the middle classes and the youth. They demanded a new society that is not dominated by class system. The Labour government introduced several changes with the concept of a Welfare State. The Welfare State concept with its ambitious programme of nationalisation of industries, opportunities of free education, social security, distribution of national wealth and welfare among all the classes was heralded as a revolution. However, this concept of social Utopia failed to create a feeling of harmony. There was lack of social insurance, political and social power still remained in the hands of wealthy individuals. A large number of school children did not get any opportunity to pursue higher studies, forcing them to live a life of drudgery and neglect. The unprivileged

youth felt disillusioned by the contradictory trend in society that rejected class advantages on the one hand but still practised the values of the social class structure of the bygone era. The youth realised that they were given false hopes and felt cheated by idealistic notions. They discovered that class and hierarchical structure of the industrial society is difficult to break.

In 1950, the Labour Party resumed power but its popularity had plummeted and its majority was reduced drastically. The next year, another election brought the Conservatives back in power. They did not dismantle the Welfare State and continued with the same policies of the earlier government. This created further disappointment and people lost faith in political parties. They did not see any way out of their situation.

There were several other events that happened in 1956, the year *Look Back in Anger* was staged. In Hungary the people rebelled against their Russian-imposed Communist government. Russia curbed the revolt ruthlessly using brute military force, while the rest of the world watched this silently without doing anything. In the West people became disillusioned with communism as a humane way. On the other hand the Egyptian government decided to take over the Suez Canal which was owned and run by British and French governments. Britain and France invaded the Canal Zone but had to return it back to the United Nations which handed it back to Egypt. This humiliation made Britain accept the fact that they were no longer world power and the supporters of the Imperialist ways became disoriented. Moreover, the chasm between two generations - those who fought the war and considered themselves inheritors of the imperial past and those who were born during and just after the war found many of the values of society outmoded – was widening. The central mood of anger and of protest depicted in the play *Look Back in Anger* was in conformity with the prevailing social temperament and Osborne came to be regarded as a dramatist who could project this mood of despondency and dejection.

10.2.1 English theatre during the Post-World War II Era:

After the end of the Second World War, British theatre had fallen into a dismal state. It was in a state of decline and neglect. Audiences had been falling off and theatres were being closed all over Britain. The process of decline was accelerated by the advent of television after a war time break. The English stage was flooded with drawing room comedies, farces, melodramas and adaptation of French sentimental plays. Most of the old plays of Shakespeare, Chekhov, Ibsen, Shaw, Restoration Comedy were reproduced. The bold and passionate plays by American authors such as Arthur Miller and Tennessee William were staged. The unexpected success of a series of verse plays by Christopher Frye, T.S. Eliot and theatrical attempts by some poets accounted for the revival of verse drama. They tried to incorporate the freshness of communication of the Elizabethan stage with modern consciousness. However, the kind of escapism their plays offered did not find much favour with the theatre

goers. Their drama failed to establish any living tradition in contemporary British drama. The most successful dramatist in England at that time was Terence Rattigan who specialised in emotional dramas. The other dramatists of the period like Giles Cooper, Denis Cannan, Peter Ustinov showed some spark but fizzled out soon and failed to create any lasting impact.

In 1956, a new group, the English Stage Company had been set up at the Royal Court Theatre. The avowed intention of the company was of becoming a writer's theatre. Many other companies had started with the same spirit but had to shut down due to the pressures of the commercial London theatre. The English Stage Company would have met the same fate had it not been for *Look Back in Anger* and the success it became. The 'new movement' in English drama began on the night of May 8, 1956 when Osborne's play opened at the Royal Court Theatre in London. The reviews in the newspapers the next day were mostly favourable.

Osborne's play appeared at the right time. If it had appeared a few years earlier or a few years later, it would not have been received well by the audiences and the critics. But in 1956 the critics as well as the public were ready for something new. They were different from the earlier generation of playgoers. The dominating mood of the play – of anger and protest – was an echo of the prevailing social conditions. The youth identified with the young protagonist of the play who is misfit in the contemporary society. Jimmy Porter became a cult figure, a representative of the disillusioned youth of the post-World War II generation.

10.2.2 The Kitchen Sink Drama:

The mid-twentieth century marks the most significant movement in British theatre called the Kitchen Sink Drama. These types of plays were distinctly different from the earlier Victorian theatre. One of the important features of the Kitchen Sink Drama was that the setting of the plays was almost always middle class. These plays centered around the theme of some social message or attack on some traditional ideology. In contrast to the earlier Victorian drama that depicted the lives of the upper, aristocratic class, the Kitchen Sink drama presented the lives of the working class people and their conflicts and struggles on the stage. The characters in these dramas unabashedly expressed their frustrations and dissatisfaction with the ruling class. They expressed their disgust over class dynamics and brazenly criticised the social, political and economic power structures.

The Kitchen Sink Drama moved the sphere of the play from the public domain to private lives of people. The plays made the kitchen the center of familial and social life giving it a realistic flavour. These plays certainly set the stage for the portrayal of the "Angry Young Man".

The Kitchen Sink Drama did not win favour with some critics and commentators of the twentieth century for portraying only the masculine

point of view. These plays focused mainly on the emotions and tribulations of the male characters. The women characters were mostly ignored in the main action of the plays and occupied a marginalised position. Men were portrayed as the suffering lot where as women were presented as contributors or responsible for their suffering.

The setting of Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* is one room attic flat in a small town of England. The furniture is simple and old comprising three chairs, two shabby leather arm chairs, a double bed, a dressing table, book shelves, a chest of drawers. The dull, dim and boring setting highlights the contrast between the high ideals of Jimmy Porter, the protagonist of the play and the dismal reality of the outside world. Jimmy comes from a working class background and has strong disdain for the upper class people. He is highly critical of the English society and its power dynamics.

10.3 The Concept of the Angry Young Man:

The phrase "Angry Young Men" refers to a movement in English theatre in the 1950s. The term is ascribed to various British novelists and playwrights who expressed scorn and disdain with the established social, political, economic and religious structures of their country. They were against the hypocrisy and mediocrity of the upper and middle classes. They showed irreverence for the British class system. They belonged to working class and some had been educated at the red-brick universities. They scorned at the idea of the welfare state. Their writings often expressed raw anger and frustration as the post-war society failed to meet their aspirations.

Osborne's play *Look Back in Anger* is representative of the "angry young man" movement as it depicts how there is frustration and anger within the younger generation. It highlights the personal and social alienation of the young who were promised equal opportunities but in reality realise that the power structure exists and it is difficult for them to break this class structure. Jimmy Porter is a spokesperson of this disillusioned generation who is angry and upset at the world around him.

10.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have seen how historical and social background of England during the post-World War II times led to a new movement in English drama and made the Angry Young Man a popular, representative figure of that era.

10.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1 Answer the following Questions.

1. Discuss the post-World War II historical and social background of Britain.

2. Write a note on the condition of the English theater after the Second World War.

3. Show how the Kitchen Sink Drama and the Angry Young Man movements effectively voiced the frustrations and anger of the people during the 1950s.

Q.1 Choose the correct option and answer the following:

1) The Concept of the _____ was popularized by the Labour Party in the Post World War II era.

- (a) Developed State (b) Welfare State
(c) Economic State (d) Industrial State

2) Which of the following aspects was not included in the concept of the welfare state?

- (a) free education (b) social security
(c) nationalization of industries (d) good infrastructure

3) Christophe Frye and T. S. Eliot are associated with _____.

- (a) tragic drama (b) emotional drama
(c) romantic drama (d) verse drama

4) Osborne wrote *Look Back in Anger* for the _____.

- (a) English Stage Company (b) Royal Shakespeare Theatre
(c) Globe Theatre (d) Modern Theatre Company

5) The protagonist of *Look Back in Anger* became a cult figure among the youth of the times because _____.

- (a) he fought in the war bravely

- (b) he represented a global outlook
- (c) he represented the disillusioned youth
- (d) he was bold in his comments

6) The Kitchen Sink Drama dealt with the lives of the _____ people.

- (a) Bourgeoisie
- (b) middle class
- (c) intellectual
- (d) aristocratic class

7) Which of the following statements cannot be applied to the Kitchen Sink Drama?

- (a) The plays had a realistic touch.
- (b) The plays focused on the private lives of people.
- (c) The women characters played a pivotal role.
- (d) The plays presented the lives of the middle class people.

8) *Look Back in Anger* is set in _____.

- (a) an empty room
- (b) an attic flat
- (c) a shopping complex
- (d) a storage room

9) What is the social background of Jimmy Porter, the protagonist of *Look Back in Anger*?

- (a) He comes from a working class.
- (b) He is a descendent of the Royal family.
- (c) He comes from an aristocratic family.
- (d) He belongs to a family of industrialists.

10) The phrase ‘Angry Young Man’ is ascribed to the portrayal of young men who were dissatisfied with the _____ of the times.

- (a) literary canon
- (b) housing facilities
- (c) education system
- (d) socio-economic and political structures

10.6 KEY WORDS

Angry Young Man Angry Young Man was a term used for a group of mid twentieth century British writers who presented the anger and frustration with Modern British culture.

Chivalry It is a medieval knightly system with its religious, moral and social code. The term is often related to virtues like kindness, courage, politeness and self-sacrifice.

Dark Ages The term “Dark Ages” is used to denote Medieval European society.

10.7 BOOKS SUGGESTED

- Taylor, John Russell (ed.) *John Osborne: Look Back in Anger: A Selection of Critical Essays*. London: Macmillan, 1968, Print.
- Choudhuri, A. D. *Contemporary British Drama: An Outsider's View*. New Delhi: Arnold –Heineman, 1976. Print.
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- Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.
- Burgess, Anthony. *English Literature: A Survey for Students*. London: Longman, 1974. Print.

Answer Key:

Check your progress 2:

Q.1 Choose the correct option and answer the following:

1- b; 2- d; 3- d; 4 – a; 5 – c;
6 – b; 7 – c; 8 – b; 9 – a; 10 - d

:: STRUCTURE ::**11.0 Objectives****11.1 Act-wise and Scene-wise Summary and Analysis****11.2 The Major Themes Depicted in the Play****11.3 Jimmy Porter as an Angry Young Man****11.4 Let Us Sum Up****11.5 Key Words****11.6 Books Suggested****❖ Answer**

11.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall

- Understand the plot of the play
- Understand major themes of the play
- Understand the character of Jimmy Porter as an Angry Young Man

On the completion of the unit you should be able to

- Discuss the plot, theme and characters of the play
- Discuss the formation of identity of Jimmy Porter as Angry Young Man

11.1 ACT-WISE AND SCENE-WISE SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

ACT I**Summary**

Look Back in Anger begins in the attic apartment of Jimmy Porter and Alison Porter. The setting of the play is mid-1950's small town England. Act I takes place on an evening in April. When the curtain rises, Jimmy Porter and Cliff Lewis are seen seated in shabby arm chairs. Jimmy is about 25 years old. Cliff is Jimmy's friend and is about the same age as Jimmy. Alison, Jimmy's wife, is ironing in a corner of the room. Jimmy and Alison share their apartment with Cliff. Jimmy and Cliff both belong

to the working class, though Jimmy is more educated than Cliff. Alison belongs to a more prominent and privileged family. Jimmy and Cliff run a sweet stall.

Jimmy is a disgruntled young man who tries to provoke Cliff and Alison with his unsavoury remarks. He regards Cliff's working class background with disdain and makes fun of him for his low intelligence by calling him a "peasant". Cliff is a good tempered man who takes Jimmy's remarks in his stride and remains calm. Jimmy also tries to provoke his wife by making fun of her family and her privileged background before she married him.

Jimmy is interested in reading newspapers but is upset about the content of the newspapers. He complains that all the book reviews sound the same and that the papers fail to provide any intellectual stimulation. He discusses about some articles in the newspaper regarding H-bomb and class distinctions. His ranting continues about several other articles and he finally declares "Nobody can be bothered. No one can raise themselves out of their delicious sloth" (Osborne 15).

Jimmy then begins to ponder over the state of England. He remembers an old saying about England: "...we get our cooking from Paris (that's a laugh), our politics from Moscow, and our morals from Port Said" (Osborne 15) Jimmy is angry and upset about Alison's family. He calls them "sycophantic, phlegmatic and pusillanimous" (Osborne 21). Alison tries her best to control her anger and does not get provoked.

Jimmy now wants to listen to a concert on the radio. He complains that he cannot hear the music because of the noise as Allison is ironing. He then begins to shout about how loud women are and again derides her by comparing her with "a dirty, old Arab, sticking his fingers into some mess of lamb fat and gristle" (Osborne 24). When the church bells start ringing, Jimmy gets more upset about the noise.

Cliff tries to maintain peace between Jimmy and Alison. Cliff and Jimmy wrestle and it ends up with Alison burning her arm when Jimmy pushes Cliff into Alison and they both fall to the floor. Jimmy feels sorry and apologises but Alison asks him to leave the room and give her some peace. Cliff helps Alison in washing and bandaging her wound. Alison tells him: "I don't think I can take much more... I don't think I want anything more to do with love" (Osborne 27).

Alison confides to Cliff that she is pregnant with Jimmy's child though she has not yet informed Jimmy about it. Cliff advises her to tell Jimmy the news. When Jimmy re-enters the room he finds Cliff and Alison touching and close to each other but he does not react. Cliff leaves and Jimmy and Alison become intimate with each other. They play a game of bear and squirrel where Jimmy calls her a squirrel and she calls him a bear.

Cliff comes back to inform Alison that her old friend Helena Charles has called her on the phone. When Alison goes to take the call Jimmy fumbles in Alison's purse and finds a letter from her mother. He is angry because Alison and her mother write to each other but never mention his name because it is a "dirty word" to them.

Alison comes back with the news that Helena is paying them a visit. Jimmy expresses his dislike for Helena and becomes furious. He starts cursing Alison and wishes that she could have a child only to watch it die.

Analysis

The opening scene of the play introduces each character through an analysis of their physical traits and their psychological disposition. Jimmy is a complex character and is full of contradictions. He is angry and bitter and yet tender and passionate. Alison has accepted her situation and has fallen into a rut. Cliff is the opposite of Jimmy. He is a good tempered man who suffers Jimmy's verbal attacks with equipoise. The sparsely furnished apartment is a reflection of the characters inhabiting it. Like some old furniture kept away in an attic, Jimmy, Alison and Cliff have also been kept away from the sight of the upper class.

Jimmy is angry about the content of the newspapers. He is concerned with enthusiasm and living. At the same time he is nostalgic about the political and social supremacy of the British Empire in the past. He accuses Alison of being cold and unemotional. He accuses her of carrying "The White Woman's Burden", a phrase that was used to suggest British imperialism and exploitation of the non-white people. Jimmy tries to exercise control over his wife and friend. By insulting Alison in particular, he wants the power that the upper class has but does not know what he would do with this power.

Jimmy is disillusioned by his routine. He says that he hates Sundays, "Always the same ritual. Reading the papers, drinking tea, ironing... Our youth is slipping away" (Osborne 15). He bemoans the fact that his youth is not full of excitement but of mundane chores. He wants to have a little "human enthusiasm" and suggests a game: "Let's pretend that we're human beings, and that we are actually alive" (Osborne 15). He considers himself to be more alive than others.

Jimmy's verbal attack on Alison's friends and family highlights the inherent conflict between the upper classes and the working classes. He thinks that Alison's brother, who wants to be a politician, is foolish but he will become successful because he has learned to "plunder" people through his high-class education. Jimmy expects some reaction from Alison after these accusations but is denied any. He is frustrated because his education has come to a naught and he considers himself to be a misfit.

Cliff's flirtations with Alison in the presence of Jimmy suggest the unconventional nature of their marriage. Unlike Jimmy, Cliff is kind and considerate towards Alison.

Jimmy's trumpet playing refers to the twentieth century British fascination with Black American jazz culture. Osborne's implication is that black jazz culture is the quintessence of a natural humanity. Jimmy's anger stems from his inability to live in such humanity.

ACT II - Scene I

Summary

Two weeks later Helena comes to stay with Alison. She is the same age and size as Alison but has a "sense of materialistic authority" and "makes most men who meet her anxious not only to please but to impress" (Osborne 39) She is an actress and leads a carefree life. Alison discusses her relationship with Jimmy. She narrates how they met and how in their younger days, soon after their marriage when Jimmy had no job and money, they used to crash parties of the rich with their friend Hugh Tanner. When Hugh left to travel the world leaving his mother behind, Jimmy got annoyed and angry with Hugh. Jimmy has a soft corner for Hugh's mother and is affectionate towards her.

Helena urges Alison to inform Jimmy about the pregnancy or else leave him. Alison points towards the squirrel and teddy bear placed in the corner of the room. She tells Helena about the game they play in which she pretends to be a squirrel and he pretends to be a bear. "It was the one way of escaping from everything... We could become little furry creatures with little furry brains. Full of dumb, uncomplicated affection for each other" (Osborne 47)

Cliff and Jimmy return and Helena informs them that she and Alison are going to the church. This provokes Jimmy and he starts his anti-religious rants. He also insults Alison's family and friends by calling them: "sycophantic, phlegmatic, and of course, top of the bill – pusillanimous" (Osborne 49). Helena gets angry on hearing this and Jimmy is pleased that he has been successful in instigating her. He tells Helena how he watched his father die for a year when he was ten years old. His father had come home from the Civil War in Spain where "certain god-fearing gentlemen there had made such a mess of him, he didn't have long left to live" (Osborne 57). Jimmy narrates how his father was abandoned by his family and he was the only one left to listen to his father's babbling: "the despair and the bitterness, the sweet sticky smell of a dying man" (Osborne 58). He further adds: "I knew more about love...betrayal... and death, when I was ten years old than you will probably ever know all your life" (Osborne 58) Alison gets ready to leave for the church and Jimmy feels betrayed by his wife.

Jimmy leaves the room to attend to a phone call. Helena informs Alison that she has called Alison's father to come here and take her away from this humiliating life. Alison gives in to her suggestion and agrees to go with her father when he comes to pick her up the next day. When Jimmy returns he informs Alison that Mrs Tanner, Hugh's mother is sick and she is going to die. Jimmy decides to visit her. He tells Alison whether she

wants to go with him or with Helena. Alison picks up her things and leaves for church. Jimmy is stunned by Alison's decision.

Analysis

Helena Charles is introduced in this scene. Just as Cliff is the opposite of Jimmy in the earlier scene, Helena is the opposite of Alison, though both of them belong to the upper class. Alison is more unnerved and domesticated because of her marriage to Jimmy whereas Helena is more outspoken and sophisticated.

While explaining her relationship with Jimmy to Cliff, Alison admits about the lack of passion in their married life. Slothfulness has entered their life which Jimmy keeps on complaining about.

This scene also throws some light on the reasons why Alison falls in love with Jimmy. In Alison's recounting of the stories of meeting Jimmy and party crashing with his friend Hugh, Jimmy becomes a knight in shining armour though Alison admits his armour never shone very brightly. His paradoxical nature is seen here when he charms his way to win Alison's heart but acts like a ruffian in storming the gates of the refined culture of Alison's family friends. Jimmy is thus linked to the British past that he detests and repeatedly says that the past is gone.

