

**DEGREE I YEAR, SPECIAL ENGLISH**  
**SEMESTER -2, COURSE -II**  
**An Introduction to Elizabethan and Jacobean Literature (1500-1660)**

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Degree I Year –Special English,  
Semester-2

First Edition: 2021

No. of Copies:

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Published by :

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Centre for Distance Education,

Acharya Nagarjuna University

*Printed at:*

## **FOREWORD**

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

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

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

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

*Prof. P. Raja Sekhar  
Vice-Chancellor (FAC)  
Acharya Nagarjuna University*

## I Year Semester II, Course-II

### An Introduction to Elizabethan and Jacobean Literature (1500-1660)

Course Outcomes:

After going through the course, the learner will

- Identify the features of Elizabethan and Jacobean periods
- Review the aspects of romantic comedy, and the evolution of prose as a genre
- Distinguish the characteristics that evolved in Poetry, Drama, Prose and Literary Criticism
- Assess literature of these periods critically.

Unit	Module	Topic	Marks
1	History of English Literature Genre, Literary Forms	Elizabethan and Jacobean (16 <sup>th</sup> and 17 <sup>th</sup> Century) Literary terms related to the pieces selected: tragedy, metaphysical conceit, aphoristic essay Other terms: tragedy, comedy, tragic-comedy, romantic comedy, chronicle play, comedy of humours, elegy, lyric	14 marks
2	Drama (Romantic Comedy)	William Shakespeare: Macbeth	14 marks
3	Poetry	John Donne: <i>for whom the Bell Talls, &amp; The Canonization</i> Ben Jonson: <i>It is not Growing Like a Tree,</i>	14 marks
4	Prose	Francis Bacon: Of Superstition, Of Parents and Children, Of youth and Age	14 marks
5	Literary Criticism	Aristotle's Poetics (Tragedy and Epic)	14 marks
Internals: 30			Total marks: 100

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## Lesson 1

# ELIZABETHAN AND JACOBAN (16<sup>TH</sup> AND 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)

### 1.0 Course Outcomes:

**By the end of the module, the learner will be able to:**

1. Know about the features of Elizabethan and Jacobean periods
2. Recognize the aspects of different literary genres, forms, and terms
3. Identify the characteristics in literature that reflected the changing trends
4. Identify major themes and forms in the literature of the Elizabethan period.
5. Identify and discuss universal themes and human conditions in Elizabethan poetry and drama mainly.

### Structure

#### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.2 The Elizabethan age (1558-1603)

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#### 1.5 The Elegy

#### 1.6 Metaphysical Conceit :

#### 1.7 Dramatic Types:

#### 1.8 Romantic Comedy in literature – Definition and Study

#### 1.9 Chronicle play

#### 1.10 Comedy of humours:

### 1.1 Introduction

The Renaissance began in Italy in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century and continued in Western Europe from 15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century. In this period the arts of painting, sculpture, architecture and literature reached its heights. The development came to England in 16<sup>th</sup> century. It did not flourish until the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. In fact, Milton is the last renaissance poet. The word “Renaissance” derived from French means rebirth, revival or reawakening”. The Renaissance was both a revival of ancient classical mythology, literature, culture and awakening of human kind. It was a revival of cult of beauty- the beauty of woman, the beauty of nature, and the beauty of art and literature.

The English Renaissance literature is marked by four periods. Historians called the Renaissance as early modern period.

1. The Elizabethan age (1558-1603)
2. The Jacobean period (1603-1625) - it was the middle age of English Renaissance.
3. The Caroline period (1625-1649)
4. The Commonwealth period or Puritan period. (1649-1660)

### The Elizabethan Age. (1558-1603)

The rule of Elizabeth I is known as Elizabethan Age. This was a time of rapid development in English commerce, Maritime power and nationalist feeling. It was a great age of English literature. It is great in drama. There are extraordinary writers of prose, drama, lyric, narrative poetry—Sidney, Marlowe, Spenser, Shakespeare, Sir Walter Raleigh, Francis Bacon, Ben Jonson, etc. There are extraordinary writers of prose, drama, lyric and narrative poetry.

### **The Jacobean period (1603-1625)**

This was the period in prose writings of Bacon, John Donne's Sermons Robert Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy, and the King James translation of the Bible. It was the time of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies, and tragic comedies. Another popular poets and playwrights include Donne, Ben Jonson, John Webster, etc.

### **3. The Caroline period (1625-1649)**

The reign of Charles is known as Caroline Age. It was the time of the English civil war fought between the supporters of the king and the supporters of parliament. John Milton started his writing during the period. There are religious poets and prose writers. The cavalier poets, the writers of witty and polished lyrics of courtship and gallantry, include Richard Lovelace, Sir John Suckling, and Thomas Carew. Son of Ben, the follower of Ben Jonson, wrote lyrics of love and gallant compliment.

### **4. The Commonwealth period or Puritan period. (1649-1660)**

It is also known as Puritan Interregnum. The age extends from 1649-1660. In this period, England was ruled by the parliament under the Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell. He died in 1658 which was marked the dissolution of the commonwealth. In 1642, the drama disappeared in the theatres. Milton wrote political pamphlets. Thomas Hobbes' work "Leviathan is a very influential work in the age.

## **1.2 The Elizabethan age (1558-1603)**

### **a. Introduction**

Elizabethan Period is generally regarded as the greatest in the history of English Literature. It received from the Renaissance from the Reformation and from the exploration of the new world. It was marked by a strong national spirit, by patriotism, by religious tolerance, by social content, by intellectual progress and by unbounded enthusiasm. It is an age of thought, feeling and vigorous action. It finds its best expression in the drama. There is a wonderful development of the drama in the age. It reaches its culmination. Besides drama, the age produced some of the excellent prose works. It is essentially an age of poetry. The poetry is remarkable for its variety, its freshness, its youth and romantic feeling.

Elizabethan literature was written during the reign of Elizabeth I of England (1558–1603), probably the most splendid age in the history of English literature, during which such writers as Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Roger Ascham, Richard Hooker, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare flourished. The epithet Elizabethan is merely a chronological reference and does not describe any special characteristic of the writing.

**b. Revival of Interest in Greek Literature**

The ardent revival in the study of Greek literature brought a dazzling light into many dark places of interest. The new classical influences were a great benefit. They tempered and polished the earlier rudeness of English Literature.

**c. Abundance of Output**

The Elizabethan age was rich in literary productions of all kinds. Singing is impossible when one's hearts undeclared & at any moment one may be laid prostrate.

Not till the accession of Queen Elizabeth, did a better state of things began to be. In the Elizabethan age, pamphlets & treatises were freely written.

Sometimes writers indulged in scurrilous abuses which were of personal character. But on the whole, the output of the literature was very wide, & after the lean years of the preceding epoch, the prodigal issue of the Elizabethan age is almost embarrassing.

**d. The New Romanticism**

The romantic quest is, for the remote, the wonderful & the beautiful. All these desires were abundantly fed during the Elizabethan age, which are the first & the greatest romantic epoch (period).

According to Albert, "there was a daring & resolute spirit of adventure in literary as well as the other regions, & most important of these was an un-mistakable buoyancy & freshness in the strong wind of the spirit. It was the ardent youth of English Literature & the achievement was worthy of it."

**e. Translations in Elizabethan Age**

The Elizabethan age witnessed translation into English of several important foreign books. Many translations were as popular as the original works. Sir Thomas North translated Plutarch's Lives & John Florio translated Montaigne's Essais.

**f. Spirit of Independence**

In spite of borrowings from abroad, the authors of this age showed a spirit of independence & creativeness. Shakespeare borrowed freely, but by the alembic of his creative imaginations, he transformed the dross into gold.

Spenser introduced the 'Spenserian Stanza', & from his works, we got the impression of inventiveness & intrepidity. On the whole, the outlook of the writers during the age was broad & independent.

**g. Development of Drama**

During the Elizabethan Age, the drama made a swift & wonderful leap into maturity. The drama reached the splendid perfection in the hands of Shakespeare & Ben Jonson, though in the concluding part of the age, particularly in Jacobean Age, there was a decline of drama standards.



### **h. Popularity of Poetry**

Poetry enjoyed its hey-day during the Elizabethan age. The whole of the age lived in a state of poetic fervour. Songs, lyrics & sonnets were produced in plenty, & England became the nest of the singing birds. In versification, there was a marked improvement. Melody & pictorialism were introduced in poetry by Spenser.

### **i. Prose & Novel**

For the first time, prose rose to the position of first-rate importance. “Even the development of poetical drama between 1579 A.D. -1629 A.D., is hardly more extraordinary than the sudden expansion of English prose & its adaptation to every kind of literary requirement.”

The deadweight of the Latin & English prose acquired a tradition & universal application. English Novel made its first proper appearance during this age.

### **j. Conclusion:**

The Elizabethan age saw the flowering of poetry (the sonnet, the Spenserian stanza, dramatic blank verse), was a golden age of drama (especially for the plays of Shakespeare), and inspired a wide variety of splendid prose (from historical chronicles, versions of the Holy Scriptures, pamphlets, and literary criticism to the first English novels). The beginning of the 17th century darkens tone in most forms of literary expression, especially in drama. The change more or less coincided with the death of Elizabeth. English literature from 1603 to 1625 is called Jacobean, after the new monarch, James I. But 16th-century themes and patterns were carried over into the 17th century, the writing from the earlier part of his reign, at least, is sometimes referred to by the amalgam “Jacobethan.”

## **1.3 Jacobean Age (1603 – 1625)**

### **a. Introduction:**

Jacobean so called from Latin word ‘Jacobus’ which means James. It belongs to the reign of James I (1603-25). A period which like the Elizabethan age, was particularly rich in literary activity. Among dramatists, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, Tourneur, Ford, Middleton and Rowley were all very active. Donne and Drayton were two of the most famous of the lyric poets of the period. Bacon and Robert Burton were best known prose writers. In 1611 was published Kings Authorized version of Bible. Forty-Seven translators were appointed to write Authorized Version of Bible in 1611.

### **b. Characteristic of the Age:**

The Jacobean age was an age of great flowering of literature. It was an age of decadence. It was rich because many great writers who were born and nurtured in Elizabethan age produced some of their masterpieces in this age. Like – Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, John Donne, Francis Bacon, George Chapman, John Marston, Thomas Dekker, Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher, Thomas Heywood, John Webster, Cyril Turner, Thomas Middleton, Phillip Massinger, John Ford, James Shirley etc are only few to name among them. But if we enter into the heart of the matter, we shall see that among them most were born and nurtured in the Elizabethan age but wrote and published

their works in the Jacobean age. Therefore, the writers born after 1570/75 or beyond were truly Jacobean for their art flowered in the Jacobean age.

**c. Dramatist of Jacobean Age:**

1. Ben Jonson (1572-1637)
2. Francis Beaumont (1584-1616)
3. John Fletcher (1579-1625)
4. John Webster (1580-1625)
5. Philip Massinger (1584-1639)
6. John Ford (1586-1639)
7. James Shirley (1596-1666)
8. George Herbert (1593-1623)

**d. Major Prose Writer of Jacobean Age:**

Lord Chancellor, politician, and philosopher, the fifth son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, lord keeper to Elizabeth I (1558-79). Bacon studied at Cambridge from 1573 – 1575. A year later, Bacon's father died, leaving him impoverished and penniless. Bacon composed his first political memorandum *A letter of Advice to Queen Elizabeth*, which earned him instant attention.

**His major work includes:**

*Advancement of Learning (1650)* - he dedicated to King James I, This work consisted of two books. Bacon tried to introduce a new system of learning based on observation, and reason. Bacon makes a distinction between 'theological truth', drawn from oracles or scriptures and 'scientific truth' drawn from reason.

*Novum Organum Scientiarum – or The New Instrument* was written in Latin and published in 1620. The book was intended as a successor to Aristotle's works on Logic. It was a great philosophical plan of Bacon to change and reform the way, in which man investigates nature. It argued in favour of knowledge based on experience or practice of truth.

Other important prose writers of this age are James I for his Authorized Version of Bible and Robert Burton for Anatomy of Melancholy.

**e. Poetry in Jacobean Age:**

**Metaphysical Poetry** – The term 'Metaphysical' is loosely applied to a group of 17th century poets. Their poetry was rich in intellectual complexity. William Drummond of Hawthornden coined the term metaphysical. John Dryden was the first to use this term in his criticism of Donne. Samuel Johnson extended it to a group of poets. In *The Lives of the Poets*, Johnson stated that about the beginning of the 17th century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets.

Major Metaphysical Poets are John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan George Herbert and Richard Crashaw

**Common Features of Metaphysical Poetry:** Metaphysical poetry is characterized by a subtle complex and concentrated thought. It is intellectually rigorous.

It employs bold and ingenious conceits, also called metaphysical conceits. Johnson called it “A combination of dissimilar images” eg. in his poem A Valediction: forbidding Mourning, Donne compares the two lovers to a compass. It employs unusual images taken from different fields of knowledge history, geography, astronomy, alchemy, mathematics etc. It has a dramatic quality to it and often has an abrupt aggressive opening. It frequently makes use of paradox.

#### 1.4 The Lyric

The Lyric is a short poem which deals with a single emotion. It is a Greek song. It is sung by a single voice to the accompaniment of a lyre and choric song. It is a musical poem. Word music is an important element in its effect. It is a subjective poem. It expresses the varying moods of the author. It is a well – knit poem. It possesses a definite structure. The poem is divided into three parts. A poet’s emotion is a law unto itself and pursues a course no critic can prescribe. The poem is developed by Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, and Swinburne.

#### 1.5 The Elegy

The elegy is a special kind of lyric. It covers war songs, love poems, political verses, and lamentations for the dead. The theme of an elegy is mournful or sadly reflective. It is written as a tribute to something loved and lost. It is less spontaneous than the lyric. Gray in his Elegy written in a Country Churchyard was ideal for his purpose. In Shelley’s Adonais, an elegy on the death of Keats, expresses his deep mourning. Milton recalls his past association with Edward king in Lycidas. Matthew Arnold wrote Thyrsis in memory of his friend the poet A.H. Clough. Both are pastoral elegies. Spenser’s Shepherd’s Calendar takes root in English soil. Spenser’s Astrophel is a pastoral lamentation on his patron and intimate friend Sir Philip Sidney. Tennyson wrote “In memoriam” in pastoral elegy.

#### 1.6 Metaphysical Conceit :

##### a. Introduction

Metaphysical conceit is a literary device. The poet used this device for making his poetry unique and extra-ordinary. According to the Oxford Dictionary, “ Metaphysical conceit is a fanciful and unusual image in which apparently dissimilar things are shown to have a relationship”. In other words, Conceit is a far-fetched and extended comparison between two dissimilar things. According to Dr. Johnson (1709-1784) “A conceit is the most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together”

##### b. History of Metaphysical Conceit

The term conceit first came to prominence in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries in Renaissance literature. At that time the English poet used to write the Petrarchan sonnet of the 14<sup>th</sup> lines. During that time conceit was used only as an elaborate and extended metaphor. Later, In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a school of poets known as the metaphysical school of poets such as John Donne (1572-1631), Henry Vaughan (1621-1695), Andrew Marvell (1621-1678), and so on used to apply this literary device. John Donne who is the pioneer of the metaphysical school of poetry has popularised this term in the field of poetry.

### c. Features of Metaphysical Conceit

Metaphysical conceit stands for a device of literature. It is used by the metaphysical school of poets in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It possesses some traits by which we can evaluate it as metaphysical conceit.

### d. Extended Metaphor

The literary device metaphysical conceit consists of an extended metaphor. It differentiates between two dissimilar things. John Donne (1572-1631) is the great master of using metaphysical conceit in his poetry. In his famous poem "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" here, he has used metaphysical conceit. In this poem he has compared the compass with lovers' two souls, the center foot is beloved, and the other foot is the lover who is bound back to his beloved.

### e. Figurative Language

The poet used figurative language to apply metaphysical conceit. Donne has used figurative language in his poetry. John Donne uses the metaphysical conceit because his illustration of love for his beloved is starkly based on conceit.

## 1.7 Dramatic Types:

### a. Tragedy and Comedy:

#### The two distinguished:

The drama is divided broadly in two kinds—tragedy and comedy. Tragedy deals with the dark side of life. Comedy deals with the lighter side of life. Tragedy aims at inspiring us with pity and awe. Comedy aims at evoking our laughter. In tragedy the characters are involved in circumstances which force them towards an unhappy fate. In comedy fortune is unkind for awhile and all comes right in the end. Tragedy, in Greek drama, deals with the fate of characters of high birth and station i.e. kings, princes and their households. Comedy deals with the people of much less importance.

The fall of a king or the ruin of great family is impressive to the spectator. Tragedy purges the emotions through pity and terror. The purpose of tragedy is to affect a catharsis or a purgation of the emotions. Comedy is to correct manners tragedy purified the feelings, where as comedy refined the conduct. Tragedy raised the audience morally and spiritually. The comedy corrected its social failings. Comedy served to show the common errors of life. Both comedy and tragedy aim at giving pleasure. Verse used to be the medium for both tragedy and comedy.

### b. Types of tragedy

The term tragedy derives from the Greek word "tragaidia" which means "goat song". The Elements of a Tragedy are a tragic hero, a tragic flaw and catharsis. A tragic hero is a central character. His choices and weaknesses lead to down fall. A tragic flaw triggers the tragic hero's defeat. The tragic flaw in Macbeth is an unbridled ambition. Catharsis is a purging or purification of emotions. Catharsis can cleanse the spectators.

Christopher Marlowe wrote a great tragedy namely Dr. Faustus. Shakespeare tragedies include Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, etc. Tragedy can be classified in two ways basing on its form and theme. Tragedy is divided into two forms: classical and romantic. The classical tragedy observes three unities and chorus based on Greek conventions. The theory of the three unities—of time, action,

and place- is based on the writings of Aristotle. a. Unity of action: a tragedy should have one principal action. b. unity of time: the action in a tragedy should occur over a period of no more than 24 hours. c. unity of place: a tragedy should exist in a single physical location. The chorus is the noteworthy element.

The romantic tragedy is not based on the three unities. It is a mixture of the tragic and the comic scenes. The scene of action may also change as often as the plot requires. The romantic tragedy is suitable to the dramatic purpose. Shakespeare has popularised the form.

### c. Types of comedy

The word 'Comedy' is taken from the Greco-Latin word *Comedia*. The word *comedia* is made of two words *komos*, which means *revel* and *aeidein* means to sing. Comedy, a branch of drama, deals with everyday life and humorous events. Comedy may be defined as a play with a happy ending. It provides entertainment to the readers. The reader is forced to laugh at the follies of various characters in the comedy. It focuses the attention on what ails the world. Comedy exposes and ridicules stupidity and immorality, but without the wrath of the reformer. There are two kinds of comedy, Romantic Comedy and Classical Comedy. Classical comedy follows the classical rules of ancient Greek and Roman Writers. The classical rules are the three Unities of Time, place and Time. There is no mingling of comic and tragic elements in a classical comedy. The aim of classical comedy is satiric in nature. It aims at providing entertainment and correcting the society. Comedy may be classical or romantic. It observes or ignores the classical rules. The classical form was popularised by Ben Jonson and the Restoration playwrights. The romantic form is popularised by Shakespeare and University Wits. The university Wits are Lyly, Greene and Nashe.

### d. Definition of Tragicomedy

Tragicomedy is a genre. It blends elements of both comedy and tragedy. A tragicomedy can either be a serious play with a happy ending. The definition of tragicomedy was first used by the Roman playwright Plautus. He was a comic writer. In his play the prologue to *Amphitryon*, Plautus announced a new form of genre through the character Mercury.

Tragicomedy flourished in England. John Fletcher provides a good example of the genre in *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1608). Notable examples of tragicomedy by William Shakespeare are *The Merchant of Venice* (1596–97), *The Winter's Tale* (1610–11), and *The Tempest* (1611–12). Shakespeare uses tragicomedy to mirror nature. The dramas of Georg Büchner, Victor Hugo, and Christian Dietrich Grabbe reflect his influence. George Bernard Shaw said that tragicomedy is a more meaningful and serious entertainment than tragedy.

### f. Significance of Tragicomedy in Literature

The earliest works of literature were confined to highly systematized rules of either comedy or tragedy. Each genre had its own conventions, and most plays worked within these confines. Plautus was not necessarily trying to make a philosophical argument in creating a play that could not be defined solely as comedy or tragedy, and yet it was important to begin recognizing that most lives contain elements of both. Different cultures and eras had their own approach to tragicomedy, and yet it has endured as an important genre for thousands of years. As the German writer and philosopher Got hold Ephraim Lessing noted, "Seriousness stimulates laughter, and pain pleasure." Tragicomedy

allows works of literature to explore depths and paradoxes of human experience unavailable to strict comedies and tragedies.

### **1.8 Romantic Comedy in literature – Definition and Study**

The origin of this genre comes from the plays of the Elizabethan period. The particular evolution of this type comedy in literature during that period was because of many works by playwrights like Shakespeare, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, etc. The first romantic comedy was considered to be written by Robert Greene and his plays resemble similar techniques.

Romantic comedy doesn't follow the classical conventions of comedy. The writer is mostly concerned with his plight of imagination and writes what he thinks. Its aim is not didactic or morality. Its main function is to provide entertainment to the readers. Romantic Comedy is thoroughly charged with powerful passion and emotion of love and romance. A Romantic comedy is a type of comedy that includes the love story between the hero and the heroine amidst perfect romantic and festive setting, develops through some difficulties, hazards, misunderstandings but ends in happy note. The romantic comedy is developed by Elizabethan dramatists. Shakespeare is the head of the group. University Wits like Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge wrote romantic comedy in the Elizabethan period. Comedies of Shakespeare are romantic in nature. William Shakespeare is the master playwright of the romantic genre- A Midsummer Night's Dream, Twelfth night, The Taming of The Shrew, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale and Tempest.

In the romantic comedy, tragedy and comedy are freely combined. Fairies, human beings, kings, fools and wise are mingled. Shakespeare did the experiment in all his romantic comedies. Romantic comedy deals with personalities and individuals. The characters develop their own way of thinking and acting. It deals with eternal issues of human life. They remain unchanged with the time and place. It mirrors life. It aims at amusement. The characters know pains of society. The characters move from urban to rural. It deals with higher love and allied romantic passions. It has no concern with sex. Love is a passion of mind and not of body for them. It is passion worth worship.

### **1.9 Chronicle play**

Chronicle play is also called chronicle history or history play. The drama deals with a theme from history. It connects the episodes of history chronologically.

Plays of this type typically lay emphasis on the public welfare by pointing to the past as a lesson for the present, and the genre is often characterized by its assumption of a national consciousness in its audience. It has flourished in times of intensely nationalistic feeling, notably in England from the 1580s until the 1630s, by which time it was "out of fashion," according to the prologue of John Ford's plays Perkin Warbeck. Early examples of the chronicle play include The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth, The Life and Death of Jacke Straw, The Troublesome Raigne of John King of England, and The True Tragedies of Richard III. The genre came to maturity with the work of Christopher Marlowe (Edward II) and William Shakespeare (Henry VI, parts 2 and 3). The Elizabethan chronicle plays are called historical plays.

### **1.10 Comedy of humours:**

Comedy of humours is a form of drama. Humour means a specific trait of a character, e.g., avarice, pride etc. The ancients believed that human body was made of four elements i.e., air, fire, water and earth. The increased quantity of any of these elements is called humour. It was supposed that every element stands for a certain trait of human character. Fire stands for ill-tempered nature, water stands for cold temperament, and earth signifies down to earth nature, while air implies a lofty or showy temperament of human being. The comedy of humours satirizes the idiocies and idiosyncrasies, the flaws and evils of contemporary society, and his satire is generally abrasive and fierce.

It becomes fashionable at the very end of the 16th century and early in the 17th. Comedy of Humours is introduced by Ben Jonson, in English Drama. The term 'humour' is used by Ben Jonson. It is based on an ancient physiological theory of four fluids found in the human body. According to this theory, there are four fluids in the human body .They determine a man's temperament and mental state. These four fluids are- Blood, phlegm, yellow Bile (choler) and black bile (melancholy). They give the individual a healthy mind in a healthy body. Basically this was a comedy of ideas physiological interpretation of character and personality. The dramas interpret the character and personality. Ben Jonson's works are *Every Man in his Humour* (1598) and *Every Man out of his Humour* (1599). Ben Jonson has been the first person to elaborate the idea on any scale.

