

SHAKESPEARE

(DEG02)

(M.A. ENGLISH)



ACHARYA NAGARJUNA UNIVERSITY

CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

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PAPER II : SHAKESPEARE

Time: 3 Hrs

Max.Marks: 100

*Q.No: 1 in Unit I is compulsory.
Answer TWO questions from Unit II and
TWO questions from Unit III. All questions carry equal marks.*

UNIT - I

1. Annotate any FOUR of the following:

- a) No more the thirsty entrance of the soil
Shall daub her lips with her own children's blood;
No more shall trenching war channel her fields,
Nor bruise her flowerets with her armed hoofs
Of hostile paces.
- b) Thou judgest false already; I mean, thou
Shall have the hanging of the thieves and
So become a rare hangman.
- c) Makes a welsh as sweet as ditties highly penn'd,
Sung by a fair in a summer's bower
With ravishing division, to her cute.
- d) Do you not love me? do you not, indeed
Well do not then; for since you love me not
I will not love myself. Do you not love me?
May, tell me if you speak in jest or no.
- e) O God! a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourn'd longer - married with my uncle,
My father's brother; but no more like my father.
- f) And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me - no, nor woman neither,
though by your smiling you seem to say so.
- g) The instances that second marriage move
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love.
A second time I kill my husband dead
When second husband kisses me in bed.
- h) If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity a while

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.

UNIT - II

2. Bring out the importance of comic spirit in Henry IV Part - I.
3. Comment on the comic element in Henry IV Part - I.
4. Attempt a critical estimate of Hamlet as a tragic hero.
5. Sketch the character of Polonius.
6. Comment on Shakespeare's treatment of History.

UNIT - III

7. Write a note on the immense variety of love in Twelfth Night.
8. Discuss the character of Prospero.
9. Evaluate the achievement of Shakespeare as a Sonneteer.
10. Write short notes on any FOUR of the following :
 - a) Theme of revenge
 - b) Shakespearean utopia
 - c) Music in Shakespeare
 - d) The historical drama
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UNIT -1 (A) - LESSON - 1

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (REVISED)

CONTENTS

I.1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.2 Greatness of Shakespeare
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1.1 INTRODUCTION

This lesson introduces you to the life of Shakespeare from varied angles. He occupies a special place in the world of literature. You can observe how he has grasped the magic of life through subtle observation.

1.2 Greatness of Shakespeare

Widely regarded as the greatest writer of all time, William Shakespeare occupies a position unique in world literature. Other poets, such as Homer and Dante, and novelists, such as Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens, have transcended national barriers; but no writer's living reputation can seriously compare with that of Shakespeare, whose plays, written in the late 16th and early 17th centuries for a small repertory theatre are now performed and read more often and in more countries than ever before. The prophecy of his great contemporary, the poet and dramatist Ben Jonson, that Shakespeare "was not of an age, but for all time", has been marvellously fulfilled. He has long been recognized as the world's finest dramatist and a poet of high rank, and most modern critics consider him the world's greatest figure. The variety of gifts that enabled him to create imaginative visions of pathos and mirth, whether read in the book or witnessed in the theatre, fill the mind and linger therein.

He is a writer of great intellectual rapidity, perceptiveness, and poetic power. Other writers have had these qualities. But with Shakespeare the keenness of mind was applied not to abstruse or remote subjects but to human beings and their complete range of emotions and conflicts. The art form into which his creative energies went was not remote and bookish but involved the vivid stage impersonation of human beings, commanding sympathy and inviting vicarious participation. Thus many of Shakespeare's great merits have survived translation into other languages and into cultures remote from that of Elizabethan England.

1.3 Early Life and Education

William Shakespeare was born at Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, in 1564. He was baptized there in Holy Trinity Church on April 26. His birth date is not known, but is traditionally celebrated on April 23 because children were usually baptized a few days after their birth.

William's father, John Shakespeare, dressed leather and made and sold such leather goods as gloves and purses. He also dealt in grain and other agricultural products, owned several buildings in Stratford, and held some of the town's most important offices. His wife, Mary Arden was of the Arden family, prosperous farmers and landowners in the vicinity, she was the heiress to some land.

Stratford was not a large town, but it was a thriving market place about 90 miles from London. Its grammar school, King's New School, was one of the best in England. As in other English schools of the time, Latin grammar and Latin literature were emphasized, with Greek sometimes taught in the upper grades. The boy's education consisted of Latin studies, learning to read, write and speak the language fairly well and studying some of the classical historians, moralists and poets. There was instruction in logic, rhetoric, education, and history, little or more in the sciences. Shakespeare did not go on to the university, and indeed it is unlikely that the tedious round of logic, rhetoric, and other studies then followed there would have interested him.

1.4 Marriage and Employment

In November, 1582, William was married to Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a farmer near Stratford. A daughter, Susanna, was born to the couple in 1583. Hamlet and Judith, twins, were born two years later. Little else is known of Shakespeare's early married life.

How Shakespeare spent the next eight years or so, until his name began to appear in London theatre records, is not known. There are stories, given currency long after his death--of stealing deer and getting into trouble with a local magnate, Sir Thomas Lucy of Charlecote, near Stratford; of learning his living as a school master in the country; of going to London and gaining entry to the world of theatre by minding the horses of theatregoers; it has also been conjectured that Shakespeare spent some time as a member of a great household and that he was a soldier, perhaps in the low countries. In lieu of external evidence, such extrapolations about Shakespeare's life have often been made from the internal "evidence" of his writings. But this method is unsatisfactory, one cannot conclude, for example, from his allusions to the law that Shakespeare was a lawyer; for he

was clearly a writer, who without difficulty could get whatever knowledge he needed for the composition of his plays.

1.5 Shakespeare in London

Though there is little direct knowledge of Shakespeare's life in London before 1594 reasonable assumptions have been made from records or later events. Modern researchers believe it more probable that Shakespeare simply left Stratford to seek his fortune. He did not break ties with his home town, and there is no indication that he lost contact with his family. It is also probable that he left Stratford with the intention of seeking a theatrical career. He had many opportunities to see plays staged by touring companies in Stratford and nearby towns.

The first reference to Shakespeare in the literary world of London came in 1592, when a fellow dramatist, Robert Greene, declared in a pamphlet written on his death bed:

There is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers heart wrapt in a players hide* supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and, being an absolute *Johannes Factotum*, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country.

Greene's bitterness reflects envy of someone more successful than himself. His malice provoked a defense of Shakespeare by a minor playwright, Henry Chettle, who wrote of him as one whose "demeanor" was "no less civil than he excellent in the quality he professes".

Shakespeare was by then making important friends. For, although the puritanical city of London was generally hostile to the theatre, many of the nobility were good patrons of the drama and friends of actors. Shakespeare seems to have attracted the attention of the young Henry Wriothesley, the 3rd earl of Southampton; and to this nobleman were dedicated his first published poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*.

One striking piece of evidence that Shakespeare began to prosper early and tried to retrieve the family fortunes and establish its gentility is the fact that a coat of arms was granted to John Shakespeare in 1596. Rough drafts of this grant have been preserved in the College of Arms, London, though the final document, which must have been handed to the Shakespeare's, has not survived. It can scarcely be doubted that it was William who took the initiative and paid the fees. The coat of arms appears on Shakespeare's monument (constructed before 1623) in the Stratford church. Equally interesting as evidence of Shakespeare's worldly success was his purchase in 1597 of New Place, a large house in Stratford, which as a boy he must have passed every day in walking to school.

It is not clear how his career in the theatre began; but from about 1594 onward he was an important member of the Lord Chamberlain's Company of players (called the King's Men after the accession of James I in 1603). They had the best actor, Richard Burbage; they had the best theatre,

the Globe; they had the best dramatist, Shakespeare. It is no wonder that the company prospered. Shakespeare became a full-time professional man of his own theatre, sharing in a cooperative enterprise and intimately concerned with the financial success of the plays he wrote.

Unfortunately, written records give little indication of the way in which Shakespeare's professional life molded his marvellous artistry. All that can be deduced is that for 20 years Shakespeare devoted himself assiduously to his art, writing more than a million words of poetic drama of the highest quality.

1.6 Other Aspects of Shakespeare's Life

Shakespeare had little contact with officialdom, apart from walking-dressed in the royal livery as a member of the King's Men-at the coronation of King James I in 1604. He continued to look after his financial interests. He bought properties in London and in Stratford. In 1605 he purchased a share (about one-fifth) of the Stratford tithes-a fact that explains why he was eventually buried in the chancel of its parish church. For some time he lodged with a French Huguenot family called Mountjoy, who lived near St. Olave's Church, Cripplegate, London. The records of a lawsuit in May 1612, due to a Mountjoy family quarrel, show Shakespeare as giving evidence in a genial way (though unable to remember certain important facts that would have decided the case) and as interesting himself generally in the family's affairs.

No letters written by Shakespeare have survived, but a private letter to him happened to get caught up with some official transactions of the town of Stratford and so has been preserved in the borough archives. It was written by one Richard Quiney and addressed by him from the Bell Inn in Carter Lane, London, whither he had gone from Stratford upon business. On one side of the paper is inscribed: "To my loving good friend and countryman, Mr. Wm. Shakespeare, deliver these." Apparently Quiney thought his fellow Stratfordian a person to whom he could apply for the loan of £30-a large sum in Elizabethan money. Nothing further is known about the transaction, but, because so few opportunities of seeing into Shakespeare's private life present themselves, this begging letter becomes a touching document. It is of some interest, moreover, that 18 years later Quiney's son Thomas became the husband of Judith, Shakespeare's second daughter.

Shakespeare's will (made on March 25, 1616) is a long and detailed document. It entailed his quite ample property on the male heirs of his elder daughter, Susanna. (Both his daughters were then married, one to the aforementioned Thomas Quiney and the other to John Hall, a respected physician of Stratford.) As an afterthought, he bequeathed his "second-best bed" to his wife, but no one can be certain what this notorious legacy means. The testator's signatures to the will are apparently in a shaky hand. Perhaps Shakespeare was already ill. He died on April 23, 1616. No name was inscribed on his gravestone in the chancel of the parish church of Stratford-on-Avon. Instead these lines, possibly his own, appeared:

Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blest be the man that spares these stones,
And crust be he that moves my bones.

Shakespeare's family or friends, however, were not content with a simple gravestone, and, within a few years, a monument was erected on the chancel wall. It seems to have existed by 1623. Its Latin epitaph, immediately below the bust, attributes to Shakespeare the worldly wisdom of Nestor, the genius of Socrates, and the poetic art of Virgil. This apparently was how his contemporaries in Stratford-on-Avon wished their fellow citizen to be remembered.

The memory of Shakespeare survived long in theatrical circles, for his plays remained a major part of the repertory of the King's Men until the closing of the theatres in 1642. The greatest of Shakespeare's great contemporaries in the theatre, Ben Jonson, had a good deal to say about him. To William Drummond of Hawthornden in 1619 he said that Shakespeare "wanted art." But, when he came to write his splendid poem prefixed to the Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays in 1623, he rose to the occasion with stirring words of praise:

Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe
He was not of an age, but for all time!

Besides almost retracting his earlier gibe about Shakespeare's lack of art, he gives testimony that Shakespeare's personality was to be felt, by those who knew him, in his poetry--that the style was the man. Jonson also reminded his readers of the strong impression the plays had made upon Queen Elizabeth I and King James I at court performances:

Sweet Swan of Avon, what a sight it were
To see thee in our waters yet appear,
And make those flights upon the banks of Thames
That so did take Eliza and our James!

Shakespeare seems to have been on affectionate terms with his theatre colleagues. His fellow actors John Heminge and Henry Condell (who, with Burbage, were remembered in his will) dedicated the First Folio of 1623 to the Earl of Pembroke and the Earl of Montgomery, explaining that they had collected the plays ". . . without ambition either of self-profit or fame; only to keep the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive as was our Shakespeare, . . ."

1.2 LET US SUM UP

Hope this lesson has given you a detailed background of Shakespeare as an individual and as a playwright. A look at his personal life will strengthen our reading of his plays.

I.3 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- (1) Where was Shakespeare born and when?
- (2) Write about his marriage?
- (3) How could Shakespeare become a playwright?
- (4) Write about the life of Shakespeare as a playwright?
- (5) Why is Shakespeare greater than other writers ?

I.4 SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Describe in detail the life of Shakespeare as an individual and as a playwright
2. What was the criticism against Shakespeare?

I.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Charles William. **A Short Life of Shakespeare with Sources** (1933).
2. E.J. Fripp. **Shakespeare, Man and Artist**, 2 Vol, (1938)
3. Peter Alexander. **Shakespeare's Life and Art** (1939) reprinted in 1961.
4. Hazelton Spencer. **The Art and Life of William Shakespeare** (1940) reprinted in 1970.

PROF. R. SARASWATHI

UNIT -1 (A) - LESSON - 2

BACKGROUND TO SHAKESPEARE

(Intellectual and Theatrical Background)

CONTENTS

- 2.1 INTRODUCTION
- 2.2 INTELLECTUAL AND THEATRICAL BACKGROUND
- 2.3 POETIC CONVENTIONS AND DRAMATIC TRADITIONS
- 2.4 CHANGES IN LANGUAGE
- 2.5 SHAKESPEARE'S LITERARY DEBTS
- 2.6 THEATRICAL CONDITIONS
- 2.7 THE PROGRESS OF SHAKESPEARE CRITICISM
- 2.8 SHAKESPEARE'S INFLUENCE
- 2.9 LET US SUM UP
- 2.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS
- 2.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

For your convenience, this lesson is divided into three separate units. After going through these lessons, you will be able to understand the secret behind the success of a world-famous dramatist.

2.2 SHAKESPEARE'S INTELLECTUAL AND THEATRICAL BACKGROUND

For a poetic dramatist, Shakespeare was born at the right time. He grew up during a period of increasing stability and prosperity in England. Queen Elizabeth was unifying the nation. Patriotic sentiment was increasing. Continental influences were helping in the transmission of classical knowledge which we call the Renaissance. The arts in general were flourishing; those of literature and drama bounded forward far more rapidly than in the earlier part of the century. The years between Shakespeare's birth and his emergence in London saw the appearance of the first major translations of Ovid, Apuleius, Horace, Heliodorus, Plutarch, Homer, Seneca, and Virgil; Shakespeare seems to have known most of these, and those of Ovid and Plutarch, at least, had a profound influence on him. During the same period appeared William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, an important collection of tales including some by Boccaccio that Shakespeare used: Holinshed's

Chronicles; Lyly's *Euphues*; Sidney's *Arcadia* and *Astrophil and Stella*; early books of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*; Lodge's *Rosalynde*; prose romances and other pamphlets of Robert Greene; the early writing of Thomas Nashe; and other books that Shakespeare either used or must have known. Indeed, it is not exaggeration to say that almost all Shakespeare's major sources are in books written or first translated into English during the first thirty years of his life, though of course he could have read the Latin works, and, probably, those in French and Italian, even if they had not been translated. The greatest earlier English author known to him was Chaucer, and he was considerably influenced by the publication in 1603 of Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essays*.

English dramatic literature developed greatly in Shakespeare's early years. Four years before his birth, blank verse was introduced as a dramatic medium in Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc*. When he was two years old, George Gascoigne's *Supposes*, a translation from Ariosto and the first play written entirely in English prose, was acted; he was to draw on it in *The Taming of the Shrew*. These are early landmarks. He was already a young man before the pace of development really accelerated. John Lyly's courtly comedies, mostly in prose, began to appear in 1584, the year in which George Peele's *The Arraignment of Paris* was presented to the queen. The pace increased in the later 1580's with Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, Greene's *James IV*, and, above all, the emergence of Christopher Marlowe. Shakespeare was finding his feet in the theatre. Our knowledge of the exact ordering of events in this period is so uncertain that we cannot always say whether he was influenced by the writers of these plays or himself exerted influence on them. What is undeniable is that English drama was rapidly increasing in range, scope, and power. Prose was for the first time becoming a rich dramatic medium—all the more so for its intermingling with verse styles that were immeasurably enriched by the ever more flexible uses that writers were making of blank verse. Growth in the size of acting companies and in the popularity of theatrical entertainment encouraged the writing of more ambitious plays, interweaving plot with subplot, tragedy with comedy, diversified with songs, dances, masques, and spectacular effects in ways that were unknown only a few years before.

The rapid progress of dramatic literature was thus inextricably linked with equally important developments in the theatrical arts. Shakespeare was twelve when James Burbage, already the father of the boy who was to become the greatest actor of Shakespeare's company, erected the Theatre, the first building in England designed primarily for theatrical performances. Before this, acting companies had roamed the land, the better ones under noble protection, playing where they could—in halls of great houses, at the Inns of Court, in guildhalls, and in innyards. Now one company, at least, had a permanent building; it was followed by others. The companies grew in size. They had the facilities to perform increasingly ambitious plays. They were encouraged by enthusiastic audiences and by the pleasure taken in drama by the queen and her court, even though they had also to resist the opposition of Puritan forces. They were, at the least, highly competent. Some gained international reputations. Boy actors, progressing through a system of apprenticeship, played female roles in a fully professional manner.

The Elizabethan theater, with its open roof, thrust, uncurtained stage, absence of representational scenery, rear opening, and upper level, was a sophisticated, if fundamentally

simple, instrument. It was a nonrepresentational, emblematic medium, shaped by and shaping the poetic dramas that prevailed on its stages.

We do not know when Shakespeare joined a company of players. In 1587 the Queen's Men lost one of their actors through manslaughter in Oxfordshire. They visited Stratford soon afterward. That they there enlisted Shakespeare is no more than an intriguing speculation. Some evidence suggests that he may have belonged to Pembroke's Men, first heard of in 1592. Certainly he was one of the Lord Chamberlain's Men shortly after they were founded, in 1594, and remained with them throughout his career. Rapidly this became London's leading company, outshining its main rival, the Lord Admiral's Men, led by Edward Alleyn. With the Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare became a complete man of the theater: actor, businessman, and dramatic poet. He is the only leading playwright of his time to have had so stable a relationship with a single company. He wrote with their actors specifically in mind, and the conditions in which they performed helped also to shape his plays. They flourished; built the Globe as their London base from 1599; survived the competition of the successful children's companies in the early years of the new century; acquired King James I as their patron in 1603, soon after his accession; increased in size while remaining relatively stable in membership; and by 1609 were using the Blackfriars as a winter house--a "private" theater, enclosed, smaller, more exclusive in its patronage than the Globe. Perhaps it affected Shakespeare's playwriting style; yet his plays continued to be performed at the Globe and elsewhere.

Shakespeare lived at a time when ideas and social structures established in the Middle Ages still informed men's thought and behaviour. Queen Elizabeth I was God's deputy on earth, and lords and commons had their due places in society under her, with responsibilities up through her to God and down to those of more humble rank. The order of things, however, did not go unquestioned. Atheism was still considered a challenge to the beliefs and way of life of a majority of Elizabethans, but the Christian faith was no longer single--Rome's authority had been challenged by Martin Luther, John Calvin, and a multitude of small religious sects. Royal prerogative was challenged in Parliament; the economic and social orders were disturbed by the rise of capitalism, by the redistribution of monastic lands under Henry VIII, by the expansion of education, and by the influx of new wealth from discovery of new lands.

An interplay of new and old ideas was typical of the time, when official homilies exhorted the people to obedience, while the Italian political theorist Niccolo Machiavelli expounded a new practical code of politics that caused Englishmen to fear the Italian "Machiavillain" and, yet prompted them to ask what men do, rather than what they should do. In *Hamlet*, disquisitions--on man, belief, a "rotten" state, and time "out of joint"--clearly reflect a growing disquiet and skepticism. The translation of Montaigne's *Essays* in 1603 gave further currency, range, and finesse to such thought, and Shakespeare was one of many who read them, making direct and significant quotations in *The Tempest*. In philosophical inquiry the question "how?" became the impulse for advance, rather than the traditional "why?" of Aristotle. Shakespeare's plays written between 1603 and 1606 unmistakably reflect a new, Jacobean distrust. James I, who, like Elizabeth, claimed divine authority, was far less able than she to maintain the authority of the throne. The so-called

Gunpowder Plot (1605) showed a determined challenge by a small minority in the state; James's struggles with the House of Commons in successive Parliaments, in addition to indicating the strength of the "new men," also revealed the inadequacies of the administration.

2.3 POETIC CONVENTIONS AND DRAMATIC TRADITIONS

The Latin comedies of Plautus and Terence were familiar in Elizabethan schools and universities, and English translations or adaptations of them were occasionally performed by students. Seneca's rhetorical and sensational tragedies, too, had been translated and often imitated, both in structure and rhetoric. But there was also a strong native dramatic tradition deriving from the medieval miracle plays, which had continued to be performed in various towns until forbidden during Elizabeth's reign. This native drama had been able to assimilate French popular farce, clerically inspired morality plays on abstract themes, and interludes or short entertainments that made use of the "turns" of individual clowns and actors. Although Shakespeare's immediate predecessors were known as "university wits," their plays were seldom structured in the manner of those they had studied at Oxford or Cambridge; instead, they used and developed the more popular narrative forms. Their subplots, for example, amplified the main action and theme with a freedom and awareness of hierarchical correspondences that are medieval rather than classical.

2.4 CHANGES IN LANGUAGE

The English language at this time was changing and extending its range. The poet Edmund Spenser led with the restoration of old words, and schoolmasters, poets, sophisticated courtiers, and travellers all brought further contributions from France, Italy, and the Roman classics, as well as from farther afield. Helped by the growing availability of cheaper, printed books, the language began to become standardized in grammar and vocabulary and, more slowly, in spelling. Ambitious for a European and permanent reputation, the essayist and philosopher Francis Bacon wrote in Latin as well as in English; but, if he had lived only a few decades later, even he might have had total confidence in his own tongue.

2.5 SHAKESPEARE'S LITERARY DEBTS

In Shakespeare's earlier works his debts stand out clearly: to Plautus for the structure of *The Comedy of Errors*; to the poet Ovid and to Seneca for rhetoric and incident in *Titus Andronicus*; to morality drama for a scene in which a father mourns his dead son, and a son his father, in *Henry VI*; to Marlowe for sentiments and characterization in *Richard III* and *The Merchant of Venice*; to the Italian popular tradition of *commedia dell'arte* for characterization and dramatic style in *The Taming of the Shrew*; and so on. But he did not then reject these influences; rather, he made them his own, so that soon there was no line between their effects and his. In *The Tempest* (which is perhaps the most original of all his plays in form, theme, language, and setting) folk influences may also be traced, together with a newer and more obvious debt to a courtly diversion known as the masque, as developed by Ben Jonson and others at the court of King James.

2.6 THEATRICAL CONDITIONS

The Globe and its predecessor, the Theatre, were public playhouses run by the Chamberlain's Men (later the King's Men), a leading theatre company of which Shakespeare was a member. To these playhouses almost all classes of citizens, except the Puritans, came for afternoon entertainment. The players were also summoned to court, to perform before the monarch and assembled nobility. In the summer they toured the provinces, and on occasion they performed at London's Inns of Court (associations of Law students), at universities, and in great houses. Popularity led to an insatiable demand for plays: repertories were always changing, so that early in 1613 the King's Men could present "fourteen several plays". The theatre soon became fashionable too, and in 1608-09 the King's Men started to perform on a regular basis at the Blackfriars, a "private" indoor theatre where high admission charges assured the company a more select and sophisticated audience.

Shakespeare's first associations with the Chamberlain's Men seem to have been as an actor. He is not known to have acted after 1603, and tradition gives him only secondary roles, such as the ghost in *Hamlet* and Adam in *As You Like It*, but his continuous association must have given him direct working knowledge of all aspects of theatre: like Aeschylus, Moliere, Bertolt Brecht, or Harold Pinter, Shakespeare was able to work with his plays in rehearsal and performance and to know his actors and his audiences and all the different potentialities of theatres and their equipment. Numerous passages in Shakespeare's plays show conscious concern for theatre arts and audience reactions. Prospero in *The Tempest* speaks of the whole of life as a kind of "revels," or theatrical show, that, like a dream, will soon be over. The Duke of York in *Richard II* is conscious of how

... in a theatre, the eyes of men,
After a well-graced actor leaves the stage
Are idly bent on him that enters next,
Thinking his prattle to be tedious.

And Hamlet gives expert advice to visiting actors in the art of playing.

In Shakespeare's day, there was little time for group rehearsals, and actors were given the words of only their own parts. The crucial scenes in Shakespeare's plays, therefore, are between two or three characters only, or else are played with one character dominating a crowded stage. Female parts were written for young male actors or boys, so Shakespeare did not often write big roles for them or keep them actively engaged on stage for lengthy periods. Writing for the clowns of the company--who were important popular attractions in any play--presented the problem of allowing them to use their comic personalities and tricks and yet have them serve the immediate interests of theme and action.

Theatre is a collaborative art, only occasionally yielding the right conditions for individual genius to flourish and develop, and Shakespeare's achievement must at least in part be due to his

continuous association with the Chamberlain's and King's Men, who were as practiced in acting together as he was to become in writing for them.

2.7 THE PROGRESS OF SHAKESPEARE CRITICISM

Shakespeare criticism must take into account the certainty that Shakespeare intended his plays to be acted, that he was the professional playwright of a repertory company, that the success of a play in performance by his company was what determined his income, and that during his lifetime he apparently made no effort (or perhaps was too busy) to gain a "literary" reputation from his plays. Yet, his contemporaries had no doubt about his literary eminence. Heminge and Condell, his fellow players, and Ben Jonson, his fellow playwright, commended the great Folio of 1623 to "the great variety of readers."

The situation has been complicated by the fact that the history of Shakespeare criticism and the stage history of his plays have run parallel but separate courses. It is fair to say that, from about the mid-18th century onward, there has been a constant tension between the critics and the theatres regarding treatment of Shakespeare. Although Dr. Johnson was the contemporary of David Garrick, Coleridge and Hazlitt the contemporaries of Edmund Kean, Dowden of Sir Henry Irving, and Bradley of Beerböhme, the links between these critics and actors were not notably strong. Theatregoers were usually impressed by character impersonations rendered by virtuoso actors while readers became more and more impressed by an awareness and admiration of the special artistic form of the plays. Rather than by stage performances, Shakespeare criticism was influenced by the dominant literary forms of each age: by the self-revelatory poem of the Romantic period, the psychological and ethical novel of the Victorians, the fragmentary revelations of the human condition in 20th-century poetry. It is a platitude that each age finds what it can. It can only see what it must. But Shakespeare critics, if criticism is to be in a healthy condition, must pay more than lip service to that fact. However deeply embedded in its contemporary situation, good criticism, like all intellectual feats, is a leaping out of the situation. The history of Shakespeare criticism is a subject of more than scholarly interest. It is a cautionary tale. Sometimes it is an awful warning.

As a basis for the criticism of an author's work, it is reasonable to begin by inquiring how his contemporaries assessed his achievement. But contemporary literary criticism was surprisingly silent about the plays actually being written (though critics were reasonably articulate about the plays they thought ought to be written). Collections of references made to Shakespeare later, during the 17th century, show that many important writers paid little attention to him. Ben Jonson's reputation was, for a variety of reasons, probably superior for the first half of the century. He was, moreover, the most vocal literary critic of the early 17th century, and he thought of Shakespeare as a naturally gifted writer, who failed to discipline himself. From his criticism derived the distinction between "nature" and "art" that for long proved to be a pertinacious and unproductive theme of Shakespeare criticism. It was further encouraged by John Milton, when he contrasted Jonson's "learned sock" with Shakespeare's "native wood-notes wild" (which refers to the comedies but came to be treated as a general statement especially the epithet "wild"). A good deal of the spirit of Ben

Jonson's cavillings, rather than his magnificent praise in the poem prefixed to the Folio of 1623, was continued by later 17th-century and 18th-century critics, censuring Shakespeare's carelessness, his artistic "faults."

John Dryden was the first great critic of Shakespeare. Much concerned with his own art as a dramatist, he judged Shakespeare in a practical spirit. For 100 years after him, the best literary criticism of Shakespeare was an elaboration and clarification of his opinions. Dryden on some occasions praised Shakespeare in the highest terms and boldly defended the English tradition of the theatre, maintaining that, if it was contrary to the revered classical precepts of Aristotle, it was only because Aristotle had not seen English plays; had he seen them, his precepts would have been different. Dryden nevertheless at times attributes artistic "faults" to Shakespeare, judging him according to Neoclassical principles of taste that derived from France and soon prevailed throughout Europe. Shakespeare's dramatic art was so different from that of the admired tragedy of the times (that of Corneille and Racine) that it was difficult for a critic to defend or interpret it in reasonable terms. The gravest charge was the absence of "poetical justice" in Shakespeare's plays. Although some of the better 18th century critics, such as Joseph Addison and Dr. Johnson, saw the limitations of "poetical justice" as an artistic theory, they nevertheless generally felt that the ending of *King Lear*, especially, was intolerable, offending all sense of natural justice by the death of Cordelia. The play was thus given a "happy ending"—one congruent with "poetical justice"—by the poet and playwright Nahum Tate: Lear was restored to his authority, and Cordelia and Edgar were to be married and could look forward to a prosperous reign over a united Britain. This change was approved by Dr. Johnson, and the revised play held the stage for generations and was the only form of *King Lear* performed on the stage until the mid-19th century.

In the early 18th century the cumbersome folio editions were replaced by more convenient editions, prepared for the reader. Nicholas Rowe, in a six-volume edition of 1709, tidied up the text of the plays, adding scene divisions, lists of dramatis personae, indications of locality, and so on. Rowe thus made a start in turning Shakespeare's plays into literature to be read, yet without neglecting the theatrical environment from which they emerged. Rowe was himself a practicing and successful dramatist, and on the whole he gave a good lead to the dramatic criticism of the plays. The preface to Alexander Pope's edition of 1725, however, had an unhappy influence on criticism. Shakespeare's natural genius, he felt, was hampered by his association with a working theatre. Pope fully accepted the artistic form of Shakespeare's writings as due to their being stage plays. But he regarded this as a grave disadvantage and the source of their artistic defectiveness. Lewis Theobald took the opposing view to Pope's, claiming that it was an advantage of Shakespeare that he belonged to the theatrical profession. Dr. Johnson similarly realized that methods of producing the plays on the stage influenced the kind of illusion created. In the splendid preface to his edition (1765), Johnson dismissed, once and for all in English criticism, the Neoclassical theories of "decorum," the "unities," and the mutual exclusiveness of tragedy and comedy—theories now seen as irrelevant to Shakespeare's art and as having confused the discussion of it. In many ways Johnson was the source of the notion of Shakespeare as a realistic dramatist, whose mingling of tragic and comic scenes was justified as "exhibiting the real state of sublunary nature," in which laughter and tears, rejoicing and misery, are found side by side.

Johnson censured Shakespeare as a dramatic artist for his lack of morality. Shakespeare, he wrote, "sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose." Later critics have felt compelled to controvert or to circumvent such a judgment. But Johnson's preface, if it did not give the discussion of Shakespeare's artistry a fresh start, cleared away some of the dead or irrelevant doctrines.

During the rest of the 18th century, after Johnson, it was scholarship rather than criticism that advanced in England. The best of literary criticism of the time was in the discovery of new subtleties in Shakespeare, especially in characterization; indeed, the acceptance of Shakespeare as a dramatic artist largely came about through his evident powers of characterization (to which probably the growth of the realistic novel in the 18th century had made readers more sensitive), and inadequate attention was paid to other aspects of his dramatic craftsmanship. There was nothing in England comparable to the brilliant Shakespeare criticism of Lessing, Goethe, and August von-ethlegel in Germany. The latter's essay on *Romeo and Juliet* of 1797 demonstrated that, apart from a few witticisms, nothing could be taken away from the play, nothing added, nothing rearranged without mutilating the work of art and confusing the author's intentions. Here modern Shakespeare criticism begins. Indeed, from the time of Lessing, in the 18th century, to the mid-19th century, German critics and scholars made substantial and original contributions to the interpretation of Shakespeare, indicating Shakespeare's superlative artistry, at a time when in England he was admired more as a great poet and a brilliant observer of mankind than as a disciplined artist.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the greatest English critic of Shakespeare, vigorously denied that he had been affected by Schlegel (though he acknowledged the influence of Lessing), but there are many similarities between the two. His criticism--which has to be put together from reports of his lectures, from his notebooks, and from memories of his conversation, for he never succeeded in writing an organized book on Shakespeare--at first censured Shakespeare's lack of artistry, but in his lectures, given from 1810 onward, and in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817), he demonstrated that Shakespeare's "irregularities" were in fact the manifestations of a subtle intelligence. It was the purpose of criticism to reveal the reasons why the plays are as they are. Shakespeare was a penetrating psychologist and a profound philosopher; but Coleridge claimed that he was an even greater artist, and his artistry was seen to be "unconscious" or "organic," not contrived. Thus the dominant literary forms of Coleridge's age, which were those of self-revelatory poetry, influenced the criticism of the age: Hamlet was felt to speak with the voice and feeling of Shakespeare, and, as for the sonnets, William Wordsworth, whose greatest achievement was writing a long poem on the growth of his own mind, explained that Shakespeare "unlocked his heart" in his sonnets.

These critical opinions were inclined to degenerate in inferior hands in the course of the 19th century: the belief in Shakespeare's all-pervading artistry led to over-subtle interpretations; the enthusiasm for character analysis led to excessive biography writing outside the strictly dramatic framework; and the acknowledged assessment of Shakespeare's keen intelligence led to his being associated with almost every school of thought in religion, politics, morals, psychology, and metaphysics. Nevertheless, it was the great achievement of the Romantics to have freed criticism from preoccupation with the "beauties" and "faults" in Shakespeare and to have devoted themselves

instead to interpreting the delight that people had always felt in the plays, whether as readers or theatregoers. Shakespeare's "faults" now became "problems," and it was regarded an achievement in literary criticism to have found an explanation for some hitherto difficult or irreconcilable detail in a play. Many of the most brilliant writers of Europe were critics of Shakespeare; and their utterances (whether or not they may be regarded as having correctly interpreted Shakespeare) are notable as recording the impressions he made upon great minds.

2.8 SHAKESPEARE'S INFLUENCE

Today Shakespeare's plays are performed throughout the world, and all kinds of new, experimental work finds inspiration in them: ". . . in the second half of the twentieth century in England," wrote the innovative theatre director Peter Brook, "we are faced with the infuriating fact that Shakespeare is still our model."

Shakespeare's influence on English theatre was evident from the start. John Webster, Philip Massinger, and John Ford are among the better known dramatists who borrowed openly from his plays. His influence is evident on Restoration dramatists, especially Thomas Otway, John Dryden, and William Congreve. John Osborne, Harold Pinter, Samuel Beckett, and George Bernard Shaw are among 20th-century writers in whose works Shakespearean echoes are to be found. Many writers have taken over Shakespeare's plots and characters: Shaw rewrote the last act of *Cymbeline*, Tom Stoppard invented new characters to set against parts of *Hamlet* in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1968), and Edward Bond used King Lear as the starting point for his own *Lear* (1971).

Shakespeare has also influenced dramatists and theatre directors outside his own country. In Germany, English acting troupes were welcomed early in the 17th century, and the German version of *Hamlet*, *Der bestrafte Brudermord* ("Fratricide Punished"), testifies to the immediate influence of that play. His influence on later European dramatists ranges from a running allusion to *Hamlet* in Anton Chekhov's play *The Seagull* to imitation and parody of *Richard III* in Bertolt Brecht's *Arturo Ui*, adaptation of *King John* by Max Frisch, and Andre Gide's translation and simplification of *Hamlet*.

Shakespeare's influence on actors since his own day has been almost as widespread. Many European and American actors have had their greatest successes in Shakespearean roles. In England very few actors or actresses reach pre-eminence without acting in his plays. Each player has the opportunity to make a part his own. This is not because Shakespeare has created only outlines for others to fill but because he left so many and varied invitations for the actor to call upon his deepest, most personal resources.

Theatre directors and designers after Shakespeare's time, with every technical stage resource at their command, have returned repeatedly to his plays, which give opportunity for spectacle and finesse, ritual and realism, music and controlled quietness. Their intrinsic theatricality, too, has led to adaptations into very different media: into opera (as Verdi's *Otello*) and ballet (as versions of

Romeo and Juliet from several nations); into sound recordings, television programs, and films. Musicals have been made of the comedies (as *Kiss Me Kate* from *The Taming of the Shrew*); even a tragedy, *Othello*, was the inspiration of a "rock" musical in 1971 called *Catch My Soul*, while *Macbeth* has yielded a political-satire show called *Macbird!* (1967).

Shakespeare has Hamlet say that the aim of theatre performance is to "hold the mirror up to nature," and this is what the history of his plays, from their first production to the latest, shows that he has, pre-eminently, achieved.

2.9 LET US SUM UP

Shakespeare has taken inspiration from his predecessors like the University wits. Yet, he proved his own originality through his representation of human nature in its tone and varied colours. His influence is still seen on several modern writers.

2.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is the contribution of the University wits?
2. How was Shakespeare influenced by Lyly?
3. Write about Marlowe's influence on Shakespeare.
4. Write about the changes in language during Shakespeare's period.
5. How did Coleridge 'praise' Shakespeare.

2.11 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Allardyce Nicoll (ed.) *Shakespeare in His Own Age* (1964).
2. A.M. Eastman. *A Short History of Shakespearean Criticism* (1968).
3. Harley Granville – Barker and Harrison. *A Comparison to Shakespeare Studies* (1934, reprinted 1960).

PROF. R. SARASWATHI

UNIT -1 (A) - LESSON - 3

SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

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3.1 SOCIAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 Personal Hygiene, Health and Habits
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3.1 SOCIAL BACKGROUND

At first sight the differences between the modern age and Shakespeare's age can seem so pronounced as to be almost frightening, suggesting that it is impossible for someone to speak across the years to a present day audience. It is true that a huge number of things have changed since Shakespeare's day: what has not changed, and what still allows the plays to be seen and read with vast enjoyment across a wide range of cultures and nationalities, is human nature. Shakespeare's characters may dress differently from us today, and even speak in a different way, but they think and feel exactly as human beings have done for five thousand years, and it is this ability to perceive what is lasting and eternal in human nature that gives Shakespeare his strength and his appeal to all audiences.

3.1.1 Personal Hygiene, Health and Habits

Some historians place the population of Elizabethan England at one-tenth or less of its present size. In London itself there were probably 150,000 inhabitants, unthinkable large to the average Elizabethan, almost ludicrously small to the modern Londoner, accustomed to sharing his city with twelve million other inhabitants. The small size of Queen Elizabeth's England was due in large part to the death rate. Mary Shakespeare's first two children died in infancy, a quarter of her family, and one of Shakespeare's brother died whilst still young, as did Hamlet, Shakespeare's own son. There

was virtually no medical care, as we know it, in Shakespeare's time. Plagues ravaged London with almost clockwork regularity, emptying the city and forcing the authorities to close the theatres for fear of spreading infection. Elizabethan ideas on hygiene and basic sanitation were either rudimentary or non-existent. In the middle of city streets ran an open gutter into which the night's waste was thrown together with any other foul rubbish. Water was drawn from wells that were often polluted, and it was safer to drink ale or beer, purified by the brewing process. Personal hygiene was rudimentary. Body lice were common, and without proper dental care even young people could carry on their breath the stink of rotting teeth: it is no accident that in Elizabethan literature, and earlier, 'sweet breath' is a major feature to recommend a lover. Bathing was infrequent when all water had to be heated on open fires. Little was known about the body and about proper medical care. There was no protection against a host of illnesses that have almost vanished from the most advanced countries nowadays, such as smallpox, cholera, and typhoid, with bubonic plague a major killer because of the absence of proper sewerage or hygiene.

However, the situation for an adult member of Elizabethan society was not as desperate as it might sound. The average life expectancy may have been only just over thirty years of age, but the figure is made so low by the large numbers of children who did not survive their first eighteen months or so of life. Those people who survived to adulthood stood at least a reasonable chance of reaching a ripe old age, and there was no shortage of seventy year-olds in Shakespeare's time. The real differences between the ages are more diffuse and less obvious than the basic figures of life and death might suggest.

3.1.2 Division of Classes - Attitudes

Elizabethan society was rigidly and strictly divided into social classes, as discussed below, but there were other divisions which tend not to appear in the history books. Probably some eight per cent of the population in Elizabeth's England were living in rural environments, with the majority of these being directly concerned in and with the production of food. Travel was strictly limited, and most peasants or lowly rural farm workers would never go beyond twenty or so miles of the village of their birth during their whole lifetime. Even Queen Elizabeth, a much-travelled monarch, never went further than the Midlands of England. Starvation over the winter period was a very real possibility for many of the populace; a large degree of self-sufficiency in food was necessary since almost no produce could be imported out of season as today, and the most highly-prized cooks were those who could invent rich sauces to cover the taste of salted-down beef, often kept in casks for six months or more, rancid, foul, and worm-ridden by the time it came to be broached.

Roads, by modern standards, were mere tracks. Well into the eighteenth century potholes on country roads were deep enough to drown the unwary traveller, and even major roads were frequently impassable when heavy rain had reduced them to mere mud baths. By the time of Queen Elizabeth London's atmosphere was already starting to cause concern. Coal from the North East of England could be transported relatively easily to London by sea, and its heavy use by Londoners was starting to produce the famous London smog that did not finally vanish until legislation in the

1950s allowed only the use of 'smokeless' fuels in big cities. In London itself the River Thames dominated the city. It was a major transport route, in effect the biggest and best 'road' in the city, a source of water, an open sewer, and a thriving port for ships from all over Britain and Europe.

There were huge divisions of wealth throughout the kingdom. At the top, the King or Queen and the nobility lived lives of what was then vast luxury, whilst at the bottom of the social ladder the farm worker lived in primitive conditions that would be unthinkable for a civilised society today to impose on any of its members. The monarch was, in effect, a totalitarian dictator, and the key to power in the kingdom still lay in the acquisition of land. It was land and houses that Shakespeare brought to finance his retirement, and it was land and property that gave eligibility for election to Parliament, and almost any worthwhile office. The great land owners - the nobility and the few middle class families who had risen in the service of the crown - may have lived their lives at a level unimaginable to their poorer neighbours (a court lady's dress might take two years to make, and cost more money than a farm labourer and his family would see in the course of a whole lifetime), but 'Death the Leveller' took hold of rich and poor alike, and the noble families could fall by rebellion against the crown with extreme rapidity, to face an ignominious death in public from the executioner's axe.

An Elizabethan was closer to nature in some respects than his modern counterpart - but not in the sense that this phrase is sometimes used nowadays, implying a completely harmonious and happy relationship between mankind and the natural environment in which he lives. An Elizabethan was close to nature because he had no option. He rose with the sun and went to bed at nightfall, because candles and oil lights were both expensive and inefficient. If it suddenly became colder he shivered, if it rained the Elizabethan got wet. Winter to an Elizabethan was a serious business, requiring planning and skill for survival. No dryers cured the grain for the Elizabethan farmer, and if it rained when the harvest was due, or the grain rotted, then people went hungry.

3.1.3 Cultural and Emotional Side of the Elizabethan

For the best of all reasons, it is wrong to dismiss Elizabethan England as a primitive society. An Elizabethan nobleman, and perhaps some gentlemen, would be expected to know the immensely detailed court etiquette, be well versed in classical and other literature, and have knowledge of the science and medicine of the day. He would be expected to be able to fight, to lead his forces in battle for his monarch, to sing, to write poetry, and to dance, as well as having a passing knowledge of the law, history, farming, accountancy, and languages. The various courts of Europe were havens for the very best in art, music, and literature, and we owe the survival of so many fine works of art to the patronage and support provided by royalty and the noble families of Europe. No one who has seen Burleigh House, near Stamford in Lincolnshire, is likely to accuse the Elizabethans of being primitive. Indeed, the typical Elizabethan country house, with its subtle use of red brick, its long mullioned windows, its high chimneys and its E-shape layout, is unsurpassed in any age for its beauty, elegance, and practicality. In other areas, too, the Elizabethans were a match for the modern age. In a deceptively simple manner they saw the whole Universe as a linked entity, a unity in which it is impossible to affect one area without also affecting others. A modern ecologist could be

forgiven for thinking that it was the twentieth century that invented the idea that every item in the natural world is interdependent, but the Elizabethans were there long before. There is no doubt that the modern age is more advanced in terms of command of the physical sciences, and that existence in Elizabethan times was harsher, more dangerous, and more painful. But there is no doubt also that Elizabethans laughed and cried at much the same things as we do nowadays, and for much the same reasons, and that in their rigidly divided society those of the top end at least were the equal of any of our contemporaries in their artistic and cultural awareness.

3.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In historical and political terms the reign of Queen Elizabeth used to be seen as a 'golden age' in English history, a view which is almost certainly unfounded. It is also wise to remember that Shakespeare lived under two monarchs, Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603) and James I (1566-1625), and that Shakespeare is arguably as much a 'Jacobean' writer as an 'Elizabethan' one. Queen Elizabeth came to the throne of England after a period of immense upheaval, caused largely by the action of her father, Henry VIII (1491-1547), who had come to the throne in 1509. At Henry VIII's accession, England was a full member of the Roman Catholic Church, and Henry himself married to a staunch Catholic, Katherine of Aragon (1485-1536). However, Katherine produced no male heir for Henry, and he began to tire of her, particularly as he fell hotly in love with Lady Anne Boleyn. Henry hoped that the Roman Catholic church would annul his marriage to Katherine, the only form of divorce possible in those days outside death, and he persuaded himself that he had right (and, no doubt, God) on his side. However, the Pope was unable to face the tide of hostility that annulment would produce from European royal families, and refused. The result was that a furious and impassioned Henry declared himself the Supreme Head of the English Church, thus replacing the Pope, declared his marriage invalid in his new capacity as Head of the Church, and proceeded to marry Anne Boleyn. She bore him a female child, Elizabeth, but was executed soon afterwards, in theory for adultery. Henry subsequently took four more wives, but could only produce one male child, the sickly Edward, who was to reign briefly after his father.

3.2.1 Role of the Church

The take-over of the Church was a major rebellion. In the aftermath the vast wealth and property of the religious orders were grabbed by the crown, and either kept or sold off to the highest bidders. The excuse offered for this act was the corruption that had overtaken the monasteries and priories of England; wealth had undoubtedly caused corruption, and scandals were frequent, but greed was the driving force behind the dissolution of the monasteries, and this sudden influx of land onto the market - much of which went into the hands of the new middle classes who thereafter came to be a force to be reckoned with in a society where power and land ownership were inseparable - had wide-ranging social, political, and economic repercussions. Possibly the breach between England and the Roman Catholic church could still have been bridged if the guardians of the new king, the nine-year-old Edward VI (1538-53), had not sought and succeeded in changing the actual form of church service used in England. Henry VIII had changed the ownership of the Church; Edward's reign changed its nature, into that of a genuinely Protestant as distinct from

Catholic religion. Confusion was added to confusion when Edward died in 1553; for the next five years the new Queen, Mary I (1516-58), the daughter of Katherine of Aragon and married to the Catholic King of Spain, tried to put the clock back and return English religion to the hands of Pope. Heretics (those who refused to accept Roman Catholicism) were burnt at the stake; Mary had to defend the Tower of London against attack by rebels and supporters of Protestantism; and the average inhabitant of the country must have wondered where the chaos, change, and suffering would all end. When Mary died, the only descendent of Henry VIII was Elizabeth, despite rival claimants: England held its breath to see what path Elizabeth, daughter of a Protestant mother, would follow.

3.2.2 Queen Elizabeth

Elizabeth was very shrewd: she saw how fragile her own hold was over her kingdom (apart from anything else England's two previous Queens, Matilda (1103-67) and Mary had produced disastrous reigns) and she realised that most of Europe was hostile to Protestant England. She announced that she did not wish a window into men's souls, and whilst enforcing Protestant observance in her kingdom did so with comparatively little fierceness, at least during the early years. With hindsight, Elizabeth's reign can appear as a golden age; in practice, it was a worrying time for all who could think more than a few months ahead. Elizabeth was a woman, and therefore expected to get married if only to produce an heir to the throne. If she married it might be expected that her husband would become ruler in all but name. A marriage to an English nobleman could split the nobility into warring and jealous factions, whilst a marriage to a foreign prince would be unpopular with a nation forced into isolation by Henry's Reformation, and with a grudge against Europe as a result. No marriage would mean no heir, and that was worry enough for a nation with a civil war only a few years behind it. Equally worrying was the threat from Europe, and in particular from Spain. Philip of Spain had a claim to the English throne through Mary, and the Pope had declared it no sin for anyone, internally or externally, to overthrow the English monarchy and replace it by a Catholic one. For practical and moral reasons Spain seemed set to mount an invasion of England.