In this scene Alison also explains the symbolism of the bear and squirrel game. She explains that by impersonating these stuffed animals, they both are able to have "dumb, uncomplicated affection for each other" (Osborne 47). Their game of squirrel and bear shows how the only way they both can truly love each other is to disengage themselves from the real world. The condition of their real lives is difficult to bear. This game offers them a chance to escape into childish happiness that was denied to both of them while growing up.

Alison's declaration that she is attending church with Helena comes as a bolt to Jimmy. For the first time in the play he expresses genuine surprise and shock at his wife's actions. Alison's church going clashes with Jimmy's beliefs. Alison says that Jimmy is a fiercely loyal man. He expects that those in his life will also be loyal to the same viewpoints – be it political, religious or social. Alison's decision to go to the church is regarded by Jimmy as a breach of allegiance to him. This is the reason why he further humiliates Alison.

Jimmy disgraces and insults Alison's mother because she hired private detectives to stop Alison's relationship with Jimmy. Jimmy's hatred for all such upper class women stems from this incident. He then begins to abuse Helena about her character and her world view. Jimmy accuses her of living in a dark age because she goes to church and looks respectable. He believes that traditional morality has no place in the modern world. He considers church to be a puppet of political and social power.

Jimmy then bares his heart open by telling others about his personal suffering, of how he watched his father die at a young age and how his family did nothing to help him. It is this initial suffering at a tender age that haunts Jimmy and prompts him to feel superior to others. Jimmy believes that since both Helena and Alison have not suffered like him, they have not truly been born into the world. With Hugh's mother on her death bed, Jimmy begs Alison to come with him to visit her. Alison, knowing that her father is coming to pick her up the next day chooses to go with Helena. Jimmy is distressed by this choice.

ACT II - SCENE II

Summary

The following evening Alison is seen packing her suitcase. Her father, Colonel Redfern who is in his late sixties is a soft spoken man. He fails to understand the love between Alison and Jimmy and thinks that he and his wife are partly responsible for the split between Jimmy and Alison. The Colonel was a dedicated soldier for forty years in the British Army. He spent the best years of his life in India and feels nostalgic about it. Alison discusses her life with Jimmy with her father. The Colonel tells her about how her mother hated Jimmy and believed that he was a criminal. The Colonel admits that they should not have interfered with their daughter's life. Alison informs him about what Jimmy said about him and her mother. She tells him that Jimmy called her mother an "over privileged old bitch" and the Colonel a plant left over "from the Edwardian Wilderness that can't understand why the sun isn't shining any more" (Osborne 66).

The Colonel admits to Alison that Jimmy is right in calling him an old Edwardian. He tells her about his past and how he left England in 1914 to command the Maharajah's army in India. He loved his stay in India until 1947. On returning to England he found that the England he had left was no longer there. He recalls his happy days in India and fondly remembers the "last day the sun shone was when that dirty little train steamed out of the crowded, suffocating Indian station... I knew in my heart it was all over then" (Osborne 68). Alison thinks about the two men in her life. She tells her father: "You are hurt because everything is changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same. And neither of you can face it" (Osborne 68).

Finally, Alison packs her bag and leaves with her father. Helena is going to stay in the house as she has a job interview the next day. Jimmy enters in a foul mood. He shouts at Helena because the Colonel had almost run him over with his car and Cliff had almost walked away from him in the street. Helena throws Alison's letter at him and he reads it. Helena then informs Jimmy about Alison's pregnancy. He is shocked by the news but soon recovers and tells Helena he doesn't care. He starts ranting about Alison's indifference to Hugh's mother. He tells her how he watched Hugh's mother die and is sure that he will attend the funeral alone because "that bitch won't even send her a bunch of flowers."

Act II Scene II

Analysis

This scene introduces Alison's father Colonel Redfern. In spite of his military background he is a soft hearted person. Jimmy has always considered him to be rigid and unyielding in his attitude but he appears to be more relaxed and caring.

Jimmy is right in his assessment of the Colonel represents the past. When Alison tells her father about Jimmy's insults to him, calling him a left over from the "Edwardian wilderness" he shows exemplary understanding. The Edwardian period in England was marked by the influence of the elite British culture in the early twentieth century. This period also saw the ebbing of the prominence of Britain as a great power which ultimately resulted in the death of British colonialism a few decades later.

The Colonel symbolises the diminishing importance of British culture. The Colonel is resigned and withdrawn which reflects the attitude of the entire British society. Jimmy says the Colonel's generation was the last generation that believed in fighting for great causes. Now the Colonel is bewildered by the world around him. He fails to understand the new generation.

Alison's comment that Jimmy and the Colonel are alike in many ways provides an understanding into their characters. The Colonel is upset because the present is not like the past and Jimmy is upset because he does not see any difference between the past and the present and finds his future bleak.

ACT III SCENE I

Summary

This scene takes place several months later. Jimmy and Cliff are sitting in armchairs with newspapers. Helena's things are scattered around the apartment. Jimmy complains about the content of the newspapers. Jimmy and Cliff continue with their banter. He is highly critical of Helena's religious tendencies. He believes that traditional religion has no place in modern society. He goes on to deliver a long speech lamenting the present scenario. He believes that there are no worthy causes to die for. He finds poverty of ideals in the modern world. Compared to the modern generation, the earlier generation believed in sacrificing their lives for their ideals. He is thus caught between nostalgia for the past glory and the situation in the present world.

Cliff then expresses his desire to move out of the house. Jimmy receives the news calmly. Then Helena expresses her love for Jimmy and they both embrace each other. There is a knock on the door and when Jimmy opens the door he finds Alison there looking very ill. Jimmy walks out of the room.

Act III Scene I

Analysis

This scene mirrors the first scene of the play. Once again Jimmy and Cliff are in their same places. Jimmy is complaining about the lack of imagination in the papers. Instead of Alison, Helena is seen ironing. The scene suggests that things have not changed much in their lives indirectly suggesting the unchanged world outside. Jimmy has not changed much from his relationship with Helena. He is critical of her religious leanings. He considers traditional religion as a thing of the past which has no place in modern society.

This scene also includes Jimmy's famous harangue about no worth causes to die for like the previous generation. He finds lack of ideals in the modern world. He is caught between his nostalgia for the past and the grim present. This nostalgia allows Jimmy to accept Cliff's desire to leave. Cliff has accepted that present has changed beyond his control while Jimmy still clings to the past, unable to move on.

ACT III Scene II

Summary

Jimmy is now in Cliff's room, loudly playing his trumpet. Alison has lost her baby and looks sick. Helena tells Alison that she would be upset with her for what she has done. But Alison tells her that it was a mistake on her part to come back to the apartment and that she does not want to come between her and Jimmy. Helena tells her what is wrong with Jimmy "He was born out of his time" (Osborne 90). She then tells her that things are over between them. Alison begs her to stay for Jimmy as he will have no one look after him but Helena is firm in her decision. Helena shouts at Jimmy for playing his trumpet very loudly and calls him to come in the room.

Jimmy shows some concern for Alison as she has lost the baby. Helena informs him that she is leaving. She says that she has realised that what they were doing was wrong. Jimmy tells them that they both are trying to escape from the pain of being alive and that one cannot fall into love "without dirtying up your hands" (Osborne 93). After Helena leaves, Alison also attempts to leave but Jimmy stops her. Alison tells him that she has undergone the mental and physical suffering that he wanted her to experience. He realizes that she has suffered much and has become like him. He kneels with her and tries to comfort her and then, with a "mocking, tender irony" (Osborne 96) begins to tell her that they'll be together as a bear and a squirrel. The play ends with Jimmy and Alison embracing each other.

Act III Scene II

Analysis

This scene brings closure to the earlier emotional upheaval experienced by the characters. Cliff's decision to move out suggests that he wants to

move on in life. He has possibly tired of Jimmy's obstinacy and relentless tirades. He has realized Jimmy's inability to change though he is living with another woman.

Helena and Alison come to a better understanding of Jimmy. Helena's remark that Jimmy is stuck in the "French Revolution" indicates how Jimmy's emotional outbursts create havoc in his own life and in the life of those around him. Alison understands him as an "Eminent Victorian" meaning that he is sticking to an idealized past.

Helena's decision to leave is emblematic of her morality. Her sense of wrong doing in stealing Alison's husband from her proves her moral uprightness.

In the concluding scene Jimmy is presented as a helpless man. Alison begs Helena to stay as he will have no one to take care of him. Her remark shows Jimmy's vulnerability and precarious position. But Helena is firm in her decision. Both these women understand how forlorn and desolate Jimmy is.

At the end Alison makes Jimmy realise she has become the person he wanted her to be. Jimmy considered Alison to be a lesser human being because she had not undergone any suffering like he had at his father's deathbed. Now with the death of her unborn child, Alison has got a new insight into what suffering is. Jimmy finally finds solace in her embrace. They return to their game of bear and squirrel. They apprehend that the only way to get away from the suffering of the real world is to create a fantasy world that can provide them a safe haven.

11.2 THE MAJOR THEMES DEPICTED IN THE PLAY

- **Inertia in British Culture:**

Jimmy Porter feels that the world he sees around him is empty and hollow. It lacks passion and intensity of emotion. He has disdain for those who lack authentic expression of feeling. He lashes out at Alison to evoke some emotional response but does not get it. It is the complacency of whole society that infuriates Jimmy. Jimmy has also slipped into a world of passivity. The same, boring routine of Sundays, the lack of emotional attachment between Jimmy and Alison points out the slothfulness and passivity in their lives. Jimmy's lines, "No one can be bothered. No one can raise themselves out of their delicious sloth" (Osborne 15) aptly sums up this inertia in British culture.

- (b) **Class Conflict:**

Jimmy comes from the working class background and although some of his mother's relatives are pretty posh, he hates them as much as he hates Alison's upper class family. The class system with its preferential treatment reserved for those at the top and the blatant disregard for those at the bottom of the rung makes Jimmy's life miserable. He has a university degree but it is not from the 'right' university. It is Alison's

brother Nigel, “the straight-backed, chinless wonder” who went to a prestigious university, who is already a Member of Parliament, who will “make it to the top”. Alison’s mother is also portrayed as a class conscious person who employs all kinds of tactics to prevent Alison from marrying Jimmy. Jimmy loves Hugh’s mother because she comes from working class and helps him in setting up his sweet shop. Jimmy has regards for Cliff for the same reason that he is “common”.

(c) Alienation:

Jimmy Porter is a spokesperson for a large segment of the British society in 1956 when he rants about his alienation from a society in which he was deprived of any opportunity in spite of having education from a ‘white tile’ university. He is not able to make any meaningful use of his education. The newly opened universities in England kindled hopes for a better way of life for the young. However, the real power and opportunities were reserved for those born into privileged class. This privileged class restrained itself from showing any strongly felt emotions. Jimmy’s alienation from Alison springs from her ‘cool’ temperament and her reticence to feel deeply. He berates her to evoke any response from her, to strike at him. He wants her to “stop sitting at the fence” and feel some sort of passion for life. Jimmy wants to lead a passionate life but the complete disregard to his emotions shown by others including his wife alienates him from those around him.

(d) Real Life:

Jimmy firmly believes that the only way people can experience real feelings that are not controlled by society is through undergoing shattering experiences. He campaigns vigorously for political, social and religious change. He complains about the lack of authenticity in human interactions. His abuse of Alison is based on the perception that he does not know what it is like to suffer and experience pure pain. His burning desire is to live a more real and full life. For him anger is a real emotion and that expression of anger makes him feel alive. His perception of real is expressed in his own words: “One day, when I’m no longer spending my days running a sweet stall, I may write a book about us all. It’s all here. Written in flames a mile high. And it won’t be recollected in tranquility either, picking daffodils with Auntie Wordsworth. It’ll be recollected in fire, and blood. My blood” (Osborne 54).

(e) Loss of Childhood Innocence:

The Post-World War II generation was grappling with the loss of childhood innocence. A theme that is deeply concerned with the characters of Jimmy and Alison Porter is the loss of childhood innocence. Jimmy loses his childhood when as a frightened ten year old he witnesses the painful death of his father. This experience has left an indelible imprint on his mind and created a feeling of estrangement with the world. Jimmy’s anger is rooted in this unforgettable experience of suffering and loneliness in his childhood. From an early age he knows what suffering is and that leads him to vent his anger on everyone around him. Alison is

also forced to grow up too fast by marrying Jimmy. Her youth is wasted in the domestic life of working class. She says that she has forgotten what it was like to be young and carefree. The game of bear and squirrel that Jimmy and Alison play at the beginning and at the end of the play is indicative of their desire to find refuge in childhood fantasies, away from the grim realities of the world.

11.3 JIMMY PORTER AS AN ANGRY YOUNG MAN

The protagonist of the play *Look Back in Anger*, Jimmy Porter, is a character of contradictions. He is a university graduate who lives in a tumbledown attic flat in a drab Midland town and earns his living by running a sweet stall in the market. He is dissatisfied with everything in life and the tone of his conversation is always one of irritation and complaint. He makes many cutting remarks about contemporary society. He lashes out at his wife Alison and friend Cliff and the world at large. He cannot forgive his wife for her upper-class background and he chooses to remain poor. He constantly torments his wife to extract some reaction from her. His world view is coloured by his irritation and frustration over the English class system. This frustration has put his marriage on a shaky ground and his wife bears the brunt of his anger. He is tormented by the intellectual inertia of those around him.

Jimmy contemptuously rejects the contemporary world and severely criticises the validity of the moral and spiritual aspects of the British Welfare state. His anger is directed towards a society which has developed a kind of moral apathy or disinterestedness towards dubious values and practises. He is a representative of the rebel youth challenging the validity of the moral values of post-war Britain. He is the voice of a large section of British society that could not find its place in society. His deeds and ranting are deliberately aimed to shock. He is full of paradoxical opinions. He lashes at Cliff both for not reading the 'New Statesman' and for reading it; he finds fault with his wife for her education and Cliff for his ignorance. He is convinced that he is the only one who really knows what suffering is.

Jimmy is an idealist fuming and frothing against the evils of man and the universe. His apparent cruelty is perhaps the result of his realisation that he is a misfit in a group of normal and well-disposed people. He exerts his revenge on society for being happy and contented with wrong things with his morbid cruelty, acidic comments and by making those around him uncomfortable. He derives perverted pleasure in making others unhappy about their life, thinking this might bring them closer to his point of view. He has come to spite and resent society so much that he slips into complacency and does nothing about it. He feels completely helpless and crumpled down in his situation that he gets totally dejected and resigned.

Jimmy's resentment towards upper class social status results in his diatribe against the social class and caste system. He does not miss a

single opportunity to abuse Alison's parents and their higher upper class social status. He is torn between two ideologies. He oscillates between sexual passion and loathing. On the one hand he cannot do without carnal desires and on the other he detests this passionate side of him. Such conflicting ideas do not allow him any peace of mind. His inability to come to terms with reality makes him fall into despair. He wants to escape from the clutches of reality that torments him and pulls him apart. This internal conflict leads him to his harangue on contemporary values. He expresses a sense of hopelessness in life in the following lines:

I suppose people of our generation aren't able to die for good causes any longer. We had all that done for us, in the thirties and the forties, when we were still kids. There aren't any good, brave causes left. If the big bang does come, and we all get killed off, it won't be in aid of the old-fashioned grand design. It'll just be for the Brave New nothing-very-much-than-you. About as pointless and inglorious as stepping in front of a bus. (Osborne 84)

Such invectives made Jimmy a cult figure, a hero of a generation that found itself on a shaky ground – a generation that wanted to protest but had no idea what to protest about. Jimmy's anguished remark "No one can raise themselves out of their delicious sloth" aptly expresses the static state of affairs. The young people's conviction that their protest was unlikely to have any desirable effect on the course of events left them high and dry. In the blind anger and frenzy of Jimmy Porter, the post-war generation discovered the realities of its own circumstances. Jimmy became the spokesperson for this whole generation famously dubbed by journalists 'angry young man'.

Apparently Jimmy's outbursts and vituperations seem senseless, irrational or incoherent but gradually his berating takes shape and we realise that they are symptoms of a character that is lost and is in search of his identity. Jimmy's description of himself as a "lonely bewildered little boy" of ten listening to the talks of his dying father who returned broken hearted from Spanish War provides us with some understanding and insight into the background of his anger. His sense of futility may be subscribed to the despair and helplessness of his dying father. This was his initiation into suffering:

Every time I sat on the edge of his bed, to listen to him talking or reading to me, I had to fight back my tears. At the end of twelve months, I was a veteran. All that feverish failure of a man had to listen to him was small, frightened boy. I spent hour upon hour in that tiny bedroom. He would talk to me for hours, pouring out all that was left of his life to one lonely, bewildered little boy, who could barely understand half of what he said. All he could feel was the despair and the bitterness, the sweet, sickly smell of a dying man. You see, I learnt at an early age what it was to be angry – angry and helpless. And I can never forget it. (Osborne 58)

He bears grudge against the world for treating him badly resulting in fits of rage. However, his anger is not confined to his own self, his barrage of

criticism goes beyond personal frustration and embraces larger issues of the contemporary society. He questions the ills and evil practises that bear the stamp of approval of society. Jimmy feels isolated in a society that prides itself on outwards success. For him suffering is a solitary experience. He says to Alison, “The heaviest, strongest creatures in this world seem to be the loneliest. Like the old bear, following his own breath in the dark forest. There’s no warm pack, no herd to comfort him. The voice that cries out does not have to be a weakling’s, does it?” (Osborne 94) However, his dissatisfaction with the world does not prompt him to take any constructive action. He merely goes on cursing and lambasting everything around him.

Through the character of Jimmy Porter Osborne has effectively chronicled the case of the young who were leading a marginalised existence, torn between economic and spiritual crisis and the demands of an affluent society. The play forcefully projects the hollowness of the one-sided development. The impotent rage of Jimmy intensely expresses the bitterness and indignation of the youth during the 1950s.

11.4 LET US SUM UP

Thus John Osborne’s play *Look Back in Anger* is a representative play of the “Angry Young Man Movement” depicting the anger and frustrations of the post-World War II generation in Britain. It is a milestone work in the category of Angry Young Man theatre which gives voice to the lower class of the society of England.

11.5 KEY WORDS

Edwardian Age	The Edwardian Age refers to the pinnacle of the supremacy of the British empire and colonial expansion at the beginning of the twentieth century.
H-bomb	It is a short hand term for Hydrogen bomb.
Half-crown	It is a denomination of the British currency.
Liberal	A liberal is a member of a British political party named the Liberal Party that is in opposition to the more conservative Tory Party.
Port Said	It is an Egyptian shipping port on the Suez Canal which was a very important British shipping territory in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
Pusillanimous	A person who lacks courage or determination.
Sweet stall	It refers to a small shop that sells candy and other confectionaries.
Welsh	A Welsh is a person from the country of Wales, often denoting a working class background.

11.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.1 Answer the following questions.

1. Examine how the post-World War II British culture is reflected in the play “Look Back in Anger”.

2. Consider the character of Jimmy Porter as an Angry Young Man.

3. Discuss, in detail, the major themes in the play “Look Back in Anger”.

4. “‘Look Back in Anger’ reflects the mood of anger and frustration in the post-war, younger generation”. Comment

5. Show how the characters Jimmy, Cliff, Alison and Helena are presented as each other’s foils in the play “Look Back in Anger.”