**Recommended Reference books:**

1. *A History of English Literature* by W.J Long
  2. *A Critical History of English Literature* by David Daiches (Published by Supernova)
  3. *The Cambridge History of English Literature* by Ward and Waller (Published by Kessinger)
  4. *A Glossary of Literary Terms* by MH Abrams (Published by Cengage)
  5. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* by J.A. Cuddon (Published by Penguin)
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## Lesson : 2

# WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE MACBETH

### Structure

- 2.1 Objectives of the lesson
- 2.2 Introduction the Dramatist – Shakespeare
- 2.3 Plot of the play ‘Macbeth’
- 2.4 Important Themes of the play Macbeth
- 2.5 Macbeth as a Shakespearean Tragedy
- 2.6 The Role of the Supernatural Elements
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### 2.1 Objectives

After a thorough study of this lesson you will be able to:

- comprehend the features of Shakespearean tragedy.
- come to know the moral values of human life.
- know that's Greed & blind beliefs bring about man's downfall.

### 2.2 Introduction to the Dramatist – Shakespeare

When William Shakespeare's Macbeth was performed in 1604, the author was already one of the most popular dramatists of his day, as well as an actor and a producer. Most of his best comedies, his great history plays and some of his finest tragedies were behind him. Only King Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, Timon of Athens, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale and Henry IV were yet to be written.

Shakespeare was so well known as a literary and dramatic craftsman, that Francis Meres, a young preacher called Shakespeare “Mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare”. Meres observes that “as Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage”.

As an actor and dramatist Shakespeare inherited three centuries of tradition. He had the intuition of gathering every, “unconsidered trifle”, and every weighty matter that could profit his art. He was everywhere possessed by the conception of loyalty and disloyalty and their consequences in human life. He contemplated the strange conflict of reason and emotion, and the disorder that arose when reason was obliterated. While he allowed his characters a freedom to live their own lives to the uttermost confines of good and evil, he was ever conscious that they existed in a moral world, functioning under a divine providence.

### The Age of Shakespeare:

The age of Shakespeare is called the Golden Age of English literature. It is one of the richest and the most fruitful periods in the history of England. There is an allround growth in the lives of the English. The Renaissance, the Reformation and the exploration of the new world leave their impact on the literature of the period. It is marked by a strong national spirit, by patriotism, by religious tolerance, by social contempt, by intellectual progress and by unbounded enthusiasm. Such an age of thought, feeling, and vigorous action finds its best expression in the drama. The age is essentially an age of poetry, remarkable for its variety, its freshness, its youthful and romantic



feeling. Both poetry and drama are permeated by Italian influence. The literature of this age is often called the literature of Renaissance.

The Renaissance has suddenly opened the eyes of the English to the beauties of ancient Greece and Rome. It has influenced the thoughts and ideas of the people of the Elizabethan age. They discarded the accepted beliefs and exhibited greater freedom of expression more with the well-being of the material world. The revival of the classical learning turned the English people to the Greek philosophy and poetry for their intellectual growth. And the culture called Humanism came into being; the humanists took interest in life and in mankind. The reformation reached its zenith during the Elizabethan age.

The defeat of the Spanish Armada resulted in the explosion of nationalistic and patriotic feelings. Life was stable and full of contentment. People's minds were free from religious fear or persecution. They had lot of leisure at their command and employed it to creative, artistic and literary activities. There was a sense of social security which gave rise to literary activities. England was making tremendous progress and taking gigantic strides in commerce and trade. A variety of goods were manufactured. These commercial activities led to material prosperity. The discovery of America widened the horizons of human knowledge and experience. The exploits of those adventurers provided a source of inspiration for poets and other creative artists. It was an age of adventure and discovery. On top of it the introduction of the printing press spread learning far and wide. Great and rare classics were brought to the doorsteps of the common man. The treasures of literature were brought within the reach of rank and file. The number of reading public grew steadily and encouraged and welcomed new forms of literature.

### **Shakespeare : His mind and heart:**

In spite of the passage of time, 'age cannot wither the works of Shakespeare nor custom stale their infinite variety'. Shakespeare's plays are not original in the narrowest sense of the term. He borrowed his themes very freely from various sources, and made them his own. As he grew, his art also became mature. The development of a character becomes more prominent than the interest in the plot. Sometimes there are plots within plots.

Shakespeare is known for the universality of his appeal and his profound understanding of human nature. There is comedy, tragedy and satire. He caters to the taste of one and all. His dramas appeal to the human heart because they touch and include the whole gamut of human experience. He was not of one age. He belongs to all times. His works possess organic strength and infinite variety. His dramas are as varied as life and as fresh as nature. He handles all human experience, be it light or serious with the same ease.

The characters of Shakespeare grip the human mind. He is unsurpassed in the creation of a rich variety of characters. Though they are removed from their context they do not lose their individuality. None of the English dramatists could come nearer to Shakespeare as far as the variety of characters is concerned. His characters enable readers to see and know themselves. They are true to life. They appeal to our emotions and share our sympathies. His characterization comprehends the whole range of human experience and nature. In sheer prodigality of output Shakespeare is unrivalled in literature. From king to clown, from lunatic and demidevil to saint and seer, from lover to misanthrope - all are portrayed with the touch of a mastery. They represent God's plenty. His characterization is objective. He remains indifferent to good and evil. All his characters have in them a blending of good and evil. Evil characters like Iago, Claudius and Lady Macbeth have their own good and human qualities.

Shakespeare is known for his rich humanity. He has unbounded love and great sympathy for all his creations. He is not satirical like Ben Jonson. He does not cry down his creations. His characters reveal his love for humanity and life. He touches the human heart and moves it to pity and sympathy. The quality of pathos is found in plenty in all his works. He makes the reader sympathise with the character.

Shakespeare's comedies depict various shades of love. Their true love, which is love at first sight, does not run smooth. There is an element of romance in all his comedies. He presents devotion and faithfulness in love. Sometimes he deals with the lighter side of love and makes fun of all lovers. The love of Bottom and Titania is a typical example of this kind of love.

Shakespeare's plays have their own philosophy though they do not reveal anything of Shakespeare's personality and philosophy of life. The speech of Jacques in As you Like It gives a comic picture of the seven stages of life, whereas Macbeth's soliloquy about the brevity, the futility and the meaninglessness of life presents the tragic view of life. He believes that there is nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so. There is no attempt on the part of Shakespeare to moralise directly. His plays reveal his power of insight, understanding and imagination. As an artist he displays genius and spontaneity. He is not learned and laborious like Jonson.

Shakespeare's characters are endowed with flesh and blood, creative and poetic imagination. His language is grand and his style is majestic. Genius, imagination and spontaneity are the hallmarks of Shakespeare's greatness. There is no work however fine it be which does not seem monotonous when compared with that of Shakespeare.

### **The Plays of Shakespeare:**

Shakespeare's plays can be divided into five groups – comedies, tragedies, tragi-comedies or romances, histories and Roman plays.

**Comedies:** The comedies of Shakespeare may be called Romantic Comedies or comedies of love. Character and plot are sometimes real and sometimes fantastic. There is a blending of fact and fiction. He has enriched the ordinary things of life with his powerful imagination. Men dominate the tragedies while the women comedies. Hence it is said that Shakespeare has no heroes but only heroines. Love at first sight and love leading to marriage is the theme of Shakespearean comedies. Some of Shakespeare's comedies are Romeo and Juliet, As You Like It, Twelfth Night etc.,

**Tragedies:** When we consider the tragedies of Shakespeare, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth come to our mind. Shakespeare's tragedies are based on more or less legendary chronicles. They deal with only one character, that is the hero. The hero is a good man who belongs to a higher rank in the society. He suffers from a fatal flaw which causes his ruin. Hamlet suffers from indecision, Othello's end is brought about by his jealousy, Macbeth is ruined by his over-ambition, King Lear comes to grief because of his lack of judgment.

In his tragedies character is destiny. They do not observe the classical unities of time, place and action. His tragedy contains an internal as well as an external conflict. They portray the conflict between good and evil. Generally the good are rewarded and the bad are punished. The tragedy produces an uplifting catharsis. The plot consists of exposition, conflict and crisis followed by catastrophe. All tragedies end in the death and destruction of the hero.

**Tragi-Comedy or Romance:** The tragic-comedy in England was first employed by Beaumont and Fletcher, the two contemporaries of Shakespeare. Shakespeare's Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale,

The Tempest were influenced by them. These plays may be called Romances because they contain the element of both tragedy and comedy.

The scenes are laid in pale unknown and imaginary. The plots are also fanciful. The events are beyond the place of reality and reason. The themes appear almost incredible. The action cannot be justified by reason. The characters are mere types than individuals. They appear rather artificial. The supernatural plays an important part. All the plays deal with the theme of reconciliation.

History & Roman Plays: Shakespeare also wrote about some aspects of British history and interpreted it in a poetic and dramatic manner. Chief among his histories are Henry IV and King Richard II. He also wrote about Roman themes. The most popular among them is Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra. The object of these plays is both instruction and edification.

The present lesson is intended to explain the background, plot and characters of the play *Macbeth*. This chapter also examines *Macbeth* as a Shakespearean Tragedy, the role of the supernatural elements and the analysis of Direct and Indirect Speech Acts in the play.

*Macbeth* is a play written by William Shakespeare. It is considered one of his darkest and most powerful tragedies. Set in Scotland, the play dramatizes the corrosive psychological and political effects produced when evil is chosen as a way to fulfill the ambition for power. The play is believed to have been written between 1603 and 1607, and is most commonly dated 1606. The earliest account of a performance of what was probably Shakespeare's play is April 1611, when Simon Forman recorded seeing such a play at the Globe Theatre. It was first published in the Folio of 1623, possibly from a prompt book. It was most likely written during the reign of James I, who had been James VI of Scotland before he succeeded to the English throne in 1603. James was a patron of Shakespeare's acting company, and of all the plays Shakespeare wrote during James's reign, *Macbeth* most clearly reflects the playwright's relationship with the sovereign.

### 2.3 Plot of *Macbeth*

*Macbeth* takes place in Scotland where Duncan is king. Two generals are on their way home from a battle they have won. On the way they meet three witches, who tell Macbeth that he will be king and Banquo that he will be the father of many kings. With encouragement from his wife, Macbeth decides to murder King Duncan while he is a guest at the Macbeth castle. Macbeth takes the throne, but is insecure. He remembers that Banquo is the father of many kings and therefore murders him as well. But Banquo's ghost haunts him and Macbeth meets the witches again second time. They warn him against Macduff who has gone to England in order to get help in the fight against Macbeth. The witches also tell him that no one born of woman can harm him, and that no one will defeat him until Birnham forest comes to Dunsinane. While this happens, Lady Macbeth has started to walk in her sleep disturbed by the crimes she has committed. She dies as a force, led by Duncan's son Malcolm, attacks the castle. Macbeth realizes that the witches have deceived him. It looks like the forest is moving, and as Macduff kills Macbeth in a hand-to-hand fight, he is told that Macduff is not born of a woman but he is a Caesarean. Malcolm becomes the new king of Scotland.

After presenting the plot of the play *Macbeth*, let us examine the major themes of the play before the textual analysis of the play.

### 2.4 Major Themes of the Play

#### Ambition

*Macbeth* is a play about ambition run amok. The weird sisters' prophecies spur both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to try to fulfill their ambitions, but the witches never make Macbeth or his wife

do anything. Macbeth and his wife act on their own to fulfill their deepest desires. Macbeth, a good general and, by all accounts before the action of the play, a good man, allows his ambition to overwhelm him and becomes a murdering, paranoid maniac. Lady Macbeth, once she begins to put into actions the once-hidden thoughts of her mind, is crushed by guilt.

Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth want to be great and powerful, and sacrifice their morals to achieve that goal. By contrasting these two characters with others in the play, such as Banquo, Duncan, and Macduff, who also want to be great leaders but refuse to allow ambition to come before honor, Macbeth shows how naked ambition, freed from any sort of moral or social conscience, ultimately takes over every other characteristic of a person. Unchecked ambition, Macbeth suggests, can never be fulfilled, and therefore quickly grows into a monster that will destroy anyone who gives into it.

### **Fate**

From the moment the weird sisters tell Macbeth and Banquo their prophecies, both the characters and the audience are forced to wonder about fate. Is it real? Is action necessary to make it come to pass, or will the prophecy come true no matter what one does? Different characters answer these questions in different ways at different times, and the final answers are ambiguous as fate always is. Unlike Banquo, Macbeth acts: he kills Duncan. Macbeth tries to master fate, to make fate conform to exactly what he wants. But, of course, fate does not work that way. By trying to master fate once, Macbeth puts himself in the position of having to master fate always. At every instance, he has to struggle against those parts of the witches' prophecies that do not favor him. Ultimately, Macbeth becomes so obsessed with his fate that he becomes delusional: he is unable to see the half-truths behind the witches' prophecies. By trying to master fate, he brings himself to his ruin.

### **Violence**

To call *Macbeth* a violent play is an understatement. It begins in battle, contains the murder of men, women, and children, and ends not just with a climactic siege but the suicide of Lady Macbeth and the beheading of its main character, Macbeth. In the process of all this bloodshed, Macbeth makes an important point about the nature of violence: every violent act, even those done for selfless reasons, seems to lead inevitably to the next. The violence, through which Macbeth takes the throne, as Macbeth himself realizes, opens the way for others to try to take the throne for themselves through violence. So Macbeth must commit more violence, and more violence, until violence is all he has left. As Macbeth himself says after seeing Banquo's ghost, "blood will to blood." Violence leads to violence, a vicious cycle.

### **Nature and Unnatural**

In medieval times, it was believed that the health of a country was directly related to the goodness and moral legitimacy of its king. If the King was good and just, then the nation would have good harvests and good weather. If there was political order, then there would be natural order. *Macbeth* shows this connection between the political and natural world: when Macbeth disrupts the social and political order by murdering Duncan and usurping the throne, nature goes haywire. Incredible storms rage, the earth tremors, animals go insane and eat each other. The unnatural events of the physical world emphasize the horror of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's acts, and mirror the warping of their souls by ambition. Also note the way that different characters talk about nature in the play. Duncan and Malcolm use nature metaphors when they speak of kingship, they see themselves as gardeners and want to make their realm grow and flower. In contrast, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth either try to hide from nature (wishing the stars would disappear) or to use nature to hide their cruel designs (being the serpent hiding beneath the innocent flower). The implication is

that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, once they have given themselves to the extreme self-iciness of ambition, have themselves become unnatural.

### **Manhood**

Over and over again in *Macbeth*, characters discuss or debate about manhood: Lady Macbeth challenges Macbeth when he decides not to kill Duncan, Banquo refuses to join Macbeth in his plot, Lady Macduff questions Macduff's decision to go to England, and on and on. Through these challenges, Macbeth questions and examines manhood itself. Does a true man take what he wants no matter what it is, as Lady Macbeth believes? Or does a real man have the strength to restrain his desires, as Banquo believes? All of Macbeth can be seen as a struggle to answer this question about the nature and responsibilities of manhood.

### **2.5 *Macbeth* as a Shakespearean Tragedy**

Shakespeare's tragic vision is to a large extent Greek in design and execution. Bradley pointed out that "a Shakespearean Tragedy may be called a story of exceptional calamity" (Bradley, 1905:11). It is a tragedy essentially of one person – the hero, in high state, or at best two persons, the hero and heroine, the latter coming into prominence primarily in romantic tragedies like *Romeo and Juliet*. In *Macbeth* though the heroine is part of the tragic action initially, she soon fades into the background.

A Shakespearean tragedy has a distinct atmosphere. This is perceptible with marked potency in *Macbeth*. The haunting, desolate, heath; the weird, horrible witches; the guilt – stricken conscience of the hero; the darkness of the night; all add to that special atmosphere. Darkness, even blackness, broods over tragedy. All the tragic scenes which remain imprinted in our memories occur in the darkness of the night. The murder of Banquo, the illusion of the dagger, Banquo's murder, Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking, all occur at night. The darkness of the nights is enormously feared by the brave Macbeth.

However the atmosphere is not that of unending black groping, darkness. There are flashes of lights and color that break out every so often. The brilliant light of the thunderstorm, the glitter of the dagger the torch carried by Fleance and by Macbeth's servant when Banquo is murdered, the torch that lit the face of the ghost of Banquo, all break the darkness with jarring effect. The colour of blood, crimson red, first visible in reality and later through Macbeth's brooding and Lady Macbeth's guilt-stricken delirium, adds as much to the atmosphere of the play, as it lessens the darkness. We find blood just after the first appearance of the witches, when a bloody sergeant staggers on to the stage. Later Lady Macbeth prays to the spirits to thicken the blood in her veins. Banquo's murderer comes to confirm the murder, with blood smeared on his face. Banquo himself stares with 'twenty trenches gashes on his head', "blood bolter'd" smiling derisively at his murderer. The worst, however, is saved for Lady Macbeth who cries, "Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him".

The imagery is vivid, violent and vitriolic, throughout the play, contributing immensely to its atmosphere. The image of a child wrenched from the breast and crushed to death; of pouring of sweet milk of concord into hell; the earth trembling due to fever; heaven struck by sorrow; mind in in restless ecstasy full of scorpions, of a furious, loud tale told by an idiot- all this, and more, adds to the tumult and the turmoil. We have thunderstorm whenever the witches are present. When they vanish we learn of ship-wrecks. Duncan's murder is accompanied by a dreadful hurricane. All this awakens horror and supernatural dread.

Shakespearean tragedies have been also called as "Tragedies of Destiny" and "Tragedies of Character". All the further tragedies get their title from the hero. In all four tragedies, the inherent

tragic flaw of the hero brings about his utter ruin. *King Lear* is a universal allegory of filial displacement. *Macbeth* defines a particular kind of evil- the evil that results from a lust for power.

This evil is depicted, as in all the tragedies, in poetic and dramatic terms. It is not an abstract process of thought through which the tragedy erupts. The action is earthly and real. It is the revealing of evil in terms of direct human experience. The logic in the play demands from us a fullness of imaginative response and profundity of realization. We have to bring both our sensations and feelings into action, if we are to understand the play's tragic depth.

*Macbeth* gives us the keenest of economy among all Shakespearean tragedies. The Action is rapid and moves quickly to the crisis; and from the final advancement to the full exposure of the plot and theme of the play are also equally swift. The main theme is the reversal of values. "Fair is foul, and foul is fair", in the play with it are associated premonitions of evil, disorder and ethical gloom into which Macbeth will plunge himself. From the very beginning of the play, we are made aware of the good against which the Macbeth evil will be contrasted. We also are made aware of the interconnected aspects of the evil, which is experienced as an unnatural perverting of the mind, clouding of logic, and a pursuit of illusions.

Macbeth as a hero is an admirable character in some ways. Thus he is not entirely evil, though we feel the least sympathy for him among the Shakespearean tragic heroes. But for the atmosphere that surrounds him, and the action that creeps from his character, he would have easily remained admirable throughout the play. Macbeth suffers from hallucinations. This is one factor which hastens his fall. Macbeth's complete dependence on the prophecy of the witches, who could have easily auto suggested through apparitions, is unthinkable to any sane man. Yet that would have not led to his downfall, if he remained on the path of glory. If destiny had the throne of Scotland in store for him he would have acquired it. He precipitates his own downfall in first killing Duncan and later committing one murder after another, something which the evil witches had not suggested.

Conflict, both external and internal, also results in suffering and Macbeth's downfall. The external conflict is symbolized by the contrast between the treasonous ambition in Macbeth and the patriotism in Macduff and Malcolm. The inner conflict is symbolized by the collision of the same forces within the soul of Macbeth. It is this inner conflict which makes Macbeth so touching.

*Macbeth* as a tragedy has some distinct features, which makes it an entity in itself. It also makes the tragedy different from other Shakespearean tragedies. Its first feature is that it is a tragedy of environment. The atmosphere is murky and dark, relieved partially by color and light. Secondly, the tragedy is not complex like other Shakespearean tragedies. It leaves us in no doubt about the evil in the play, and creates conflict in our mind regarding the nemesis of its hero. Thirdly, the element of supernatural in the form of the weird sisters imparts to the play a distinct mystique bordering on fear and awe. Fourth, the poetic creativity of *Macbeth* intermingled with his murderous instincts and gloom adds to the charm of the play. Fifth, the destructive violence and incredibly rapid pace is definitely greater than any of the other tragedies of Shakespeare. Six, *Macbeth* is the only hero who deserves his deathly end. *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet* are "more sinned against than sinning", whereas *Macbeth* is not.

Macbeth's deeds end in his nemesis. Shakespeare's tragedies are invariably romantic, barring *Macbeth*, which is a classical tragedy. It is a tragedy in the mould by Euripides, Aeschylus, Sophocles and other great Greek tragedies. Fate plays a vital part in the plays of other Greek tragedies. Bradley, however, does not agree with this view, for he says, "I mean that he may have seen in the bloody story of Macbeth a subject suitable for treatment in a manner somewhat nearer that of Seneca".

Despite Bradley's assertion, *Macbeth* is as close to a Greek tragedy as Shakespeare could possibly get. His genius was too great to be completely influenced by any one aspect of playwriting of his predecessors.

## 2.6 The Role of the Supernatural Elements

Knowing Shakespeare's intellect and restrained genius, the latter seems much saner. He used witchcraft purely for dramatic purpose. He wrote at a time when witches were "channels through which malignity of evil spirits might be visited upon human beings" (Kenneth Muir, 1984:4). Professor Curry thinks that the witches are demons or devils. He writes, "whether one considers them as human witches in league with the power of darkness, or as actual demons in the form of witches or as merely inanimate symbols, the power which they wield or represent or symbolize are ultimately demonic". (Muir, 1984: 4). To him, their control over nature would indicate that they were indeed demons disguised as witches. Yet the witches do not have any such power. It lies in their deity, Hecate, whom they have to muster, in case they wish to have any control over the primary elements of nature. They appear to be able to control nature, because Macbeth exalts them to that position. George Lyman Kittredge thought that the witches were norms. To him they were great powers of destiny. They controlled our past, present and future (David, 2013:1114).

The weird sisters, though considered evil by many critics are in fact neutral. Their prophecies that Macbeth would become Thane of Cawdor and the King of Scotland are not true. They do not incite him to commit murder or any other crime for that matter. The crime and murder are the direct outcome of Macbeth's overpowering ambition and his misplaced interpretation of the prophecies. If Macbeth was destined to become king, he would have become one without murdering Duncan. If his offspring were destined not to succeed him to the throne of Scotland, all the subsequent bloodshed and murders caused by Macbeth could not prevent it. Macbeth himself never blames the weird sisters for inciting him to commit murder, though he does accuse them of lulling him into a false sense of security. Some critics believe that Shakespeare discarded the norm of his original source, and introduced three entirely new characters, who were genuine witches. These critics, especially F.G. Fleay (1876), have given exhaustive reasons to support their theory. Spalding later examined Fleay's theory in detail. Banquo's first reaction on seeing the apparitions points to the fact that the sisters were in fact norms for they "look not like the inhabitants o'th' eart, and yet are on't"(G.K. Hunter, 1966:4). Yet this initial surprise happens. When he recovers, his description of choppy fingers, and parched lips, displays a description of old, haggard, beardless women. They are bleary eyed, fowl and wrinkled, yet they are human, which norms are not. Shakespeare's description of the weird sisters through Banquo and others conclusively points towards them being witches. There is very little to ever consider that they were norms.

Critics who believe that the sisters were not witches argue that they had powers which only norms could possess and not witches. Spalding pointed out even women accused of witchcraft have been reputed to have powers of the norms. They had the power of vanishing from the sight, of predicting the future, of creating storms and so on. Thus everything attributed to the witches of Macbeth was in fact believed to be possible to women practicing witchcraft. Moreover, the frequent reference to the derivation of knowledge of the future from the devil is only appropriate to witches as per Elizabethan beliefs and norms.

The supernatural prophecy and soliciting reveal the nature of the hero's capricious environment. Its partial fulfillment is merely a coincidence. Macbeth is encouraged by it, for he considers chance, which infrequently governs our lives, as the basic law of existence. In contrast, Banquo remains unimpressed. For him there is no easy way to success. The two in fact symbolize the two opposites in human existence. Macbeth is the personification of undeserved ambition, believing

that fate would bring to him by chance what is not his. He extracts sinister meanings from ordinary happening, like Duncan's visit to his castle soon after the prophecy. Banquo is the personification of fair play and success through hard work. It is through this that Banquo warns Macbeth against the viciousness of the witches. Macbeth refuses to listen to his words of caution, so engrossed he is in his own ambition. Opportunities begin to offer themselves to him. He kills Banquo and later Macduff's wife and son. It is here that nemesis catches up with him. Like Iago and Edmund, he has been lucky in the situations created for him and by him, and like them in the end he finds himself pushed to the wall.