By the end of Elizabeth's reign the situation was only slightly different. She had not married, and there was therefore no direct heir. The nearest in line to the throne was James VI of Scotland (1566-1625), and the problem here was two-fold: James's mother was Mary Queen of Scots, who had been executed in England on Elizabeth's orders for plotting against her; and James was King of Scotland, perhaps England's oldest and bitterest enemy. No one knew whether James would be allowed to take over the throne, and what his attitude would be towards the country that had killed his mother and been the bitterest enemy of his homeland. As it happened, the transition was remarkably easy, especially in view of James's attributes. He was a stunted man whose tongue was too large for his mouth, causing him to slobber; he had phobic fear of bared steel (whilst he was in his mother's womb she had witnessed a man who may have been her lover, Rizzio, stabbed to death with over fifty incisions); he had a virtually maniacal dislike of tobacco; he had a fondness for interrogating witches himself; and he also tended to form strong relationships with attractive young men . . .

3.3 CONCLUSION

This brief history helps to explain some of the worries and uncertainties that are visible in Shakespeare's plays, and in particular the overriding concern with kingship, the rights of succession, and political power. Government to Shakespeare and his fellows was not merely a question of how high the taxes were; it could mean, quite literally, the difference between life or death, if the monarch of the day was unable to stop either rebellion from within or invasion from without.

There is also another side to the coin. Under Elizabeth England prospered. In the absence of civil war or a major European war it began to grow in confidence and its middle classes, the trading part of the nation, prospered. The early excitement and spirit of adventure which is visible under Elizabeth did not last for long, but we still hold as symbolic of her reign the great Elizabethan sailors such as Sir Francis Drake (1545-96) and Sir Walter Raleigh (1552-1618), who sailed to the corners of the earth and in their puny boats, and, at least when they were lucky enough to meet a Spanish treasure ship, brought back vast wealth to their sponsors. Elizabeth herself sponsored such voyages. In an age when the monarch was expected to pay for many of the expenses of government out of her own income, Elizabeth was desperate for money, and not always too scrupulous about where it came from. The rise of the middle classes (merchants, clerks, lawyers, civil servants) also brought its problems to the monarchy, who needed their goodwill in Parliament to raise anything like significant quantities of money. Parliament had to be silenced by Elizabeth with increasing frequency, as it began to feel its muscles and test its strength against the monarchy. In under fifty years after the death of Elizabeth that same Parliament would order the execution of a reigning monarch, and attempt to run the country as a republic.

3.4 LET US SUM UP

By now you should have been through with the intellectual, social and historical backdrop of Shakespeare, which had an unconscious spell on his genius. Along with these you must also be familiar with the attitudes and outlook of the Elizabethans.

3.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What do the historians think of the Elizabethan England?
2. Write about health and hygiene during 16th century.
3. Describe the divisions of classes during the Elizabethan period.
4. What is the positive code of the Elizabethans?
5. Write about Queen Elizabeth's reign?
6. Why was Elizabethan Age treated as the 'Golden Age'?

3.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Sidney Lee and Charles T. Onions. **Shakespeare's England : An Account of the Life and Manners of His Age**, 2 Vol. (1916)
2. Harley Granville – Barker. **Prefaces to Shakespeare** (5 Series, 1929-47; 4 Vol., reprinted in 196.

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M.A., English (Previous)

UNIT -1 (A) - LESSON - 4

THE ELIZABETHAN WORLD (REVISED)

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will make you familiar with the outlook and attitude of the Elizabethans. You will understand what they thought of God and about the universe. This unit will also form the basis to understand the concept of the world of Shakespeare.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.2 HIERARCHY

4.3 THE UNIVERSE

4.4 KINGSHIP

4.5 LET US SUM UP

4.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4.7 SAMPLE QUESTIONS

4.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Every period in history has its own culture, a collection of ideas about the world, how it works, and people's place in it. In some respects the Elizabethans looked at their world very differently from the average citizen of today. Their views were based on a mixture of ancient and classical writers such as Plato and Aristotle, the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, and the perceptions of the Middle Ages, with a dash of the Renaissance, or new learning, that was sweeping Europe. There are a large number of allusions in Shakespeare's plays that might easily be missed, or misunderstood, nowadays. Just as a modern writer would mention electricity or motor cars without feeling the need to explain them, so Shakespeare could talk about the music of the Spheres and the four elements and assume that his contemporary audience knew what he meant without explanation. The student needs to know about comparatively few of these, the major ones of which are listed below.

The Elizabethans lived a very precarious existence, at least in physical terms, and were much less able to influence, change, or alter their physical environment than we are. In effect, they were much more at the mercy of the elements. In their political world there was no effective and efficient transport system, with the result that local barons and lords could rule as kings, far removed from the centre of authority, and effectively out of its reach. Slack or weak government did not only threaten more tax or a bad balance of payments, but also families robbed and left to starve to death with no recourse to law, civil war in which whole towns could be reduced to ashes, and total economic collapse for the regions affected. The uncertainties of Elizabethan political life - a Queen with no direct heir, the threat from Spain, the response of a Scottish King to England - have all been mentioned. The result was that Elizabethans felt themselves much closer to chaos and anarchy than might be the case today. To counter this fear, they had a firm and fixed concept in order, which was both a belief and a need.

The Elizabethans believed that everything in the world had its natural mode of working, and its natural place in the scheme of things. Before the creation of mankind and the world there had been Chaos - an actual physical state in which no one particle of matter was able to bond to another, and all things were in a permanent state of anarchic conflict and hostility. God then imposed his own law on matter and formed the world out of Chaos. As everything was created by God, the whole cosmos was like a carefully linked and complex machine created and kept working by the one Being. The world is always on the brink of dissolution and a return to Chaos; it is order that keeps everything working and in its place, and it is order that staves off dissolution. Order can be seen in many things, such as a rigid class-structure in which everyone has his or her fixed place or the love and loyalty that a son owes to his father. It can also be seen on a wider and larger scale in the heavens with the planets following their fixed courses, night following day, and the progress of the four seasons, all of which are manifestations of order. The most commonly-quoted expression of this belief in and need for order in Shakespeare's work is a speech in his play *Troilus and Cressida*. The speech begins with a prime image of disorder. The planets are kept in their proper orbits by God's will. The author imagines them breaking free from their proper paths and careering randomly through the Universe, causing death and destruction. Since in Elizabethan thinking the planets influence events on Earth, so Earth will suffer too:

But when the planets
In evil mixture to disorder wander,
What plagues and what portents, what mutiny,
What raging of the sea, shaking of earth,
Commotion in the winds! Frights, changes, horrors,
Divert and crack, rend and deracinate,
The unity of married calm of states
Quite from their fixture! ...

(1.3.94-101)

Shakespeare, after having drawn this horrific picture of destruction, then talks about degree, everyone having his or her own place in society. Degree is the social equivalent of order. Without it

society will disintegrate, civilisation become impossible. Schools will vanish and all learning, trade will be disrupted, inheritance and family succession will vanish, no one will respect old people, and government will be impossible:

Oh, when degree is shak'd,
Which is the ladder of all high designs,
The enterprise is sick! How could communities,
Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
The primogenity and due of birth,
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,
But by degree, stand in authentic place?

(1.3.101-8)

The climax of the speech then follows, an appalling vision of Chaos where Nature, unrestrained by order, rises up against itself and destroys the world, where madmen and lunatics have authority over the sane, and sons kill their fathers:

Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark, what discord follows! Each thing melts
In mere oppugnancy: the bounded waters
Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
And make a sop of all this solid globe;
Strength should be lord of imbecility,
And the rude son should strike his father dead.

(1.3.109-15)

Order is seen as the frame upon which the fabric of civilised life is woven. Our own age has discovered many secrets of chemistry, physics, biology, and a host of related sciences, each of which has its laws. In this sense the Elizabethans anticipated our concept of the structure of the world, but for them the prime necessity was not for an understanding of how the laws work, but for the very laws themselves to exist.

4.2 HIERARCHY

One aspect of the belief in order was that everything was ranked and had its place in a hierarchical structure which had God at the top and the lowest mineral at the bottom. A phrase coined to describe this Elizabethan outlook is the 'chain of being', in which everything that lives or was created is seen as being like a link in a vast chain. Of course the Elizabethans did not really believe that there was a huge chain stretching from heaven to earth, but they used this picture to symbolise and represent their view of how the world worked and was arranged. The image of a chain is very useful, implying as it does that everything is linked, just as one link in a chain is joined to a link above it and a link below it, and so suggesting how nothing can happen in isolation. Take out a link in a chain and the chain collapses; hit a link and the whole chain shudders.

There were six leading links or classes of links in this chain of creation. The highest was, of course, God, the source of everything. Under him was the next class, the angels, themselves divided into nine groups - Seraphs, Cherubs, Thrones, Dominations, Virtues, Powers, Principalities, Archangels, and Angels. Thus the highest form of angel was a Seraph, the lowliest an actual angel. The third class was that of Man, who had the four qualities of existence, life, feeling, and understanding. The Emperor was the highest being in this class, the beggar or physically and mentally disabled the lowest. Fourthly, there was the so-called Sensitive class, who had existence, life, and feeling. These were divided into three sub-sections, those of the higher animals, animals, and mere creatures. Fifthly, there was the Vegetative class, which had existence and life, and which would include flowers and plants. Finally, at the bottom, came the inanimate class, which had mere existence without life, sensitivity, or understanding, and which included metals, liquids, rocks, and minerals. Certain references in Shakespeare's plays take on a new meaning when this hierarchy is understood. Fire, eagles, dolphins, whales, and gold are all at the top of their respective classes, and so are powerful images of strength, purity and goodness, just as a reference to a cur implies the lowest of the low in the dog world. Macbeth's speech to the two murderers in the play *Macbeth*, when he is discussing the murder of Banquo with them, contains a multitude of references to curs and animals at the bottom of their respective classes, and thus implies that the murderers themselves are contemptible (III.1.91-107). There are, of course, similarities between a chain and a ladder, and the image used by the Elizabethans does contain within it the potential for upward movement.

4.3 THE UNIVERSE

Elizabethan ideas about science may seem very strange to modern understanding, and they were in fact being challenged by the new learning of the Renaissance. The idea was still current that the Universe consisted of a number of concentric spheres, possibly nine in number. God inhabited the outermost sphere, the *primum mobile*, from which all the others took their movement. The two innermost spheres were those of the moon and of earth. This is a double-edged concept. Looked at in one light it makes the Earth the centre of a Universe, but in another it makes it the cess-pit, where all the dregs gather. The Elizabethans believed that everything in the created world was made up of four elements, Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. In their pure state, or when mixed properly, these were immortal. When God created Adam and then Eve as the founders of humanity, all on Earth was in this pure state, including Adam and Eve, and there was no illness, disease, or death. Then Adam and Eve fell from grace by disobeying God, and this, the Fall, brought *mutability* into the sphere of Earth. This was a state where the elements were either impure or mixed in wrong proportions, and so were subject to decay, death and sickness. This only applied to the area enclosed by the sphere of the moon. Above this all was still pure, and a circle of ether sealed off Earth from the other spheres, like a sterilising layer. Meteors were thought to be fragments of fiery ether collapsing into Earth's sphere. The spheres were supposed to produce a divine and marvellous music as they revolved, though this could not be heard by human ears.

The Elizabethans also believed in correspondences. As everything had been created by the one Being, so the same pattern would, logically, emerge throughout creation. Thus they saw links

between the state and the human body; the king's equivalent was the brain, the guiding and controlling force; ministers were eyes and ears, and the humble peasant the feet, and so on. The four elements also had their equivalents in the human body, known as the four humours: choler, blood, phlegm, and melancholy. If they were mixed in perfect proportion inside the body then the person would be healthy and have a good personality, but most humans had an imperfect mix. A person's personality would be dictated by his humours; for example a man with too much choler in him would be bad-tempered and aggressive.

The Elizabethans believed that the stars exerted an influence on the world and events within it, although Edmund in *King Lear* pours scorn in this idea, saying the people blame the influence of the stars for events because they are too stupid, idle, or incompetent to dominate events themselves. Again, before the Fall the stars were so balanced in their influence as to have no evil or bad effects, but this altered with the Fall

Despite their belief in astrology the Elizabethans were also very religious, at least in the sense that very few Elizabethans would have failed to believe in the existence of a Christian God. Failure to attend a Church service once a week was a punishable offence in law, and, in an age when England's enemies were largely the Roman Catholic countries of Europe, politics and religion were closely linked.

4.4 KINGSHIP

The Elizabethan attitude to kingship and monarchy also differed in several major respects from the attitude nowadays towards those who have responsibility for government. There was a religious element in kingship, as well as a political one, and the concept of the 'divine right of kings' needs to be understood before many of the comments and attitudes found in Shakespeare's history plays can be understood. This concept stated that it was God and God alone who was responsible for the appointment of a person to kingship, operating as he did through the hereditary principle: the King held his office from God, and was not appointed by other humans. Therefore any attempt to remove a King or to 'usurp' him was not merely a crime against human law, but a crime against God, and an attempt to decide something that only God could decide. Usurpation or the murder of a monarch is therefore a huge sin and crime against Nature in Shakespeare. The idea that the King or Queen held his or her office from God was carefully fostered by monarchs through the ages, not least of all Elizabeth I, for the obvious reason that it was an added protection against rebellion and gave moral justification for their attempts to resist any attack on their throne. There was also a very practical element in the principle, in that once it was shown that a reigning monarch could be removed from the throne, a precedent would be created that could easily lead to chaos and civil war. Shakespeare's support for properly-constituted monarchs - even if they are weak at the job of government - is support for stability as well as for kingship.

4.5 LET US SUM UP

Hope you are able to understand the Elizabethan concept of God and their understanding of the secrets of the universe. This will form the basis for a better assessment of the plays of Shakespeare.

4.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Why did the Elizabethans feel themselves closer to chaos?
2. How did the Elizabethans look at the order of the world?
3. What is the speech in Troilus and Cressida about?
4. What did the Elizabethans think about the Universe?

4.7 SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the attitude of the Elizabethans towards the universe and the creation of God?
2. How did Shakespeare represent his contemporary thinking in his plays?

4.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. E.M.W. Tillyard. **The Elizabethan World Picture** (1943, reprinted 1966).
2. Patrick Murray. **The Shakespearean Scene; Some Twentieth – Century Perspectives** (1969).

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UNIT -1 (A) - LESSON - 5

THE CHRONOLOGY AND SOURCES OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to understand

- different stages in the life of Shakespeare as a playwright
- aspects of Shakespeare's plays
- nature of romances and tragedies

5.1 INTRODUCTION

5.2 TABLE OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

5.3 SHAKESPEARE AS A PLAYWRIGHT

5.4 ROMANCES OF SHAKESPEARE

5.5 HISTORIES OF SHAKESPEARE

5.6 SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES AND THEIR SOURCES

5.7 LET US SUM UP

5.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

5.9 SAMPLE QUESTIONS

5.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the first edition of Shakespeare's collected plays, the First Folio of 1623, the plays were classified into three types or categories, Comedies, Histories and Tragedies, the three conventional Elizabethan divisions of drama. This order was subsequently followed in later editions. Under these headings plays were arranged irrespective of their date of composition. The book began with *The Tempest* and ended with *Cymbeline*. In fact, for a long time no attempt was made to establish the chronological order of the plays, for the interest in the development of Shakespeare's art (and of an art for that matter) was a relatively late phenomenon in the history of literary studies. The first attempt to work out the order of succession of the plays was made towards the end of the eighteenth century and ever since the question of dating plays has been one of the major concerns of Shakespearean scholars. To fix the date of a play scholars rely upon two types of evidence, external and internal. The former includes records of the performances of a play or allusions to it in the contemporary literature or the date of its publication or references in the play itself to known

historical events. Internal evidence, for instance, evidence based on the style of the play and its verification, is generally less trustworthy, because it is less objective, but is used to corroborate other evidence.

Because of the enormous difficulties posed by the task of dating the plays no chronological arrangement can be regarded as certain. However, in the following table the order followed is the one which was accepted by E.K. Chambers and upon the approximate truth of which there is a certain measure of agreement among scholars.

5.2 TABLE OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

Date	Comedies	Histories	Tragedies
1590-1		Henry VI Part 2 Henry VI Part 3	
1591-2		Henry VI Part 1	
1592-3	<i>The Comedy of the Errors</i>	Richard III	
1593-4	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>		Titus Andronicus
1594-5	<i>The Two Gentlemen of Verona</i> <i>Love's Labour's Lose</i>		Romeo and Juliet
1595-6	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	Richard II	
1596-7 1597-8	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>	King John Henry IV Part 1 Henry IV Part 2	
1598-9	<i>Much ado about Nothing</i>	Henry V	
1599-1600	<i>As You Like It</i> <i>Twelfth Night</i>		Julius Caesar
1600-1	<i>Merry Wives of Windsor</i>		Hamlet
1601-2			Troilus and Cressida
1602-3	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>		
1604-5	<i>Measure for Measure</i>		Othello
1605-6			King Lear Macbeth
1606-7			Antony and Cleopatra
1607-8			Coriolanus Timon of Athens
1608-9	<i>Pericles</i>		
1609-10	<i>Cymbeline</i>		
1610-11	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>		
1611-12	<i>The Tempest</i>		
1612-13		Henry VIII	

5.3 SHAKESPEARE AS A PLAYWRIGHT

A glance at the above table will bring out one or two things. First, that Shakespeare seems to have passed through certain clearly defined stages in his development. For instance, the great tragedies seem to be concentrated in one period, during which Shakespeare did not write many comedies and the few he did write were distinguished by their dark or sombre atmosphere. On the other hand, it seems that the good history plays were written at the same time as the great comedies. Likewise, in the final years of his writing career, Shakespeare appears to have relinquished tragedy altogether and to have returned to the world of comedy. Because of these interesting features, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century Edward Dowden divided the dramatic career of Shakespeare into four main stages, which he called respectively: (1) 'The workshop'-which is the period of 'dramatic apprenticeship and experiment'; (2) 'In the world'-that is the period of later historical plays and the joyous comedies; (3) 'Out of the depths'-which is the period of the serious comedies and of the great tragedies; (4) 'On the heights'-the period of the 'romantic plays' which, he says, 'are at once grave and glad, serene and beautiful poems'.

This 'four period doctrine', as it came to be known, has been severely criticised by some modern critics, mainly because of the sentimentality of Dowden's treatment. But it is difficult to find any other theory to replace it. The picture of Shakespeare passing from apprenticeship to the world of history and mirthful comedy and from that moving on to the world of serious comedy and the great tragedies, from which he emerges in the last romances, is basically true. Roughly contemporary plays like *Henry VI* and *The Comedy of Errors* obviously belong to an early period of experiment and apprenticeship and they show unmistakable signs of immaturity, while the lyricism of *Romeo and Juliet* has more in common with the sparkling world of the comedies than with the dark world of the great tragedies of *Macbeth* or *King Lear*. *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* clearly form one group, which represents the final stage of the development of the poet dramatist.

Another thing that emerges from a consideration of the above table is the sheer bulk of Shakespeare's creative output. During an active career, stretching over a period of just over twenty years, he wrote no less than thirty seven plays, at an average of approximately two plays a year. When we recall that Shakespeare had to shoulder other burdens as well, like acting and sharing in the management of his company, we realise that he must have worked exceedingly hard.

As a dramatist Shakespeare was in a sense a tradesman, catering for the needs of the time. The demand for new plays was so great (as a result of the very keen competition between theatrical companies) that dramatists had to work rapidly to increase the company's repertoire of plays and sometimes two or three (or even more) playwrights collaborated on a play. Often when a company put on a play that drew a large audience, a rival company would commission its dramatist to provide a play on a similar theme as quickly as possible. To add to a company's repertoire it was not unusual for authors to get hold of earlier plays by other writers and make a few alterations in them, adding a few topical allusions to make them look new.

Given these theatrical conditions we can understand one feature of Shakespeare's drama, namely the lack of originality in the stories on which the plays were based. Shakespeare was not alone in this. Unlike modern playwrights, most Elizabethan dramatists did not trouble to invent the stories of their own plays. Their attitude to plagiarism was different from that of modern writers. Nowadays, when an author borrows the plot of his play he has to acknowledge his debt. Not so with the Elizabethans who drew upon a common body of literature freely and without acknowledgement.

The stories of Shakespeare's plays came from a limited number of sources. They were derived either from the prose and verse romances (English and foreign) or from North's rendering of Plutarch's *Lives*, or from Holinshed's *Chronicles*. Occasionally Shakespeare reworked the theme of an older play. Each of these groups must now be considered in some detail, the object being to give an impression of Shakespeare's use of his sources, and not in any way to attempt an exhaustive account of the sources of the plays.

5.4 ROMANCES OF SHAKESPEARE

The romances, which were tales of love and adventure, were very popular reading in Shakespeare's time. Not all of them were English; in fact, there were a few collections of translated tales, from Italian, Spanish or French. The works which were best known and made most use of were Italian, Boccaccio's *Decameron* (c. 1350), Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* (1565) and Bandello's *Vovelle* (1554). Tales translated from these works were to be found in such collections as William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* (1566), Barnabe Riche's *Farewell to Military Profession* (1581) and George Whetstone's *Heptameron of Civil Discourses* (1582).

The romances furnished Shakespeare with most of the stories of the early comedies. In the very earliest of his comedies, when Shakespeare was still a beginner in the dramatic art, he derived the stories for his plots not so much from the Italian novella as from Roman comedy. In *The Comedy of Errors*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*, he relied on Plautus and Terence: the plot of the former play is derived from Plautus's *Menaechmi* or *The Twins* and *Amphitruo*, while the latter is indebted to the *Supposes* (1566), Gascoigne's translation of a play by the Italian dramatist Ariosto (which was in part an adaptation from Plautus and Terence). It is as if at this stage Shakespeare could not as yet see the dramatic possibilities of the romances, but felt safer in going straight to the Roman drama for his sources.

With *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* begins Shakespeare's dramatic use of the romance material. Here the source is a translation of a Spanish romance, *Diana Enamorada*, by de Montemayor (published in 1582). In the romances Shakespeare found the framework of his early comedies. Love is a common theme in these plays and the romances provided him with his pairs of lovers involved in intricate situations and complicated adventures, with such conventions as girls disguised as boys and with the pastoral setting against which the actions take place. To love and

pastoral life Shakespeare only added the comic themes. Needless to say, the whole thing was anglicised, so to speak: for the lovers, the simple pastoral life and especially the humorous characters, all strike one as essentially Elizabethan. *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Twelfth Night*-all owe in varying degrees a debt to Italian romances. *As You Like It*, *two*, is in many respects a dramatisation of a pastoral romance, *Rosalynde* (1590) by Thomas Lodge. Unlike his comedies, Shakespeare's tragedies do not as a rule derive their plots from the world or romance. Apart from the early tragedy *Romeo and Juliet*, which, as we have already said, has much more in common with the world of the comedies than with that of the later tragedies, *Othello* is the only which is based chiefly on romance. The direct source of *Romeo and Juliet* is the narrative poem *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* (1582) by Arthur Brooke, which is ultimately derived from Bandello's *Navelle* (1554), while the source of *Othello* is Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* (1565). In the last plays Shakespeare turned to romance once more. The world of the last plays with its pastoral setting, its idealised love, its improbable adventures, its conventions of lost children miraculously found and girls disguised as boys, is essentially the world of romantic fiction. *Cymbeline* owes much to Boccaccio's *Decameron* (c. 1350) and in *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare's chief debt is to a pastoral romance by Robert Greene, called *Pandosto: The Triumph of Time* (1588).

The story of Shakespeare's dealing with romance material seems in fact to follow an interesting pattern. He went to the romances in his early period when he was writing in a comic vein and, after practically abandoning them in his tragic period, he returned to them while writing his last plays. One or two reasons for this may be suggested. First in the comedies, especially the early comedies, there is on the whole a happy atmosphere of love and joy. It was therefore natural that for his stories he should go to the romances, since the romances were tales of love and adventure with a generally happy outcome. Secondly, because the romances were stories of intricate situations Shakespeare resorted to them during those periods in his dramatic career when he was interested in situation rather than character. When he was most interested in character--as he was in the tragic period--he searched elsewhere for his plots. It is not without significance that the only mature tragedy based on romance, *Othello*, is chiefly a domestic tragedy of intrigue.

5.5 HISTORIES OF SHAKESPEARE

Before turning to the tragic period we must say a word about the English history plays. These were mainly derived from Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (second and fuller edition, 1587) and Edward Hall's *The Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* (1597). Both Holinshed and Hall furnish most of the historical material of *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3*, *Richard III* and *Henry VIII*. (Shakespeare is also indebted to Holinshed for *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and to some extent *Cymbeline*.) In the history plays Shakespeare did not slavishly follow his source, and his treatment of Holinshed was in a sense just as free as his treatment of the romances: he often felt the need to compress, omit, add to his material or rearrange the order of events. Generally he went to his source to obtain a framework for his plays, although he did not hesitate to follow the chronicle pretty closely if it happened to serve his purpose. In *Richard III*, for instance, practically all the details of the death of Lord Hastings come from Holinshed (or rather

from Sir Thomas More who is Holinshed's unacknowledged source). But on the whole he chose from his material only those events which revealed motive and character. In his handling of his material for *Henry IV* and *Henry V* we notice quite clearly the development of his interest in character.

The character stage in Shakespeare also happens to be his tragic stage: and indeed the relation is more than mere coincidence, for after all character assumes a larger importance in tragedy than in comedy or even in historical drama. When Shakespeare began to be interested in character he first turned for his material to Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's great work *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (1579). The *Lives* themselves contain a series of lively character portraits and it is interesting to note that from this work Shakespeare derived the material of his first major tragedy, *Julius Caesar*, which contains his first serious attempt at delineating a truly tragic character. It also furnished him with the material of his other Roman tragedies, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*, as well as with part of the material of *Timon of Athens*. Shakespeare did not refrain at times from following Plutarch very closely in the rich words of North's translation.

5.6 SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES AND THEIR SOURCES

During this period in which he produced his most subtle character portraiture, Shakespeare also resorted to Holinshed's *Chronicle*--but this time with a difference. The story of *Macbeth* is derived from the *Chronicle*, but if you compare the way in which Shakespeare used the *Chronicle* in *Macbeth* with his handling of it in an early play like *Richard III*, you will realise the significant development of Shakespeare's dramatic powers. In *Richard III*, as in the other history plays on the whole, and despite the liberties he granted himself, Shakespeare followed history fairly faithfully, but in *Macbeth* history becomes subservient to character. In *Macbeth* character and the exigencies of character become the prime consideration. *Richard III* is basically a chronicle play, whereas *Macbeth* is a tragedy. Indeed, if we go to Holinshed we shall find the source of some of the details in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. For instance, the dialogue between Ross and an Old Man in Act II, Scene iv, in which they discuss the various manifestations of disorder in nature accompanying the sacrilegious murder of King Duncan seems to come straight from Holinshed (see pp. 51-3). The resemblance to the original here may seem as close as that between the details of the death of Lord Hastings in *Richard III* and the account given in Holinshed. In fact there is an important difference between the two instances. The details borrowed in *Macbeth* do not come from Holinshed's history of Macbeth or Duncan, but from his account of the murder of King Duff (who was the great grandfather of Duncan) by Donwald. In *Macbeth* Shakespeare was obviously freer in the treatment of his material. He found a detail in Holinshed which, irrelevant as it was historically to the death of Duncan, he did not hesitate to use because he saw that it could serve his dramatic purpose. Similarly, in the actual murder of Duncan Shakespeare by no means followed Holinshed's history. Holinshed dismisses the murder very briefly, but in the play the murder of Duncan could not have been accomplished so simply. Shakespeare had to use it as a crucial scene for the sake of the dramatic exigencies of his tragic character. Also, to make it more effective he altered the age of

Duncan, who was historically a young man; just as in his portrayal of Macbeth he brought in the details from the murder of King Duff, which seemed to him to have greater tragic possibilities. From a single sentence in Holinshed he developed the whole character of Lady Macbeth:

'but specially [Macbeth's] wife lay sore upon him to attempt the thing, as she that was very ambitious burning in unquenchable desire to bear the name of a queen.'

Here too he fuses her with Donwald's wife. It is this greater freedom in handling his material, this ability to seize upon anything that could serve his dramatic purpose however unhistorical it might be, that makes the play a tragedy and not a history play.

Besides seeking his sources in North's Plutarch and in Holinshed's *Chronicle*, Shakespeare in this period reworked the themes of already existing plays. It is now pretty certain that before his *Hamlet* there existed a play, now lost, by the same name-which was written by Thomas Kyd, the author of *The Spanish Tragedy*. This play is often referred to as the *Ur-Hamlet*, that is, the original *Hamlet*. Another of the great tragedies which was written on the theme of a contemporary play, this time extant, is *King Lear*, the main source of which is an anonymous play called *The True Chronicle History of King Leir And His Three Daughters*.

After the period of tragedies Shakespeare returned to the romances for his sources. Generally in the last plays Shakespeare seems to have lost interest in individualised character and to be more drawn to idealised types and less probable situations. Moreover, the predominant theme of these plays is that of regeneration and reconciliation, which, however, are brought about after much suffering. Yet the evil in human existence, though by no means minced by the poet, is transcended in a kind of mystical vision which finds more harmony than strife and discord in the universe. It is, therefore, fitting for the poet to return to the world of love and wonder which the romances provided. For the atmosphere of the last plays is on the whole one of joy, it only differs from that of the early bright comedies in that the joy is more spiritual since it is the joy, not of innocence, but of a vision of life that has 'supped full with [tragic] horrors', but has also gone beyond tragedy.

5.7 LET US SUM UP

Hope you have become familiar with the stages of Shakespeare's life as a playwright and the aspects of his plays.

5.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. How is the date of a play fixed?
2. What are the great tragedies of Shakespeare?
3. How did Dowden divide the career of Shakespeare?
4. Comment on the life of Shakespeare as a dramatist.
5. How did Shakespeare gather themes for his plays?

5.9 SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Comment on the tragedies of Shakespeare?
2. Assess the life of Shakespeare as a playwright?

5.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Kenneth Muir and Samuel Schoenbaun (ed.). **A New Companion to Shakespeare Studies** (1971).

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Unit I-A - Lesson 6

SHAKESPEARE IN THE THEATRE OF HIS TIME (REVISED)

6.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will introduce you

- to Elizabethan theatre – its stage-conditions.
- different theatres during the period
- conditions of drama during 16th & 17th centuries, and
- Shakespeare's plays and their stage conditions

6.1 INTRODUCTION

6.2 ELIZABETHAN STAGE – ITS EVOLUTION

6.3 HISTORY OF 16TH & 17TH CENTURY PLAY HOUSES

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6.1 INTRODUCTION

The connection between Elizabethan drama and the stage on which it flourished was close, continuous and profoundly significant. Shakespeare's drama was born in the Elizabethan theatre and grew up by making the most of all its advantages. These facts are so well known today that they sound like platitudes. And yet several details concerning the stage and the staging of plays still remain to be settled. The physical stage, which was the indispensable background of the Elizabethan play, has received the attention due to it only during the present century. We owe the phrase Physical Stage to Mr. A. H. Thorndike who begins his account of this aspect of Shakespeare's theatre by remarking: 'The sources of our information in regard to the physical stage of the Elizabethan theatre are uncertain and baffling.' Shakespearean bardolatry in the 19th century had a tendency to drive Shakespeare out of the theatre into the study. It was Granville-Barker the actor-manager and dramatist-critic who rescued Shakespeare from the pedantry of the scholar-

critics as well as the charlatanism of producers like Henry Irving. The achievement of Granville-Barker is thus described by Bernard Shaw: He (Shakespeare) was on the brink of the appalling *degringolade* of the British Drama which followed his death and went on for three hundred years until my time. And his plays were so abominably murdered and mutilated, until Harley Granville-Barker restored them to the stage, that it was shamefully evident that the clergymen who knelt down and kissed Ireland's forgeries and the critics who made him ridiculous by their idolatries, had never read a line of his works and never intended to. It is of course easy to be wise after the event. But the great 19th century romantics, Coleridge and Lamb, would have written differently if they had our advantage of being able to see Shakespeare acted on the sort of stage he wrote for. Coleridge, with the insight of genius and the evidence afforded by the text of the plays, was able to assert that Shakespeare would fare far better on the bare boards of a platform than on the picture-frame stage, on which contemporary actors mangled his lines so recklessly, that Charles Lamb could declare with sincere conviction that the greatest of Shakespeare's plays cannot be acted! But neither Lamb nor Coleridge could foresee the revolution that has been produced by modern research which enables us to appreciate Shakespeare in an authentic Shakespearean setting.

6.2 ELIZABETHAN STAGE – ITS EVOLUTION

Elizabethan drama was the product of a long evolutionary process. The tradition of the mediaeval drama, cross-fertilised during the renaissance by that of the classical, combined with the spirit of the age to fashion it in accordance with the exigencies of the moment. Towards the close of the 16th century, bands of strolling players organised themselves into companies for protection against the law that classed them with thieves and vagabonds, unless they claimed service under some distinguished aristocratic patron and wore his livery. Thus the Lord Chamberlain's men, the Admiral's men, Lord Strange's men were designations adopted by the various dramatic troupes that had only a name, but as yet no local habitation. When they toured the provinces they used to improvise their stage of rough boards propped up on barrel-heads in moot-halls or inn-yards, and occasionally in the Reception rooms and manorial halls of the wealthy. In the city of London, too, at first they seem to have found the most convenient inexpensive places for their plays in the spacious inn-yards of the metropolis. The inn-yards had such excellent facilities for happy collaboration among audiences, players, and managements, that they continued to be popular haunts of the drama long after regular play-houses, came to be built. Five of them are included in a list of 17 regular playhouses in London mentioned in the year 1632; and at least three of them--*The Cross-keys*, *The Bell Savage* and *The Bull*--continued to exhibit plays till the theatres were closed at the outbreak of the Civil War (1642).

These inn-yards were generally square in shape and surrounded by three tiers of galleries overlooking them. Against one of the four sides a temporary stage could be easily set up, so that the galleries and the open space in the yard in front of the stage served to accommodate the audience. Entrance to the yard, while a play was on, was regulated by the payment of a penny, and to the gallery by another penny, and to a seat in the gallery by a third. The stage was a large wooden platform jutting out into the yard from the gallery at the back and partly open to the sky. A part of the stage at the rear used to be protected by a roof supported by two pillars. The ground-floor room

behind the platform served as an inner stage, with or without a curtain. The gallery above the stage was used as an upper stage for various scenic effects as well as to accommodate the musicians. Almost all these features of the inn-yard stage were present in an embryo form in the mediaeval Miracle Stage: the 'platea' an open, neutral ground corresponding to the outer stage; and behind it the 'loea' or 'domus', constituting an inner stage; and an upper stage above it, for the god or angel in the machine to descend from. When permanent playhouses were built, they were closely modelled on the inn-yard stage in all its main features. Thus, the tradition of the physical stage is fairly continuous and unbroken from the earliest mediaeval times right up to the middle of the 17th century.

6.3 HISTORY OF 16TH & 17TH CENTURY PLAYHOUSES

The first permanent playhouse in London--perhaps in the modern world--was built in 1576 by James Burbage and was called *The Theatre*. Situated in the Shoreditch area of London just outside the city limits, *The Theatre* was a notable financial enterprise in the exploitation of organised public entertainment as well as a milestone in the history of modern drama. The inn-yard theatres, like *The Cross-keys* and *The Bull*, were within the city limits. But the players were soon driven to the suburbs by the persecution of the puritanical City Council of London. Richard Flecknoe calls puritanism 'that fanatic spirit which then began with the stage and after ended with the throne.' He says it 'banished the players thence to the suburbs.' There were five great inns which served as homes of the drama at this time--*The Cross-keys*, *The Bull*, *The Bell Savage*, *The Bell* and *The Boar's Head*. The order of banishment was issued by the Common Council in 1576. It was not, however, very rigorously enforced, thanks to the intervention of the Privy Council, and the support and patronage of the court. The 'Puritans attacked the drama as contrary to Holy Writ, as destructive of religion, and as a menace to public morality.' Their hostility compelled the players to build their public playhouses in the suburbs, the Bankside to the south, and Finsbury Field in Shoreditch to the north of the city. By 1632 there were altogether eight public play-houses in addition to the private houses and the inn-yards. They were the *Theatre*, the *Curtain*, the *Rose*, the *Swan*, the *Globe*, the *Hope*, the *Fortune* and the *Red Bull*, in the order of their erection. The private houses were four in number, the *Cockpit* or the *Phoenix*, *St. Paul's Singing School*, the *Blackfriars*, and the *Whitefriars*. Both private and public playhouses were open to all classes of play-goers on payment for admission, though the private houses charged high rates. The private theatres were more compact, fully protected from the weather, and provided with artificial lighting. Since Shakespeare wrote for the public playhouse of his day, we are more concerned with the details of its construction and working. We shall not therefore deal in this lesson with the private theatres and the court theatres of the 17th century.

From contemporary accounts, it is clear that these playhouses were very much alike, being mostly modelled upon each other. For instance, the *Hope* built in 1614 was a replica of the *Swan* built twenty years before. The timber as well as the plan of the *Theatre*, built in 1576 served to build the *Globe* in 1599. All except the *Fortune*, which was square, were either round or polygonal in shape. The *Fortune* was square-and in this respect exceptional-measuring 80 feet each way on

the outside and 55 feet inside, the difference being accounted for by the depth of the galleries. The foundation of the galleries was of brick on which was raised a wooden frame supporting three tiers of galleries 12, 11 and 9 feet in height. The width of the galleries was 12 feet 6 inches and they contained four 'divisions' or rooms to accommodate the more well-to-do patrons paying higher rates for admission. The galleries were provided with seats and the rooms had ceilings and plastered walls. 'The stage and the galleries were roofed with tiles, paled with oak and floored with deal. The width of the stage was 43 feet and it jutted 27½ feet into the open space in front of it from the gallery behind. The inner stage was about 12 feet deep. Between the outer stage and the galleries on either side there was about six feet of space. The total cost of the erection was £1320. The *Fortune* was occupied by the Lord Admiral's men, who became the Prince's men, on the accession of James I. The whole building was burned down by an accident on December 6, 1621.

According to John de Witt, a Dutch traveller who visited London in 1596, there were four theatres in the city, 'of notable beauty'--the *Theatre*, the *Curtain*, the *Rose* and the *Swan*. The largest and the most magnificent was the *Swan* of which de Witt has left us a sketch. He says it had a seating capacity for three thousand persons which sounds like, but need not be, an exaggeration.' The sketch given by de Witt has been challenged as inaccurate and fanciful but it is undoubtedly a valuable piece of contemporary evidence. It presents the leading features common to all Elizabethan theatres. These are the circular interior, the three tiers of galleries, the stage extending into the pit, the balcony in the rear, the two doors on either side of the inner stage, the hut above it, the flag and the trumpeter, the 'heaven' or 'shadow' supported by pillars in front of the inner stage. The absence of curtains seems to be the only notable omission.

Shakespeare belonged to the company that performed in the *Theatre*, the pioneering venture erected by James Burbage in 1567. The *Theatre* was pulled down and its timber was utilized to build the *Globe* in Bankside in 1597. Shakespeare was a share-holder in the new enterprise. Shakespeare served his apprenticeship in the *Theatre* and the *Globe* witnessed the perfection of his art. The physical stage of his time exerted the greatest possible influence on Shakespeare's art as a dramatist.

6.4 THE TYPICAL ELIZABETHAN STAGE

'The sources of our information in regard to the physical stage of the Elizabethan theatre are uncertain and baffling.' After this opening remark Thorndike admits that we have four pictures of theatre--interiors preserved from the 17th century, and in addition, the evidence of the stage directions contained in the printed plays; and the testimony of foreign tourists like de Witt, who came to London during this period and wrote about it. The four pictures are those of the *Swan* by de Witt, the *Red Bull* by Kirkman (1672) and the general view of a theatre-interior found on the title pages of *Roxana*, published in 1632, and *Messalina* in 1640. Philip Henslowe's diaries and papers furnish much valuable information. Finally, the stage directions of all the plays printed from 1550 to 1642, contain a wealth of information, if properly sifted; for, as Thorndike puts it, 'they do not supply an open book'.

The typical Elizabethan stage consisted of a platform roughly 40 feet square, about half of it extending into the auditorium exposed to the sky and surrounded on three sides by the groundlings -- the lowest class of the audience who were not provided with seats and were not even protected from the weather. This projecting platform stage remained characteristic of the English theatre all through the 17th century. Behind the outer stage, or the proscenium, was the curtained recess called the inner stage. On either side of the curtain, there were doors leading to the wings from the proscenium. Above the inner stage was an open gallery hung with curtains that could serve as a balcony. There were windows on either side of the balcony curtain corresponding to the doors on the stage below. The outer stage was sometimes partly protected by a roof, called the heavens, or the shadow, or the canopy, supported by pillars on either side. This feature, prominent in the *Swan* picture, is absent in the *Messalina* title page, and may have gradually dropped out because of its intrinsic clumsiness.

The inner stage with its curtain was excellently adapted to serve as a study, a bed-chamber, a cave, or an arbour which could be suggested by the use of appropriate properties and disclosed by drawing the curtain. The upper stage or balcony could represent the first floor of a house, the rampart of a city or fortress, or indeed any place requiring elevation. The outer stage could serve admirably for comparatively unlocalised scenes, with the curtains closed and the inner stage ignored altogether. It could also assume almost any character with appropriate background effects provided by the skilful use of the curtains and properties on the inner stage.

There was a small structure like a turret, commonly put up above the balcony. It was sometimes called the 'hut', from the roof of which a flag could fly, to indicate a performance in progress; and a trumpeter stationed in it, could give a loud blast to mark commencement and conclusion of a play. It was also the 'hut' that concealed the machines, out of which gods and goddesses would on occasions descend on the stage below. There were several kinds of traps and machines for such descents and they were called 'thrones'.

A few minor details may be added for the sake of completeness. The proscenium doors placed on either side of the curtain enabled the actors to enter and leave the proscenium without crossing through the inner stage. The windows and balconies over the doors of the inner stage were found more useful than the balcony directly above the inner stage which came to be less frequently used in the later plays and not used at all in the Restoration theatre. Trap-doors were liberally provided on the outer as well as the inner stage, and are glanced at in Hamlet's quip about the Ghost, as 'this fellow in the cellarage'. Besides the main curtain dividing the inner from the outer stage, there were others employed for special effects. Part of the inner stage was sometimes curtained off, as a place of concealment. Beds were sometimes hidden behind curtains. The mention of 'traverses' has led some scholars to confound them with the curtain in front of the inner stage. They were more probably the 'arras' or tapestry hangings running at right-angles to the rear wall, used for the purpose of dividing the inner stage into compartments. The pit in front of the stage was seldom provided with seats, except in the private indoor theatres, like the *Blackfriars*. There were galleries in both private and public theatres. Footlights were not used at this time. The public

playhouses performed in the afternoon by natural light. In the private theatres the stage was brilliantly illuminated with wax-candles.

The differences between Shakespeare's stage and ours are many and striking. But these differences were of gradual growth. About a hundred years after Shakespeare's time Sheridan's *School for Scandal* was first acted on just that kind of long, narrow projecting stage, with properties and scenery far in the rear, so that the actors, when they came down front, were surrounded on three sides by the audience, in a way that is familiar to us in the Elizabethan theatre. Sheridan's stage had as many points of resemblance with our modern stage as with that of the 17th century.

6.5 SHAKESPEAREAN PLAYS AND HIS 'STAGE'

We have seen that the old idea of the Elizabethan stage as a crude and primitive affair, on which nothing but symbolical and descriptive back-ground effects were attempted, is completely wrong. The Elizabethan stage could achieve a considerable degree of realism and serve as a suggestive and harmonious background to the most daring imaginative flights of the dramatist. An incredibly high degree of freedom and sophistication was possible by the skilful utilization of the outer and inner stage together with the balcony. 'The chief characteristic of the Elizabethan stage was its neutrality and its corresponding virtue, flexibility' says a recent writer on Shakespearean Tragedy. 'There was no inevitable scenic background or any other localising factor, such as a chorus provides'. The flexibility was due not only to the absence of the chorus, but the presence of the outer stage, which could remain unlocalised and neutral; while the inner stage could represent very specific scenes, and also serve as a suggestive background to the outer stage and give it a positive significance when necessary. For instance, by setting the inner stage in a suitable way, the outer stage could become the entrance to a street, the open place before a house, a palace or a fortress, the sea-shore, the desert landscape through which one passes before reaching the forest of Arden, or the desert of Bohemia in which Antigonus is chased and eaten by a bear within sight of the storm-tossed ship, which sinks presently without a single survivor.

In general, the outer stage was used for unlocalised scenes. The inner stage could represent the most specific and highly localised scenes with scenery and properties. The curtain being drawn, the setting for temple, shop, bed-room, cave or forest was disclosed. 'If the inner stage was a bed-room, the outer became a hall or an ante-room. Indeed any exact separation of the two stages became impossible when once the curtains were opened. The inner stage then became an integral part of the outer stage or rather the outer now embraced the inner.' The staging of a play was mainly the problem of distributing the action suitably over the three parts of the stage, the *proscenium*, the *domus*, and the *balcony*. But this was not difficult since plays were written with an eye to these potentialities of the contemporary stage.

The conditions of the physical stage, which we have described, largely account for both the idealism and realism in Elizabethan drama. The bare outer stage in full view of the audience and almost surrounded by them encouraged intimate subtle and expert acting. The soliloquies and asides

that are so frequent in the plays of the period were a natural outcome of such a situation. The stage made it possible to introduce an unlimited number of scenes into a play, ensured quick changes of scene, and concentrated attention on the actor, on the lines written by the dramatist, instead of distracting it by elaborate background effects and scenery.

Shakespeare's stage has been described as mediaeval, plastic, symbolic and incongruous on the assumption that the outer stage was all that really counted, the inner stage being a mere appendage of very limited usefulness. This is of course a misconception. Both the inner stage and the outer were necessary in almost equal measure to the staging of any play, so much so indeed that a theory of the regular alternation of scenes between them as an unalterable principle of Elizabethan stage-craft has been developed. There is a certain justification for this theory, though in its extreme form it is untenable, since the plays themselves contain its refutation.

The plays of Shakespeare have come down to us with few stage directions. Even the division into acts and scenes was first adopted by the editors of Shakespeare in the 18th century. A pause in the action to indicate a change of place or a lapse of time is marked on the modern stage by the fall of the curtain. On the Elizabethan stage, since this was impossible, an empty stage denoted by the stage direction *exeunt omnes* would signify the end of a scene; the rhyming couplet at the end of a blank verse speech was another indication. While the scenes denote integral and significant units of dramatic construction, the acts were often mere conventional intervals between spells of action introduced from extraneous considerations. From the point of view of staging there are three kinds of scenes in Shakespeare. There are scenes in which the locality is vaguely and casually mentioned. There are no indications as to the property required, nor whether the inner or the outer stage is to be employed. In such scenes, the action would invariably take place on the outer stage. Secondly, there are scenes that have no reference to any locality at all. Thirdly, there are scenes--a comparatively small number--which contain specific directions as to locality, requiring properties, setting and scenery, besides the use of the curtain and the inner stage.