6. Analyse critically the plot of the play “Look Back in Anger”.

- 10) Jimmy considers himself superior to Alison and Helena because _____.
- (a) he is more knowledgeable
 (b) he was introduced to suffering at a tender age
 (c) he owns a sweet shop
 (d) he participated in war
- 11) Where did Alison's father live and work before retiring to England?
- (a) Germany (b) France
 (c) Thailand (d) India
- 12) Jimmy calls Alison's father a/an _____.
- (a) Victorian (b) Elizabethan
 (c) Edwardian (d) Puritan
- 13) Jimmy loses his childhood innocence when he witnesses _____.
- (a) the painful death of his father (b) people die of hunger
 (c) a horrible accident (d) his house collapse
- 14) Jimmy laments about _____.
- (a) lack of facilities in the house
 (b) the changing weather
 (c) the way people dress
 (d) no worth causes to die for
- 15) What is the root cause of Jimmy's anger?
- (a) His not getting education
 (b) His inability to run successful business
 (c) Not having loving people in life
 (d) His experience of suffering and loneliness in his childhood

11.6 BOOKS SUGGESTED

- Taylor, John Russell (ed.) *John Osborne: Look Back in Anger: A Selection of Critical Essays*. London: Macmillan, 1968. Print.
- Choudhuri, A. D. *Contemporary British Drama: An Outsider's View*. New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1976. Print.
- Brown, John Russell Ed. *Modern British Dramatists: New Perspectives*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1984. Print.
- Stephen, Martin *English Literature*. New York: Pearson Education Limited, 1986. Print.
- Sanders, Andrew. *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.
- Burgess, Anthony. *English Literature: A Survey for Students*. London: Longman, 1974. Print.

❖ **Answers:**

Q.2 Choose the correct option and answer the following:

1.	c	9.	c
2.	b	10.	b
3.	a	11.	d
4.	d	12.	c
5.	c	13.	a
6.	d	14.	d
7.	a	15.	d
8.	c		

:: STRUCTURE ::**12.0 Objectives****12.1 Introduction****12.2 Indian Theatre**

- **Check Your Progress 1**

12.3 Marathi Theatre**12.4 About the Author: Vijay Tendulkar**

- **Check Your Progress 2**

12.5 *Ghashiram Kotwal*: Background**12.6 *Ghashiram Kotwal*: Historical Background****12.7 *Ghashiram Kotwal*: An overview**

- **Check Your Progress 3**

12.8 Let Us Sum Up**12.9 Key words****12,10 Check Your Progress****12.11 Books Suggested**

12.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit, we shall study background of Indian Theatre and Marathi Theatre. The reason for studying Marathi Theatre is to understand the drama *Ghashiram Kotwal* in a better way. Moreover, we shall have a brief introduction about the author, background of the drama and its plot structure. In addition to this we shall also have a look at socio-political conditions that has largely influenced Indian theatre and its development.

With the study of this unit, you will be able to:

- understand the Indian Drama and its trends;
- understand the Marathi Theatre and its development;
- learn about the background of the author and his play.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Ghashiram Kotwal (First published in 1973) is one of the most popular Marathi Drama written by Vijay Tendulkar. *Ghashiram Kotwal* has been translated into Hindi and English by Vasant Dev (1974) and Jayant Karve and Eleanor Zelliot an American Professor (1984) respectively. In order to understand the play *Ghashiram Kotwal* we need to understand the background of the drama. *Ghashiram Kotwal* belongs to Indian theatre in general and Marathi theatre in particular. Moreover, India is a nation with diverse cultures and languages and may be that is the reason why we need to study some of the specific features of Maharashtrian culture. After learning the background of the play you will surely develop the interest in the play and find *Ghashiram Kotwal* interesting.

As you know that all the literary genres are different and written for varied reasons. Unlike all the other genres, drama is meant to be performed or enacted. The audience plays an active role while witnessing the play. Moreover, they also respond the play differently. In many situations when you do not watch plays performed, you read focusing on usual aspects of the play including themes, dialogues, plot and action. The power of your imagination while reading the play becomes very important.

Further, you may find it difficult to relate the dialogues and context of the drama when you read it in English language as it was originally written in Marathi language. However, the translated version has its own charm and an independent one though rooted in the source text.

Here, in this unit we shall learn about almost all the criteria of the play and will definitely enjoy your reading experience.

12.2 INDIAN THEATRE

Indian drama tradition is very ancient. It has its roots in Sanskrit drama of ancient India. It has influenced not only Modern Indian drama but also local folk dramas. In addition to this Western theatre too has influenced Indian theatre.

Sanskrit Drama's growth is very ancient and as part of this tradition we too have Bharat Muni's *Natyashastra*, the great treatise of Ancient Indian Tradition. *Natyashastra* in its greatness and relevance can be compared with Aristotle's *Poetics*. Classic Sanskrit Drama does not present tragic end, very much opposite to Aristotle's emphasize on tragic end. The root of this presentation of content is based on Hindu philosophical ideology that views the world as a 'maya' or 'illusion'. Further, death is not the final end or an event to lament but death is to celebrated as it releases soul and merges to supreme form i.e. God.

The western world, unaware of the greatness of Sanskrit theatre, learnt about the great Kalidasa around late 18th century i.e. in the year 1789 when William Jones translated *Shakuntala* into English. The west found *Shakuntala* so influencing that the German writer Goethe (1749 - 1832)

used the prologue of *Shakuntala* for his play *Faust*. A part from Kalidasa, around 9th century three other kings including Shudraka, Harsha and Visakhadatta wrote plays and contributed to the Sanskrit Drama tradition. *Mrichkattakam*, *Mudraraksasa*, and *Ratnavai* are three major plays by Shudraka, Visakhadatta and Harsha respectively. Further, Bhasa has written 134 plays and *Swapana-Vasavadatta* is considered as his masterpiece.

As part of Indian Theatre, Bharata Muni's *Natyashastra* is regarded as a comprehensive book that discusses all aspects of dramaturgy. *Natyashastra* not only focuses on aspects of production but also on direction, make-up, costumes, jewellery, movements of eyes, neck and body postures. Playwright, director and actors are considered very important in drama.

In Sanskrit drama, some of the major kinds of *Abhinaya* are:

Angika i.e. representation of action physically by moving hands, fingers, lips, neck and feet.

Vacika i.e. expressing through speech, song, intonation to arouse different moods and sentiments among the audience.

Abarya i.e. appropriate use of costumes and make-up, and

Sattvika i.e. when actors feel the role and emotion that he or she is to convey to the audience. This is one of the most important kinds of *Abhinaya*.

Moreover, Indian drama has been divided into 10 different types out of which two namely *Nataka* and *Prakarana* are very important. *Nataka* is a heroic drama taken from history or mythology where heroes, gods and kings are featured as protagonists. And *Prakarana* is social drama that deals with lives of common people's life.

In addition to this, Folk theatre is also an integral part of Indian drama tradition. They usually have mythological stories as their base. Some popular regional forms of folk theatre are as below:

Nautanki (Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra)

Jatra (Bengal)

Bhavia (Gujarat and parts of Western India)

Tamasha (Maharashtra)

Terukoothu (Tamil Nadu)

Yakshagana (Karnataka)

Kuchipudi (Andhra)

Ramlila (Uttar Pradesh and pan India)

Krishnalila (Uttar Pradesh and pan India)

- **Check Your Progress 1**

1. Write a brief note on Sanskrit Drama tradition.

2. Some of the major kinds of *Abhinaya*.

3. Name some of the major folk theatres.

12.3 MARATHI THEATRE

Marathi Theatre can be considered around Six decades old. However, its tradition begins with Vishnudas Bhave's play *Sitaswayamvar* published in the year 1843. Vishnudas Bhave contributed to Marathi Theatre for 60 years and wrote 50 plays wherein *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are two major ones. Some of the sentiments of national freedom movement were also conveyed through plays as their core themes. Khadilkar's *Keechakavadha* (1906) is one of such plays. *Keechakavadha* is an event from *Mahabharata*. Keechaka was the brother in law of king Virata and he was killed by Bhima. Here the face of Bhima is compared with Lokmanya Tilak and Keechaka as Lord Curzon. His second important play is *Bhau Bandaki*. As part of this play the character of Anandibai has been featured who causes Peshwa to be murdered. She is also a popular character in many other folk tales of Maharashtra.

Some of the other Marathi playwrights and their works are:

Gadhari's *Akach Pyala*

Warerkar's *Bhoomi Kanya Sita, Satte Che Gulam, Sonya Cha Kalas*

P L Deshpande's *Sunder Mee Honar*

Sai Paranjpe, Mahesh Elkunchwar, C T Khandekar and Vijay Tendulkar are some of the major playwrights as successors to the Marathi theatre's maestros.

12.4 ABOUT THE AUTHOR: VIJAY TENDULKAR

Vijay Tendulkar is one of the renowned playwrights of the Marathi theatre. He was born on January 6, 1928 in Mumbai (Maharashtra). He had his education in Kolhapur, Pune and Bombay. Though he had meager formal education, he had really his education in real life. The real life experiences, observations and Impression enriched his personality and vision of life. He poured these experiences and observations into his writing. Tendulkar's father Dhondopant was an enthusiastic writer, director and actor of amateur plays. He used to take young Tendulkar to the rehearsals of his plays. The younger Tendulkar was greatly amazed to see the actor's performance especially the woman's role being played by the male actor. His brother, Ragunath used to act too. Like his father, he was interested in literature. It was from here Tendulkar's education to become a great playwright began.

Tendulkar was brought up in a domestic atmosphere where his mother used to tell him stories about Mahatma Gandhi and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. This instilled the spirit of nationalism in the mind of Tendulkar. He was associated with The Quit India Movement of 1942. All these things had an abiding influence on his career as a playwright later on in his life.

Moreover he was also influenced by the great writers who very often visited his house. No doubt, Tendulkar grew up in a kind of literary atmosphere. Thus the literary environment at home prompted young Tendulkar to take up writing. Tendulkar wrote his first story at the tender age of six.

Tendulkar had two role models who influenced him while he was at Pune. Both were well-known names in Marathi literature. They were Dinkar Balkrishna Mokashi, a fine writer and Vishnu Vinayak Bokil, Tendulkar's Marathi teacher at school and a successful writer. Thus these writers rendered dominant influence on the personality of Tendulkar. During his school days, Tendulkar used to bunk the school and spent time watching Western plays and also at the city library where he read a lot and felt inspired to write plays himself. At the age of eleven he wrote, directed and acted in his first play *Amchyavar Kon Prem Karnar* (Who Will Love us?).

He started his career as a freelance writer. He worked as sub-editor on the daily *Navbharat* and *Maratha*, then as executive editor of the magazines, *Vasudha* and *Deepavali*. He spent a few years as public relation officer for the *Chowgule* Group of Industries before being appointed assistant editor of the daily *Loksatta* in 1968. He was the Chairman of the General Council, SahityaAkademi, New Delhi from 1978 to 1982 and of Sangeet Natak Akademi from 1977 to 1981. In 1979 he was made the Vice-President, National School of Drama. His association with the theatre was also long and profound. He rendered his services in different capacities like writer, producer and director etc. He was also associated with All

India Radio and Doordarshan. His varied professional experience put him in touch with people of all classes.

He has been felicitated with many awards and honours including the Maharashtra State Government Award (1956, 1969 and 1972), Sangeet Natak Akademy Award (1971), The Filmfare Award (1980 and 1983), Padmabhushan (1984), Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay Prize (1970), National Award for the best Hindi film *Manthan* (1977), Saraswati Samman (1993), The Kalidas Samman (1999), The Maharashtra Gaurav Puraskar (1999), The Jansthan Award (1999), and recognition for life time literary achievement the Katha Chaudamani Award in 2001.

As the most noted writer has to his credit 30 full length plays such as *Grihasiha* (1955), *Shrimant* (1955), *Manus Navache Bet* (1956), *Madhalya Bhinti* (1958), *Chimniche Ghar Menache* (1960), *MiJinklo Mi Haralo* (1963), *Kavlyanchi Shala* (1963), *Sari Ga Sari* (1964), *Ek Hotti Mulagi* (1967), *Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe* (1968), *Ashi Pakhare Yeti* (1970), *Gidhade* (1971), *Sakharam Binder* (1972), *Gharte Amuche Chhan* (1973), *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1973), *Dwamdipacha Mukabala* (1973-74), *Bhalyakaka* (1974), *Bhau Murarrao* (1975), *Bebi* (1975), *Pahije Jatiche* (1977), *Kamala* (1982), *Mitrachi Goshta* (1982), *Kanyadan* (1983), *Vithala* (1985), *Chiranjeev Saubhagya Kanshini*, *Safer* (1991), *Niyatiehya Bailala Ho* (1992) and *Kutre* (2003) etc.

He has also to his credit 23 one-act-plays, six collections of children's plays, five anthologies of short-stories, five volumes of Literary essays and social criticism and two novels. He has also written eleven movies in Hindi and eight movies in Marathi and T.V. series too. In 2004, he has written a single-act-play *His fifth Woman* - his first play in the English language - as a sequel to his earlier exploration of the plight of women in *Sakharam Binder* which was first performed at the 'VijayTendulkar Festival' in New York in October 2004.

• **Check Your Progress 2**

1. Brief note on Marathi Theatre.

2. Name some of the major Marathi playwrights and their works.

3. Write a brief note on Tendulkar and his contribution to Marathi Theatre.

12.5 GHASHIRAM KOTWAL: BACKGROUND

Ghashiram Kotwal was first written in Marathi in 1972 and published by Nishat Books in 1973. Its English translation was rendered by Jayant Karve and Eeanor Zelliot in the year 1984. It was then translated into Hindi by Vasantdev in 2007. The play has been translated in more than a dozen languages of India. It was presented on 16 December 1972 at Bharat Natya Mandir, Pune.

After nineteen performances of the play by the Progressive Dramatic Association of Pune, it was suddenly banned by the president of the Association. The resentment against the play came not only from the Brahmins of Maharashtra but also from the President of the Dramatic Association itself. The play was branded as anti-Brahman. The play, it was, alleged, had put to ridicule the Brahmins of Pune and their cult hero Nana Phadnavis, who was not so as per the oral and written history. There was a fear of revolt among the audience. As a result, most of the actors resigned from the Association and formed a new performance group called Theatre Academy (27th March 1973). The production was revived in 1974 and since then, the Academy has presented the play in France, Germany, U.K. Netherlands, and Italy. Jabbar Patel's production of the play for Progressive Drama Association in Pune is considered a classic in Modern Indian Theatre.

The play owes its popularity less for its thematic and literary contents and more for its theatrical experiment which has immortalized the play for use of folk and traditional mediums which sits so perfectly well with the modern theatrical structure of the play. Produced by People's progressive Theatre, Pune and directed by Zabbar Patel, the play has ever been a success in all its vernacular, Hindi and English versions. The kind of theatrical experiment Tendulkar has suggested in his script was executed by Zabbar Patel and subsequently by hundreds of theatre directors all over the country and even beyond its borders. The shifting and waiving human curtain which shows its presence in all the scenes and constituents of which also act as dramatic personae is the highest achievements of Tendulkar and his directors. The style has universally been used by many directors of regional theatre because it is the best idiom to hybridize the Indian and the Western theatre. The style of the songs has been carefully selected so as to make the play authentic and aesthetic both. In the very opening of the play the impressive chorus of the players resounds in the auditorium and apart from making the interesting revelations about the

historical and mythical ambiance of the play also builds instant empathy with the audience. The same kind of theatrical experiment was made in Kannad theatre a decade before by Girish Karnad while staging his own play *Hayavadana*.

12.6 GHASHIRAM KOTWAL: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Tendulkar used Ghashiram incident as a political satire on a politico-historical situation in which existed at the time of Nana Phadnavis (1741–1800). It is just an essence of the history to convey the thought that men in power give rise to ideologies to serve their purposes, and later destroy them when they become useless.

Maya Pandit in her article “Deliberate Dismantling of an Icon” (2000, p.16-23) says that Ghashiram was “an official of Nana Phadnavis , the Peshwa’s deputy in Pune , during 1768—1800”. Tendulkar has put less focus on Ghashiram and more on Nana Phadanvis who was a Brahmin ruler enjoying “political power and cultural hegemony”. The Peshwa rule ended with the entry of the British. The Brahmins, already smarting from the pain of Colonial rule, felt further humiliated by the negative image presented in the play.

Maya Pandit explains in detail the history of the shadow battle between the dethroned Brahmins and the Britishers. The Britishers deliberately raised a propaganda against all Indian rulers painting them as “weak, immoral, degenerate and and incapable of just government”. At the same time they projected themselves as “benign, restraining, guiding, and in other words, as saviours.” This image about themselves was gradually accepted by the Brahmins of Puna which finds its expression in Maroba Kanhoba’s book *Ghashiram Kotwal* (1863) from which Tendulkar derived his plot and characters. The image of Brahmins was further downgraded by Mahatma Phule in his book *Brahmanache Kasab* by saying, ‘They bathe, put chandan mark on their forehead, with a cap on their head. And they seat a whore on their lap’(Maya, p., 18). Ramchandra Narayana Lal, a minor writer in the nineteenth century, wrote that Ghasiram Kotwal would procure women for Nana’s lustful ventures. This negative publishing of the Brahmins was encountered by cultural revivalism by the high caste Brahmins like Lokmanya Tilak who sought the revival of the image of Indian rulers in general and Brahmin image in particular, through cultural and literary movements. The historical facts spoke otherwise: Nana had nine wives and two mistresses, as confessed in his own autobiography. His eighth wife was only fourteen when she died one day after his death. His last wife Jiubai had not even attained puberty at the time of his death.

12.7 GHASHIRAM KOTWAL: AN OVERVIEW

Ghashiram Kotwal was written in 1972, and is one of the longest running plays in the history of Indian Theatre. The play is introduced by a swaying human curtain of Pune Brahmins who convey the lawless and

corrupt state of their city. Ghashiram Kotwal is the story of a Brahmin from Kannauj, who comes to Pune during the 18th century reign of Peshwa. Nana Fadnavis, the chief of Pune visits a Lavani dancer, and while dancing with her accidentally pulls a leg muscle. Ghashiram offers Nana Fadnavis his back to rest his injured foot on, and receives a necklace from him as a gift. The necklace, though, is taken away by the Brahmins of Puna, who denigrate Ghashiram in public. Ghashiram swears revenge on the Brahmins of Pune, and uses his beautiful daughter to catch the roving eye of Nana Fadnavis. Lustful Nana asks him to let him have the girl, and Ghashiram asks to be made Kotwal (Police chief) of the city in return. After becoming Kotwal, Ghashiram unleashes his revenge on the Brahmins of Pune.