The supernatural counsel is symbolic of Macbeth's betrayal of self. The irony of the works has a twofold effect. It heightens the dramatic suspense as well as lays bare the bizarre and chaotic world of treachery and villainy. Macbeth who once thought that he would do only what became a man now says: "What man dare, I dare" (*Macbeth*, 116). It is not without design that both these statements are made in the presence of Lady Macbeth.

Thus on the physical plane, the witches are real beings, and not merely a figment of Macbeth's imagination. Banquo would not have seen them otherwise. On a metaphysical plane, they represent Macbeth's guilt and evil. The witches have a close affinity to Macbeth's consciousness. The witches also symbolize the general evil that prevails in the world. We are either able to overcome this evil and remain good human beings or succumb to their temptations and become bad, as does Macbeth. The transition from the good to the bad is thus in our own deeds.

The witches strike the keynote of the play in the very beginning itself, when they say "Fair is foul and foul is fair" (*Macbeth*, 2). Macbeth becomes a victim and a ruthless follower of this terrible dictum. The dread and the reversal of moral values that they stand for could have come to nothingness if Macbeth had not been tempted by them. That someone as powerful as Macbeth becomes their victim is as much an insight into his evil character as it is to the power of the witches to influence minds. Yet they can influence only those minds which succumb to evil, exaggerate temptation. To a moral person, their magic is of no consequence.

Apart from the supernatural element provided by the witches, Banquo's ghost also adds to it. Shakespeare introduced the ghost because it was a source of enormous enjoyment to the Elizabethan audience. The ghost, however, is seen by no one else save Macbeth. This time the ghost is a mere apparition and has no "earth-like qualities" in it. It is a symbol of justice and punishment. Macbeth very nearly betrays himself in front of his guests of the appearance of Banquo's ghost at the banquet. Thus it is symbolic of Macbeth's guilt as well, and it is instrumental in bringing this guilt to the surface. It is from this point onwards that Macbeth commits wholesale and motiveless murders when he kills Macduff's wife and son.

Shakespeare's audience was not very sophisticated, it was certainly not barbaric as suggested by Lee Sidney (1916) "Shakespeare and his contemporaries bountifully illustrate the superstitious credulity which guided their contemporaries' conduct, molded many of their social customs, and governed their interpretation of natural phenomena"(Sidney;1916:529). It was this catering to general taste that made Shakespeare introduce the supernatural element in *Macbeth*. His sanity was too profound to indulge in any personal superstition. It is a credit to this genius that he created such magnificent plays out of such an incongruous element.

## 2.7 Conclusion

*Macbeth* as a Shakespearean tragedy has been explained in the beginning of this chapter. *Macbeth* has been termed as a tragedy of ambition by many. To others it is a tragedy of character, and even of will. To yet others it is a tragedy of vividness of imagination and even of fear. In the



words of Verity, 'Macbeth' is the least complex of Shakespeare's tragedies, and is, indeed, marked by sheer simplicity of theme, motive and treatment which consorts with the simple, unsophisticated period of the play, to this extent at least, that ambition is the main spring of its action. Ambition alone calls into operation the forces that bring about the central deed and its train of fearful results"(A. W. Verity: 1902: 26).

On the other hand, the role of the supernatural elements has importance in *Macbeth*. There is a strong role of a supernatural force in *Macbeth*. The witches who had the power to see the future, the ghost and bloody dagger that appeared to Macbeth before going to commit his murder to the king, all these seem to be supernatural. Witches are strongest of the supernatural powers in the play. They made prophecies that effected Macbeth and moved killing the king and his best friend and finally those prophecies caused his death.

In this chapter, the plot of *Macbeth*, *Macbeth* as a Shakespearean tragedy, the role of the supernatural elements, and vivid and detailed analysis of Direct and Indirect Speech Acts in *Macbeth* are presented. Though there are many important and significant dialogues and conversations spread over the play "*Macbeth*", the researcher confined himself to the analysis of 91 Speech Acts from Act I to Act V which are vital in understanding the play in a novel way. Each speech is a gem in itself.

## 2.8 Sample Questions

1. Discuss Macbeth as a typical Shakespearean tragedy.
2. Consider Macbeth as a tragedy of intrigue.
3. Comment on major themes of Macbeth.
4. "In its whole constructional effect Macbeth differs from other tragedies". Explain.
5. Trace the sources of conflict in Macbeth.
6. Write a note on Shakespeare's use of soliloquies in Macbeth.
7. Examine Banquo character as an important one in the play Macbeth.
8. Was Macbeth greedy by nature? Discuss.

## 2.9. Reference Books

1. Joel Littaner : *Examining Shakespearean Tragedy*
2. Gideon Lester : *The Shape of Tragedy*
3. Barbara A Mowat : *Shakespeare : Macbeth*
4. M.R. Ridley : *The Arden Shakespeare*
5. Louis B. Wright : *The Folger Shakespeare Library*
6. Hazlitt William : *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays.*
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## Lesson : 3

# ***MACBETH*- TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND ANNOTATIONS**

### Structure:

- 3.1 Objectives of the lesson
- 3.2 Background of the play *Macbeth*
- 3.3 Textual Analysis
- 3.4 Conclusion
- 3.5 Sample Questions
- 3.6 Reference Books

### 3.1. Objectives

After a thorough study of this lesson you will be able to:

- comprehend the features of Shakespearean tragedy.
- come to know the moral values of human life.
- know that's Greed & blind beliefs bring about man's downfall.

### 3.1.2 Introduction to the Dramatist – Shakespeare

When William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* was performed in 1604, the author was already one of the most popular dramatists of his day, as well as an actor and a producer. Most of his best comedies, his great history plays and some of his finest tragedies were behind him. Only *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Henry IV* were yet to be written.

Shakespeare was so well known as a literary and dramatic craftsman, that Francis Meres, a young preacher called Shakespeare "Mellifluous and honey-tongued Shakespeare". Meres observes that "as Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for comedy and tragedy among the Latins, so Shakespeare among the English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage".

As an actor and dramatist Shakespeare inherited three centuries of tradition. He had the intuition of gathering every, "unconsidered trifle", and every weighty matter that could profit his art. He was everywhere possessed by the conception of loyalty and disloyalty and their consequences in human life. He contemplated the strange conflict of reason and emotion, and the disorder that arose when reason was obliterated. While he allowed his characters a freedom to live their own lives to the uttermost confines of good and evil, he was ever conscious that they existed in a moral world, functioning under a divine providence.

### 3.2. Background of the play *Macbeth*:

Before the analysis of important dialogues/ excerpts in the play '*Macbeth*', it is a necessary to present the back ground of the play '*Macbeth*' here. *Macbeth* is a tragedy by William Shakespeare written around 1606. The only Shakespearean drama set in Scotland, *Macbeth* follows the story of a Scottish nobleman (Macbeth) who hears a prophecy that he will become king and is tempted to evil by the promise of power. *Macbeth* deals with the themes of evil in the individual and in the world more closely than any of Shakespeare's other works. Shakespeare draws on *Holinshed's Chronicles as Macbeth's historical source*, but he makes some adjustments to Holinshed's depiction of the real-life Macbeth. Holinshed's *Macbeth* was a soldier, and not much more; he was capable, and not too thoughtful or self-doubting. In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, it is the internal tension and crumbling of *Macbeth*, entirely Shakespeare's inventions, that give the play such literary traction.

*Macbeth* is also unique among Shakespeare's plays for dealing so explicitly with material that was relevant to England's contemporary political situation. The play is thought to have been written in the later part of 1606, three years after James I, the first Stuart king, took up the crown of England. James I was the son of Mary, Queen of Scots (cousin to Elizabeth I) and this less-than-direct connection meant that James was eager to assert any legitimacy he could over his right to the English throne (even though he was a Scot).

Shakespeare's portrayal of Banquo as one of the play's few unsoiled characters (in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Banquo helps Macbeth murder the King) is a nod to the Stuart political myth. King James traced his lineage to Banquo, who is thought to be the founder of the Stuart line. In Act I, scene iii, the witches predict that Banquo's heirs will rule Scotland and later, the witches conjure a vision of Banquo's descendants – a line of eight kings that culminates in a symbolic vision of King James, who was crowned King of Scotland and England (and also claimed to be king of France and Ireland).

Shakespeare, whose theater company (*the Lord Chamberlain's Men*) became the King's Men under James's rule, seems intent on flattering the King. Shakespeare also dramatizes one of the king's special interests: witchcraft. In *Macbeth*, the three "weird sisters" feature centrally in the plot. They show Macbeth visions of the future and manipulate his murderous ambition in a play full of dark forces and black magic. Witchcraft was a hot topic in England at the time and James even published his own treatise on the subject in 1597, entitled *Daemonologie*. As James's court play-maker, Shakespeare would have known that inclusion of the dark arts would interest the King.

Beyond the abstract of evil, James was also the target of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605, where a group of rebel Catholics tried to blow up the King and Parliament (this is the historical version of Guy Fawkes, that guy in V for Vendetta). Macbeth's murder of King Duncan, then, would have struck a sensitive chord with the play's audience. There is also another allusion to the Gunpowder plot during the Porter's infamous comic routine in Act II, scene iii. The Porter refers to Catholic "equivocators," which is a reference to Jesuit Henry Garnet, a man who was tried and executed for his role in the Gunpowder Plot. Garnet wrote "Treatise on Equivocation," a document that encouraged Catholics to speak ambiguously or, "equivocate" when they were being questioned by Protestant inquisitors so they would not be persecuted for their religious beliefs.

A brief introduction of the play '*Macbeth*' is presented here followed by the Textual analysis of important Speech Acts from '*Macbeth*'.

### 3.3 Textual Analysis

#### Examples of Annotations:

1. "Fair is foul, and foul is fair"

(All witches, Act – I, Scene– i, Line –12)

This utterance is a Direct Representative Speech Act, the witches utter this paradoxical phrase, which repeats in various forms throughout the play. This is an introduction the theme of equivocation, the Illocutionary meaning in this Direct Speech Act, suggests that things may not always be as they seem, and foreshadows the deceit that will take place.

2. "I have given suck, and know How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me; I would, while it was smiling in my face. Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums, And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you Have done to this."

(Lady Macbeth, Act– I, Scene – i, Lines –54 –59)

In this Direct Representative Speech Act, Lady Macbeth tries to build confidence in Macbeth, trying to convince him to be unafraid like her. The significance is that Lady Macbeth could never break her promises and vows. In an Indirect Speech Act, she does not say directly to her husband, but uses a comparison of suckling. She is giving an example to Macbeth of how loyal she may feel, she must remain in keeping a promise. She says that even though she knows the pleasure of nursing a child, if promised to kill him, she will, even if he is looking up at her smiling.

3. “ No more that Thane of Cawdor shall deceive Our bosom interest. Go, pronounce his present death, And with his former title greet Macbeth.”

(Duncan, Act– I, Scene – ii, Lines – 63 – 65)

This line has the form of a Direct Representative Speech Act where Duncan states that the Thane will never betray him and go announce that he will be executed, and requests Ross to tell Macbeth that Cawdor’s title will be given to him. Obviously, in the Direct Speech Act, Duncan is upset that the Thane of Cawdor has deceived him, and knows that he must find a replacement immediately. The first person that comes to his mind is Macbeth.

4. “ Though his bark cannot be lost, Yet it shall be tempest-tossed.”

(First witch, Act– I, Scene–iii, Lines – 24–25)

This speech is stated by the first witch while she and the other witches are discussing a recent experience of hers with a sailor. She insists that although he cannot make his ship disappear, he can still make his journey miserable; it is in the form of a Direct Representative Speech Act. It gives us insight on the capabilities of the witches.

5. “So foul and fair a day I have not seen”

(Macbeth, Act– I, Scene– iii, Line–38)

Macbeth uses a Direct Speech Act to Banquo. He states the day is so strange that it is good and bad at the same time. It has great significance because it shows that the people are joyous because Macbeth is very courageous and so he gains victory in the war. There is thunder and lightning which symbolize something will be happening in the future and that the atmosphere is very unstable whereas the kingdom is unstable as well.

6. “ How far is’t call’d to Forres? ”

(Banquo, Act–I, Scene – iii, Line – 39)

In Banquo’s opening line he is using an Indirect Directive Speech Act asking Macbeth a question. It is an Indirect Speech Act since he is not asking how far it is, but how much longer they will have to travel, which is the Illocutionary meaning. He does not however get the required answer to his question since he is interrupted by the appearance of the witches.

7. “ What are these, So withered, and so wilde in their attire, That look not like th’inhabitants o’th’Earth, And yet are on’t? ”

(Banquo , Act– I, Scene – iii, Lines, 39 – 42)

This line looks like a Direct Speech Act at first but is an Indirect Speech Act since it is unlikely that Banquo is asking Macbeth a question. The Speech Act is in the form of a question, but it actually has the Illocutionary force of a statement. Banquo is not expecting an answer; he is just expressing his surprise. He is stating that the witches do not look like ordinary women in this Representative Speech Act.

8. “ Live you, or are you aught That man may question? ”

(Banquo, Act – I, Scene – iii, Lines – 42–43)

This utterance is a Direct Speech Act where Banquo is asking if the witches can speak and are real and therefore he is expecting an answer. The Illocutionary meaning in this Direct Speech Act is that Banquo is uncertain and nervous since he cannot determine whether or not the witches are humans or other creatures.

9. “ You seem to understand me, By each at once her choppy finger laying Upon her skinny Lips:”

(Banquo, Act– I, Scene – iii, Lines – 43 – 45)

In this speech, Banquo is talking directly to the witches. The Speech Act is in the form of Representative Direct Speech Act, but it has the force of a Directive Speech Act, since the Illocutionary meaning is that Banquo is requesting the witches to speak with him. Since the request is not in the form of a question, it is an Indirect Speech Act.

10. “ You should be Women, And yet your Beards forbid me to interpret That you are so. ”

(Banquo, Act – I, Scene – iii, Lines – 45–47)

In this Representative Speech Act, Banquo is speaking to the witches and identifying the witches as a mixture of women and men. With an Indirect Speech Act, Banquo is actually saying that he does not know what to make of them. Coming to the Perlocutionary Speech Act in this line is to convey the feelings that Banquo might have towards the witches and the researcher’s interpretation of this Speech Act is that Banquo is curious but still careful since he does not trust the creatures.

11. “ Speak, if you can: what are you? ”

(Macbeth, Act– I, Scene – iii, Line –48)

In this Direct Speech Act, Macbeth asks the women who they are and he expects an answer. This tells us in a Perlocutionary Speech Act that he is not as negative as Banquo. The Illocutionary Speech Act lets us know that Macbeth is more intrigued by getting to know what they are, than suspicious about where they are from like Banquo. It is a Direct Speech Act.

12. “All haile Macbeth, haile to thee Thane of Glamis! ”

(First witch, Act – I, Scene – iii, Line – 49)

In this line, the witches perform the act of telling Macbeth that they know who he is. This act can be called a Representative Speech Act according to Searle. It is a Direct Speech Act with the Illocutionary meaning of the witches stating that they know who they are talking to.

13. “ All haile Macbeth, haile to thee Thane of Cawdor!”

(Second witch, Act – I, Scene – iii, Line –50)

This line is both a Direct Speech Act and an Indirect Speech Act. It works on two levels, since the audience has information about Macbeth’s promotion to Thane of Cawdor that Macbeth himself does not know yet. If you analyze it from Macbeth’s perspective, it is a prediction and should be seen as an Indirect Commissive Speech Act, since it is suggesting that he might be the “Thane of Cawdor”. However if you see the line from the audience’s perspective, it is a Direct Representative Speech Act where the witches are identifying Macbeth as “Thane of Cawdor”.

14. “ All haile Macbeth, that shalt be King hereafter!”

(Third witch, Act – I, Scene –iii, Line –51)

This line is a Direct Representative Speech Act that is predicting what Macbeth will be. What Macbeth listens to promise that he perceives as insincere promises and these promises follow the propositional content rule “promise is to be uttered only in the context of a sentence, the utterance of which predicates some future act” (Searle 1969: 63). The perception of sincerity of the promises that the witches make depend on what information the hearer possesses and can be analyzed from two

perspectives. Macbeth does not know that he has been promoted, so he perceives the Speech Acts as insincere, but the audience knows about the promotion to Thane of Cawdor and so to them it is a sincere promise.

15. “ Good Sir, why do you start, and seem to fear Things that do sound so faire?”  
(Banquo, Act – I, Scene – iii, Lines – 52 –53)

It is a Direct Speech Act. Banquo wonders about Macbeth’s reaction to the predictions. In a Direct Speech Act from Banquo, we are also told by Shakespeare that Macbeth seems to fear the predictions. According to my interpretation, the Illocutionary meaning is that Banquo feels a sting of jealousy over the wonderful things that Macbeth has been promised.

16. “ I’th’name of truth Are ye fantastical, or that indeed  
Which outwardly ye show? ”

(Banquo, Act – I, Scene – iii, Lines – 53 – 55)

It is an Indirect Directive Speech Act. In it, Banquo is making a request to know whether the witches are to be trusted or not. It is indirect since the words that Banquo really want to say are “Can I trust you?” and with an Illocutionary Speech Act he is also wondering what the witches are. He is speaking directly to the witches and is expecting an answer.

17. “My Noble Partner You greet with present Grace, and great prediction Of Noble having, and of Royall hope, That he seems rapt withal.”

(Banquo, Act – I, Scene – iii, Lines –55 –58)

Banquo does not question who the witches are talking to because the identity of their references is clear. The principle of identification requires like Searle writes: “that the hearer be able to identify the object from the speaker’s utterance” (Searle 1969: 85), and in this Representative Speech Act, Banquo is able to identify Macbeth as the object since the witches name his title. With a Direct Speech Act, Banquo is stating that Macbeth seems to be in shock from the predictions he has been told, which is also the Illocutionary meaning.

18. “To me you speak not.”

(Banquo, Act – I, Scene– iii, Line – 58)

This Speech Act is disguised as a statement made in a Direct Representative Speech Act, but is in fact an Indirect Directive Speech Act where Banquo requests the witches to speak to him.

19. “If you can look into the Seeds of Time, And say, which Grain will grow, and which will not, Speak then to me,”

(Banquo, Act –I, Scene – iii, Lines –59 – 61)

Banquo speaks directly to the witches and questions if they have any predictions for him as well. He does this in a Direct Speech demanding information with the Illocutionary meaning that he will welcome the predictions whether they are positive or negative.

20. “ Who neyther begge, nor feare Your favors, nor your hate.”

(Banquo, Act – I, Scene – iii, Lines 61 –62)

Banquo tells us in a Direct Speech Act that he is not intimidated by the witches. This Directive Speech Act is a clear display of curiosity and confidence. The Perlocutionary meaning is that Banquo wants the witches to believe he is secure and self-confident in their presence and the Speech informs us that he is encouraging the witches to be honest with him.

21. “Thou shalt get Kings, though thou be none.”

(Third witch, Act – I, Scene – iii, Line – 68)

This Direct Speech Act is one of the most unambiguous of the witches’ fortunes. The line consists of two Illocutionary Acts, since the persons hearing it receive the information in two separate ways. The first Illocutionary Speech Act is as a threat to Macbeth and the throne he has been promised. The second Illocutionary Speech Act is a positive act where it is hinted that Banquo will be the father of kings. So, it is a Commissive Speech Act.

22. “So all haile Macbeth, and Banquo. Banquo, and Macbeth, all haile!”

(Third witch, Act – I, Scene – iii, Lines –68–70)

This last line of the witches is a Representative Speech Act where the witches only identify the persons affected by their predictions. They speak both to Macbeth and to Banquo. It is a Direct Speech Act with the Illocutionary meaning is that the witches finish the conversation.

23. “Stay, you imperfect Speakers, tell me more ”.

(Macbeth, Act – I, Scene – iii, Line – 71)

This is a Direct Directive Speech Act. In it, Macbeth is talking directly to the witches. The use of the word “imperfect” suggests the Illocutionary meaning that Macbeth requests the witches to speak more clearly and explain properly what they mean. Macbeth expects an answer from the witches.

24. “By Sinel’s death, I know I am Thane of Glamis.”

(Macbeth, Act– I, Scene – iii, Line – 72)

The Illocutionary meaning with this Representative Speech Act is that Macbeth is accepting the witches’ greeting of him as the Thane of Glamis. He is speaking directly to the witches but not expecting an answer to this statement. So it is a Direct Speech Act.

25. “But how, of Cawdor? The Thane of Cawdor lives, A prosperous Gentleman,”

(Macbeth, Act– I, Scene – iii, Lines – 73 –74)

This line has the form of a Representative Speech Act where Macbeth questions the witches’ predictions, but is in fact a Directive Speech Act where Macbeth demands the witches answer him, and explain the predictions. The Illocutionary meaning in Speech Act is that Macbeth is nervous about the fantastic predictions he has received. It is an Indirect Speech Act since he does not state directly that he is nervous.

26. “And to be King, Stands not within the prospect of belief, No more than to be Cawdor.”

(Macbeth, Act – I, Scene – iii, Lines –75–76)

Macbeth follows in the same manner as the previous line. It is a Direct Speech Act since Macbeth is speaking to the witches demanding an answer in the Illocutionary meaning, but is disguised in the form of a Representative Speech Act since the first impression is that Macbeth is making a statement in this Indirect Speech Act.

27. “Say from whence You owe this strange Intelligence, or why Upon this blasted Heath you stop our way With such Prophetic greeting.”

(Macbeth, Act – I, Scene – iii, Lines – 76 –79)

Since the predictions he has received were of such fantastic nature, Macbeth shows great disbelief in his utterance and is using a Directive Speech Act as he makes the request for information. With an Illocutionary Speech Act Macbeth is asking the witches to give him a reason to

trust them and the Perlocutionary meaning in this Direct Speech Act is therefore that Macbeth does not trust the witches or the predictions they have given him.

28. “Speak, I charge you.”

(*Macbeth*, Act – I, Scene – iii, Line –79)

Macbeth’s last sentence “Speak I charge you” is almost aggressive. It is a Directive Speech Act in the imperative form where Macbeth orders the witches to answer him. The Perlocutionary Act that Macbeth performs is that he wants to instill respect in the witches so that they give him a satisfactory answer that could explain all the incredible predictions that he and Banquo have heard. This is a Direct Speech Act with the Illocutionary meaning “Answer me”

29. “What! Can the devil speak true? ”

(*Banquo*, Act– I, Scene– iii, Line –109)

This line is an Indirect Speech Act because Banquo asks this question to himself and he does not expect the answer from anyone. This Speech Act is in the form of a question “What? Can the devil speak true?” which is what Banquo says when the witches’ prophecy about Macbeth becoming “Thane of Cawdor” comes true. The illocutionary act in this utterance is that Banquo does not believe the witches can tell the truth. The Perlocutionary Speech Act in this line is Macbeth got the title of Thane of Cawdor now.

30. “The Thane of Cawdor lives: why do you dress me In borrowed clothes? ”

(*Macbeth*, Act – I, Scene – iii, Lines – 110 – 111)

This utterance is a Directive Speech Act when Macbeth is asking Angus and Ross, “It means if the Thane of Cawdor lives, why are you talking to me like I am the Thane of Cawdor?”, he is expecting an answer. Angus replies him that the man who was of Cawdor is still alive, but he has been sentenced to death, and he deserves to die. He said the king sent them to give him his thanks and told him to call you “the thane of Cawdor”. The Illocutionary meaning in this Direct Speech Act is that Macbeth wonders what he heard, and the second prediction of the witches has come true.

31. “ Two truths told, As happy prologues to the swelling act of the imperial theme.”

(*Macbeth*, Act– I, Scene – III, Lines – 129– 131)

This utterance is a Direct Representative Speech Act where Macbeth is speaking to himself and the prediction of witches is very clear. Macbeth is greeted by the weird sisters on the heath. The witches had predicted that Macbeth will be the “Thane of Cawdor” in addition to his title as “Thane of Glamis”. They also predict that he would be the king of Scotland. Macbeth said that two predictions have already come true, since Ross has already informed him that the king has conferred on him the title of the “Thane of Cawdor”. Macbeth is amazed and is convinced that the third prediction would also come true.

32. “ Present fears Are less than horrible imaginings: My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical, Shakes so my single state of man That function is smother’d in surmise And nothing is But what is not.”