Though the regular alternation of scenes between the inner and the outer stage could not have been an unalterable principle of presentation, it was undoubtedly an aspect of Elizabethan stage technique which had its influence on dramatic composition. Similarly, the facility for quick scene-changing encouraged the dramatist to go in for an unlimited number of scenes following each other in quick succession, such as, for instance, we find in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

A high degree of realism coexisted with symbolical action and scenery in the Elizabethan theatre. Since the 'Wooden O' of the Globe could not hold 'the vasty fields of France', half a dozen soldiers engaged in a rough and tumble clash and clatter of weapons would represent a battle. A few paste board tree-trunks, and painted leaves and potted shrubs, together with Rosalind's firm announcement, 'Well, this is the forest of Arden', were enough to conjure up that sylvan paradise. The beautiful moonlight scene in *The Merchant of Venice* (Act V, Sc. I) would have been exhibited in the public playhouses by means of some conventional stage symbol, like that which Bottom and his friends employed in their *Pyramus and Thisbe* : 'This lantern doth the horned moon present etc!' While symbolism and convention must have persisted, there was an increasing degree of

realism in the later plays. The repeated exploitation of storm scenes with thunder and lightning (in *King Lear*, *The Tempest*, etc.) the extensive use of ghosts, witches, and other supernatural apparitions (in *Macbeth*, *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*) desert, seacoast, and ship-wreck scenes in all the plays of the last period *Pericles*, *Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*) show that these could be exhibited with adequate realism.

The wealth of poetic description and word-painting, that make Shakespeare so uniquely enjoyable in the study, creates the impression that they were designed to compensate for the limitations of the contemporary stage. For instance, it is maintained that the vivid and moving scene of Ophelia's death could never have been acted on the Elizabethan stage and hence the descriptive-narrative technique used in the play. This is an extreme case and does not really prove the point. Perhaps scenes like this would lose something by their representation on any stage by violating the purity and delicacy of the poetic conception. Let us take an average passage of description from *Macbeth*, and consider whether it can function independently of stage-setting:

Duncan: This castle has a pleasant seat: the air
Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
Unto our gentle senses.

Banquo: This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet does approve
By his loved masonry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here: no jutty, freize, buttress,
Nor coigne of vantage, but this bird hath made
His pendant bed and procreant cradle.

(Act I, Sc. VI)

An exquisite piece of brilliant word-painting! Dramatically, however, its sole justification is the undercurrent of tragic irony of which the speakers are blissfully unconscious. On the stage, consider the effect of Banquo's lines without an adequate 'objective correlative' immediately in front of him and the audience! Phrases like 'pendant bed' and 'procreant cradle' are hard enough to construe, even with the help of teachers and reference books. What would the audience have made of 'the temple-haunting martlet' though they are told that he is a bird? Elizabethan plays were not written for 'University Wits' though some were written by them! Such descriptive passages abound in the plays. To imagine that they were interpreted by the actor without the help of the stage-manager's art is to exaggerate the powers of the Elizabethan actor and the patience of the audience. The Elizabethan actor was not a *Kathakali* artiste; and he could not say 'this guest of summer, the temple-haunting martlet' to the accompaniment of eloquent gestures and contortions of his face and body to convey an exact meaning.

In fact, some of the fundamental problems of realism *versus* symbolism have been posed by Shakespeare himself through the comic Interlude in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The conclusion to be drawn from the experience of Bottom and his friends in staging their absurd, playlet, has been

formulated thus by Duke Theseus: 'The best in this kind are shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.' This famous remark and the apologetic references to the *Globe* theatre in *Henry V* as 'this Wooden O' and 'this cockpit' have led critics to the hasty conclusion that Shakespeare did not set over-much store by stage-illusion built up by careful and elaborate staging. This conclusion is not borne out by his plays themselves, which--especially those of the last period--require careful and elaborate setting to be quite successful. Bottom and Co., came to grief over their 'lamentable comedy', not because they attempted to be realistic, but because they were too prosy, and unimaginative in their realism. As Dr. Johnson says in his Preface to Shakespeare, the aim of the drama is not to make the stage pass for something real, but 'to bring real things to mind'. Reality has to be kept at a safe distance from the make-believe world of the stage or else it might shatter the illusion altogether by producing a sense of incongruity. On Shakespeare's stage there was a constant striving for more and more realistic effects. It sometimes produced absurd or tragic results. When Antigonus in *The Winter's Tale* is made to run for his life chased by a tame bear, hired by the *Globe* from the near-by Paris Garden Zoo, the groundlings must have roared with appreciative laughter. But it is the sort of thing that would make 'the judicious grieve'. When real cannon was let off in *Henry VIII* to make a more than usually realistic effect, the explosion sparked off a conflagration in which the theatre perished. But, on the whole the balance between realism and symbolism, poetry and drama, action and narration was well preserved.

'The Elizabethan stage' says Mr. Drinkwater, 'was an instrument magnificently equal to any demand that they could make upon it. ... There was nothing that Shakespeare and his players wanted to do that they could not do. To see Shakespeare's stage as something crude and elementary is not to see it at all. It was neither primitive nor crude: it was highly civilized, expert and given hardly at all to experiment, but carrying an established tradition to its highest perfection.'

6.6 LET US SUM UP

The unit has made you familiar with the conditions of the Elizabethan Stage and how Shakespeare used it for his plays. This will help you to understand his plays in a better way.

6.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What did Bernard Shaw say about the achievement of Granville-Barker?
2. How were the 'inn-yards'?
3. What were the theatres during 16th century?
4. What were the popular theatres during 17th century?
5. What were the theatres mentioned by John de Witt?
6. Describe the typical Elizabethan Stage?

6.8 SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Describe the evolution of the Elizabethan stage?
2. Write about the 16th & 17th century playhouses?

6.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. E.K. Chambers. **The Elizabethan Stage**. 4 Vol. (1923).
2. Alfred Harbage. **Shakespeare's Audience** (1941).

Prof. R. SARASWATHI

Henry IV Part I

Henry IV, Part I List of Characters

The Scene: England and Wales

King Henry the Fourth, also called King Harry and Bolingbroke.

Prince Henry(Prince of Wales) also called Hal and Harry(King Henry's eldest son and heir).

Lord John of Lancaster, also called Prince John of Lancaster, a younger son of the King.

Earl of Westmoreland (A nobleman loyal to the King and a Commander of his army.)

Sir Walter Blunt (A nobleman loyal to the King and a Commander of his army.)

Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland (father of Hotspur, a rebel leader)

Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester, (Northumberland's younger brother and Uncle of Hotspur).

Sir Henry or **Harry Percy**, known as Hotspur (Northumberland's son and nephew of Worcester).

Edmund Mortimer/Lord Mortimer, Hotspur's brother-in-law, also referred to as the Earl of March, the son-in-law of Glendower and claimant to the throne of England.

Owen Glendower, a Welsh Lord, Mortimer's Father-in-law a supporter of the rebels (welsh of wales) is a peninsula west of England, not politically united with England before 1536(King Henry ruled England between 1399 & 1413).

Archibald Douglas, Earl of Douglas, a Scottish lord not an Englishman and hence not a rebel against the King but an enemy of the King as supporter of the Rebels.

Sir Richard Vernon, an English Knight (a nobleman, a man of high social rank with duty to fight for his King a knight will have the title 'SIR' before his name). He is like Sir Walter Blunt, but he serves not the King but the rebels, percies.

Richard Scroop, Archbishop of York, a religious head and an ally (supporter) of the Percies in the rebellion.

Sir Michael, a priest or Knight in the Archbishop household.

Sir John Falstaff, a witty fat Knight.

Edward Poins, also called Ned and Yedward, Prince Hal's companion at Boar's Head Tavern at Eastcheap.

Bardolph, Associate of Falstaff.

Peto, Associate of Falstaff.

Gadshill, another associate of Falstaff, and setter for the highway robbery.

Francis, a drawer, or tapster, a supplier of beer.

Vintner, or tavern-keeper, a person who buys and sells wines.

First Carrier, or transporter of produce.

Second Carrier

Ostler, or stable groom, 'a man who takes care of guests' horses at an inn.

Chamberlain or room servant.

First Traveller

Sheriff, an officer of the King, who performs some legal duties

Servant to **Hotspur**

Messenger

Second Messenger

Lady Percy, also called Kate, Hotspur's wife and Mortimer's sister.

Lady Mortimer, Glendower's daughter and Mortimer's wife.

Mistress Quickly, Hostess of the Boar's Head Tavern in Eastcheap.

Lords, Officers, Soldiers, Travellers at Gad's Hill, -- others attending.

Unit-I : Henry IV, Part-I, Lesson-I

I.I.0 OBJECTIVES

After working through this unit, you will be able to

- understand the background to Shakespeare's Historical plays
- know the Nature of kingship in England
- understand the Tudor Myth
- discuss the date of composition and sources of the play
- analyse the historical background to the play

I.I.1 STRUCTURE

I.I.0 Objectives

I.I.1 Structure

I.I.2 Introduction

I.I.2.1 Shakespeare's History Play : The Intellectual and Political Background

I.I.2.2 Introduction to Shakespeare's Historical plays

I.I.2.3 Nature of Kingship

I.I.2.4 Tudor Myth

I.I.2.5 Introduction to Henry IV – Part-I – Its date of composition and sources

I.I.2.6 Historical Background to the play

I.I.3 Check your progress

I.I.4 Sample examination questions

I.I.5 Let us sum up

I.I.6 Suggested Readings

I.I.2 Introduction

Before we go into a detailed discussion of the play, Henry-IV, Part-I, let us consider the stature and greatness of William Shakespeare.

The great English playwright, William Shakespeare with his dramatic and poetic ornaments, embellished the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603). He was not born when she first became the Queen. He was born in 1564, by which time, the queen completed six years of her golden rule, he passed away in 1616, 13 years after the Queen's death. Her Majesty, the great Queen, who belonged to the Tudor dynasty, developed the Tudor concept of strong rule and succeeded in taking England through one of its greatest periods.

Shakespeare was a true son of this great Elizabethan Age. He imbibed the spirit of renaissance and the other cultural and intellectual currents of his age. As a man steeped in patriotism, he rose above narrow feudalism and worked for the spread of nationalism in his plays.

“This royal throne of kings, this scept’red isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars.
This other Eden, demi-paradise . . .
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England..”

Thus Shakespeare paid rich tributes to his motherland in his tribute to John of Gaunt, father of King Henry IV, in his play “Richard II”.

I.I.2.1 Shakespeare’s History Plays : The Intellectual and Political Background

Shakespeare's history plays, much more than his comedies and tragedies, tend to present certain difficulties to the student. Therefore a few remarks explaining something of the background issues they involve are included here.

The Elizabethan history play, or as it was then called, the chronical play, is a kind of drama which was of an entirely English origin. Basically it is a dramatisation of a national historical event or a series of events. Unlike the comedy and tragedy which seemed to follow certain recognisable patterns, the history play tended to be episodic in structure; it harkened back to the miracle plays which related the lives of saints in such a way that one incident followed another for no reason other than mere succession in time. The chronicle play therefore often gives the impression of being formless. Because of the lack of models in this type of writing the chronicle play, especially in the hands of Shakespeare, sometimes attempted to follow the pattern of tragedy (for example, *Richard III*) while at other times it leaned heavily on the side of comedy (*Henry IV, Part 1*). Besides, an early device to impose some shape on the unwieldy mass of historical material was for the chronicle play to adopt the pattern of a morality play where two opposite forces of good and evil battle for the soul of man: in the chronicle play the soul of man is represented by the King and by implication the State of England. A clear example of this structure is provided in *Henry VI, Part 2*.

No less than ten of Shakespeare's plays are classified as histories by the editors of the First Folio. They are the plays which deal with relatively recent events from English history: *King John*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI, Parts 1, 2 and 3*, *Richard III* and *Henry VIII*. Shakespeare was by no means the only dramatist to write about the history of England, for in the Elizabethan period, the 'chronicle play' enjoyed great popularity. It is estimated that between 1588, the year the Spanish Armada was defeated, and 1603, when Queen Elizabeth died, about 200 plays dealing with themes from English history were produced.

Why did the Elizabethan audience demand history plays? It has been suggested that the Elizabethan interest in English history was manifestation of the people's belief in their national glory. Of course, there was much patriotic exultation in the Elizabethan days and we can see it seeping into serious works like Spenser's epic *The Faerie Queen*. However patriotism can only go part of the way towards explaining the Elizabethans' interest in plays dealing with their own history. Absolute patriotism and the sense of national glory may account for certain things in *Henry V* and even *Henry VI, Part I*, such as jingoism, or the clearly unsympathetic treatment of Joan of Arc. But nobody can claim that plays like *King John*, or *Henry VI, Parts 1 and 2* were merely attempts to satisfy patriotic feeling. The Elizabethans, in fact, were concerned about the future of their country. The Wars of the Roses (1455-1485) did not seem to them such ancient history as they do now. Nor was civil war a thing of the distant past. Shakespeare, as one scholar once reminded us, was six years old when the great rebellion broke out in the North of England in a desperate attempt to replace Queen Elizabeth by her sister, the Catholic Mary Stuart. In *King John* the Bastard says:

This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud feet of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself.

(V vii 112-114)

The same sentiment is expressed in the anonymous chronicle play, *The Troublesome Reign of King John* (printed in 1591). It was this concern about the future of England that gave the English history plays their peculiar urgency at the time. There was much anxiety lest England should make a wrong choice in the question of appointing a successor to Elizabeth. The interest in English history then was not only a manifestation of patriotic feeling, but also part of a vital concern about national survival. The Elizabethan preoccupation with politics was no less keen than that of twentieth century man. For many Elizabethans fear of Catholicism was no less, if not more real and oppressive than fear of communism or totalitarianism or colonialism or neocolonialism in certain quarters today. This perhaps explains why it is only in the past few decades that Shakespeare's history plays have received the attention of critics on such a wide scale. Amongst other things Shakespeare's history plays showed the Elizabethans, in a dramatic form, the forces that went to the making and preservation, or caused the destruction, of a nation. That is why one critic maintained that the real hero of Shakespeare's history plays is not so much Henry IV or Richard II as England the Republica itself. In this respect Shakespeare was still writing within the English dramatic tradition. For instance, in an early Tudor play, perhaps the earliest English chronicle play, *King Johan* (written by John Bale), which is a mixture of a morality and a history play, we get historical and allegorical characters side by side and amongst the allegorical figures is that of 'England' which appears as a 'widow'.

What was the Elizabethan view of history which Shakespeare wove into his history plays? In the middle ages history was largely a collection of records, centred on the church. The centre of the medieval world was religion and it was therefore natural that the main theme of history then was, as Tillyard says 'the revolt of the angels, the creation of man, the incarnation, the redemption of man and the Last Judgment'. Any human history was conceived only in relation to that

theological scheme, which gave pattern to it and which lay behind the moralising comments on the fall of princes and the mutability of fortune. The Renaissance, on the other hand, dealt more with human history proper; it also brought in a more practical attitude to it. It is true that Sir Walter Raleigh attempted to write a history of the world which began with creation, but like a typical Renaissance historian he went on to treat things more mundane and more applicable to people's lives. The historian would select certain events of the past and interpret them in such a way that they would help towards understanding and controlling contemporary events. (The choice of such events from national history may be due to the growing self-consciousness of the nation as a nation in the Renaissance which lay behind the increasing interest in recording and treasuring national events, and in giving embodiment to the memories of national figures to ensure national survival.)

Although it introduced or rather intensified interest in human history, the Renaissance did not lose sight of the relation between human events and divine Providence. The immediate theme of Shakespeare's history plays may be disorder in the form of civil war in England and continual defeat in France, but that disorder is at the same time seen as an aspect of a larger order in the universe. There is a wider religious setting against which human actions take place, for God has His own reasons for the occurrence of this disorder. He uses it as a means by which He reveals His divine plan. That is why to an Elizabethan audience Shakespeare's history plays had a religious and cosmic significance. In this connection it is interesting to see the Elizabethan attitude to a revolutionary modernist like the Italian political philosopher Machiavelli (1469-1527). Machiavelli maintained that politics are essentially secular, that political order or disorder are essentially matters of technique of ruling which have no relation to religion. For him politics did not have the philosophical or rather the religious significance they had for the Elizabethans, but are only secular matters whose aim is purely practical and related to the question: How can the ruler keep control and the unruly subjects be effectively controlled? Machiavelli believed that to secure this end any means was legitimate. It was largely because he omitted the presence of God in politics and denied His hand in operating man's actions, that to the Elizabethans the name Machiavel came to mean an intriguer and an unscrupulous atheist.

The religious significance of history which is implied in Shakespeare's history plays can best be studied under the following headings:

COSMIC ORDER

The Elizabethans believed that the whole of the universe presented an integrated pattern, that all created things were linked together and arranged in a fixed order based upon the principle of hierarchy. The details of this system of the universe are – firstly, for harmony to prevail in the universe all things must keep to their appointed station in the total scheme. Secondly, the universe presents a significant pattern of correspondences; for instance, the oak to the plants bears the same relation as the dolphin to the fishes or the lion to the beasts. Thirdly, there is a sympathetic relation between the various planes of being, so that any disturbance on one plane would be echoed or would have its reverberation on the rest.

POLITICAL ORDER

The cosmic order is also reflected in the political order. We can hardly find a clearer exposition of the relation between the two than in the opening of a contemporary widely known homily called *'An exhortation concerning Good Order and Obedience to Rulers and Magistrates'* (first published 1547).

Almighty God hath created and appointed all things in heaven, earth, and waters, in a most excellent and perfect order. In heaven he hath appointed distinct and several orders and states of archangels and angels. In earth he hath assigned and appointed kings, princes, with other governors under them, in all good and necessary order. The water above is kept, and raineth down in due time and season. The sun, moon, stars, rainbow, thunder, lightning, clouds and all birds of the air, do keep their order. The earth, trees, seeds, plants, herbs, corn, grass, and all manner of beasts, keep themselves in order: all the parts of the whole year, as winter, summer, months, nights and days, continue in their order: all kinds of fishes in the sea, rivers, and waters, with all fountains, springs, yea the seas themselves, keep their comely course and order: and man himself also hath all his parts both within and without, as soul, heart, mind, memory, understanding, reason, speech, with all and singular corporal members of his body, in a profitable, necessary, and pleasant order, hath appointed to them their duty and order; some are in high degree, some in low, some kings and princes, some inferiors and subjects, priests and laymen, masters and servants, fathers and children, husbands and wives, rich and poor; and every one have need of other; so that in all things is to be lauded and praised the goodly order of God, without the which no house, no city, no commonwealth can continue and endure or last. For where there is no right order, there reigneth all abuse, carnal liberty, enormity, sin and babylonical confusion. Take away kings, princes, rulers, magistrates, judges and such states of God's order, no man shall ride or go by the high way unrobbed, no man shall sleep in his own house or bed unkilld; no man shall keep his wife, children, and possessions in quietness, all things shall be common; and there must needs follow all mischief and utter destruction both of souls, bodies, goods, and commonwealths.

This passage is particularly interesting because it occurs in a homily which was read to the people throughout the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Both as a child and as a grown man, Shakespeare must have heard it in church. The ideas expressed here on the close link between the cosmic and political order formed therefore an integral part of the religious and civic education of the common man. The Book of Homilies from which the above extract is derived, was officially placed in churches by the Elizabethan Church, and intended to be read aloud to the congregation on Sundays, as an effort to promote conformity of doctrine amongst all. It is not surprising then to find these commonplaces in Shakespeare's history plays, where the parallel between political and social order and natural order (as is exemplified for instance in the bee kingdom in *Henry V* 1 ii) is constantly drawn.

THE POSITION OF THE MONARCH

Among men, therefore, the king enjoys the same status as the oak among the trees, the eagle among the birds, the lion among the animals or the sun among the heavenly bodies. The king rules by undisputed divine right. He should therefore be obeyed because to rebel against him is to rebel against God. This belief is crucial to the understanding of the pattern of Shakespeare's history plays. For a clear and unequivocal statement of it we may go to the same homily, that reservoir of the political commonplaces of the time: there we find, backed by suitable quotations from the Bible, the following principles. (1) The king has a divine right to rule: 'as it is written of God in the book of the Proverbs, *Through me kings do reign* . . . Here let us mark well, and remember, that the high power and authority of kings, with their making of laws, judgments and offices are the ordinance not of man, but of God'. (2) The king must always be obeyed, for: 'St Paul threateneth no less pain than *everlasting damnation to all disobedient persons*, to all resisters against this general and common authority, for as much as they resist not man, but God'. (3) If, however, the king's orders conflict with God's commandments then disobedience is allowed, but then it must be passive disobedience. Subjects should not resist but be content with suffering patiently. (4) Under no circumstances then are subjects allowed to show violence to the king, even when he is wicked. 'Christ taught us plainly, that even the wicked rulers have their power and authority from God: and therefore it is not lawful for their subjects to withstand them, although they abuse their power.' Subjects are not to withstand their liege lord and king; not to take a sword by their private authority against their king'. (5) 'Traitors and rebellious persons bring upon their own heads the terrible punishment of Almighty God'. The evil consequences of any rebellion are greater than the evil it was meant to redress.

This exaggerated religious aura which kingship had acquired by Shakespeare's time was in fact the product of deliberate Tudor propaganda, designed to discourage further rebellion and civil war. Coming after the Wars of the Roses Henry Tudor felt rather uneasy about his title to the throne, and to strengthen his position he sought first to encourage the notion of the divine right of kings, secondly to propagate through his historians a particular view of English history according to which the union of the two houses of York and Lancaster through his marriage with the York heiress was regarded as the inevitable and divinely ordained happy ending to the melancholy events of the preceding period. Another factor contributing to the increase of reverence for the figure of the king was that after the breach with Rome the English Church began to view kingship with a flattering eye. Besides, in the hearts of the people the void created by the removal of the figure of the Pope was later partially filled by the king.

In Shakespeare's plays in general, and not only in his histories, the religious significance of kingship is only too apparent. Readers of *Macbeth*, to choose an obvious example, are struck by the profundity and abundance of its religious imagery, of which this comment on the murder of King Duncan may serve as an example:

Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope
 The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence
 The life o' th' building. (II iii 66-8)

The history plays are full of references to the divine sanction of kingship. Nevertheless in Shakespeare's history plays we do not find the extreme principle of absolute obedience to an evil monarch. Armed resistance against Richard III (and against Macbeth) is clearly sympathetically portrayed, although it may be argued that neither king lawfully succeeded to the throne. Shakespeare was clearly aware of the existence of the tragic implication of the situation when two cogent rights conflict; obedience to the king and obedience to the dictates of one's conscience. For instance in *Richard II* we have such a situation where John of Gaunt stands powerless, unable to avenge the death of his own brother, in spite of the entreaties of his wife, the Duchess of Gloucester, because it is the king who was responsible for his death, or, as he put it:

God's the quarrel; for God's substitute,
 His deputy anointed in his sight,
 Hath caus'd his death; the which if wrongfully,
 Let heaven revenge, for I may never lift
 An angry arm against his minister (I ii 37-41)

Gaunt's words are clearly in accordance with the teachings of the homilies.

Because of this divine sanction of monarchy which meant that to the king the subjects owed absolute obedience and allegiance, the king's responsibility towards his subjects was felt and believed to be truly great. Shakespeare's history plays are full of references to the heavy burden of responsibility laid upon the shoulders of the monarch. To discharge his duties to his subjects properly and to see to it that order should prevail in the state, to prevent chaos and disorder from ravaging the state in the form of rebellion and civil wars, the king had to be a good and efficient ruler. He had to possess the right personality, and that meant that he had to possess certain traditional virtues, like courage, cunning, and justice or disinterestedness, symbolised respectively by the lion, the fox and the pelican. Because so much depended on the strength of the monarch's character, the subject occupied the attention of Shakespeare when he was interested in the theme of man in his political setting. His plays provide studies in kingly character: in some way *King John* is a study of a weak monarch while in *Henry V* we are given the study of a strong king.

THE DIVINE PATTERN OF HISTORY

Likewise, in Shakespeare's history plays is embodied the Tudor view of recent English history as expressed in the main sources of the plays, especially *Hall's Chronicle*. This view states that the recent events leading up to the accession of Henry Tudor were closely linked together by a moral chain of cause and effect and that the whole thing followed a divine plan. Briefly the details of this divine plan are as follows: the trouble started with the quarrel between Henry Bolingbroke and Mowbray, which Richard II was unable to resolve and which resulted in the deposition of

Richard. For that, and for his even more serious breaking of his faith in allowing the sacrilegious murder of Richard to take place, God punished Henry (IV) of Lancaster by making his reign full of internal troubles. However, God's full punishment was postponed in the reign of his son Henry V, because of his piety and his attempt to expiate his father's sin by having Richard reburied in Westminster. Unlike Richard II, Henry V was a good and strong king, but God chose to make his life short and His punishment was realised in the reign of his weak son, Henry VI, who was only a child when his father died, a thing which was a bad omen in itself. His reign was marked by internal strife (incessant quarrelling and intriguing among the nobles) and by external defeat abroad (whatever his father had won in the wars in France was forfeited by him). The result was the weakening of the house of Lancaster and the emergence of the descendant of the house of York, Richard, Duke of York, as claimant to the throne. Hence the Wars of the Roses, which occupy *Henry VI, Parts 2 and 3*, and in which many atrocities and butcheries were committed and complete anarchy and disorder reigned. This was symbolised by Shakespeare in a scene in which, unwittingly, a father kills his son and a son his father. At first victory fell to the house of Lancaster but later the Yorkist Edward (later Edward IV) returned and resumed the fighting swearing that he only sought his dukedom of York, not the throne, but he did not keep his oath. Eventually he won the war, but because he was a good king God postponed His punishment for perjury till after his death. (His brother, Gloucester-later Richard III-caused his sons to be murdered.) Richard III committed many sins, including the murder of King Henry VI in the Tower, he was therefore punished by his defeat at the hand of Henry Tudor (later Henry VII) who was clearly God's minister in delivering England at last from her long and dark night of misery and in bringing order out of disorder. The feud between the two houses was healed by his marriage to the heiress of the house of York. But the glory that was to be England was attained only in the reign of the issue of the two houses, Henry VIII.

Two things emerge from this account: first, evil and wickedness never pass unpunished, but each sin brings about the punishment it deserves. Secondly, Divine Providence ordained that events should be such that they would culminate in the 'triumphant reign' of the Tudors.

When we turn to Shakespeare's ten history plays we find that, apart from the two dealing with the reigns of the first and last English kings, namely *King John* and *Henry VIII*, the plays form two groups, each consisting of four closely linked plays. The first group or tetralogy, in the order of writing, contains the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III*. In the second there are *Richard II*, the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*. In both groups of plays this pattern of English history is clearly revealed. The deposition and murder of Richard II is referred to time and again as a heinous sin which eventually unleashed the forces of disorder that were only vanquished by the intervention of Divine Providence through the person of Henry VII. In both Shakespeare dramatises the whole period of recent English history covered by Hall's *Chronicle*, beginning with the inception of the trouble during the reign of Richard II and ending with its resolution by the victory of Henry Tudor.

The ideas discussed above form only the political and intellectual background of the history plays. However, it would be a mistake to assume that Shakespeare wrote his plays to expound these ideas or that his aim was to preach to his contemporaries the folly and dangers of civil war or

to provide effective propaganda for the Tudor regime. We cannot even prove that he personally believed in the Tudor view of the War of the Roses. In his histories Shakespeare was primarily a dramatist whose chief concern was to create enjoyable works of art. And it is as works of art that the plays ought to be approached and not as historical documents embodying the political commonplaces of the Elizabethan age--even though these commonplaces have to be grasped by the reader in order that he may have a clearer view of the situations in which characters in Shakespeare's plays are placed and have to make significant choices. As a serious artist Shakespeare used the political thought of his time, but only as the raw material of the plays. To read the histories with a view to defining and tracing the political thinking of the time is no less ludicrous than to go to Milton's *Paradise Lost* for the ptolemaic cosmogony it embodies. For in Shakespeare's history plays the apparent theme may be English history and English kings, but the real one is obviously nature: man in his relation to the state: the fascinating variety of human behaviour revealed by the exigencies of public life; the attraction of authority and conflict of powers; the marriage or divorce between politics and morality; the sufferings of individual human beings when caught in the grip of clashing national events. These are eternal themes which are not confined to a particular time and place. Not long ago we saw some of them treated in the moving Russian novel, *Dr Zhivago* (by Pasternak). This point should be emphasised because there is a danger, implicit in the historical approach, of regarding the plays as period pieces or historical curiosities.

1.1.2.2 Introduction to Historical plays

Shakespeare wrote as many as 37 plays, including Comedies, Histories and Tragedies. His 10 plays based on English History are known as Chronicle plays, as the emphasis there is on the sequence of historical events. "King John" and "Henry VIII" are independent plays and the remaining eight plays are called First and Second Tetralogies (A tetralogy is a group of four plays embodying strict chronological sequence of events. These plays tell the stories of the civil wars between the two noble houses of York and Lancaster in the 15th century known as the War of the Roses, based on the badges worn by them – the Lancastrians wore the red rose and the Yorks wore the white rose.

The first tetralogy known as the Yorkist tetralogy comprises the three parts of "King Henry VI" and "King Richard III". The second tetralogy known as the Lancastrian tetralogy comprises "King Richard II", the two parts of "King Henry IV" and "King Henry V"

The present play, 'Henry IV Part I', one of the plays of the Lancastrian tetralogy, is continuation of the earlier play 'Richard II'.

1.1.2.3 Nature of Kingship

As the play is concerned with kings and kingship, it is desirable to go into a detailed discussion of the nature of kingship. We know that our society is different from the nature of the

society a few hundred years earlier. Similarly, the society after a few hundred years will be different from ours.

Let us now think about the society in England in the medieval period (A.D. 1100-1400). People then lived at the subsistence level. They had no surplus but only produced enough food for the farmer and his family, leaving none to sell. Society was organised in a rigid hierarchy, a system with grades of authority from the lowest to the highest. It was held together by bonds of loyalty between individuals. The King received loyalty from the lords; the lords from the knights; the knights from their yeomen (farmers who owned their own lands) and the yeomen from the peasants (poor farmers renting small pieces of land). The local peasants were protected by their lord and in turn they would serve as soldiers in his army. This is called feudalism. In this system, bravery and skill in battle and loyalty to the lord were important and these values were called chivalry.

Chivalric loyalty towards the king often came into conflict with loyalty to the family and one's own honour. These conflicting loyalties contributed to the constant state of war between the medieval barons. This feudalism had long seemed unchangeable. But by the 14th century, it was already in transition and capitalism slowly evolved from it.

The universal Catholic Church was organised in a hierarchy parallel to the social one and belief in its authority in all matters of religion was widespread. Culture was based on the calendar and ritual of Catholicism. The Church became corrupt and the secular minded people developed ideas which led to the Protestant Reformation.

Social mobility from humble status to power started and possession of land was not a prerequisite any longer.

The absolutist Tudor Monarchy, with its centralising tendencies, succeeded in doing away with the private armies of individual lords. It concentrated taxation and legal powers in a government bureaucracy based in London. Thus kings gave up ruling the country with the cooperation of their armed fellow lords, but claimed the God-given right to rule exactly as they pleased.

The play 'King Richard II' shows the decadence of feudalism, and the internal forces which destroyed it.

King Richard regarded himself as God's appointed representative on the earth and so wanted to be obeyed in all matters. But he was also a warrior lord who had to respect the honour of the other warrior lords of the kingdom. He deliberately violated this rule, in depriving Henry Bolingbroke, after the death of his father John Gaunt, of his incomes and titles. He thought he was right in his action, but a feudal monarch could not actually behave like an absolutist monarch.

Richard believed that power resided within himself simply because he was the king. Soon he discovered that this was a fantasy and that power resided in men and material, in troops and weapons.

Though Richard was defeated, the powerful principle of absolute monarchy was his contribution. And it was only at the end of the Wars of Roses that the Tudor Monarch, Henry VII, established peace through absolute monarchy.

It was once believed that the right of succession from father to son was inviolable and that this right had divine sanction. So people showed their allegiance to Richard. And now this belief had lost its validity, and people felt that they could shift their loyalty to Bolingbroke owing to political expediency. The disgruntled Bolingbroke was disinherited by Richard II and so he worked for the latter's disinheritance. He usurped the throne of Richard and thus he introduced kingship based on power and political effectiveness, rather than birth in a royal family.

There is indeed a paradox here, Shakespeare knew that the world he described in his history plays was one that had passed away. Yet, he seems sometimes to write as if his characters were actually living in the England of 1590s and not the 1530s.

I.I.2.4 Tudor Myth

Rebellion and usurpation were held to be sinful in the sight of God and unmitigated disasters would descend on the countries that experienced them. Bishop of Carlisle gave expression to this myth in 'Richard II'. He protested against the dethronement of Richard II as a sin against God. He declared that Bolingbroke's usurpation of the Crown of Richard II would result in wars and bloodshed in England.

The violent events reported at the beginning of the play "King Henry IV, Part I," support this prediction. King Henry himself at the opening of the play referred to the troubles caused by the struggle for power between him and Richard. After Richard's deposition and death, his supporters raised many rebellions on his behalf and there was no peace and security in England. In the West, a thousand of Mortimer's men were butchered. In the North also a large number of Scottish corpses were seen. Thus there was news of guns, drums and wounds throughout the play.

This was really a changed world as judged from the accepted theological point of view. It was a world doomed to groan under the curse of impiety (lack of respect for God and religion). This world of outrage was already anticipated by Carlisle. It was a divinely appointed punishment for the assault on Richard.

But there was another point of view, the secular point of view. Henry Bolingbroke gave a new reading to the play, a changed world based on a secular, non-religious modern idea. Henry's world was secular and Shakespeare saw in secularism the necessary condition of a usurper's success.

In physical and secular terms, Henry was a successful usurper, not so on the mental plane. The blood of Richard was on his mind and so he had no moral courage to build a lasting order in the kingdom and remained helpless on the wake of disorders initiated. Moreover, he was greatly disturbed by the instances of discord on the wake of by Percy's rebellion, Prince Hal's behaviour and the knavery of Falstaff. Thus Shakespeare was justified in continuing the Tudor theme of the harsh wages of usurpation.

But Shakespeare as Maynard Mack says, minimised and softened this theme. He took a lenient view of Bolingbroke, taking into consideration his strength, sagacity and efficient rule and relaxed moral rules to enable him to rule the country for a short period. He was not allowed to rule indefinitely however effective he might be, the only solution was to pass on the crown to his richly deserving son, Prince Hal.

I.I.2.5 Introduction to Henry IV – Part-IV – Its date of composition and sources

Many critics say that 'Henry IV, Part I' was written and acted during 1596-97 and published in 1598, and the following points prove this statement.

- (1) An entry in the Stationer's Register under the date 25th February, 1598.
- (2) An echo of Falstaff's remark in the famous Mere's list.
- (3) A reference to the fatness of Falstaff in the last lines of Jonson's play, "Everyman Out of his Humour", in 1599.

The following points of evidence within the text also support this view. There is a reference in the play to the events of 1596-97. In Act II, Scene I, the second carrier refers to the high cost of cats that killed Robin Ostler and this was an event of 1596-97.

Sources:

Shakespeare based his play 'Henry IV, Part I', on Holinshed's 'Chronicles' and on "The Famous Victories of Henry V", an anonymous play of that period.

Holinshed's "Chronicles" was the main source for him. He borrowed many situations from his Chronicles and a few are listed below:

- 1) The defeat of English army led by Edmund Mortimer by the Welsh.
- 2) The victory of the English army over the Scots at Holmedon.
- 3) Hotspur's refusal to hand over the prisoners of war to the King.
- 4) Hotspur's request to the King to ransom Edmund Mortimer
- 5) Display of great valour by Prince Henry.
- 6) Death of Hotspur.

Shakespeare also deviated from Holinshed and a few deviations are listed below:

- 1) He introduced new characters -- Prince John of Lancaster, Lady Percy and Lady Mortimer. They are not found in Holinshed.
- 2) Shakespeare showed King Henry as less valient and Prince Hal more valiant than in Holinshed.
- 3) Shakespeare changed the age of King Henry and Hotspur. He represented the 30 year-old king as an old man. Hotspur who was actually older than Henry, was given the same age as Prince Hal.

Shakespeare turned to the second source 'The Famous Victories of Henry V' for the Falstaffian scenes. The scene of the highway robbery was also taken from that play.

Shakespeare was also indebted to the book, Daniel's 'Civil Wars' and 'Ballad of the Chevy Chase'. The account of the Battle of Shrewsbury was wholly derived from Daniel.

Finally, 'Morality plays' were the source for Prince Hal's triumphant journey from tipling in taverns to glory on the field of battle.

I.I.2.6 Historical Background to the Play

K.R.S. Iyengar says "England is the real theme of Shakespeare's historical plays. And England was ruled by kings who had to wage wars for survival

The present play 'Henry IV, Part I, is a continuation of 'Richard II' of the Lancastrian tetralogy. It forms the historical background to our play. Here Shakespeare concentrated on the wars between Richard II and his uncles and gave an analysis of the process of order and disorder resulting in selfish individual decisions.

Richard II was a weak and vain king. As the grandson of Edward III he was the true heir to the throne of England. He came to the throne in his eleventh year after the untimely death of his father, the Black Prince, the eldest son of Edward III. As he was a minor 'The Barons of the Royal Council' managed the government, and the Duke of Lancaster (John of Gaunt, the father of Henry Bolinbroke) was the most important member of this council. When Richard came of age, he started asserting himself as an absolute monarch. Owing to his misrule, he lost the support of the people. He made Henry Bolingbroke his enemy by banishing him from the country for quarrelling with Duke of Norfolk. Now King Richard confiscated his property and left for Ireland to put down a rebellion there.

Henry took advantage of this absence and he landed in England with a shrewd plan. Many discontented people joined hands with him and with their support Henry seized the crown and

became King Henry IV. With the help of the Parliament, he deposed Richard and imprisoned him. Richard died the following year and it was rumoured that he was murdered by the King's agents.

Richard had no heirs and after him, Mortimer, the Earl of March, had a better claim to the throne than Bolingbroke. He was nearer in blood to Richard than Bolingbroke. But, by his cunningness and diplomacy Bolingbroke bypassed Mortimer and became king. Then fearing a rebellion from Mortimer, he imprisoned him. Mortimer's supporters raised many rebellions but the king put down all of them. Now Mortimer had no supporters and the King, seeing this, released him and enlisted him as one of his supporters. Hoping that the civil wars had come to an end and that peace had descended on England, he entertained the thoughts of going to Jerusalem on a holy pilgrimage, and the play "Henry IV, Part I" begins at this point of history.

I.I.3 Check your progress

1. How did Shakespeare work for the spread of nationalism through historical plays?
2. What do you know about the nature of kingship?
3. What is meant by Tudor Myth?
4. When was Henry IV Part-I written and what were the sources?
5. Discuss the Historical background to the play.

I.I.4 Sample Examination Questions

1. Describe the greatness of Shakespeare as an Elizabethan dramatist with reference to Henry-IV Part-I.
2. Bring out the importance of Henry-IV Part-I with proper comments on its time and sources.

I.I.5 Let us sum up

After going through all the aspects of this lesson we have understood the background to Shakespeare's historical plays, the Nature of kingship in those days and the time and sources of the play Henry-IV, Part-I.

I.I.6 Suggested Readings

1. W.A. Armstrong. **Shakespeare's Histories.**
2. L.C. Knights. **Shakespeare: The Histories.**
3. E.M.W. Tillyard. **Shakespeare's History Plays.**

Unit-I : Henry IV, Part-I, Lesson-II

I.II.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson you will be able to

- Know the characters of the play.
- Understand the summary of the play.
- Discuss the plot of the play.
- Understand Act-wise, Scene-wise critical analysis and evaluation of the text.

I.II STRUCTURE

I.II.0 Objectives

I.II.1 Introduction

I.II.2 Act-I

I.II.3 Act-II

I.II.4 Act-III

I.II.5 Act-IV

I.II.6 Act-V

I.II.7 Summary of the text

I.II.8 Check your progress

I.II.9 Sample examination questions

I.II.10 Let us sum up

I.II.11 Suggested readings

I.II.1 Introduction

This is the second lesson of the play. Here, we discuss the plot of the play. It includes an Act-wise, Scene-wise critical analysis and evaluation of the Text. A synopsis of the Act is given and this is followed by analyses and evaluations of the Scenes. Finally comes the summary of the entire play.

I.II.2 Critical analysis and evaluation of Act I

The first act has 3 scenes. In the Act I scene I, King Henry appears in the royal court with his younger son and lords. He speaks about his crusade to Jerusalem but postpones it owing to fresh troubles. The outbreak of the Welsh rebellion is one of them. The second trouble is Hotspur's rebellious attitude arising out of his refusal to handover the Scottish prisoners of war. The King is unhappy for his son, who quite unlike Hotspur, is wasting his time in taverns. In the second scene, Prince Hal, Falstaff and others talk about drinking, robberies and women. Falstaff and others plan

to rob certain travellers. The Prince and Pains then plan to rob these robbers, but with a different motive. In the third scene, the King meets the Percies and demands surrender of the Scottish prisoners of war. He threatens to punish them if they disobey him. This leads to the Percies plan to join the rebels to unseat the King.

Act One - Scene One

Critical Analysis

The titular hero, King Henry appears in the royal court of England with his younger son and other lords. He seems very unhappy though he has completed a year of his rule. He feels guilty of the usurpation of Richard's throne and his murder. He sees that the civil wars have come to a temporary end and so he plans to visit Jerusalem to expiate his sins. But he has to postpone this pilgrimage owing to a bad news brought by Westmoreland. It is the defeat of the English forces under the still loyal Mortimer by the Welsh Lord Owen Glendower. He also hears of the victory of brave Hotspur over Archibald Douglas and about the large number of Scottish nobles taken prisoners. The king is jealous of Hotspur as his heroism reminds him of the worthlessness of his son Prince Hal. The King learns that Hotspur insists in ransoming Mortimer as a condition for surrendering the prisoners and this makes the King very angry and he orders the Percies to appear before him to explain their stand.

Critical Evaluation

King Henry, the titular hero is introduced in this opening scene. He has a guilty conscience as he is haunted by his crimes of usurpation and regicide. He also remembers the Tudor myth that crimes against the anointed king result in retribution and so fears that he may be punished by God for his crimes. So he tries to be acceptable to people by gaining moral strength through expiation of his sins. That is the reason why he proposes to visit the Holy Land. And now he cannot do this, owing to the problems posed by Douglas and Hotspur.

The nobles who know that the King is a sinner gain the moral courage to rebel against him. Thus rebellion appears as the major theme of the play.

Mention is also made in this scene about the two major contestants, Prince Hal and Hotspur and about their honourable and dishonourable conduct, thus hinting at the second but important theme of Honour.

Critical analysis of Act I, Scene II

This scene gives a picture of Prince Hal's merry life. He is in his chamber with his friend Jack Falstaff. They exchange jokes on topics of drinking and robberies. Then they plan for a highway robbery just for fun. The Prince first refuses to go along with them but finally agrees to enjoy the sport of robbing the robbers, just to dupe Falstaff. When alone, the Prince speaks about himself in a soliloquy. (A speech in a play in which a character's secret thoughts are spoken to the

audience). He says that his present behaviour is only a mask worn by him to hide his serious nature. He intends to detach himself from these anti-social elements at the proper time and reveal himself in true colours.

Critical evaluation

The first scene is about the serious main-plot of King Henry and his problems.

The second scene introduces the comic' sub-plot and here the matter is not serious but jovial.

Falstaff is an immortal creation of Shakespeare. He is the King of the comic world. He is an old white-haired Satan, a great drunkard and an incorrigible liar. Yet he makes the audience laugh with his wit and humour.

Prince Hal is the real hero of the play, whereas King Henry is the titular hero. Time could affect change and at the present point in time, the Prince is among the evil companions. But at the proper time, he will emerge as the true Prince, like the sun among the clouds, and prove an ideal King.

Critical analysis of Act I - Scene III

The King meets the Percies in the Council Hall and asserts his authority. He demands reasons from Hotspur for not surrendering the prisoners. He scolds them and threatens to use force against them. Hotspur's uncle Worcester presents the King's speech and demands courtesy and reminds him that they were responsible for his kingship. Northumberland speaks convincingly about his son Hotspur. Hotspur himself explains the position and throws all the blame on the King's messenger. This does not appease the King, for he suspects Mortimer to be in league with the rebels. So he calls Mortimer a traitor and so refuses to ransom him. He leaves the Council threatening to punish the Percies if the prisoners are not surrendered.

Hotspur is very angry. He scolds his father and uncle for placing Henry on the throne. Worcester reminds them that King Richard II designated Mortimer as his heir and Henry became King by bypassing him. And so the King considers Mortimer his born enemy. Worcester unfolds a plan to oppose the King. They have to strengthen themselves by allying with Glendower, Mortimer and the Archbishop of Canterbury and thus pave the way for installing Mortimer on the throne. Soon Hotspur agrees to join in the rebellion against the King. It is for this that he will be friends with Douglas, Mortimer and Glendower.

Critical evaluation

Hotspur's refusal to surrender the prisoners of war develops the situation and this is the turning point in the play. It is the conflict between the King and the rebels.

We see Hotspur's basic character – his heroic stature. He is selfless, straightforward and courageous. He is ready to do anything for the sake of honour. He refuses to be loyal to the King at the cost of his honour and here we find a clash between loyalty and honour.

I.II.3 Critical analysis and evaluation

This Act has four scenes. In the first scene, we come to know how Gadshill, a professional thief gets information about the money the travellers have. The second scene describes the robbery. Falstaff, Gadshill, Bardolph and Peto rob the travellers. When they are about to share the booty, Prince and Poin come in disguise, fall upon them and rob them. In the third scene Hotspur appears reading a letter from a lord. The Lord does not want to join in the rebellion. His wife Lady Percy appears and expresses her concern for his safety. Hotspur replies roughly but affectionately. The fourth scene is full of comedy. The trick played on Francis is funny. The scene also contains a mock-play of the interview between the King and the Prince, played out by Falstaff and the Prince.

Critical analysis of Act II - Scene I

The scene opens at an inn in Rochester, on the London-Canterbury road. It is early morning and two carriers are loading the horses. Gadshill, a professional thief tries in vain to get information from them about the money the travellers have with them. Chamberlain, one of the servants, who is in league with him, tells him that two rich merchants with plenty of money, will be leaving the inn, that morning.

Critical evaluation

After the rebellion in the previous scene this scene supplies the necessary comic relief. The carriers represent the honest subjects of the kingdom. Gadshill and the corrupt Chamberlain provide a contrast to them.

Critical analysis of Act II - Scene II

In this scene, we see the robbery and the counter robbery, as planned earlier. Prince Hal and his friends assemble on a highway near Gad's Hill to play a practical joke on Falstaff. They have hidden Falstaff's horse and the fattest, big-bellied Falstaff cannot walk even a few feet. So he frets and fumes for not finding his horse. The Prince jocularly asks Falstaff to lie down with his ears close to the ground and listen if he can hear the footsteps of the approaching travellers. Falstaff replies that once down, he cannot get up, unless a lever is brought to lift him from the ground.

Now, the Prince and Poin withdraw on the pretext of keeping themselves in reserve. The travellers approach and Falstaff and his gang rob them. The Prince and Poin see them sharing their spoils, fall upon them and rob them.

Critical evaluation

We see comedy at its great heights. Critics say that this scene is written mainly for the Elizabethan groundlings. Here we have the gulling of Falstaff. It is similar to the gulling of Malvolio in "Twelfth Night". Here we see another side of Prince Hal. Though he is with low comrades, he is not one of them. Even earlier, he has robbed the robbers only to restore the money to its owners. That is the character of Prince Hal.

Critical analysis of Act II - Scene III

It is a beautiful domestic scene between Hotspur and Lady Hotspur. Hotspur is reading angrily a letter from a lord who does not want to join the rebellion. He shows his contempt of the writer and thinks that he may expose the plot to the King. It is at this time that Lady Percy (Hotspur's wife) enters and enters into a dialogue with him. She questions her husband about his preoccupation and dreams of battle. But Hotspur ignores her and wants to ride away hurriedly. She suspects the truth but she does not succeed in extracting anything from him. Hotspur assures her that she will be brought to his camp.

Critical evaluation

Hotspur is very rough and emotional and knows only war. Yet he has a soft corner for his wife and she dotes on him. She wants to know from her husband whether he loves her or not and his indirect reply is that he loves her infinitely.

Critical analysis of Act II - Scene IV

This scene takes us back to Boar's Head Tavern at Eastcheap. This scene is called the Tavern scene and it presents many funny situations.