Ghashiram's daughter gets pregnant and dies during childbirth. Nana orders her buried without Ghashiram's knowledge. Ghashiram's tyranny goes out of hand, and when a group of people thrust in a small jailroom dies of suffocation, People of Pune plead to Peshwa to intervene. Peshwa summons Nana, and in his true chameleon-like fashion, Nana orders the merciless public execution of Ghashiram, the root of all-evil. Hence, Ghashiram, an embodiment of crude revenge is eliminated, and Pune is reinstated to how it was before. No changes occur in the political scenario, yet a false sense of justice prevails among the people of Pune, and Nana only strengthens his reputation.

• **Check Your Progress 3**

1. Write background of the play *Ghashiram Kotwal*.

2. Overview of the play *Ghashiram Kotwal*.

12.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have gone through the following points:

- Brief introduction of the play
- Tradition of Indian Theatre
- Tradition of Marathi Theatre
- Life and work of Vijay Tendulkar
- Historical background of the play
- Overview of the play

12.9 BOOKS SUGGESTED

- *Collected Plays in Translation: Kamala, Silence! the Court Is in Session, Sakharan Binder, the Vultures, Encounter in Umbugland, Ghashiram Kotwal, a Friend's Story, Kanyadaan.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 2003.
- Prabhakar Machewe, *Four Decades of Indian Literature* (New Delhi, Chetana Publication. 1976)
 - Tendulkar, Vijay. *Ghashiram Kotwal*. Calcutta: Seagull, 1986.
 - Tendulkar, Vijay. *Ghashiram Kotwal: A Reader's Companion*. M. Sarat Babu, Asia Book Club, 2003.

MCQs

1. Ghashiram Kotwal was first published in the year _____.
a. 1975 b. 1973 c. 1977 d. 1971
2. As part of Indian Theatre, Bharata Muni's Natyashastra is regarded as a comprehensive book that discusses all aspects of dramaturgy.
a. True b. False
3. In the year 1789 when William Jones translated Natyashastra into English.
a. True b. False
4. The 'VijayTendulkar Festival' was held in New York in October _____.
a. 2001 b. 2003 c. 2004 d. 2006
5. Which of the following is not a play by Vijay Tendulkar?
a. Grihasiha b. Kutre c. Kamala d. Hayvadana

2.11 Key

1. Ghashiram Kotwal was first published in the year _____.
b. 1973
2. As part of Indian Theatre, Bharata Muni's Natyashastra is regarded as a comprehensive book that discusses all aspects of dramaturgy.
a. True
3. In the year 1789 when William Jones translated Natyashastra into English.
b. False
4. The 'VijayTendulkar Festival' was held in New York in October _____.
c. 2004
5. Which of the following is not a play by Vijay Tendulkar?
d. Hayvadana

:: STRUCTURE ::**13.0 Objectives****13.1 Introduction****13.2 Themes of the Play *Ghashiram Kotwal*****• Check Your Progress 1****13.3 Important Characters****• Check Your Progress 2****13.4 Let Us Sum Up****13.5 Key Words****13.6 Books Suggested**

13.0 OBJECTIVES

- To discuss the themes of the play *Ghashiram Kotwal* critically
- To analyze some of the important characters and their role in the play

13.1 INTRODUCTION

In the first unit, we discussed basics of the play and its summary in detail. In this present unit, we shall be discussing some of the major themes and important characters of the play. So you will be able to strengthen your understanding about the play and relate your observation that you must have developed while reading the first unit. *Ghashiram Kotwal* has been considered as a complete play and as a reader you must have experience the kind of expertise the author, Vijay Tendulkar possesses in crafting the play and giving it a complete shape.

While reading the play you can observe and relate to the ups and downs that Ghashiram Kotwal experiences in his life. The story of the play is set in history, but presented in a very interesting way. Most of the incidents of the play is set in past. The play deals with the various themes like violence, manipulating power and religion to oppress lower caste people in general and women in particular. You will be observing such themes that may make you thoughtful throughout the play.

13.2 THEMES OF THE PLAY *GHASHIRAM KOTWAL*

Themes can be the main idea or meaning that the author conveys in a play, novel, short story or any other literary works. Themes can effectively be conveyed by proper combination of characters, setting, dialogues or plot. A play usually consists of one theme that becomes prominent and sometimes it may also have various sub themes stemming from a main theme.

Then what can be considered as the main theme in Ghashiram Kotwal? The character conflict between the Nana and Ghashiram might give an impression of being the topic at the outside level however we realize that Tendulkar has inspected the connection between religion, position, sexuality and brutality to expose the constructions of force that keep up with the state of affairs. According to Saimik Bandhopadhyay, 'In *Ghashiram* power is defined 'horizontally' in terms of individuals against individuals from humiliation, to revenge in assertion, to eventual victimization...' (*Ghashiram Kotwal*, Seagull, Calcutta, 1984, p.v.) Do you agree with that? It seems to an extent that one individual is opposed to another. On another level, however, it is clear that state forces and society remains supreme even after the death of individuals. For example, Ghashiram, Poona's innocent newcomer was unjustly accused of theft and beaten by Poona Brahmin. This incident made Ghashiram swear revenge. Interestingly, Ghashiram, himself a Brahmin, turned his back on his other brothers. The opportunity for revenge against the Brahmins presented itself as the lustful and middle-aged Nana Phadnavis wishes his beautiful daughter Lalita Gauri. Then begins the power game in which Gauri becomes a pawn and is sacrificed for Nana's lust. In return, Ghashiram was made Kotwal of Poona. This serves two purposes: first, it gives Ghashiram a chance to take revenge and to the horror of the inhabitants of Poona and the two of them, this allowed Nana to have cake and eat his one too. He has Gauri on one side and his own tyranny overshadowed by the cruelty of Ghashiram. Apparently, even at this point, the deal is unfair because the advantage is mainly on Nana's side. And in the end, Nana sacrificed Ghashiram to bloodthirsty crowd without a hint of shouting or regret and at the end play; we find that itself continues to grow.

Who is really strong; Nana or Ghashiram? Note that power is authorized only to Ghashiram, who doesn't recognize it and begins to confuse it with real power. When he loses Lalita Gauri and his game is over, he realizes his mistake and his reality. It was Nana's misconduct that was "credited to his account". It seems after that this power hides behind its agents and continues to grow strong. Make strength stay with Nana? It seems so, but even Nana's call can be called at any time Peshwa's moment. Peshwa itself is a symbol of power in the context of feudal society. Thus, the power given to it is reinforced by the social system which operates on a

status quo basis. King or Peshwa in this case has power according to divine law whose position is upheld by various state apparatus such as army, police, religious and social organizations, etc. Here, power is vested in Nana, who further delegates to Ghashiram by make him Kotwal then work through the police force. So there is an entire hierarchy of positions of power. Then it seems it's an individual against a individual, individual, individual. For example, if a person is beaten by the police, they can see the evil face. of this particular policeman. He didn't realize that the policeman was supported by police force is still maintained by a particular state. The state operates on its own according to a certain ideology. A society structured in this way ensures that power maintained and supported by such hierarchies. Attention is focused on individual's self-identified perpetrator. But the real culprit, social configuration continues cannot be argued because the individual is opposed to the individual. And even if Ghashirams were created and destroyed, society remains unchanged. Attention is diverted from reality and the problem is still intact. And Tendulkar's play very negligibly makes us ponder about and examine this phenomenon.

We've seen how violence and persecution may make power more visible. At a deeper level, it operates through social attitudes that aid in the maintenance of hierarchies and the concealment of the true source of power, which is assigned to agents like Ghashiram, who are also victims of that power. Religion and sexuality have also been employed as power strategies.

Religion

The army and police are used by the government to maintain social control. Other, more subtle policies are also employed. Take religion, for example. When we are hit, most religions teach us to turn the other cheek. This makes us incapable of reacting to oppression and injustice. When we are instilled with these values as children, first in the home, then in school, and finally in society at large, these values become so deep-seated in us that we are unable to question or change our social circumstances. Such values are instilled in us so finely that we are unaware to whether they are correct or incorrect.

The play Ghashiram Kotwal opens with a religious hymn and popular stage dancing. This establishes the backdrop against which the drama unfolds. The Brahmans visit Bavanna Khani to see the dancing girl and announce that they are going to the temple to preach on "Vishvamitra and Menaka." By comparing Bavannakhani to the holy city of Mathura, they justify their self-indulgence. In his play, the "abhanga," a devotional song, is frequently sung alongside the "lavani," or love song. Violent and cruel scenes are intermingled with devotional songs. Nana dismisses Gauri's fears when he tries to seduce her in front of the holy Ganpati statue, saying "That is the Holy Ganpati," says the narrator. Furthermore, when Ghashiram confronts Nana and accuses him of his daughter's death in the play, the later reassures him by saying: He – the Omnipresent- He

makes everything happen..... We are merely instruments.....As a result, religion becomes a valuable excuse for people's wrongdoings at that time.

Caste

Along with religion, caste plays a significant role in the play. Is it a remark on the Brahmans' decadence? The performance was first banned because it was anti-Brahman and there was a concern of a backlash from the audience. Is it truly intended to reveal Brahmans' corruption and moral degeneration? He was more concerned in 'the emergence, expansion, and inevitable death of the Ghashirams...' according to the dramatist. The decadence of the class in power (the Brahmans, incidentally, during the period which I had to depict) also was incidental though not accidental. Caste is utilised as a means of gaining power. According to Ghashiram, 'eating with a lower caste person is a crime,' according to the Sutradhar (p. 26). It is also illegal to sleep with a 'Mahar woman' (a lower caste among the untouchables). The Brahmans, on the other hand, have no qualms about pursuing and harassing a white Sahib for money. This demonstrates that race and colour have a higher social hierarchy rank. And the privileged Brahman who is feasted and showered with gifts in the Peshwa's Poona ranks lower than the white Sahib.

Tendulkar showed the Brahmans' two-facedness, arrogance, tyranny, as well as their wicked and adulterous behaviour. The Brahmans are distinguished by their "shaved head," "sacred thread," and "pious expression," rather than their good deeds and moral behaviour. Their petty activities are hidden by their earnest appearance. Nana, a Brahman, is being married for the sixth time, not to mention his lust for young ladies, Lalita Gauri among them. Ghashiram is a Brahman, despite his vengeance and hatred for the Brahmans.

Sexuality

Women, too, have become pawns in the power struggle, as we have witnessed. In truth, sexuality and power are inextricably linked. Consider Nana's remark on Lalita Gauri: 'Our grandeur's gone if she's not had' (p.20). It appears that a man's self-image, identity, and masculinity can only be defined in terms of women's conquest and oppression. As *lavanis* (love songs) and *abhangas* (devotional songs) are performed at merriments in Bavannakhani, which is compared to Mathura, and erotic dances to Krishna Lila, there is a strong link between sexuality and religion. The Brahman men's debaucheries are justified and whitewashed by their religious clothing. Gulabi's seductive dances, the Nana's ardent pursuit of Lalita Gauri, and the Brahman wife's secret meeting with a Maratha lover all contribute to the play's underlying eroticism.

Violence

Tendulkar researched on violence in India, and as a result, he has delved into its numerous magnitudes. He is concerned not only about state violence against the people, but also about individual violence against other individuals. Ghashiram's torture of innocent Brahmans and Gulabi's

men's hostility against Ghashiram when he is forcibly stripped of the necklace Nana had given him demonstrate this. The ordeal-by-fire episode is a vivid example of extreme violence. Unsuccessfully, an innocent Brahman convicted of robbery tries to persuade Ghashiram of his innocence. Despite the fact that the evidence suggests the Brahman has been wrongfully accused, Ghashiram has an adventure planned to prove his innocence. The nails of the Brahman's right hand are removed, and his fingers are cleansed in lemon juice and soap before being packed in a bag. An iron ball is heated red hot and seven Rangolis are drawn on the floor. The ball is then forcibly placed on the resisting Brahman's hands. Naturally, his hands bum, and the evil Ghashiram proudly shouts that if he had uttered the truth, this would not have happened, for only liars get burned. The tortured victim is then urged to 'confess,' or else the ordeal will be repeated. Left with no choice, he falls into the trap - 'I confess that I stole'. (p.36). Instead of letting him off Ghashiram orders the soldiers to 'cut off his hands and drive him out of Poena'. (p.36). This is an illustration of the terrible physical and emotional violence that humans may inflict on one another. How does this fit with the Brahmans' ostensibly religious commitment? There's also the more subtle forms of violence that humans are capable of. This is the kind of mental brutality we see when Nana uses protocol to reduce Ghashiram's pain and rage over the death of his daughter.

But what is Tendulkar's aim in portraying this violence? According to Sudhir Sonalkar 'It [violence), has to somewhere grasp the tragic human condition, it has to have a poetic dimension to it The violence of greek tragedy, moves and enriches. Tendulkar's violence shocks and even when it disturbs, the ethical question remains both untouched and unanswered'. ('Vijay Tendulkar and the Metaphor of violence' The Illustrated Weekly of India. Nov. 20, 1983, p.21). By leaving the ethical question open, Tendulkar is perhaps inviting his audience to think about the solutions for themselves. Is Tendulkar attempting to convey a message? As we all know, the purpose of art is to create questions rather than to provide answers or solutions. It becomes mere propaganda if it begins to have 'palpabale intentions on us,' as Keats would put it. As we can see, Tendulkar satirizes feudal society's absolute decadence in this play, providing us with a model for an amazing theatrical experience. He forces us to consider the state of our own civilization by revealing the faults and hypocrisies of Brahmans.

Before we move to the next section, let us do the following exercise.

• **Check Your Progress 1**

Answer the following question in your own word: (About 200 words each)

1) Which is the central theme of the play? What does Tendulkar try to depict through the story of the rise and fall of Ghashiram?

2) Describe the role of religion and sexuality in maintaining the structure of power and dominance.

3) Comment on the end of the play. (100 words approx)

13.3 IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

You must have formed some impressions about the various characters after reading the play. How do we get to know a play's characters? To present a character, the playwright employs a variety of techniques:

- i. Unlike a character in a fiction or film, the character appears on stage or novel. A character in a novel or tale can be described in great depth, but in a play, this is not possible;
- ii. he/she is mentioned by other characters;
- iii. the character interacts with other characters;
- iv. the character may soliloquize, or speak loudly on stage, his or her ideas;
- v. The character's behaviours may show some of his or her characteristics.

Tendulkar has used historical characters like Nana Phadnavis and Ghashiram Kotwal. Though Nana's character is taken from history, Tendulkar does not claim that his play should be treated as a historical play. The play is about power politics and Ghashiram is creation of Nana. Nana uses him as a pawn and throws him away when his purpose is served. Nana is symbol of a political figure that use the mad people like Ghashiram to play with. In the edition of 2005, Tendulkar has written an epilogue to Ghashiram Kotwal in which he has exposed the birth story of Ghashiram. He has stated that even after twenty-two years of his publication of the Ghashiram Kotwal, he met the character Ghashiram in a local train. Ghashiram cannot die. As long as Nanas there are Ghashirams too. Tendulkar has used just two female characters in the play, one is Gulabi and the other is Lalita Gauri. But both these women are molested by Nana. They become the prey to the lust of Nana. The art

of characterization of Tendulkar is quite different from that of other contemporary writers. Ghashiram Savaldas and Nana Phadnavis are the historical characters but Tendulkar has presented them to tackle the contemporary issues. The characters of Ghashiram and Nana are symbolic. One is demon and the other is creator of demon. History repeats. Though in the play Ghashiram is killed at the end, Ghashirams are still alive in the society and even the creators of Ghashirams, Nanas are there in the society. Tendulkar wants to criticize the tendency and behaviour and not the human being. Tendulkar's plays expose vices of the society such as hypocrisy, vulgarity, barbarism, corruption, narrow mindedness etc. Ghashiram Kotwal is based on power, sex and violence and the play explores the depths of human mind. In the portrayal of society, Tendulkar's plays mark a definite departure from the previous Marathi theatre. He presents the characters and their lives as those are. Life is projected with all its ugliness and crudity. He was interested in showing disharmony rather than harmony in the relationship between man and society. The characters in his plays are the victims of hostile situations or harsh circumstances. The characters are either aggressive or tender hearted, and they are victimized by chance (fate) or circumstances. These characters have to follow the law of life. The playwright's as well as readers' and audience's sympathy goes with the victim. In her preface Shailaja Wadikar writes, "In the treatment of his theme and delineation of characters, Tendulkar is out rightly humanitarian, but for that, one has to read his plays between the lines." (Wadikar P.XII) Psychologically speaking heredity and environment play a major part in shaping the behavior of characters. The hostile circumstances in life leave some of them aggressive and violent. But the condition of many is helpless and pitiable. Most of them are animals disguised in human forms. And Kumar Ketkar uses the term, 'Tendulkar's Human Zoo'. The function of Tendulkar's plays is neither to just entertain nor to just reveal ironies and contradictions but to help man to know himself in relation to his environment. Tendulkar aims at bringing to light some of most complex and vital issues of our existence inner and outer. Tendulkar is treated as an Avant Garde playwright for he deliberately undertakes in Ezra Pound's phrase to make it new. He had shocked the conventional sensibility and by revolting against the accepted norms and values, he shocked the traditional readers and introduced the neglected and forbidden subject matter. He did not sugar coat the realities but put the things as those are.

Ghashiram:

He is the central character in the play. He functions both as a victim and a victimizer. He is ambitious, revengeful and sometimes inhuman. But his strategy to rule is toppled down by Nana and in the end of the play Ghashiram is lynched to death on the command from Nana. Ghasi Ram, usually addressed as Ghasya by Nana is a Brahmin of Kannauj come to seek his fortune in Puna as Puna happens to be a kingdom of Brahmins

who assemble there to try and enjoy their fortune. Living along with his family in Puna, Ghasiram finds a job in Bawankhani as a pimp of a dancer's cabin and also plays iktara to the songs and dances of the courtesan, Gaulabibai. Once when Nana visits the dancer, his foot receives a sprain and Ghasiram rushes to massage the foot. Pleased by the serviceability of Ghasiram, Nana gives him a gift of a precious garland. But Gulabibai snatches away the garland and also gets him thrashed by her goons. Ghasiram once again receives a thrashing when in a queue for food and dakshina, he is accused of stealing. He decides to seek revenge on the Brahmins of Puna. He uses his young daughter to lure Nana into his trap. Ghasiram succeeds and offers to send his daughter to Nana's lustful residence on the condition that Nana appoints the former as the Kotwal of the city of Puna. The crafty Nana agrees but also plans the end of Ghasiram. He gives him a long leash to indulge in unjust acts so that the Pune-kars to whom Ghasiram is an alien would rise in revolt against the latter. It so happens and Ghasiram is sentenced to death on the demand of the Brahmins of Pune. Ghasiram is a craftless character like the modern day sharpshooters of the gangs of the underworld. Hurt by the humiliation of the Brahmins of Pune he vows to turn the city of Puna into a city of swine. He succeeds. But he is unaware of the conspiracy and diplomatic plans of Nana. He continues to commit atrocities and brutalities on the poor people of the city in order to stop all kinds of sinful practices but fails to understand that all the immorality is being promoted by Nana himself. He is so unwise that he pushes his own daughter into the unholy profession, an object of carnal desires for Nana. The girl is pathetically murdered when she is no more useful. The event breaks Ghasiram and in desperation he thrusts the Southern Brahmins into a cell where half of them are found dead. Ghasiram is cruel by temperament and immoral by nature. Or he has no leisure to be moral in the situation he has been put in. His accusation of a Brahmin of the theft and then the eventual Agniparikscha through which a burning metal ball is put in the hands of the accused and then his hands are amputated electrify the audience with horror. His recce through the city of Puna at midnight and then dragging out a man and woman who are in fact husband and wife on the charges of lechery are examples of worst kind of cruelty. In his madness for revenge he even forgets the basic norms of humanity and stifles the Brahmins by putting them in a small cell. The devilish methods he uses for arresting the citizens and the alibis he seeks to confirm the charges are the part of his nature which disqualify him for any kind of sympathy. Ghasiram is both a victim and a victimizer. He is the victim of the circumstances which have brought him to Puna to try his career there. But he is rather beaten and humiliated at every stage of his stay which forces him to adopt monstrous ways of acquiring power. He assumes the role of a victimizer now. As a Kotwal he begins to intimidate and torture people most of whom are innocent. He acts just a tool in the hands of Nana who wants a surrogate sinner for all the evil deeds he has done

himself. Then at the opportune moment Nana commands the murder of Ghasiram at the hands of common people.