(*Macbeth*, Act – I, Scenes – iii, Lines – 139 – 144)

This is a Direct Representative Speech Act. The lines are spoken by Macbeth after two prophecies of the witches come true, Macbeth’s expectations of becoming king are high. In an aside, he philosophies between the terrors and horrors a person has to face. To him the immediate terrors are easier to bear than the imagination of horrors to be faced at some future time; for what has been



faced is distinct whereas what has still to come is vague. He feels that his intention to murder has not taken any definite shape as to its execution and hence is limited to his imagination. Such imagination paralyses the government of his mind, for it is without allies and is stifled in vague conjectures. In such a state nothing is real, for everything appears unreal. The preliminary thought of murdering Duncan has already arisen in Macbeth's mind. He knows in order to make the third prophecy come true, he has to murder Duncan, king of Scotland. Since the thought is at an embryo stage, the horror of future is unbearable to him. The Illocutionary Act meaning is that Macbeth is riddled with doubt and his conscience has a conflict of right versus wrong.

33. "If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me "

(Macbeth, Act- I, Scene- iii, Line- 145)

The Speech Act is in the form of Representative Direct speech Act. In it, he says if fate wants him to be the king perhaps fate will just make it happen and he will not have to do anything. In the Illocutionary meaning, this quote illustrates Macbeth's ambition, which is immediately stirred after he discovers he has been given the title of "Thane of Cawdor". This unchecked ambition and desire for power corrupts Macbeth's mind, as he contemplates committing ill against the king. The meaning of Perlocutionary act is that Macbeth is presented the title "Thane of Cawdor" by the king, Duncan.

34. " New honors come upon him, Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mold  
But with the aid of use."

( Banquo, Act – I, Scene – iii, Lines – 146 –147)

Banquo is using a Direct Speech Act after the second prediction of the witches comes true. Banquo tries to say that Macbeth is uncomfortable in his new title, and he compares this to having new clothes. Your new clothes are never as comfortable as your old ones, thus Macbeth's new title will never be as comfortable for him as his old one.

35. " Is execution done on Cawdor? Are not Those in commission yet returned? "

(Duncan , Act – I, Scene – iv, Lines – 1– 2)

These Speech Acts are in the form of questions, they are Direct Speech Acts. He questions his son, Malcolm, "Has the former Thane of Cawdor been executed yet? Haven't the people in charge of that come back?" because Duncan expects an answer from Malcolm. When Duncan learns that Scotland has been betrayed by the Thane of Cawdor, he decides immediately that he must be executed, for how else would one go about getting rid of such a horrible traitor? He knows what must be done, and sets out for this action to take place as soon as possible.

36. " There's no art To find the mind's construction in the face. He was a gentleman on whom I built  
An absolute trust."

(Duncan, Act – I, Scene – iv, Lines – 13– 16)

When Duncan says this line in Direct Speech Act, it is a Direct Representative Speech Act form. He says that there is no way to read a man's mind by looking at his face. He trusted Cawdor completely. The Illocutionary meaning is that Duncan is severely troubled over how not only one, but two Scots that he trusted had betrayed their country. He does not expect it to happen because everybody had seemed so happy or content with the way he was ruling things. The meaning is that Cawdor had executed. Malcolm confirmed him, he spoke with someone who saw Cawdor die, and he said that Cawdor openly confessed his treasons, begged his highness' forgiveness, and repented deeply.

37. " Welcome hither. I have begun to plant thee and will labor To make thee full of growing."

(Duncan, Act- I, Scene -iv, Lines – 31– 33)

With this Indirect Speech Act, Duncan is metaphorically comparing his kingdom to a garden. People normally tend to garden with extra care and do everything in their power to make sure the plants in the garden are healthy and well. Duncan compares his kingdom to a garden because the way one would treat a garden is exactly the same way he is treating his kingdom. He treats them with extra care and does everything in his power to make sure every soul is as healthy and well as possible.

38. “We will establish our estate upon Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter The Prince of Cumberland;”

(Duncan, Act – I, Scene– iv, Lines – 38– 40)

The Speech Act is in the form of Representative Direct Speech Act when Duncan declares who should be the king after he has passed away. As a king, he should have good judgment on whoever he has chosen to be the next king. When he chose Malcolm, his oldest son, to be his heir, he clearly knew what he was doing and knew that the people of Scotland would be comfortable under Malcolm’s rule after Duncan’s death. We also know Duncan partakes in the battle against Norway. He defends his country, Scotland, against the rebellion and any other attacks that may occur. Although there are no good quotations to show just how much he was partaking in the battle, Duncan was indeed present during the battle.

39. “Glamis thou art, and Cawdr; and shalt be What thou art promised: yet do fear thy nature; It is too full o’ the milk of human kindness To catch the nearest way”.

(Lady Macbeth, Act– I, Scene –v, Lines –14–17)

This passage is spoken by Lady Macbeth about her husband; it is a Direct Speech Act. She says directly to him, “You are Thane of Glamis and Cawdor and you are going to be king”. She has received a letter from her husband, informing her about two of the three prophecies, made by the witches, coming true. She now sums up the character of her husband. She knows that he is already the “Thane of Cawdor” as per the prophecies made by the witches. She realizes that her husband is not lacking in ambition. What he lacks is unscrupulous resolution which ought to accompany ambition, and without which it is useless. Lady Macbeth fears regarding her husband’s temperament. He does not lack in daring. What becomes his obstacle is his gentle nature, which makes him take the most direct path, no matter how difficult it might be.

In the study of the characterization of a play we learn the most by what the dramatic personae say of each other. No one knows Macbeth so intimately as his wife, and every line of this analysis of his character should be weighed, and what is more, illustrated Lady Macbeth’s speech, not only reveals much about Macbeth’s character, but also her own character. We never see Macbeth “too full o’ the milk of human kindness”. What we see instead is a man obsessed by supernatural greed, which incites him to a crime that brings into the play all evil in him.

40. “Come, thick night, And pall three in the dunnest smoke of hell, That my keen knife see not the wound it makes, Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark, To cry, Hold, hold!”

(Lady Macbeth, Act– I, Scene– v, Lines 51– 54)

The Speech Act is in the form of Direct Directive Speech Act where Lady Macbeth invokes the night to fall quickly and cover the earth with its darkness like a dress and make the environment murky and dusky like hell. The Indirect Speech Act is that Lady Macbeth needs to murder the king, Duncan as well, she does not request darkness only, she wants darkness so that none notices the fatal wound made on the king by her sharp knife. She wants the blanket of night to hide a murder; so that

no one can watch her hideous crime. She wants so much darkness that even the brightness of heaven cannot prevent her crime.

41. “O’ never Shall sun that morrow see! Your face, my thane, is as book where men May read strange matter; to beguile the time, Look like the time. Bear welcome in your eye, Your hand, your tongue.”

(Lady Macbeth, Act –I, Scene– v, Lines– 63–67)

In this Direct Representative Speech Act, Macbeth tells his wife that Duncan will arrive at their castle that night and shall return the next morning. Lady Macbeth uses Direct Speech Act and says that such a thing will not happen, for the king will not be alive by then. She tells her husband that his face is like an open book, where anyone can read the thoughts that go in his mind. She advises her husband to adapt himself to the practices in vogue so that he can hoodwink the world around him. He must welcome the king with his eyes, his gestures and his words. In fact, in Indirect Representative Speech Act Lady Macbeth tells us that she is preparing the plot for murdering the king. She also says, “Let me handle tonight’s preparations because tonight will change night and day for the rest of our lives” to her husband but she does not get the answer from Macbeth, he just says we will speak about this further.

42. “This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself Unto our gentle senses.”

(Duncan, Act– I Scene –vi, Lines – 1– 3)

The Speech Act is in the form of a Representative Direct Speech Act. Duncan is directly talking to Banquo and he says the castle is pleasant, and the air is light and sweet to their gentle senses. Banquo continues the conversation by saying that in his experience he has noticed that where the martlet (birds that they see) dwells the air smells “woingly,” and, “Where they must breed and haunt, I have observed, the air is delicate”. It appears as it is in the form of a Direct Speech Act statement. For most of the play Macbeth’s castle will be metaphorically compared to hell. Words like pleasant, sweetly, gentle, woingly, and delicate do not belong in a description of Macbeth’s castle. Because the audience already knows this (we have already seen and heard Macbeth, as well as Lady Macbeth, plotting the king’s assassination), the scene is dramatically ironic.

43. “I have bought Golden opinions from all sorts of people.”

(Macbeth, Act – I, Scene –vi, Lines – 31– 32)

This utterance is in Direct Speech Act but it is in the form of a Representative Direct Speech Act. Macbeth states to his wife, Lady Macbeth, he cannot go on the plan of the king’s assassination. Macbeth is saying that King Duncan has honored him recently and now everyone thinks that he (Macbeth) is a wonderful person, good person, and that he should be proud of this and do those opinions justice rather than doing something that would make him look bad and cast doubt on the honors and good opinions that people have of him now.

44. “ If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well It were done quickly.”

(Macbeth, Act– I, Scene – vii, Lines – 1 – 2)

This Speech is stated by Macbeth while he contemplates the murder of Duncan. It can be categorized as Direct Representative Speech Act. The significance of this soliloquy is that Macbeth is only human, and has doubts and fears that make him that much human. But he has no morals; he knows the seriousness of the murder, but does not know the moral consequences of the murder. It means that if Macbeth is going to commit murder, he assumes he might as well do it quickly, before he loses his nerve.

45. “ I have no spur To prick the sides of my intent, but only Vaulting ambition, which o’erleaps itself And falls on the other.”

(Macbeth, Act– I, Scene –vii, Lines– 25–28)

Macbeth states us in a Direct Speech Act and using a Direct Representative Speech Act, he lists out his reasons for killing Duncan. He says that he has nothing to inspire him to murder the king, except his ambition. He can plead neither private grievance, nor public duty. He knows that his ambition is excessive, and is certain to end in disaster.

46. “False face must hide what the false heart doth know,”

(Macbeth, Act – I, Scene–vii, Line – 83)

This speech is a Direct Speech Act where Macbeth concludes that he must commit the murder of Duncan. The significance is that he comes to the conclusion he will do this in secret. Macbeth paraphrases what Lady Macbeth said about him being innocent. It means Macbeth must put on a false face to hide what his traitorous heart knows.

47. “ This diamond he greets your wife withal, By the name of most kind hostess, and shut up In measureless content. ”

(Banquo, Act – II, Scene – i, Lines, 14 – 16)

In a Direct Representative Speech Act, Banquo is speaking to Macbeth and tells him that King Duncan presents this diamond to his wife and for her boundless hospitality. It actually has the Illocutionary force of a statement; Banquo shows just how generous King Duncan is. Not too many people would stay at another person’s home, and give their hostess a diamond. Duncan, on the other hand, is so kind and generous that he feels it is the best way to show how much he appreciates Macbeth’s hospitality.

48. “ Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives,”

(Macbeth, Act – II, Scene – i, Line – 61)

Before the murder of Duncan, Macbeth is making final judgment about committing mortal sin and Lady Macbeth is not there pushing him, he is doing it by himself. He knows talking about something could never compare to actually doing it. The speech is in the form of a Direct Speech Act where Macbeth realizes he must stop all the talking about killing Duncan, and just do it.

49. “ Th’ attempt and not the deed Confounds us. ”

(Lady Macbeth, Act –II, Scene – ii, Lines –10–11)

In this speech, Lady Macbeth uses a Direct Representative Speech Act. She talks to Macbeth that their murder attempt may be known to the world. The meaning in this Speech is that Lady Macbeth is afraid that the servants may wake up and people would know they are guilty.

50. “This is a sorry sight.”

(Macbeth, Act – II, Scene – ii, Lines – 33– 34)

Macbeth dropped the daggers and peered at his hands in the dim light of his wife’s torch and said this sentence. In this Direct Representative Speech Act Macbeth is speaking directly to his wife. He means that it is a miserable sight. On the other hand, one can easily tell that Macbeth is feeling guilty about what he has done and he is afraid of what has happened. Also, one can tell that Macbeth has not done everything with his own decision.

### 3.4 Conclusion:

*Macbeth* as a Shakespearean tragedy has been explained in the previous lesson 2. *Macbeth* has been termed as a tragedy of ambition by many. To others it is a tragedy of character, and even of will. To yet others it is a tragedy of vividness of imagination and even of fear. In the words of Verity, '*Macbeth*' is the least complex of Shakespeare's tragedies, and is, indeed, marked by sheer simplicity of theme, motive and treatment which consorts with the simple, unsophisticated period of the play, to this extent at least, that ambition is the main spring of its action. Ambition alone calls into operation the forces that bring about the central deed and its train of fearful results"(A. W. Verity: 1902: 26).

On the other hand, the role of the supernatural elements has importance in *Macbeth*. There is a strong role of a supernatural force in *Macbeth*. The witches who had the power to see the future, the ghost and bloody dagger that appeared to Macbeth before going to commit his murder to the king, all these seems to be supernatural. Witches are strongest of the supernatural powers in the play. They made prophesies that effected Macbeth and moved killing the king and his best friend and finally those prophesies caused his death.

In this chapter, the plot of *Macbeth*, *Macbeth* as a Shakespearean tragedy, the role of the supernatural elements, and vivid and detailed analysis of Direct and Indirect Speech Acts in *Macbeth* are presented. Though there are many important and significant dialogues and conversations spread over the play "*Macbeth*", the researcher confined himself to the analysis of 91 Speech Acts from Act I to Act V which are vital in understanding the play in a novel way. Each speech is a gem in itself.

### 3.5 Sample Questions

1. Discuss *Macbeth* as a typical Shakespearean tragedy.
2. Consider *Macbeth* as a tragedy of intrigue.
3. Comment on major themes of *Macbeth*.
4. Explain the differences in the characters of *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*.
5. Trace the sources of conflict in *Macbeth*.
6. Write a note on Shakespeare's use of soliloquies in *Macbeth*.
7. Examine *Banquo* character as an important one in the play *Macbeth*.
8. Was *Macbeth* greedy by nature? Discuss.

### 3.6. Reference Books:

1. Joel Littaner : *Examining Shakespearean Tragedy*
2. Gideon Lester : *The Shape of Tragedy*
3. Barbara A Mowat : *Shakespeare : Macbeth*
4. M.R. Ridley : *The Arden Shakespeare*
5. Louis B. Wright : *The Folger Shakespeare Library*
6. Hazlitt William : *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays.*
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## Lesson 4

# POETRY

### Structure of the lesson:

#### 4.0 Objectives of the lesson

#### 4.1 John Donne – An Introduction

#### 4.2 Metaphysical Poetry

#### 4.3 “For Whom the Bell Toll” – Text

#### 4.4 Paraphrase of the poem

#### 4.5 Critical Summary of For Whom the Bell Toll

#### 4.6 Ben Jonson – An Introduction

#### 4.7 “It is not Growing like a Tree” – Text

#### 4.8 Critical Summary of the poem

#### 4.9 Questions

#### 4.10 Poetry Comprehensions

#### 4.11 Annotation Questions

### 4.0 Objectives of the lesson

- To study poetic forms
- To learn Elizabethan poetry
- To understand Metaphysical poetry
- To learn poetry comprehension

### 4.1 John Donne – An Introduction

**4.1.1 Life History:** Poet Introduction: **John Donne** (22 January 1572 – 31 March 1634) was a metaphysical poet and scholar. He was a soldier, cleric, secretary and an MP. Donne was born on 22 January 1572 into a recusant catholic family. And he was of Welsh descent. His religious and national descent were illegal at that time and he had to avoid the attention of the government. His education began as private education and ended incomplete at University of Cambridge. At Cambridge to take oath of Supremacy was essential to graduate. Because of his Catholicism Donne did not take the oath. As a result, he did not get his university degree. Later, he became a legal student and admitted to Lincoln’s Inn in 1592.

Donne had been a spend thrift and squandered away his good inherited money on women, travelling, hobbies, and literature. He had participated in wars. He accompanied Earl of Essex and Sir Walter Raleigh against Spain troops. He witnessed the loss of San Felipe, Spanish ship. He was good diplomate and held political positions. He was an MP too. His marriage was as sensational as his poetry. His secrete marriage with Egerton’s niece Anne More ruined his career as secretary and he sent to prison. Donne had twelve children in sixteen years of marriage with Anne. Unfortunately, Donne lost three kids before they turned ten years old. Their cremation expenses became too burdensome that Donne thought of committing suicide. Later, he wrote *Bigthanatos* to defend the idea of suicide. Under the grace of royal patronage, he got the position of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London from 1624-1634. It is a sad fact of Donne’s life that he spent his life in poverty. In 1645 Donne received an honorary doctorate in divinity from Cambridge University. Donne died on 31 March 1634 and rests at old St Paul’s Cathedral.

**4.1.2 Literary Career:** Donne poetic output is varied. He wrote sonnets, elegies, love poems, religious poems, Songs, epigrams, Latin translations, Satires, and Sermons.

- a) **Erotic Poetry:** Donne early poetry was erotic. He canonized his unconventional love metaphors in his love poems.

**b) Satire:** Donne's writing is satirical commentary about his times and Elizabethan institutions. Legal system and its corruption, vain courtiers, and substandard poetry of then time are put to gentle and humorous ridicule in his satires. Donne employed images of plague, sickness, manure etc to expose the flaws of times.

**c) Religious Poetry:** His early religious poetry was satirical towards orthodoxy and hypocrisy in the established religious practices. In the last phase of his life his religious poetry became sermonizing. Illness in his old age, deaths of some of his children, wife, and friends gave way to pious tone in him. Examples - "An Anatomy of the World", Holy Sonnet X, "Death Be Not Proud, Death's Duel sermon etc.

## 4.2 Metaphysical Poetry

John Donne is the representative metaphysical poet. The term metaphysical was coined by Samuel Johnson in his work *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets* in the year 1784. Samuel Johnson used the term while commenting on John Dryden's Comment on Donne that "He affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softness of love." Johnson defined the seventeenth century poets as "a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets." George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Andrew Marvell, and Richard Crashaw are the metaphysical poets along with Donne. Romantic writers like Coleridge and Browning and Modern poets and critics like T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis ranked Donne as the leader of the Metaphysical poets. Hence Donne is the master of metaphysical poetry. The following are the features of metaphysical poetry,

**i. Conceit:** Conceit is the main feature of metaphysical poetry. A metaphor that joins diverse ideas into a unified idea is called a Conceit. Imagery is commonly used to express a conceit. Donne is master of metaphysical conceit.

**ii. Tense syntax:** The sentence flow in a metaphysical poetry is tense with compact knitting of images and conceits. At places the poem also tends to be dramatic.

**iii. Witty:** Wit is an amusing quality of metaphysical poetry. Paradoxes, puns, and analogies enrich the wittiness of metaphysical poems.

## 4.3 "For Whom the Bell Tolls" - Text

No man is an island,  
Entire of itself.  
Each is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main.  
If a clod be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less.  
As well as if a promontory were.  
As well as if a manor of thine own  
Or of thine friend's were.  
Each man's death diminishes me,  
For I am involved in mankind.  
Therefore, send not to know  
For whom the bell tolls,  
It tolls for thee.

#### 4.4 Paraphrase of the poem

No man is an island,  
Entire of itself.  
Each is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main.

The opening lines of the *For Whom the Bell Tolls/No Man is an Island* begins with an axiom like statement. Unity of human kind is stressed in these lines. No single man is complete but part of human kind. These lines are best examples of Donne metaphysical conceit. Donne compares human beings, their connection to one another and the rest of the world, to landmasses that are part of a continent.

If a clod be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less.  
As well as if a promontory were.  
As well as if a manor of thine own

Continuing the conceit in the first part of the poem, these lines expand the thought and liking it to loss or death. Every single loss is an injury to the human beings. So, the sentiment that loss of one man is a loss to human race.

Or of thine friend's were.  
Each man's death diminishes me,  
For I am involved in mankind.  
Therefore, send not to know  
For whom the bell tolls,  
It tolls for thee.

The last six lines of the poems Donne relates this sentiment of loss to human beings in the loss of an individual. He says your loss is a loss to your friend. At the end, Donne relates his loss to the holistic loss to the human race

#### 4.5 Critical Summary of the Poem

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* is the most renowned line of Donne's oeuvre of literature. Though we read it as poem, many critics identifies it as prose extract from *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, "Meditation XVII." Donne wrote this in 1624 while he was Dean of St. Paul. This is dedicated to Prince Charles, the son of widowed wife of and Charles.

The bell metaphor is a linking metaphor from the previous Meditation as symbol of death. In that Meditation Donne meditates on death lying seriously ill in a bed. Donne described the tolling of the bell in the near by church as his death bell. In Meditation XVII Donne meditates on the idea of death at the Universal level. Human beings as a whole are taken into the vision of life and death in the poem. Human beings are compared to an island, an organic unit of the continent. Death is the inevitable fact of life. Death steals people. When death comes to a single man it not only takes away a person but injures all the human kind. Therefore, when bell tolls it indicates all the loss and injury of whole human kind.

The organic unity of human kind in life and death like an island in the continent reflects Donne's Catholic vision of life. In Catholicism church is seen as common identity of Catholics when a child is baptized it becomes a unit of the church. This Catholic vision of life and humanity has transformed into secular image of continent and island in Donne's imagination.

The sub theme of the poem is the impossibility of solitude in human life. To have spiritual connect is impulsive reality of human existence. So, when the death bell tolls for a man it means that



it tolls for everyone. The poetic technique employed are metaphysical conceit, enjambment, metaphor, and anaphora.

#### 4.6 Ben Jonson – An Introduction

Benjamin Jonson (c. 44 June 1572 – c. 46 August 1637) was an English playwright and poet. He second popular Elizabethan playwright after William Shakespeare. He popularized Comedy of Humours. Jonson was a posthumous child, born a month after his father's death. He had Scottish inheritance. Jonson is a man of letters graduated from the University of Cambridge. He is classicist as a dramatist. Jonson carved a unique class of satire in drama. He greatly contributed to the sophistication of English dramatic art and stage its formative years. As poet too his influence is everlasting on English poetry. He is admired by Caroline era writers. His most famous works are *Every Man in His Humour*<sup>[3]</sup> (1598), *Volpone, or The Fox* (c. 1606), *The Alchemist* (1610) and *Bartholomew Fair* (1614). His lyrics and epigrammatic poetry as popular as his satirical plays. and for his lyric and epigrammatic poetry.

#### 4.7 “It is not Growing like a Tree” - Text

It is not growing like a tree

In bulk, doth make man better be;  
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,  
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:

A lily of a day

Is fairer far in May,

Although it fall and die that night—

It was the plant and flower of Light.

In small proportions we just beauties see;  
And in short measures life may perfect be.

#### 4.8 Critical Summary of “It is not Growing like a Tree”

“It is not Growing like a Tree” is a lyrical extract from the poem *Noble Nature*. Lyric is a short and tense poem. Lyrical is of Greek origin. In Greek language lyric is a composition sang in single voice to the accompaniment of lyre. In later lyrics musical impact is generated from literary devices like alliteration. Usually, lyric focuses on single emotion or feeling of the poem. Ben Jonson's “It is not Growing like a Tree” is a perfect lyric, a brief musical poem dedicated single feeling of the poet.

The lyric is sublime in thought. The poet beautifully utters the fulfilling nature of qualitative nature of humble and short life than a grand and long life. Oak is a grand tree with long life span. But it does not benefit anybody during its life span except serving its own grandeur. It comes to public use when it falls and becomes a log. The culminative impact of so called grand people is nothing but maintain the grand image of them.

Jonson contrasts this worthless life with humble life of common people. The image of grandness in Oak tree is juxtaposed against lily. Lily is a delicate, pure looking flower with short life span. The aesthetic pleasure it caters to the world is memorable. Similarly, the contribution of humble people to life is ominous than the grand people. Ben Jonson's classical temperament is evident when this poem stresses on simplicity and humbleness of life. His sentiment is against the Renaissance temperament for grandness and everlasting thirst for more. The poem sings the fulfilment in simple and humble. Therefore, this lyrical poem is universal in appeal as it underlines the important two main morals of life live while giving life to many other. Ben Jonson votes for giving humble short life like lily. He rejects three hundred years long grand self-serving life like oak.

### 4.9 Questions

4. What are the salient features of Metaphysical Poetry?
2. John Donne is the representative Metaphysical poet. Defend the statement by critically analysing his literary career.
3. What is the Classical note in Ben Johnson's "It is not growing like a Tree."

### 4.10 Poetry Comprehension

a) No man is an island,  
Entire of itself.  
Each is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main.  
If a clod be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less.  
As well as if a promontory were.  
As well as if a manor of thine own  
Or of thine friend's were.  
Each man's death diminishes me,  
For I am involved in mankind.  
Therefore, send not to know  
For whom the bell tolls,  
It tolls for thee.