The Prince and Poins enjoy a practical joke at the expense of the drawer (tapster), Francis. First the Prince and then Poins go on calling for poor Francis. Trying to please them he answers each call with "Anon, Sir" and thus makes a fool of himself. Then follows a humorous discussion of the robbery at Gadshill and the gulling of Falstaff there.

A messenger comes from the King and informs Hal that he must appear before his royal father, to discuss the threat posed by Hotspur and his allies. This provides a subject for the rehearsal in which the Prince and Falstaff play alternate roles. First Falstaff plays the role of the King and the Prince his own role. Then the roles are reversed, Falstaff becomes the Prince and the Prince becomes the King.

The Sheriff comes to arrest Falstaff for his part in the robbery. But the Prince sends him away saying he is not present. And Prince Hal suddenly decides to pester Falstaff by taking him to the battlefield of Shrewsbury as one of the army commanders.

Critical evaluation

Falstaff is the central figure of this scene and his is the source of broad comedy, here. He is not a historical figure, but an immortal creation of Shakespeare. He is not only witty in himself but the cause that wit is in other men.

I.II.4 Act III

The Third Act has three scenes and in the first scene, the rebels, excepting Northumberland and Douglas meet at Bangor, Wales and plan the campaign against the King and the later division of England into 3 parts. This is followed by a few happy moments between the leaders and their wives.

In the second scene, the King meets the Prince and blames him for his irregular life. The Prince excuses himself and promises to prove his loyalty and worth by performing glorious deeds.

In the third scene, Falstaff appears at the Tavern and says that his pocket is picked, and Prince Hal who exposes him, appoints him an officer in the army.

Critical analysis of Act III - Scene I

The rebels have assembled in the Archdeacon's house at Bangor in Wales. Hotspur, Worcester, Mortimer and Glendower discuss their plans to combine their forces at Shrewsbury, against the King. On a map they divide the country into three portions, the North going to Hotspur, the West to Glendower and the South to Mortimer. Hotspur ridicules Glendower's claim that the earth shook at his birth. Worcester and Mortimer request Hotspur to be more friendly towards Glendower and Hotspur promises to do so.

Mortimer's wife is sad that her husband is leaving soon. Hotspur cannot persuade his wife to sing and he feels happy that he is not exposed to the trouble of listening to songs.

Critical evaluation

The rebels are sure of deposing the King and so they are serious about dividing the kingdom among themselves. So this scene is called the "Division Scene" and it is very important from the political point of view. By planning to divide the kingdom, the rebels estrange the English people who turn hostile to them. The people start sympathising with the King, who stands for the unity of the country.

Critical analysis of Act III - Scene II

The scene shifts to the royal palace and the King speaks privately to his son Prince Hal. The King tells him that he is not worthy of his line and that he is more a sign of God's displeasure than an obedient son. The same age as Hal, Hotspur is the leader of armies in the battlefield trying to takeover the kingdom from Henry. But Hal is wasting time in frivolous pursuits. Hal is more likely to surrender to the enemy than come to his father's aid.

Agitated by his criticism, Hal excuses himself and swears obedience to his father. He vows that he will snatch honours from Hotspur in a single fight. King Henry is happy and appoints his son the supreme commander of an army. The King himself leads one of the armies, Westmoreland and Prince John, the other two.

Critical evaluation

This scene throws light on the character of the King and the Prince and takes us back to the play, "Richard Second". The King confesses that he is guilty of usurpation and regicide. He knows that he is the real sinner and not his son, Hal. According to 16th century political belief people should be loyal to their King, as he is God's agent on earth. In other words, the King should win the support of his people. As a sinner, the King is doubtful about his son's future and so wants him to win the love of his people by proving himself an ideal ruler. And the Prince, whole-heartedly complies with this ideal.

Critical analysis of Act III - Scene III

The scene moves from the Palace to Boar's Head Tavern in Eastcheap. Falstaff confesses to Bardolph that he is repentant and so ready to mend his ways. Then they indulge in mutual teasing till the arrival of the hostess.

When she enters, Falstaff accuses her of having picked his pocket. So he refuses to pay his bill for wine and other services. The hostess declares that this is meaningless, as he has no money in his pockets. The Prince enters at this moment and attests to this statement.

Prince Hal informs Falstaff that he and his father have become friends and the money taken during the robbery has been given back. He rejects Falstaff's proposal to steal the treasury and persuades him to join the army against the rebels, by raising in him national sentiments.

Critical evaluation

The comic and historical plots are beautifully blended together, in this scene. Falstaff is seen here in his favourite attitude of mock repentance and finally enlists himself in the army in reply to the Prince's stirring call to take up to arms.

I.II.5 Act IV

This Act has five scenes. The first scene opens in the rebel camp near Shrewsbury. Hotspur, Douglas and Worcester review the war preparations. They receive news that Northumberland and Glendower are not coming. Yet Hotspur and Douglas decide to face the thirty thousand strong royal army.

In the second scene Falstaff appears as a military captain. He is on his way to Shrewsbury with his new recruits, a group of hopeless people who cannot even walk steadily.

The third scene opens in the rebel camp near Shrewsbury. Worcester and Vernon recommend delay in action but Hotspur and Douglas opt for immediate war. Sir Walter Blunt comes from the King with an offer of peace. Hotspur, after narrating his grievances, promises to send a reply, the next morning.

The fourth scene which shifts to the palace of Archbishop of York, is a minor scene indicating Hotspur's shaky position. He may face defeat as he is going into the battle without the support of Northumberland, Glendower and Mortimer.

Critical analysis of Act IV - Scene I

It is the rebel camp near Shrewsbury where Hotspur, Douglas and Worcester assemble to review the preparations of war. They learn that Northumberland and Glendower are not coming with their forces as the former is ill and the latter wants some more time to collect his forces. This upsets Worcester but Hotspur and Douglas assure themselves that they can serve as reserve forces and can come to their rescue in time of need.

Sir Richard Vernon brings news about the royal forces. He gives a glorious description of the Prince and how he is leading a formidable army to the battlefield. Prince Hal appears as fresh as the month of May and as heroic as the midsummer sun. The King and Prince John also have not forth with their armies.

But Hotspur is fearless and declares that the opponents will be killed and offered as sacrifices to Mars. Douglas describes Hotspur as the King of honour and Hotspur too compliments

Douglas as the bravest soldier of the world. And both of them, and inspite of their shrunken numbers, are eager to launch an attack on the innumerable forces of the royal army.

Critical evaluation

We see that the rebels on the royal forces are active and we have information about their relative strengths and weaknesses. We see a falling action here,. The action which reached climax in Act III - Scene II is now falling. The rebels' chances of success appear low and those of the royal forces appear high.

Critical analysis of Act IV - Scene II

The scene opens on a road south-east of Coventry. Falstaff, as the officially appointed Commander of troops, is leading his newly enlisted soldiers to Shrewsbury. They are good-for-nothing people. First Falstaff pressed into service rich people whom he released after receiving sufficient money from them. They are latter on replaced by hopeless people who cannot even walk steadily. Prince Hal and Westmoreland catch up with them and comment on the lawful condition of the soldiers. However, they are in a hurry to join the King who is already on the battlefield.

Critical evaluation

Falstaff is totally dishonest and even war does not bring a change in his character. He has enlisted in the army weak and crippled men who are unfit for war. They are only food for powder as callously remarked by him.

We should not underestimate King Henry. He is a master strategist and is already in the field ready to face the enemy.

Critical analysis of Act IV - Scene III

It is the rebel camp near Shrewsbury. The rebel leaders, Hotspur, Worcester, Douglas and Vernon are discussing the pros and cons of immediate attack. Hotspur and Douglas are in favour of it; but Worcester and Vernon are against it.

Sir Walter Blunt comes from the King with a message for peace talks. Hotspur reminds him how he and his people placed Henry on the throne and the King is humiliating his former supporters. However, he takes time till next morning, to send a final answer to the King.

Critical evaluation

We see Hotspur here as the supreme Commander of the rebel forces. He argues convincingly like a good statesman and expresses a willingness to negotiate, if the terms are honourable.

The King is more statesmanly than Hotspur. The King is a valiant warrior and yet he is not interested in war. So he pursues a policy of conciliation and sends a gracious offer of unconditional pardon to the rebels.

Critical analysis of Act IV - Scene IV

The scene shifts to the palace of the Archbishop of York, who is sympathetic to the rebels. He learns that Northumberland, Mortimer and Glendower are not coming to the support of Hotspur. So he fears that Hotspur will lose the battle. He knows that he will be the target of the King, after Hotspur's defeat. So he sends letters to his friends and relatives, through Sir Michael, seeking their support against the King.

Critical evaluation

This Archbishop is very cunning. He makes an accurate assessment of the military situation and keeps away from the scene, just to save his skin.

1.II.6 Critical analysis and evaluation of Act V

This Act has five scenes. The first scene opens in the King's camp near Shrewsbury. Worcester and Vernon meet the King and give him the reply of the rebels. Prince Hal desires to settle the issue in a single combat with Hotspur, but the King is against this, but offers free pardon to all the rebels. Falstaff, alone, comments upon 'honour'.

The second scene takes us to the rebel camp. Worcester and Vernon come back to Hotspur and urge him to get ready for the battle. They do not tell him about the King's offer of pardon. So the battle begins.

In the third scene, during the battle, Douglas attacks Blunt and kills him, and Falstaff looks fearfully at his body, and he wonders about his chance of survival.

In the fourth scene, some more details about the battle are given. The Prince rescues his father who is in danger and then kills Hotspur. Falstaff in order to save himself from Douglas, falls on the ground and pretends to be dead. He gets up after sometime and takes the credit for killing Hotspur.

Now we are in the last (fifth) scene in another part of the battlefield. This short final scene describes the events following the victory of the royal forces over the rebels.

Critical analysis of Act V - scene I

It is the King's camp near Shrewsbury. He appears along with his two sons, Prince of Wales and Lord John of Lancaster and others.

They opine that the sun by its red appearance and the south wind by its violence indicate a terrible day for the rebels, and thus appear confident of their victory.

It is at this time, Worcester and Vernon call on the King for talks. Worcester repeats the grievances of the rebels and declares that the King has forgotten his benefactors, and the King refuses to answer their charges. The Prince pays a glowing tribute to Hotspur as a soldier. In order to prevent loss of life on either side, he proposes to settle the war by a single combat between him and Hotspur. The King does not like this proposal but offers free pardon if the rebels lay down their arms. Falstaff, alone, begins his famous soliloquy on honour. He considers that honour achieved through death is not worthwhile.

Critical evaluation

The King is dignified and assertive. Yet, he wants to avoid bloodshed and so tries to establish peace through negotiations.

The Prince appears a completely changed man hero. He has all the ingredients of an ideal king.

Falstaff's soliloquy (catechism) on honour shows his cowardice and self-interest. The King, Prince Hal and Hotspur look upon honour as something vital, wonderful and worthy of great achievement. For Falstaff, honour is a mere word and so he does not care for it.

Critical analysis of Act V - Scene II

Worcester and Vernon return to the rebel camp. They keep Hotspur in the dark about the King's offer of conciliation. But he speaks the truth about the Prince's offer of single combat to decide the issue, and Hotspur welcomes it. He gives Hotspur the impression that the King is haughty and aggressive and against conciliation.

Worcester and Vernon urge Hotspur and Douglas to get ready for the battle without delay. Hotspur decides to fight and shouts the war cry of the Percies, and embraces his friends for the last time.

Critical evaluation

The Prince appears different and glorious in this scene. Hotspur's character is also commendable. Vernon is good but timid, and Worcester appears at his worst.

Critical analysis of Act V - Scene III

The battle of Shrewsbury begins and Hotspur inspires his friends to fight with courage. Douglas sees Walter Blunt wearing an armour similar to the King. He mistakes him for the King and kills him. Only afterwards, he finds the mistake and resolves to kill every one in royal disguise.

Falstaff comes on the scene and looks fearfully at Blunt's body and says that his (Blunt's) desire for honour has brought him to this end. He declares that he will not work for this type of honour. The Prince appears at this time and asks Falstaff for his sword and he gives him his pistol. The Prince is very angry when he realises that the pistol is nothing but a bottle of sack. He throws the bottle down and leaves in disgust.

Critical evaluation

The King is very crafty. He sends a number of lords to the battle in disguise, to impersonate him. The foolish concept of honour does not inspire Falstaff and so he prefers life to honour. The Prince is a completely changed man now. He has given up the easy life of Eastcheap and has become more serious.

Critical analysis of Act V - Scene IV

It is another part of the battlefield, Douglas attacks the King and is about to defeat him. Seeing his father in trouble, Prince Hal comes to his rescue. He fights against Douglas and forces him to flee for his life. King Henry is particularly touched by this heroism and praises his son.

The King leaves and Hotspur comes face to face with Prince Hal. The Prince appreciates him for his bravery and fighting ability. They both fight with determination to snatch away honour from the other. Falstaff appears and incites the Prince to fight. While the fight continues, Douglas appears on the scene and challenges Falstaff. Falstaff falls down and pretends that he is dead. Just as Douglas leaves, Hotspur himself is fatally wounded and falls. He tells the Prince that he is worried about his loss of honour and not about his loss of life. The Prince has robbed him of honour which is dearer to him than life. In moving terms, he begins to recite his own epitaph, but dies before he can finish it. It is the Prince who in generous terms, completes it.

The Prince then turns to Falstaff and thinks that he is really dead. He bids him farewell and leaves the scene. Very soon Falstaff rises and sees the dead Hotspur on the ground and suspects him of feigning death. To make sure, he stabs him and lifts his body on to his back and carries it as his trophy. He claims credit for killing Hotspur and looks forward to be promoted as an earl.

Critical evaluation

Hotspur is really great. We admire his courage and gallantry. We sympathise with him in his fall. His conqueror Prince Hal emerges as a completely heroic figure. He is magnanimous without any suggestion of personal triumph. He is certainly greater than Hotspur and all other persons. He is a complete man.

Critical analysis of Act V - Scene V

It is a short concluding scene. It sums up what follows the battle of Shrewsbury.

After winning a victory over the rebels, King Henry issues orders for the execution of Worcester and Vernon. Douglas is pardoned in appreciation of his valour. Forces are dispatched to capture the remaining rebels to rid the country of rebellion.

Critical evaluation

Some of us may think that the victory of the King is not morally justifiable. Shakespeare may be of the view that life does not always follow a moral code. Moreover the King stands as an example of the survival of the fittest. Though a usurper, he has turned benevolent and proved his efficiency by preserving the unity of the kingdom.

I.II.7 Summary of the text

Shakespeare's play "Henry IV Part I" is a fine blend of the serious and the comic elements. The serious element consists of scenes of historical interest. This is the main plot and it tells us the story of separation between King Henry and the Percies which leads to the revolt of the latter and ends in the death of Hotspur in the battle of Shrewsbury. The comic element appears in the minor plot and it gives an account of the happy, riotous life lived by the Prince in the company of Falstaff and his jolly crew at Boar's Head Tavern.

The main plot deals with political affairs - royal diplomacy, with revolts, and a few battle scenes.

The minor plot deals with a merry world from whose promises all seriousness is charmed away. There is no activity here except drinking, swearing, playing practical jokes and conducting robberies.

Characters in the Play
Supporters and Opponents of King Henry

Supporters of King Henry	Opponents of King Henry
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. King Henry or Henry Bolingbroke or Henry of Monmouth. 2. Prince Henry (King's first son) or Prince of Wales, or Prince Hal 3. Lord John of Lancaster (King's second son) 4. The Earl of Westmoreland 5. Sir Walter Blunt 6. Falstaff and his companions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Henry Percy (Earl of Northumberland) 2. Henry Percy or Hotspur Son of Northumberland. 3. Thomas Percy or Worcester (Brother of Northumberland) (Uncle of Hotspur) 4. Mortimer, the Earl of March (Brother-in-law of Hotspur) 5. Owen Glendower, a Welsh man. 6. Mortimer's wife (Glendower's daughter. She knows only Welsh) 7. Kate (Hotspur's wife) Mortimer's sister. 8. Archbald Douglas (A daring Scotsman) 9. The Archbishop of York.

Henry Bolingbroke or King Henry IV has ruled England for a year and yet he has no peace of mind. He knows he is not a lawful king as he is a usurper. So he plans to visit Jerusalem for Christ's blessings but postpones the visit owing to the outbreak of fresh rebellion. The still loyal Mortimer has been taken prisoner by the wild Glendower and Hotspur wants the King to obtain freedom of this Mortimer by paying ransom to Glendower. Only then Hotspur will return to the King along with all the high ranking prisoners he has caught, after quelling the Scottish rebellion led by Archbald Douglas. This leads the King to compare the idleness of his son Prince Hal with the valour and ambition of Hotspur. He is very unhappy about his son, who is wasting his time in taverns with the humorous Falstaff and other companions.

The tavern is the domain of Falstaff where he and his friends while away their time in undignified amusements and Prince Hal is their inseparable companion. A robbery is planned and Prince Hal unwillingly agrees to participate in it. He desires to expose Falstaff for recreation and this is his motive behind the robbery. He knows his mission and will soon detach himself from these anti-social elements and reveal himself in true colours.

The King summons Hotspur and the other Percies and demands surrender of the prisoners. He threatens to punish them, if they disobey him. So the Percies join the rebels and plan to unseat the King.

The gulling of Falstaff based on Gad's Hill robbery begins. Prince Hal and Poinciville keep away from the scene on some pretext. Falstaff, Peto, Bardolph and Gadshill wear masks, fall upon rich

travellers and rob them. When they are about to share the money, Prince and Poins fall on them and rob them. They look forward to a funny dialogue about this incident with Falstaff, afterwards.

Hotspur is busy enlisting the support of nobles against the King. He is so preoccupied that he does not find time to speak to his wife whom, he loves very much.

The Prince and Poins meet at the Tavern and play a practical joke on Francis, a drawer or supplier of beer. Both of them call on him alternatively and confuse him. Trying to please them he answers each call with 'Anon, Sir' and thus makes a fool of himself.

The rebels Hotspur, Worcester, Mortimer and Glendower are confident of their victory over the King. So they take a map and make a hypothetical division of the kingdom among themselves.

The Prince is summoned to meet his royal father. So Falstaff advises the Prince to make a rehearsal of his explanation for his loose behaviour, and they begin a mock-play of the proposed meeting. First Falstaff plays the role of the King while the Prince plays his own role. Then Falstaff becomes the Prince and the Prince becomes the King. And their action and their dialogues during this impersonation are both amusing and instructive.

The King now meets his son Prince Hal in his palace. He scolds his son for his riotous life with Falstaff and asks him to mend his ways. The Prince excuses himself and promises to prove his loyalty and worth in the coming war.

Hotspur, Worcester and Douglas are in a camp near Shrewsbury. They learn that Northumberland and Glendower are not joining them. Yet, they are bent upon facing the royal army. They turn down the King's offer of peace and the battle begins. Douglas enters the field and searches for the King. He sees Sir Walter Blunt in the guise of the King, mistakes him for the King and kills him. Falstaff, a new recruit in the army sees the fallen Blunt and declares that he does not want this type of honour. He wants to survive somehow. That is the reason why he plays dead and thereby saves his skin when Douglas attacks him.

Douglas meets the King in another part of the field and is about to defeat him. The Prince finds his father in danger, goes to his rescue and saves him. He engages Douglas in a single combat and forces him to run away. The King who is greatly moved by his son's filial love and heroism, praises him with all his heart.

The King moves to another front and Prince Hal comes upon Hotspur. He realises that he has to redeem time by serious action. He fights against Hotspur with all his might and kills him, in a single combat. The dying Hotspur confesses that he is more worried about his loss of honour than the loss of his life. The Prince, as a true hero, admires Hotspur for his valour and honours him by covering his dead body. He leaves for another part of the field and Falstaff, who is playing dead, rises from the ground. He looks at the dead body of Hotspur and stabs him in his thigh to find out

whether he is actually dead or playing dead like him. Then he carries the body on his back as his trophy and claims credit for killing him. Of course, nobody takes this boast seriously.

The King wins victory over the rebels. He executes Worcester and Vernon for keeping Hotspur in the dark about his offer of peace but pardons Douglas in appreciation of his valour. Though triumphant, the King cannot rest at home. He has decided to rid his country of all rebellion and so moves to capture the remaining armies of the rebels.

I.II.8 Check your progress

1. Discuss the plot of the play.
2. Describe how the play is a fine blend of the serious and comic elements?
3. Analyse the summary of the play.

I.II.9 Sample examination questions

1. Comment on the structure of Henry IV Part I.
2. Bring out the rich relationship between history and comedy in King Henry IV Part I.

I.II.10 Let us sum up

This lesson enables us to understand the structure of the play and it also presents us with the Act-wise, Scene-wise critical analysis by which we can appreciate the play from all aspects. The detailed summary at the end of the lesson helps us to understand the play, in brief.

I.II.11 Suggested Readings

1. D.A. Traversi. **Shakespeare: From Richard II to Henry V.**
2. M.M. Reese. **The Cease of Majesty: A Study of Shakespeare's History Plays.**
3. John Palmer. **Political Characters of Shakespeare.**

T. SUBBA RAO

Unit-I : Henry IV, Part-I, Lesson-III

I.III.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson you will be able to -
understand the main characters of the play.

I.III STRUCTURE

I.III.0 Objectives

I.III.1 Introduction

I.III.2 Main characters of the play

I.III.2.1 Character of Prince Hal

I.III.2.2 Character of Hotspur

I.III.2.3 Character of King Henry

I.III.2.4 Character of Falstaff

I.III.3 Sample Annotations from the play

I.III.4 Check your progress

I.III.5 Sample examination questions

I.III.6 Let us sum up

I.III.7 Suggested readings

I.III.1 Introduction

This is our third lesson and we have a few character sketches and annotations taken up for close study. We will appreciate Shakespeare's powers of characterization or his manner of presenting characters or the way in which he makes the persons in his play seem real. "Henry IV-Part I" belongs to the middle period of his dramatic development and here characterization is not as perfect as it is in *Hamlet*. Yet in *Henry IV-Part I* Shakespeare shows a good understanding of human nature and presents his characters convincingly.

A character is a person in the play. He is the sum of qualities and features that make him different from others. We will discuss what he is like and how he changes and how he differs from other persons and finally judge his importance in the play as a whole.

I.III.2 MAIN CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

I.III.2.1 Character of Prince Hal/Prince Henry

Prince Henry is the real hero of the play 'Henry IV Part I' though it is named after his father. He is the eldest son of the King and so he is the Prince of Wales, heir apparent to the throne of England. He is a loving and lovable young hero and yet he has no peace of mind owing to his righteous principles. He knows that his father, the King, owing to his usurpation and regicide has no legitimacy to preside over the nation's destiny. Yet he has proved himself very efficient and indispensable to the kingdom at least for the time being.

So, the Prince avoids the Court temporarily and spends his time at Boar's Head Tavern, one of the haunts of the common people. He is so drawn to the witty and humorous Falstaff that the latter becomes a temporary substitute for his father. Thus he has two fathers, King Henry and Falstaff and the double blessings of a mixed upbringing. Falstaff becomes his model for a happy living, of course temporarily. He soon outgrows this adoration and successfully withstands the degrading effects of this low society. He knows that his life here, can at best serve as the best means of democratic training, by affording contact with the masses.

We cannot agree with critics like Masefield who have said some sharp things about the Prince. We better sail with a critic like Gervinus who declares that the Prince is a wonderful man. It is as if to caution those who misjudge him, he reveals his mind in his first soliloquy. He wears the mask of a bohemian (a person who does not follow accepted rule of behaviour) only as a temporary measure, and promises to redeem himself at the proper time. Then stands forth in his true character to the great surprise and gratification of the entire world.

Even the King fails to judge his son properly. He considers him a wastrel steeped in riot and dishonour. He compares him with the heroic Hotspur whom he considers more responsible and honourable than his son.

By staying at the tavern, the Prince is not squandering away his time. He is actually functioning as a link between the nobles and the commons, and between the main-plot and sub-plot.

The Prince is steady and philosophic compared with the unsteady and emotional nature of Hotspur. His greatness and filial love are seen in his interview with the King. He is agitated by his father's criticism that he is more a sign of God's displeasure than an obedient son. So he excuses himself and swears obedience to his father. He declares that Percy is only his factor and that he will redeem all this on Percy's head. The King who is convinced, appoints him the supreme commander of an army.

The Prince is very chivalrous on the field of battle. He rushes to his father's rescue when the doughty Douglas is about to kill him. The King who is greatly touched by this noble act praises him with all his heart. Then the Prince comes face to face with Hotspur. First, he appreciates him

for his bravery and fighting ability. Then, he engages Hotspur in a single combat. He and Hotspur fight with determination to snatch away honour from the other. True to his claim, he kills Hotspur and snatches all his glories. But he is kind enough to bid farewell to him in a fitting manner. He is magnanimous enough to be tolerant to Falstaff when the latter claims credit for killing Hotspur. He is equally great in extending unconditional pardon to the brave Douglas. In view of all these superlative qualities, Prince Henry commands our admiration as the real hero of the play 'Henry IV-Part I'.

I.III.2.2 The character of Hotspur

Hotspur or Harry Percy is the son of the Earl of Northumberland and the nephew of the Earl of Worcester, and the chief votary of honour which is the main theme of the play "Henry IV-Part I". His father is cold and polite while his uncle is scheming and calculating. But Hotspur has not inherited any of these qualities. His innate nobility and sense of honour are very great and so he is fit to be the hero of the play though he is rash and his rashness is his tragic defect. The play is built round the principle of contrast and Hotspur is conceived as a foil to Prince Hal. The King sees him as a better crown prince than his own madcap son. The King hears of the victory of brave Hotspur over Archibald Douglas and about the large number of Scottish nobles taken as prisoners. He is jealous of Hotspur as his heroism reminds him of the worthlessness of his son Prince Hal. He is also envious of Northumberland for being the father of such a blessed son. He admires Hotspur as the embodiment of honour and the theme of honour's tongue, and wishes that he had such a son as Hotspur.

That is the admiration that Hotspur commands at the beginning of the play, continues to enjoy the same impression till the end, but with a few variations. It is already noted that his rashness is his tragic flaw and this is successfully exploited by his wicked uncle Worcester. It is under his instigation that Hotspur raises the banner of youthful revolt against the King. His arrogance is the result of his uncle's influence.

Hotspur is not generally arrogant. He has been very loyal to the King and fights against the Scots with dedication and wins the war. He is ready to surrender the prisoners to the King. He makes a request to the King to do him a favour. His brother-in-law Mortimer is taken prisoner by Glendower and he appeals to the King to ransom Mortimer. The King not only refuses this but brands Mortimer a traitor and this infuriates Hotspur. Hotspur feels dishonoured by the King. He remembers how he and his people have helped him to become king and thinks that the King is ungrateful. So Hotspur entertains thoughts of deposing the King and installing Mortimer on the throne, as he is the rightful successor to the previous lawful King Richard II.

Hotspur is fortunate to have a loyal and loving wife in Lady Percy alias Kate. She is greatly concerned about his health and happiness. She is worried about his obsession with thoughts of armed conflict, and indifference to her. She notices that her husband has no peace of mind and that he mutters about war even in sleep. She demands an explanation from him but he evades a reply saying that she is after all a woman and so he cannot take her into his confidence. Yet he assures

her, without an outward display of tender feeling, that she will be brought to his camp, very soon. In spite of his rough exterior and show of manliness, he has his moments of tenderness, he deeply loves his Kate, just as she dotes on him.

Tenderness is not alien to him. It appears that he is not properly groomed by his uncle Worcester. He is not less idealistic than Prince Hal. He too is ready for a single combat with the Prince to settle the issue of war to avoid bloodshed and the loss of innocent lives.

Honour is Hotspur and Hotspur is honour. For him honour means glory in the battlefield and he will do anything to achieve it. It is in pursuit of it that he rushes heedlessly into the battle with the King. He faces the Prince at Shrewsbury and fights with determination to snatch away honour from him. But destiny wills otherwise and fatally wounded by the Prince, Hotspur falls down dying. As he tells the Prince he is worried about his loss of honour and not about his loss of life. That is the tragedy of Hotspur.

LIII.2.3 Character of King Henry

King Henry is the titular Hero of the play 'Henry IV-Part I'. Kingship has not come to him through lawful succession but through cunning and treachery. Abetted and aided by the Percys, he has deposed the lawful King Richard II and seized his crown. He is also accused of murdering Richard in jail, some time after coming to the throne. Thus he is guilty of usurpation and regicide.

This is only one side of the coin. Coming to the other brighter side, he has many redeeming features. He is a brave soldier, a careful administrator and a wise statesman. He cultivates good relations with the people and works for their betterment. He uses his tact and diplomacy to establish peace and maintain unity of the country. Thus he becomes a saviour of the people who are disgusted with civil wars and rebellions.

The King and his actions can be interpreted in both positive and negative ways. The negative side shows him to be a villain, a usurper, a murderer and a wearer of the mask of goodness. The positive side affirms that he is a nationalist and representative of ruthless efficiency.

An inefficient king is no king at all. King Henry is every inch a king, a very dignified and assertive personality. He maintains the kingly dignity all through the play. He claims people's admiration by being seen very rarely, like a comet in the sky.

Suspicion is an inherent quality of a King and King Henry is always suspicious. He suspects everyone including his son Prince Hal. He suspects Mortimer who has valiantly fought for him. He also suspects Hotspur as the latter demands Mortimer's ransom.

Hotspur and his people have made Bolingbroke King by their help in deposing Richard II, even ignoring the claims of Mortimer, the rightful heir. This Mortimer is Hotspur's brother-in-law and he is taken prisoner by Glendower and Hotspur wants the King to ransom him in return for

surrendering the Scottish prisoners of war. This naturally rouses the King's suspicion of their intentions. So the King, out of self-interest exercises his sovereign power and vetoes Hotspur's demand. Hotspur, who feels incensed at this refusal, determines to depose the King, by joining the rebels.

For Henry Bolingbroke, Kingship is not a bed of roses. He knows that his life and position are very insecure. He is always in fear of being robbed of the crown. He fears that the Tudor myth will become operative and destroy him. His tragedy is heightened by his son who is wasting his time at the tavern, by avoiding the Court and public responsibility. So he considers his son a thorn in his flesh and he wishes very much for a brave son like Hotspur.

In the King's interview with Prince Hal, the real father in him comes to the fore. His paternal love and concern succeed in impressing his son of the need for a change in his behaviour. He is happy that Prince Hal, who is not really loose, is ready to prove his loyalty by performing glorious deeds. He wholeheartedly showers praise on his son when he saves him from the brave Douglas. He is overwhelmed with joy when the Prince kills Hotspur in a single combat and brings victory to the royal forces. Thus King Henry, in spite of his unholy background not only gains the acceptance of the people but also wins our admiration.

I.III.2.4 Character of Falstaff

Sir John Falstaff bestrides the comic world of literature like a Colossus. His character is very subtle and so defies all analysis. As Charles Lamb says, Falstaff lives outside the kingdom of moral laws and so he should not be judged by moral standards known to us. The following few sentences can, at best, be a rough sketch of this immortal figure.

Falstaff is an enormously fat, white-bearded knight of the kingdom. His pot-belly is so big that he cannot see his own knees. He is so huge that he cannot easily get up. If he falls down, he can get up only with the help of levers. That is why he is called a 'horse-back breaker, and a huge hill of flesh.' He is a military free-thinker and enjoys unfettered freedom of soul. He moves in the world of taverns in which there are no moral laws. Even if there are any moral laws, they are suspended for his benefit. He is given to endless drinking but it does not dull his wit, it loosens his tongue and makes his wit flow. His wit and humour are so powerful as to infect the Prince thoroughly.

In fact, Falstaff's introduction in the play has a dramatic purpose. He is to serve as a suitable companion to the Prince in his roistering days.

Falstaff is the Prince's boon companion. He is in a way, a temporary substitute for his father. It is in the Prince's chamber in the palace that we first see him. He and the Prince are exchanging jokes on topics like drinking, robberies and women. Falstaff exchanges spontaneous good-natured repartee with the Prince. First he asks the Prince what time of the day it is. The Prince reminds him that it is night time and so he should not ask for the hour of the day. Moreover

time is not his concern as he spends his time in eating, drinking and sleeping. Falstaff who can enjoy a joke at his expense, agrees with him. He is also a thief and so reckons his time by the moon and the stars in the sky. He tells him that he can only address him as Your Majesty. He cannot address him as Your Grace as the Prince has lost all his grace by joining them. Thus they exchange puns and jokes very freely. The Gadshill robbery is planned to bring out Falstaff's fund of humour. We know that the Prince and Poins stay away, and Falstaff and others rob the travellers. Then they are attacked and robbed by the Prince and Poins in disguise. It is a sport for all to expose Falstaff as a coward and a liar and then see how he defends himself.

Falstaff returns from the place of robbery, he is very angry at being robbed. He forgets that he has run away like a coward. Prince and Poins have not joined him in the robbery and so he calls them cowards. Then he begins to boast about his heroism. He says that he and his three friends were attacked by a hundred fighters.

He fought against all of them, then he went on changing the number. Then he refers to two men in buckram suits. They become successively 4,7,9 and finally 11. The Prince reveals the truth and Falstaff defends himself by saying that he knew all this. He was a lion in valour and so he did not harm the true prince.

In the mock play enacted by Falstaff and the Prince, the role of the former is a comic masterpiece. First Falstaff takes up the role of the King, 'with a chair for his state, a dagger for his sceptre and a cushion for his crown'. Then he and the Prince exchange positions and Falstaff steps into the role of the Prince. Falstaff makes use of this device for a brilliant defence of himself and his ways of life.

Falstaff in his soliloquy on honour says that honour achieved through death is meaningless. Honour is the dream of soldiers and heroes. It is honour that has inspired men to lay down their lives. But Falstaff prefers life to honour.

Falstaff feigns death when Douglas fights with him. He gets up and declares that discretion is the better part of valour.

Then he looks at the dead Hotspur on the ground and thinks that he may be feigning death like him. He stabs him to see whether he is really dead or not. Then he carries it on his back claiming that he has killed Hotspur. Both these incidents are comic masterpieces and excite laughter.

Thus, Falstaff is a man of irrepressible humour by the use of which he retrieves himself from difficult situations.

So it is practically for one to pass moral judgements on his character.

He is so popular that Shakespeare honours him with resurrection. He is made to die in 'Henry IV' but he is restored to the life of a lover in "The Merry Wives of Windsor".

I.III. 3. Sample Annotations from the play

1. No more the thirsty entrance of this soil
Shall daub her lips with her own children's blood;
No more shall trenching war channel her fields,
Nor bruise her flowerets with the armed hoofs
Of hostile pace;

(I. I. 5-9)

In the beginning of the play, King Henry is represented as being tired of and disgusted with the civil strifes that had been agitating England for too long. He is anxious that the peace, which has been just established, should not be disturbed, and so thinks of making his people forget their hostilities at home by turning their minds to a Crusade in the Holy Land.

The King is resolved that the Civil War should no longer taint with bloodshed the fair and lovely land of England. The parched and cracked-up earth shall not drink in the blood of her own children. The fields shall not be furrowed with trenches cut out for war, nor shall the flowerets of the meadows be trampled under the hoofs of opposed cavalry.

Entrance is the Quarto reading and seems to be the correct one, though it is rather unusual to use the word in the sense of 'mouth'. There cannot be any doubt regarding the meaning, however, as it is definitely indicated by the words 'daub her lips', in the second line. *Entrails*, the reading of the Fourth Folio, does not make any meaning in the context. Steevens' emendation, *entrants* (invaders) is also inappropriate as no invasion has been referred to. Another interesting emendation is that offered by Manson—*Erinnys* in the sense of the fury of discord.

Trenching: cutting out trenches in the earth for purposes of defence.

2. Marry then, sweet wag, when thou art king let not us that are squires of the night's body be called thieves of the day's beauty; let us be Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon, and let men say we be men of good government, being governed as the sea is by our noble and chaste mistress the moon, under whose countenance we steal.

(I. ii. 23-30)

Falstaff speaks to the Prince, about his companion robbers as though they are valiant and chivalrous defenders of the beautiful damsel, night. He entreats the Prince, when he becomes King, to give up the practice of calling them "thieves of the day's beauty". They should be called by such names as 'Diana's foresters, gentlemen of the shade, minions of the moon'. It must be understood

that they, like the sea, are well disciplined, for they too are under the control of Diana, the chaste moon goddess.

Squires of the night's body, and thieves of the day's beauty: The Arden editors are of opinion that these may be respectively euphemisms for 'highwaymen' and 'loafers'. In the first, a pun is intended on 'night', and 'knight'. There is also possibly a pun on 'beauty' and 'booty'. The latter word was suggested as a substitute by Theobald.

Diana's foresters: attendants on the goddess Diana. Diana, the goddess of the moon, was also represented as a great huntress. Falstaff wishes that he and his companions should be spoken of as the valiant guardians of her forest. He says that she controls them even as she (the moon) controls the tides of the sea.

minions: servants

countenance: favour or patronage—with a play on the literal meaning of the word 'face'.

3. Well, for two of them, I know them to be as true-bred cowards as ever turned back; and for the third, if he fight longer than he sees reason, I'll forswear arms.

(I. ii. 181-184)

Poins unfolds to the Prince his plot of robbing the robbers. The Prince doubts whether they two would be able to overpower the robbers who outnumber them. Poins replies that he knows two of the robbers to be thorough cowards. As for the third (Falstaff), he would not fight longer than he sees reason.

This passage is of great importance in any discussion of the problem of Falstaff's cowardice. Maurice Morgann, in his essay, *The Dramatic Character of Falstaff*, discusses at length the significance of this passage. It must be noted that Poins does class Falstaff with the other two whom he has styled arrant cowards. Falstaff, to be sure, is no hero, no valiant fighter; driven to it, he would certainly show fight, but would not fight longer than he considers it safe. He knows that discretion is the better part of valour. He can fight if it is necessary, but would rather prefer saving his life to risking it in pursuit of 'grinning honour'.

4. So, when this loose behaviour I throw off,
And pay the debt, I never promised,
By how much better than my word I am,
By so much shall I falsify men's hopes.

(I. ii. 207-210)

Poins leaves the Prince to himself after persuading him to join in his plot of robbing the robbers. Left alone, the Prince soliloquises. This soliloquy reveals that there is hidden strength in the Prince, of which, as yet, he alone is aware.

For the present, the Prince is content to play his part in madcap adventures. When the time comes, he can give up his loose and ill-disciplined life. He will deceive all men in their expectations of him. Judging from his wild ways, most people would predict him an inglorious future. He will prove all their prophecies wrong.

The introduction of this soliloquy is for the purpose of preparing us for the later reformation of the Prince. Such thoughts as are uttered here are always present in the Prince, and in *Henry IV, Part II*, when he has become King, he says.

“I survive
To mock the expectation of the world.
Th frustrate prophecies, and to raze out
Rotten opinion, who hath writ me down
After my seeming.”

Dr. Johnson says of this passage that it is artfully introduced to keep the Prince from appearing vile in the opinion of the audience; and “what is yet more valuable, exhibits a natural picture of a great mind offering excuses to itself, and palliating those follies which it can neither justify nor forsake.”

5. I have foresworn his company hourly any time this two and twenty years, and yet I am bewitched with the rogue's company. If the rascal have not given me medicines to make me love him I'll be hanged; it could not be else; I have drunk medicines.

(II. ii. 15-17)

On the highway near Gadshill, Poins removes Falstaff's horse and hides himself. Falstaff enters cursing Poins for removing his horse and forcing a fat man like him to walk. He tells the Prince that he would kill the rascal Poins and be hanged for it. He does not know, he says, what the matter is with him. For the last twenty-two years, every hour he has been swearing to give up the company of that villain, Poins. And yet he has not been able to give up his company. That rogue must have given him some medicines to make him love him. It cannot be otherwise.

medicines: love philtres. The belief was very current at the time that certain medicines had the power to inspire or to repel love.

This speech of Falstaff shows how good-humoured he really is, even when he is greatly annoyed. A fat man like him has been forced to trudge on foot a long uneven road, and yet he manages to forget his physical suffering in his sense of humour. Even his curses on Poins have something essentially cheerful about them. He is a jolly good fellow and can never think of giving up a companion like Poins just because he played a practical joke on him.

6. And in thy face strange motions have appear'd,
Such as we see when men restrain their breath
On some great sudden hest O, what portents are these
Some heavy business hath my lord in hand.
And I must know it, else he loves me not.

(II. iii. 62-66)

Lady Percy tells her husband Hotspur that she is very much worried about him. For nearly a fortnight she says, he has not been himself. Something is preying on his mind. He is always melancholy. Even in those rare moments of slumber, he murmurs "tales of iron wars." The motions of his face indicate that he must have received some important command. What do these things signify? she asks. She must know what it is that has been agitating him. Otherwise, she will conclude that he does not love her.

These lines give an excellent description of Hotspur's condition ever since the plan of a campaign was unfolded by Worcester. Some light is also thrown on Lady Percy's character. She is a devoted wife and believes firmly that she has a right to know her husband's secrets.

hest: command.

7. They take it already upon their salvation, that though I be but Prince of Wales yet I am the king of Courtesy and tell me flatly I am no proud Jack, like Falstaff, but Corinthian a lad of mettle, a good boy, by the Lord, so they call me, and when I am king of England, I shall command all the good lads in Eastcheap.

(II. iv. 8-15)

The Prince and Poins are awaiting the arrival of Falstaff at the tavern. The Prince is in a mood of self-revelation, and opens out his heart to Poins. He is a Prince, and yet, he is moving on such intimate terms with all sorts and conditions of men. He calls the waiters at the inn familiarly by their Christian names. Though as yet, he is only the Prince of Wales, his comrades in Eastcheap have already crowned him King of Courtesy. They tell him plainly that he is a brave, jolly good fellow—"no proud Jack, like Falstaff". When he becomes King, he feels sure that all the brave fellows in Eastcheap would be at his beck and call.

This passage gives us an even better insight into the character of the Prince than the soliloquy in Act I, scene 2. The Prince seems really proud of the homage of his comrades in Eastcheap. He is conscious that he is laying the foundations of his success as a King by assuring himself of the loyalty of such people. There is even a touch of sentiment in his reference to the love that these revellers in taverns bear him.

take it upon their salvation: swear by their hopes of salvation.

Jack: a term of contempt. There is also perhaps an allusion to Falstaff's Christian name.

Corinthian: a cant term for a jolly good fellow.

8. I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the north; he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife 'Fie upon this quiet life! I want work.'
(II. iv. 101-105)

Tired of amusing himself at the expense of the poor distracted waiter, Francis, the Prince tells Poincils how people take their pleasure differently. Here he is fooling a half-witted waiter who can only murmur 'Anon, anon, sir,' in reply to all questions. He is not yet in a mood to emulate Hotspur who thinks time is wasted, if it is not spent in bloodshed. Half amusingly the Prince represents him as killing some six or seven dozen Scots before breakfast, and afterwards telling his wife that he is tired of such a quiet life!.

It is interesting to contrast the Prince's estimate of Hotspur's character with Hotspur's judgment of the Prince in an earlier scene. Hotspur speaks contemptuously of the Prince and thinks that he deserves no better fate than being poisoned with a pot of ale. The Prince's estimate of Hotspur's character, on the other hand, is as shrewd as it is amusing. He cleverly hits off the essential spirit that animates Hotspur.

9. Diseased nature often times breaks forth
In strange eruptions; oft the teeming earth
Is with a kind of colic pinched and vex'd
By the imprisoning of unruly wind
Within her womb; which for enlargement striving,
Shakes the old beldam earth and topples down
Steeple and moss-grown towers.
(III. i. 27-33)

When Hotspur tells Glendower that King Henry trembles whenever he hears the Welshman's name, Glendower receives the compliment with complacent egotism and proceeds to give an account of the portents that attended his birth. Hotspur treats this account with disdain and yet Glendower, without any sense of humour, persists in telling him that at his birth the heavens were all on fire and the earth trembled. If it was so, Hotspur replies, it has a simple enough explanation. If the earth shook, it was to see the heavens on fire, and not in fear of his (Glendower's) nativity. Moreover, Nature, when troubled with some disease, frequently bursts out, in strange eruptions. The earth is often tormented by a kind of colic as a result of the imprisonment in her stomach of all kinds of unruly winds. These winds striving for freedom shake the earth and topple down steeples and ancient towers.

colic: a disease attended with severe pain and flatulent distension of the abdomen.

pinch'd and vex'd: griped and tormented.

womb: stomach.

enlargement: freedom—release, especially from prison.

10. And then I stole all courtesy from heaven.
 And dress'd myself in such humility.
 That I did pluck allegiance from men's hearts,
 Loud shouts and salutations from their mouths.
 Even in the presence of the crowned King.

(III. ii. 50-54)

(Context and general remarks same as in the previous annotation)

The King tells the Prince how slowly and deliberately he set out to win the crown. He assumed a god-like graciousness and adopted an air of such humility that men were forced to pay him the homage of their hearts. So high was he in the esteem of the people that loud shouts and salutations greeted him even when he was in the presence of the crowned King. The people regarded him as greater than the King himself.

King Henry's account of the methods he adopted to win the crown reveals him as a skilled diplomat who would stop at nothing to achieve his object. Everything about him is deliberate. There is an utter absence of spontaneity. We feel that there is some justice in epithets like "this king of smiles" and "this fawning greyhound," showered on him by the irate Hotspur.

stole all courtesy from heaven: He was so courteous and regal in his behaviour that it looked as if he had robbed the gods of their special attributes. There is perhaps an allusion here to the story of Prometheus who stole fire from Heaven.

pluck hearts: forced men to be faithful to me though they might not have liked it at first.

11. A hundred thousand rebels die in this:
 Thou shalt have charge and sovereign trust herein.

(III. ii. 160-161)

Henry has been so much vexed with the course of his son's life and so jealous is he of the renown Hotspur has won by his valour, that, in bitterness, he tells the Prince that he believes him to be capable of the basest treachery. Even this unjust accusation does not give offence to the Prince, for he feels that his father has a right to be incensed with him. In a frank and manly manner, he assures his father that he would hereafter give him no reason to be ashamed of him. He would make Percy his agent "to engross up glories" on his behalf.

These words move the King deeply. He is now confident that the rebellion can be easily quelled if his son shows himself as valiant as he promises to be. He gives up his suspicions and is now ready to take him into his confidence. The Prince's assurances are now as comforting to the King as the news of the death of a hundred thousand rebels.

12

Let them come;
 They come like sacrifices in their trim,
 And to the fire-eyed maid of smoky war
 All hot and bleeding will we offer them:
 The mailed Mars shall on his altar sit,
 Up to the ears in blood.

(IV. i. 112-117)

To the rebels' camp near Shrewsbury, Vernon brings the news of the strength of the King's army and how the King, Westmoreland and Prince John are marching towards them. 'They are welcome', says Hotspur, and asks for news about 'the nimble-footed madcap Prince of Wales.' Vernon gives a very glowing description of the Prince as he appeared on horseback. When he jumped on to his horse, Vernon says, the Prince looked like an angel dropped down from the clouds to charm the world with his horsemanship.

Hotspur's jealousy is roused by this glowing description. He refuses to listen further. Let the Prince and the others come in all their gallant attire, he says. To him they are only so many gaily decorated victims whom he will offer as sacrifice, all hot and bleeding, to the goddess of war. The war-god Mars also shall sit in his altar up to his ears in blood !

In spite of this proud and boastful speech and in spite of his refusal to regard the Prince as anything more than a fit sacrifice on the altar of the god of war, he is really jealous of the Prince, as in his heart-of hearts he knows him to be his rival.

There is an instance of dramatic irony in this passage. As events turn out, it is Hotspur and not the Prince who is offered as a sacrifice at the altar of the god of war.

sacrifices in their trim: victims decked for sacrifice. It was the custom to decorate animals with garlands of flowers before leading them to the sacrificial altar.

fire-eyed maid of smoky war: the goddess of war, named Bellona by the Romans.

mailed Mars: the god of war clad in armour.

13 And move in that obedient orb again
 Where you did give a fair and natural light.
 And be no more and exhaled meteor,
 A prodigy of fear, and a portent
 Of broached mischief to the unborn times ?