Nana:

Nana has been described as the Machiavelli of Puna. He uses the tactics of deputation to mask his strategy of exercising power to hide from victims the real face of power. Like the paraphernalia of modern Indian bureaucracy he uses Ghasiram as a cover to deflect resistance to hide himself from the charge of abuse of power. Like a perfect politician he knows when to submit to Ghasiram and when to neglect him. He silently disposes of Lalita Gauri and throws her body into a river. At the end of the play he calmly and quietly signs the death verdict on Ghasiram and resumes his adventures of lust to the tune of the song “Bavankhani mein Mathuraavatari”. Nana operates his power game not only through policing or edicts but also through the network of social rituals and institutions. He has a full support to Bavankhani, a redlight area where the citizens of Puna remain lost and do not feel resentment against the centre of power. He has his mediators who act on his behalf. He promotes rituals like Ganpati Puja, Holi etc. He also organizes feasts and festivals where the poor are given alms. He is a despot who has ruthlessly and without a scruple been ruling the roost. As already discussed when his desires not fulfilled even by seven wives, he hires women of pleasure like Gulabibai and Lalita Gauri. He is lustful, festive and mirthful but equally cruel. For him religion is just a façade. When Lalita Gauri resists his embraces in front of the idol of Ganesha, Nana says, {Look at the feet of Ganesha, these are just made up of clay”. Nana is what he is described in history. Through his character Tendulkar only wants to assert that Nanas and Ghasirams are there in every age and every country.

The Brahmins of Puna:

The Brahmins of Puna are a decadent society. They are busy in merry making under the garb of religiosity. One of the Brahmins in the opening scene answers to the narrator that he is going to the temple to hear the bhajana. When enquired further, he admits that he would listen to and enjoy a lavani daance which of course is not held in a temple but only in a red light area. When the Brahmins are busy in Bavankhani, their wives are entertaining Sindhe knights in their respective houses at night. They make a queue for alms in the houses of the lords, they flock together at Puna to get pittance from the rulers. In total the play presents the Brahmins of Puna as chanting “Ram Shiva Hari, Mukund Murlī” but at their heart they are lost in the lustful desires for women. Their best representative, Nana Phadnavis is entertaining dozens of women at a time.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Discuss the character of Ghashiram and comment on the title of the play.

13.4 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you were given an introduction to Vijay Tendulkar's Ghashiram Kotwal. You were also given the objectives and brief introductory background of the play. Furthermore, this unit also dealt with the various themes as well as the important characters of the play.

13.5 KEY WORDS

Ganapati	Lord Ganesha, God of learning and wisdom.
Bavannakhani	Place of entertainment where nautch girls resided
Kirtan	A form of religious entertainment where stories from epics are
sung	Usually performed in temples or village squares.
Lavni	Forms of folk songs that became popular during the rise of Peshwas.
Bamanhari	The Brahmins of Puna, also known as Pune-kars
Banni chali	The daughter is leaving for her Husband's house
sasre	
Kanyadan	the giving away of one's daughter. A ritual in the Hindu wedding.

13.6 BOOKS SUGGESTED

- For an introduction to modern theatre and drama, you could look at: Eric Bentley (ed) -The Theory of the Modern Stage (Hannondsworth: Penguin, 1983)
- Siegfried Melchinger, The Concise.. Encyclopedia of Modern Drama (New York: Horizon Press, 1964)
- Venna Noble Dass, Modern Indian Drama in English Translation (Hyderabad, 1988).

:: STRUCTURE ::**14.0 Objectives****14.1 Introduction****14.2 Performative Structure of the Play****14.3 Language and Style****14.4 Dramatic Techniques****14.4.1 Music and Dance****14.4.2 The Human Wall****14.5 Let Us Sum Up****14.6 Key Words****14.7 Suggested Reading**

14.0 OBJECTIVES

With the study of this unit, you will be able to:

- learn about the performative structure of the play;
- understand the use of language by Tendulkar;
- discuss some important dramatic techniques used by Tendulkar;
- understand the blend of song and dance resulting into an amalgamation of old and new theatre's performances.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

As you read the play, you may have noticed the techniques Tendulkar uses. The director's job seems simple. Variations and dramatic effects seem to be inherent. So far, previous units have provided a brief introduction to Indian theater in general and Marathi theater in particular. We also read about the life and work of Tendulkar. We then discussed the setting of the play: the historical context and the people on which it was based, the central theme of power and the way power works in a society concerned with the social or political issues. Here we mean hierarchies of class, caste, and gender in which some dominate and oppress others. This section examines issues related to form, the technique by which the playwright effectively communicates his or her vision. In short, how and how the subject is expressed.

We will first discuss the use of language and style, and other dramatic techniques that Tendulkar uses to achieve his goals. Remember that literature can have more than one interpretation. Read the plays and discussions carefully and critically so you can make your own decisions.

14.2 PERFORMATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE PLAY

The play's performance format is based on motifs from a number of Marathi folk plays. The following are the major points of this idiom are *Khela*, the *Dashavatar*, the *Tamasha*, the *Gondhal*, the *Bharud*, and *Waghya –Murlī*. (Samik Bandyopadhyaya, 'Introduction' to the English text, 1986, p., 4-5). Bandyopadhyaya cites a note of Theatre Academy:

“The basic structure of the play is a human wall, which is basically a singing and dancing chorus, personally commenting on the episodic developments. But it also breaks into smaller tableaux, grouping and regrouping endlessly. The human wall ceases to exist when its back is turned to the audience. The Sutradhar or narrator interposes in the proceedings to keep the audience abreast of things, the actors switching parts with perfect timing. A touch of opera with verse, music and prose fusing into one another in a strange, compelling alchemy. The ballet, blending with the traditional folk dances, sets the mood and tempo of the decadent and bawdy era” (Bandyopadhyaya, p.5.)

The mimetic shape of the play is another noteworthy characteristic of the performance structure that the aforementioned writer overlooks. The play is primarily mimetic in nature, with only a few dialogues. The dialogues are choric even when they are uttered. The use of Lavani's singing adds to the irony of the scenario.

The chorus in the performance is required to perform both as a collective and as actors. They serve as the stage's wall or cyclorama; they play Brahmins, soldiers, attendants, priests, and everything else. In the garden, they also serve as trees and stones. They act as inanimate items in Nana's house and garden as Nana is chasing Lalita Gauri. The perfection of the song, performed with intonations, rising and falling by the chorus, and the time with which the chorus performers interchange roles, are the highlights of the performance. The utilisation of minimum property and sets is another highlight of the performance.

Hence, it is recommended that *Ghasiram Kotwal* should be read as a performance text rather than a written text.

14.3 LANGUAGE AND STYLE

We are often told that "Style is the man himself". And each literary work bears its own imprint of the particular idiom of the writer. For example, one could say that the style of one playwright is different from that of another playwright. For example, Shakespeare's style is different from Shaw's. But in a play, the writer speaks through the people of different

characters. And so the style should change depending on the character's personality. In fact, an educated person speaks differently from an uneducated person. In short, everyone has their own style. And the success of a playwright lies in being able to write lines to suit the character's personality.

In Ghashiram Kotwal, we have a wide range of characters from the mighty Nana to the members of Chorus. How far has Tendulkar managed to give us the kind of dialogue that suits his characters? But before we do that, let's consider the fact that what we have in front of us is a translation play.

Translation of the Play:

Translation is more than simply rewriting Marathi text into English. It also means translating into English the cultural context of 18th century Pune. There is no doubt that Jayant Karve and Eleanor Zelliot succeeded in making the translation as accurate as possible in the spirit of the original. When translating a drama, the translator often adapts the play to the needs and expectations of the audience in the target language. Character translations are not possible, as literary texts require minor modifications. Eleanor Zelliot, the translator said: Tendulkar's play demands and inspires creativity and provides an example of the abuse of Marathi, which literally translates as "Oh, worthless." This sounded rather bland, so the translators thought the original replacement would be "You shape a piece of shit!" as a punch needed.

Many of the serious theatres were performed in Hindi translation and that even in Delhi. The translated plays were of great dramatists namely Brecht and Beckett. Western performances were limited to Western plays either in English or in translation. Many of the urban theatres have now begun to perform plays written in Hindi and regional languages. However, plays available in English language offer a great range of audience with no bar to language barriers. The play begins with the prayer to Ganapati and Saraswati. The translation of the hymns is done such a way that it does not lose rhythm of the original.

Rhyme of the play adds to its musicality. Culture-related words such as "Bhatji buva", "sindur", "lavani", and "kirtan" have been preserved in the original. An explanation is provided at the beginning of the text instead of a translation. As in abuse, the flavor of the original idiom is preserved. "May you itch without cause" and "I would have you riding backward on a donkey with Sindur all over your head" Arrogant Nana calls herself "we" in revenge. For example, he tells the servant, "We will have you killed." He promises Gauri: "But our devotion is limited to this elegant image...." It is a custom amongst royalty in India and the West to refer to themselves in the plural. For example, Queen Victoria often said, "We're not amused."

Dialogues in the play are not long but they are very effective and full of wit. More often just like 'Tamasha' tradition, this play also has use of

abusive language. You will observe that only Sutradhar has got some long dialogues. In comparison to Sutradhar, only Nana has got some long soliloquies through which we learn his intentions for Ghashiram. Vijay Tendulkar on his style of language said: 'But this is a question of my playing with various styles and levels rather than of conscious planning. I am in fact at ease in many styles of language' (1971, Rajinder Paul).

This language analysis is very evident in the following dialogue between

Nana and Ghashiram:

Nana: Bastard. You've got me in a narrow pass.

Ghashiram: Yes, the narrow pass of my only daughter.

In addition to this the use of pun in the play can be observed in the following dialogue:

There's only one Nana

The rest are na-na-na-na. (p.21)

And pun can also be observed in the interchangeable use of 'brutish' instead of 'British' which focuses on the nature of British Empire in India.

Moreover, slapstick comedy can also be seen in the dialogues between Sutradhar and Brahman:

Sutradhar : Ho Ho Ho Bhatji Buwa!

Wait now, wait now. Hold your horses! Must you go?

Brahman : Forces? Whose forces? Foreign? English?

Sutradhar : Not forces! Hold your horses!

Brahman : So I'm stopped. What do you have to say?

Sutradhar : Where is your honour going so late at night?

Brahman : Nowhere, nowhere. It's all right.

Sutradhar : Where is nowhere?

Brahman : Just near somewhere.

Sutradhar : Somewhere is near where?

Brahman : Go away. Don't wait. Its getting late. (p. 3)

A part from language, tone is also worth to interpret. In the dialogue by Sutradhar his tone presents the implied sarcasm. This can be seen in the following dialogue between Sutradhar and Brahman:

Brahman : Oy. Oy. You son of a bitch. Don't you have eyes and ears?

Sutradhar : I'm sorry, O priestly Brahman.

Brahman : Don't you have any manners?

Sutradhar : I'm so sorry, O lordly Brahman.

Brahman : Don't you have any brains.

Sutradhar : I'm very sorry. O honoured Brahman (p. 4).

The play has got all the varieties including poetic dialogues, songs, humming, silence and mime. The presence of this range of variety make the drama complex and rich piece of art.

13.4 DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES

While reading any drama we first try to understand its theme by asking a question 'What is it about?' You may also observe if there is any hidden

message or function of the play. Just like any piece of art, drama too has something to offer, it may focus on ‘instructing by pleasing’. This will definitely make the spectators feel like crying, laughing or lead them to deep thinking. In an interview by M. Maharishi (1973), we learn, “To my mind the function of theatre today is not just to entertain, nor just to reveal certain ironies and contradictions of man’s mind and behaviour nor just to philosophise or sermonize over certain socio-political issues. For me the major function of theatre today is to help man to know and discover himself in relation to his environment’. So let’s move to inquire about the techniques used in this present drama.

3.4.1 Music and Dance

Many plays are written with rhythmic and musical qualities which are core elements of *tamasha* and *powada* folk theatre. In the play the main line ‘Shree Ganaraya Nartan Kari, Amhi Punyache Baman Hari’ which means ‘Ganpati dances the Ganpati Dance, and we are Brahmins of Pune’. We find this line recurring almost throughout the play. The tempo, mood, emotion, and musical theme of this line changes with the progress of the play. For instance in the prologue the tempo and mood of the line is slow, calm and happy however when Ghashiram is stoned to death, the tempo and mood of the line is fast and full of anger. Moreover, when the singer sings *Radhe Krishna Hari, Mukund Murari*, it is accompanied with *lavani* dance where the mood is full of anger and gestures of the dancer is jerky and forceful.

Hence, we can observe that in order to express cruelty and savagery in drama, Tendulkar has taken the help of music which makes the drama a worth watching experience.

The use of chorus is also interestingly used in the play. According to V Shyamala in her article “Design in the text” said, “In Ghashiram, the chorus operates with greater flexibility. The group, about twelve strong serves to indicate numerical strength, conformity, spread of an idea even rumor, or take physical shapes indicating locations and moods. The chorus modifies the sentences on occasions, to yield a very different sense. The narrator functions. He leads the comment, he joins the group and separates from it, play some roles in illustrate the point. This particular device facilitates the pace of the play”.

3.4.2 The Human Wall

‘The Human Wall’ is part of the basic structure of the play. This wall is basically a singing and dancing chorus that personally comment on the episodic developments of the play. ‘The Human Wall’ is formed of twelve men dressed as Brahmans. ‘The Human Wall’ enters the stage in the beginning of the play and ceases to exist when its back is turned to the audience. Rajinder Nath, the producer of the play uses the wall and this has been observed by Rajinder Paul on which he commented as, “From an aesthetically clothed backdrop, he [Rajinder Nath] rhythmically

removes one Brahman like a brick to make a cut-out window, from behind which emerges a female figure on the look-out for a noble catch”.

‘The Human Wall’ is replaced with a curtain that was very common in a conventional stage. Above this, the human wall helps in the transition from one scene to another. It also plays a role of chorus in the play. The chorus moves from left to right and back again, singing and dancing it offers an account of the action of the play and in a way it also gives us an impression of folk theatre.

Moreover, the members of the wall also get transformed into an individual role, assuming the part of the group in Gulabi’s hall sitting scene. Over and above the Brahmans, performing as ‘The Human Wall’ form a human god house round Ganapati, and when the Nana chases a girl, they become a garden. Throughout the play we can see the human wall assuming new and visually stimulating configurations. And at the end of the play, at Ghashiram’s execution, the human wall becomes the fierce mob which is shouting with sadistic glee.

• **Check Your Progress : I**

1. Discuss the use of the Human Wall and cite example.

2. Write a brief note on the language and style of the play.

3. Discuss the Dramatic Techniques used in the play by Tendulkar.

14.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the language and style of the play. As the play is translated from Marathi to English there were many aspects of language and style which were worth to focus on. Moreover, the effective use of the folk theatre form as part its presentation is also focused in this unit. In addition to this, the unit also presents an overview of integration of song and dance to the action of the play. Theatrical device like the use

of the Human Wall is also used effectively to control the flow of the story.

14.6 KEY WORDS

Mimetic	The way in which the real world and human behaviour is represented in art or literature
Cyclorama	A circular picture of a 360° scene, viewed from inside
Sermonize:	To give moral advice, especially when it is boring or not wanted
Conformity	Behaviour or actions that follow the accepted rules of society

14.7 SUGGESTED READING

- *Collected Plays in Translation: Kamala, Silence! the Court Is in Session, Sakharam Binder, the Vultures, Encounter in Umbugland, Ghashiram Kotwal, a Friend's Story, Kanyadaan.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press. 2003.
- Tendulkar, Vijay. *Ghashiram Kotwal.* Calcutta: Seagull, 1986.
- Tendulkar, Vijay. *Ghashiram Kotwal: A Reader's Companion.* M. Sarat Babu, Asia Book Club, 2003.

:: STRUCTURE ::**15.0 Objectives****15.1 Introduction to the Author****15.2 A Brief Overview of Girish Karnad's plays****15.3 Summary of *Hayavadana* by Girish Karnad****15.3.1. Act 1****15.3.2. Act 2****15.4 Conclusion****15.5 Check Your Progress**

15.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall

- Give an introduction to the author of the play *Hayavadana*
- Provide a brief overview of the plays of Girish Karnad
- Provide a detailed and act-wise summary of the play *Hayavadana*.

15.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHOR

Girish Karnad was a multidimensional personality who earned international praise as a dramatist, director, critic, actor, translator and cultural administrator and thus was all rolled into one. He was an acclaimed playwright who is said to have greatly influenced the Indian dramatic writing and tradition. He was undoubtedly one of the best dramatists and a leading practitioner of performing arts in India. Karnad was born on 19 May 1938 in Matheran, in present-day Maharashtra. He was initially schooled in Marathi as he was born in the Marathi region of present-day Maharashtra. But later, when his father, who was a doctor, was transferred to Sirsi, the Kannada speaking region, he was exposed to the local theatre troupes. It was during these early years of his life in Sirsi that laid the foundation for his dramatic vision. He began to take interest in *natak mandalis* (theatre troupes) and these years had a tremendous impact on his sense of *natak* or theatre.