Questions:

4. Does poet mean by calling a man an island in the first line of the poem?
2. What are the thematic conceits in the poem?
3. What are the images in the poem that indicate death?
4. What is the tone of the poem?
5. Is there an autobiographical note in the poem?

Answers:

4. The poet means every man is an isolated unit of the whole idea of human kind.
2. The thematic conceits are island and continent.
3. Clod, promontory, manor, and bell tolls are the images of death in the poem.
4. The tone of the poem is philosophical and meditative.
5. The poem does have a autobiographical note. It is the result of poets meditative thoughts about his illness and death.

b) It is not growing like a tree  
In bulk, doth make man better be;  
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,  
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:  
A lily of a day  
Is fairer far in May,  
Although it fall and die that night—  
It was the plant and flower of Light.  
In small proportions we just beauties see;  
And in short measures life may perfect be.

Questions:

1. What does the oak symbolize in the poem?
2. What does the lily symbolize in the poem?
3. What is the message of the poem?
4. What is the measure for perfect life according to the poem?

Answers:

1. Oak is the symbol of long, grand and self-serving life.
2. Lily is symbol of short, humble and fulfilling life.
3. Qualitative humble life is better than quantitative long life.
4. Joy we have and give to others is the measure for perfect life.

#### 4.11 Annotation Questions

1. No man is an island,  
Entire of itself.  
Each is a piece of the continent,  
A part of the main.
2. It is not growing like a tree  
    In bulk, doth make man better be;  
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,  
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:
3. If a clod be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less.  
As well as if a promontory were.  
As well as if a manor of thine own  
Or of thine friend's were.
4. A lily of a day  
    Is fairer far in May,  
    Although it fall and die that night—  
    It was the plant and flower of Light.
5. Each man's death diminishes me,  
For I am involved in mankind.  
Therefore, send not to know  
For whom the bell tolls,  
It tolls for thee.
6. In small proportions we just beauties see;  
And in short measures life may perfect be.

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## Lesson - 5

### DONNE : 'THE CANONIZATION'

#### Structure:

- 5.1 Objectives
- 5.2 Introduction: the poet and his works
- 5.3 The Text
- 5.4 Glossary
- 5.5 Analysis of the Text
- 5.6 Critical evaluation
- 5.7 Summary
- 5.8 Passages for comprehension
- 5.9 Sample questions
- 5.10. References

#### 5.1 Objectives

After the study of the lesson the student will have an idea about

- a) Donne, the poet
- b) his love toward his mistress
- c) the metaphysical features in Donne's poetry

#### 5.2 Introduction: The poet and his works

John Donne was born in 1572. He was the son of John Donne, a prosperous London iron monger. His father died when he was three or four years old. At the age of twelve years, John Donne matriculated from Hart Hall in 1584. In 1591 he was admitted as a law-student at Thavies Inn. His Catholic faith debarred him from taking a degree, however long he might stay at the university. Prof. Leishman says that Donne must have spent the years 1588-91 in travel. From Thavies Inn he was transferred to Lincoln's inn in 1592. From that year until 1596 he studied not only law but also divinity. These four or five years he led an intense and varied life making new acquaintances, writing poetry, going to plays and falling in and out of life. His brother died in 1593. Later he bent towards the Protestant faith. In 1597 he was appointed as private secretary to the Lord Keeper. At the end of 1601 he married Anne More secretly. This single event changed the whole course of Donne's life. He was sent to prison. On his release from prison he fought a long legal battle to obtain possession of his wife. By the time the pair was united, he was reduced to poverty. By 1621 he became the dean of St.Paul's. Donne's prose sermons as a priest too have become as famous as his earlier love poems. He died in 1631.

Donne has left behind him only five formal satirical poems, all belonging to the early years of his poetical career. In Donne's poetry satirical poems is everywhere. Moreover his satires are notorious for their harshness, unevenness and unpleasantness. His 'Songs and Sonnets, the Elegies, or the later religious poetry contain satire.

#### 5.3. The Text: The Canonization

- John Donne

For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,  
Or chide my palsy, or my gout,  
My five grey hairs, or ruined fortune flout,  
With wealth your state, your mind with arts improve,  
Take you a course, get you a place,  
Observe his Honour, or his Grace,

Or the Kings real, or his stamped face  
 Contemplate; what you will, approve,  
 So you will let me love.  
 Alas, alas, who's injured by my love ?  
 What merchant's ships have my sighs drowned ?  
 Who says my tears have overflowed his ground  
 When did my colds a forward spring remove ?  
 When did the heats which my veins fill  
 Add one more to the plaguy bill ?  
 Soldiers find wars, and lawyers find out still  
 Litigious men, which quarrels move,  
 Though she and I do love.

Call us what you will, we are made such by love;  
 Call her one, mee another fly,  
 We are tapers too, and at our own cost die,  
 And we in us find the Eagle and the Dove,  
 The Phoenix riddle hath more wit  
 By us; we two being one, are it,  
 So to one neutral thing both sexes fit,  
 We die and rise the same, and prove  
 Mysterious by this love.

Wee can die by it, if not live by love,  
 And if unfit for tombs and hearse  
 Our legend be, it will be fit for verse;  
 And if no piece of chronicle we prove,  
 We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;  
 As well a well-wrought urne becomes  
 The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,  
 And by these hymn, all shall approve  
 Us canonized for love:  
 And thus invoke us; 'You whom reverend love  
 Made one another's hermitage;  
 You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage;  
 Who did the whole world's soul contract, and drove  
 Into the glasses of your eyes  
 (So made such mirrors, and such spies,  
 That they did all to you epitomize),  
 Countries, towns, courts: beg from above  
 A pattern of your love!'

#### 5.4 Glossary

The title: the Roman Catholic Church keeps a canon (a list) of men and women who are authoritatively pronounced as saints after death, in recognition of the pious life they led. The act of pronouncement is called canonization. But the saints of this poem are not canonized by the church for righteous life but by humanity for enjoying perfect love and finding tranquil joy in it.

palsy	:	loss of nervous power in limbs
gout	:	pain in joints
five gray hairs	:	baldness and old age

ruined fortune	:	it is a personal reference to Donne's married life
course	:	voyage
a place	:	an office of importance
observe	:	pay respect to
kings real	:	the face of the king printed on gold coins (Pursuit of wealth)
approve	:	allow
litigious men	:	men with an inclination to engage themselves in law suit
which	:	who
move	:	excite
call us what you will	:	call us by any name you please
fly	:	any winged creature, here means 'moth'
tapers	:	burning candles
the eagle	:	represents strength
the dove	:	symbolizes meakness and purity
the phoenix riddle	:	the phoenix was the legendary bird which was the only one of its kind in the world; it lived for several centuries and burnt itself to ashes from which it rose again without any change.
we two being one	:	separate only in bodies but one in the soul
one neutral thing	:	a bird of no sex
both sexes fit	:	we two belong to different sexes but both our souls accord with the bird and like it, will rise unchanged after death.
hearse	:	here the temple-shaped structure of wood, used in royal funerals, which often had poems pinned on it
legend	:	history
piece	:	masterpiece
prove	:	establish the truth of
well wrought	:	excellently designed and caved
approve	:	pronounce
canonized for love	:	there are other pious people and martyrs who are declared saints for the righteous life they led. We too will be pronounced
thus invoke us	:	others implore our help, in the following way
reverend love	:	highly respected love (we respected no law but the law of love)
made ....hermitage	:	We are like two hermits who withdrew from the world completely to live in mutual love. I am a hermit and she is my hermitage; she is a hermit and I am her hermitage.
hermitage	:	the humble cottage of a hermit
You... rage	:	you found tranquil joy in love; we know only the fever and restlessness caused by it
a pattern	:	a model; an example

### 5.5 Analysis of the Text

The poem begins abruptly in the characteristic manner of Donne. "For God's sake hold your tongue and let me love". Donne advises his friend to run after wealth, improve his mind by pursuing arts. He can go on a voyage or try for an exalted office in king's court and obtain his favour. As a result he can accumulate gold coins which bear the king's face. He may rebuke Donne for his palsy, gout or old age. Love is as natural to him as the diseases or old age. Hence there is no meaning at all in criticising him for his love. Donne requests his friend not to interfere in his love affair. Donne gives argument after argument in support of his point of view.

No one is harmed by his love. No one has been injured by his love. His sighs never created a storm that would drown the ships of a merchant. His tears have never flooded the ground of any person. No spring is deferred on account of his colds. The heat of his veins never caused even a single death. The soldiers still engage themselves in wars, and the lawyers are able to find litigants. No extraordinary thing has happened though she and he love each other. There is no point at all in having any objection for his love.

Donne says that his friend is free to give them any name he pleases. Their natural love has entitled them to that name. Theirs is a true love. Physically they may be two but spiritually they are one. They are at the same time flies as well as burning candles. They are eagle and dove to each other. The legend of the phoenix is true in their case. They are like the phoenix having both the sexes and they too will rise unchanged after death. Their resurrection is more mysterious than the rebirth of the phoenix.

When their love does not permit them to live, they can at least die happily in each other's love. Their love is certainly a fit theme for poetry. Their love may not make history, but they live in many sonnets. These sonnets will be as worthy a movement as a rich cremation, large tombs and artistic urns. These love sonnets proclaim them the saints of love.

Once they are proclaimed saints, people will invoke them and say that they have led the life of a hermit. They have withdrawn from the world and found a peaceful abode in each other. Thus they have found tranquil joy in love. They have found the whole world summed up for them in each other, and mirrored in each other's eyes. They have gazed into each other's eyes and were lost in absorption. And in mutual adoration they have found all the pleasures that others crave for in countries, towns and princely circles. So people will plead them to entreat God on their behalf to bless them with the model of such love they have set.

## 5.6 Critical evaluation

Chronologically Donne belonged to the Elizabethan age and temperamentally to the seventeenth century, though with a difference. As a youth Donne wrote satirical and love poetry by turns. His 'Sonnets' are no sonnets in the traditional manner. The diction is novel and stress and intonation are imposed on us as we read. Passionate feeling and logical argument are fused together. Donne's conceits are so peculiar that they are farfetched and travel with sudden swiftness from the mundane to the supra-mundane, from natural and physical sciences to philosophy and theology. Most of Donne's poetry is concerned with himself in relation to women and with himself in relation to God.

Donne's poetry was a revolt against the Elizabethan conventions. As Fausset observes "he spurned the dainty elegance of the Elizabethan song-writers, the drowsy enchantments of Spenser, the courtly appeals of Sidney, the pastoral plaintiveness of Greene".

### Donne as a Metaphysical poet:

Dryden first used the word "Metaphysical" in connection with Donne's poetry and wrote that "Donne affects the metaphysics". Dr. Johnson confirmed the judgement of Dryden. Ever since the word 'Metaphysical' has been used for Donne and his followers. But Donne's poetry is not metaphysical in its true sense. A metaphysical poem is always long while Donne's poems are all short. His poetry does not expound any philosophical system of the universe, rather it is as much concerned with his emotions and personal experiences. Donne's poetry is not metaphysical as far as the content is concerned. But as Grierson puts it, "Donne is metaphysical not only by virtue of his scholasticism but by his deep reflective interest in the experiences of which his poetry is the

expression, psychological curiosity with which he writes of love and religion". Donne's poetry may be called "metaphysical" only in as far as its technique or style is concerned. It is heavily overloaded with 'conceits' which may be defined as the excessive use of the most farfetched, remote and unfamiliar sources. Legouis rightly remarks, "He will have nothing to do with the easy and familiar mythological imagery; he turns out the company of gods and goddesses, and rejects the spoils of Greek and Latin poetry. "He uses the natural language of men," not when they are 'emotionally excited,' but when they are engaged in commerce or in scientific speculations

### **Metaphysical element in 'Canonization' :**

'The Canonization' is one of the best known poems of John Donne. It is a love poem expressing Donne's 'positive attitude' towards love, an attitude of satisfaction and absorption in a love relationship. Critics have taken it to be an expression of his love for Anne More whom he loved dearly. It is written in the form of dramatic monologue addressed to a silent listener who tries to dissuade him from his love. Metaphysical poetry is characterized by the use of 'conceit'. In 'The Canonization', the dramatic and abrupt opening is in itself a conceit :

"For God sake hold your tongue, and let me Love". The string of rhetorical questions in the second stanza which asks whether anyone is injured by his love, whether any merchant ships are drowned by his sighs, whether the ground is flooded with the tears shed by him, whether his love fever has spread death to others or whether his colds have postponed the spring is a very fantastic thought indeed. The whole of the third stanza is a very fine example of the over-ingenuous thought of Donne. The lovers are turned into tapers and flies. The lovers are also like the phoenix:

"We die and rise the same, and prove  
Mysterious by this love".

In 'The Canonization' where Donne speaks of the 'phoenix riddle', the image remains a riddle to the readers and unless one probes deep into the recesses of the poet's soul one would never get at the spirit of the lines.

The dramatic opening, the use of conceits, the wit expressed in 'kings reall or his stamped face' are all the characteristics of Donne's poems.

### **5.7. Summary**

'The Canonization' is a very good dramatic monologue of John Donne. He addresses some one who appears to chide him for his palsie or gout. He tells the absentee fool to do whatever he pleases, on condition that he holds his tongue and permits the poet to love. Donne advises him to go about on his own pursuits – he may gather wealth, go on voyage, get place in the king's court, amass gold coins with the face of the king. The affair of the lover does not harm anyone. The poet and his beloved would turn into tapers and flies by turns and consume away in their mutual love of fame. Their legend might not become a part of history but certainly becomes immortal through poetry. They will be canonized for their love and become St. John Donne and St. Ann Donne. Then people on earth would invoke them to beg of heaven a pattern of their love.

### **5.8 Passages for Comprehension.**

1. "For God sake hold your tongue, and let me love,  
or child my palsie, or my gout  
My five gray haire, or ruined fortune flout".
  - a) Who does 'your' refer to?
  - b) Who does 'me' refer to?



- c) What are 'palsie' and 'gout'?
- d) What is meant by 'five gray haire's'?
- e) What is meant by 'ruined fortune'?
2. 'The phoenix riddle hath more wit  
By us, we two being one, are it,  
So, to one neutral I thing both sexes fit  
We dye and rise the same, and prove  
Mysterious by this love' .
- a) What is a 'phoenix'?
- b) Who does 'we' refer to?
- c) How are the lovers?
- d) How are they described?
- e) Why does the poet say that they 'prove mysterious by this love'?
3. 'We can die by it, if not live by love,  
And if unfit for tombes and hearse  
Our legend bee, it will be fit for verse' .
- a) What does 'it' refer to?
- b) What does the poet say about his love?
- c) What is meant by 'unfit for tombes and hearse'?
- d) Where will their love be recorded?
- e) What is the mood of the poet?
4. 'And thus invoke us; You whom reverend love  
Made one another's hermitage;  
You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage.
- a) Who will invoke the lovers?
- b) What did the lovers do?
- c) What did the lovers become?
- d) What was love for the lovers?
- e) 'That now is rage' --- Explain.

### 5.9 Sample Questions

1. Bring out the theme in 'Canonization'
2. What metaphysical elements do you find in Donne's 'Canonization'.

### 5.10. References

1. Grierson, The Metaphysical Poets.
2. Grierson & Brad brook, A History of English Poetry.

### Answers for the comprehension questions.

1. a). The poet's friend, the silent listener  
b). The poet, John Donne.  
c). Palsie is loss of nervous power in limbs and gout is pain in joints.  
d). Baldness and old age.  
e). Reference to Donne's personal life. His hasty and thoughtless elopement with Ann More brought about his ruin.
2. a) The Phoenix is a legendary bird. It is believed that it burns itself to ashes from which it rises again without any change.

- b) The poet and his beloved
  - c) Physically they may be two but spiritually they are one
  - d) They are like the bird of no sex having both the sexes in it.
  - e) They die but rise again like the phoenix and prove mysterious.
- 3.
- a) Love
  - b) If they are unable to live by their love they will die
  - c) People may think that their love is unfit for the construction of tombs or monuments after their death.
  - d) Their love will be recorded in verse
  - e) The poet is confident that their love will remain permanent in literature even after their death.
- 4.
- a) People
  - b) they made love respected and revered
  - c) they became one another's hermitage
  - d) love was peace for them
  - e) people will say that they know only the fever and restlessness caused by love.

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## Lesson 6

### FRANCIS BACON ESSAYS

#### Structure of the lesson

#### 6.0 Objects of the lesson

#### 6.1 Author's Introduction

#### 6.2 Essay

#### 6.3 Aphoristic Essay

##### 6.3.1 Epigrammatic Style

##### 6.3.2 Antithetical Statement

##### 6.3.3 Multi-Prong

##### 6.3.4 A Rhetorician

##### 6.3.5 Imagery and Analogy

##### 6.3.6 Allusions and Quotations

##### 6.3.7 Flexibility

##### 6.3.8 Wit

##### 6.3.9 Obscurity

#### 6.4 "Of Superstitions" Text

#### 6.5 Critical Summary of "Of Superstition"

#### 6.6 "Of Parents and Children" Text

#### 6.7 Critical Summary of "Of Parents and Children"

#### 6.8 Bacon as an Essayist

##### 6.8.1 Reasons for His Popular Appeal

##### 6.8.2 Treasure House of Worldly Wisdom

##### 6.8.3 Dispersed Meditation

##### 6.8.4 Bacon as a Moralistic essayist

#### 6.9 Conclusion

#### 6.10 Questions

#### 6.11 Annotation Questions

#### 6.0 Objects of the lesson

- To introduce the literary genre – Essay
- To examine Francis Bacon as Father of English Essay
- To learn Aphoristic style of Essay
- To know the Elizabethan social and cultural conditions

#### 6.1 Author's Introduction

**Francis Bacon** (22 January 1561- 9 April 1626) was an Elizabethan empiricist, philosopher, and essayist. Besides being an intellectual figure, he was also a statesman. Bacon was a 6th Viscount St Alban and served as Attorney General and as Lord Chancellor of England. As an empiricist who dedicated his life to introduce scientific temperament into the middle-aged English world rooted in dogma of theology. He is called the father of empiricism. Francis Bacon was a patron of libraries and developed a system for cataloguing books under three categories — history, poetry, and philosophy. Some of the important works of Bacon are *The Advancement and Proficiency of Learning Divine and Human* (1606), *Novum Organum* (1620), *New Atlantis* (1626) etc.

#### 6.2 Essay

A composition of prose of moderate length is called Essay. The term essay is derived from the French term "essayer" which means "to try" or "to attempt" Dr. Samuel Johnson, seventeenth century English writer and lexicographer defined Essay as "a loose sally of the mind, an irregular, indigested piece, not a regular and orderly performance." The epistles of Roman writers Cicero and

Seneca are the earliest essays. Michel de Montaigne, sixteenth century French writer, developed the proper essay. Hence Montaigne is the originator of the Essay. Thomas Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* and John Lyly's *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* are the first forms of English Essay. But it is Francis Bacon who has given proper structure and course to English essay. So, he is acclaimed as the Father of English Essay. Any topic in the universe ranging from morals to personal observations, space, etc., can be the subject of an essay.

### 6.3 Aphoristic Essay

Francis Bacon owes his everlasting fame more to his literary style. He is renowned as the father of Aphoristic Style. The prose counsel of Bacon is defined as aphoristic style of essay. The features of Aphoristic style are like the below,

**6.3.1 Epigrammatic Style:** The aphoristic style is the style that is terse, compact, and epigrammatic. Many sentences from Bacon's essay are quoted as proverbs.

Example: A lie faces God and Shrinks from man. (Of Truth)

A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure. (Of Truth)

**6.3.2 Antithetical Statements:** The force of the aphoristic statements depends upon stylistic devices like Antithesis. Antithetical statement is a statement where two opposite ideas are balanced in a statement to convey a meaning in a powerful manner.

Example: Studies serve for delight, for ornament and for ability.

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.

**6.3.3 Multi-Prong:** Balance is one of the key techniques in Elizabethan Prose. Bacon weighs the pros and cons of the title subject of his essay. So, he needs balanced sentences. Bacon spices it up by employing more than two thoughts in a sentence. The balancing of more than two thoughts in a sentence is called Multi-Prong.

Example: Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.

Read not to contradict, nor to believe, but to weigh and consider.

**6.3.4 A Rhetorician:** The rhetorician in Bacon has led to the creation of the short sentence with rhetorical edge. For example, he opens the essay "of Truth" with a question "what is Truth?" which is a rhetorical quality. The question is followed up by an anecdote from the life of Jesus.

**6.3.5 Imagery and Analogy:** There is a constant use of imagery and analogy in Bacon's essays.

Example: "We see in needle-works and embroideries, it is more pleasing to have a lively work, upon a sad and solemn ground, than to have a dark and melancholy work, upon a lightsome ground;" (Of Truth)

Truth is a naked and open daylight. (of Truth)

**6.3.6 Allusions and Quotations:** Bacon is a learned man. He uses his vast learning to quote from various different areas of knowledge like classical fables, the Bible, History, the ancient Greek and Roman writers and the familiar collection of proverbs.

Example: Bacon refers to Jestings Pilate in the essay "Of Truth." He refers to Solomon in the essays "Of Revenge" and "Of Adversity."

**6.3.7 Flexibility:** Though Bacon's style is heavy with learning, yet it is more flexible than any of his predecessors and contemporaries. The sentences are short and with this shortness came lucidity. The grammatical structure is sometimes loose.

**6.3.8 Wit:** There is no humor in Bacon's essays, but there is ample of wit. He is a master of the skillful use of words. He could manipulate words cleverly to delight the reader:

Example: "By pains men come to greater pains." (Of Adversity)

"Through indignities men rise to dignities." (Of Adversity)

**6.3.9 Obscurity:** Bacon on the whole is not difficult. But obscurity arises for two reasons. The first is because of his Latinism like- Dolours (pain), plausible (praiseworthy); foreseen (provided); creature (created tiling) etc. The other is occasional, too much of condensation of meaning in terse sentences leads to obscurity.

Example: "Secrecy in suits is a great mean of obtaining." (Of Suitors)

#### 6.4. "Of Superstition" Text

IT were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of him. For the one is unbelief, the other is contumely; and certainly superstition is the reproach of the Deity. Plutarch saith well to that purpose: *Surely (saith he) I had rather a great deal men should say there was no such man at all as Plutarch, than that they should say that there was one Plutarch that would eat his children as soon as they were born; as the poets speak of Saturn.* And as the contumely is greater towards God, so the danger is greater towards men. Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men. Therefore atheism did never perturb states; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no further: and we see the times inclined to atheism (as the time of Augustus Cæsar) were civil times. But superstition hath been the confusion of many states, and bringeth in a new *primum mobile*, that ravisheth all the spheres of government. The master of superstition is the people; and in all superstition wise men follow fools; and arguments are fitted to practice, in a reversed order. It was gravely said by some of the prelates in the Council of Trent, where the doctrine of the Schoolmen bare great sway, *that the Schoolmen were like astronomers, which did feign eccentrics and epicycles, and such engines of orbs, to save the phenomena; though they knew there were no such things;* and in like manner, that the Schoolmen had framed a number of subtle and intricate axioms and theorems, to save the practice of the church. The causes of superstition are: pleasing and sensual rites and ceremonies; excess of outward and pharisaical holiness; over-great reverence of traditions, which cannot but load the church; the stratagems of prelates for their own ambition and lucre; the favoring too much of good intentions, which openeth the gate to conceits and novelties; the taking an aim at divine matters by human, which cannot but breed mixture of imaginations; and, lastly, barbarous times, especially joined with calamities and disasters. Superstition, without a veil, is a deformed thing; for as it addeth deformity to an ape to be so like a man, so the similitude of superstition to religion makes it the more deformed. And as wholesome meat corrupteth to little worms, so good forms and orders corrupt into a number of petty observances. There is a superstition in avoiding superstition, when men think to do best if they go furthest from the superstition formerly received; therefore care would be had that (as if fareth in ill purgings) the good be not taken away with the bad; which commonly is done when the people is the reformer.

#### 6.5 Critical Summary of "Of Superstition"

This essay is part of Bacon's *Essay or Counsels, Civil, and Moral*. Bacon analyses the religious dogma in superstition and its regressive nature on human minds. The essay appeals for a superstition free broad human mind.

**a. Atheism is better than Superstition:** According to Bacon being an atheist is better than being a Superstitious person. An atheist does not believe in God and does not respect Him. But a superstitious person believes in God by disrespects Him with his dogmatic ignorance. Atheism inculcates sense, philosophy, natural piety, laws, outward moral, virtue, and reputation. On the other end superstition turns people into fools.