(V. i. 17-21)

When Worcester enters the King's camp near Shrewsbury, bearing the message of the rebels, the King greets him with a speech from which these lines are quoted. In a truly regal manner the King tells Worcester that it is not proper at all that they should meet on such terms. He

accuses him of deceiving his trust and forcing him to take part in a ruinous civil war. Will he give up all this, he asks, and become once again the loyal subject he formerly was ?

The King contrasts the erratic course of the meteor with the regular course of the planets moving in their 'obedient orb'. According to the King, Worcester is now like the wild and irregular meteor.

obedient orb: the path of obedience. According to old astronomy, planets circled the earth in a regular orbit and did not, like the meteors, pursue an irregular path.

exhaled meteor: It was believed that meteors were exhalations or evaporations from the earth caused by the sun's heat.

prodigy of fear times?: Meteors were believed to be portents of disaster.

broached mischief: mischief which is now originated but will run its course only at a later day. *To broach* is to tap a cask of ale, so that the ale overflows. Mischief is compared to a cask of ale which is tapped now but from which the ale will overflow only later.

14 And being fed by us you used us so
 As that ungentle gull, the cuckoo's bird,
 Useth the sparrow: did oppress our nest;
 Grew by our feeding to so great a bulk
 That even our love durst not come near your sight
 For fear of swallowing;

(V. i. 59-64)

Worcester who has come to the King's camp near Shrewsbury, bearing the message of the rebels, tells the King at length about the injuries he has done them and the wrongs he has committed. He reminds the King of his oath at Doncaster that he would do nothing against the State and that he would claim no more than his right, the dukedom of Lancaster. This oath was broken and so were many others. Worcester, his brother and his brother's son, had rendered him every assistance when he was a poor lonely outlaw. He has forgotten his debt and has treated them with scant courtesy. They have been forced, Worcester says, to seek safety in rebellion.

Worcester complains that the King treated them as the cuckoo bird treats the sparrow's nest where it is brought up. When the King grew powerful he forgot that he owed his power to Worcester and others and even threatened them with ruin.

that ungentle gull sparrow: The cuckoo is believed to lay her eggs in the nest of some small bird such as a sparrow. The poor sparrow not knowing that there is a stranger egg in its nest, hatches it along with its own. We are told that when the young cuckoo grows strong it

oppresses the nest where it was brought up and intercepts the meat from the other young birds. References to this habit of the cuckoo are very frequent in Shakespeare.

gull: an unfledged nestling.

cuckoo's bird: the chick, or young of the cuckoo.

even our love: even we with the love we had shown you.

for fear of swallowing: for fear of being devoured by the cuckoo. It was a common belief that the cuckoo bit off the heads of the other nestlings in the nest where it was brought up.

15 For treason is but trusted like the fox,
Who, ne'er so tame, so cherished and lock'd up,
Will have a wild trick of his ancestors. (V. ii. 9-11)

Returning from the King's presence, Worcester tells Vernon that it would be unwise on their part to convey the King's gracious offer to Hotspur. The King, he says, cannot love them as he promised. He will always suspect them. He will make any trivial fault they might commit, an excuse for punishing them for their earlier offences. Men like them once suspected of treachery will be trusted only like the fox, which, however tame and well brought up, will inevitably have something of the inherited guile of its race.

This passage is of great importance in estimating the character of Worcester. Worcester decides on suppressing the King's message of clemency, because he feels it safer to risk everything on immediate war than being subjected to the torment of ceaseless suspicion by the King.

ne'er so tame up: however tame, cherished and carefully brought up the fox might be.

Will have ancestors: is sure to have inherited something of the wickedness of its ancestors.

16 Ill-weaved ambition, how much art thou shrunk. (V. iv. 88)

Hotspur, defeated by the Prince, lies dead on the field of battle. Gazing on his corpse, the Prince pronounces a noble eulogy. When Hotspur was alive, a kingdom was not enough for his proud spirit. "But now two paces of the vilest earth" suffice him. All his ambitions are shrunk to this.

Ill-weaved shrunk: The metaphor is taken from a loosely and badly woven cloth which shrinks when exposed to the weather. The Prince implies that there was nothing noble and definite about Hotspur's ambitions.

17. 'Sblood,' 'twas time to counterfeit, or that hot termagant Scot had paid me scot and lot too. Counterfeit? I lie, I am no counterfeit; to die is to be a counterfeit; for he is but the counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man; but to counterfeit dying, when a man thereby liveth, is to be no counterfeit, but the true and perfect image of life indeed. (V. iv. 113-120)

Prince Henry after killing Hotspur on the field of battle, turns round and is shocked to find Falstaff lying apparently dead. He bids a sad farewell to his companion in dissoluteness whom he believes to be dead. If it were not for the seriousness that has come recently over him he would miss Falstaff even more. He proposes to have him properly buried later on.

Falstaff rises up when the Prince is out of earshot. He has been feigning death to avoid being killed by Douglas, 'the termagant Scot.' He assures himself that though he counterfeited death he is really no counterfeit. Only a dead man can be called a counterfeit, because he is then the image of a man without life in him. To live and to counterfeit dying is an altogether different matter, because such a counterfeit is "the true and perfect image of life indeed."

This passage is of importance in understanding Falstaff's character. He is greatly in love with life and gives a number of sensible though facetious reasons to prove that it is the height of wisdom to counterfeit death when hard pressed.

termagant: 'Termagant' was originally the name of a deity worshipped by the Saracens. The name was frequently given to violent and passionate characters in the Old Morality Plays (Cf. *Hamlet*, III, ii, 15: "I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod; pray you, avoid it.") The word now means 'a scolding woman'.

that. Scot had paid me scot and lot too: The phrase 'scot and lot' means 'utterly' or 'thoroughly'. To pay scot and lot was originally a legal expression meaning the payment of tates or other municipal taxes. There is a pun on the word *scot* here.

I.III.4 Check your progress

1. Sketch the character of Prince Hal.
2. "Hotspur is honour and Honour is Hotspur", justify this with reference to Henry IV, Part-1.
3. Sketch the character of Falstaff.
4. King Henry is the titular hero of the play Henry-IV, Part I. Discuss.

I.III.5 Sample examination questions

1. Sketch the character of King Henry.
2. Sketch the character of Prince Hal.
3. Sketch the character of Falstaff.

I.III.6 Let us sum up

In this lesson we have studied about the major character of the play in a very detailed manner. This lesson provides sample material to answer questions regarding character sketches in the examination.

I.III.7 Suggested readings

1. E.M. Wouth (Ed.) **Shakespeare: The Histories.**
2. Edward Dowden. **Shakespeare: His Mind and Art.**
3. R.G. Moulton. **Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist.**

T. SUBBA RAO

Unit-I : Henry IV, Part-I, Lesson-IV

I.IV.0 OBJECTIVES

- After going through this lesson you will be able to
- understand Honour as the main theme of the play.
 - analyse the comparison between Hotspur & Prince Hal.

I.IV STRUCTURE

I.IV.0 Objectives

I.IV.1 Introduction

I.IV.2 Honour as the main theme of the play

I.IV.3 Prince Hal and Hotspur - A comparative study

I.IV.4 Select Literary Criticism

I.IV.5 Check your progress

I.IV.6 Sample examination question.

I.IV.7 Let us sum up

I.IV.8 Suggested Readings

I.IV.1 Introduction

This is the fourth lesson of the play. First there is a discussion of the important theme of honour. You will also find a comparative study of the two leading characters Prince Hal and Hotspur. This way, an attempt can be made on any other question not forgetting to base it on a thorough reading of the text of the play. Select Literary Criticism on important issues and characters has also been included.

I.IV.2 Honour as the main the theme of the play

An eminent critic, K.R.S. Iyengar says that England is the real theme of Shakespeare's historical plays and England is ruled by kings who wage wars against internal and external enemies for survival. 'Henry IV Part I' is concerned with the successful efforts of the King at crushing the rebellion of the Percys. The rebellion takes its origin in Hotspur's feeling of humiliation that the King has dishonoured him by refusing to ransom his brother-in-law, Mortimer.

All the characters in the play are concerned with honour in varying degrees, and the development of the play depends upon their reaction to the sentiment of honour, so honour is an important theme of the play, which contributes to the unity of the play.

King Henry makes a mention of honour in the opening of the play. He does this envious of the gallant Hotspur for his crushing defeat of Douglas and his forces. For the King, Hotspur is the theme of honour's tongue and the straightest plant among a grove. He is equally unhappy that his son Prince Hal, who is of the same age as Hotspur is spending his time dishonourably with disreputable companions like Falstaff. The King values honour highly though he himself has acted shamefully in usurping the throne of Richard II.

Hotspur is the chief votary of honour. Excited by Worcester's suggestion of a great exploit, Hotspur is driven beyond the bounds of patience. He will face any danger, if there is honour in it. He is ready to pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon or from the depths of the ocean. As he jumps into the battle with his war-cry "Esperance", all his peers are inspired with heroism. The doughty Douglas admiringly praises him as the King of honour. Even Prince Hal graciously admires Hotspur as the most valiant young man alive. When he is killed by Prince Hal, it is the loss of his honour that hurts him and not the loss of his life. One naturally feels that his love of honour has gone beyond limits.

Prince Hal is another votary of honour, but more reasonable and restrained than Hotspur. He has the strength of character to keep up his honour intact inspite of his contact with the dishonourable friends of the tavern. He is so honourable as to offer to fight a single combat with Hotspur to settle the issue of war in order to save the loss of innocent lives. He comes face to face with Hotspur on the battlefield of Shrewsbury. He first appreciates the great valour of Hotspur. Afterwards he fights against him with all his might and kills him. Thus he snatches away all the honours of Hotspur and emerges as a completely heroic figure. Even afterwards, he is so honourable and magnanimous as to pay tributes to Hotspur as brave Percy and great heart in recognition of his knightly virtues.

Falstaff's conception of honour is of quite a different type. He does not understand the greatness of honour and so dismisses it as an airy nothing, and a figment of the imagination. When Douglas attacks him, he saves himself by falling down and pretending to be dead. For him, discretion is the better part of valour and it consists in saving himself by running away from danger. But occasionally his conscience wakes up and he becomes conscious of honour. He thinks of his past and talks about the necessity of repentance, but he soon drinks and forgets everything.

There are many other characters in the play who cherish honour. John of Lancaster, the Earl of Westmoreland and Sir Walter Blunt uphold honour as much as Northumberland, Glendower and Douglas as against Falstaff who pours ridicule on honour and all of them succeed in lending unity to the play as a whole.

I.IV.3 Prince Hal and Hotspur - A comparative study

Harry Percy and Prince Hal are the two stars who find the sphere of Henry IV unwieldy for both of them. Their personalities are so great that they cannot exist together. Both of them are high-spirited young men created for the purpose of providing a strong contrast to each other. Their

fathers, the Earl Northumberland and Henry Bolingbroke were friendly nobles who worked together for deposing Richard II and for making the latter King of England. Northumberland's son Hotspur and his uncle Worcester also played an active role in elevating Henry Bolingbroke. That was the background.

King Henry in his endeavour to win the people's confidence has to ignore these benefactors, and so resentment among the discontented started growing up. Hotspur is still loyal to the King and is very active in political matters. He is leading the armies on King's behalf and winning glories in battles. Prince Hal, on the other hand, disgusted with the cramped and chilly atmosphere of the court, leaves the royal palace and all responsibility and spends his precious time in the tavern, joking and drinking with the low companions, Falstaff and others.

Hotspur the loyal supporter of the King till the Scottish war, turns hostile to the King as the latter hurts Hotspur's sense of honour by refusing to ransom Mortimer. Provoked by his uncle Worcester, he joins him and other rebels in a plan of rebellion against the King.

The King is filled with jealousy of Hotspur for his military adventures and glories. He is sorry that his madcap son has lowered his prestige through his wild and dishonourable behaviour, he feels that Northumberland is a wicky father in his son Hotspur and wishes very much for a son like him.

But the Prince is not a debased character and his father has only mistaken him. The Prince's present life with the disreputable company is only a mask worn by him to hide his good nature, and he makes this clear in his first soliloquy, where he lays bare his heart. He knows the character of his associates. He is in their riotous company only for recreation. But at the proper time, he will redeem himself publicly by appearing in his true noble character.

Hotspur is a great votary of honour. He is excessively and blindly committed to honour. He is ready to face any danger, if there is honour in it. He is ready to pluck bright honour either from the pale faced moon above or from the depths of the ocean below.

But Prince Hal's love of honour is pragmatic, more reasonable and restrained than that of Hotspur. He is so honourable as to offer to fight against Hotspur in a single combat in order to save the lives of innocent people.

Prince Hal is determined to wrest all the honours won by Hotspur at one stroke. But when Hotspur falls, fighting with him, the Prince is magnanimous enough to recognise his opponent's honour. He calls Hotspur a warrior of great heart and bids him a moving farewell.

Thus Prince Hal and Hotspur are great heroes born to complement and supplement each other. Between the two, Prince Hal is more practical and reasonable and hence successful in life.

I.IV Select Literary Criticism

Shakespeare and His Predecessors by F. S. Boas was published in 1896, it may conveniently form our starting point. Dealing with the historical plays of Shakespeare, Mr. Boas points out that England is the heroine of every play. But the plays also show how individual character affects national life. For instance, in *Henry IV*, politics are subordinated to the clash between individuals. And in this clash, the King is not able to become even the dramatic centre. But his character is effectually brought out in contrast with Prince John on the one hand and Northumberland on the other. Prince John seems to be a pale replica of his father and thus helps us to measure the full stature of Henry IV. Northumberland shares with the King a fondness for craft and intrigue, but lacks courage. Henry IV has all the qualities of the successful man, but his very success turns to ashes in his mouth as he lacks idealism. Mr. Boas suggests that the Prince of Wales frequents taverns because of his disgust with his father's hypocrisy. The most notable point that Mr. Boas makes about Falstaff is that the corpulent Knight develops a vulnerable spot by getting fond of Hal. And it is through this that he is fatally wounded in the end.

Dr. Brandes's book on Shakespeare appeared about the same time as that of Professor Boas. He pays a striking tribute to *Henry IV* as full of artistic excellences. It is suggested that like Prince Henry, Shakespeare concealed great qualities behind a misinterpreted exterior. Dr. Brandes tries to assess the position of Falstaff in European comedy. He compares him to Rebelais's Panurge, but ranks him higher as the gayest and most entertaining figure in European comedy. He shows how the theme honour occupies an important position in the scheme of the play. "It is dignity to the king, renown to Hotspur, the reverse of show to the prince; while Falstaff proves how a man can live without it." In an interesting sketch of Hotspur, Dr. Brandes shows him to be an embodiment of the untamed spirit of feudal nobility. Prince Hal becoming the national hero as Henry V, strikes him as the prototype of those who were to conquer India. Henry V is "the typical English conqueror, adventurer and politician, unscrupulous, and on occasions cruel, undismayed though the enemy outnumber him tenfold."

Dr. Bradley's famous lecture, *The Rejection of Falstaff*, was delivered in 1902. As is well-known, Dr. Bradley comes to the conclusion that Shakespeare pains us at the end of *Henry IV* even though he did not intend to do so. Falstaff outgrew Shakespeare's original intention and wrecked all his dramatic plans. He is the greatest comic character in literature, his essence being the bliss of freedom gained in humour. Shakespeare has conferred on him an inexplicable touch of infinity, thus making him of a class with Hamlet, Macbeth and Cleopatra.

Sir Walter Raleigh (1907) looks upon Falstaff as a comic Hamlet whose escapades demonstrate the triumph of spirit over matter. By his side Prince Hal appears a satellite. The Prince's qualities do not make him dear to us. Professor Herford (1912) considers Hal to be the centre of the plays on Henry IV. The Falstaff scenes show us the humorous quintessence of life.

Stopford Brooke in his *Ten More Plays of Shakespeare* (1913) pronounces *Henry IV, Part I* among the greatest of Shakespeare's plays. The play is a dramatic representation in tableaux of a

continuous series of events. Prince Hal is estranged from his father on account of lack of sympathy with his father's character. But he also inherits his father's craft. This is seen in his deliberate plan to forsake his boon companions when he becomes King. The most notable thing said about Falstaff is that we forget rather than forgive his faults. We are compelled to do so because we enjoy his good humour and intellectual power and because he has the courage of his situation.

Professor Stoll's important essay on Falstaff appeared in 1914. He considers Falstaff to be the conventional stage - coward of the Elizabethan age. He belongs to the type of the braggart captain. He is entertaining rather than plausible. His character is full of psychological inconsistencies. Falstaff has become fascinating on account of the supremely poetic language in which Shakespeare makes him speak.

Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, in his *Shakespeare's Workmanship* (1918), declares that Falstaff is the hero of *Henry IV*. Falstaff is derived from Gluttony of the old Interludes. Indeed, the whole play deals with the conversion of the Prince on the model of the Morality and the Interlude. But the rejection of Falstaff is the most damnable piece of workmanship in Shakespeare. The Prince's soliloquy poisons him in our imagination for good.

Sir F. A. R. Marriott's *English History and Shakespeare* appeared in the same year. In this work he tries to find out Shakespeare's conception of history. The poet looked upon history as a field for the play of personal forces. *Henry IV* tries to represent social order, ecclesiastical orthodoxy and parliamentary government. It combines history of a high order with some of the finest English comedy. Falstaff is the despair of commentators. Somehow or other we like him. This can hardly be on account of his rascality, but is probably due to his rare wit and superb self-possession.

Mr. Middleton Murry's *Falstaff* (1923) regards the corpulent knight as the greatest creation of Shakespeare's yet undivided being. A fundamental irresponsibility links Falstaff with Hotspur. "One carelessly pursued honour, the other sack." In *Henry IV, Part I*, Shakespeare gets tired with Falstaff. When the poet's creative light fails, Falstaff is seen to be a rather disreputable adventurer.

Mr. John Bailey's *Essay on Shakespeare's Histories* belongs to the same year. *Henry IV* is here considered to be among the very greatest of Shakespeare's works. Falstaff is a votary of the life of the senses and uses his intellect unreservedly in their service. We love him because we know all that is to be known about him. The gift of self-revelation makes him near to us. Mr. Bailey thinks, however, that there are some inconsistencies in the character of Falstaff which could have been avoided. He regards Falstaff as a liar and a coward, and considers the occasional praises of Falstaff's warlike prowess as out of place. Falstaff's fundamental defect is that he lacks will and confidence. But he is vital enough to run away at times with his creator and makes it difficult for Shakespeare to paint Prince Hal as worthy of praise and honour. The Prince may be somewhat self-righteous, but his soliloquy reveals him to be a strong man full of self-confidence.

Mr. J. B. Priestley in his *The English Comic Characters* (1925) skilfully analyses the character of Falstaff. He points out that the Falstaff of the stage was more or less a bloated buffoon. In his view, Morgann concentrates on Falstaff's incongruities and tells us what he is; while Professor Bradley draws attention to his bliss in freedom and tell us what he does. The two together give us Falstaff's secret. He is the supreme example of the clubbable man. He falls in the end because he cannot laugh away his love for Henry. Henry rejects Falstaff with the fervour of the converted rake. He was, of course, never a gentleman and was something of a prig.

L. L. Schucking in his *Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays* (1922) looks upon Falstaff as a self-confessed clown. "To be witty himself and to stimulate laughter; and wit in others is the business of the clown." "Falstaff is the prince and grand-master of all dramatic clowns, and belongs to the dramatic tradition which makes the clown the centre of the comic underplot in the serious drama."

Mr. Charles Williams in his study of *Henry V* (1930) has some interesting things to say about Falstaff. The distinction of Falstaff is that, though he may want a lot for his comfort, he does not need it for his complacency: "Hotspur, without a sense of his own honour, feels himself deficient; that is why he rebels. Falstaff, without the same sense, feels himself free; that is why he runs away or fights as circumstances and his own commonsense dictate."

Mr. G. B. Harrison in a couple of articles in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1930* traced allusions in *Henry W* to the politics of Essex. He believes that the 'lord, neat and trimly dressed, who demands the prisoners from Hotspur must have been once recognisable. Certain characteristics of Essex are found in Hotspur. They are similar to each other both in their love for glory and in their lack of self-control. Not that Hotspur is Essex." Shakespeare finds opportunities in the character of Hotspur for significant speeches and takes them, but he is writing a play and not an allegory of the times." Falstaff's catechism on honour shows that Shakespeare's sympathy is definitely turning away from glory. (Republished in *Shakespeare Criticism 1919-1935*, edited by Anne Bradley).

Professor H. B. Charlton's important work *Shakespearian Comedy* (1938) suggests that Shakespeare's original intention about *Henry IV* was upset by Falstaff. "This huge mass of flesh, this Sir John, has distorted the drift of the historic story and of the deliberate plan of Shakespeare's play. He has converted an intended hero into a heartless politician and a happy ending into a revolting conclusion." Prince Hal appears common, selfish and without feeling. And his soliloquy is an offence against humanity.

Mr. G. L. Kitredge's edition of *Henry IV, Part I*, tries to vindicate the character of Prince Hal. "His riots are mere frolics." And his soliloquy should be understood as a statement by the dramatist of the trend of his plot. Professor Gordon's *Shakespearian Comedy and Other Studies* (1944) points out that Shakespeare has fixed for ever in the immortal scenes of Falstaff a humorous, masculine, clubroom atmosphere. "Cheerful abuse of each other is the principal delight of Falstaff and his friends; and I have authority for saying that this is wholly unfeminine."

PROFESSOR DOVER WILSON ON THE FORTUNES OF FALSTAFF

In his work entitled *The Fortunes of Falstaff (F 43)*, Professor Dover Wilson attempts a new interpretation of the characters of Prince Hal and Falstaff. His thesis is that in *Henry IV, Parts I and II*, Shakespeare was giving his own version of a theme frequently used in the morality plays. He sets out to show how a madcap prince became an ideal king. In other words, Shakespeare is treating the theme of the return of the prodigal. Prince Hal is the prodigal son. Falstaff is the tempter, the lord of misrule. Hal must free himself from the toils of Falstaff and return to virtue. He is called upon to make a choice between vanity and Government. He chooses Government, but his choice is made, so to speak, in two stages. In *Henry IV, Part I*, Hal is shown as returning to chivalry and displaying prowess in battle. In *Henry IV, Part II*, the Prince makes his atonement with justice.

After stating his thesis briefly, Professor Dover Wilson makes a plea for returning to the sanity of the 18th century and the commonsense of Dr. Johnson. He finds that all the romantic critics from Morgann downwards have misunderstood Shakespeare. They have glorified Falstaff at the expense of Prince Hal. It has been their favourite contention that Falstaff is a gentleman and a brave warrior in spite of all seeming evidence to the contrary. They are unable to excuse the Prince for rejecting Falstaff. Professor Dover Wilson contends that they have not understood Shakespeare's intention and have not followed the plays closely.

Professor Wilson discusses at length the vexed question of Falstaff's cowardice, but he comes to the somewhat startling conclusion that the whole question is incapable of solution. He contends that so far as the battle at Gadshill is concerned, Falstaff shows himself to be a true coward. He runs away precipitately, roaring for mercy like a bull-calf. But in the tavern scene Falstaff's lies certainly seem to be too palpable to be serious. When he speaks in the same breath of the night being too dark even to see one's hand, of his identifying two men in Kendal green, he seems to be deliberately playing into the hands of the Prince and Poins. "Thus when the climax comes," he writes, "alert minds are ready to take Falstaff's word for it that he had recognized the men in buckram from the beginning and are almost prepared to doubt their own eyes and ears which had seen and heard the running and the roaring on Gadshill." From this, he comes to the conclusion that Shakespeare did not intend to offer any definite opinions of Falstaff's cowardice. And in order to confuse us still further, Shakespeare immediately afterwards shows us Falstaff faced by the threat of imminent arrest by the sheriff on a capital charge and taking it all with superb nonchalance. Thus so far as the Gadshill episode is concerned, we first see Falstaff as an unmistakable coward. Then Shakespeare shows him full of impudent wit and self-assurance. Hints are conveyed to us that the panic at Gadshill had been merely acting. Lastly, Falstaff is shown as calm and self-possessed before the imminent threat of arrest and execution. The characteristics that are shown are inconsistent with one another, but Shakespeare somehow succeeds in passing them off upon us.

Professor Wilson interprets in a similar way the part played by Falstaff at Shrewsbury. He concedes that Falstaff is not a mere *miles gloriosus*, a braggart soldier. He is shown as an old soldier knowing all the tricks of the game. Though he was not prepared to throwaway his life for honour, he was prepared to run certain risks. But he was always alert to take care of himself without

incurring the charge of cowardice. But he is not a good soldier and it is absurd to talk, as some romantic critics do, of his military reputation.

At Shrewsbury too, Professor Wilson thus points out 'Some notable inconsistencies in the picture of Falstaff's character. He is both brave and cowardly. But Professor Wilson goes slightly farther than the text warrants him and suggests that Shakespeare is now beginning to emphasize his unlovely qualities. That is why Falstaff confesses how he misused the King's press damnably. He enrolled well-to-do men who were reluctant to serve in the army. Then he allowed them to buy themselves out at two pounds apiece. What ultimately remained with him was a set of "pitiful rascals." But Falstaff cynically confesses that they are good: enough as food for powder.

Professor Wilson contends that Falstaff is here really serious. It does not matter to him whether his men live or die so long as he is able to make some money out of them. Professor Wilson also finds an ugly significance in Falstaff leading his men into the hottest part of the battle at Shrewsbury. While Morgann and Bradley take this as evidence of Falstaff's bravery, Professor Wilson suggests that it was the usual practice of officers in Elizabethan times to make their men face the enemy and then leave the battlefield under the pretence of fetching supplies. In fairness to Falstaff, it must be pointed out that there is no evidence in Shakespeare's text to suggest that Falstaff left his men in the lurch and ran away.

Professor Wilson then surveys the fortunes of Falstaff in *Henry IV, Part II*. He finds a progressive deterioration in Falstaff's character in Part II. Towards the end of Part II we are ready to concede that Falstaff is an impossible companion to a king. His rejection by the King strikes us as right, proper and inevitable.

As in the case of Falstaff, so in that of Prince Hal, Professor Wilson offers a re-interpretation. He disagrees with the romantic view which tends to look upon Prince Hal as a cad and a sanctimonious hypocrite. The Prince's soliloquy in Part I is not to be understood literally. In the Elizabethan theatre, it was a dramatic convention to use the soliloquy to convey information to the audience about the general drift of a play. In *Richard III*, for instance, Shakespeare makes his hero inform the audience that he is determined to prove a villain. So all that we are entitled to infer from the Prince's soliloquy is that in spite of all evidence to the contrary, he will reform in the end. Shakespeare here merely sketches for us the theme of the play. The soliloquy also suggests that Prince Hal is beginning to tire of his companions and is eagerly looking forward to the day when he can assume the burden of kingship and discard them for ever.

The interview with his father on the outbreak of the Percy rebellion shows the Prince conscious of the responsibilities of his position and anxious to establish his prowess in arms by meeting Hotspur in the field. The battle scenes at Shrewsbury demonstrate how the Prince keeps his promise. He comes to his father's rescue when the latter is in danger from Douglas. He fights and kills the formidable Hotspur. He shows himself not merely brave and skilful at arms, but also full of chivalry. He pronounces a noble eulogy on his fallen foe. After thus displaying his greatness as a soldier and general, the Prince is generous enough to allow Falstaff to steal his honours. Prince Hal's reform is shown stage by stage.

In *Henry IV, Part II*, we see the Prince progressing further towards his predestined goal. When the time for the rejection of Falstaff comes, we are ready to side with the Prince. Professor Wilson suggests that Falstaff's imprisonment in the Fleet was only temporary. The Fleet in those days was a State prison in which only men of position and rank were confined. Indeed, Falstaff's committal to the Fleet is something of a complaint, for it implies that he is a distinguished person. If King Henry V speaks rather harshly to Falstaff, it is on account of his being obliged to discharge an unpleasant duty.

Falstaff should not be regarded as having taken to heart the Prince's rejection. In fact, Shakespeare shows him afterwards as being self-assured and brazen even in his disgrace. He tells his satellites that he will be sent for by the King in private. It is true that this hypothesis does not square with the end of Falstaff as described in *Henry V*. But Professor Wilson contends that this account should not be taken into consideration in judging the episode of the rejection of Falstaff. For one thing, *Henry V* was written at a later date. For another, Shakespeare was obliged to kill Falstaff, in all probability because Will Kempe, the actor, who used to do the part, left Shakespeare's company.

Professor Wilson's criticism of Falstaff and Prince Hal challenges the whole trend of modern Shakespearean criticism starting with the famous essay of Maurice Morgann on Falstaff. He is quite conscious of the weight of critical authority ranged against him, but he feels that a study of the two parts of *Henry IV*, scene after scene, will lead inevitably to the conclusions he has reached. Though Professor Wilson's study is valuable in many respects, it seems on the whole to suffer from being obliged to prove a preconceived theory. If *Henry IV, Parts I and II*, are to be regarded as representing the well-known morality theme of the repentance of the prodigal son, naturally we have to admire Prince Hal and despise Falstaff. Professor Wilson seems also to be animated by a desire to uphold Prince Hal as the would-be mirror of all Christian Kings. National tradition obliges him to follow the same lines of interpretation as the morality theme. It is quite plain that Shakespeare and his audience knew from the beginning that Prince Hal would have to reject Falstaff. Professor Wilson's thesis merely points out the necessities of plot and story by which Shakespeare was bound.

I.IV.5 Check your progress

1. Explain how honour is the main theme of the play.
2. Bring out the comparison between Prince Hal and Hotspur.

I.IV.6 Sample examination questions

1. What kind of view of history does Shakespeare develop in this play?
2. History is the main theme of the play, discuss.

I.IV.7 Let us sum up

In this lesson we have understand that honour is the main theme of the play and we have made a comparative study of the characters of Prince Hal and Hotspur. We have also gained a primary knowledge of the prominent Criticism on the play.

I.IV.8 Suggested readings

1. John Dover Wilson. *The Fortunes of Falstaff*.
2. L.C. Knights. *Some Shakespearian Themes*.
3. William Shakespeare. *Henry IV, Part I, Arden Shakespeare Series*.

Prof. R. SARASWATHI

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

List of Characters

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.

Claudius, King of Denmark, Hamlet's Uncle.

Gertrude, Queen of Denmark, Hamlet's mother.

Ghost of Hamlet's father, the former king of Denmark.

Poloxins, Counsellor to the king.

Laertes, his son.

Ophelia, his daughter.

Reynaldo, his servant

Horatio, Hamlet's friend and fellow-student.

Marcellus
Barnardo
Francisco } ambassadors to Norway.

Rosencrantz
Guildenstern } former schoolfellows of Hamlet.

Fortinbras, Prince of Norway.

Captain in the Norwegian army.

First Player.

Other Players.

Osric
Lord
Gentleman } Courtiers

First Clown, a gravedigger and sexton.

Second Clown, his assistant.

Sailor

Messenger

Priest

English Ambassador

Lords, Attendants, Sailors, Soldiers, Guards.

Scene: The Danish royal palace at Elsinore

II. HAMLET.I

Structure

- II. I. 0 Objectives
- II .I. 1 Introduction
- II.I.2.1 Background
 - 2.2 Aspects Of A Shakespearean Tragedy
 - 2.3 Out Line Summary Of The Play
 - 2.4 Act/Scene-Wise Summary

II.I.0 Objectives

After working through this unit, you will be able to

- Understand the background to Shakespearean Theatre
- Discuss the aspects of Shakespeare's tragedies
- Analyse the significance of Hamlet as a play.

II.I.1 Introduction

This lesson enables you to understand the conditions of drama before Shakespeare. You will know about the theme of the play analytically.

Shakespeare : *Hamlet*

II.I.2.1. Background.

Shakespeare is THE BARD, the greatest poet of England. And *Hamlet* is perhaps the most popular play written by him. Certainly it is the most fascinating play. It will be interesting to see the reason for its this immense popularity and utter fascination.

Quite a number of the plays Shakespeare wrote end in the death of the protagonist. In plays based on British History or Greek and Roman history, only about six plays do not end on a tragic note. That means that Shakespeare wrote as many as fifteen plays out of a total of thirty-seven in this genre. Of course all of them cannot be called tragedies, though they may be 'tragic'.

'Tragedy' is one of the genres and literary features the English writers happily borrowed from Greek and Latin literatures during the Renaissance. Tragedy, like comedy, was the gift of the Greeks to European literatures. Aristotle had laid down the characteristics for a tragedy. It represents the sorrows of a king or a leader of men, and presents action of certain magnitude. It involves a reversal of fortune of the good, not absolutely 'good' man carrying a certain weakness

in the shape of over-confidence or error in judgement, resulting in a catastrophe, evoking pity and fear among the audiences. Great tragedies by the Greek masters, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, were read by all the 16th century scholar-poets of England.

But another strain of tragedy developed in early Roman literature, and underwent considerable modification in the Italian literature of 12th-14th centuries. Seneca of the 2nd century admired the Greek masters, but gently shifted the emphasis in his plays from the moral-religious aspects of retribution and atonement to sociological aspects of revenge and personal vendetta, as being more in tune with contemporary social psychology. This was further diversified by the later writers. It was this that caught the attention of the early English writers. The reason was that the English society of the times was psychologically closer to the 13th, 14th century Italians than to the Greeks of 5th century B.C., with their pre-Christian beliefs in the relation between man and the gods, their rituals and philosophy.

Particularly England in the 16th century, under Queen Elizabeth, was passing through a high tide of success in her position with respect to other European nations. Britain's emergence as the queen of the high seas gave the people a tremendous self-confidence, bordering on arrogance. The sky was the limit for their aspirations. But pride always went before the fall, and at least in psychological terms, this was true of Britain as well. This can be clearly seen in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.

Before Marlowe there were two major 'tragedies' in English, *Gorboduc* and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. Both of them imitated Italian models. The first play has a garbled revenge theme, unrelieved by any poetry. *The Spanish Tragedy* was much better organized as a drama for the stage. Even if it is a revenge play, there is an attempt to present the agony of a character consistently in dramatic terms. Some features used in the play reflect the general tendency of the Elizabethan writers when they came to write. *The Spanish Tragedy* revels in bloodshed and presents killings on the stage (contrary to the norms of a Greek play). It presents madness, real as well as assumed, on the stage. A ghost is brought in as a dramatic personage, either to further the action of the play, or to throw light on some events or happenings in the course of the action. The Elizabethan audiences were very excitable, and wished for something sensational. So these three features, bloodshed, madness and ghosts, appealed to them enormously. Child-like in their attitude to life, the public were pleased by the appeals to their imagination on the lower planes. (After all, they revelled in watching 'bear-baiting', baiting of helpless bears by a pack of hounds for public entertainment, as much as in drinking and in sex.)

Thus *The Spanish Tragedy* became a kind of trend-setter for the later Elizabethan tragedy, but for Christopher Marlowe. Marlowe, a poet first and foremost, or a poet who was also a dramatist, wrote five plays in full: *Tamburlaine, Part 1*, *Tamburlaine, Part 2*, *Doctor Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Edward II*. Apart from being tragedies, these plays are full of highly evocative poetry. The presence of poetry in these plays was a great saving grace, in that it mitigated the otherwise grim and gruesome atmosphere in them. The second, and perhaps the most significant, contribution of Marlowe to English tragedy was the presentation of a growth in the character of the protagonist. This resulted in a sea change in the basic tragic vision as presented in a play. For, Greek tragedy was built upon certain principles, and was controlled by the stagecraft and costumes

in vogue then. The Greek actors wore masks to give identity to individual characters, distinguishing one from the other. The playwrights were using popular themes to present their own view of human predicament, divine justice and human culpability. As such, a Greek tragedy was, in broad terms, a statement of man's relationship to God. Man commits an error, either unknowingly or prompted by destiny. He cannot avoid punishment, and all his efforts to justify his actions are negated by divine justice, which prevails at the end. The play would catch the action almost at the climactic stage and employ strategies of narrative and reportage, and present the anguish of the protagonist. This results in a static character presentation. In other words, we do not see any 'growth' in the character. If the plot structure precludes any growth in the character, the physical condition of the actor wearing a single mask through the entire play, in tune with the artistic intentions of the playwright, prevents any possibility for a growth in the character. In view of the importance the Greek thinkers gave to Destiny in the scheme of things, one can say that "destiny controls character" in Greek drama.

But in Marlowe's plays we get the contrary vision of "character as destiny". The Marlovian hero (protagonist, we should say) has certain tendencies and aspirations. He suffers from the typically Renaissance man's extraordinary self-confidence and boundless aspiration, be it for territorial power, for monetary power, be it for love, or for intellectual supremacy. This overarching ambition in him leads to a stage where he overreaches himself and heaps destruction on his own head. These plays present the protagonist seeking glory, power and grace, growing in confidence, growing arrogant, and in the face of calamity, striving to undo what he had done. This interplay between character and action, the growth of the hero's personality, the ups and downs in his path to glory or ignominy, taking him to the zenith of his aspirations, and then dashing him to the very nadir, -- all this is as gripping, and evocative of pity and fear as any Greek tragedy.

Marlowe was at the height of his popularity, when Shakespeare came on to the scene. Apparently, Shakespeare was not only familiar with Marlowe's work, apart from the other popular plays like *The Spanish Tragedy*, he also realized the significance of Marlowe's twin contribution of poetry and character-growth to English tragedy. His earliest attempts, the three parts of *Henry VI* (apparently, a redoing of another's handiwork), *Titus Andronicus*, and *Richard III*, carry the traces of the horrendous, more in the line of *Gorboduc*, and just a little of *The Spanish Tragedy*. But with *Richard II* he developed a strain of tragic protagonist who is more akin to the Marlovian hero. With *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard II*, he established himself as an unrivalled tragic artist. (Marlowe had died in 1593). He himself described *Romeo and Juliet* as a tale of "star-crossed lovers", thus perhaps indirectly paying tribute to the Greek belief in the supremacy of destiny over character. Yet we see the young Romeo, fashionably romantic and wild-mannered, undergoing a mellowing of his personality after meeting Juliet, while Juliet, an obedient daughter of the Capulets maturing into a defiant young woman. Here is a tale of impossible love pursued in the face of bloody family feuds. It is the enmity between the two families, rather than any error of judgement or flaw in the protagonists, that leads to the tragic end. *Richard II* presents "the arbitrary, weak, imaginative king who is the victim of his own vagaries". In a sense, we can see a continuation of the mood of *Edward II* here, but at the same time, Shakespeare's characterization is stronger and sharper than that of his model, Marlowe.

Of the remaining nine tragic plays he wrote, from *Julius Caesar* to *Antony and Cleopatra*, four stand out for their artistic greatness: *Hamlet* (1602), *Othello* (04), *King Lear* (05) and *Macbeth* (06). Shakespeare's reputation as a tragic artist rests on these four plays, called by the critics as the 'Great Tragedies'. *Hamlet* is the most fascinating as well as puzzling, *Othello* the most well-constructed as also most naïve, *King Lear* the most poignant and most popular, and *Macbeth* the most poetic of the plays written in English. Critics deduce the traits of a Shakespearean tragedy from an analysis of these four plays.

II.I.2.2 Aspects of a Shakespearean Tragedy

The protagonist is a man of 'high degree'; his fate affects the welfare of a nation, and when he falls, a whole nation or a body of people suffers. The fall shows the powerlessness of man against the caprice of Fate or Fortune. This may appear to be similar to the vision of a Greek tragedy. But the calamities do not simply happen, nor are they sent: they proceed from the actions of the protagonists. With Shakespeare, as we have already seen, "character is destiny". There may be a supernatural element, there may be a conflict of opposing factors / elements, but in the final analysis, these events / accidents are nothing more, nor less than tragic facts. The conflict is interiorised in the hero's soul: we see him torn by inward struggle. (The anguish and spiritual conflict of Faustus in the closing scene of the play illustrates this.)

Shakespeare's tragic protagonists are made of the stuff we find in ourselves – leading to an easy empathy with them – so that the heroes not only evoke pity but admiration and awe as well. Prompted by the necessity to act, they come into clash with forces that are evil and inimical to human aspiration and progress. In the end they may be crushed and destroyed, and leave an impression of waste. We may exclaim in horror, "there is no 'poetic justice' in the tragic world" (critics complain that there is no poetic justice in any tragedy, classical or Elizabethan.). But the Elizabethan world-view postulated a 'moral order' which is sought to be disturbed or destroyed by a 'moral evil', and something had to restore the order. The protagonist steps in and takes up the gauntlet. Tragic suffering and death may result from the conflict, but it is not the hero's death that makes the play 'tragic', nor is tragedy in the mere defeat of evil forces and reestablishment of 'moral order'. If the end involves "waste of so much good", mere "waste of good" does not constitute the tragedy, unless it is accompanied by the restoration of 'order' in the moral world. In the process, the agony and the ultimate destruction count as nothing against the heroism and fortitude that the protagonists display. They appear as being larger than life.

Othello tells a tale of betrayal of trust, vulnerability of innocence, and of relentless reign of malignity that cannot bear the sight of 'goodness'. The trust Othello placed in Iago is turned to machination against the gullibility of the Moor and his intense love is soured into blind jealousy, leading to the catastrophe. Not only the final exposure of Iago's villainy, but Othello's belief in the innocence of Desdemona, whom he strangled in her bed, constitute the tragedy.

King Lear is the story of the inability to distinguish true love and loyalty from pretense and hypocrisy. The stubborn refusal of Cordelia to accommodate the equally stubborn egotism of Lear leads the tale through a devil's dance of ingratitude, lechery, souring of filial relationships and of

loyalty to the King. The final tragedy of King Lear is the inevitable consequence of his passion and thoughtless action, but the evil is defeated and the king recognizes the truth for what it is, before his heart breaks.

Macbeth is promised a promotion by powers beyond his comprehension and, mistaking a casual visit for an opportunity, he commits regicide, and follows it up with further villainy, until the evil he perpetrates doubles back upon him and destroys both him and his partner-in-crime, Lady Macbeth.

Prince Hamlet is called upon to repair the time that is "out of joint", when his father is killed and his mother marries him who committed the crime. Basically averse to action and unequal to the needs of the challenging task, Hamlet lets loose a set of events which ultimately engulf him, but not before he had helped to restore order to the disjointed world.

II.1.2.3 The Play.

Shakespeare never thought twice before taking up for dramatic treatment a tale he found anywhere, whether in translations, books of histories, or in popular ballads. What interested him were two things: one, that the story was popular and, two, that the theme was dramatically viable and exciting. It fired his imagination, peopled his mind with unforgettable men and women, and resulted in the creation of a memorable dramatic composition.

The story of Hamlet was much more popular and well-talked about than many others he handled. It appears to have its ultimate source in Icelandic saga; it was included in the history of the Danes written by the 12th century monk, Saxo Grammatik'cus. The story appears among the tales of the French Belleforest. In England there were references to the Hamlet theme as early as in 1587-88 (to Senecan tragedy, tragical speeches etc. in Nash's letter), 1594 (Henslowe's diary refers to a play called 'Hamlet'), 1596 (Lodge refers to a ghost in a play 'Hamlet, Revenge'), a reference again in 1598 (?), and a phrase in a play of Dekker ("my name's Hamlet, Revenge!"). Perhaps the play referred to was a play on the Hamlet theme, a revenge tragedy, very similar to *The Spanish Tragedy*, with assumed madness, a ghost, and a play within the play. Some stylistic features as well as the inversion of the plot, -- the father avenging the murder of the son in *The Spanish Tragedy* being inverted to the son avenging the death of the father in the Hamlet story, -- give credence to the assumption that the early play was penned by Kyd himself, and had proved quite popular with the Elizabethan audiences. (One wonders why Kyd should have written another play with a similar story with the same dramatic devices in such a short time: but it is difficult to answer the question.)

But what one quickly realizes is the fact that whatever be the source of a tale that Shakespeare handled, it gets so transformed in his hands that it becomes altogether distinct, and fascinating. The 'normal sources' merely furnish the raw material for his creative imagination, and do not in any way constitute his genius. For, as Furness points out, "how much did he 'draw', or what did he 'find'? ... Of whatsoever makes his tragedies sublime and heaven-high above all other human compositions, -- of that we find never a trace...."

In outline, the story of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* as written by Shakespeare runs as follows: with a father killed and mother defiled, Prince Hamlet is called upon to avenge the killing and to restore the moral order. Essentially given to thinking and averse to action, he procrastinates, wishing to ensure that the course of action he would take is right. In this process, he kills the Minister inadvertently, for which he is shipped away to England, with a secret instruction to that King to eliminate the Prince. He learns of the villainy, escapes providentially, and returns to Elsinore, only to face further treachery. He is able to establish the villainy of his uncle at last, and kill him. But he himself could not escape death.

II.I.2.4. The Play: Scene by Scene.

Act I.: Scene 1. It is midnight. The sentries on watch are troubled because they had seen a ghost haunting the battlements, and think that it is the ghost of the late King. Horatio, a friend of Prince Hamlet, called to investigate, challenges the ghost when it appears, but it sulks away. Seeing the ghost clad in armour, Horatio links its appearance to the war-preparations going on in the state; but decides to report its appearance to the Prince.

Scene 2: King Claudius decides to send envoys to Norway to caution that king to avert a possible battle. He then turns to Leartes the son of the Chief Minister Polonius, listens to his request to be permitted to return to his school in Paris. Learning that he had his father's permission, he grants the request graciously.

Queen Gertrude turns to her son Hamlet and asks him to be more cheerful. The King asks him not to grieve over his father's death. He also asks him not to return to Wittenberg for studies, declaring that he would be the next king of Denmark.

Left alone, Hamlet speaks out in a soliloquy his mind, troubled by the unhealthy haste with which his mother had rushed into another wedding so soon after the death of her husband. Sorely distraught, he would like to commit suicide but for the fact that his faith forbade it as mortal sin.

Horatio and friends find him thus, and narrate their encounter with the ghost. Swearing them to secrecy, Hamlet decides to meet the ghost that night.

Scene 3. Leartes is getting ready for his journey to Paris. He counsels his sister Ophelia not to be too prodigal with her affection; towards Prince Hamlet who was showing marked preference for her. Polonius comes urging his son to make haste, all the while delaying his departure with his exhortations. After his son's departure, Polonius talks to his daughter in regard to Hamlet's affection for her, and orders her not to encourage his advances.

Scene 4. Hamlet is on the battlements awaiting the arrival of the ghost. He comments on the vice of drunkenness among the people of Denmark. The ghost appears and beckons to Hamlet to a more secluded place. He follows the ghost for a distance, and demands to know what it wishes to impart.

Scene 5. The ghost tells him how he had been treacherously murdered by his own brother and how it had been given out that he had died of snakebite. Not content over usurping the throne, Claudius had seduced the queen into marrying him. The ghost asks Hamlet to avenge his unnatural murder, but to spare his mother.

After the disappearance of the ghost, Hamlet swears his friends to strict secrecy, and not to betray him even if he chooses to occasionally act 'mad'.

Act II. Scene 1. Polonius sends his servant to Learnes with money, but instructs him to spy on his son before meeting him. Ophelia comes in, hands over a letter she received from Hamlet and describes the pathetic state to which he seems to have been reduced because she had turned cold towards him, as advised by her father. Polonius assumes that the indisposition afflicting the Prince could have been caused by unrequited love, and he decides to report the same to the King and the Queen.

Scene 2. The King calls Hamlet's schoolfellows, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and asks them to spy on Hamlet closely to learn of the cause of his disaffection. The ambassadors he had sent to Norway in Scene 2 are back with the word of reassurance that the King of Norway had admonished his son against any designs of war against Denmark. And to keep him from mischief, he was being sent to attack Poland, and Norway and ask Claudius for permission to cross through Denmark.

Polonius gives the King and Queen his explanation for Hamlet's malady, and lays a plot to let Ophelia meet the Prince and proposes that he and the king eavesdrop on them while they talk.