Girish Karnad has scripted, directed and acted in several plays, feature films, documentaries and television serials in Kannada, Hindi and English. Although he was highly active in directing, acting and

translation, it was as a dramatist that he left a lasting impact. He is most remembered for his contributions to the canon of Indian literature. He was to the Kannada theatre what Badal Sarkar was to the Bengali, Vijay Tendulkar to the Marathi and Mohan Rakesh to the Hindi. Although he originally wrote all of his plays in Kannada, it was he himself who translated them into English. It was this body of translation of his plays from Kannada into English that was amongst the main forces that laid the foundation for Indian Drama in English. His translated plays are as good as the ones written originally in Kannada because he himself has said, “My translation must therefore be seen as approximation to the original”. It was because of his dramatic genius that he emerged as one of the leading playwrights of the Post-Independence Indian Literature. Both theatre and drama critics have heaped praises on him appreciating many aspects his plays including plot construction, characterization, song, spectacle, symbolism, reinterpretation of history, use of myths and folktales, highlighting on contemporary social and psychological problems, especially those of women and children etc. His translated plays have brought him national and international recognition over the years. Karnad was conferred the Jnanpith Award, the highest literary honour conferred in India, in the year 1998. His journey from *Yayati* to *The Fire and the Rain* and *The Wedding Album* holds a mirror to the very evolution of Indian theatre during a period of more than four decades. Though most of Karnad’s plays have their origins in Indian mythology, folklore and history, he was still praised internationally because of the overall appeal his plays had. It can be said that his plays had a larger appeal and that they were not limited to just Indian readers and theatres. K. Chandrashekhara writes of him saying, “The likes of Girish Karnad enable us to pretend that there is such a thing as a truly “Indian” theatre which can be true to its traditions and at the same time responsive to contemporary concerns.” Karnad’s plays have also been translated into many Indian languages. His plays have also been directed by various acclaimed directors like Ebrahim Alkazi, B. V. Karanth, Alyque Padamsee, Prasanna, Arvind Gaur, Satyadev Dubey, Vijaya Mehta, Shyamanand Jalan, Amal Allana and Zafer Mohiuddin. He was also conferred Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan by the Government of India for his outstanding contribution to the world of drama, writing, acting, directing and translating. He died on 10 June 2019 at the age of 81. He was so remarkable that his plays continue to be performed and read even today after his death. He was certainly one of the most significant playwrights of Indian literature and Indian literature in English.

15.2 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF GIRISH KARNAD’S PLAYS

Girish Karnad, along with Mahesh Dattani and Vijay Tendulkar, revolutionized modern Indian theatre. As mentioned earlier, his plays were originally written in Kannada but he himself translated them into English which brought him national and international recognition. Girish Karnad’s fame rests on eight path breaking plays which include one

written originally in English and the rest in Kannada which were later translated into English. Most of his plays are based on mythological tales and are rooted in Indian culture. He was a well-known playwright who infused contemporary issues with the myths and legends in his plays, and present urban problems and conflicts. In this section, we shall take a brief look at all of his plays.

Girish Karnad's plays (both written in English and translated from Kannada into English) are: *Yayati* (1961), *Tughlaq* (1972), *Hayavadana* (1975), *Nagamandala* (1990), *Tale-Danda* (1990), *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (1997), *The Fire and the Rain* (1998), *A Heap of Broken Images, Flowers, Wedding Album* (2009), *Boiled Beans on Toast* (2014).

Yayati, the first play of Girish Karnad, was written in the year 1960 and was originally published in the book form in 1961. It won the Mysore State Award in 1962. *Yayati* is based on an episode from the Indian epic Mahabharata. Yayati was one of the ancestors of the Pandavas in Mahabharata. The play *Yayati* narrates the age-old myth of this mythological king named Yayati. The play revolves around the character of Yayati who is given the curse of premature old age by Shukracharya, his father-in-law. Shukracharya cursed Yayati because of Yayati's infidelity towards his wife, Shukracharya's daughter. But he was told that he could redeem this curse only if someone was willing to exchange his youth with him. Yayati, yearning for eternal youth, wished to obtain the vitality of his own son, Pooru, and exchange his son's youth with him. It was finally his son who offers to do this for his father. The play examines the dilemma that it presents for Yayati, Pooru and Pooru's young wife. *Yayati* is highly remarkable because Karnad introduces the *Sutradhara* (the anchor) in the play who comes on the stage and introduces the characters as well as informs the audience that the play is mythical in nature. The play explores the famous 'Yayati complex', that is, parents hoping for sacrifices on the part of their children to fulfil their own selfish ambitions.

Tughlaq was written when Karnad was studying at Magdalen College, Oxford. The play opens in 1327 A.D. *Tughlaq* was a historical play unlike *Yayati*. The play was written in Kannada in the year 1964. It is divided into thirteen scenes and portrays the life of Muhammad bin Tughlaq about whom Karnad said, "Certainly the most brilliant individual ever to ascend on the throne of Delhi and also one of the biggest failures." The play *Tughlaq* is a historical play and it is also considered a commentary on the contemporary politics of the 1960s. The Times of India comments: "In the play, the protagonist, Tughlaq, is portrayed as having great ideas and a grand vision, but his reign was an abject of failure. He started his rule with great ideals of a unified India, but it degenerated into anarchy and his kingdom." Thus, *Tughlaq* was one of the most significant plays of Girish Karnad since it commented on the political environment of contemporary India.

Hayavadana was another of Girish Karnad's play that was based on Indian myth. The main plot is inspired from a folktale in Somadeva's Kathasaritsagar as well as Thomas Mann's play 'The Transposed Head'. Devadutta, a scholar and Kapil, a healthy young man, are very close friends. Kapil helps Devadutta and Padmini to get married but she is drawn towards Kapil. Soon their affair becomes known to Devadutta and he cuts off his head in shock and despair. Filled with guilt and remorse, Kapil also severs off his own head. Padmini then prays to Goddess Kali to get back the two men. But in her excitement and hurry, she transposes the two heads, that is, she places Devadutta's head on Kapil's body and Kapil's head on Devadutta's body. Padmini chooses to live with the body which has Devadutta's head. But not long after, she goes to the other man. A fight ensues and both men kill each other. Padmini commits Sati. The subplot of the play is a horseman's search for completeness.

Nagamandala was originally written in Kannada and later translated into English, like most of Karnad's plays. *Nagamandala* is based on two oral tales from the region of Karnataka. It deals with the issue of gender bias and oppression of women in the patriarchal society. The plot revolves around Rani who wants to earn the affection of her husband Apanna. Apanna is indifferent and spends most of his time with a concubine. Rani decides to drug her husband with a love root which she mixes in the curry in order to win her husband's love. However, she spills the curry on an anthill and Naga, a King Cobra, consumes it. Naga can assume the form of any human being. He is struck by her beauty and transforms himself into the form of her husband and visits her every night. Soon she becomes pregnant and she is accused of adultery by Apanna. The news reaches the Village Panchayat and she is asked to prove her fidelity by putting her hand inside a snake's hole. She is ordered by the Village Panchayat to prove her chastity like Sita did in Ramayana. Rani puts her hand in the hole and nothing happens to her and she is declared to be innocent. But her husband Apanna is not satisfied and spies on her at night and discovers that Naga was assuming his form and visiting his wife. He gets very angry and pursues the snake to kill it. Rani gets to know the truth by Naga. Apanna realizes his mistake and is reformed.

Tale-Danda again takes to history. The play is about the various prevalent social issues that had the nation in its grip. The plot of the play revolves around Basavanna, a social reformer of the 12th century, who speaks against caste system, gender discrimination and many other social evils. But because of his revolutionary ideas, Basavanna was resented by the higher class people and soon dies a very mysterious death. The play is highly remarkable because it was written during the time when the Mandir-Mandal conflict was in news.

A Heap of Broken Images was highly remarkable because of its subject matter. The play has contemporary relevance because it talks about English language in the contemporary setup. *A Heap of Broken Images* (2005) takes up the subject of writers preferring English over their mother

tongue as it is their ticket to instant success and fame. The play also focuses on technology taking a major part of our lives. *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* (1997) is a not so popular political play which was written to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Indian Independence. The playwright has brilliantly recreated the life of Tipu Sultan and all the characters are well drawn. It examines the inner life of the warrior and his dreams.

The Fire and the Rain, just like *Yayati*, is based on an episode from the Indian epic Mahabharata. Yavakrita, son of Sage Bharadwaj, performs penance in order to gain knowledge. However, he commits evil deeds and falls prey to lust. Here Karnad points out the perils of being knowledgeable without wisdom. The scene of drought in the entire land due to Yavakrita's sin is his own invention. *Bali: The Sacrifice* (2004) is another of his lesser known plays and again has its source in an ancient Kannada epic. It revolves around four characters - the Queen, who is a Jain, the Hindu King, the Queen Mother and the Mahout. It is the study in the viability of Ahimsa. *Flowers* was performed in 2007 and here again Karnad returns to the familiar world of folk tales. The play revisits as well as reinvents a popular folktale of Karnataka. It is a break from his other plays as it focuses on the male sexual desire rather than the female. One of the most popular and read play of Girish Karnad is *Wedding Album* which appeared in 2008. The play is similar to *A Heap of Broken Images* as it too makes use of technology. *Wedding Album* deals with women and their two different worlds, i.e., the traditional and the modern cyber world. Every character leads a respectable life but each one of them has skeletons in his/her closet. The episodes are spread over nine scenes and the entire plot is built around a Saraswat Brahmin girl's wedding to an NRI boy, whom she has never met before. The play is a hilarious and moving spectacle that is deeply revelatory about the India that we are living today in. *Boiled Beans on Toast* is a more recent play which is set in contemporary Bangalore.

Thus, based on this brief study of his plays, we can see that most of Karnad's plays have their origins in Indian mythology, folklore and history. His three plays—*Yayati*, *Hayavadana*, *Nagamandala*—can be grouped together as they contain thematic similarities—that of myth and folktale. *Tale-Danda* and *Tughlaq* are two of his historical plays because they are highly based on history. Thus, Karnad has carved a place for himself in the canon of Indian literature through his dramatic genius. He is still remembered worldwide for the genius he was.

15.3 SUMMARY OF HAYAVADANA BY GIRISH KARNAD

Hayavadana is the third play written by Girish Karnad. It is a two-act play. It was originally composed in Kannada like Karnad's two previous plays—*Yayati* and *Tughlaq* and was later translated into English by him. Karnad received Homi Bhabha Fellowship Council's award for the composition of this play. Karnad translated *Hayavadana* into English because he was persuaded to do so by Mr. Rajinder Paul. The translated

version of the play (English version) was first published in *Enact*, the journal published by Mr. Rajinder Paul. Regarding the title of the play, it is said: “Hayavadana is a man with the head of a horse: “*haya*” means horse and “*vadana*” means face.” The play is said to have been based on *Kathasaritsagara* because it has the story of Devadatta and Kapila. But Karnad intended to reworking of the tale in *The Transposed Heads* by Thomas Mann. Karnad himself admits: “...but I have drawn heavily on Thomas Mann’s reworking of the tale in *The Transposed Heads* and am grateful to Mr. Mann for permission to do so.” However, it is Somadeva’s *Kathasaritsagara* on which the main plot of the play is based. The twin play of *Hayavadana* is *Nagamandala*. In this section, we shall look at the summary of the play *Hayavadana* and see how it proceeds.

15.3.1. Act 1

Hayavadana (meaning horse-face) opens with worship to Lord Ganesha, a prayer ritual performed by Hindus. Bhagavata, the narrator, appears on the stage and asks that Ganesha bless the performance that he and the company are about to perform. Bhagavata tells the audience about the play that they are going to perform. He says that the play is set in the city of Dharmapura which is ruled by King Dharmasheeka. He also introduces the characters to the audience. He introduces the two protagonists: Devadatta and Kapila. Devadatta is handsome, slight, fair, intelligent, son of a Brahmin, poet, and witty. Kapila on the other hand is dark, plain, muscular, strong and physically impressive. The two men are very different from each other and yet they are the best of friends.

After the small introduction given by Bhagavata, a scream comes from offstage. It is the scream of an actor (Actor I), Nata, who runs on screaming that he has seen something fearful. The actor has seen a man with the head of a horse and a human voice. He saw and heard this talking horse when he was coming along the road and stopped to pee. Bhagavata is amused to hear something of this sort and the actor insists he is not drunk and that whatever he saw is true. Bhagavata asks the actor to reassure himself that the horse does not talk. As Bhagavata continues his talk about the two best friends, there comes another scream from the actor who runs yelling that “he” is coming and rushes back out. Bhagavata is confused hearing this from the actor and believes that the actor has seen *something* really frightening. He also hopes that the audience does not get frightened.

After the second scream from the actor, Bhagavata orders to pull up the curtain which reveals the presence of Hayavadana. Bhagavata finds that there is a horse head that is attached to a man’s body and realizes that the actor was true. Bhagavata discovers that the horse head is crying. Bhagavata is stunned to see what is there right in front of him. Bhagavata calls the horse-man (the man with the head of a horse) over and asks him to remove his mask since it is frightening people and bothering the audience who have come to enjoy the performance. Bhagavata believes that it is the mask that the man is wearing on his head and that there is

nothing like a horse-head on a man's body in real. He orders Hayavadana to take off his mask but when Hayavadana does not do so, Bhagavata tries to pull it off himself. But soon he realises that the horse-head is real and that it is not a mask. He realises that it is the real head of a horse on a man's body. Bhagavata asks Hayavadana several times who is he but Hayavadana chooses to remain silent.

Regarding having the head of a horse on his body, Bhagavata asks Hayavadana why he is so. He asks if it the result of a curse, or an insult or if he desecrated a holy place. Hayavadana finally speaks and says that this is his fate and also let Bhagavata pull of his head because he himself cannot get rid of it. All Hayavadana wants is to become a full *man*. Continuing his story to Bhagavata, Hayavadana says that his mother was the princess of Karnataka and that she was able to choose her own husband. It was during the time when the Prince of Araby came on his white stallion that she fell in love with the white stallion, the horse. The Princess then decided to marry the horse. The marriage eventually happened because no one could oppose the decision of the Princess. One morning after the marriage when she woke up, the horse was gone. The horse was replaced by a Celestial Being who had been cursed as a horse for fifteen years for misbehaviour. The Celestial Being was told that the love of a human being would rescue him, and thus he asked the Princess to come with him to the Heavenly Abode. The Princess, however, refused which resulted in the Celestial Being cursing her because of which she became a horse. The Princess was elated and ran away, and Hayavadana who was the only offspring of the Princess and the Celestial Being remained with his human body and horse head. Hayavadana tells Bhagavata that the only thing he wants is to become a "complete man". Hearing the story of Hayavadana, Bhagavata tries to suggest some holy places that can help Hayavadana become a complete man. Bhagavata suggests Banaras but Hayavadana has already visited it. Bhagavata suggests some others as well but at last he suggests that Hayavadana should go to the temple of Goddess Kali of Mount Chitrakoot and Hayavadana decides to do so. Bhagavata decides that Hayavadana will be accompanied by Nata, the Actor, on his visit to the temple of Goddess Kali. After the two depart for the temple, Bhagavata continues his story to the audience.

Bhagavata, the narrator, continues his story to the audience and narrates the story of the two friends, Devadatta and Kapila. Devadatta enters and is followed by Kapila. Kapila finds that Devadatta is not being attentive to what he says and asks him who is it this time, implying a girl. Devadatta blushes and asks how he knew to which Kapila says that he has seen him fall in love fifteen times before which proves that the two young men are best of friends and know each other very well. Devadatta describes the woman and says that her "beauty is as the magic lake". Devadatta says she has become "my guru in the poetry of love" and that he wants her in real life as well. When Kapila asks the name of the girl,

Devadatta says that she does not know her name but tells him that she lives in the street called Pavana Veethi. Kapila immediately decides that he will go there and find out her name and woo her for his friend Devadatta. Kapila goes to that street to find the girl and Devadatta thinks how good friend Kapila is. But he also thinks that he is not the right man to send there. Meanwhile in Pavana Veethi, Kapila is not his search for the girl. He knocks at the door of one house which is answered by a girl named Padmini. She is startlingly beautiful and Kapila realises that Padmini must be the girl Devadatta has fallen for. Kapila wants to know her name and begins by asking if she knows the Revered Brahmin Vidyasagara who has a son named Devadatta. Hearing the name of Devadatta, Padmini blushes and calls for her mother and runs inside.

Padmini is the daughter of the leading merchant in Dharmapura. It is a wealthy and educated house. Kapila somehow manages to persuade Padmini into marrying Devadatta and Padmini does so. Devadatta and Padmini marries each other and she moves into his home. Devadatta owes Kapila a debt and the bond of their friendship strengthens as never before. But over time Devadatta finds that Padmini was chattering and drooling over Kapila all day. He also chides her for her propensity to do this. He begins to believe that Padmini is taking interest in Kapila. To this, Padmini asks if he is jealous of Kapila. But she later comforts Devadatta by saying he is her everything and that Kapila is just an innocent and a baby.

The three of them, Padmini, Devadatta and Kapila, are going on a trip somewhere now and Padmini praises Kapila for his driving abilities and compares him with Devadatta. Padmini and Kapila are in a jovial mood and are laughing but Devadatta sulks seeing this. Devadatta cannot accept the fact that Padmini is being nice and friendly to Kapila. Padmini asks about various things to Kapila and she loves to see what Kapila says and does. Padmini marvels at the way Kapila moves, walks, climbs and runs. He looks like a Celestial Being to Padmini. Padmini also marvels at the muscles of Kapila and secretly desires of him. Bhagavata says that no woman can resist Kapila and his muscular looks and that Padmini too falls for him. There was a time when Kapila tells Padmini about a nearby temple (Goddess Kali's temple) and says that the three of them should visit it but Devadatta refuses and asks Kapila to move ahead. But Kapila and Padmini walk off to the temple and Devadatta stays behind. Devadatta later walks to the temple, and finding a sword there, strike off his own head in anguish. When Kapila and Padmini returns to the cart, they do not find Devadatta there. Kapila seems very worried knowing that Devadatta is not there and he rushes off to find him while Padmini stays there. When Kapila reaches the Kali temple, he finds the decapitated body of his dear friend Devadatta and moans that he does not know why Devadatta was so angry, and how he could forget that Kapila loved him and would do anything for him. Kapila is so disheartened seeing the decapitated body of Devadatta that he picks up the sword and strikes off his own head claiming they can be brothers in the next world.

Padmini was still waiting for the two men at the cart and got tired waiting. She decides to go and find the two men. She walks to temple in dark and stumbles over the two bodies in front of the Kali temple. She is shocked to see that the two men are dead and does not know what to do. She worries what she will tell people about the death of the two men. She seems totally perplexed and disheartened and decides she must die as well. As she picks up the sword to kill herself, the voice of the goddess comes and tells her to put down the sword. Padmini is scared seeing the goddess in front of her. She falls to the feet of Goddess Kali. Kali is pleased with Padmini and asks her what she wants. She tells Padmini to put the heads back on the bodies of the two men to bring them back to life again. Padmini gets very excited hearing from the Goddess Kali that the two men can be brought back to life again. Because of her excitement and the darkness of the night, she puts the heads on the bodies but accidentally mixes them up. She puts the head of Devadatta on Kapila's body and Kapila's on Devadatta's. The goddess disappears and two dead bodies begin to sit up and get back to life. They realize that their heads are on wrong bodies but they do not care and happily decide to return back to home. But it is unclear with whom Padmini should go home. Devadatta (Devadatta's head on Kapila's body) says the head is the "sign of a man" but Kapila (Kapila's head on Devadatta's body) says this hand or body married her, and this body lived with her. Devadatta says a person marries a person, not a body, and that "Of all the human limbs the topmost—in position as well as importance—is the head". Padmini is convinced by Devadatta's arguments and decides to go with him. Kapila angrily tells Padmini he knows she wants Devadatta's head and Kapila's body because she married Devadatta and was attracted towards Kapila because of his muscular looks. Devadatta himself agrees to what Kapila has to say. Kapila tells Devadatta that they must get rid of Kapila but Kapila says they will have to kill him to get rid of him. The three are still in a confusion what they should do get rid of this situation. Bhagavata interrupts the three people on the stage and says this is indeed a dilemma, and a deep and perplexing problem whose "answer must be sought with the greatest caution". He tells the audience to take a ten-minute break and ponder this, and then come back with solutions.