**b. Ruins of Superstition:** Atheism helps people be civil and makes states stable. Contrary to this superstition takes control of the state. Wise people follow fools in the world of superstition. As such it becomes hardly possible to run state in rational manner. Bacon refers to "Council of Trent" to say that medieval age teachers used explain heavenly bodies. He calls it a false proposition. Those teachers misinterpreted and ruined the doctrine of religion.

**c. Reasons for the Growth of Superstition:** Bacon explains the reason for the growth of the Superstition as the follows,

- i. Most superstitions are delightful
- ii. Blind faith in religion
- iii. Slavish obedience to forefathers' customs
- iv. Personal interest of the people create false traditions and follow them
- v. "favouring too much of good intentions."
- vi. Promotion of superstition is rampant because some people explain heavenly aspects with human affairs.
- vii. Some people attribute their tragedies to irrational fate or evil eye.

**d. Not all Customs superstitions:** People must make a clear distinction between rational customs and dogmatic superstitions. Thus, people can be reformative.

## 6.6 Of Parents and Children

THE JOYS of parents are secret; and so are their griefs and fears. They cannot utter the one; nor they will not utter the other. Children sweeten labors; but they make misfortunes more bitter. They increase the cares of life; but they mitigate the remembrance of death. The perpetuity by generation is common to beasts; but memory; merit, and noble works are proper to men. And surely a man shall see the noblest works and foundations have proceeded from childless men; which have sought to express the images of their minds, where those of their bodies have failed. So the care of posterity is most in them that have no posterity. They that are the first raisers of their houses are most indulgent towards their children; beholding them as the continuance not only of their kind but of their work; and so both children and creatures.

The difference in affection of parents towards their several children is many times unequal; and sometimes unworthy; especially in the mother; as Solomon saith, *A wise son rejoiceth the father, but an ungracious son shames the mother*. A man shall see, where there is a house full of children, one or two of the eldest respected, and the youngest made wantons; but in the midst some that are as it were forgotten, who many times nevertheless prove the best. The illiberality of parents in allowance towards their children is an harmful error; makes them base; acquaints them with

shifts; makes them sort with mean company; and makes them surfeit more when they come to plenty. And therefore the proof is best, when men keep their authority towards their children, but not their purse. Men have a foolish manner (both parents and schoolmasters and servants) in creating and breeding an emulation between brothers during childhood, which many times sorteth to discord when they are men, and disturbeth families. The Italians make little difference between children and nephews or near kinsfolks; but so they be of the lump, they care not though they pass not through their own body. And, to say truth, in nature it is much a like matter; insomuch that we see a nephew sometimes resembleth an uncle or a kinsman more than his own parent; as the blood happens. Let parents choose betimes the vocations and courses they mean their children should take; for then they are most flexible; and let them not too much apply themselves to the disposition of their children, as thinking they will take best to that which they have most mind to. It is true, that if the affection or aptness of the children be extraordinary, then it is good not to cross it; but generally the precept is good, *optimum elige, suave et facile illud faciet consuetudo* [choose the best—custom will make it pleasant and easy]. Younger brothers are commonly fortunate, but seldom or never where the elder are disinherited.

### 6.7 Critical Summary of “Of Parents and Children”

Bacon assumes the voice of a counselor in this essay to counsel the parents of all generations about correct parenting.

- a. Joys and Fears are Secrete:** The joys and fears of parents are secret as parents could not express them out.
- b. Children make the labour sweeter:** The parents feel the labours sweeter because they are doing it for their children.
- c. Misfortunes become bitter:** Parents suffer the misfortunes of the family because children being part of the family suffer too. And the suffering their children pains the parents the most.
- d. Parents Continue after Death:** Parents reel under anxiety. But their anxiety is compensated by the fact that they continue after the death through their children.
- e. Human Species is Unique:** Reproduction perpetuates every species. However, memory, intellectual achievement, are special qualities of human species.
- f. Childless men are noblest men:** childless men see the whole public as their children. So, they see their continuity after death in securing future welfare of the public. Hence, they do the noblest service to the public.
- g. Parents are discriminative:** Often fathers and mothers have their favorite children. Bacon warns that it is not desirable. Bacon quotes Solomon that those intelligent sons are pride to the fathers while the spoiled child is shame to the mother.
- h. Middle child ignored:** In large families either eldest children or youngest children are pampered and cared more. The middle children may get neglected. But the ignored middle children grow up to be the best.
- i. Pocket allowance should not be miserly:** When parents do not give reasonable pocket allowance to the children, the children may become useless. The children borrow money

and fall in bad company. Or they fail to manage the inherited wealth in the future. Therefore, the parents must be reasonable in giving the pocket allowance to their children.

**j. Parent's bias might bring disharmony:** Parents must be careful they do not cause disharmony among brothers. The bias of parents sows mutual hatred among the parents that lead to disharmony in the family coming future.

**k. Nephews are more of a relationship than sons:** In Italian families, nephews are loved equal to or more than sons. For nephews look alike the uncles.

**l. Parents role in selecting the profession of their Children:** Bacon recommends that the parents must select the professions for their children. If children are gifted and passionate about their career options, the parents must encourage to pursue their options.

**m. Younger Brothers are Handworkers:** Bacon concludes his observation on parents and children by noting that younger brothers are hard workers and accumulate wealth.

## 6.8 Bacon as an Essayist

Bacon's essays have charming universal appeal. A good number of his essays are written for the benefit of kings, rulers, courtiers, and statesmen – Of Seditious and Troubles, Of Empire, Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates etc. But the popular interests of the common man are the subjects of the majority of his essays – Of Truth, Of Marriage, Of Studies, Of Parents and Children etc. The second class of his essays make him come home to men's business and bosoms.

**6.8.1 Reasons for His Popular Appeal:** The following are the reasons for the popular appeal of Bacon's essays,

**1. Ripe thoughts on general topics:** Bacon's essays are neither abstract nor metaphysical. They are wise and experienced counsels. They are general or natural truths about life.

**2. Illustrative arguments:** Bacon does not leave the reader with his arguments on the topic of his essays. He gives appropriate similes, metaphors, and quotations so that his arguments are better explained.

**3. Judicious use of Morality:** Though morality bores people, the apt doses of morality in his essays pleasingly engages the readers. By reading the essays, readers welcome the moral preaching in his essays as they feel being turned into wiser and nobler.

**4. Condensed form:** The pithy and condensed form of essay is another reason for its universal appeal. The readers can swallow the essays like light moral deserts.

**6.8.2 Treasure House of Worldly Wisdom:** Essays of Bacon are a blend of philosophizing, moralizing, and worldly wisdom. Bacon is more a man of the world than a philosopher in his essays. Bacon described his essays as "counsels, civil and moral." "It is the art of success among men which is the subject of Bacon's essays." "Bacon is not so much concerned with moral values as with the art of getting on in life." The essays of Bacon constitute a handbook of practical wisdom. "Bacon's essays are concerned only with worldly wisdom and the art of success." Bacon is often guided by considerations of utility and progress, rather than by high moral principles. His essays show his wide experience of life.



**6.8.3 “Dispersed meditations:”** Bacon was fully justified in describing his essays as “dispersed meditation.” He also described his essays as brief notes set down rather significantly than curiously, using the word “curiously” to mean elaborately. Indeed, Bacon regarded the essay as detached thoughts. He does not give us an exhaustive discussion of the subject that he chooses for a particular essay, but goes on jotting down his thoughts as they come. There is no systematic development of ideas in the essays. Almost every essay is a miscellaneous collection of ideas relating to a Particular subject.

**6.8.4 Bacon as a Moralist essayist:** Bacon in his essays. His essays abound in moral precepts. He lays down valuable guidelines for human conduct. He urges human beings to follow the right path in every field of life – political, social, domestic etc.

### 6.9 Conclusion:

The style of Bacon is not the personal, and chatty style of the subjective essayist like Montaigne or Lamb. This aphoristic style of Bacon lends charm to his essays. He polished and chiseled his expressions to suit to his subject. With him, English prose definitely took a long leap forward. Reynolds, praising Bacon’s style in the essays, “such expressions are the works of a great writer at his best, the highest efforts of an art that defies analysis, simple, unaffected, sublime,…”

### 6.10 Questions

1. They come home to men’s business and bosoms.” Refer to Francis Bacon’s essays prescribed to you and illustrate the statement.
2. Critically comment on the Francis Bacon’s Aphoristic Essay style.
3. How apt is the title of Francis Bacon’s Essays “Counsel civil and moral?”
4. Justify Francis Bacon’s comment on his essay as “dispersed meditation by referring to the essay included in your syllabus.
6. To what extent is Bacon a moralist in his essays?
6. How far is Francis Bacon’s influence due to the charm of his style?

### 6.11 Annotation Questions

1. IT were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of him. For the one is unbelief, the other is contumely; and certainly superstition is the reproach of the Deity. Plutarch saith well to that purpose: *Surely* (saith he) *I had rather a great deal men should say there was no such man at all as Plutarch, than that they should say that there was one Plutarch that would eat his children as soon as they were born; as the poets speak of Saturn.*
2. They cannot utter the one; nor they will not utter the other. Children sweeten labors; but they make misfortunes more bitter. They increase the cares of life; but they mitigate the remembrance of death. The perpetuity by generation is common to beasts; but memory; merit, and noble works are proper to men.
3. And as the contumely is greater towards God, so the danger is greater towards men. Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men.
4. So the care of posterity is most in them that have no posterity. They that are the first raisers of their houses are most indulgent towards their children; beholding them as the continuance not only of their kind but of their work; and so both children and creatures.

5. Therefore atheism did never perturb states; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no further: and we see the times inclined to atheism (as the time of Augustus Cæsar) were civil times.

6. Solomon saith, *A wise son rejoiceth the father, but an ungracious son shames the mother.* A man shall see, where there is a house full of children, one or two of the eldest respected, and the youngest made wantons; but in the midst some that are as it were forgotten, who many times nevertheless prove the best.

7. But superstition hath been the confusion of many states, and bringeth in a new *primum mobile*, that ravisheth all the spheres of government.

8. The illiberality of parents in allowance towards their children is an harmful error; makes them base; acquaints them with shifts; makes them sort with mean company; and makes them surfeit more when they come to plenty.

9. The master of superstition is the people; and in all superstition wise men follow fools; and arguments are fitted to practice, in a reversed order. It was gravely said by some of the prelates in the Council of Trent, where the doctrine of the Schoolmen bare great sway, *that the Schoolmen were like astronomers, which did feign eccentrics and epicycles, and such engines of orbs, to save the phenomena; though they knew there were no such things;*

10. that the Schoolmen had framed a number of subtle and intricate axioms and theorems, to save the practice of the church. The causes of superstition are: pleasing and sensual rites and ceremonies; excess of outward and pharisaical holiness; over-great reverence of traditions, which cannot but load the church; the stratagems of prelates for their own ambition and lucre; the favoring too much of good intentions, which openeth the gate to conceits and novelties;

11. Superstition, without a veil, is a deformed thing; for as it addeth deformity to an ape to be so like a man, so the similitude of superstition to religion makes it the more deformed. And as wholesome meat corrupteth to little worms, so good forms and orders corrupt into a number of petty observances.

12. Men have a foolish manner (both parents and schoolmasters and servants) in creating and breeding emulation between brothers during childhood, which many times sorteth to discord when they are men, and disturbeth families.

13. And, to say truth, in nature it is much a like matter; insomuch that we see a nephew sometimes resembled an uncle or a kinsman more than his own parent; as the blood happens.

14. There is a superstition in avoiding superstition, when men think to do best if they go furthest from the superstition formerly received; therefore care would be had that (as if fareth in ill purgings) the good be not taken away with the bad; which commonly is done when the people is the reformer.

16. It is true, that if the affection or aptness of the children be extraordinary, then it is good not to cross it; but generally the precept is good, *optimum elige, suave et facile illud faciet consuetudo* [choose the best—custom will make it pleasant and easy]. Younger brothers are commonly fortunate, but seldom or never where the elder are disinherited.

### 6.12 Suggested Reading:

1. Ifor Evans. 1940. *A Short History of English Literature*. 1940. Penguin Books.

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## FRANCIS BACON : OF YOUTH AND AGE

### Structure

#### 7.0 Objectives

#### 7.1 Introduction: The writer, his life and works

#### 7.2 The text

#### 7.3 Glossary

#### 7.4 Analysis of the text

#### 7.5 Brief Critical Evaluation

#### 7.6 Summary

#### 7.7 Lines for explanation

#### 7.8 Sample questions

#### 7.9 Suggested Reading

### 7.0. Objectives

After reading the lesson you will be able to

- discuss Bacon's contribution to the English essay.
- know Bacon's use of classical allusions to illustrate his points
- analyse the relevance of Bacon's essays even to the modern times.

### 7.1 Introduction: the writer, his life and works:

Francis Bacon “the father of the English essay” was born in London on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January, 1571. He was the youngest son of the Lord Keeper, Sir Nicholas Bacon, one of Queen Elizabeth's favourite ministers. His mother was a woman of unusual ability, of strong character and a dedicated Protestant. The mother's influence seems to have been paramount during his boyhood. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge and Gray's Inn and was later sent to Paris to acquire further education. He stayed here for a few years and was later called to the bar in 1582. He became a Member of Parliament in 1584 and to quote Douglas Bush, “soon established a solid reputation in the House and in committees, and through his letters of advice on state affairs.” He sat in every Parliament till his ultimate disgrace and fall.

With the sixteenth century the modern world begins. The spirit of its religion, its philosophy and its science is the spirit of its people. Francis Bacon is one of the most interesting figures of that interesting age. He represents its deep patriotism, its patient effort, its wide interests, its high aims, and its lofty enthusiasm. His earliest and chief interest in life was the reform of scientific method. Aristotle reigned supreme in the schools and Bacon was struck with “the unfruitfulness of his way”. Science had little or nothing to show in the way of results; and nothing, it occurred to him, was to be hoped for, until a new method was invented and applied. To supply this want became henceforth the passion of his life. The most permanent result of his life at Cambridge was his deceptions of the Aristotelian philosophy then so much in vogue in all seats of learning and his resolve to replace it by something better. Queen Elizabeth took much notice of him and used to call him playfully her “Young Lord Keeper”.

Bacon remained without promotion during the rest of Queen Elizabeth's reign, nor was he more successful during the early part of the reign of James I. Till June, 1707 he did not receive the appointment of Solicitor General. In 1727, he married an alderman's daughter with a fortune. He had no children. Bacon never forgot his divinely appointed mission. When he was twenty-five years old, he had published a philosophical essay entitled The Greatest Birth of Time. In his application to his uncle he wrote, ‘I have taken all knowledge to be my province’, and this was no empty boast. He

worked hard all the time at collecting a treasury of literary love in the shape of proverbs, quaint maxims, curious and telling phrases, which might furnish him both for speech or for writing.

In 1597, Bacon brought out the first edition of a book, which perhaps beyond all others, laid a sure foundation for his literary reputation. This was his essays, ten in number. A second edition containing thirty-eight essays was published in 1712, and a third, considerably enlarged and revised in 1725. The popularity and high reputation of essays led to translation into Latin and several other continental languages being published, some of them in the author's lifetime. It must be remembered that Bacon uses the word essay in its etymological sense of an experimental trial. The style of these brief essays, in which every sentence was compact with thought and polished in expression until it might run alone through the world as a maxim, had all the strength of euphemism without any of its weakness. Each essay shrewdly discriminative, contained a succession of wise thoughts exactly and beautiful expressed.

Bacon's stock of words is exceptionally rich. His quotations are so numerous that they may be said to be quite a feature of his style. His quotations show the range of his reading as it was his habit to jot down any expression, or turn of thought that had struck his fancy. His sentences are more modern in their structure. Even his more intricate sentences are so carefully constructed, and so free from inversions that the meaning is not difficult to catch. The secret of Bacon's strength lies in his conciseness. Hardly any writer ancient or modern, has succeeded in compressing so much meaning within so short a compass; several of the Essays – e.g. those on Studies and Negotiating are marvels of condensation.

Referring to Bacon as an essayist, Matheson has observed in his introduction to Selections from Francis Bacon that, "The Essays have won him a place apart, and are the source of his fame with the world at large. They introduce a new form of composition into English literature which was destined to have a varied and fruitful development. They are also, in a sense, a record of Bacon's outlook on the world throughout the years of his active life".

#### A Chronology of Bacon's life and works.

January 22 <sup>nd</sup>	1571	: Francis Bacon born
	1573	: Bacon joins Trinity College, Cambridge.
	1576	: Sent to France as Junior Secretary to the Ambassador
	1582	: Bar-at-law
	1584	: Member of the House of Commons for Melcombe Regis
	1603	: Knighted
	1606	: Married Alice Barnham, a lady of property
	1607	: Appointed Solicitor – General
	1613	: Appointed Attorney – General
	1617	: Appointed Lord Keeper
	1618	: Appointed Lord Chancellor
	1718	: Made Baron Verulam
	1721	: Made Viscount St. Albans.
	1621	: Charged of bribery in the House of Lords
	1721	: The House of lords removed him from its membership, dismissed from all posts, fined forty thousand pounds and awarded life imprisonment. However, the king released him the next day and allowed his fines to remain unpaid.
April 9, Publications	1727	: Died.
	1595	: Published the first edition of his <u>Essays</u> .
	1705	: Published <u>The Advancement of Learning</u> in English.

- 1709 : Published De Sapientir Veterum.  
 1612 : Second and enlarged edition of his Essays.  
 1720 : Published The Novum Organum  
 1722 : Published History of Henry VII  
 1723 : Published De Augmentis.  
 1625 : Third and enlarged edition of his Essays  
 1626 : Published the New Atlantics.

The Editions of the Essays: Three different editions of the Essays in English were published during Bacon's lifetime and with his sanction. These were the editions of 1597, 1712 and 1725. The edition of 1597 contained the following ten Essays, (1) Of Study, (2) Of Discourse (3) Of Ceremonies and Respects (4) Of Followers and Friends (5) Of Suitors (6) Of Expense (7) Of Regimen of Health (8) Of Honour and Reputation (9) Of Faction (10) Of Negotiating.

The edition of 1712 – published with the title The Essays of Sir Francis Bacon, Knight, the King's Solicitor General – contained thirty-eight Essays, twenty-nine of them new and nine from the former edition. The new essays added are the following:

1. Of Religion; 2. Of Death; 3. Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature; 4. Of Cunning; 5. Of life; 6. Of Parents and Children; 7. Of Nobility; 8. Of Great Place; 9. Of Empire; 10. Of Counsel; 11. Of Dispatch; 12. Of Love, 13. Of Friendship; 14. Of Atheism; 15. Of Superstition; 16. Of Wisdom for a Man's Self; 17. Of Seeming Wise; 18. Of Riches; 19. Of Ambition; 20. Of Young Men and Age; 21. Of Beauty; 22. Of Deformity; 23. Of Nature in Man; 24. Of Custom and Education; 25. Of Fortune; 26. Of Praise; 27. Of Judicature 28. Of Vain Glory; 29. Of Greatness of Kingdoms.

The Edition of 1725 contained all the Essays included in the two earlier editions – for the most part greatly altered and enlarged – and the following nineteen new Essays (58 in all):

1. Of Truth; 2. Of Revenge; 3. Of Adversity; 4. Of Simulation and Dissimulation; 5. Of Envy; 6. Of Boldness; 7. Of Seditions and Troubles; 8. Of Travel; 9. Of Delays; 10. Of Innovations; 11. Of Suspicion; 12. Of Plantations; 13. Of Prophecies; 14. Of Masques and Triumphs; 15. Of Usury; 16. Of Building; 17. Of Gardens; 18. Of Anger; 19. Of Vicissitude of Things.

Bacon was a Machiavellian in so far as his moral values and his precepts for practical success in life are concerned. Success first, moral next – this was Bacon's philosophy of life. He did not believe in any high moral or spiritual values. He is a true product of the Renaissance utilitarian philosophy of life. Macaulay rightly says that "neither his principles nor his spirit were such as could be trusted when strong temptations were to be resisted and serious dangers to be branded." Therefore Pope's estimate of his character is largely true. Bacon was intellectually a Titan but morally a Lilliputian. There was often a conflict between Christ and Satan in his heart, and very often he stood by the side of Satan.

**Francis Bacon** (22 January 5575- 9 April 5727) was an Elizabethan empiricist, philosopher, and essayist. Besides being an intellectual figure, he was also a statesman. Bacon was a 5th Viscount St Alban and served as Attorney General and as Lord Chancellor of England. As an empiricist who dedicated his life to introduce scientific temperament into the middle-aged English world rooted in dogma of theology. He is called the father of empiricism. Francis Bacon was a patron of libraries and developed a system for cataloguing books under three categories — history, poetry, and philosophy. Some of the important works of Bacon are *The Advancement and Proficiency of Learning Divine and Human* (5705), *Novum Organum* (5720), *New Atlantis* (5727) etc.

### Essay

A composition of prose of moderate length is called Essay. The term essay is derived from the French term “essayer” which means “to try” or “to attempt” Dr. Samuel Johnson, seventeenth century English writer and lexicographer defined Essay as “a loose sally of the mind, an irregular, indigested piece, not a regular and orderly performance.” The epistles of Roman writers Cicero and Seneca are the earliest essays. Michel de Montaigne, sixteenth century French writer, developed the proper essay. Hence Montaigne is the originator of the Essay. Thomas Nashe’s *The Unfortunate Traveller* and John Lyly’s *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit* are the first forms of English Essay. But it is Francis Bacon who has given proper structure and course to English essay. So, he is acclaimed as the Father of English Essay. Any topic in the universe ranging from morals to personal observations, space, etc., can be the subject of an essay.

### Aphoristic Essay

Francis Bacon owes his everlasting fame more to his literary style. He is renowned as the father of Aphoristic Style. The prose counsel of Bacon is defined as aphoristic style of essay. The features of Aphoristic style are like the below,

**Epigrammatic Style:** The aphoristic style is the style that is terse, compact, and epigrammatic. Many sentences from Bacon’s essay are quoted as proverbs.

Example: A lie faces God and Shrinks from man. (Of Truth)

A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure. (Of Truth)

**Antithetical Statements:** The force of the aphoristic statements depends upon stylistic devices like Antithesis. Antithetical statement is a statement where two opposite ideas are balanced in a statement to convey a meaning in a powerful manner.

Example: Studies serve for delight, for ornament and for ability.

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.

**Multi-Prong:** Balance is one of the key techniques in Elizabethan Prose. Bacon weighs the pros and cons of the title subject of his essay. So, he needs balanced sentences. Bacon spices it up by employing more than two thoughts in a sentence. The balancing of more than two thoughts in a sentence is called Multi-Prong.

Example: Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.

Read not to contradict, nor to believe, but to weigh and consider.

### 7.2 Text: “Of Youth and Age”

A man that is Young in yeares, may be Old in Houres, if he have lost no Time. But that happeneth rarely. Generally, youth is like the first Cogitations, not so Wise as the Second. For there is a youth in thoughts as well as in Ages. And yet the Invention of Young Men, is more lively, then that of Old: And Imaginations streame into their Mindes better, and, as it were, more Divinely. Natures that have much Heat, and great and violent desires and Perturbations, are not ripe for Action, till they have passed the Meridian of their yeares: As it was with *Julius Caesar*, and *Septimius Severus*. Of the latter of whom, it is said; *Iuventutem egit, Erroribus, imo Furoribus, plenam*. And yet he was the Ablest Emperour, almost, of all the List. But Reposed Natures may doe well in Youth. As it is seene, in *Augustus Caesar*, *Cosmus Duke of Florence*, *Gaston de Foix*, and others. On the other side, Heate and Vivacity in Age, is an Excellent Composition for Businesse. *Young Men*, are Fitter to Invent, then to Judge; Fitter for Execution, then for Counsell; And Fitter for New Projects, then for Setled Businesse. For the Experience of Age, in Things that fall within the compasse of it, directeth them; But in New things, abuseth them. The Errours of *Young Men* are the

Ruine of Businesse; But the Errours of *Aged Men* amount but to this: That more might have, beene done, or sooner. *Young Men*, in the Conduct and Mannage of Actions, Embrace more then they can Hold, Stirre more, then they can Quiet; Fly to the End, without Consideration of the Meanes, and Degrees; Pursue some few Principles, which they have chanced upon absurdly; Care not to Innovate, which draws unknowne Inconveniencies; Use extreme Remedies at first; And, that which doubleth all Errours, will not acknowledge or retract them; Like an Unready Horse, that will neither Stop, nor Turne. *Men of Age*, Object too much, Consult too long, Adventure too little, Repent too soone, and seldome driye Businesse home to the full Period; But content themselves with a mediocrity of Sucesse. Certainly, it is good to compound Employments of both; For that will be Good for the *Present*, because the virtues of either Age, may correct the defects of both: And good for Succession, that *Young Men* may be Learners, while *Men in Age* are Actours: and lastly, Good for *Externe Accidents*, because Authority followeth the *Old Men*, And Favour and Popularity *Youth*. But for the Morall Part, perhaps *Youth* will have the preeminence, as *Age* hath for the Politique. A certaine *Rabbine*, upon the Text; *Your Young Men shell see visions, and your Old Men shall dreame dreames*; Inferreth, that *Young Men* are admitted nearer to God then *Old*; Because *Vision* is a clearer Revelation, then a *Dreame*. And certainly, the more a Man drinketh of the World, the more it intoxicateth; And *Age* both profit rather in the Powers of Understanding, then in the Vertues of the Will and Affections. There be some have an Over-early Ripenesse in their yeares, which fadeth betimes; These are first, Such as have Brittle Wits, the Edge whereof is soone turned; Such as was *Hermogenes the Rhetorician*, whose Books are exceeding Subtill; Who afterwards waxed Stupid. A Second Sort is of those that have some naturall Dispositions, which have better Grace in *Youth*, then in *Age*: Such as is a fluent and Luxuriant Speech; which becomes *Youth* well, but not *Age*: So *Tully* saith of *Hortensius*; *Idem manebat, neque idem decebat*. The third is of such, as take too high a Straine at the First; And are Magnanimous, more then Tract of yeares can uphold. As was *Scipio Affricanus*, of whom *Livy* saith in effect; *Ultima primis cedebant*.