Hamlet had assumed the 'antic disposition' to prevent some people from probing his intentions. He talks to Polonius rather wildly and inconsistently. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern inform him of a troupe of players on their way to Elsinore. This information cheers Hamlet greatly. He welcomes the players warmly, and arranges with the head of the troupe to enact a particular play, 'the Murder of Gonzago', to entertain the courtiers. Having got one of the actors to speak a passage from a play he had seen earlier, he is struck by the involvement of the actor with the imaginary character, and wonders why he is delaying to act on the word of the ghost. He hopes that the play he proposes to get acted by the troupe would expose the guilt of the King.

Act III. Scene 1. The king learns from the two friends that Hamlet is eagerly planning a show with the visiting players. He welcomes the change, and is ready to attend the play.

The king agrees to the scheme of Polonius to eavesdrop on Hamlet and Ophelia. She is asked to wait with a book in hand in the passage where the Prince is in the habit of walking. He does come there, but absorbed in his metaphysical speculations. When she accosts him hesitantly and returns the love tokens she had received from him, he suddenly gets angry and bursts out against women in general, advising Ophelia to enter a nunnery, and leaves as suddenly as he came, leaving a shattered Ophelia behind. Hamlet's outburst does not appear to the King as the raving of a jilted lover, but something much more serious. At that moment, he decides to send him off to England. He agrees with Polonius that the queen should have a talk with her son later that night.

Scene 2. Hamlet gives a pep talk to the players about how to deliver the dialogues. The King and the courtiers gather. A Dumb Show followed by the actual play, 'The Murder of Gonzago', is played. Claudius watches the scene in which the player King is poisoned by his relative, and is greatly agitated. The play is abandoned, and everyone exits separately, but Hamlet is pleased with the success of his scheme through which he could catch "the conscience of the King". Polonius tells him that the queen would like to speak to him immediately. He brushes aside the two school fellows like a pest and proceeds to his mother's closet.

Scene 3. Claudius tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern about his decision to send Hamlet to England, and asks them to escort him. He is shaken by what he had seen and, touched in his conscience, he kneels in an attempt to pray. Hamlet, on his way to the Queen's closet, comes upon the praying King, and though the prospect of killing is tempting, yet he spares him for another day lest killing him now, and sending him to heaven, might not be proper revenge.

Scene 4. Before Hamlet could arrive, Polonius briefs Gertrude, and promises her that he would be at hand in case of need, and hides behind the curtain. Hamlet comes straight to his mother and charges her with being insensitive. She cries for help as he forces her to sit down; Polonius responds with a shout, and unthinkingly Hamlet strikes and kills him. He hopes that it might be the King.

He then charges her with crimes that she could not comprehend, and with insensitivity in marrying so different a person from the one who had been her husband. His harangue is cut short by the appearance of the Ghost, in night attire. The Ghost had come to remind the Prince of his promise to avenge. But seeing the puzzled Queen, the Ghost asks Hamlet to help her fight her own spirit. And then the ghost disappears, disillusioned by the realization that his 'dear' wife could neither 'see' nor 'hear' it. Hamlet seats her down and brings her to an understanding of her own lapses, asks her not to return to the incestuous bed of Claudius. We also learn that Hamlet too knows about the King's decision to send him away to England.

Act IV. Scene 1. The Queen informs the King about the killing of Polonius. Considering the affection in which the people held the Prince, he wishes to act at once and send off Hamlet without any delay.

Scene 2. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern chase Hamlet around the castle to learn about the whereabouts of Polonius' body, but putting on his queer disposition, Hamlet gives them a run all around.

Scene 3. They go to the King and inform him about their inability to locate the body. The King informs Hamlet to get ready to leave immediately for England. The latter bids farewell to his mother. We learn from the King's soliloquy that he had asked the King of England to eliminate the Prince.

Scene 4. Walking towards the seashore, Hamlet comes across Fortinbras and his soldiers crossing Denmark on their way to Poland. The determination of the young Fortinbras to find a cause for fight in such a small thing as a straw strikes Hamlet as remarkable, and he compares his

own aversion to action and procrastination in avenging his father's murder, to the enthusiasm of the young Norwegian Prince. He resolves to put aside his passive mood and act.

Scene 5. The sudden death of her father, the lack of the comforting presence of her brother, and the mysterious disappearance of her lover, unhinge the mind of Ophelia, and she goes mad. The King and the Queen request Horatio to keep an eye on the poor distracted girl.

Leartes comes to know of his father's inexplicable death and hurried burial, and returns to Elsinore in an angry mood, demanding an explanation and reparation. The sight of the insane Ophelia agitates him further. The King talks to him gently, and diverts his anger to the 'real' cause of Leartes' sorrow, namely Hamlet.

Scene 6. We learn that the ship in which Hamlet and others were sailing was attacked by pirates, and that Hamlet had crossed over to the pirates' ship. While the Danish ship proceeded to England without Hamlet, he himself persuades the pirates to put him on the shore of Denmark. He sends word to Horatio to meet him.

Scene 7. As Claudius is convincing Leartes that it is Hamlet who is to be blamed for all the disasters, the sailors bring a letter to the King informing him of the return of Hamlet. This perturbs and puzzles him greatly. But he is quick to seize the opportunity and using Leartes' eagerness to avenge his father's death and sister's madness, shapes him into a fine-tuned instrument against Hamlet. They plan their stratagem carefully. The queen comes and announces the death by drowning of Ophelia. This makes Leartes all the more determined to kill the Prince.

Act V. Scene 1. Horatio meets Hamlet and they wander towards the churchyard, where a new grave is being dug. They exchange pleasantries with the gravediggers for some time when they notice a funeral procession coming there. The King and the Queen as well as Leartes were in the crowd. Hamlet realizes that it is Ophelia that is to be buried. When Leartes jumps into the grave, Hamlet also jumps in and they wrestle each other, and are separated.

Scene 2. Hamlet tells Horatio about the letter Claudius wrote to the King of England to put him to death. He had altered and sealed the letter with the ring of his father he had on his finger, and put it back where he had found it. Providentially the pirates save him the next day.

As they are talking, word from the King is brought that a friendly fencing match between Leartes and Hamlet is being arranged and all the courtiers are gathering for the event. Though Horatio is ready to seek a reprieve on his friend's behalf, he goes ahead with the challenge.

As the match progresses and Hamlet is winning, the Queen rejoices and takes up the poisoned drink Claudius had intended for Hamlet. Leartes wounds Hamlet with a poisoned sword; in a sharp exchange of fight, Hamlet takes possession of that sword and finds it 'unbated' and hits Leartes. Suddenly realizing that he is dying, Leartes discloses that the sword is poisoned and he as well as Hamlet has only a short while to live, that the queen too is poisoned, and that it is the King who is behind the entire scheme. Catching him at last in the midst of his villainy, Hamlet stabs him to death.

Before he himself is overpowered by death, he requests Horatio to stay behind to tell his story to the courtiers and people who are puzzled by the events. He proclaims Fortinbras as the successor to the throne of Denmark, and dies.

The poetry that brings out Hamlet's meditative nature and imagination, the course of action which careens towards the inevitable catastrophe, the fatalism the poet puts in the mouth of this philosophic Prince who walks towards his own destruction, have such an impact on the audience as to make the response highly aesthetic. The puzzles remain, the pain gathers momentum, and the audience are plunged along with the protagonist headlong into the vortex of tragic irony. We look for some answers to our doubts and questions, some explanations for the apparent inconsistencies, but are caught in the tragic denouement from which we emerge, cleansed of all dross, having experienced the catharsis. The puzzlement, the inexplicability, the very dubiousness of some central issues constitutes the tremendous spell the play casts upon us. This is the cause of the fascination of the play and the character of Hamlet, and the cause of the play's immense popularity. Playing the role of Hamlet on the stage is considered by every serious actor as the *summum bonum*, the ultimate height of achievement for his talent, and no artist would think his career is complete until he had an opportunity to portray Prince Hamlet.

Glossary

- addition** title (II, 1. 42)
admiration wonder (I, 2. 191)
anchor recluse (III, 2. 208)
anle to give unction to the dying (I, 5. 71)
batten feed coarsely (III, 4. 67)
beaver visor of a helmet (I, 2. 229)
beatle to overhang (with shaggy eyebrows) (I, 4. 71)
bilboes fetters (or a sword) (V, 2. 6)
bissom blinding (dim-sighted) (II, 2. 486)
blench to flinch (II, 2. 575)
cautel deceit, craft (I, 3. 15)
censure judgment (I, 3. 68)
cerement winding sheet (I, 4. 48)
chopine high-soled shoe (II, 2. 409)
chough red-legged crow (V, 2. 88)
clepe call (I, 4. 19)
coil ado ((III, 1. 67)
complexion disposition ((I, 4. 27)
cote overtake, pass (II, 2. 3076)
cousin relative, like nephew (I, 2. 64)
cozen cheat, deceive (III, 4. 77)
eisel vinegar ((V, 1. 269)
escot maintain (II, 2. 334)
eyas young hawk (II, 2. 327)
fee value (I, 4. 65)
flaw gust of wind, passion (V, 1. 209)
fordo destroy (II, 1. 97; V, 1. 214)
frets stops on a stringed instrument (like guitar) (II, 2. 292)
miching lurking, sulking (III, 2. 128)
mallecho mischief (III, 2. 128)
marry by Mary
mazzard head, skull (colloq.) (V, 1. 86)
mobled muffled (II, 2. 482)
nonce for the occasion (IV, 7. 160)
noyance hurt, harm (III, 3. 13)
ore gold (IV, 1. 25)
paddock toad (III, 4. 189)
pat exactly (as expected) (III, 3. 73)
plurisy excess (IV, 7. 117)
porpentine porcupine (I, 5. 20)
quaintly skillfully (II, 1. 26)
quiddity sophistry, subtle arguments (V, 1. 95)
quietus acquittal, discharge from a debt (to life, here) (III, 1. 75)
quillet legal subtlety (V, 1. 95)
rack drift (with clouds) (II, 2. 465)
rede (read) advise (I, 3. 50)
rheum flow of tears (II, 2. 486)
rival partner (I, 1. 3)
romage tumultuous hurry (I, 1. 107)
sconce the head (V, 1. 97)
scrimmer fencer (IV, 7. 100)
secure fearing no danger (I, 5. 61)
shrewdly keenly (here) (I, 4. 1)
simple herbal sample for medication, medicinal herb (IV, 7. 144)
sledged on sledges (I, 1. 63)
spill destroy (IV, 5. 20)

grained dyed with a fast colour (III, 4. 90)
handsaw heron (II, 2. 363)
hent seize (III, 3. 88)
his its (here) ((I, 2. 215;V, 1. 214)
house sacramental (I, 5. 77)
humour temperament ((II, 2. 12)
lazar beggar (afflicted with disease like
leprosy) (I, 5. 72)
learn teach (here) (V, 2. 9)
let hinder (I, 4. 85)
luxury lust (I, 5. 83)

sterling of full value (I, 3. 106)
stuck thrust (IV, 7. 161)
tax censure, reproach (I, 4. 18).
unbated without the protective tip (V, 2.)
union a fine pearl (V, 2. 260)
valanced fringed (II, 2. 406)
wassail a carousing, drinking revel (I, 4. 9)
yaw to **steer** unsteadily (V, 2. 113)
yeoman's service invaluable service (V, 2. 36)
yesty foaming, frothy (V, 2. 181) (V, 2. 136)

Prof. S. Krishna Sarma

II Hamlet II

Structure

II.II.0 Objectives

II.II.1 Introduction

II.II.2.1 Introduction to Annotation

II.II.2.2 Sample Annotations from the Play

2.2.1. Act I

2.2.2 Act II

2.2.3 Act III

2.2.4 Act IV

2.2.5 Act V

II.II 0. Objectives

As you are aware of the theme of the text, this lesson gives you a revision of the study through selected annotated passages of the play. You will be able to recall the play and analyse the skills of Shakespeare as a playwright.

II.II.1 Introduction

You will now understand how to annotate a passage, the divisions of an annotation and some passages from the text.

II.II.2.1 Introduction to Annotation

Annotating a passage is explaining the passage in its context and estimating its artistic significance. This procedure is nothing but a formalization of what a teacher has to do in the classroom when he analyses a passage for the students. As such, any passage from anywhere in the text, poem, drama or prose piece, can be annotated. But for examination purposes, only some passages, which carry a greater significance and a more pregnant meaning, are set.

An annotation comprises three sections: **context**, **explanation** and **critical comment**. **Context** is not merely a reference to the Act and scene in which the passage occurs, but it is a narration of the most important events that lead to the point where the particular statement is made. That not only clarifies the background, but also establishes the set-up for the utterance of the passage. **Explanation** is the attempt to bring out the significance of the passage in relation to the context (already established). It also includes any allusions (classical or Biblical) or parallel references. If the **context** and **explanation** explain the passage in context, the **critical comment** tries to relate it to the larger artistic scheme of the work (play, here), by throwing light on the speaker or the situation in the play, bring out the attitude of the speaker, or of the writer to the

speaker, and bring out the artistic features involved. (This structure for an annotation is a norm that can be used any time an annotation is attempted.)

II.II.2.2 Hereunder are some sample annotations for selected passages from *Hamlet*.

II. II. 2. 2.1 47-49

The head is not more native to the heart, The hand not more instrumental to the mouth Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.

Leartes, the son of Polonius the Chief Minister, had come to Elsinore from Paris where he was at school. The occasion was either the mysterious death of old King Hamlet, or the wedding of Queen Gertrude and the new King Claudius. At the end of the festivities relating to the wedding, Leartes appeals to the King to let him return to Paris.

The King is all graciousness in his response. He announces how close his father Polonius is to him. He is dearer to him than even the head is to the heart or hand is to the mouth. Head and heart function in unison in man, and hand and mouth are linked closely: even in dark the hand can feed the mouth!

This is obviously an expansive statement, but expresses the relationship between him and his Chief Minister. It shows Claudius in a regal light, however briefly.

Though we do not suspect at this point in the play, a little later we begin to wonder how much the King would have depended on the support of Polonius to get the approval of the courtiers to ascend the throne, even while a grown up young Prince (Hamlet) is at hand. This passage, from the play *Hamlet*, reflects one side of the King's character.

2. I, 2. 67

Not so, my lord; I am too much in the sun.

Old King Hamlet is dead; his brother Claudius ascends the throne, and he succeeds in marrying Queen Gertrude as well. Claudius shows himself as a 'peace-loving', 'gracious' and 'loveable' King in the way he deals with the neighbouring King, his Chief Minister and Leartes. After the two items, he turns to Hamlet (who should rightly have been sitting on the throne, being a young and popular Prince). His relation to Hamlet is dubious: as his uncle he should call him 'cousin' or 'nephew', but as his mother's husband, he might call him 'son'. Unable to decide, he uses both words: "But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son".

As his mother refers to his continued sorrow for the dead father, Hamlet quips that he is not under clouds, -- sorrowing, that is, -- but quite in the sun; --in fact, too much in the sun. He is punning on the word 'son' used by the King in the earlier speech, and implying that he is being made into a 'son' more than he liked. There is also the hint about his having been kept out of his rightful position, kept away from the throne, unsheltered and exposed, and so, "too much in the sun".

Shakespeare is a master of this kind of punning and playing with words (quibbling, as it is called). But the passage gives a lead to the inquisitive reader about the possibility that his unhappiness might have stemmed from his losing the throne. But later events show that that is not the case.

3. I, 2. 151-53 *married with mine uncle, My father's brother; but no more like my father Than I to Hercules;*

Old king Hamlet had loved his queen very much. But soon after his death, she was persuaded into marrying Claudius, his brother. Prince Hamlet, who had been called home to attend his father's funeral had also to witness the wedding of his mother. Claudius ascended the throne, and married the Queen, "the Imperial jointress", as he calls her. When the King, Queen and all the courtiers depart, having been assured by Hamlet that he would stay back and not return to Wittenberg for his studies, he remains behind, and gives expression to his anguish in the first of many soliloquies he indulges in through the play.

He is greatly disturbed by the moral disorder that he sees around him. The world appears to him stale and unappetizing. He cannot commit suicide, because it is against the religious tenets. He is particularly upset by his mother's behaviour. He had known her love for his father, and witnesses now the way she allowed herself to be seduced by Claudius, -- and so soon after her dear husband's death. He is not able to fathom the frailty displayed by her: he even generalizes from her conduct: "Frailty, thy name is woman". He is shocked as to how a woman who had tasted the heavenly love of his father could now be content with the base love of a person like Claudius. For Claudius had hardly any resemblance to his brother: we learn later that the old King was majestic, and almost god-like. There is something bestial and besotted about the character of Claudius. Even as he himself cannot compare with Hercules in strength, so too Hamlet cannot compare Claudius with the old King in any of his qualities. Hercules is an early Greek demigod, noted for his strength and endurance.

The passage throws light on a different side of the personality of Claudius, and on the character of Gertrude as well as the love that she had enjoyed through her first marriage. It also tells us much about Hamlet the protagonist, his pensiveness, tendency to get lost in thought, his soliloquizing. Above all, the passage brings us close to the heart of Hamlet, the problem that vexes him, and the crucial conflict wherein this quiet man is called upon to 'act'. Tragic irony starts operating even from this early stage in the play, for, soon after this soliloquy, he learns from Horatio about the visitation from his father's ghost, a meeting with whom changes the whole complexion of his life.

4. I, 3. 61-62. *The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel.*

Leartes the son of Polonius had come from Paris, where he was at school, for the funeral of the old King Hamlet, and stayed for the royal wedding of Claudius and Gertrude that followed soon after. He was granted permission by the King to leave for Paris. Everything is ready for

departure, and he is chatting with sister Ophelia when Polonius enters, urging his son on, admonishing him for delaying, asking him to make haste, and yet delaying him with his parting parental lecture.

He advises his son on human relationships, moral aspects of life and on money management. Among others, he touches upon the nature of friendship. He says that true friends are hard to get, and casual acquaintance should not be mistaken for friendship. He points out how one should evaluate the other's tendencies, and when once a man with integrity is found, one should hold on to him at any cost. Such persons should not be abandoned, he declares

Polonius is portrayed as a comic character, a clown, a busybody, a well-meaning fool, fussy and shallow. His style of speech and his manner distinguish him for what he is. He expresses all platitudes, which he had evidently gathered through his life. Apparently he himself had not experienced in his own life any of the virtues he exhorts his son to follow. This is comically ironical because it contrasts sharply with his own shift of allegiance from the old king to Claudius.

5. I, 5. 166-67 *There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*

Prince Hamlet had been called back from his studies at Wittenberg when his father was reported dead. Soon followed the wedding of his mother with his uncle, Claudius, who also usurped the throne. As Hamlet was feeling despondent over the moral disorder that seemed to envelop him, he learns from his friends that they had sighted the ghost of the old King, haunting the battlements of Elsinore. He joins them for the night watch, meets the ghost of his father and learns some truths about the nature of the death that took him away and the villainy of Claudius. The Ghost urges him to take revenge for the foul murder. Horatio and his friends who had brought news about the Ghost to him, are naturally curious to know what transpired between him and the Ghost.

Hamlet respects the Ghost's desire for secrecy, and does not wish to give out all details about the conversation. But he has to allay their doubts and reassure them that the Ghost was honest and had not come to harm him as they surmised earlier. A scholar trained in scientific explanation of natural phenomena would be skeptical and pooh pooh at the idea of ghosts. But his encounter with the Ghost had assured him that experiences transcending scientific explanation are possible. So he tells Horatio who is also his schoolmate about the honesty and reliability of the experience.

Superstition and scientific skepticism co-existed in the Elizabethan period. While belief in ghost and devils was prevalent among the common people, the new sciences tended to make the scholars doubt not only the common beliefs but even the concept of divine. Therefore Hamlet's declaration here is perhaps Shakespeare's attempt to answer the doubting Thomases that one should be open to newer experiences constantly.

6. I, 5. 189-90 *The time is out of joint: O cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right!*

Prince Hamlet comes home to Elsinore to attend his father's funeral. But soon there was the wedding of his mother with Claudius. Very early in the play, Hamlet is seen feeling puzzled and despondent over the moral turpitude (e.g. his mother's senseless wedding with Claudius). At that juncture, his friends bring him news that the old King's ghost was haunting the battlements. He accosts the Ghost, and learns from him how he had been murdered by Claudius. The Ghost asks him to avenge the foul murder. His companions, who were not present at the meeting, are curious to know what transpired. Hamlet gives them unsatisfactory explanations in his impatience, because, fresh from his promise to the Ghost to 'fly to vengeance', he is eager to act. He gets his friends to swear that they would not betray him or divulge the secret of the encounter with the Ghost.

He is by nature contemplative, of studious habits, given to cogitation. Any need to act, like a common man or a common soldier, is displeasing to him. It is not as if he was unmanly or un-prince-like in his training. We learn later that he was an excellent athlete and skilled fighter with dagger and sword etc. Having promised the Ghost that he would avenge the murder, he is suddenly struck by the untenability of his position. Averse to action, yet he is being forced by circumstances to take action. He bemoans his destiny, which is prompting him to a course of action that is contrary to his natural inclination. He feels unequal to the task he is being called upon to perform.

As the tragic protagonist, it falls to his lot to restore order in a world thrown 'out of joint'. What he sees around him by way of moral disorder, exemplified by his mother's wedding, and the unnatural foul murder of old Hamlet by Claudius, which is both a regicide and a fratricide, symbolizes the disharmony and corruption that had crept into the core of the universe: "it is an unweeded garden, . . . things rank and gross possess it merely", he had lamented earlier. The universe is structured on the principle of moral order. Any disruption or violation anywhere would throw the entire universe "out of joint" Thus the statement underscores the basic irony in the plot. It also throws light on the central conflict in the protagonist.

- II.II.2.2.2.** 7. II, 2. 294-97 1. *...What a piece of work is man!*
2. *How noble in reason!*
 3. *How infinite in faculties!*
 4. *In form and moving how express and admirable!*
 5. *In action how like an angel!*
 6. *In apprehension how like a god!...*

Prince Hamlet, engaged in scholarly pursuits at Wittenberg, is called home to attend his father's funeral. He is shocked by the indecent haste with which his mother goes and marries his uncle, King Claudius. The Ghost of the dead King appears to him and tells that he had been murdered by Claudius, and asks him to take revenge. Basically averse to action, Hamlet is upset by the need to act. With a view to postpone the necessity to act, he wants to make sure that the Ghost's story is true, and for this sake he puts on an 'antic disposition', in order to distract watchful eyes. The King, naturally suspicious over Hamlet's movements, but unable to probe the mystery, seeks the help of Hamlet's schoolfellows, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Hamlet soon

realizes that the schoolfellows are here at the behest of the King, and for a purpose. So he projects another basis for his indisposition for the benefit of his friends.

He explains to them how he had lost appetite for the good things of life, and the beauties of nature. He describes the nature of man in glowing terms, that he is a marvellous product of creation, endowed with reason, noble, majestic, admirable, angelic. His power of reason and ability to comprehend makes him nearly god-like. Yet, he goes on to say that man is nothing more than "a quintessence of dust", and does not interest him.

This passage not only displays Hamlet's intellectual stature and imaginative vigour, but also exemplifies his, and Shakespeare's, poetic power. The poetic-imagination is one of the important qualities in Hamlet's character, and constitutes one of the reasons for the popularity of the hero and the play. Apart from this, the passage leads us to a central conflict in the Elizabethan world-view. The new Humanism has brought man to centre stage and shifted the emphasis from moral supremacy as laid down by religion to human endeavour. It is a part of the Renaissance ethos that saw man as invincible, admirable and ambitious. But underneath the new philosophy one saw the "learned doubt". The sceptic and the cynic questioned the conclusions of the neo-humanism for, as Donne lamented, "the new Philosophy puts all in doubt, / The sun and moon are quite put out". Even before Donne, Shakespeare seems to have shared in this cynical approach to the new thinking, and to sense the negative side of existence where man is seen as "quintessence of dust", and "food for worms". This attitude becomes more pronounced as the play progresses, till he is ready to face death, because one cannot escape one's fate.

8. II, 2. 536-38 *What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, That he should weep for her?*

Hamlet comes home for his father's funeral. He witnesses his mother's hasty wedding with Claudius, and is disturbed by the moral disorder that surrounded him. He encounters the Ghost of the old King, and learns that he had not died but been murdered by his own brother. The Ghost asks Hamlet to avenge the murder. For complex reasons, he put on 'an antic disposition'. The King, Polonius and others around have their own theories about the cause for the Prince's behaviour. The king calls two of Hamlet's schoolfellows and puts them to spy on him. As the schoolfellows were chatting about Hamlet's melancholia, a troupe of players arrive at the court. The Prince who knew them earlier welcomes them enthusiastically. He arranges with the leader to have a particular play put on show that night. Then he asks one of the actors to speak a touch dialogue from a classical play about the fall of Troy. On the spot, the actor reels off the long speech, gets into the mood of the situation, and as he describes the plight of Hecuba at the death of her husband King Priam, there are tears in his eyes. Hamlet sends them off to rest.

Then he falls to pondering. The actor is not Hecuba, nor is he related to her by blood ties. Yet, describing her woeful condition, he heaved sighs, panted and shed tears. If he could identify with an imaginary situation so closely, what would he not do if he had a father murdered and a mother seduced? he asks himself. He feels guilty for having let pass occasion after occasion to take revenge. He compares himself with others who are prone to passion and are ready to jump into action. He blames himself for his lethargy, his inertia in taking revenge.

At the fall of Troy, on the last day of the War, the Greeks entered the city by deceit, and burned and killed indiscriminately. They kill King Priam in bed. Hecuba his queen is seen running around helplessly and shouting for help, before she too is killed. (The long passage quoted by the actor came perhaps from *Dido, Queen of Carthage* written by Marlowe and Nash.)

This passage is from another of the six or seven soliloquies of Hamlet. These soliloquies are the heart and soul of his character. In other words, we begin to understand Hamlet's character, the reasons for delay, and so on. Without them, Hamlet appears as a weak, inconsistent, even mad, and bloodthirsty person, unreasonably angry or peeved. The soliloquies are perhaps the key to unravel the mystery that is Prince Hamlet.

II.II.2.2.3 9. III, 1. 66-68 *For in that sleep of death what dreams may come, When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, Must give us pause;...*

Hamlet is called away from his studies to attend his father's funeral. There followed the wedding of his mother Gertrude to his uncle, Claudius. As he was brooding over the moral disorder rampant in the world, the Prince is accosted by his father's Ghost, and is told that he had not died a natural death, but was poisoned by Claudius. The Ghost urges Hamlet to take revenge for his foul murder. Faced with the need to take action when he had no liking for it, he seeks time for himself, and to escape scrutiny, he puts on an 'antic disposition', and puzzling the King, Queen and Polonius with his queer behaviour. The scholar in Hamlet comes out often, particularly where he is faced with moral dilemmas. Here we see him pondering on more serious issues than personal sorrow or love.

He is lost in an analysis of the human predicament. How easy it would be if only one could escape from sorrow and pain through the simple act of suicide! So easy to meet death, and go to peaceful sleep! But then, one may dream while sleeping, and one does not know, nor can control, the kind of dreams that might visit one. Death is compared to sleep here, and the idea of dreaming emerges logically out of that. In ordinary sleep, a nightmare or a bad dream would waken the sleeper, and he may feel reassured. But death is such a sleep from which there can be no awakening. Death leads to a land from where no return is possible: no traveller returns to tell us how it is like, there. That, argues Hamlet, makes man desist from killing himself; and as a result some of the most magnificent activities of man lose their savour, and 'lose the name of action'.

Soliloquies are the only way a reader can attempt to enter the heart of Hamlet, and have a peep into his real self. Without them, he would appear queer, mad, and blood-thirsty, and then the play would not be a tragedy at all! In fact, in all his plays, and especially in the four great tragedies, Shakespeare has used soliloquy with a remarkable effect. This particular one, "To be, or not to be,..." is the most poetic-philosophic among all the ones Hamlet indulges in, and is perhaps the most famous soliloquy in the entire English literature.

10. III, 2. 352-54. *'sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me.*

Old King Hamlet is killed, and Hamlet's mother marries again. He is brooding over the moral discord around him, when his father's ghost appears and tells him that he should revenge his foul murder. Temperamentally averse to action, Hamlet assumes a queer disposition, which disturbs the King, in particular. He invites Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, two schoolfellows of Hamlet to probe the secret behind his apparent madness. A troupe of players comes to the court, and the Prince, who knew them earlier, arranges with them to put on 'The Murder of Gonzago' to entertain the courtiers. Through this means he hopes to verify the truth in the words of the Ghost. A scene in the play is a near re-enactment of the way in which Claudius killed his brother, the old Hamlet. Seeing this presented before his eyes, the King is greatly upset, and breaks up the show, leaving in anger. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern try to tackle Hamlet at this point and try to see if they could not unravel his secret in this unguarded moment.

Hamlet takes a pipe from a passing player and asks his schoolfellows to play upon it. But they say that they have no talent towards playing a pipe. Hamlet bursts out at them and says that the poor wooden pipe has so much music in it, and they could not bring it out. Yet they presume that they know his stops and could play on him and make him 'sing', -- blurt out his secrets. He admonishes them for considering him less complex and less worthy than a simple pipe. As he had said the first time he met them, man is a wonderful piece of divine creation, with a heart and a mind, and with a complexity of nature, far superior to that of other creatures. He rounds up on his schoolfellows angrily and says, they might call him by whatever name they choose, fret and tease him as a beginner might, but they would surely be disappointed. In other words, he warns them off his back, saying that he knows what they are, and that they would not be able to pluck the secret from his heart.

Hamlet shows no respect for these two chaps; it is because they were hired **spies**, and had no respect for friendship and loyalty. The statement he makes about Horatio's **character** at the beginning of this scene takes added significance in comparison with the **scant** respect and generosity he shows to these two fellows. Later, he shows no qualms in sending them to their certain death in England.

11. III, 4. 136-38. *This is the very coinage of your brain, This bodiless creation ecstasy Is very cunning in.*

The Ghost tells Hamlet that he had not died a natural death, but had been poisoned by Claudius, his brother, and he asks him to avenge the murder. To avoid the discovery of his knowledge, initially, but later to establish the truthfulness of the Ghost's tale, Hamlet puts on a mask of madness. Polonius believes that his daughter's rejection of his love overtures caused the Prince's 'madness'. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet's schoolfellows, employed by the King to spy on him, conclude that Hamlet was disaffected by the loss of the throne. Hamlet organizes a play resembling his father's murder, with the help of a visiting troupe of players. The King is disturbed by what he sees in the play, recognizes that Hamlet knows the truth, and is upset. Polonius arranges a meeting between Hamlet and his mother, on which he wished to eavesdrop. While hiding behind a curtain, he is killed by the Prince inadvertently.

Hamlet charges his mother with killing the King and marrying his brother, Gertrude is puzzled and looks uncomprehendingly. At that juncture, the Ghost reappears, in night gown, to remind his son about the promise to take revenge. But seeing the queen puzzled, he wants Hamlet to comfort and console her. As Hamlet turns to her and says that he is talking to his father's ghost standing near the window, the Queen, who cannot see or hear anything beyond the two of them, says that he is seeing phantoms, and that it is the frenzy of his brain that makes him believe that he is talking to his father's ghost. Realizing that the wife whom he had loved so much while he lived is incapable of seeing or hearing him, the Ghost becomes saddened and disappears, with the injunction to Hamlet not to hurt her, but to "leave her to heaven".

Like others in the court the mother too believes that Hamlet is really mad. She mentions the common symptoms of madness, the frenzy of the brain and the phantoms the overheated brain projects to mislead the individual. But what we should note here is the fact that Gertrude is incapable of seeing or hearing her husband's ghost, while Hamlet could. Perhaps that is the measure of love for the old King that the two possess. The reader notices that basically she is a very average and insensitive character; and wonders that the old King had so much love for such a woman. Even the cunning Claudius is so enamoured of her as to kill his own brother in order probably to possess her.

II.II.2.2.4 12. IV, 7. 185-86. *Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia, And therefore I forbid my tears;*

Hamlet had loved Ophelia, but before leaving for Paris, Leartes had cautioned her to be careful and not be 'too prodigal with her virginity'. Polonius too had warned her against encouraging the youthful fervour of the Prince. But when Hamlet had put on the 'antic disposition' for an entirely different reason, Polonius, and even Ophelia, assumed that disappointment in love caused the madness in him. Polonius told the King that he would eavesdrop on the Queen and Hamlet when they meet (after the play) and bring the news to him. But, standing behind the curtain, he was inadvertently killed by Hamlet. To prevent any public uproar, the King decides to send Hamlet to England the same night, and conduct the burial of Polonius hastily. Ophelia had to face alone the sudden death of her father and the mysterious disappearance of her lover, and not having her brother to turn to, goes mad. In that mad condition, she decks herself in flowers and gets into the stream, singing a love song. Slowly she is dragged down and drowns.

Coming to know of his father's mysterious death and hasty burial, Leartes comes in rage, seeking explanation and reparation. As he is being mollified by the King, he learns about his sister's drowning. In a mood of gentle irony, he says that she had drowned and thus has too much of water already, and did not need the addition of his tears over her death. But the trick of nature is such that it overrides man's resolve and melts him in tears.

There are two points to be noted here. Leartes is basically a good and innocent young man, a little immature in comparison with Hamlet and Horatio: he is more like Fortinbras. Faced with a situation similar to the one Hamlet faced at the beginning of the play, yet he responds more

violently and impetuously than Hamlet. He demands explanation for his father's death and hasty funeral, but very soon he is shaped like wax in the hands of the crafty Claudius. He emerges as simple-souled at the end of the play. The second point is Ophelia's madness. One major problem in the play and in Hamlet's character, is that of his 'madness'. Medical experts of the early twentieth century have opined that Hamlet shows, in the play, all the typical symptoms of madness. If Shakespeare intended Hamlet to be mad, he need not have created another mad character. Clearly, the real madness of Ophelia was intended to throw the assumed madness of Hamlet into relief.

II.II.2.2.5 13. V, 2. 328-29. *Never believe it: I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.*

Hamlet is dying, having been poisoned by Leartes' sword. But he had redeemed his pledge to the Ghost and avenged the foul fratricide and regicide. The villainy of Claudius is fully exposed, and declared by Leartes. So the two uncertainties, about the authenticity of the Ghost, and the religious dilemma about killing the King at prayer, are cleared. Yet, the villainy of Claudius and the vengeance taken are both personal, so that the courtiers are but mute audiences to the grim drama of retribution. They would be confounded. So Hamlet wants Horatio, his intimate friend, to "report me and my cause aright to the unsatisfied".

But Horatio admired his friend for his nobility and sweetness (Ophelia is the other character who refers to this side of Hamlet, which is not displayed during the course of the play). He believes that he should follow his friend into death rather than outlive him. Elsewhere in his plays, Shakespeare uses 'a Roman' to court death to avoid disgrace (as in *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*). But here Shakespeare is stressing on the nobility and loyalty in friendship, in contrast to the Danes' love of liquor and self-indulgence. So Horatio looks for any remaining dregs of poison that the Queen had drunk from. But Hamlet forces him to stay back, to absent himself from the felicity of death in order to clear his name.

This most poignant context in the entire play projects Horatio as an admiring friend. We meet him in the opening scene, and on some more occasions, when we see him as passive. Hamlet's enumeration of his soberness and imperturbability ("not a passion's slave") in III, 2 fills up Horatio's personality with positive virtues. Even after Hamlet's return from his curtailed sea voyage, Horatio is still seen as a passive figure. Leartes and Fortinbras on one side (as impulsive action-mongers) and Horatio on the other side (as a sedate and sober scholar, but not given to brooding) serve as foils for Hamlet in the play.

Prof. S. Krishna Sarma

II. HAMLET III

Structure

II. III. 0. Objectives

II. III. 1 Introduction

II. III. 2.1 Hamlet

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II.III.3 Some Problems

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II.III.0 Objectives

After working through this, you will understand the major characters in Hamlet and analyse some of the problems in the play.

II.III.2 Introduction

This unit will enable you to understand and analyse the nature of the characters in the play. You will learn how the play has become a hard nut for critics; you will also be able to discuss the intricate themes in the play.

II. III. 2. Characters

II. III. 2. 1 Hamlet.

Hamlet the young Prince of Denmark is handsome, polite, courteous (as Ophelia describes him), a scholar and student of Philosophy, noble (as his close friend Horatio and Ophelia describe him), pensive and given to contemplation on the nature of the world and of man, and is generally not keen to jump into impulsive action. He had great love and admiration for his father, the old King Hamlet. He believed in a principle of harmony in the universe: the organization of the

world is based upon certain principles; the microcosm is the family, man and woman. Filial, love and loyalty between husband and wife are the inviolable moral tenets, which constitute the harmonizing principles behind the world. The hasty (“a beast that wants discourse of reason would have mourned longer”) and thoughtless marriage of his mother Gertrude with his uncle Claudius (“my father’s brother, but no more like my father than I to Hercules”) signifies a moral lapse, and it disturbs Hamlet much more than his father’s demise. From his mother’s action, he generalizes and concludes that woman is frail.

He could probably have been saved from frustration and disillusionment by Ophelia whom he loved. (It is a pity that we are not shown Hamlet in love; but then he was meant for something else!) Ophelia loved him and had genuine admiration for his personality. But, docile as she is, she is controlled by her father, and helplessly rejected Hamlet’s overtures. Even this would not have greatly bothered him. He hoped that she would be loyal to him. When he realized that she is a tool in her father’s hands and is set up by him to unravel his secret (at least, according to critic John Dover Wilson), he feels badly let down by her. The little faith he could still entertain in womanhood is thoroughly shaken by her inability to stand by him.

Though a scholar and student of philosophy, Hamlet was ready to listen to what the Ghost had to say. He overcomes his initial skepticism and finds his suspicions corroborated by what he heard from the Ghost (“O, my prophetic soul, my uncle!”) Towards the end of that scene we see that he had completely believed in the ghost story but that, having sworn his friends to secrecy, he himself wished to check out the veracity of the accusation. Perhaps he suspected that it was all a mental aberration, an inner suggestion in tune with what he himself wished to believe. (This is how a modern critic might explain the role of the Ghost in the play.)

This skepticism and his basic aversion to action result in his putting on an antic disposition, as he terms it. This could be a mask to enable him to test the authenticity of the ghost’s story. It could also be an attempt to protect himself from a fate similar to that of his father, at least until he could avenge his father’s murder. This creates an impression among people that he is mad or has gone mad, particularly the King, Queen, Polonius and Ophelia. Secondly, it leads to a procrastination in taking the necessary action as per the pledge he had given to the Ghost.

The puzzle of Hamlet’s character is beset by two crucial problems: why does he delay, and is Hamlet mad? As we have already noticed, delay is the natural consequence of his aversion to impulsive action. But in its turn it results in the tragic climax leading to the catastrophe. His delay helps his opponent to plot carefully and consolidate his position. His inaction, or non-action at the right time when he comes across Claudius ‘praying’ (it is ironical that he was incapable of ‘praying’, for which Hamlet spared him), and action at the wrong moment, -- killing Polonius under the impression, more a hope, that the one behind the curtain was the King -- (having left the King in the praying position hardly a few moments earlier, how could he imagine that he would come and hide behind the curtain, unseen by him?) – which hastens his departure to England, leads to the point where he plays into the King’s hands. And Claudius has the leisure to organize a series of strategies to ensure Hamlet’s death. In his soliloquies he comes out heavily against his own inaction: it is not that he did not love his father as much as he proclaims, – certainly much

more than the actor loved Hecuba. It is not also because he is a coward. There is no instance anywhere in the play to suggest even remotely that Hamlet could be a coward.

His preoccupation with the larger, universal, problems seems to keep him away from the revenge, which he could have taken at any time. What is man, what worth this life, and what does one face after death—these and such other metaphysical-moral issues make revenge a matter of minor significance. He could even set aside his ardent love for Ophelia (“forty thousand brothers could not, with all their quantity of love, make up my sum”) for the larger problems of life.

It is true that there is delay in the play, and it is equally true that that delay has tragic consequences, directly leading to the tragic denouement. But the delay is neither planned, deliberate, nor accidental. It is the direct outcome of the hero's personality, a trait of his character.

As to the question if Hamlet is mad, there are perhaps as many answers as there are readers. He does declare, in I, 4., that he would put on an ‘antic disposition’ now and then. But his melancholy moods and his broodings, the wild and rambling way he speaks with Polonius, the violent outburst when Ophelia tries to return the love-tokens she had received from him earlier, the near-abuse and ill-treatment he metes out to her, asking her to go to a nunnery, the alternating moods of melancholy and hilarity in talking to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, in welcoming the players, and responding to the Hecuba-passage, in his speaking sharply to his mother (“speak daggers, but use none”), his inexplicably impulsive act of killing Polonius, leading a chase all round the palace, and the grave demeanour through the rest of the play except for the few instances of impulsive action, jumping into the pirate ship, jumping into the grave and grappling with Leartes, and of killing Claudius, -- all could be taken as ravings and deeds of a man crazed in mind. Some medical experts of the early twentieth century have concluded that Hamlet shows all the symptoms of a typical lunatic. When Hamlet is trying to follow the beckoning ghost to a remoter place on the battlements, Horatio appeals to him not to go, lest it should assume a horrible form,

Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason And draw you into madness.

Is it then possible that Hamlet not only displays symptoms of madness, but is really mad, at least temporarily? Not so. Because the Ghost's revelation indicates to him that perhaps there is a danger to his own life, and he has to protect himself at least until he could avenge his father's murder, he puts on the mask of madness. It also helps him in his investigation.

There is one strong evidence in the play to say that Hamlet is not mad. It is Ophelia's madness. It is an artistic master-stroke of Shakespeare that for some very valid reasons he makes her lose her reason. She is a weak character, emotional (not intellectual), dependent, and unhappy over losing the love of Hamlet. Faced with her father's sudden death, and her lover's disappearance, she had nobody to turn to for consolation. So she goes crazy. Shakespeare presents Ophelia's madness almost entirely to contrast it with Hamlet's ‘pretended’ madness. It could not be so crude as to form a deliberate design on Shakespeare's part). It would be contrary to Shakespeare's artistry to have another mad character if Hamlet was intended to be mad. If the

medical experts were convinced about the symptoms of lunacy in Hamlet, it only goes to show the great artistry of the poet in creating a character who can confound so many people so long.

For all the contradictions in the character, there is an integrity in Hamlet's characterization. Moreover, if he is intended to be so convincingly mad as the medical authorities wish to claim, he would not regain sanity, and the death of a 'mad' Hamlet would hardly be tragic. Pathetic, pitiable, maybe, but never tragic. In the many versions of the tale prior to this play, scholars noticed either a pretended or temporary madness. Hieronimo of Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* pretends madness. So it suited Shakespeare's artistic purposes to present Hamlet with the convincing symptoms of madness.

Hamlet is the tragedy of a man who thinks too much. As one critic put it succinctly, "the great object of his life is defeated by continually resolving to do, yet doing nothing but resolve". If a person of the temperament of Othello, or even Leartes, were in his shoes, the tragedy would not have taken place. A man of great sensitivity and extraordinary sensibility, Hamlet is being forced to set right a world gone awry, contrary to his inclinations, and ends in such a tragic waste of goodness and nobility, that we can only exclaim, "the pity of it, O, the pity of it!"

II. III. 2. 2. Claudius.

Claudius is one of the less attractive villains of Shakespeare. He has cunning and craft, he is treacherous, and he is weak as well as incestuous. These traits enable him to kill the King who is also his brother, take the throne, and proceed to take the Queen too. He would drink on every occasion, like a typical Dane, for the Danes, according to Hamlet, are notorious for this habit and, whatever their virtues, they take "corruption from that particular fault". His cunning nature makes it difficult for Claudius to believe the simple explanation proposed by Polonius about Hamlet's madness. Again, we have to attribute to his craftiness his success in winning over Polonius, and through him the other courtiers, without whose support he could not have occupied the throne. His craftiness is in full display when he had to encounter the irate Leartes demanding explanation for his father's sudden death and hasty funeral. Showing a rare streak of courage, he confronts him, and brings him round, converting a certain enemy into a malleable supporter: his interpretation of events was so masterly, and the blame so confidently placed on Hamlet that Leartes was willing to concede the plausibility. He turns so docile that he actively endorses the King's plot to kill Hamlet in a mock fencing match with multiple levels of offence to poison him.

Disloyal and treacherous as he is, he is ready to use Hamlet's schoolfellows, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to spy on him to unravel the mystery behind his queer behaviour. Hamlet might easily have been taken in, and might have confided in them. Luckily for him, they were not smart enough to play their part with skill. It did not take Hamlet much effort to gauge their intentions. This pair too, like Polonius, were more the victims of the King's deceit, than of Hamlet's impulsive action. Claudius shows no compunction in using Polonius as his spy, and in using Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as his agents to escort Hamlet to his death, as he planned, in England. He never imagined for a moment that Hamlet might act impulsively, as he did in killing

Polonius, or turn the tables on him ("it's sport to see the enginer hoist with his own petar"), -- as he rewrote the royal command and sent his school fellows to their death. Hamlet did feel sorry for

Polonius:

For this same lord, I do repent, but heaven hath pleased it so, To punish me with this, and this with me, That I must be their scourge and minister. ...

But he had no qualms about sending Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to death: they did not deserve anything better for their treachery, even if it is unwitting: they were willing to spy on their own 'friend'!

In the beginning, Claudius shows a regal dignity in dealing with Norway, thereby creating a favourable impression, if only for a brief while, on the readers. Under old King Hamlet, Denmark was noted for its valour and staidness, and perhaps Claudius was merely making use of this reputation to threaten Norway, and later browbeat England. To be fair, one can say that he possessed a good diplomatic sense.

Another apparently positive characteristic that seems to—only seems to—redeem his character is his love for Gertrude. His love for her predates his becoming the king. It is quite possible that he could have chosen to kill his brother only for the love of Gertrude. Kingship might have been incidental, or the two might have been equally strong, and he got them at one stroke. He proclaims publicly how he had taken to wife "our sometime sister, now our queen". He seems to have genuine love for the queen: while trying to pray, after the 'play-within the play' episode, he wonders if he would be pardoned, and yet could retain "my crown, mine own ambition, and my queen". He almost constantly has her by his side: it is only while he was spying on Hamlet-Ophelia meeting, while he was trying to pray or sending off Hamlet to England, or while he was plotting with Leartes about eliminating Hamlet, that we do not find her by his side. Yet, at the climax when he sees Gertrude about to drink the poisoned wine intended for Hamlet, he only protests weakly, but is not man enough to knock it out of her hands. Evidently his love for the Queen is not stronger than his love for himself. He lacked the courage to expose his villainy to Hamlet in an attempt to save his "imperial jointress". (Contrast this with Hamlet's readiness, against odds, to expose himself to the King and to the wrath of Leartes, in order to declare his love for Ophelia.) When, on being stabbed by Hamlet, he weakly cries out "O, yet defend me, friends; I am but hurt", none of the courtiers or soldiers come to his rescue. It could be either because of their love for the Prince, or maybe because of their feeling that he richly deserved the treatment. (Of course, there is no evidence to bear out the latter assumption.) The reader certainly feels that the wretch fully deserved the punishment at Hamlet's hands, because he was the principle of evil, the element that brought disorder into the moral world, and threw it out of joint.

II. III. 2. 3 Polonius.

Polonius is an officious, busy old fool, more a clown than a wise minister. For all his years, he does not seem to have gained wisdom beyond a basketful of platitudes. He generously

doles out these moral tents to his son at the time he was returning to Paris. It is perhaps more out of obedience of Leartes and Ophelia that he succeeds in being a father, than out of natural qualities of loveability, worth or nobility. When he tries to pit his wit against Hamlet, he comes out the worse: Hamlet only tolerates him for his age, not for his office or his wisdom.

One question that bothers the reader is his sense of loyalty. How far was he loyal to the old King Hamlet? He does not have the wit or complexity to have engineered or advised, or even abetted the poisoning of King Hamlet. Like Gertrude, he too must be acquitted of any complicity in the crime. For him perhaps loyalty to the throne was equal to loyalty to the person, and so we cannot say that he switched loyalties. Under the notion of loyalty to King Claudius, he works counter to Hamlet's interests. He must have known the Prince as a boy and a young man, polite, courteous, cultured, sensible and sensitive, at least as much as his daughter Ophelia had known him. If he still sided with Claudius, it only means that he was insensitive to moral niceties, or incapable of distinguishing between right and wrong. At no point in the play do we find him empathizing with the protagonist, or expressing pity or admiration for him. In this regard, he serves as a petty tool in the hands of Claudius, no better than a sword, a dagger or a bowl of wine.