15.3.2. Act 2

The second act of the play begins with Bhagavata asking the audience about the solution to the problem. The problem of whose wife is Padmini still persists. Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini go to a great *rishi* in anticipation of a valid solution to the problem. The *rishi* suggests that the head is supreme among human limbs and thus Devadatta's head on Kapila's body gets to be with Padmini. Devadatta and Padmini jump with joy hearing this from the *rishi* but Kapila is mournful. As Devadatta and Padmini prepare to leave, Padmini tells Kapila not to despair and whispers that she is going to be with his body, after all. Bhagavata also tells Kapila not to grieve since this is fate. Kapila goes to live in the

woods after this and Devadatta and Padmini goes to Dharmapura to enjoy their married life.

Padmini is expecting a child as she is pregnant. Devadatta brings two dolls for their child. She sees that Devadatta's new body has acquired a new characteristic in the sense that the new body simply acts and does not wait for thoughts. The child is born and the two dolls which Devadatta brought starts to talk to each other. The dolls also begin to address the audience and tell them what happens next. Devadatta and Padmini fights over the best ways to raise their son. But Padmini does not forget to think about Kapila. She constantly thinks of him and wonders where he is and what he is doing. The two dolls also sense this inclination of Padmini towards another man. Padmini also secretly wants to go and meet Kapila. She also expressed her desire to her son that she would take him to the forest, which he has never seen before.

Kapila appears on the stage again after he left for the forest. He tells Bhagavata that he will never return to the city again since he wants to spend the rest of his life in the forest owing to the fact that Padmini now belongs to Devadatta. Bhagavata also tells Kapila that his (Kapila's) mother has died and that Padmini has given birth to a son. Kapila is expressionless to this and simply walks away and starts to cut a tree. It was after this Padmini appears in the forest with her son since she had promised her son that she would take him to the forest. Padmini sees Kapila there and both of them are transfixed seeing each other. Padmini tells Kapila that she has brought her son to the forest because he has never seen it before, that he had never felt the wind on his cheeks or a thorn in his foot or seen the river. Kapila looks at the son and asks if it is her son, to which Padmini says that it is his too, as his body (Kapila's head is on Devadatta's body) created it. Padmini also tells him that her son has the same mole on his shoulder that he (Kapila) does. She also tells Kapila that it was her fault that she mixed the heads up, and she has suffered for it. She wishes she could stay and look at him and fill up for the rest of her life. Kapila tells her that he has buried all the memories of his past and that Padmini is unearthing them now. She is sorry but he does not want her pity. Finally, she caresses him and lays her head on his chest. Both of them embrace and go inside his home.

When Devadatta returns from the fair (he had gone there to bring the new dolls), he asks Bhagavata if Kapila lives here. The scene is still in the forest. Devadatta comes to forest and asks Bhagavata if Kapila is here but Bhagavata is reluctant to answer his question since he knows that he lives here and that Padmini is with him (Kapila). Devadatta is very angry and has come here with a sword and two new dolls in his hands. He also asks Bhagavata for how long she has been here in the forest, to which Bhagavata says four or five days. Kapila comes out of his hut and says that he was eagerly waiting for Devadatta. Both of them have a conversation and Devadatta asks if he loves Padmini, to which Kapila says yes, he does. To this, Devadatta tells him that he also loves Padmini.

Seeing the sword of Devadatta, Kapila also goes in to fetch his own. The two men confront each other and start fighting with their swords. Padmini also comes out to watch the fight. Bhagavata sings as the two men fight. Both the men finally die in the battle. Padmini leans down to them and says they've "burned, lived, fought, embraced and died". She wishes if there was any other solution to this or they could have lived together. But this was the only ending that was possible, that of killing each other and dying. Padmini finally tells Bhagavata about her desire. She wants to give away her son to the hunters of the forest to raise him as Kapila's son, and after he is five years old, he is to be sent to Dharmapura to be raised as the son of Devadatta. She asks Bhagavata to help her in doing so. She announces to Bhagavata that she would commit *sati* and die. Padmini finally commits *sati* and is consumed by the flames. Bhagavata tells the audience that they are totally unaware of where did she carry out this act of committing a *sati*.

After the death of Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini, the scene shifts to the subplot of Hayavadana, a man with the head of a horse. Bhagavata is addressing the audience and he sees Actor II (Actor I is Nata, who saw Hayavadana in Act One) rushing towards him. He is scared and tells Bhagavata that he almost died seeing something. He tells bhagavata that he heard someone singing the National Anthem. When he went to see who he was, he was shocked to see that it was a horse that was singing the National Anthem. Actor I also appear on the stage with a serious, sulky little boy of about five years old. Bhagavata asks who the boy is but the boy does not reply. Actor explains that he was passing through a hunter's village when the hunters gave him the boy, saying he no longer belongs here. Bhagavata gets a little idea as to who the child is as he was told by Padmini about her desire to give away her son to the hunters first and later to the city of Dharmapura. He asks the child to show his shoulder, and seeing the mole on his shoulder, Bhagavata announces that he is the son of Padmini.

It was after this that Actor II says that he saw a full horse and not the one Bhagavata thought of, i.e., the horse-headed man. It was after this that Hayavadana appears on the stage. He is a full horse now and he thank Bhagavata and Actor I for suggesting him to go to the temple of Goddess Kali. But Bhagavata is astonished to see the transformation of Hayavadana and wants to know how he became the full horse. Hayavadana explains to Bhagavata and says that he went to the goddess and proclaimed he would chop off his head. But Kali stopped him and asked what he wanted, to which he said he wanted to become complete. Hayavadana had not even finished speaking to the goddess when Kali granted him his wish. She made him a complete *horse* and not a complete *man*. Hayavadana says he wish he could get rid of his human voice and says that he was singing because it is believed that people who sing ruin their voices. So, he was trying to get rid of his human voice by ruining it through singing. Hayavadana also begins to cry narrating his story

because his fate is still following him and he is still not complete as he is having the body of a horse and the voice of a human. The little boy (Padmini's son) asks Hayavadana not to cry. The boy sits on the back of Hayavadana, the horse and asks Hayavadana to laugh, and surprisingly as the horse does so, he begins to lose his human voice and can only neigh. Realizing that he has gotten rid of the human voice, Hayavadana leaps with joy and the boy enjoys bouncing up and down on his back. The play ends with Bhagavata being happy that Hayavadana has become complete. He tells the Actors to tell the Brahmin his grandson is coming on a large white horse. The boy is being taken to Dharmapura on the back of the horse. Bhagavata thanks Lord Ganesha for the smooth completion of the performance of their play.

15.4 CONCLUSION

Hayavadana is one of the most widely known plays of Girish Karnad. Though the play is divided into two acts, it can also be said that the play has two subplots: the plot of Hayavadana, the man with the head of a horse and the plot of the love triangle between Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini. Though the two plots are very different from each other, they meet at the end when the child goes to Dharmapura sitting on the back of the white stallion, Hayavadana. Thus, *Hayavadana* is an interesting play that deals with the story of Devadatta, Kapila, Padmini and Hayavadana.

15.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Girish Karnad was conferred the Jnanpith Award in the year _____.
2. Karnad's *Yayati* is based on an episode from _____.
3. *Wedding Album* was published in the year _____.
4. Who is the narrator of the play *Hayavadana*?
5. Which of the following plays of Girish Karnad is based on the oral tales from Karnataka?

a) Yayati	b) Tughlaq
c) Nagamandala	d) Tale-Danda
6. Who persuaded Girish Karnad to translate *Hayavadana* into English?

a) Anita Myles	b) Mr. Rajinder Paul
c) K. Chandrashekhar	d) Mahesh Dattani
7. Who of the following is singing the National Anthem in *Hayavadana*?

a) Bhagavata	b) the boy
c) Actor II	d) Hayavadana

Answers:

- 1) 1998
- 2) Mahabharata
- 3) 2009
- 4) Bhagavata
- 5) c) Nagamandala
- 6) b) Mr. Rajinder Paul
- 7) d) Hayavadana

:: STRUCTURE ::**16.0 Objectives****16.1 *Hayavadana*: Major Themes****16.2 *Hayavadana*: Symbols and Motifs**

- **Check Your Progress**

16.3 *Hayavadana*: Critical Analysis

- **Check Your Progress**

- ❖ **Answers**

16.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit are

1. To discuss the major themes of *Hayavadana*
2. To discuss the Symbols, Allegory and Motifs of *Hayavadana*
3. To discuss the writing style of *Hayavadana*
4. To discuss critical analysis of *Hayavadana*

16.1 HAYAVADANA: MAJOR THEMES

Theme of Hybridity

Girish Karnad reveals hybridity in the play *Hayavadana* in most decorative traditions. Hybridity is not similar to the advanced version of postcolonial hybridity. Girish Karnard portrays hybridity as a basic perception. The play begins with the invocation of Lord Ganesha. In Hindu mythology it is a belief to pray Lord Ganesh and lighting up a lamp. Ganesha is the God who prevents us from the obstacles. Lord Ganesha's physical appearance does not portray perfection. The mask of Ganesha on the stage represents that the fragmentation is not always incomplete or awful. As the play moves forward the title character, Hayavadana, appears. Hayavadana is also a hybridized character having a head of horse and body of human. He was born from a woman who married to a horse. Later in the play appears Devadatta and Kapila. After the sacrifice of their heads in the temple of goddess Kali they both were made alive by the goddess Kali. But transposition of their heads went wrong. Devadatta's head was attached to Kapila's body and Kapila's head was attached to Devadatta's body which made them hybridized.

Further, as the play moves forward, these characters seem less perfect. Their imperfection reflects because of their hybridization.

Theme of Incompleteness

The theme of incompleteness reflects in almost every character. The character of Devadatta reflects intelligence whereas the character of Kapila reflects strength. Both the characters are not truly complete. This incompleteness is reflected by the character of Padmini. Padmini marries Devadatta as Devadatta is intellectual but even after marriage she is craving for Kapila's physicality. She is abandoned by both the men twice which makes her feel incomplete.

However, Devadatta and Kapila both feel the incompleteness when their bodies are interchanged. Initially it reflects that Devadatta is in a better position as he gets the body of Kapila along with his own brain which makes him complete. But later his body starts to get in the same shape which it used to be. Further Kapila gets the body of Devadatta which makes him more unathletic and soft like Devadatta. It gives him the feeling of incompleteness. However, when both the men realize that their bodies are getting into their prior state, still they both are feeling incompleteness as they realize their half existences.

One of the fine examples of the incompleteness is Hayavadana. Hayavadana wants to become a complete man as he is half horse and half man. He prays to goddess Kali, but she makes him a complete horse instead of a man. Even after Goddess makes him a complete horse, he feels the incompleteness as he still possesses the voice of a human. He feels complete when he finally achieves his "neigh" of horse in the end.

Conflict between Body and Mind

The play reflects the question that which is more powerful, the mind or the body. It is, by all respect, the mind, as it is reflected in the experiences of Devadatta, Kapila and Hayavadana. But Girish Karnad also indicates that the human body seems to have more ability than one may think. The human body consists of memory which persistently opposes the mind's attempt to control it. The physical interaction of the body with the world leaves a trace within it, and when in view of this as well as the supposed dominance of the brain, one must understand that both the parts are equally important to have a complete identity.

Subversiveness of Women

The character of Padmini, in one way, portrayed as a traditional woman of Indian society who is a wife and a mother, but she is very open about her choices. She goes for the things she likes. Padmini is married to Devadatta but she craves for Kapila's body for which she tries to pursue. She is a sensual and desiring woman who follows her desires and goes after what she loves and like. Karnad expresses her subversion through her own dialogues as well as those of the Female Chorus, which

expresses her dissatisfaction with her marital existence. Her sharp language and subversiveness present her as more than any of the common woman. She is the only character who is close to the “completeness” in compare to the all other characters.

16.2 HAYAVADANA: SYMBOLS AND MOTIFS

Symbols:

1. The Flower

The flower “The Fortunate Lady” which Devadatta shows to Padmini is a symbol of Padmini. It reflects the features similar to a married woman like parted hair, mark on the forehead and a necklace. Just like a beautiful woman it is seductive and lovely, sensual and opulent. Bhagavata, at the conclusion of the play, reminds the spectators that the flower “The Fortunate Lady” plant emits a delightful fragrance and sing on the full moon night, resembling Padmini and her splendid but tragic death for love.

2. Dolls

Dolls have long been associated with childhood. They are toys that are eerily similar to children and are designed to teach nurturing and sympathy qualities. They are identified with the child in this play, having been acquired during the time of his birth and then kept until fresh ones are purchased later. Karnad, on the other hand, flips the symbol on its head by making these dolls incredibly alive, as well as catty, vicious, and selfish. This does not necessarily reflect negatively on the youngster, but rather on his parents, who brought the dolls into the house.

3. Padmini’s Door

Above Padmini's entrance of the house is a two-headed bird, which represents her division between Devadatta and Kapila. She cannot seem to reconcile her desires for Kapila's body and Devadatta's brain, and since both men are so stuck in their incompleteness, she cannot seem to choose between them.

Motifs:

1. Switching Heads

Switching heads is a key motif in the concepts of incompleteness and hybridism. The god Ganesha, who has the head of an elephant and the body of a child, is the first character introduced in Bhagavat. Hayavadana, who possesses the body of a man and the head of a horse, is the next character the audience sees in person.

Initially Devadatta and Kapila both have had their heads properly connected to their own body but When goddess Kali ask Padmini to put the head of Devadatta and Kapila, who is died by sacrificing their head in the temple of goddess Kali, Padmini in excitement joined the heads with the wrong body. It reflects the incompleteness of both the male characters

16.3 HAYAVADANA: CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Hayavadana, which literally means "horse-head," is one of Girish Karnad's most outstanding masterpieces. It is an apt example of the "theatre of roots," since it is amusing, deep, and a fusion of Indian dramatic themes, structures, and stories with aspects of the Western. Initially it was written in Kannada language and later translated into English by Karnad himself. The inspiration of the play is *Kathasaritasagara* and *The Transposed Head* by Thomas Mann. Whether the themes of his all three plays Tughlaq, Yayati and Hayavadana are legendary, mythical or historical, Karnad's approach is modern in all the three plays. He brilliantly employs folk-art conventions and motifs such as masks and curtains to create a world of intensity, uncertainty, and unpredictability.

Bhagavata appears at the beginning of the play. Bhagavata is a character who is worshipping the god Vishnu. He is the director, narrator and guide of the play who is commenting on the characters, actors and even the audience. Girish Karnad represents Bhagavata's character as a more prominent character as it reflects the different layers of the theatre experience for instance while narrating the story, he often communicates to the audience too and when the other characters appear on the stage, they perform their act as if it is real. "What do you mean by all this shouting and screaming? In front of our audience too!" (Karnad, 74)

There is a divergence between what the audience perceives to be the play and what they believe to be reality. The play begins with the invocation of Lord Ganesha, the god with the human body and a head of elephant. He ponders on the appearance of the god "the embodiment of imperfection, of incompleteness" (73), still how we worship him nonetheless. This is a great teaching that

"the completeness of God is something no poor mortal can comprehend... It is not for us to understand this Mystery or try to unravel it. Nor is it within our power to do so" (Karnad, 73).

From the Karnad's point of view the representation of Lord Ganesha is not a mere allusion, but the figure that anticipates the themes and the events that take place in the play. Dr. Amara Khan in her research paper titled *Girish Karnad's Hayavadana: Analysis of Text and its Theatrical Performance* published in *Journal of Research in Humanities* asserts that

"In this framework, Karnad has used the mask of Ganesha to announce another incomplete character that is Hayavadana. Karnad presents Ganesha as an outer agency for ensuring the success of the play and to design the play in traditional Yakshagana form. In the text of Hayavadana we perceive that at the very beginning of the play, it is through the mask of Ganesha that hybridity is offered as the best solution for life."(144)

A character having similar features like Lord Ganesha, Hayavadana, appears after this invocation at the beginning of the play. A creature who

appears to be a human from the body it possesses and a horse from the face it has. The fusion of animal and human. The one whose desire of being complete is fulfilled at the end of the play.

Moreover, Yakshagana theatre also represents stylized action, of which Dr Amara Khan writes "this technique constantly reminds the audience that they are watching a play and not a slice of life, resulting in some amount of distance between the play and the audience psychologically."

Furthermore, Bhagavata unfolds the story of two friends, Devadatta and Kapila. Hayavadana interferes between the story. The tale of Hayavadana is nothing but a sub-plot. It is left unsaid once the story of Devadatta and Kapila starts. At the end of the play it continues and ends with the Hayavadana turning out to be a complete horse. Girish Karnad has intertwined the plot with the sub-plot. He explained that he would "always felt tremendous fascination for shakespeare's sub-plots - how he tells us the same story twice, from two different points of view." We notice these stories appearing parallelly in the play.

Devadatta and Kapila are very good friends. Devadatta is intellectual while Kapila is physically strong. Devadatta marries Padmini when both realize love for each other. Later in the play Kapila falls in love with Padmini. To cope with the situation both friends sacrifice their life in the temple of goddess Kali. Goddess Kali appears. She asks Padmini to put their heads near their body so that goddess Kali can rejoin their heads and make them alive with her godly powers. Mistakenly Padmini joins the heads with wrong bodies. This results in confusion with their identities. At the end of the play both led to a duel which results in the death of both the protagonists of the play. Padmini performs sati after their deaths. Even without the psychological element, it's a fascinating story, and Karnad does an excellent job of bringing it to life.

Hayavadana is one of the most remarkable works of Girish Karnad. The story of *Hayavadana* is inspired from the ancient Sanskrit work *Kathasarisagar*. The story of Devadatta and Kapila is inspired from the ancient Indian tale "*Betal Panchbinsati*" whereas the plot he portrayed is borrowed from the work of Thomas Mann which is the retelling of story in *The Transposed Head*. Mann's adaptation of a Sanskrit story told by a ghost to an adventurous king takes on a new mock-heroic dimension. Mann uses the story to mock the mechanical notion of life that distinguishes between body and soul, whereas the original story poses a moral dilemma. He mocks the philosophy that places the head above the body.

Mann claims that the human body is an instrument for the fulfilment of human destiny. Even the reversal of heads did not free the characters from nature's physiological constraints. Karnad's work tackles a distinct issue: individual identity in a world of complicated relationships. When the play begins, Devadatta and Kapila are described by Bhagavata as

"close friends with one thought and one heart." Kapila is a man of the body, whereas Devadatta is a man of the mind. When Devadatta marries Padmini, their relationship becomes more complicated.