### 7.3. Glossary

- L 1-2: A man ..... No time: A young man who has not wasted any time of his life is older than an old man who has wasted much of his.
- L. 3: Cogitations: thoughts, Second thoughts are wiser and maturer than the first.
- L.4: there is a youth in thoughts: as well as in ages: just as men are young and old, similarly thoughts are also young and old. Young or incipient thoughts are immature and unrefined; they ripen with time.
- L.5: invention: imagination lively: full of life: active. As compared to old men, young men have a more fertile imagination.
- L.7: stream : rush profusely
- L.7: divinely: by divine inspiration; Natures: persons; that have much heat: violent and uncontrollable
- L.8: Perturbations: restlessness; disturbance; ripe: matured: developed.
- L.9: the Meridian of their yeares: the highest point of their life, that is, their prime or youth.
- L.10: Julius Caesar: He was one of the greatest men of antiquity. Born probably on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, 102 B.C. whose youth was exceptionally irresponsible. His achievements were crowded within the last sixteen years of his life.
- L.10: Septimius Severus: Emperor of Rome (193-211 A.D.) who had a tempestuous youth.
- LL. 11-12: Juventutem .... Pleanam (Latin) "His youth was full of mistakes and even of violent outbreaks" – quoted from Spartianus, the biographer of Severus. From Spartian's *Vita Severus* (*The Life of Severus*).
- L. 13: Of all the list: among the catalogue of Roman emperors.
- L.14. reposed natures: men of calm temperament.

- L.15: Augustus Caesar: another Roman emperor, the nephew of Julius Caesar. He became an emperor in his youth.  
 Cosmus Duke of Florence: He was appointed Duke in 1537 at the age of 17, and was one of the greatest of the Medici family and Governor of Florence. Under him Florence flourished much.  
 Gaston de Foix: (1479-1512): the nephew of Louis XII, the king of France. He distinguished himself as the commander of the French troops in Italy and fell in the battle of Ravenna in 1512.
- L. 17: Vivacity in age: an old man who has energy and initiative is a successful man of affairs. in age : in old men.
- L.17: Composition: temperament ; fitter: more capable (than young men)
- L.18: to invent than to judge: to conceive new ideas than to scrutinize the existing ones.  
 For execution than for counsel: for acting according to a particular suggestion than for suggesting themselves courses of action to others.
- L. 19: For new projects than for settled business: for new schemes than for set, conventional work.
- L.20: the compass of it: the period of old age.
- L. 21: them: old men; abuset: deceives, misleads
- LL 22-23: The Errors of Young ... business: the mistakes made by youth, often prove their ruin in their business career.
- L. 24: manage: management.
- L. 25: embrace more than they can hold: younger people are apt to undertake more than they can carry through or accomplish.
- L. 27: stir more than they can quiet: young provoke so many difficulties which they find themselves unable to suppress.
- LL 27-27: They ... and degrees: young people are anxious to arrive at their goal quickly without knowing how and by what degrees;  
 degrees: intervening steps; stages pursue: follow, adhere to
- L. 28: which they have chanced upon: which they have met by chance.  
 Absurdly: at haphazard, unreasonably. They follow some principles which have caught their fancy and which they have selected at haphazard after coming across them by chance.  
 Care not to innovate: do not hesitate to replace old things with new.
- L.29: which draws unknown in conveniences: which attracts unexpected difficulties.
- L. 30. at first: at the very beginning; Extreme: external
- L.31: retract them: pull them back; Unready: incompletely or badly trained.
- L.32: object too much: argue too much
- L.33: adventure too little: they do not take risks.
- L. 34: the full period: perfection, completion.
- L.35: the mediocrity of success: partial success.
- L.37: to compound employments of both: to employ both young and old men.
- L. 38: Succession: future.
- L. 39: actors: those who act. Young men can learn much from the actions of the old.
- L.40: externe: external accidents: relations (with persons outside)
- LL. 40-41: good for .... Youth: Employment together of young and old men can benefit the employer by promoting his relations with the people outside.
- L. 43: But for the moral past ... pre-eminence: young persons are too apt to think more in terms of principles rather than of expediency.
- L.44: Rabbinic: Jewish priest  
 Text: an extract from the scripture which serves as the foundation of a sermon by a priest.
- L.45: Your young and C.: Joel, ii, 28: "young men are visionaries and old men only dreamers."
- L.48: Profit: improve: become proficient



- L. 50: affections: feelings and passions
- L. 51: Betimes: speedily
- L. 52: Wits: minds, intelligence the edge where of is soon turned: their mind is like a knife made of a weak material whose edge becomes dull very quickly.
- L.53: Hermogenes: a famous Greek rhetorician of Tarsus in the days of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. When he was fifteen, he became professor of Greek Eloquence at Rome. He published a book on rhetoric and oratory. But it is said that at twenty-five he entirely lost his memory and became a permanent imbecile.
- L.55: disposition: inclination
- L.57: have better grace: look better because more proper.  
luxuriant : rich  
becomes : fits, suits
- L.57: Tully: Cicero, the famous Roman Orator.
- L.58: Hortensius: a Roman orator (114-50 B.C.) who became famous at the age of nineteen when he spoke with great applause in the forum. He acted with Cicero his rival in the field of oratory and also against him in several cases.
- L.70: Idem ... decebat (Latin) – “He did not change though his teaching did” or “he remained the same when he might have changed with advantage” – Cicero from *Brutus*, 95.
- L.70: take too high a Straine: achieve a great height in the very beginning of their career.
- L.71: Magnanimous: generous; Tract of years: length of years; Uphold: support, justify
- L.72: Scipio Affricanus: (237 BC – 183 BC) the conqueror of Spain and Hannibal at the battle of Zama (202 BC), and one of the greatest of the Romans. He conquered Carthage after defeating Hannibal. The surname of “Africanus” was conferred upon him. He took no prominent part in public affairs during the next few years. His later achievements in the East were not so successful and he was accused of having received bribes.  
Livy: the Roman historian.
- L. 74: Ultima Primis cedebant: “His later life could not equal his early years”. Or “The end was inferior to the beginning”.

#### 7.4: Analysis of the Text of youth:

Youth is apt to indulge in follies, being liable to foolish thoughts; but youth is the time for embarking upon inventions, experiments, adventures and for undertaking imaginative flights. As compared to old men, young men have a more fertile imagination. What young men lack in maturity of thought and wisdom they make up with the fertility and vividness of the imagination. Those youths who have a violent disposition are unripe for action. Rare is the case of the youths who though young in years are ripe in experience. Youth is experimental and is better fitted to invent, to create, to venture into the unknown and to execute things than to judge or deliberate which is the privilege of old age. People who are of a calm temperament even when young do well as young men. Unlike people of a fiery and restless nature they have not to wait till they have become old for getting ready for action. They have the requisite maturity right in their youth.

Youth is liable to make mistakes because of its tendency – (i) to attempt too much, undertake more than they can manage effectively, (ii) to ignore the intervening steps in his anxiety to reach the goal all too quickly, (they desire to “win the race” without being prepared to be “slow and steady”), (iii) to stick to imperfect principles which they seize haphazardly and which have no bearing on the line of action taken by them, (iv) to indulge in reckless innovations and to feel no anxiety about making great and sudden changes in their lines of action, regardless of the consequences of such an ill-advised step, (v) to resort to extreme remedies when once he has embarked upon some foolish and

extravagant undertaking and (vi) to refuse to acknowledge his mistakes or to retract his steps once he had taken a wrong step.

### **Of Old Age**

Old men are over cautious, over critical, too fastidious and fond of raising all manner of objections. They are too prudent, cowardly, shy of undertaking experiments, explorations and adventures. They are too contented with partial success or fulfillment. The longer a man lives in the world, the more experienced and proficient does he become. However, he improves in some, not in all qualities. His power of understanding does undergo a change for the better. Since the virtues of either age may correct the defects of both, the wisest course could be to have young and old people working together in all walks of life, owing to the complementary nature of each to the other. In business, for the sake of immediate efficiency the young men will have to learn methods of efficient work from old men and their elders, so that in course of time they get, experience, wisdom and far-sightedness of elderly people. For the sake of developing public relations, the authority of the elderly people and the popularity of youth is needed. It is also necessary for the young and old to work together. Team work between the two is also needed for a combination of the moral freshness of youth and the prudence of old age.

Youth sometimes fails to come to our expectations. It fails when it has to stand a continuous strain of work. Hermogenes suffered total lapse of memory after a continuous spell of work. It fails when the natural gifts of the youth are inappropriate for old age. Hortensius' gift of a florid style suited him better as a young man than when he was old. They fail when they shoot too high and have too lofty ambitions in early stages which they cannot keep up in old age. The case of Scipio Africanus who remained in advanced way too great for a private citizen and yet had nothing to do in old age.

### **7.5: Brief Critical Evaluation:**

Francis Bacon's attitude in this essay is thoroughly utilitarian, practical, prudential and non-moral. He was a firm believer in empiricism. Like a true scientist and a practical man of the world his aim was prudential, self-seeking for success in life. His suggestions are practical and utilitarian. His expediency is determined by the situation, circumstances, character and the nature of the problem. The average man ordinarily pursues a course of action on life, that will make him successful and happy. He does not consider its result on others, because with him charity begins at home and also ends there. For success in any field honesty is the best policy. According to Bacon, statesmen are to consider what will make their country prosperous even at the expense of other countries which can look after themselves. This is the sort of prudence and expediency that Bacon professes in this essay. Bacon states that young men tend to act more in terms of principles and less in terms of expediency. In Bacon's time, people in high places used to believe and practice this kind of expediency advocated by Bacon.

Bacon writes here, as everywhere in his essays in a highly economical and compact style. His aphoristic style makes him an essayist of high distinction. Aphorisms give to his essays singular force and weight. Here are a few examples of the terseness of his style and the aphoristic quality of some of the sentences.

- (1) "Young men are fitter to invent than to judge; fitter for execution than for counsel; and fitter for new projects than for settled business."

- (2) “The errors of young men are the ruin of business: but the errors of aged men amount but to this, that more might have been done, or sooner.”

It is always Bacon’s effort to support a generalization either with some homely example or with a historical case. In this essay he gives us several historical references. He mentions the cases of Julius Caesar, Septimius Severus, Augustus Caesar.

Bacon uses the method of illustrations. An argument naturally becomes more convincing when the method of illustrations is employed. The thought in an essay by Bacon is always developed in a connected and logical manner, one argument leading to another by natural transition. There is rarely an abrupt change in the sequence of ideas so that we really get a mental jerk.

### **7.6. Summary:**

Francis Bacon (171-1727) is one of the greatest writers of English prose of his age. His writings have been admired for various reasons. They are the result of his own experience. His essays are popular because of their brevity. His essays show Bacon as a profound thinker. The present essay “Of Youth and Age” is a contrast between two phases in human life.

Youth and Age have traditionally been contrasted with each other. Youth has its merits and its limitations, just as age has its handicaps and its compensations. Nobody can wholly admire youth and nobody can wholly condemn old age. Nor can anyone wholly condemn youth or wholly admire old age.

Bacon is right in pointing out that youth possesses the spirit of enterprise and initiative to a pre-eminent degree, and that youth is bold, dashing and energetic. But, as he says, youth is generally lacking in maturity and in judgment. In old age one possesses the wisdom and the discernment which come from long experience. Youth often becomes rash and takes certain courses of action which lead to disastrous consequences. Old men on the other hand are too hesitant and too timid; they cannot take risks, and they feel quickly satisfied even with a small success in any venture. Since the virtues of either age may correct the defects of both, the wisest course would be to have young and old people working together in all walks of life, owing to the complementary nature of each to the other. Team work between the two is also needed for a combination of the moral freshness of youth and the prudence of old age.

In actual life, especially in our times, we find that the young look upon the old as antiquated and useless, while the old treat the young in a patronizing and condescending manner as if the young were mere apprentices and trainees struggling to develop their faculties and capacities. This essay by Bacon should put the whole case of “youth versus age” in the proper perspective and rectify the attitude of each to the other. The essay has thus an instructional value.

### **7.7. Lines for Explanation:**

(A) Lines 7-9: Natures that have much heat ... Julius Caesar and Septimius Severus.

Ans: Youthful people endowed with violent nature and excitement of the mind and assailed by inordinate desires and passions are least fitted for action till they reached the point of their lives. What young men lack in maturity of thought and wisdom they make up with the fertility and vividness of the imagination.

Julius Caesar was born probably on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July, 102 B.C. He was one of the greatest men of antiquity. He was gifted by nature with the most varied talents. He was distinguished by extraordinary attainments. He achieved great things in government and war during the period of

maturity, but not in his youth. He led a wild youth. His achievements were crowded within the last sixteen years (70-44 BC) of his life between the ages of 40 and 57.

Septimius Severus was Emperor of Rome (193-211 A.D.) at the age of 47 when a series of victories over several competing candidates placed him on the throne. After holding various important military commands under M. Aurelius and Commodus, he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the army by which he proclaimed himself emperor after defeating several aspirants to the throne. He carried on war against the Caledonians in Britain and erected the famous wall which bore his name.

(B) Lines 10-20: Of the latter of whom it is said ..... fitter for new projects than for settled business.

Ans: People who are of a calm temperament even when young do well as young men. Unlike people of a fiery and restless nature they have not to wait till they have become old for getting ready for action. They have the requisite maturity in their youth. Just as calmness and maturity are good in youth, similarly youthful vitality and enthusiasm enable old men to do well.

Augustus Caesar was another Roman Emperor, the nephew of Julius Caesar. He became a triumvir with Antony and Lepidus at the age of 20. His original name was Caesar Octavius, and after his adoption by his great uncle Julius Caesar he became Caesar Octavianus. Augustus was only a title given him by the Senate and the people in 27 B.C. to express their respect towards him.

Cosmus, Duke of Florence – Cosmus dei Medici (1520 – 1598) was master of the Medici for thirty years. He was appointed Duke in 1537 at the age of 17, and was one of the greatest of the Medici family and Governor of Florence.

Gaston de Foix: (1479-1512) was the nephew of Louis XII, the King of France. He distinguished himself as the commander of the French troops in Italy and was killed in the battle of Ravenna in 1512.

(C) Lines 25-32: Young men, in the conduct and manage of actions ..... like an unready horse that will neither stop nor turn.

Ans: Young people are apt to undertake more than they can accomplish. They are too often liable to act rashly and land in problems. Their hasty actions provoke tumults which they are ultimately unable to suppress. Young people are often apt to think only of the end, ignoring the necessary process, means, steps and stages through which they must pass before they can gain their desired object in life. Once they have landed in a difficult situation, they are apt to push forward instead of stopping or turning away from the mistaken course of action.

Bacon wants to make out his point that 'caution and experience' are the virtues of age while its faults are nervousness, lack of adventure, contentment with partial success, fondness for raising objections and lack of the power of execution. The young on the other hand, are like an ill-trained horse who goes on speeding on a wrong path and does not stop or turn aside.

(D) Lines 45-50: A certain rabbin upon the text .... Virtues of the will and affections.

Ans: Abranavel, a Portugese Jew commented upon the Old Testament text from Joel, ii:28: "Your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams". Youth is the worthier age for those visions which are nearer to God than dreams. The longer a man lives in the world, the more experienced and proficient he becomes. However, he improves only in some but not in all qualities. His power of understanding undergoes a change for the better. However, his will power and the sensitiveness of his feelings do not improve with the passage of time.

(E) Line 52-57: There be some have .... Who after words waxed stupid.

Ans: There are some men who become mature quite early in their lives. However, the quick rise of intelligence and proficiency in such precocious people has an equally quick fall. They start declining after their initial rise, an end not so high as they started.

Hermogenes was a famous Greek rhetorician of Tarsus in the days of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (second century A.D.). When he was fifteen, he became professor of Greek Eloquence at Rome. He published a book on rhetoric and oratory. But it is said that at twenty-five he entirely lost his memory and became a permanent imbecile.

### **7.8. Sample Questions:**

1. Comment upon the range and variety of topics in Bacon's Essay.
2. Show how Bacon's essays reflect the Renaissance spirit.
3. Comment on Bacon's style.
4. What does Bacon want to convey through the essay 'Of Youth and Age.'

**7.9 Suggested Reading:** I for Evans. 1940. *A Short History of English Literature*. 1940.

Penguin Books. **Dr.N.V.Subbaiah.**

## Lesson-8

### LITERARY CRITICISM- ARISTOTLE

#### Structure of the lesson

#### 8.0 Objectives

#### 8.1 Introduction

#### 8.2 *Poetics*

#### 8.3 Epic – Text

#### 8.4 Tragedy – Text

#### 8.5 Aristotle's Views on Poetry

#### 8.6 Aristotle's Views on Epic

#### 8.7 Aristotle's Views on Tragedy

##### 8.7.1 The Nature of Tragedy

##### 8.7.2 Constituent Parts of Tragedy

##### 8.7.3 The Plot

##### 8.7.4 Three Unities

##### 8.7.5 The Kinds of Plot

##### 8.7.6 Plot – Emotions of Pity and Fear

##### 8.7.7 Division of Plot

##### 8.7.8 Character

##### 8.7.9 Thought and Diction

##### 8.7.10 Songs

##### 8.7.11 The Functions of Tragedy – Catharsis

##### 8.7.12 Aristotle's Observation on Style

#### 8.8 Conclusion

#### 8.9 Question

#### 8.0 Objectives

- To learn origin of literary criticism
- To examine the earliest forms of literary genres
- To know about Epic
- To study about Tragedy and its features

#### 8.1 Introduction

The age of Pericles was the golden age of ancient Greek literary Criticism. The literary creative activity and criticism had prospered in this age. The literary criticism was enriched by the critical theories of philosophers cum critics like Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Euripides, and Socrates etc. But it was not until the dawn of Plato that literary criticism was systematized. Plato was the first Greek Philosopher to express the systematic views on art and poetry.

Aristotle (384 B.C. – 322 B.C) is most distinguished thinker and forefather to many fields of knowledge. His role in literary criticism is equally significant. He was the most famous student of Plato. Plato died without naming Aristotle as the principle of Academy. Disheartened Aristotle left the Academy. Later, he established his own education institution Lyceum. His important 858 Constitutions, Dialogues, On Monarchy, Alexander, The Customs of Barbarians, Natural History, Organon or The

Instrument of Correct Thinking, On the Soul, Rhetoric, Logic, Eudemian Ethics, Physics, Metaphysics, Politics, and Poetics.

## 8.2 *Poetics*

*Poetics* is the chief work of the Aristotle's literary critical work. It is a storehouse of literary theories whose influence is continuous and universal. It is a short treatise of twenty-three chapters in forty-four pages. It is a lecture notes of Aristotle for his personal teaching purpose. The disjunctive treatise dealt with various literary topics as classified below,

- a. The first four chapters and the twenty fifth – Poetry
- b. The fifth – A sweeping notes on Comedy, Epic and Tragedy
- c. Next fourteen Chapters (6<sup>th</sup> to 89<sup>th</sup>) – Exclusive discussion about Tragedy
- d. The twenty first – twenty three – Poetic Diction and
- e. The last and twenty fifth chapter – Poetry and Tragedy

## 8.3 Epic - Text

As to that poetic imitation which is narrative in form and employs a single metre, the plot manifestly ought, as in a tragedy, to be constructed on dramatic principles. It should have for its subject a single action, whole and complete, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It will thus resemble a living organism in all its unity, and produce the pleasure proper to it. It will differ in structure from historical compositions, which of necessity present not a single action, but a single period, and all that happened within that period to one person or to many, little connected together as the events may be. For as the sea-fight at Salamis and the battle with the Carthaginians in Sicily took place at the same time, but did not tend to any one result, so in the sequence of events, one thing sometimes follows another, and yet no single result is thereby produced. Such is the practice, we may say, of most poets. Here again, then, as has been already observed, the transcendent excellence of Homer is manifest. He never attempts to make the whole war of Troy the subject of his poem, though that war had a beginning and an end. It would have been too vast a theme, and not easily embraced in a single view. If, again, he had kept it within moderate limits, it must have been over-complicated by the variety of the incidents. As it is, he detaches a single portion, and admits as episodes many events from the general story of the war—such as the Catalogue of the ships and others—thus diversifying the poem. All other poets take a single hero, a single period, or an action single indeed, but with a multiplicity of parts. Thus did the author of the *Cypria* and of the *Little Iliad*. For this reason the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* each furnish the subject of one tragedy, or, at most, of two; while the *Cypria* supplies materials for many, and the *Little Iliad* for eight—the Award of the Arms, the *Philoctetes*, the *Neoptolemus*, the *Eurypylos*, the *Mendicant Odysseus*, the *Laconian Women*, the *Fall of Ilium*, the *Departure of the Fleet*.

Again, Epic poetry must have as many kinds as Tragedy: it must be simple, or complex, or 'ethical,' or 'pathetic.' The parts also, with the exception of song and spectacle, are the same; for it requires Reversals of the Situation, Recognitions, and Scenes of Suffering. Moreover, the thoughts and the diction must be artistic. In all these respects Homer is our earliest and sufficient model. Indeed each of his poems has a twofold character. The *Iliad* is at once simple and 'pathetic,' and the *Odyssey* complex (for Recognition scenes run through it), and at the same time 'ethical.' Moreover, in diction and thought they are supreme. Epic poetry differs from Tragedy in the scale on which it is constructed, and in its metre. As regards scale or length, we have already laid down an adequate limit:—the beginning and the end must be capable of being brought within a single view. This condition will be satisfied by poems on a smaller scale than the old epics, and answering in length to the group of tragedies presented

at a single sitting. Epic poetry has, however, a great—a special—capacity for enlarging its dimensions, and we can see the reason. In Tragedy we cannot imitate several lines of actions carried on at one and the same time; we must confine ourselves to the action on the stage and the part taken by the players. But in Epic poetry, owing to the narrative form, many events simultaneously transacted can be presented; and these, if relevant to the subject, add mass and dignity to the poem. The Epic has here an advantage, and one that conduces to grandeur of effect, to diverting the mind of the hearer, and relieving the story with varying episodes. For sameness of incident soon produces satiety, and makes tragedies fail on the stage. As for the metre, the heroic measure has proved its fitness by the test of experience. If a narrative poem in any other metre or in many metres were now composed, it would be found incongruous. For of all measures the heroic is the stateliest and the most massive; and hence it most readily admits rare words and metaphors, which is another point in which the narrative form of imitation stands alone. On the other hand, the iambic and the trochaic tetrameter are stirring measures, the latter being akin to dancing, the former expressive of action. Still more absurd would it be to mix together different metres, as was done by Chaerephon. Hence no one has ever composed a poem on a great scale in any other than heroic verse. Nature herself, as we have said, teaches the choice of the proper measure. Homer, admirable in all respects, has the special merit of being the only poet who rightly appreciates the part he should take himself. The poet should speak as little as possible in his own person, for it is not this that makes him an imitator. Other poets appear themselves upon the scene throughout, and imitate but little and rarely. Homer, after a few prefatory words, at once brings in a man, or woman, or other personage; none of them wanting in characteristic qualities, but each with a character of his own. The element of the wonderful is required in Tragedy. The irrational, on which the wonderful depends for its chief effects, has wider scope in Epic poetry, because there the person acting is not seen. Thus, the pursuit of Hector would be ludicrous if placed upon the stage—the Greeks standing still and not joining in the pursuit, and Achilles waving them back. But in the Epic poem the absurdity passes unnoticed. Now the wonderful is pleasing: as may be inferred from the fact that every one tells a story with some addition of his own, knowing that his hearers like it. It is Homer who has chiefly taught other poets the art of telling lies skilfully. The secret of it lies in a fallacy, For, assuming that if one thing is or becomes, a second is or becomes, men imagine that, if the second is, the first likewise is or becomes. But this is a false inference. Hence, where the first thing is untrue, it is quite unnecessary, provided the second be true, to add that the first is or has become. For the mind, knowing the second to be true, falsely infers the truth of the first. There is an example of this in the Bath Scene of the *Odyssey*. Accordingly, the poet should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities. The tragic plot must not be composed of irrational parts. Everything irrational should, if possible, be excluded; or, at all events, it should lie outside the action of the play (as, in the *Oedipus*, the hero's ignorance as to the manner of Laius' death); not within the drama,—as in the *Electra*, the messenger's account of the Pythian games; or, as in the *Mysians*, the man who has come from Tegea to Mysia and is still speechless. The plea that otherwise the plot would have been ruined, is ridiculous; such a plot should not in the first instance be constructed. But once the irrational has been introduced and an air of likelihood imparted to it, we must accept it in spite of the absurdity. Take even the irrational incidents in the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus is left upon the shore of Ithaca. How intolerable even these might have been would be apparent if an inferior poet were to treat the subject. As it is, the absurdity is veiled by the poetic charm with which the poet invests it. The diction should be elaborated in the pauses of the action, where there is no expression of character or thought. For, conversely, character and thought are merely obscured by a diction that is over brilliant.