Polonius remains in the memory of the reader as a busybody, a clown, pronouncing wise platitudes, and nothing else. If anyone feels any tenderness for him, it is mostly because he is Ophelia's father. By himself, he did not deserve respect or sympathy from the audiences or readers.

II. III. 2. 4 Ophelia.

We have no way of knowing the true nature of Ophelia except through the way others treat her. The very brief time she appears as an innocent loving girl is when she is free in talking to, or being harangued by, Leartes. After his departure she goes into the shell of an obedient daughter of an opinionated father. The next we meet her is when she hands over the letter from Hamlet and describes his condition to her father. When she meets Hamlet, she is nervous and tensed up, being under strict instructions from her father, and conscious of the eavesdropping presence of the King and her father behind the curtain. At the play when Hamlet chooses to sit at her feet with his head in her lap, she is embarrassed and self-conscious, because the entire assembly is watching them. She sees double meanings in everything Hamlet says, and her modesty is offended. This is the last stage of her protected, normal (her) life. She wakes up to a shattered world the next morning, with her father killed, and her lover mysteriously missing. The shock is too much for her, and she goes mad: her weak sensibility is destroyed by the turn of events over which she could hardly have any control.

So we do not have direct evidence about her beauty, sweetness, gentle temper, her loveability, etc. Her one great qualification for our liking her is that she is loved by Hamlet. The readers generously shift a part of their admiration of Hamlet to Ophelia, the object of his love. She shows herself as a sweet girl in her madness as she goes round the court singing amorous songs, and the way she is reported to have picked flowers, decked herself with them, and gently drifted on the stream to her death, still singing. When Queen Gertrude briefly expresses her regret that she

hoped to have decked her bride-bed, rather than strewn her grave, with flowers, she might be formally eulogizing the dead, or she might have had a genuine liking for the girl. (for Hamlet's sake?).

All we know about her is by indirection. And we know that Hamlet is angry with her. He might have longed for her soothing loving company, particularly when he was puzzled by the Ghost's tale. But obeying her father, she 'shunned' him, lending strength to his growing disillusionment with womankind. Hence his outburst, "Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? – Get thee to a nunnery, go!" the lack of positive response from her, her 'inaction', only confirms him in his sad conclusion, "Frailty, thy name is woman!" She could not understand him. It is a pity that she is not more resolute, in addition to being simple, innocent and loving. Any other girl, a Rosalind or a Portia, or even a Jessica, might have made a lot of difference for Hamlet the man, and the play.

But is not Ophelia's condition, and her fortune, similar to that of Hamlet himself? She too is the victim of circumstances: called upon to play an impossible part, like Hamlet, she too succumbs. It is an unconscious irony of the tragedy that Hamlet, as well as the audience, lose sight of this, and feel bitter about her!!

II. III. 2. 5. Gertrude.

Gertrude was the queen of the old king, Hamlet, and is the queen of the present king, Claudius. She has no positive qualities, even to the extent Ophelia has. She is a neutral character. One looks on her with some sympathy because she is Hamlet's mother. In spite of the great puzzle as to how this lady could forget King Hamlet and shift her affection to Claudius, forget the loving and indulgent husband and be infatuated by the drunkard-coward, still she receives respect and affection from Hamlet. Her love for the son seems to be genuine. Insensitive as she is, she is puzzled by his continued sorrow over the loss of his father. She wants that like her, he too should let bygones be bygones, and move with the present. There is something "animal" about her; it looks as if she is insensitive to the moral aspects of her wedding to Claudius so soon after the death of her former husband. She needed the cozy protection of somebody, and after King Hamlet's death, she felt she found it in Claudius.

Yet it cannot be said that she was proxy to Claudius in his crime, she could not have had a share in it. She was totally surprised when she hears about the 'killing of a king. She is too simple and uncomplicated to be able to pretend innocence if she was guilty. We can watch this side of her character as Hamlet works on her conscience in the 'closet scene'. We can be confident that she would not betray Hamlet. After this scene, there is an apparent change in her behaviour with regard to Claudius (at least we assume it). She continues to appear in the company of the King and he continues to shower his love on her: he even indulges her in her love for her son, as he confesses to Lear:

The queen his mother Lives almost by his looks; and for myself, She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,...

She probably loved Ophelia, whom she must have seen growing up into a young woman, and after she learnt from Polonius about Hamlet's love for her, she must have been pleased. When Ophelia turned insane, she was distressed and asked Horatio to keep an eye upon her; and at her funeral, she was performing the queenly unction of praying for the dead.

Simple as she is, she does not suspect any foul play in the King organizing a fencing match between Leartes and Hamlet. Particularly after what happened in the grave, anyone with some common sense would have suspected the motive. But unsuspectingly, she picks up the cup that Claudius had intended for Hamlet, and not heeding the King's warning, drinks it with a vein of stubbornness, which we see in her for the first and last time.

At the end we feel that she gets precisely her due in Hamlet's final farewell to her: "wretched queen, adieu!"

II. III. 3 Some Problems.

II. III. 3. 1 Supernatural Element.

Shakespeare is in the habit of using ghosts, witches, magic and elves in his plays for dramatic purpose. This was made possible because a large portion of his audiences were superstitious, believed in supernatural agencies, and were excited by their presence on the stage. The Ghost in *Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar*, the elves in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, witches and ghost in *Macbeth* and magic in *Tempest* are the more popular uses of this element in his plays.

Shakespeare had a precedent in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. There was an earlier version of Hamlet play, probably written by Kyd himself, in which a ghost appeared, on the model of *The Spanish Tragedy*. The audiences were excited and thrilled by such spectacles, and with earlier instances of such uses, Shakespeare was happy to cater to the tastes of his audiences. One of the most important things in theatre activity for Shakespeare was the satisfaction of his audiences. Against this background, it is irrelevant to ask if he shared the beliefs of his contemporaries. It does not matter if he did or did not. Given a dramatic situation, he had a way of maximizing the dramatic effect, and to achieve it, he would use any device that is to hand.

Thus he makes the Ghost of *Hamlet* as one of the *dramatis personae*. Just as a Messenger in a classical tragedy would come to report events of the past, here too, the ghost is furnishing details to Hamlet and the audiences about the death of the old King; and the information is of supreme dramatic importance, since it modifies and shapes the later course of action. If it were a human character, rather than a ghost, still he would have served the same purpose. But using a human character would entail other complications, like a live witness, who would be in mortal danger from the king, etc. Such problems would be avoided with a ghost. As we have seen earlier, creating a dramatic effect, by whatever means, is of importance to Shakespeare.

Samuel Johnson says that in Shakespeare, Kings and Romans are first and foremost humans and then alone kings or Romans. Similarly, his ghost too is first and foremost a 'human'-

like character, and then alone a ghost. The Ghost is made to show all human emotions and sentiments. On the first occasion when he meets Hamlet on the battlements of Elsinore, he comes clad in armour, perhaps to signify his undiminished regality and majesty. He laments over the kinds of experiences he had been having since his murder, shows anger at his brother's treachery, and he urges Hamlet's friends to swear quickly, like an eager old man seeking a quick redress. He expresses his love for the truant Gertrude, and cautions Hamlet not to harm her.

The second time he appears is in the Queen's closet, this time, clad in a nightgown, proper to the place he is visiting. Though primarily he came to remind Hamlet about his pledge ("to whet thy almost blunted purpose"), soon he displays a loving husband's concern for his disturbed queen and asks Hamlet to reassure her. But when he realizes that she is not able to see or hear him, he is sorely disillusioned and leaves, with a reiteration to his son not to hurt her, but to "leave her to heaven". In his reactions to the developing situation in the human world, the Ghost is in no way different from a human character.

If the first appearance of the Ghost serves a dramatic purpose, the second appearance serves a more sentimental purpose for the dramatist.

It is not difficult to give a modern interpretation to the visitation of the Ghost. Puzzled by the circumstances, Hamlet was perhaps entertaining various doubts, and one that appeared plausible was Claudius murdering the King, -- the motive of gain is obvious. This suspicion ("my prophetic soul, my uncle!") could have been dramatically externalized. That the Ghost appeared to Bernardo, Marcellus and Horatio, besides Hamlet, does not pose any problem, because none of these characters cut across the course of action and vitiate it: for all dramatic purposes, they might not have seen the ghost at all!

The second appearance also could be explained as a self-reminder for Hamlet after the play-within-the play clarified his doubt, and as he observes the helplessness of his mother. The ambience, his own words, "ay, madam, as bloody as kill a king and marry his brother", and his hapless killing of Polonius, suddenly make him realize his remissness and delay in taking revenge. The Ghost's parting exhortation to leave his mother to her own conscience also could be taken as autosuggestion, externalized.

In the famous "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, Hamlet refers to "the undiscovered country from whose bourns no traveller returns". This is in tune with what Philosophy had taught him. But the Ghost whom he encounters contradicts his knowledge. That is why he is made to say to Horatio, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are thought of in your philosophy". Perhaps Shakespeare is non-committal in his belief regarding ghosts and other supernatural beings.

However that be, and whatever be the factors that prompted him to make use of a ghost, the Ghost in the play contributes significantly to the structure of the narrative and the nature of the tragedy.

II. III. 3. 2. Soliloquies.

Soliloquy is a speech by a character when he is alone on the stage. (When he speaks to himself, and to the audiences, while others are present, it is called an 'Aside'.) It is not exactly addressed to anybody, but the audiences 'overhear' what the character is saying to himself. It is a dramatic device wherein the character is thinking aloud, projecting his inner conflict, expressing his thoughts, or explaining his conduct or actions. Thus a soliloquy can be a signpost or self-introduction, may sum up feelings, (rarely go motive hunting, as in the case of Iago in *Othello*), or it can be reflective-meditative. The last type may not have any direct link with the external action, but it reveals the character's deeper levels of consciousness. So long as it is not misused for merely furnishing information to the audiences, soliloquy is a legitimate, and even unavoidable, dramatic device. However, the modern theoreticians of drama dismiss it as being artificial and undramatic. Modern drama has, in the pursuit of 'realism', given up a very useful dramatic convention.

Elizabethan drama made good use of soliloquies. Faustus' choosing of Necromancy for study, and his final moments of anguish and spiritual struggle are only two of the many examples one can list out from the plays of the times. Shakespeare made use of the device generously in all his plays, including comedies ('including' because a comedy very rarely requires use for this device: the situation of Viola-Cesario in *Twelfth Night* and of Rosalind in *As You Like It* could not do without a soliloquy.) Prince Hal in *Henry IV*, *Richard II* and *Richard III*, and Brutus in *Julius Caesar* are further examples who needed to express their inner thoughts.

By its very nature, tragedy seems to require a use of this convention frequently. *Macbeth* and *Lear*, *Othello* and even Iago, and Hamlet indulge in soliloquies. Much of the delineation of the characters depends directly on what these soliloquies contain. Claudius has two to his name. Soon after the play, he suffers from a prick of conscience, turns repentant, and forcing his knees to bend, he tries to pray. His confession about fratricide and regicide is something that no one can express to an associate however intimate. Again, sending Hamlet in charge of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, he spells out what he had asked the King of England to do in his letter. This helps build up the tension among the audiences till they hear of Hamlet's safe return, the action itself concentrating on Ophelia and Leartes and moving away from Hamlet.

There are a total of seven soliloquies for Hamlet. The very first one refers to his mother's incestuous wedding, thoughts about which he could not have shared with others. Moreover, it tells a good deal about his nature, and his world of values. In the 'Hecuba' passage he is struck by his inaction, and indulges in self-analysis: he fixes on the play as the thing that should help to catch "the conscience of the King". The 'Fortinbras' passage makes him resolve that he had done with thinking, and that he would act now: "let my thoughts be bloody, or be nothing". There is a small passage in which he wonders if he should kill the King, kneeling in prayer ("now might I do it pat"). It is unthinkable that Hamlet would speak out these words as regular dialogue. The situation makes a soliloquy inevitable. The small one in which he prepares to meet his mother in her closet expresses his frame of mind ("speak daggers to her, though use none"). "To be or not to be" is the most famous soliloquy of English literature. It is an existentialist cry, reflecting the universal

human predicament. It shows the protagonist in a speculative mood, an important side of his character.

Talking of the unnaturalness of a soliloquy as a dramatic device, can there be an alternative to express what Hamlet was trying to do in the more important passages? More importantly, what would be our understanding or impression about Hamlet, in the event that there are no soliloquies, -- or those that are present are erased? He would appear a weak, blundering, vacillating and bloodthirsty person, not meriting our sympathy, and none at all of our admiration for being such a fascinating though puzzling character. This masterly use of soliloquies shows Shakespeare's mastery of dramatic art, taking Hamlet to the very verge of things reprehensible, yet making him such an adorable and fascinating character, perhaps the most loved character in the entire Western literature!

II. III. 3. 3. 'The Play within the Play'

In *The Spanish Tragedy* Kyd used a 'play within a play' device to wreak vengeance on the perpetrators of the original crime. Shakespeare borrowed this device along with the ghost and madness for his *Hamlet*. The device, as used by Kyd, is crude: the protagonist, Hieronymo takes part in the play, and he persuades the antagonists to take two other roles. And as a part of the action, he kills his antagonists. It is improbable that the bride-to-be and the bridegroom-to-be should act in a play to entertain the visiting viceroy and the King of Spain. In *Hamlet*, it is used with greater artistry and finesse.

As the troupe of players arrives at the court, Hamlet wishes to take their help to enact a play by way of entertainment: they had come to entertain the courtiers. The King and the Queen welcome the idea that the Prince, given to moods of melancholy should show enthusiasm in organizing a performance. Hamlet makes a deal with the chief actor that a particular play, 'The Murder of Gonzago', should be presented. He had seen it earlier, and from what he remembered of it, it ran parallel to his father's murder. (In this play, a near relative poisons the King and courts the dead king's spouse.) He was primarily interested in cornering the Claudius into exposing his guilt by word or gesture (based on the psychological principle that a person confronted by a show of a deed he had done would wince and betray himself. Remembering the love Elizabethan audiences had for tragedy, bloodshed, murder, and so on, Hamlet's choice of the play here is quite apt. Not the protagonist and antagonist, but a roving group of actors is being employed for the purpose. All this is quite in order. As the play reaches its climax, and the player pours poison in the ears of the player King, Claudius understands not only the drift of the play, but also Hamlet's knowledge of his crime, and the purpose of choosing this play for the show. He is upset, reacts violently, and the show is curtailed at that point. But it had served the purpose as far as Hamlet is concerned ("O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound")

But there are structural and thematic problems posed by this device that need to be resolved. The play, as edited by Hamlet, is preceded by a Dumb show, in which the events of the plot are quickly shown in mime. This was contrary to what Hamlet had asked them to do. He wished that Claudius should be taken by surprise. If he is alerted by the Dumb Show, the entire

plan would be defeated. Did not the King see the pantomime, and did he have to wait for the actual play before he could betray himself? Or did he miss the point, having seen it, -- or, as some experts opine, did he need a reiteration before the point struck home?

The players of those days were in the habit of presenting a kind of brief dumb show to entertain one section of the audience. Shakespeare had reservations about the method, and expressed his views through Hamlet's exhortation to the players. When they put it on, in spite of his warning, he was worried that the King might be alerted by the Dumb Show. Luckily (for him), the King was either preoccupied with the Queen, or was only half-attentive to something meant for the underlings (where are the underlings at a King's court?) It was a risky thing, and disturbed Hamlet ("this is miching mallecho; it means mischief").

There is the additional danger that some of the courtiers who might have watched the Show and the play might identify the villain with Hamlet because it is the nephew who poisons the king in the play. This is one of such other problems that contribute to the complexity of the play Hamlet, but one which works out favourably to the protagonist, by sheer luck!

II. III.4. Let us Some up Hamlet

Hamlet, written in about 1600/1, at the height of Shakespeare's creative powers, is that arguably the most popular and famous play ever written, and its hero seems to have exerted a huge fascination over theatre audiences of every age, race, colour, creed, and time.

The play contains a great deal of corruption, sickness, and disease imagery. Some critics link this to the supposed decline of the Elizabethan 'golden age'. When *Hamlet* was written Queen Elizabeth was an old woman with no children of her own. The next in line to the throne was James VI of Scotland, king of England's oldest enemy, and son of Mary Queen of Scots, executed on the orders of Queen Elizabeth some years previously. Civil war, an unpopular king, and acts of revenge against the old order were all possibilities, and may have contributed to an atmosphere of corruption and decay in the play.

Of all Shakespeare's plays *Hamlet* is the one in which the most questions are asked and the fewest answered. Hamlet cannot be certain of how his father died, whether his mother knew or not of his father's murder, if the Ghost is telling the truth, or if his friends are indeed on his side. Hamlet is caught in a web of uncertainty, confusion, and misunderstanding; the harder he struggles, the more he becomes entangled.

Deception and political intrigue are common features in the play, but even the masters of it, Claudius and Polonius, find that events run away with them, and all the intrigue and deception they can muster does not save them from death.

Madness is an excellent protection for Hamlet, because the madman is unpredictable, and is avoided by other people. With both Hamlet and Ophelia, madness is seen as a symbol or sign of a mind that has been pushed beyond the level of tolerance, and which can no longer cope.

Appearance and reality is a major theme in *Hamlet*. Is the Ghost what he appears to be, the spirit of Hamlet's murdered father, or is he a spirit of evil sent to lure Hamlet to his destruction? Is Ophelia in love with Hamlet, or prepared to act merely as Polonius's spy on her ex-lover? Did Gertrude know about the murder of old Hamlet? Is Polonius an old fool, or one of the most dangerous men in the play? Nothing in *Hamlet* is what it seems to be; almost everything could be interpreted in several different ways.

One theory which attempts to explain the fascination of the play to successive generations states that the play dramatises the terrible realisation that all young people go through that life is not as simple, as good, or as straightforward as it appeared to be when they were children - a loss of innocence that is both painful and inevitable given a corrupt world and corrupt humanity. The play thus appeals to young people because Hamlet rebels against a cruel world, and to older people he emerges from the painful learning process a better and wiser man.

Hamlet has every possible advantage. He is intelligent, physically proficient, and born into the highest family in the kingdom. He has a loving father and mother, and every advantage that money, rank, and privilege can bring. In a short space of time, one by one, everything that he has relied on in his life is taken away from him, often with cruel force. His father dies, and Hamlet then finds out that he has been murdered by his uncle, who now reigns with every sign of success, thus throwing doubt on family love and the whole honesty of the Danish court, as well as revealing how ruthless the streak of ambition can be in human nature. His mother shames him and the family name by a hasty remarriage, taking away Hamlet's faith in his mother. The girl he appears to have been in love with is caught out acting as a spy on Hamlet for her father and the murdering Claudius. His friends from the University turn out to be acting on the orders of Claudius. Almost at a stroke Hamlet has lost father, mother, lover, and friends, and has been exposed to an ever-widening vein of corruption. It is as if Hamlet, up to the point where the play starts, has been leading his life behind screens which shielded him from the true horror and cruelty and corruption of human life. In a matter of weeks events serve to smash these screens and show him the full corruption and stink of human misdemeanour. In desperation he retreats into an act of madness, in a desperate attempt to gain time to distinguish appearance from reality, truth from deceit. In doing this Hamlet can be seen as the archetypal adolescent, the young man who has the scales ripped from his eyes, and who suddenly sees life as it really is for the first time, but cannot find the means to confront it.

Madness symbolises the breakdown of natural order in the mind, a breakdown which in turn reflects the breakdown of all law and natural order in Denmark, where a murderer reigns. Ironically it is the mad people who often speak the truth; this sanity-in-madness is a symbol of a topsy-turvy world where nothing is as expected.

It is however perhaps surprising that there is any question about Hamlet's sanity. Hamlet clearly announces to Horatio that he will feign madness. It allows Hamlet to say things that a sane man would not be permitted to say, and it distances him from other people, who, if they could get closer, might be able to distinguish his real motives. As Hamlet has been under severe strain it is also relatively easy for him to act mad.

The problem is that at times he does it too well, and can give the impression of being truly mad - that is, having lost all rational control over his actions. Only the reader or audience can decide.

On the other hand, he is described as a 'sweet prince', and as someone who would have made a good king. He is popular with the people. He is a scholar and a fighter, the best Denmark has. He is a loving and loyal son, and does nothing to bring about the events that lead to the action of the play. He is placed in an appalling predicament and suffers vastly. As far as he is aware Ophelia and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are spies for Claudius, and have betrayed him. He can and does do evil things; it need not spoil him completely or even partially as a hero, merely make him more realistic. His treatment of Ophelia may be a result of his attitude to women in general, which in turn springs from his reaction to his mother's betrayal of the family honour by her re-marriage.

After your reading of Hamlet you might like to ask if its only firm conclusion is that humans must suffer what is dealt out to them by Fate with dignity, strength, and without complaint; that humans can never hope to understand the complexity of life. Ask yourself also the significance of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Fortinbras, the episode on the pirate ship, why Hamlet leaps into Ophelia's grave when he appears to have regained his sanity and whether or not Gertrude realizes Claudius's guilt.

S. KRISHNA SARMA

II. III. 3.5. Hamlet

SELECT LITERARY CRITICISM

If the dramas of Shakespeare were to be characterized, each by the particular excellence which distinguishes it from the rest, we must allow to the tragedy of *Hamlet* the praise of variety. The incidents are so numerous that the argument of the play would make a long tale. The scenes are interchangeably diversified with merriment and solemnity; with merriment that includes judicious and instructive observations; and solemnity not strained by poetical violence above the natural sentiments of man. New characters appear from time to time in continual succession, exhibiting various forms of life and particular modes of conversation. The pretended madness of Hamlet causes much mirth, the mournful distraction of Ophelia fills the heart with tenderness, and every personage produces the effect intended, from the Apparition, that in the First Act chills the blood with horror, to the Fop in the last, that exposes affectation to just contempt. . . .

Hamlet is, through the whole piece, rather an instrument than an agent. After he has, by the stratagem of the play, convicted the King, he makes no attempt to punish him; and his death is at last effected by an incident which Hamlet had no part in producing.

SAMUEL JOHNSON (1765).

The grief of Hamlet is for the death of a father: he entertains aversion against an incestuous uncle, and indignation at the ingratitude and guilt of a mother. . . . The death of his father was a

natural evil, and as such he endures it. That he is excluded from succeeding immediately to the royalty that belongs to him, seems to affect him slightly; for to vehement and vain ambition he appears superior. He is moved by finer principles, by an exquisite sense of virtue, of moral beauty and turpitude. The impropriety of Gertrude's behaviour, her ingratitude to the memory of her former husband, and the depravity she discovers in the choice of a successor, afflict his soul, and east him into utter agony. Here then is the principle and spring of all his actions.

WILLIAM RICHARDSON (1784).

AROUND the main action the play gathers a varied and attractive world within which the whole Renaissance atmosphere in its humours, its intrigue, its interest in art, language and superstition, gains ample illustration. At the centre is **Hamlet** himself, melancholic, introspective, witty, incomprehensible and gracious, that strange, unaccountable Renaissance prince in whom, by some unfathomable miracle, Everyman not only in England but wherever the play is enacted, finds the image of his own art.

B. IFOR EVANS, *English Literature* (1044).

The Character of *Hamlet*

The character of *Hamlet* has been many times discussed, and the opinions expressed may, for the most part, be ranged in two opposing camps. Some critics have held, with Goethe and Coleridge, that Hamlet is Shakespeare's study of the unpractical temperament; the portrait of a dreamer. Others, denying this, have called attention to his extraordinary courage and promptitude in action. He follows the Ghost without a moment's misgiving, in spite of his companions' warnings. He kills Polonius out of hand, and, when he finds his mistake, brushes it aside like a fly, to return to the main business. He sends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their death with cool despatch, and gives them a hasty epitaph:

“Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
Between the pass and fell incensed points
Of mighty opposites.

In the sea-fight, we are told, he was the first to board the pirate vessel. And nothing in speech could be more pointed, practical, and searching, than his rapid- cross-examination of Horatio concerning the appearance of the Ghost. Some of those who lay stress on these things go further, and maintain that Hamlet succeeds in his designs. His business was to convince himself of the King's guilt, and to make open demonstration of it before all Denmark. When these things are done, he stabs the King, and though his own life is taken by treachery, his task is accomplished, now that the story of the murder cannot be buried in his grave.

Yet when we read this or any other summary of the events narrated, we feel that it takes us far from the real theme of the play. A play is not a collection of the biographies of those that appear in it. It is a grouping of certain facts and events round a single centre, so that they may be seen at a glance. In this play that centre is the mind of Hamlet. We see with his eyes, and think his

thoughts. When once we are caught in the rush of events we judge him no more than we judge ourselves. Almost all that has ever been said of his character is true; his character is so live and versatile that it presents many aspects.

It is observed by Coleridge that in Hamlet the equilibrium between the real and the imaginary worlds is disturbed. Just such a disturbance, so to call it, is produced by any great shock given to feeling, by bereavement or crime breaking in upon the walled serenity of daily life and opening vistas into the infinite expanse, where only the imagination can travel. The horizon is widened far beyond the narrow range of possible action; the old woes of the world are revived, and pass like shadows before the spellbound watcher. What Hamlet does is of little importance; nothing that he can do would avert the tragedy, or lessen his own agony. It is not by what he does that he appeals to us, but by what he sees and feels.

WALTER RALEIGH, *Shakespeare* (1907).

In Hamlet, what Shakespeare values and makes us value is an extreme of experiencing power which, while it may produce the symptoms of irresolution, is not irresolution. In Hamlet there is neither uncertainty nor poverty of values; it is because his values are so rich and strong that he experiences all things so fully; and because he experiences them fully, he is more hurt by the calamity that befalls him than the common hero would be. But his hurt is also of a peculiar kind; the very calamity, beginning as external, becomes internal; his mind cannot adjust itself to the world of the court, as he finds it, or to life itself, since the world of the court is part of life. It is not merely conscience but his sovereign reason that rebels and is shaken by its own rebellion. The common hero, in such a case, would do something effective; in a tragedy he would be killed doing it, and the tragedy would consist of his death. But Hamlet's tragedy is his life after he has learned the truth from the Ghost; and it consists in the fact that, by his very virtues, moral, intellectual, and aesthetic, he is prevented from doing anything effective. It is the tragedy of 'Captive good attending captain ill'; and yet we are sure that this very capacity for suffering is more to be valued than the common hero's effectiveness. We may not be able to say why; we may, when the spell of Hamlet is no longer upon us, even ask why he does not act like the common hero; but, so long as we are under his spell, we do value him, not in terms of what he does, but in terms of himself.

A. CLUTTON BROCK, *Hamlet* (1922).

It should be plain to any reader that the signal characteristic Hamlet's inmost nature is by no means irresolution or hesitation or any form of weakness, but rather the strong conflux of contending forces. That during four whole acts Hamlet cannot or does not make up his mind to any direct and deliberate action against his uncle is true enough; true, also, we may say, that Hamlet had somewhat more of mind than another man to make up, and might properly want somewhat more time than might another man to do it in; but not, I venture to say in spite of Goethe, through innate inadequacy to his task and unconquerable weakness of will; not, I venture to think in spite of Hugo, through inmedicable scepticism of the spirit and irremediable propensity to nebulous intellectual refinement. One practical point in the action of the play precludes us from accepting so ready a solution of the riddle as is suggested either by the simple theory of half-heartedness or by the simple hypothesis of doubt. There is absolutely no other reason, we might say there was no other excuse, for the introduction or intrusion of an else

superfluous episode into a play which was already, and which remains even after all possible excisions, one of the longest plays upon record. The compulsory expedition of Hamlet to England, his discovery by the way of the plot laid against his life, his interception of the King's letter and his forgery of a substitute for it against the lives of the King's agents, the ensuing adventure of the sea-fight, with Hamlet's daring act of hot-headed personal intrepidity, his capture and subsequent release on terms giving no less patent proof of his cool-headed and ready-witted courage and resource than the attack had afforded of his physically impulsive and even impetuous hardihood--all this serves no purpose whatever but that of exhibiting the instant and almost unscrupulous resolution of Hamlet's character in time of practical need. But for all that he or Hamlet has got by it, Shakespeare might too evidently have spared his pains; and for all this voice as of one crying in the wilderness, Hamlet will too surely remain to the majority of students, not less than to all actors and all editors and all critics, the standing type and embodied emblem of irresolution, half-heartedness, and doubt.

A. C. SWINBURNE, *A Study of Shakespeare* (1879).

His troubles apart, what sort of a man is Hamlet? The course of the action gives us three different views of him: in his disillusioned grief; under the strain of his madness; and returning, hardened, to quit his account with the King. But they are all abnormal views. And, while we discount without much difficulty the antic disposition and even the moments of sore distraction, there would be no measuring the depth of the moral tragedy did not Shakespeare contrive to give us also some refracted glimpses of a more normal man.

The players are put to this use. The imaginative Hamlet finds forgetfulness in that unreal world, and in the noble music of Aeneas' tale to Dido, though his thoughts soon drift back.

Here is the man of fastidious taste, who prefers a play that 'pleased not the million' and had 'no sallies in the lines to make the matter savoury' -- upon which small point alone he will be at odds with his surroundings, with the revelling Claudius, and with that man of the world Polonius, who is for a jig, or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps.

Here is a Hamlet, too, as princely in welcoming a common player as his friend, as (from another standpoint) in his frank mockery of Polonius, and (from yet another) in his curt warning to the favoured player not to follow his example. The famous advice to the players throws light on the intrinsic Hamlet too. It is like him, at such a crisis, to trouble with it at all. Upon *what* he has written for them to act his whole project may depend; but that they might mouth it, or saw the air with their hands, or o'erstep the modesty of nature cannot matter in the least. But this is Hamlet ingrain; delighting in the thing that does not matter, and delighting in it for its own sake; and only the more because it is a fictive thing. The imaginative I man prefers the unreal to the real; he can have his will of it.

But the chief use of these glimpses of a sounder Hamlet is for a counterpoise to the soliloquies--where, it first blush, we might expect to see him as he most unfeignedly is. But we do not. In a tragedy of spiritual struggle, discord will be at its worst when a man is left alone with his thoughts. When we see Hamlet alone he is either lapsed in self-conscious grief, or savagely self-

reproachful, wrought to murderous excitement, or in suicidal despair. And when, in the calm of defeat, he deliberately questions himself, he has to admit that he knows nothing of himself at all.

But, this moral turmoil apart, it is not from his self-communings that we should best learn the simple truth about him. He is too imaginative a man for that. When he says to his mother

you shall not budge;
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you. . .

it is his own disposition that prompts the image. He is always looking at himself in the glass of his conscience. He tells the players 'to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature'; and there is, indeed, more than a little of the actor in him.

It is not that he is crudely self-conscious. But he is ever trying to see himself, with his mind's eye, as he is; never, in the nature of things, succeeding; never satisfied of the truth of what he sees. Before such a mirror so constantly and provokingly held up a man inevitably falls to attitudinising, and to distorting the truth about himself. Till suffering has flogged all self-consciousness out of him, Hamlet is ever a little apt to be striking spiritual attitudes.

HARLEY GRANVILLE-BARKER,
Prefaces to Shakespeare: Third Series (1937).

The character of Hamlet is itself a pure effusion of genius. It is not a character marked by strength of passion or will, but by refinement of thought and feeling. Hamlet is as little of the hero as a man can well be: but he is a young and princely novice, full of high enthusiasm and quick sensibility--the sport of circumstances, questioning with fortune, and refining on his own feelings, and forced from the natural bias of his character by the strangeness of his situation. He seems incapable of deliberate action, and is only hurried into extremities on the spur of the occasion, when he has no time to reflect, as in the scene where he kills Polonius, and again, where he alters the letters which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are taking with them to England, purporting his death. At other times, when he is most bound to act, he remains puzzled, undecided and sceptical, dallies with his purposes, till the occasion is lost, and always finds some pretence to relapse into indolence and thoughtfulness again. For this reason he refuses to kill the King when he is at his prayers, and by a refinement in malice, which is in truth only an excuse for his own want of resolution, defers his revenge to some more fatal opportunity, when its object shall be engaged in some act 'that has no relish of salvation in it'.

He is the prince of philosophical speculators, and because he cannot have his revenge perfect, according to the most refined idea his wish can form, he misses it altogether. So he scruples to trust the suggestions of the Ghost, contrives the scene of the play to have surer proof of his uncle's guilt, and then rests satisfied with this confirmation of his suspicions, and the success of his experiment, instead of acting upon it. Yet he is sensible of his own weakness, taxes himself with it, and tries to reason himself out of it. . . . It is not for any want of attachment to his father or abhorrence of his murder that Hamlet is thus dilatory, but it is more to his taste to indulge his

imagination in reflecting upon the enormity of the crime and refining on his schemes of vengeance, than to put them into immediate practice. His ruling passion is to think, not-to act: and any vague pretence that flatters this propensity instantly diverts him from his previous purposes. . .

Hamlet is probably, of all other of Shakespeare's characters, the most difficult to personate on the stage. It is like the i attempt to embody a shadow. . . . The character is spun to the finest thread, yet never loses its continuity. It has the i yielding flexibility of a wave of the sea I It is made up of undulating lines, without a single sharp angle. There is no set purpose, no straining at a point. The observations are suggested by the passing scene the gusts of passion come and go, like the sounds of music borne on the wind. The interest depends not on the action, but on the thoughts.

WILLIAM HAZLITT,
Characters Of Shakespeare's Plays (1818).

People indeed reflect so little in the theatre. What has just passed is scafcely remembered, yet judgement is pronounced upon what is directly before their eyes; the public depends upon what it sees, and is so engrossed with that, that it is led without thought into the greatest violations of logic. To consider Hamlet insane, then again immediately to believe that it is mere feigning, and then to return to the first impression, and to continue changing thus backwards and forwards, is nothing that a poet like Shakespeare might not count upon in a susceptible public. He commands, and his audience follow him obediently like children, to whom he tells a story, making them laugh and cry by turns.

HERMAN GRIMM (1875).

One very manifest purpose of adopting the disguise of feigned madness was to obtain access to the King in some moment of unguarded privacy. . . . The ordinary tone of social intercourse would be the last he would willingly or successfully support. This feint of madness offered a disguise to him the more welcome, and which called for less constraint, than the laboured support of an ordinary, unnoticeable demeanor. The mimicry of madness was but the excess of that levity and wildness which naturally sprang from his impatient and overwrought spirit. It afforded some scope to those disquieted feelings which it served to conceal. The feint of madness covered all, -- even the sarcasm, and disgust, and turbulence, which it freed in some measure from an intolerable restraint. Nor was it a disguise ungrateful to a moody spirit, grown careless of the respect of men, and indifferent to all the 'ordinary projects and desires of life. The masquerade brought with it no sense of humiliation it pleased a misanthropic humor,-it gave him shelter and a sort of escape from society, and it cost him little effort. That mingled bitterness and levity, which served for the representation of insanity, was often the most faithful expression of his feelings.

Blackwood's Magazine (1839).

Hamlet, among all the characters of Shakespeare, is the most eminently a metaphysician and psychologist. He is a close observer, continually analysing his own nature and that of others, letting fall his little drops of acid irony on all who come near him, to make them show what they are made of. Even Ophelia is not too sacred, Osric not too contemptible for experiment. If such a

man assumed madness, he would play his part perfectly. . " If you deprive Hamlet of reason, there is no truly tragic motive left. He would be a fit subject for Bedlam, but not for the stage. We might have pathology enough, but no pathos. Ajax first becomes tragic when he recovers his wits. If Hamlet is irresponsible, the whole play is a chaos.

This feigned madness of Hamlet's is one of the few points in which Shakespeare has kept close to the old story on which he founded his play; and as he never decided without deliberation, so he never acted without unerring judgement. Hamlet *drifts* through the whole play. . . . The scheme of simulated insanity is precisely the one he would have been likely to hit upon, because it enabled him to follow his own bent, and to drift with an apparent purpose, postponing decisive action by the very means he adopts to arrive at its accomplishment, and satisfying himself with the show of doing something that he may escape so much the longer the dreaded necessity of really doing anything at all.

J.R. LOWELL (1870)

'Hamlet' and 'Macbeth'

In *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* not only is the feeling of a supreme power or destiny peculiarly marked, but it has also at times a peculiar tone, which may be called, in a sense, religious. I cannot make my meaning clear without using language too definite to describe truly the imaginative impression produced; but it is roughly true that, while we do not imagine the supreme power as a divine being who avenges crime, or as a providence which supernaturally interferes, our sense of it is influenced by the fact that Shakespeare uses current religious ideas here much more decidedly than in *Othello* or *King Lear*. The horror in Macbeth's soul is more than once represented as desperation at the thought that he is eternally 'lost' ; the same idea appears in the attempt of Claudius at repentance; and as *Hamlet* nears its close the 'religious' tone of the tragedy is deepened in two ways. In the first place, 'accident' is introduced into the plot in its barest and least dramatic form, when Hamlet is brought back to Denmark by the chance of the meeting with the pirate ship. . . . It appears probable that the 'accident' is meant to impress the imagination as the very reverse of 'accidental', and with many readers it certainly does so. And that this was the intention is made the more likely by a second fact, the fact that in connection with the events of the voyage Shakespeare introduces that feeling on Hamlet's part of his being in the hands of Providence. . . .

We may remember another significant point of resemblance between *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, the appearance in each play of a Ghost, -- a figure which seems quite in place in either, whereas it would seem utterly out of place in *Othello* or *King Lear*. Much might be said of the Ghost in *Hamlet*, but I confine myself to the matter which we are now considering. What is the effect of the appearance of the Ghost? And, in particular, why does Shakespeare make this Ghost so *majestical* a phantom, giving it that measured and solemn utterance, and that air of impersonal abstraction which forbids, for example, all expression of affection for Hamlet and checks in Hamlet the outburst of pity for his father? Whatever the intention may have been, the result is that the Ghost affects imagination not simply as the apparition of a dead king who desires the accomplishment of *his* purposes, but also as the representative of that hidden ultimate power, the messenger of divine justice set upon the expiation of offences which it appeared impossible for man to discover and avenge, a reminder or a symbol of the connection of the limited world of ordinary experience with

the vaster life of which it is but a partial appearance. And as, at the beginning of the play, we have this intimation, conveyed through the medium of the received religious idea of a soul come from purgatory, so at the end, conveyed through the similar idea of a soul carried by angels to its rest, we have an intimation of the same character, and a reminder that the apparent failure of Hamlet's life is not the ultimate truth concerning him.

A. C. BRADLEY, *Shakesperean Tragedy* (1904).

The Imagery of the Play

In *Hamlet*, naturally, we find ourselves in an entirely different atmosphere. If we look closely we see this is partly due to the number of images of sickness, disease or blemish of the body, in the play, and we discover that the idea of an ulcer or tumour, as descriptive of the unwholesome condition of Denmark morally, is, on the whole, the dominating one.

Hamlet speaks of his mother's sin as a blister on the 'fair forehead of an innocent love', she speaks of her 'sick soul'. and as in *King Lear* the emotion is so strong and the picture so vivid, that the metaphor overflows into the verbs and adjectives: heaven's face, he tells her, is *thought-sick* at the act; her husband is a *mildew'd ear*, *blasting* his *wholesome* brother; to have married him, her sense must be not only *sickly*, but *apoplex'd*. Finally, at the end of that terrific scene (III. iv.), he implores her not to soothe herself with the belief that his father's apparition is due to her son's madness, and not to her guilt, for that

will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen.

So also, later, he compares the unnecessary fighting between Norway and Poland to a kind of tumour which grows out of too much prosperity. He sees the country and the people in it alike in terms of a sick body needing medicine or the surgeon's knife. When he surprises Claudius at his prayers, he exclaims,

This physic but prolongs thy sickly days;

and he describes the action of conscience in the unforgettable picture of the healthy, ruddy countenance turning pale with sickness. A mote in the eye, a vicious mole, a galled chilblain. a probed wound and purgation, are also among Hamlet's images; and the mind of Claudius runs equally on the same theme.

When he hears of the murder of Polonius, he declares that his weakness is not sooner having had Hamlet shut up was comparable to the cowardly action of a man with a 'foul disease' who

To keep it from divulging, let it feed
Even on the pith of life;

and later, when arranging to send Hamlet to England and to his death, he justifies it by the proverbial tag:

diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are relieved,
Or not at all ;

and adjures the English King to carry out his behest, in the words of a fever patient seeking a sedative:

For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me.

When working on Lactes, so that he will easily fall in with the design for the fencing match, his speech is full of the same underlying thought of a body sick, or ill at ease:

goodness, growing to a plurisy,
Dies in his own too much;

and finally, he sums up the essence of the position and its urgency with lightning vividness in a short medical phrase:

But, to the quick o' the ulcer:
Hamlet comes back.

. . . In *Hamlet*, . . . *anguish* is not the dominating thought, but *rotteness*, disease, corruption, the result of *dirt*; the people are 'muddied',

Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers;

and this corruption is, in the words of Claudius, 'rank' and 'smells to heaven', so that the state of things in Denmark which shocks, paralyses and finally overwhelms Hamlet, is as the foul tumour breaking inwardly and poisoning the whole body, while showing

no cause without
Why the man dies.

This image pictures and reflects not only the outward condition which causes Hamlet's spiritual illness, but also his own state.

CAROLINE SPURGEON,
Shakespeare's Imagery (1935).

II. III. 4 Sample Questions.

1. Development of drama in Elizabethan England.
2. Revenge play, and revenge motive in Elizabethan drama
3. Characteristics of Shakespearean tragedy
4. Consider *Hamlet* as a tragedy
5. The role of Ophelia (or) the Ghost in the play *Hamlet*
6. Significance of 'the play within the play'
7. Hamlet's character
8. 'Character is destiny'—how far is it true of *Hamlet*?
9. Causes for delay.
10. Is Hamlet mad?
11. *Hamlet* is the tragedy of a man who is given to too much thinking.
12. Character of Polonius (or) Claudius
13. Supernatural element in the play.
14. The importance of soliloquy in the play.
15. The tragic world of *Hamlet*

II. III. 5. Suggested Reading:

Verity (ed), *Hamlet*

Furness (ed), Variorum edition of *Hamlet*

Walter Raleigh, *Shakespeare*

KRS Iyengar, *Shakespeare, his Mind and Art*

H Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare's Plays*

AC Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*

John Dover Wilson, *What Happens in Hamlet?*

TS Eliot, *Elizabethan Essays*.

Prof. R. SARASWATHI

The Sonnets

III. THE SONNETS

Structure

- III. 0 Objectives
- III. 1 Introduction
- III. 2.1 Background
- 2.2 Summary
- III.3 Some Problems
 - 3.1 Themes
 - 3.2 Dedication, Dating etc.,
 - 3.3 Autobiographical Element
- III.4. Sample Questions
- III.5. Suggested Reading

III.0 Objectives

After going through the Unit you will be able to

- Understand the form 'Sonnet'
- Tradition of Sonnet-Writing
- Kinds of Sonnets
- Themes of prescribed sonnets and
- Shakespeare's greatness as a sonneteer.

III. 1. Introduction

This lesson enables you to understand the form 'sonnet' and its evolution and development. You will be able to understand Shakespeare's excellence as a poet and as a sonneteer.

III.2.1. Background

Sonnet is a fourteen-lined stanza probably developed in Italian literature before 14th century. Petrarch, the greatest love poet of that century, popularized it by using it for his love poems. He became a trendsetter for love poetry for almost the entire Europe during the Renaissance. Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey, the two poets of pre-Elizabethan England introduced the sonnet form into English. Many of their compositions in this genre were published in Tottel's Miscellany in 1557. This simple literary form caught the attention of the later scholar-poets, Spenser, Sidney, Drayton and others.

Thanks to Petrarch and his imitators, sonnet got firmly linked with love poetry, and love poetry itself developed certain conventions. So when the Elizabethan poets started composing sonnets, they also borrowed the conventions which came with the sonneteering tradition. The

themes always range between a description of the beauty and cruelty of the lady love, the lover's infatuation for her, his concern over her refusal to take a mate, and therefore his appeal to her to marry and beget children. They talked about the mutability of human life and the fading of one's beauty, they philosophized on the relentlessness of Time and the impossibility to escape death. The poetic convention also included the similes and metaphors the poets tended to use to describe the various beautiful aspects of the lady, and describe the poet-lover's despondency over unrequited love and so on. (The literary picture in regard to the sonneteering during 16th century reminds one of the era of 'prabandha' poetry in Telugu, in which too there are literary conventions about themes, styles, imagery and the like.)

Because of the simplicity of its structure and the popularity of the themes, all the young poets, aspirants to poetry, and poetasters, took to writing sonnets. When critics described England of the 16th century as "a nest of singing birds", they are probably referring to the prolific writing of amorous verse by nearly all who had any pretense to writing. Of course only a few of them could be said to have really mastered the technique of even the sonnet form, and turned out sonnets worth reading. Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* and Spenser's *Amoretti* are two of the more popular sonnet sequences. (A sonnet sequence is a string of sonnets connected in theme: a number of sonnets addressed to the same lady love, or making the same appeal in different, convoluted shapes and using varied arguments.) The last decade of the century, probably 1592-1601, was the time when sonnet writing was at its height in England, and there were innumerable sonnet sequences by almost every poet, full-fledged, half-baked or pretentious.

It is natural that Shakespeare too should have heard of the new fad, the tradition as well as the conventions. He too was young and aspiring to make a mark, or just rousing the envy of a few scholar-writers. He is reputed, by tradition, to be a prolific reader, covering all translated works, tales, legends, histories, biographies, travel accounts, as also a few works in French, and maybe Latin too (of which he had working knowledge). It is not difficult to imagine the young Shakespeare viewing the new genre and the tradition with curiosity, and do some experiment in it. Fundamentally a poet who saw the possibility of the dramatic in everything, he turned out a number of sonnets on a theme that is conventional, and yet different, using the same imagery as found in the tradition of love poetry, and altering the structure to make it more 'malleable', more expressive, and less rigid. In other words, taking up the sonnet as it was borrowed from Italian and practised by his contemporaries, he molded it in such a way as to leave his impress upon it. It is no wonder that Shakespearean sonnet has come down as distinct from the Petrarchan sonnet. The very fact that the sonnet is called after him ('Shakespearean', not 'Spenserian' or 'Sidneyan') indicates that he was not a mere imitator, as the other poets, but took his place by the side of Petrarch in this regard!)

The Petrarchan sonnet has a natural break after the eighth line. The fourteen lines are divided into an octave (8 lines) and a sestet (6 lines). Petrarch used the octave for a query, a doubt, or a statement to be debated, and in the sestet, answered the question, cleared the doubt or concluded the argument. So there was cohesiveness, an integrity, in the sonnet. All those who borrowed and imitated in English followed this model, though the Earl of Surrey himself furnished an alternative, which was used by Daniel and Drayton. Even Milton of the next century chose to use the classical structure for his Latin and many English sonnets. Later writers like Wordsworth

and Keats also favoured it. But Shakespeare found the model used by Drayton and Daniel more resilient, and broke the sonnet into four quatrains (4 lined stanzas) and a couplet (2 lines). With this structure, he had a greater elbow room for expression, while the end couplet "served either to summarize or else in epigrammatic form to serve as an antithesis to the rest of the sonnet". Some of his sonnets do show an octave-sestet break-up in theme, though they are very few. Moreover, he altered the rhyme scheme too. The octave of the Petrarchan sonnet has 'abba abba' and the sestet has 'cdcdcd' or 'cdcedc'. The scheme we find in a Shakespeare sonnet is 'abab cdcd efef gg'. The simplicity of the structure made this form more popular, and rightly named after the poet who was responsible for its popularity.

We said earlier that Shakespeare wrote his sonnets on a theme that is conventional and yet different, using the same imagery, but with a difference. The conventions of love poetry present a young lady, as cruel as she is beautiful, and as stubborn. The lover is usually the poet himself, and he indulges in serenading the lady despite her rejection of his advances. He admonishes her over her cruelty to herself and refusal to marry, since she would die without leaving a copy of her beauty behind. Somewhere on the way there is a rival for the poet to the lady's attention. Jealousy and magnanimous surrender are the result. All these are presented in conventional imagery, which is stock-in-trade of the sonneting tradition. Shakespeare uses all these features and some more, yet projects an entirely different picture of the situation.