Later in the play it is acknowledged that Kapila starts falling in love with Padmini. As Padmini is also craving for his physicality she too acknowledges her desire for him. When Devadatta realises Padmini's love for Kapila he sacrifices his life in the temple of goddess kali. Soon Kapila also sacrifice his life knowing his friend is died because of him. When Padmini tries to sacrifice her life too goddess kali appears and ask her to put their heads in front of their bodies. Padmini in excitement transposes their heads which results in Kapila's body having Devadatta's head and Devadatta's body having Kapila's head. Padmini's desire is fulfilled by swiping the heads.

As a result, identities are muddled, revealing the uncertain essence of human personality. Initially, Devadatta (Devadatta's head on Kapila's body) behaves in a different manner than previously. However, he gradually reverts to his previous state. Kapila, like Devadatta, is a quick learner. There is, however, an important distinction to be made. Devadatta, unlike his nature, stop reading and writing poetry. Kapila too is haunted by the memories of the body of Devadatta.

After transposing heads Padmini feels that she is having the best of both the man which later turns out to be a big disappointment. She is the one who has experienced this situation completely. Now she acknowledges the situation in which she has drowned herself but cannot control it.

The duel that takes place at the end of the story results in the death of both the protagonists. furthermore, Padmini sacrifice her life by performing sati ritual. The death of all the three central characters is not represented in a tragic way. The death of these characters signifies the rationality. How absurd the situation is.

The motifs and symbols of folk theatre marks and folk tales, dolls, curtain and the story within a story used in the play is to create a peculiar world. Karnad portrays a plot which revolves around an incomplete world of the individual characters, gods that are indifferent, dolls that can speak and children who cannot utter a single word. The horse is the only character that has tremendous and absurd energy whereas the character of the horse-rider who is roaming around the stage emphasizes the powerful but monotonous rhythm of life.

Check Your Progress

Q. 1 Girish Karnad's Hayavadana is inspired from the ancient Indian collection of folk tales and fairy tales. What is the name of book?

Q. 2 What does Hayavadana means?

Q. 3 Hayavadana is an example of which Indian movement?

Q. 4 Girish Karnad was an admirer of Which Indian theatre during his childhood?

Q. 5 Which substances are used in the play to make it more peculiar?

❖ ANSWERS

Check Your Progress: 1

Ans. 1 Lord Ganesha

Ans. 2 Goddess Kali

Ans. 3 Horse

Ans. 4 Physicality

Ans. 5 Devadatta and Kapila

Ans. 6 Padmini

Ans. 7 Hybridity

Ans. 8 Padmini

Ans. 9 Horse

Ans. 10 The Fortunate Lady

Check Your Progress: 2

Ans. 1 Kathasaritsagar

Ans. 2 Horse Head

Ans. 3 Theatre Root Movement

Ans. 4 Yakshagana Theatre

Ans. 5 folk theatre marks and folk tales, dolls, curtain and the story within a story

:: STRUCTURE ::**17.0 Objectives****17.1 Introduction****17.2 Brief Introduction to Modern Indian Theatre**

- **Check Your Progress 1**

17.3 Girish Karnad as a Modern Indian Playwright

- **Check your progress : 2**

17.4 Revisiting the folk

- **Check your progress : 3**

17.5 Let Us Sum Up**17.6 Key Words****17.7 Books Suggested**

- ❖ **Answers**

17.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, we shall study

- The introduction to Modern Indian Theatre
- The works of Girish Karnad , his contemporaries and their style of writing
- Cross cultural transformation of the folktale of *Hayavadana*

After completion of the unit, you should be

- Aware of the term Modern Indian Theatre in detail
- Able to understand Karnad's style of writing and technicality in his works
- Aware of Folktale of Hayavadana and its cross cultural connections.

17.1 INTRODUCTION

Last two units on Girish Karnad's play *Hayavadana* mainly deal with brief introduction to Karnad and his works, detailed synopsis of the play *Hayavadana*, how the play deals with various themes and some of the

symbols in the play. This unit is taking you further in the area of Modern Indian Theatre where Karnad stands as a major literary figure. Here we will get brief idea of the term Modern Indian Theatre which incorporates comments from various literary scholars such as Govind Deshpande, Nandi Bhatiya and others. We will also understand how critics receive Karnad's works and their comments upon his literary style. And last but not the least we will study the folktale of *Hayavadana* in comparative framework. Now let us begin with our discussion on the term Modern Indian Theatre.

17.2 BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO MODERN INDIAN THEATRE

The term Modern Indian Theatre is a complex term as Nandi Bhatiya in her book *Modern Indian Theatre: A Reader* tries to define the term. She rejects the idea of periodization attached to the Modern Indian Theatre as she says, "modern" Indian theater is not linked to a particular period, but to a style that combines elements of "traditional and European, classical, folk and ritualistic, and rural and urban forms and practices". However, various critics have variety of opinions in this matter as G.P.Deshpande in the introduction of his edited work on Modern Indian Drama argues that the hunt for Authentic Indian Theatre leads to two directions: i) A Comparable Indian Theatre and ii) a notion of theatre which is civilisation-specific. According to him pre modern theatre was highly Sanskritized and highly influenced by European romanticism. We can say that European romanticism made us believe in pre modern Indian theatre as 'the Indian Theatre which is timeless or eternal'. Talking about how in the 19th century our early writers were dealing with this classical heritage Deshpande says, "Michael Madhusudan Dun wrote a play on *Sharmistha* in Bangla in 1856 while Kirloskar narrated the story of *Subhadra* (again from the *Mahabharata*) in Marathi less than a quarter century later. There was a Malayalam adaptation of *Shakuntala* in 1880 and so on. Vishnudas Bhave turned to *Yakshagaan*, *akhyan* and other folk and traditional forms to create modern, proscenium theatre beginning 1843". Colonial time period brought a huge difference in Indian Theatre. According to Nandi Bhatiya, the beginning of modern theatre can be identified in the colonial encounter that resulted in the influence of European models on local theatrical traditions. Further, talking about colonial influence on Indian theatre Deshpande writes, the new theatre came to be written and staged in the shadow of the British rule. The traditional-theatre in India was hardly bound by the text. In the encounter with Europeans, Indian playwrights had come into contact with "theatre of words". Talking about integration of Shakespeare in colonial Indian Theatre, Deshpande states: Colonial theatre writing was greatly influenced by Shakespeare. A new prose style developed—a style which could be described as Anglo-native prose-style. Long, flowing sentences, ornate speech, Sanskritization of speech were some of its specialities. Thus, colonial period according to

Deshpande was marked with new drama which seemed to stand aloof from the drama we had traditionally known.

Talking about post-Independence Theatre, Aparna Dharwadker argues that the initial period of Post-Independence was a period of disjunction from “the commercialism of the Parsi stage (dominant until the 1930s) and the radical populism of the Indian People’s Theatre Association (dominant during the 1940s)” as both of them failed to provide the proper model for the development of urban drama. Talking of this time period, she states: This sense of disconnection from the immediate past led the more ambitious post-independence playwrights to rethink the issues of dramatic form and presentational style, to forge radical connections with an older past as well as the postcolonial present in India, and to put the resources of world theatre (especially modern Euro-American theatre) to novel use. This post-independence period had seen on the one hand establishment of National School of Drama with its goal to set the middle ground between pre-colonial revivalism and imitative Westernization and on the other hand, also witnessed the revival of Sanskrit theatre around 1956-57 with activities like beginning of the Kalidasa Festival in Ujjain. However, the time period from 1960s to 1970s is considered as ‘the ‘Renaissance of Indian Theatre’ as Samik Bandyopadhyay in his 1998 essay “Renaissance of Indian theatre” claims. *Ananta Patha* (multiple texts) is the significant aspect of 1960s theatre which focuses on different productions by different directors of the same play. Talking about this phenomenon, Deshpande states:

Girish Karnad’s *Tughlaq*, a Kannada play, was done by Alkazi in Hindi and by Satyadev Dubey in Marathi. These productions were not only in two different languages but also brought us face to face with very different *Tughlaqs*—one *avatara* of a play with another *avatara* of the same play in contention with each other. Such “non-antagonistic contradictions” add charm to theatre.

The theatre during the time period of 1970s witnesses intense experimentation and the collapse of the well-made play on the one hand and engagement with Brechtian theatrical form in combination with local forms and conventions. Playwrights who became an active critique of the nation through its theatrical forms returned to the folk. K.N. Pannikar experimented with traditional dance idioms from Kerala, Habib Tanvir brought folk actors from Chhattisgarh, and Karamh (Karnataka) used Yakshagana in his drama. However, this kind of plays also got failed sometimes to attract the attention of modern, urban Indian audience. In the next section we will discuss the overall scenario of Modern Indian Theatre and Girish Karnad and his style of writing among other playwrights.

• **Check Your Progress : 1**

Q.1 Fill in the gaps

- 1) Colonial Indian Theatre was highly influenced by _____
- 2) Pre Modern Indian Theatre was heavily influenced by _____

3) _____ is the play written by Michael Madhusudan Dun in the year 1856.

Q.2 Answer the following questions.

1) What are the characteristics of Anglo-native prose-style?

2) Who are the major playwrights of post-modern era?

17.3 GIRISH KARNAD AS A MODERN INDIAN PLAYWRIGHT

In the previous units, we have already discussed a brief overview of Girish Karnad's works. In this unit we are trying to understand Karnad and his unique style of writing. But before that we should understand the overall scenario of Modern Indian Drama in general. This category includes the playwrights such as Dharamvir Bharati, Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, Chandrasekhar Kambar, K.N. Panikkar, Satish Alekar, Utpal Dutt, Habib Tanvir, Mahasweta Devi, G. P. Deshpande, Mahesh Elkunchwar, and Girish Karnad.

Deshpande in his essay states that Mohan Rakesh and Badal Sircar changed the concerns of modern drama and introduced a language which was an antithesis of the pseudo-Shakespearean prose that dominated Indian theatre writing for well over a century. Vijay Tendulkar according to Deshpande is known for his 'Tendulkarian modernity'

These playwrights approach playwriting 'as a serious literary activity and drama as a complex verbal art, potentially connected to, but also independent of, theatrical practice'. Thus, their plays neither participate in political performance nor are part of commercial entertainment business. According to Dharwadkar, "Each playwright is committed to an indigenous language (rather than English) as his medium of original composition, and hence to the literary and performative traditions of the region where that language is dominant. But each has also participated actively in the process of interlingual translation that gives his plays national (and often international) visibility, and establishes them as contemporary classics."

Born in the year 1938 in Matheran and brought up in Dharwad, Girish Karnad went to Oxford University with Rhodes scholarship. He returned to India in 1960 and worked for Oxford University Press in Madras for six years. Talking about his first play *Yayati*, Karnad talks about the influence of European playwrights such as Camus and Sartre on Puru who is the central character of *Yayati*. We have already got brief introduction to some of the significant works of Girish Karnad such as *Tughlaq*, *Hayavadatia*, *Naga-Mandala*, *Yayati*, *Bali: The Sacrifice* and others. His one of the masterpieces *Tughlaq* according to Ranjit Hoskote, “is a play about the inevitability of corruption... showing up Tughlaq’s cruel side. The play is full of allusions, resonant with Shakespearan situations and Ibsenian modes. It combines a historical flavour with a contemporary relevance” In praise of Karnad, *The Tribune* writes: .. There have been a galaxy of litterateurs in Indian languages whose works can be classified as the world’s best and translated not only in English but other languages. Girish Karnad is one of them.’ Giving his views on *Naga-Mandala*, Makarand Paranjape writes: “This is a fine play, powerful, gripping, and exciting... It uses tradition creatively and sensitively... It is fast-paced, well plotted, coherent, and controlled. The central conflict is sharply defined and brilliantly executed” In his conversation with Kirtinath Kurtkoti on how his play *Hayavadana* became the ‘theatre-game’ and how with its complex appeals it redefines the form of drama, Karnad talks about his concept of drama:

After writing *Tughlaq*, I participated in many seminars on drama, in Karnataka as well as other States. Wherever I went scholars always discussed the importance and the usefulness of our folk theatre. I did not have a rural background and the only theatre I was acquainted with was urban commercial theatre. I do not have any live contact with folk theatre but I was curious about the folk form of theatre. I had to acquire knowledge of the conventions and technicalities of this theatre. But what I realized at the end of my study was a surprise. Now I am convinced that there is no difference between the theatre conventions of classical drama and those of folk drama. The principles that govern their dramatic aesthetics are the same. For example; the function of the Sutradhara is the same as that of the Bhagavata of a folk play. Discussing the writing style of Karnad, Dharwadkar emphasis how Karnad’s plays use the narrative of myth, history and folklore to evoke an ancient world which gets reflected in contemporary context. Starting from his first play *Yayati* (1961) to *Hittina Hunja* which was rewritten in English as *Bali: The Secrifice* (2002) have conspicuous connection with myth and mythology. She states:

The dominant presence of the ancient and medieval past in Karnad’s drama is a result of both personal and cultural compulsions. He has argued from the beginning that the deep-rooted narratives of myth, oral history, and legend constitute a vital connection between an author and his or her audience, and theatre is a particularly powerful medium for the communication of such culturally resonant fictions. Karnad belongs

perhaps to the last generation of *urban* Indian writers who encountered the ‘great’ and ‘little’ traditions of myth, poetry, history, legend, and folklore at first hand in their earliest childhood, and internalized them deeply enough to have their adult authorial selves shaped by them. Such a vibrant culture of orality is no longer available to the Western playwright, and Karnad is fully aware that it is being rapidly eroded in India by the processes of urbanization, Westernized education, and economic development. Orality and print, however, are also carefully balanced in his oeuvre. All his major plays, from *Yayati* to *Agni Mattu Mali* and *Bali*, originate in remembered stories but depend extensively on printed sources for their textual complexity and weight.

Discussing about his play *Hayavadana*, Karnad says, “I remember that the idea of my play *Hayavadana* started crystallizing in my head right in the middle of an argument with B. V. Karanth... about the meaning of masks in Indian theatre and theatre’s relationship to music’. In the following section we will discuss about the various versions of the folktale narrated in the play *Hayavadana*.

• **Check your progress : 2**

Q.1 Write whether the given sentences are True or False

- 1) History and myth are important aspects of Girish Karnad’s plays.

- 2) *Bali* is originally written in English and later on translated in Kannada

- 3) The function of the Sutradhara is different from that of Bhagvanta

- 4) *Tughlaq* is a play about the inevitability of corruption _____
- 5) Karnad’s childhood background led him to the use of folk narrative in theatre _____

17.4 REVISITING THE FOLKTALE

We have got the idea of Modern Indian Theatre and Karnad’s position among the modern playwrights in the previous sections. This section focuses the play *Hayavadana* in terms of its folktale. *Hayavadana* combines a twelfth-century folktale about ‘transposed heads’ as our previous units describe in detail. *The Hindu* celebrates this quite popular play which offers ‘a path-breaking model for a quintessentially ‘Indian’ theatre in postcolonial times’ in the following words: ‘*Hayavadana* is full of humour, sly comments on politics, and comic hyperbole... a richly layered play, intersperse[d] [with] typical Indian elements like the folk tale...’. We are aware of the various themes and symbols attached to this one of the most celebrated plays. However, in this section, we are going to understand the cross cultural study of the folktale narrated in *Hayavadana* in a comparative framework.

In his article “Switching Heads and Cultures: Transformation of an Indian Myth by Thomas Mann and Girish Karnad” Anand Mahadevan

argues that the Indian myth provide huge source of folktales or narratives of switching the heads. He strengthen his arguments by giving examples of lord Ganesha, the elephant headed god who was beheaded by his own father and when the father Lord Shiva realized his mistake, restores his son to life by attaching the head of an elephant. Another example that he gives is from *Kathasaritsagar* written around AD 1070 where the story of King Vikramaditya, who is asked to fetch a corpse and this corpse is possessed by demon in between and demon every time narrates a story with a puzzle at the end and the moment king answers the puzzle he flies away. The last story is *The Heads That Got Switched* where “a washerman, Dhavala, falls in love with Madanasundari, the beautiful daughter of another washerman, and marries her. While he is enjoying the fruits of a happy marriage, Madanasundari's brother visits them and requests that all three make a trip to the festival of the goddess Parvati. Dhavala enters the great temple of Parvati empty-handed and in a fit of religious excess beheads himself with the sacrificial sword as an offering to the goddess. Madanasundari's brother discovers the beheaded corpse and in his grief beheads himself with the same sword. Madanasundari becomes anxious when both men fail to return and enters the temple. Confronted by the horrific sight before her, she too decides to end her life and fashions a noose from vines in order to hang herself. However, the goddess, pleased with their devotion, stops Madanasundari from committing suicide and allows her to bring the two men back to life by reattaching their heads to their bodies. Unfortunately, in her haste and excitement Madanasundari puts her brother's head on the husband's body and vice versa. The story ends with a puzzle the king must answer correctly: "Which of these two mixed up people is now her husband?" The king replies, "The one with the husband's head is her husband because the head rules the limbs and personal identity depends on the head;" thus affirming the superiority of intellect (verstand) over emotion (gefiihle) and spirit (geist) over body”. Thomas Mann in his novella with the similar plot where Brahmin Schridaman falls for Sita and Nanda, a cowherd and very good friend of Schridaman arranges their marriage. The story follows the Indian myth and Sita transposes the head and starts her life with head of Schridaman and body of Nanda. Unlike Vikarm’s story Mann’s novella does not end here. It is continue with the second episode where after having a child called Samadhi, Sita runs back to Nanda and finally both Nanda and Schridaman kills each other and Sita immolates herself on their burning pyre (sati). This plot which resembles to the plot of *Hayavadana* and which we have studied in detail in the previous units is actually Thomas Mann’s own imagination and creativity. The significant aspect of this folktale which was not available in *Kathasaritsagar* and which is conspicuous in Karnad’s play is class, caste and race distinction. Both Mann and Karnad uses the power of myth, in words of Madhvan to show how the social differences created by castes and class are amplified by modern economic and political structures in a deeply segmented post-colonial Indian society”.

• **Check your progress 3:**

Q.1 Fill in the blanks.

- 1) *Kathasaritsagar* was written around _____ AD
- 2) _____ is the son of Sita.
- 3) Dhavala, falls in love with _____
- 4) After transposes the head, Sita begins her new life with _____
- 5) Karnad's story reflects the issue of _____ and _____

17.5 LET US SUM UP

Overall, this unit provides the insight into Modern Indian Theatre with specific understanding of Karnad and his play *Hayavadana*. We have also understood how being a modern playwright; Karnad subverts a traditional folk deeply rooted in ancient Indian culture to showcase the social problem of the present Indian society.

17.6 KEY WORDS

Folklore	the traditional beliefs, customs, and stories of a community, passed through the generations by word of mouth
Performative	relating to or of the nature of dramatic or artistic performance
Post-colonial	occurring or existing after the end of colonial rule.

17.7 BOOKS SUGGESTED

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❖ Answers:

Check your progress 1:

- 1) Shakespeare
- 2) Western Romanticism
- 3) *Sharmistha*

Check Your Progress 2:

Q.1 Write whether the given sentences are *True* or *False*

- 1) True
- 2) False
- 3) False
- 4) True
- 5) False

Check Your Progress 3:

- 1) *1070*
- 2) Samadhi
- 3) Madanasundari
- 4) Dhavala's head and brother's body
- 5) caste and class