#### 8.4 Tragedy – Text



Of the poetry which imitates in hexameter verse, and of Comedy, we will speak hereafter. Let us now discuss Tragedy, resuming its formal definition, as resulting from what has been already said. Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions. By 'language embellished,' I mean language into which rhythm, 'harmony,' and song enter. By 'the several kinds in separate parts,' I mean, that some parts are rendered through the medium of verse alone, others again with the aid of song. Now as tragic imitation implies persons acting, it necessarily follows, in the first place, that Spectacular equipment will be a part of Tragedy. Next, Song and Diction, for these are the medium of imitation. By 'Diction' I mean the mere metrical arrangement of the words: as for 'Song,' it is a term whose sense every one understands. Again, Tragedy is the imitation of an action; and an action implies personal agents, who necessarily possess certain distinctive qualities both of character and thought; for it is by these that we qualify actions themselves, and these—thought and character—are the two natural causes from which actions spring, and on actions again all success or failure depends. Hence, the Plot is the imitation of the action: for by plot I here mean the arrangement of the incidents. By Character I mean that in virtue of which we ascribe certain qualities to the agents. Thought is required wherever a statement is proved, or, it may be, a general truth enunciated. Every Tragedy, therefore, must have six parts, which parts determine its quality—namely, Plot, Character, Diction, Thought, Spectacle, Song. Two of the parts constitute the medium of imitation, one the manner, and three the objects of imitation. And these complete the list. These elements have been employed, we may say, by the poets to a man; in fact, every play contains Spectacular elements as well as Character, Plot, Diction, Song, and Thought. But most important of all is the structure of the incidents. For Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality. Now character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the actions. Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all. Again, without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character. The tragedies of most of our modern poets fail in the rendering of character; and of poets in general this is often true. It is the same in painting; and here lies the difference between Zeuxis and Polygnotus. Polygnotus delineates character well: the style of Zeuxis is devoid of ethical quality. Again, if you string together a set of speeches expressive of character, and well finished in point of diction and thought, you will not produce the essential tragic effect nearly so well as with a play which, however deficient in these respects, yet has a plot and artistically constructed incidents. Besides which, the most powerful elements of emotional interest in Tragedy Peripeteia or Reversal of the Situation, and Recognition scenes—are parts of the plot. A further proof is, that novices in the art attain to finish: of diction and precision of portraiture before they can construct the plot. It is the same with almost all the early poets. The Plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy: Character holds the second place. A similar fact is seen in painting. The most beautiful colours, laid on confusedly, will not give as much pleasure as the chalk outline of a portrait. Thus Tragedy is the imitation of an action, and of the agents mainly with a view to the action. Third in order is Thought,—that is, the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in given circumstances. In the case of oratory, this is the function of the Political art and of the art of rhetoric: and so indeed the older poets make their characters speak the language of civic life; the poets of our time, the language of the rhetoricians. Character is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids. Speeches, therefore, which do not make this manifest, or in which the speaker does not choose or avoid anything whatever, are not expressive of character. Thought, on the other hand, is found where something is proved to be, or

not to be, or a general maxim is enunciated. Fourth among the elements enumerated comes Diction; by which I mean, as has been already said, the expression of the meaning in words; and its essence is the same both in verse and prose. Of the remaining elements Song holds the chief place among the embellishments. The Spectacle has, indeed, an emotional attraction of its own, but, of all the parts, it is the least artistic, and connected least with the art of poetry. For the power of Tragedy, we may be sure, is felt even apart from representation and actors. Besides, the production of spectacular effects depends more on the art of the stage machinist than on that of the poet.

These principles being established, let us now discuss the proper structure of the Plot, since this is the first and most important thing in Tragedy. Now, according to our definition, Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude; for there may be a whole that is wanting in magnitude. A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other thing follows it. A well constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end at haphazard, but conform to these principles. Again, a beautiful object, whether it be a living organism or any whole composed of parts, must not only have an orderly arrangement of parts, but must also be of a certain magnitude; for beauty depends on magnitude and order. Hence a very small animal organism cannot be beautiful; for the view of it is confused, the object being seen in an almost imperceptible moment of time. Nor, again, can one of vast size be beautiful; for as the eye cannot take it all in at once, the unity and sense of the whole is lost for the spectator; as for instance if there were one a thousand miles long. As, therefore, in the case of animate bodies and organisms a certain magnitude is necessary, and a magnitude which may be easily embraced in one view; so in the plot, a certain length is necessary, and a length which can be easily embraced by the memory. The limit of length in relation to dramatic competition and sensuous presentment, is no part of artistic theory. For had it been the rule for a hundred tragedies to compete together, the performance would have been regulated by the water-clock,—as indeed we are told was formerly done. But the limit as fixed by the nature of the drama itself is this: the greater the length, the more beautiful will the piece be by reason of its size, provided that the whole be perspicuous. And to define the matter roughly, we may say that the proper magnitude is comprised within such limits, that the sequence of events, according to the law of probability or necessity, will admit of a change from bad fortune to good, or from good fortune to bad.

Unity of plot does not, as some persons think, consist in the Unity of the hero. For infinitely various are the incidents in one man's life which cannot be reduced to unity; and so, too, there are many actions of one man out of which we cannot make one action. Hence, the error, as it appears, of all poets who have composed a Heracleid, a Theseid, or other poems of the kind. They imagine that as Heracles was one man, the story of Heracles must also be a unity. But Homer, as in all else he is of surpassing merit, here too—whether from art or natural genius—seems to have happily discerned the truth. In composing the Odyssey he did not include all the adventures of Odysseus—such as his wound on Parnassus, or his feigned madness at the mustering of the host—incidents between which there was no necessary or probable connection: but he made the Odyssey, and likewise the Iliad, to centre round an action that in our sense of the word is one. As therefore, in the other imitative arts, the imitation is one when the object imitated is one, so the plot, being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole, the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed. For a thing whose presence or absence makes no visible

difference, is not an organic part of the whole. have happened. Still there are even some tragedies in which there are only one or two well known names, the rest being fictitious. In others, none are well known, as in Agathon's *Antheus*, where incidents and names alike are fictitious, and yet they give none the less pleasure. We must not, therefore, at all costs keep to the received legends, which are the usual subjects of Tragedy. Indeed, it would be absurd to attempt it; for even subjects that are known are known only to a few, and yet give pleasure to all. It clearly follows that the poet or 'maker' should be the maker of plots rather than of verses; since he is a poet because he imitates, and what he imitates are actions. And even if he chances to take an historical subject, he is none the less a poet; for there is no reason why some events that have actually happened should not conform to the law of the probable and possible, and in virtue of that quality in them he is their poet or maker. Of all plots and actions the episodic are the worst. I call a plot 'episodic' in which the episodes or acts succeed one another without probable or necessary sequence. Bad poets compose such pieces by their own fault, good poets, to please the players; for, as they write show pieces for competition, they stretch the plot beyond its capacity, and are often forced to break the natural continuity. But again, Tragedy is an imitation not only of a complete action, but of events inspiring fear or pity. Such an effect is best produced when the events come on us by sunrise; and the effect is heightened when, at the same time, they follow as cause and effect. The tragic wonder will thee be greater than if they happened of themselves or by accident; for even coincidences are most striking when they have an air of design. We may instance the statue of Mitys at Argos, which fell upon his murderer while he was a spectator at a festival, and killed him. Such events seem not to be due to mere chance. Plots, therefore, constructed on these principles are necessarily the best.

Plots are either Simple or Complex, for the actions in real life, of which the plots are an imitation, obviously show a similar distinction. An action which is one and continuous in the sense above defined, I call Simple, when the change of fortune takes place without Reversal of the Situation and without Recognition. A Complex action is one in which the change is accompanied by such Reversal, or by Recognition, or by both. These last should arise from the internal structure of the plot, so that what follows should be the necessary or probable result of the preceding action. It makes all the difference whether any given event is a case of *propter hoc* or *post hoc*.

Reversal of the Situation is a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to our rule of probability or necessity. Thus in the *Oedipus*, the messenger comes to cheer Oedipus and free him from his alarms about his mother, but by revealing who he is, he produces the opposite effect. Again in the *Lynceus*, Lynceus is being led away to his death, and Danaus goes with him, meaning, to slay him; but the outcome of the preceding incidents is that Danaus is killed and Lynceus saved. Recognition, as the name indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune. The best form of recognition is coincident with a Reversal of the Situation, as in the *Oedipus*. There are indeed other forms. Even inanimate things of the most trivial kind may in a sense be objects of recognition. Again, we may recognise or discover whether a person has done a thing or not. But the recognition which is most intimately connected with the plot and action is, as we have said, the recognition of persons. This recognition, combined, with Reversal, will produce either pity or fear; and actions producing these effects are those which, by our definition, Tragedy represents. Moreover, it is upon such situations that the issues of good or bad fortune will depend. Recognition, then, being between persons, it may happen that one person only is recognised by the other—when the latter is already known—or it may be necessary that the recognition should be on both sides. Thus Iphigenia is revealed to Orestes by the sending of the

letter; but another act of recognition is required to make Orestes known to Iphigenia. Two parts, then, of the Plot—Reversal of the Situation and Recognition—turn upon surprises. A third part is the Scene of Suffering. The Scene of Suffering is a destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds and the like.

[The parts of Tragedy which must be treated as elements of the whole have been already mentioned. We now come to the quantitative parts, and the separate parts into which Tragedy is divided, namely, Prologue, Episode, Exode, Choric song; this last being divided into Parode and Stasimon. These are common to all plays: peculiar to some are the songs of actors from the stage and the *Commoi*. The Prologue is that entire part of a tragedy which precedes the Parode of the Chorus. The Episode is that entire part of a tragedy which is between complete choric songs. The Exode is that entire part of a tragedy which has no choric song after it. Of the Choric part the Parode is the first undivided utterance of the Chorus: the Stasimon is a Choric ode without anapaests or trochaic tetrameters: the *Commos* is a joint lamentation of Chorus and actors. The parts of Tragedy which must be treated as elements of the whole have been already mentioned. The quantitative parts the separate parts into which it is divided—are here enumerated.]

As the sequel to what has already been said, we must proceed to consider what the poet should aim at, and what he should avoid, in constructing his plots; and by what means the specific effect of Tragedy will be produced. A perfect tragedy should, as we have seen, be arranged not on the simple but on the complex plan. It should, moreover, imitate actions which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of tragic imitation. It follows plainly, in the first place, that the change, of fortune presented must not be the spectacle of a virtuous man brought from prosperity to adversity: for this moves neither pity nor fear; it merely shocks us. Nor, again, that of a bad man passing from adversity to prosperity: for nothing can be more alien to the spirit of Tragedy; it possesses no single tragic quality; it neither satisfies the moral sense nor calls forth pity or fear. Nor, again, should the downfall of the utter villain be exhibited. A plot of this kind would, doubtless, satisfy the moral sense, but it would inspire neither pity nor fear; for pity is aroused by unmerited misfortune, fear by the misfortune of a man like ourselves. Such an event, therefore, will be neither pitiful nor terrible. There remains, then, the character between these two extremes,—that of a man who is not eminently good and just,—yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty. He must be one who is highly renowned and prosperous,—a personage like Oedipus, Thyestes, or other illustrious men of such families. A well constructed plot should, therefore, be single in its issue, rather than double as some maintain. The change of fortune should be not from bad to good, but, reversely, from good to bad. It should come about as the result not of vice, but of some great error or frailty, in a character either such as we have described, or better rather than worse. The practice of the stage bears out our view. At first the poets recounted any legend that came in their way. Now, the best tragedies are founded on the story of a few houses, on the fortunes of Alcmaeon, Oedipus, Orestes, Meleager, Thyestes, Telephus, and those others who have done or suffered something terrible. A tragedy, then, to be perfect according to the rules of art should be of this construction. Hence they are in error who censure Euripides just because he follows this principle in his plays, many of which end unhappily. It is, as we have said, the right ending. The best proof is that on the stage and in dramatic competition, such plays, if well worked out, are the most tragic in effect; and Euripides, faulty though he may be in the general management of his subject, yet is felt to be the most tragic of the poets. In the second rank comes the kind of tragedy which some place first. Like the *Odyssey*, it has a double thread of plot, and also an opposite catastrophe for the good and for the bad. It is accounted the best because of the weakness of the spectators; for the

poet is guided in what he writes by the wishes of his audience. The pleasure, however, thence derived is not the true tragic pleasure. It is proper rather to Comedy, where those who, in the piece, are the deadliest enemies—like Orestes and Aegisthus—quit the stage as friends at the close, and no one slays or is slain.

### 8.5 Aristotle's views on Poetry

Aristotle's views on Poetry lies like the below

1. **The Nature of Poetry:** Poetry is an imitation or Mimesis. Plato was the first to apply the term to describe poetry. Plato condemned poetry for being an imitation. Aristotle corrects his master Plato's impression about poetry. He defines poetry as "Art imitates nature....Art finishes the job when nature fails, or imitates the missing parts." According to Aristotle imitation of poetry is the imitation of the inner human action. Whereas for Plato imitation is the imitation of the physical reality which is again an imitation of the idea of life. Aristotle writes in *Poetics* that Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy and Dithyrambic Poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all..., the manner or the mode of imitation."
2. **Object of Imitation:** Aristotle's equivalent term for mimesis is Homoioima. Homoioima meant imitation of passions in the form of rhythm and melody. However, Aristotle is the first critic to stress that metrical composition is not necessary for poetry. The peculiar object of imitation of poetry is "men in action." The men could be higher or lower and could be better worse than in the real life. For example, according to Aristotle comedy shows men as worse than the real. On the other hand, tragedy shows men as better than the real. Thus, Aristotle places the object of poetry in imitation of human nature.
3. **The Nature of Poetry:** The imitation of poetry is defined as imitation of imagination by Aristotle. The poets are specialized genius in imitating imagination can only create poetry. Poet is a grown-up child with an impulse to relate the higher meanings of truth to reality.
4. **The Function of Poetry:** Aristotle continues the ancient Greek norm that aesthetics should not be divorced from civic end. But his opinion rejects his master Plato's charges against poetry. Aristotle emphasizes, through his theory of catharsis that literature provides safe outlet for disturbing passions. So, poetry helps to generate a better state of mind.
5. **Classification of Poetry:** Aristotle's classification of poetry is based on the character of the writer. And there are two kinds of poetry.
  - A) **The Heroic/Dithyramb/Tragic:** The noble writers imitate noble action, especially of good men. Example: Homer composed hymns to the Gods and the praises of famous men.
  - B) **The Lamponing/Satire/Comedy:** The more trivial poets imitate the actions of meaner persons. The inferior spirits composed satires. The parent forms of comedy are satirical verse and phallic songs. The comedy must ridicule the ugliness or vices but should not cause pain.
  - C) **The Epic:** Along with the above two Aristotle gives one more classification of poetry that is the epic. The Epic is older than either Tragedy or Comedy. It is both narrative and meter.

**Aristotle makes a passing remark to lyrical poetry but does not elaborate it.** To conclude, Aristotle views on poetry are more relevant to modern view of poetry than his master Plato or his predecessors.

## 8.6 Aristotle's Views on Epic

Aristotle jots down his views on epic as found in the following headings,

**A. Definition:** Aristotle defines Epic as a poetic imitation in narrative form composed in single meter and “the plot manifestly ought as in a tragedy.

Subject: Aristotle has emphasized that an epic must have a single action. The single action has to be whole and complete.

**B. Organic Unity:** A beginning, a middle, and an end is essential to an epic. The three parts must have a unity which resembles the unity of living organism so that the epic produces pleasure.

**C. Different from Historical composition:** Aristotle makes a difference between a historical composition and an Epic. Historical Composition is based on single period while an epic is based on single action.

**D. Kinds of Epic:** Epic is classified into simple or ethical and complex or pathetic by Aristotle. Each kind must have “Reversals of the Situation, Recognitions, and Scenes of Suffering.

**Epic vs Tragedy:** Tragedy is for single sitting. The action of tragedy has the limitations of stage and players' action. On the other hand, epic can transcend the all limitation providing greater pleasure by blending together the incongruous.

**E. Heroic Metre:** The best suited metre for epic is Heroic metre according to Aristotle. Heroic is stately and massive as is needed for majesty of an epic. Iambic and trochaic tetrameter are stirring measures.

**F. Homer is the best Epic Poet:** According to Aristotle Homer is the best illustration to the perfect epic writing. He has always quoted Homer as an example to his theory of epic poetry.

## 8.7 Aristotle's views on Tragedy

Aristotle assigns very important place to tragedy. His definition of Tragedy is –

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

**8.7.1 The Nature of Tragedy:** the main object of tragedy is “an imitation of action.” According to Aristotle ‘action’ implies an event or process of events. The action unfolds through human agents, the characters.

**8.7.2 Constituent Parts of Tragedy:** According to Aristotle, tragedy has six parts-

**8.7.3 The Plot:** The plot means “the imitation of the action” and “the arrangement of incidents.” For Aristotle plot is more important than character. The plot must have a distinctive beginning, middle and the end. The middle and the end must be the natural and inevitable consequence of the beginning. The plot must be arranged in certain length to have proper magnitude.

**8.7.4 Three Unities:** A good plot must subscribe to three unities,

- i. **Unity of Action:** A compact and complete plot with no unnecessary dialogues or events or characters. Aristotle disapproves episodic plots.
- ii. **Unity of Time:** The whole plot must complete within the single revolution of time. and
- iii. **Unity of Place:** Aristotle did not directly mention unity of place. It is implied in his proposition of unity of time. Since in real life people could not change their place within 24 hours, the unity of place is understood unity.

**8.7.5 The Kinds of Plot:** Aristotle gives two kinds of plot. They are,

- a. **Simple Plot:** An action which is one and continuous and in which the change of fortune takes place without reversal of the situation (Periteteia) and without recognition (Anagnorisis) leading to morality is simple.
- b. **Complex Plot:** The complex plot has peripeteia accompanying anagnorisis or one of the two. Peripeteia is irony of worlds. And Anagnorisis is heroes realization of irony of the world. Hamartia - the heroic flaw is the catalyst of the complex plot. The moral consequence is the object of Perpetia, Anagnorisis and Hamartia.

**8.7.6 Plot – Emotions of Pity and Fear:** The plot must contain a powerful appeal to emotions of pity and fear. In order to affect this there must be a change from good to bad fortune, and this change or disaster must be so managed as to enlist the sympathies of the spectator in the highest degree. Aristotle explains that – “It should, moreover, imitate actions which excite pity and fear, this being the distinctive mark of fortune presented must be the spectacle of a virtuous man brought from prosperity to adversity for this means neither pity no fear; it merely shocks us.

**8.7.7 Division of Plot:** The plot is divisible into two parts – complication and its unraveling or denouement. The former ties the events into the tangled knot, the latter unties it. The complication extends from the beginning of action to the part which marks the turning point to good or bad fortunes. The unraveling is that which extends from the beginning of change to the end. The first is commonly called rising action and the second falling action.

**8.7.8 Character:** A tragic hero must be good human as per the classical Greek tradition. He is a person above common level. Aristotle prescribes four things for character portrayal. They are-

- a. A Good Person
- b. Has propriety – manly valour, but valour in a woman, or unscrupulous cleverness, inappropriate
- c. Character must be true to life. And
- d. Consistency – Consistency in consistent.

**8.7.9 Thought and Diction:** Thought is the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in given circumstances. Character is revealed through thought and thought diction. Aristotle says that character is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids. Thought has to be produced by speech. Proof and refutation are its subdivisions. It includes “the excitation of the feelings, such a pity, fear, anger and the like: the suggestion of importance or its opposite.” Diction to Aristotle “the expression of the meaning in words,” He believed that the language of poetry must be enriched especially by the use of metaphor which he pronounces to be the greatest of technical aids and adds that “it is proof of natural ability; for to write good metaphors is to have an eye for analogies.”

**8.7.10 Songs:** Aristotle allows judicious use of songs. According to Aristotle spectacular effects depends more on the art of the stage machinist than on that of the poet.

**8.7.11 The Function of Tragedy- Catharsis:** Aristotle describes the specific effect, the proper function of tragedy, which is “through pity and fear effecting “in calm of mind, all passions spent.” Thus, tragedy provides a harmless and pleasurable and outlet for instincts which delights the soul. So, the function of Tragedy is purgation.

**8.7.12 Aristotle’s observation on Style:** The use of current and proper words contributes to clarify and lucidity aimed at dignity and charm.

## 8.8 Conclusion

Aristotle’s *Poetics* remains one of the greatest contributions to literary and critical theory. The Renaissance was deeply influenced by *Poetics*. His influence can be felt in Sidney, Ben Jonson, etc English critics. The pseudo or neo-classicism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was formed on the various interpretations of *Poetics*.

## 8.9 Questions

1. What is the significance of Aristotle in literary Criticism?
2. What are the features of Tragedy as explained in *Poetics*?
3. Epic is Poetic imitation, critically, expand Aristotle’s view.

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MODEL QUESTION PAPER  
B.A. SPECIAL ENGLISH - 2023.  
(Examination at the end of Second Semester)  
COURSE II — SPECIAL ENGLISH  
Time : Three hours Maximum : 70 marks

**Unit -1 History of English literature PART A (Compulsory)**

**14 marks**

Q.1

Answer any four of the following topics/ terms (Short Answers)

- A) Tragedy
- B) Metaphysical Conceit
- C) Aphoristic Essay
- D) Bacon style in his Essay
- E) Elegy
- F) Lyric
- G) Comedy
- H) Elizabethan period

**PART -B(14x4 =56m)**

Answer the following questions from each unit one question

**UNIT 2 (Drama)**

Q2. A) Examine the growth of Drama during Elizabethan period.

14x1=14 m

**OR**

Examine William Shakespeare as a popular dramatist of Elizabethan period.

**OR**

Examine the character of Macbeth in the play *Macbeth*.

**UNIT 3(Poetry)**

14x1=14m

Q3 a) Explain the differences between poetic styles of John Donne and Ben Jonson.

**OR**

Explain the poem "For whom the bell Tolls" by John Donne.

**OR**

Examine John Donne as a Metaphysical poet.

**Unit 4 (Prose)**

14x1=14M

Q4.(a) Explain different forms of Essays with examples.

**OR**

Explain the central theme of the Essay "Of Superstition/ of Parents and Children".

**OR**

Examine the concepts dealt by John Donne in the Essay "Of Youth and Age"

**Unit 5(Literary Criticism)**

14X1=14M

Q 5 (a) What is the significance of Aristotle in literary Criticism?

**OR**

(b) What are the features of Tragedy as explained in Poetics?

**OR**

(c) "Epic is Poetic imitation", critically expand Aristotle's view.