For, most of his sonnets are addressed to a handsome young man. His beauty and the transient nature of earthly beauty are described in conventional language. He talks of the young man's need to marry, and leave a copy of his beauty to the world in gratitude to Nature which had showered on him the riches of his physical beauty. He talks of the passing time, and the approaching end.

He also talks of a rival to him, a rival poet who had inveigled himself into the young man's favours during his temporary absence. There is a lady too; but here she is a dark one, not pretty in conventional sense, but all the same alluring. He makes use of conventional imagery to convey the opposite of beautiful and graceful in her. The poet is her slave, and is saddened that she had seduced his favourite; that his loss is a double one, the loss of a friend, and the loss of his mistress. He blames her for her treachery, but he is indulgent towards the young man and is ready to condone the lapse.

Looking at the group of sonnets Shakespeare wrote, we tend to believe that he too was participating in the sonneting revels of the times. The sequence carries all the traits of conventional sonnets, displaced no doubt, yet all there, as in a Picasso painting. Because of this we wonder how much of seriousness went into the composition. Dramatist that he was, his energies would have been focussed on turning writing dramas. Any versification he indulged in could be off-hand, casual, maybe more to while away time, or even to experiment with a new, interesting form. It could also be a reflection of something intensely personal, a record of some disturbing experiences, which occasionally peep through there and there in his plays. But whether they are literary exercises or a passionate recordation of personal anguish, these sonnets are a repository of a very high poetic order.

III.2.2 Summary

No. 12. The clock tells the passage of time, and the day sinks into night. Men grow grey, lofty trees shed leaves, an entire grove that shaded the herds of sheep from summer's sun grows barren. Vigorous summer grows old, dies and is buried in grim winter. When the entire nature is put to waste, the poet wonders how the young man could save his beauty from the ravages of time. Nothing can defend it from the onslaught of Time, except progeny. It is only one's children who can carry a copy of one's beauty, and thus defeat the design of Time. (The poet is suggesting that the young man should marry and beget children if he wished the future generations to have a glimpse of his beauty.)

No. 18. The young man, according to the poet, is more gracious and eve-tempered, than summer. The buds of May may be marred by rough winds; summer itself may be too short; sometimes the sun shines too bright, and more often dimmed and behind clouds. By chance, or by the shifting moods of Nature, things of beauty may decline or be destroyed. But the poet assures the young man that his beauty, and its reputation, will enjoy 'eternal summer', and will not come under the dragnet of Death, for he is immortalized in the poet's verse. As long as men live and can see and read, the verse will give life to the young man.

No. 20. The poet says, the young man possesses almost feminine beauty, his face hand-crafted by Nature herself; his heart is gentle like a woman's, but not changeable like a woman's; his eye is brighter than that of a woman, but not false like a woman's rolling eye. A man by nature and in control of all nature, he attracts men's eyes and fills women with wonder. Attracting the poet with beauty, yet being a man, he becomes the "master-Mistress" of his passion. Originally Nature intended him for the poet, but slipping up, it made him into a man, thus deceiving the poet. Reconciling to the situation, the poet is content that the young man should give him his love, even if he should satisfy his manhood in the company of women.

No. 23. An imperfect actor might be upset by stage fright, or he may overact, and weaken his impact. Similarly the poet, afraid to trust his luck, or overwhelmed by the enormity of his own love, fails to give full expression to his own devotion to love. He appeals to the young man to ignore his imperfectly spoken professions of love, but rather look into his verses to read what silent love has expressed, for after all, love's language is to be found in looks, and not in speeches.

No. 30. In a pensive mood the poet calls up the memory of past experiences. At such times, he regretfully remembers many qualities he did not possess, and remembers the wastage of his youth. Unused to weeping, he would shed tears for dear friends gone into Death's embrace, and again would lament over the sorrows of love as well as the loss of lovely sights. These sessions only serve to moan over the dead past, as if he had not paid that debt earlier. But when he remembers his dear friend at such times, he feels that all his sorrows are ended, and that all losses restored. Such is the reviving impact the young man has on the poet.

No. 33. {rack mass of floating clouds; region clouds clouds of the sky; alcherry ancient science, based on the belief that metals could be transformed into gold. }

Often one sees the sun of a glorious morning light up the hills, transform the streams and pasturelands with 'heavenly alchemy'. But soon the dark clouds hide the sun's face from the world; the sun sinks in the west in 'disgrace'. Even thus, the human 'sun', the young man, shone on the poet for a brief while in triumphant splendour, and the rank clouds hide him from the poet now. But this does not diminish the poet's love for the young man, for if the heaven's sun is defaced, what to say about the humans?

No. 35. Beautiful roses have thorns; silver fountains still have mud; sun and moon are afflicted by clouds and eclipses; even the sweetest bud carries a canker in its heart. After all men do err. Even the poet committed the error of excusing the young man's trespass. So he need not feel sorry about it. The poet is ready to forgive the young man for all his errors and much more, himself the plaintiff and himself the advocate for the young man against his own self. There is so much of internal struggle in the poet, that it is no wonder he aids and abets the 'sweet thief' who robs him. (He is here talking about the poet's mistress betraying him and seducing the young man.)

No. 55. The verse of the poet is more powerful and long-lasting than marble structures or royal monuments: in time they would be abandoned and marked by passing time, or destroyed by battles or civil strife. No such depredation would affect the record of the young man's memory: his praise shall live through till the Doomsday. The young man may be reassured that he would live in the works of the poet, as he lives in the lover's eyes, until he is called to his judgment.

No. 60. Just as the waves in the sea move towards the shore, one after the other, in a sequence, the minutes hasten to the end in the relentless march of time. Born in brightness, man crawls towards maturity, the crown of manhood. But soon it is eclipsed, and time that had endowed gifts in childhood and youth takes them all back. The pride and beauty set on youth's brow is furrowed with lines in due course. And nothing can save itself from the fell stroke of the sickle of Time. Yet, says the poet, his verse praising the young man's worth would stand against the ravages of Time.

No. 64. In the relentless march of Time, proud products of an age, the magnificent monuments and lofty towers, are destroyed or razed to the ground, brass itself becomes slave to 'mortal rage'; oceans submerge the land, or land pushes out the sea, now gaining, now losing. When the poet notices such alteration in the state of things, or the very condition of things getting confounded, he begins to ponder on the possibility that his precious love too will be targeted by Time. The very thought of the possible loss of his love is like death to him, because he cannot but choose to love something that is 'mortal' and 'short-living'.

No. 73. The poet describes his own old age: it is the winter of life, when the cold breezes shake the boughs without, or with few yellowed leaves of a once mighty tree, now with only a sad moan where once sweet birds sang. His life is in its evening, fading into twilight, soon to be overtaken by black night. This is a kind of death. It is like the fire that is dying out, fire lying on its

own ashes, consumed by that same air which had earlier kindled and nourished it. The young man sees this state in the poet, and this knowledge makes his love stronger indeed; or, to love something that one knows one must soon lose, is to love well.

No. 94. Some people have the power to hurt, but do not use that power; they desist from doing what they appear to be inclined to do. Such people may affect others, but are themselves unaffected, unmoved, and slow to be tempted. They inherit heaven's graces, and manage their inheritance carefully: they are the lords and masters of their own faces. The others are but "stewards" poor managers of their own petty virtues. The flower of a summer may live and die for itself. Yet, it spreads sweetness around the season. If it should be infected by canker, its dignity would be as nothing in comparison to even a base weed. When sweet things turn sour, they out-rot everything. Is it not true that the beautiful lily when it rots smells far worse than weeds?

No. 116. Love is not true love if it should alter with circumstances, or if it should vanish. So the poet wants not to think of any impediments for the love between him and the young man, -- "the marriage of true minds". True love is steady, unshaken by tempests, steadfast like the polestar, immeasurable in its greatness, even when one attempts to measure its height. Youth and beauty, with rosy cheeks and lips may be ravaged by time, but love is not a victim to it. True love defies Time, and endures through eternity. The poet pledges the truth of this on his verse. If it is proved false in his case, he says his verse is nothing ("I never writ") and man's love is worthless.

No. 123. The poet defies time, and says he is not going to change: the pyramids piled up are nothing new to him: they had been envisioned before. Men of lives may admire time defying edifices, which are more often shaped by men's wishes (what they wish to see in them) than something heard of earlier. The poet is not bothered by the past or the passing present, for the evidences of the past and what men see before their eyes both lie, and are not constant. They grow greater or lesser by the hastening march of time. The poet vows and promises that he would ever be true (to his love), in spite of the ravaging time and its destructive power.

No. 130. The poet describes his mistress, (the notorious Dark Lady of the sonnets). Her eyes are not bright like the sun; her lips are not red like coral; her breasts are pale and not white like snow; her hair resembles more a coil of wires; no rosy red of white flourishes in her cheeks; her breath is not pleasant, but stinks; when she speaks, no music can be heard in the voice, though the poet loves to hear her speak; and when she walks, her tread is certainly not like that of a goddess. But the poet is fondly in love with her despite all her defects: to his eyes she appears as agreeable and loveable as any woman beautified by the exaggerations of the love poets.

No. 144. {suggest persuade, instruct.}

The poet talks about the two loves he has, the one comforting, and the other disturbing, both of which, like two spirits, control him. The better spirit is a beautiful angelic man, and the worse one is a dark-favoured woman. Since this Dark lady had succeeded in tempting the young man away from the poet's side, he is in veritable hell. She would corrupt a saint into a devil, seducing his purity with her pride. It is hard for the poet to say if his friend had already turned into a devil,

though he suspects it. Both of them were his friends, and therefore friends to each other; and possibly one of them is controlled by the other. The poet would be tormented by doubts, but would never know for certain about this until (and unless) the bad angel releases the good angel from her clutches.

III.3 Problems

III.3.1. Themes

By all accounts, Shakespeare seems to have composed his sonnets over a decade and more, but most of them seem to belong to 1594-98. The poetic vitality and the metaphorical exuberance which one finds in the early plays, and some thematic features found in some Romantic comedies like the Merchant of Venice and the Twelfth Night, can also be found in some of the sonnets. This constitutes the internal evidence, suggesting the approximate time of composition. Sonnet writing was in vogue during the decade, every poet, noted or not so noted, took to writing sonnets or sonnet sequences. Shakespeare too might have had his fling at the new and exciting experiment. Perhaps with his dislike for slavery to tradition, -- the stock-in-trade poetry, as one might call it, -- and the slavish imitation of imagery and themes, he must have reversed the central elements in the tradition: he describes the young lady as being dark complexioned, and correspondingly proud and evil; he replaces the poet's conventional object of love with an angelic and handsome (more woman-like in beauty: "the Master-Mistress of my passion") young man. Together with his modification of the stanza form and the rhyme scheme, in the manner of Surrey, Daniel and Drayton, -- ('abbaabba cdcdd' or abbaabba cdecde' replaced by 'abab cdd, efef gg'), -- these may be considered as casual experiments or a pleasant diversion in between the serious business of writing plays.

Some of the sonnets were in circulation among Shakespeare's friends. They were apparently well-received. In 1598, Meres refers to "the sugared sonnets making the round among the friends". They were collected and published in 1609, apparently without the approval of Shakespeare, though he did not care to deny their authenticity. It is possible that he did not want them published. Shakespeare never took any care about publishing his plays. He just ignored them, not bothering if they were printed with errors, or not published at all. He just forgot about them after handing over the manuscript to the theatre managers. Was his displeasure over the publication of the sonnets then because they were mere experiments not worth publishing, or because they were too intimate for public gaze? If the later, he should not have circulated them among his friends!

Whatever may be the circumstances associated with their composition, circulation and publication, the *Sonnets* come to us in an assortment, expressing some odd sentiments and excessive passions, both positive and negative. Yet, with all their defects, they possess some "absolute beauty" in places. In the words of Legouis, "His unequal collection, spoilt in more than one place by excessive subtlety, ... the casket which encloses the most precious pearls of Elizabethan lyricism, some of them unsurpassed by any lyricism".

One can discern a loose story line in the collection. Sonnets 1 to 126 are generally addressed to a handsome youth, 127 to 152 are addressed to a 'black' lady, perverse and alluring. The last two are conventional exercises. The speaker, or the personal, of the sonnets is the poet, or one whose vocation is poetry.

There are variegated moods and sentiments expressed in connection with the young man ranging from sheer ecstasy of love to the depths of despair, from abject surrender to total resignation. In a group of sonnets, the poet is urging the young man to marry and not allow his matchless beauty to wither and die without a copy. He urges the youth to beget children and ensure the perpetration of the tradition of beauty. He got beauty as a legacy from his parents and it is his duty to leave a legacy in the form of beautiful children. He would be dishonoured like the setting sun if he should die childless; if he is trying to save a woman from widowhood and tears, the entire world would lament his death if he should die childless. He should not be cruel to himself, but take warning from fast-paced Time and marry to defeat Time's designs. He admonishes him not be content with the panegyrics of poets. (But in the very next breath, he says that his beauty would be immortalized in his verse, and enjoy 'eternal summer'.)

This is followed by another group of sonnets that revolve round the poet's departure from the place and consequent absence (the 'absence group' of sonnets). Even in his exile he carries the image of his beloved in his heart and dwells upon the "master-mistress" of his passion. He may be much older than the youth, and as a poet may not have rank, status or recognition; but as long as his friend is youthful and handsome, and as long as he can enjoy his love, the poet considers himself luckier than all the others of rank, the favourites of Princes. For they do not know when they would fall from grace. On the contrary, he loves and is loved. Even if he is separated from him, and unhappy and disgraced, yet thinking of the young man would restore his cheer to him, and all loss is recompensed.

But the period of absence had wrought mischief too in his absence: the poet's mistress had seduced the young man. He could do nothing but forgive them both since losing them both, the friend and the lover, he had only lost them to each other. Here follows self-pity, self-abasement and exhortation to the young man, not to mourn if he should die, because the world would mock him for loving the poet. Even like the mistress, there are others trying to inveigle into the young man's favours; there is another poet, a rival, who is trying to get close to the youth, taking advantage of his absence. If the young man should be persuaded away from him, the poet would not blame; he would rather try to justify the young man's actions, because the other poet must be worthier than himself for having caught the young man's attention. He has his love enshrined in his heart, which consoles him, and all his injuries are forgotten the moment he thinks on the youth. His love is unchanging, for, true love would not change with changing circumstances.

The last group of sonnets, addressed to the dark lady, is filled with passion, but there is also a seething satire colouring them. Though she is dark and far from beautiful, the poet is infatuated with her. She is not only 'black' in complexion, she is black in her deeds too. By seducing his friend, she had not only deprived him of her love, but also of his friend. In spite of all her weaknesses and defects, he still loves her. Yet, he cannot bear to think of her capturing the

'angelic' young man and leading him into the ways of hell. Fully conscious of his infatuation for her, the poet rises and falls in his own estimate of his love for her and his own self-abnegation.

There are many sonnets in which Shakespeare expresses the sheer joy of loving and the agony of love for a fickle lady. There is passion, poignancy, and lyrical beauty in them. The sonnets are perhaps to be rated as "the highest of their kind". In them, there is "an intensity of central fire that makes most of sonnets of the other Elizabethan Sonneteers seem tepid exercises".

III . 3. 2 Dedication, Dating, the Young Man, the Rival Poet and the Dark Lady.

Shakespeare perhaps never cared to publish the sonnets he wrote. He was content to circulate them among his close friends. A decade after they were first mentioned by Meres (1598), an enterprising and unscrupulous publisher, T.T. (Thomas Torpe) published the sonnets in some arbitrary order (according to later critics who see inconsistencies in the arrangement). Shakespeare never cared to publish any of his plays, nor cared how they were published, when they were published. But, he was annoyed by this unauthorised publication. Whether it was the irregular order of the sonnets that annoyed him, or the very fact of publishing something private, close to his heart (?) we would never know. He did not care about the plays because they were meant for the stage and were already public property once they were handed over to the theatre manager. It hardly mattered how they were published if ever, but poems are a different matter.

Mr. Thorpe published the sonnets with a 'dedication' in capital letters, prefixed to the sonnets:

TO THE ONLIE BEGETTER OF
THESE INSUING SONNETS
MR. W.H. ALL HAPPINESSE
AND THAT ETERNITIE
PROMISED
BY
OUR EVER-LIVING POET
WISHETH
THE WELL-WISHING
ADVENTURER IN
SETTING
FORTH

T.T.

Nearly one-fourth of the critical activity relating to Shakespeare's writing, comprising how many millions of words it is hard and rash to guess, has surrounded the puzzles that the *Sonnets* has let loose. Who is W.H.? Is he the same as the youth described in the course of the poem? It was not Shakespeare who prepared the dedication, it was T.T., because, it was already clear that T.T. published the sonnets without Shakespeare's approval or knowledge. Much ink has flowed

over the identity of the 'begetter'. Literary snoops tried to suggest various candidates based upon contemporary equations and internal evidence.

At the best this is a 'mysterious dedication', and a mischievous one, as the scores of critics who broke their lances in trying to solve the mystery testify. As already mentioned, Shakespeare had no hand in the matter of the dedication, and T.T.'s vagaries hardly matter. But, even if it was Shakespeare's, it has no relevance or importance for the lover of poetry. How often do we check to see to whom a particular book is dedicated, and then relate it to the theme of the book? The 'mischief' was in linking 'the only begetter', 'W.H.' and 'that eternity promised by our ever-living poet'. The critical curiosity that distracts our attention from the poetry and lyrical beauty in the book to inessentials is unhealthy. For, the exact identity of Mr W.H. does not tell us anything vital, nor does it help us appreciate the poem any better.

When were the sonnets written? Sonneteering became a rage around 1592 or thereafter. (Marlowe who died in '93, was not bitten by this bug). Shakespeare, always with eyes open to what went around him, and ever ready to experiment with things that touched his fancy or curiosity, could have written them "in moments snatched from work for the theatre". Parallels with *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, indicate that probably many of the lyrics addressed to the youth were written between '94 and '98. Commentators have noted how the dialogue between Romeo and Juliet at the dance when they met for the first time takes the shape of a sonnet. The sombre note in middle sonnets and the biting tone in the later ones addressed to the 'black lady', parallel his moods in his problem plays and the great tragedies. It is possible that he went on spinning out these sonnets on some roughly common threads, even into early 1600s. (It is a well-known fact that Shakespeare reflected contemporary events like the Spanish Armada – as in the 'mortal Moon' sonnet -- etc. in his plays as much as in his sonnets. Such items constitute the internal evidence.)

Since they were not written for a particular occasion, or to a deadline, and since in all probability, they were but a casual composition, -- perfecting a form, without any particular aim, (unlike those of Spenser or Sydney), the sonnets can be read for their own sake, for the lyrical beauty, imagery and the poetry therein, without seeking remoter intellectual satisfaction.

By 1609, when Thorpe chose to publish them, he got a total of 154 sonnets, loosely grouped around themes of marriage, absence, a rival poet and the black lady. Since there is no connected theme as such, either in itself, or as agreed upon by the busy literary detectives, the reader would do well to take them as they are, and enjoy the riches found therein, for this collection is a casket "which encloses the most precious pearls of Elizabethan lyricism"; and the great critical investigation surrounding this body of writing should not be allowed "to conceal the absolute beauty of the verses or the clear lines of the drama of feeling they trace".

If Shakespeare had followed the conventional lines for his poem, no one would have cared greatly about the 'dedication', and the 'dating'. The presence of the mysterious youth, and the glorious terms in which his beauty is described, are the elements at the root of the problem, the other being the dark lady, presented in quite contrasting terms. In spite of the exhortations of the

wise voices like Churton Collins and W.H. Auden to leave other things be and “consider the sonnets themselves”, the critics of a certain kind continue to dig and excavate in the hope of getting new evidence. Is the young man William Herbert (W.H.) or Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton (inverted H.W.)? (The poet had dedicated his *The Phoenix and The Turtle* and *The Rape of Lucrece* to the Earl.) The critical discussion in regard to the poet’s passionate relationship to the young man also considered the possibility of ‘homosexuality’. His plays contain some relationships (for e.g., that between Antonio and Bassanio in *The Merchant of Venice*) that might be considered as bordering on the abnormal. But friendship among men was glorified in 16th century Europe. In addition, Shakespeare set great value by loyalty. Any violation of loyalty is anathema to him. From the early comedies to the very last play, *The Tempest*, we see instance after instance of this moral problem presented. It could thus be seen to be in tune with his way of thinking, and need not disturb the reader too much.

The Rival Poet could be Christopher Marlowe or George Chapman, said the commentators. Shakespeare had been riding a wave of success. Especially until the turn of the century, he was unrivalled. Under the circumstances it is rather surprising to see a note of diffidence and self-abnegation creeping into some sonnets. It is difficult to believe that the ‘persona’ could be Shakespeare himself. Having tasted success for so many years, should he feel demoralized or belittled if some critic hailed Ben Jonson or Chapman as superior to him? The general picture of his personality we get from the plays does not bear out this aspect. He would not have minded it, much less felt jealous of the rival. (Marlowe was killed in ’93; the Earl – if he was the young man – had refused a marriage proposal in ’92, apparently; Shakespeare was writing these sonnets some time in ’96 or ’97. How could one take it that the rival poet could be Marlowe, for whom Shakespeare had admiration?) One sane explanation would be to consider these sonnets as following the Petrarchan convention that calls for a rival (a poet here), in comparison with whom the poet feels small, and yet appeals to the young lady not to cut him off from her favours.

Similarly, for the Dark Lady, they suggested the candidature of one Mary Tilton, Emilia Lanier and even Anne Hathaway. Shakespeare described the young lady as ‘black’. But she has gone into critical circles as the ‘Dark Lady’. She could not be a non-European, but only a brunette, with a stronger complexion than the usual ‘pale face’ one saw in the Northern latitudes. Hermia of *A Mid-Summer Night’s Dream*, Rosalind of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* as also Rosalind to whom Romeo wrote a sonnet were described as dark in complexion. The darkness of the Dark Lady was perhaps to be found more in her character than in her colour. She is perverse, willful, a ‘worse spirit’, with nothing ‘angelic’ about her:

...those lips of thine
That have profaned their scarlet ornaments
And sealed false bonds of love as oft as mine,
Robbed others’ beds’ revenues of their rents;...

This echoes Antony’s recrimination of Cleopatra at a crucial stage in the play, but on a sharper note.

To reiterate, the identity of the lady does not add a whit to our enjoyment of the poem, nor the ignorance thereof take away a whit from it. Yet the critical industry is ever active in this regard. The critics no doubt have their own axes to grind, and their own arguments to establish the identity of the young man, the poet and the lady. A.L. Rowse among the moderns is one of the most confident and determined of these conjecturers, as the title of his book, *Shakespeare's Sonnets: the Problems Solved* (1972) suggests.

Let us remember that drama is an impersonal art form, and that the best of dramatists could not express a feeling or emotion beyond what a particular character can carry. On the other hand, lyric poetry is a form in which a poet need not rein back his galloping imagination. And again, it is no news that Shakespeare had gone through the entire gamut of passions and emotions, almost touching the limits through some characters (Juliet? Othello? Antony? Cleopatra? Lear?) Why should we wonder that we meet with profound poignancy and pathos and intensity of emotions in *The Sonnets*? The pleasure, first and foremost, is in their lyrical beauty. The identity of the various figures that people the sonnets becomes immaterial. The sonnets should be read for themselves, simply.

III . 3. 3. Autobiographical element.

The poignancy and intensity of passion the poet displays in the Sonnets gives scope for the argument that they could be autobiographical, or based upon personal experience. The consistency and persistence with which the poet dwells upon certain emotions like dedicated love, abject surrender, poignancy in the feeling of loss, and the bitterness surrounding the betrayal by the beloved, etc., lends added weight to this argument.

The puzzle of the 'dedication' and the identity of the young man, the dark lady and the rival poet, only complicate the picture, and allow the literary detectives to fish for evidences and solutions. Because the poet did not address a ladylove but a handsome young man, there must be some original of which the portrayal is not merely a fair imitation, but a close copy, argue the scholars. They look at the Elizabethan scene and come up with possible candidates: William Herbert? The Earl of Southampton, Henry Wriothesley? The Earl appears to have rejected a marriage proposal in 1592. So in '94 this poet who had dedicated two of his poems to his patron, the Earl, writes a number of sonnets urging him to marry and beget children!

Did Shakespeare suffer from a sense of inferiority such that he could feel self-pity when another poet was mentioned as superior to him, or when the young man tended to show favours to another poet? Could it be Marlowe who died in '93, or Chapman for whom Shakespeare had considerable respect, the two candidates for the rival poet, proposed by the researchers?

And to top it all, who was this lady of 'black' favour, the Dark Lady of the Sonnets, a proud, unprincipled lady of easy virtue? Would these scholars want us to believe that having left his wife and kids at Stratford-upon-Avon, he came to London and had a very serious affair with a

married lady? And then he quarrels with her morals for having seduced the young man? Some names are suggested, but the Dark Lady eludes their resolutions.

Leave aside the personages, and their identities. Should one believe that Shakespeare poured out the ecstasy and anguish of his heart into the sonnets? The scholars seem to believe not only that it is possible, but are confident that it must be so. Let us leave them smugly embracing their pet theories and look at the sonnets themselves.

On one side we have the tradition of sonneteering, with its stock-responses and Petrarchan conventions. On another side we have a poet young at heart, romantic, with an imagination vigorously active, and savouring success as a dramatist. There is his tendency to experiment with every new thing to such a degree that he left his stamp upon it. In addition, there is the fact that Shakespeare is a dramatist.

The Petrarchan convention laid down that the lady love is beautiful, cruel and proud. "The cruellest she" (to borrow a phrase from *Twelfth Night*) would not marry. So the poet appeals to the lady to marry and beget children of equal beauty, and thus pay back the debt to Nature, as also confirm that the poet's description of her beauty is factual and not born of poetic fancy. The convention postulates a rival to her favours, and the poet feeling sorry for himself, and for the way he had fallen from her favours.

Whether it is for experiment's sake or because he is critical of the sentimentalism in the convention, Shakespeare alters the personages and presents, in the place of the young lady, a young man, refusing to marry. Since a rival lover is untenable, he presents a rival poet; the rivalry being in social rank and artistic merit, in both of which our poet seems to suffer by comparison. The convention needs a rivalry in love; so another lady is presented. Since the young man is handsome, the lady possesses contrasting traits: she is not beautiful, though alluring, very seductive, at least for him, being his beloved. But she casts her spell on his young friend, throwing the poet into 'a slough of despond.'

All this is easy for an imaginative poet. Moreover, quite a number of features and ideas we find in *The Sonnets* have parallels in the plays, mostly the early ones, but the later plays too echo the ideas. It is not too hard to assume that a dramatist like Shakespeare could easily identify with the poet, and present the ecstatic and poignant in lyric after lyric. As a dramatist, we are told, Shakespeare went about observing human nature closely, and nothing escaped his attention. What he observed, he universalized. Should it then be necessary to assume that he must have personal experience of the agony and rapture that find expression in these poems?

Shakespeare was a dramatist of the first order, and had written more plays, on more varied themes, than any contemporary of note. His plays present emotions ranging from the quiet to the most violent, and personages from the most simple to the most complex, from the most innocent to the most villainous. Here was God's plenty, exclaim the critics. With his 'negative capability', in the words of Keats, he was able to fill each of his characters to its most complete authenticity. Did it entail that he should have had personal experience of all the emotions, passions and villainies, in

order to make his characters authentic? How easy for such a writer to present a crude tale of admiration for a young man, infatuation for an undeserving woman of no character, portray the pain of separation, the keenness of jealousy, or sorrow over the loss of love? No doubt the presentation is in lyric form, in a series of loosely connected sonnets, and not in the impersonal form of drama. In the lyric a poet tends to pour out the innermost of his experiences. For a dramatist who also wrote poems occasionally, it need not be necessary to have first hand experience to be able to write the way Shakespeare wrote: it should not be necessary to have homosexual relation with an handsome young man, or love for a lascivious young lady, to be able to present the passions and emotions we encounter here.

Critics are in the habit of lamenting that they know so little about Shakespeare the man. Not one-tenth, not even one-hundredth of what we know about other poets, is known about him. Beyond the certificate of baptism, some references to his life in London, his will and his burial, there is no other evidence about his life. There are the plays. So for the biography-hungry critics Shakespeare remains a mystery.

The poets of the early 19th century, votaries of Romanticism, but a romanticism different from that of Shakespeare and other Elizabethan poets, were greatly impressed by the sonnets. Wordsworth declared that with the sonnets Shakespeare “unlocked his heart”, something very welcome for the hungry critics. But Browning retorted with a sneer: “Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he”.

“The tradition of gentility”, said Walter Raleigh, “clings to the name of Shakespeare like a faded perfume”. From all accounts, ‘Master Shakespeare’ was a gentle, benign and sedate man, cheerful, friendly and uncritical. Not only because of the personality, and his value system, that emerges out of a study of his plays, but also because of his stature as an artist, it is difficult to believe that he had to stoop to the device of writing the sonnets in order to give access to his heart. That is why Browning quipped that Shakespeare would be less worthy than what one considers him to be.

All this goes to show that we see in a poet what we want to see. Such investigations and arguments, researches and declarations, are futile. In the final analysis, the reader is well advised to ignore all this brushwood of critical opinion, and approach the sonnets as they are, huge trees in a wild forest filled with resplendent flora and the music of exotic birds.

III. 4 Sample Questions

1. Sonnet tradition in England.
2. Shakespeare’s contribution to sonneteering tradition in the 16th century.
3. Themes in *The Sonnets*.
4. The circumstances associated with the composition and publication of *The Sonnets*.
5. A note on the ‘Dedication’ of the Sonnets.

6. Impact of the identity of the Youth, the Dark Lady and the Rival Poet on the appreciation of the sonnets.
7. Are the sonnets autobiographical?
8. With the sonnets, Shakespeare “unlocked his heart”, it is said. Do you agree?
9. “If so, the less Shakespeare he”—who said this about what, and why?

III. 5 Suggested Reading.

1. Sir Sidney Lee, *Shakespeare's Poetry*
2. Clutton Brock, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*
3. A.C. Bradley, *Lectures on Poetry*
4. AL Rowse, *Shakespeare's Sonnets: The Problems Solved*
5. Walter Raleigh, *Shakespeare*

Prof. S. Krishna Sarma

Twelfth Night
or
What You Will

Twelfth Night
or
What You Will

List of Characters

Orsino, Duke of Illyria.

Olivia, a rich Countess.

Sir Toby Belch, Uncle to Olivia, her kinsman.

Maris, Olivia's waiting – gentlewoman.

Malvalio, Olivia's steward.

Fabian, a member of Olivia's household.

Sir Andrew Aguecheek, companion of Sir Toby.

Viola, a lady, later disguised as Cesario.

Sebastian, Viola's twin brother.

Antonio, a sea Captain, friend to Sebastian.

A Sea Captain, friend to Viola.

Valentine, Curio, Gentleman attending on the Duke.

Fabian, Feste, a Clown, Servants to Olivia.

Lords, Priests, Sailors, Officers, Musicians, and other Attendants.

Scence: A City in Illyria; and the Sea Coast near it.

Unit - IV - TWELFTH NIGHT - I

IV.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * Understand the Date and Composition of the play
- * Know about the title of the play
- * Have an idea regarding the sources of the play
- * Analyse the characteristics of the play

IV.1 - STRUCTURE

IV.0 Objectives

IV.1 Structure

IV.2 Introduction

IV.2.1 Date and composition of the play

IV.2.2 Title of the play

IV.2.3 Sources of the play

IV.3 Some characteristics of the play

IV.3.1 Illyria - Land of romance

IV.3.2 Music and songs

IV.3.3 Social Background

IV.3.4 Satire on Puritanism

IV.3.5 No pathos but sadness with happiness

IV.3.6 Full of Gulls

IV.3.7 Love Theme or play of love at first sight

IV.3.8 Improbabilities

IV.3.9 Plot construction

IV.4. Select Literary Criticism

IV.5. Let us sum up

IV.5. Check your progress

IV.6. Suggested Readings

IV.2 - INTRODUCTION

This unit enables you to understand the important characteristics of the play, about the significance of the title *Twelfth Night* or *What You Will* its date of composition and sources.

Last and best (of the comedies) came *Twelfth Night*, which for sheer lightness of touch goes as far as even Shakespeare can reach, blending music and revelry, realism and romance, the wittiest prose and the most ravishing poetry.

Twelfth Night is Shakespeare's farewell to comedy for many years. It is fitting that the earliest recorded performance should have been at a feast in the Middle Temple, since this marks the fact that from beginning to end the comedies and histories were composed for audiences of young men. It is also which provides youth with its eternal retort to the cooling blood of age: "Dost think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?"

John Dover Wilson *The Essential Shakespeare* (1932)

Twelfth Night is undoubtedly the most profound of Shakespeare's so called "golden comedies" It has been a favourite with the students as well as with audience. Johnson, a man not given to unconsidered judgements admired its elegance and ease and its exquisite humour and he conceded on the ground that the principal action "wants credibility" and "exhibits no just picture of life". Brandes considers the play as "perhaps the most graceful and harmonious comedy Shakespeare ever wrote. Hazlitt estimates it to be the most delightful of his comedies "full of sweetness and pleasantry". Mrs. Jameson describes it as a "perpetual spring of the gayest and sweetest fancies".

Twelfth Night belongs to the period of authorship of Shakespeare when he was at the height of his fame and brilliant maturity. This light-hearted comedy belongs to the group of Shakespeare's comedies, which have been variously referred to as "the middle comedies, the sunny comedies or comedies, joyous, refined, romantic. The other, comedies of this group are *As You Like it*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Merry Wives of Windsor*. The comedies of the earlier phase are characterised by immaturities and crudities of different kinds, from which the present comedy is entirely free. Neither has it the gloom, the bitterness, and the comedy atmosphere of the later comedies which followed as *Measure for Measure* and *All is Well that Ends Well*. These Comedies of the middle phase represent Shakespeare at his happiest, they are ranked among the greatest comedies of the world, and *Twelfth Night* is commonly regarded as the best of this group of comedies.

IV.2.1. Date of Composition:

Although the absolute chronology of Shakespeare's play is far from certain, the consensus of opinion of the leading modern scholars is that *Twelfth Night* was written round about the year

1601 i.e. just after *As You Like It* and just before *Hamlet*, first acted in 1602 and printed in the Folio of 1623. The following are the reasons to assign the play to the above date:

- (a) This play is not included in the list of 12 plays mentioned by Meres
- (b) John Mannigham, a barrister, recorded his witnessing the play on February, 2, 1602.
- (c) The lines in the play referring to "the new map with the augmentation to the Indies" (III.ii.85) and referring to "Words are very rascals since bounds disgraced them" (III.ii.25) besides the reference to "Mistress to Mall's picture" (I.iii.3) indicate topical allusions that can assign the composition to 1601-1602.

The verse structure and the use of prose alike belong to the middle period of Shakespeare. These facts point to the date of composition to 1601.

IV.2.2. Title of the Play:

Why was the play called *Twelfth Night* or *What you Will*?, Shakespeare seems never to have pondered over the title of his plays. From the chronology of his writing we can see that he was continuously writing, probably writing in a hurry to fulfil his assignments and naturally he did not look back to search for a title. Thus the title of his plays gave scope for controversies. Those named after the heroes like *Hamlet* or *King Lear* are beyond dispute. *Twelfth Night* is one of those plays whose title was given without much consideration. The justification seems to be as Quiller Couch points out "The dramatist had written the play and the title to say nothing of the sub-title, was no great matter. After all, the play's the thing."

Several explanations are offered justifying the title and sub-title. Halliwell Phillips thinks that the play was called so because of its first performance on the festivities after Christmas. The festivities of the night are characterised by merry-making, revelry and fun, which form the dominating trait of the play; the alternative title "*What You Will*" is attributed by Wright to Shakespeare's indifference to the title. Reading the two titles together would mean that the choice of the title is left to the reader or audience. Indeed Charles I, who was a Catholic sympathiser, called the play *Malvolio* to indicate his amusement at gulling of the steward, "a kind of puritan"

IV.2.3 Sources of the Play:

Pillaging was a distinguished Renaissance tradition for Italian, Spanish, French and English writers of Shakespeare's days and before borrowing his plot for *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare fashionably did pilfer Plautus for the *Comedy of Errors*. The adventures and misadventures of a pair of identical twins was a popular subject in Greek comedy and the change in the basic

situation was the sexual differentiation of the twins, affording a variety of intrigues and complications into the play. Also it is not difficult for us to trace the sources of Shakespeare as he follows the originals sometimes and occasionally improves upon those situations. But whatever might be his borrowing, the play when it went into Shakespeare's hands was something new and different.

Leading features of the main plot were drawn from *Gl, Inganni* (The Deceived) and *Apolonius and Silla*. The Olivia-Orsino and Viola-Sebastian plots were derived from the tale Apolonius and Silla in Barnaby Riche's *Farewell to the Militarie Profession* (1581). Riche's own source for this was a "novella" in French by Bandello (1554). No source is known for the secondary plot involving Malvolio, Maria, Sir Andrew Auguecheek and Sir Toby Belch. The subplot and its characters as well as the weaving of it into the main plot was Shakespeare's contribution. *Twelfth Night* is distinctively, as fundamentally Shakespeare's as if every conception, every incident and every character had been without any precedent in literature.

IV.3 Some Characteristics of the Play

IV.3.1 Illyria, land of romance :

Captain's announcement that "this is Illyria, Lady" makes us aware of the scene of the play's action. Being accustomed to look to places of Italy in Shakespearean plays, the plays came to be associated with that country by some Elizabethans. But situations in the play are not connected to any precise locality. As Thorndike describes, it is a land of romance bounded by the land of fun, not far removed from the republic of reality and entirely surrounded by poetry. It is an artist's vision of a land of romance, which means in literature the union of strangeness and beauty. As imaginary and indefinite a realm as Illyria is, equally indefinite is the period in which the events are supposed to have happened. Yet in this wonderful land of romance, the events are governed by our time scale.

Considered as "one of the most delightful of Shakespeare's comedies" it is full of sweetness and pleasantry. A genial spirit runs through it, it is harmonious and symmetrical in construction, with situations dovetailed into one another. The whole theme moves like a symphony and without a jarring note. Smooth movement of action, combination of diversity of incidents and delineation of characters make it a "genuine comedy-a perpetual spring of the gayest and sweetest of fancies"

IV.3.2. Music and Songs

There is no play in which we see the use of music more clearly than in *Twelfth Night*, which begins and ends with music" says a critic. Bradley considers that the playwright's praise for music occurs in this play only. It gives expression to the interest of the Elizabethans in the art

of the modulation of voice and instrument. Every character is music minded, but it is Feste, the fool that sings all the songs in play. Not only for jesting but also in selecting his songs, he observes the "moods, the quality of persons and the time" and this choice adds musical value to the romantic and humourous quality of the play.

IV.3.3 Social Background :

In spite of its great popularity, *Twelfth Night* at sometime "suffered" in its popularity "by reason of a fairly general ignorance of that aspect of Elizabethan life which is mirrored in its under-plot" (Byrne) Though Illyria need not have any parallel in the Elizabethan social background, Shakespearean audience must have searched for parallels in the play. Only from this angle, Bailey's observation that "no play is more Shakespearean or more English" will find justification. The entire household of Olivia was considered an epitome of the Elizabethan society. Quiller Couch finds Sir Toby a late survival of the old feudal order. Stories of Olivia and Orsino as well as Malvolio had a parallel and original in the current history of the Elizabethans.

IV.3.4 Satire on Puritanism :

But to infer Shakespeare's antipathies or sympathies to any particular folly or virtue is hazardous. Some read a deliberate attack on Puritanism in the portrayal of Malvolio but Lamb correctly explains it, saying that Malvolio is not essentially ludicrous, but "he becomes comic by accident." His virtues are but patched with 'sin, as Feste puts it. Shakespeare's opposition goes only against narrowness and intolerance of the puritans, but there is pity for the pathetic plight and aversion at the steward's overweening and vain temperament. It is doing injustice to the playwright to consider the Malvolio incident as a satire on puritanism.

IV.3.5 No pathos but sadness with happiness:

A golden comedy as it is often described, *Twelfth Night* has no trace of real sadness but that born out of obsessions. Fine poetry provides a high tone of sentiment to the action and motives. Some consider it as containing strain of "romantic pathos" but Brooke describes it as a "sadness mingled with happiness" Chevrillon observes that, "melancholy is linked with joy, emotion with humour, tenderness with petulant wit." Refuting that the play has a touch of romantic pathos, Brooke points out that the pathos is only "Sweet imaginings of sorrow, on the edge of joy, aromatic pain, monetary despair, uprushing of passions, which flush their being". It will be difficult to find a trace of the deep sorrows of the world in it. The fantasies of love, jovial humour abound in it as if Shakespeare is bidding farewell to mirth, *Twelfth Night* being the last of his joyous comedies. It is the dividing line in his growth to full stature as an artist and a man.

IV.3.6 Full of gulls:

The gulling of a fool is the single situation in the play and the three main lines of action are reciprocal and reverberating statements of that situation. Writers from Aristophanes to Bernard Shaw have used this situation, in one form or another to didactic purposes because they have brought the fool through ridicule to exposure and correction. Each of the main characters-Orsino, Olivia, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Malvolio are gulls, victims of self deception who learn nothing from experience. Each of them is successfully gulled and it is rightly called a play "full of gulls" though not all of them are of the same kind. They are victims of obsessions they deliberately cultivate.

IV.3.7 Love Theme or the Play of "love at First Sight :

Twelfth Night is a play of "Love at First Sight." When Duke Orsino sees Olivia, he knows how "She purg'd the air of pestilence" because of her love for him. He becomes a prey. Viola in spite of her distressed condition falls in love with the name of the Duke at first and later after joining his service. But she does not divulge it. She determines "Who ever I woo, myself would be his wife." Olivia who is on a vow not to think of love for seven years, grieved by her brother's death she falls in love with a page, despite her rank-consciousness. Malvolio is plagued with love, though it might not be love at first sight. Sir Toby discovers a gull-catcher in Maria, a kindred spirit, and falls head long into love. Sebastain with his robust commonsense, does not fall in love with Olivia, but agrees to it from the beginning knowing that it would be to his advantage.

Along with love at first sight, there are two other elements that make the play a delightful comedy - they are the issues of human hearts at cross purposes and the problem of mistaken identity of the twins. There are finally three pairs of lovers in the play. Viola and Orsino, Olivia and Sebastain and Maria and Sir Toby. Each has his characteristics way of love. Entanglement in love and the lovers is the theme. They are trapped by their illusions. They are victims not merely of deceit but also of their own folly. For example, Orsino is blinded by his image of himself as an ardent but despairing lover and to the question of Viola "But if she cannot love you Sir?" the Duke's reply is "I cannot be so answered" He indulges in this hope and conviction throughout the play, because like most self-centered persons, his discussion about his most complicated state of mind shows him off. What he really loves is the romantic notion of a lover of which he himself is the model. His utterances on fancy and love are mere lyrical self-deceptions. See how easily he transfers his love of "Olivia" to Viola. Again Olivia is similarly shackled by her inability or refusal to comprehend her own emotions or even to discern her blunders. Though preoccupied with a "Brother's dead love" a single visit of Cesario (Viola in disguise) provides her with a new obsession. Malvolio is known to one and all, of course except to Olivia, as one "sick of self love". Sir Andrew's follies are too many. Sir Toby fails to understand his own foibles, though he encashes on other's follies. Viola suffers in all respects from another type of obsession. She

thinks that she must embark upon a programme of deceit in order to survive and requests the captain, "conceal me what I am". Her finest moment in the play-- the speech about the love-lorn girl who never told her love--is charming and pathetic. It shows a certain pleasure in equivocation. Her skill and relish for the kind of organised deceit on which the action hinges is appropriate as the heroine of a play in which dissimulation and deception are routine.

Only Feste the clown seems to be clear-headed and free from the pandemic error in Illyria. In a world where every one is slightly a maniac, his motley is a badge of knowledge. Almost everyone in the play lives by error and illusion. Orsino, Olivia and Malvolio are all the victims of deception and only the third clings to his absurd illusions. It does not mean that the other two surrendered their obsession, but only they are released from the maze of misconceptions. Malvolio alone is not profited by this comic therapy and at the end we see his self-love stiffened further by a sense of his injured merit leaving the merry folks in anger, he says "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you." The others teach us the lesson of life that we must settle for illusions, since we rarely win our way to truth.

IV.3.8 Improbabilities :

All Shakespearean plays are meant for giving enjoyment on the stage. Despite the laurels *Twelfth Night* received from critics as being one of his "golden comedies" during all these centuries, the play has not escaped criticism for the lapses one finds in it by reading closely. The lapses go under the heading of discrepancies and inconsistencies which include an anachronism. Shakespeare seems never to have supervised his plays when once they left his hand to reach the theatre. He seems to have cared more for the totality of effect, which he limited to creation of an artistic delight. Thus the so-called discrepancies and inconsistencies have not materially altered that effect.

The first glaring defect pointed out by the critics is about the duration of the play. The time-scheme has not been paid sufficient attention, as it has been pointed out. Fabian's announcement of the marriage of Sir Toby and Maria before his Lady Olivia in the last scene is considered to strain the sense of probability. Improbability of a Countess falling in love with a page comes next for consideration. Verity explains the fallacy by explaining the page as "a youth employed as a personal attendant of a personal rank," which means that he does not need to belong to inferior social status. Viola tells Olivia "My state is well; I am a gentle man." Other minor discrepancies are obvious. Orsino is referred to as the Duke and the Count. Clown's song (II IV) does not accord with the description the Duke had given earlier. Substitution of Fabian for Feste in the plotters is not hinted. Easy shifting of love of main characters, release of Malvolio and the captain that rescued Viola, the church bells of St. Bendick, Sebastian's change in name, and Antonio's love for the youth are considered other minor discrepancies. But none of these mar the sweet and pleasant effect of the play and they are visible to an arm-chair critic only. *Twelfth Night* is a gay comedy and its extravagance is unlimited.

IV.3. 9 Plot Construction :

"The movement of the piece is so light and rapid, and several actions move so naturally without perplexing or confusing each other that if it were played from beginning to end without any pause at all" the spectators will have artistic satisfaction. Shakespeare exhibits technical mastery of construction in *Twelfth Night*, almost last of his comedies, by which fresh situations are perpetually evolved without any sense of strain. Every part of the plot is made to fit into every other part, so that everything appears to turn out precisely as it must have happened.

The two plots, the anguished passion of Orsino and the gulling of Malvolio are skillfully interwoven with the love of Olivia and the disguise of Viola that it scarcely becomes possible to divide the two. Starting as two different stories, both are brought into full swing by the time Sebastian reaches Illyria and Sebastian brings them together. The duel episode is the interlude that binds the two plots. The main plot and the under plot are so arranged as to overlap at several points and criss-cross each other that they finally fit into an artistic whole. Although conducted in the most delightful manner and with artistic ingenuity, some critics feel (Johnson is one of them) that Viola's disguise fails the test of relevance. (Eminent scholars line up in defence of her action and equally large number remark that it requires the "implicit faith of a child to receive without misgiving or of belief".)

Questioning the relevance of Viola's disguise hits the essential characteristics of a romantic comedy at the root because only by a "willing suspension of disbelief" does the structure of a romance become probable. Viola's disguise was in agreement with the theatrical convention of his times and the Elizabethans did not consider it an improbability. They admired the elegance, exquisite humour and ease with which the playwright had used the convention. Shakespeare was not the first writer to use this device to serve a dramatic purpose. But the fact remains that he had handled it with superb mastery and skill. In his hands the machinery of romance acquires the novel function of articulating the theme. To say that it "wants credibility" and so the play "exhibits no just picture of life" challenges the very hypothesis of a romance and it has a logic of its own and it creates an independent frame of reference that baffles any moral or utilitarian test. Beguiled by its mazy plot and music, many might not even dare to ask if this disguise is probable.

Spread over a span of two decades Shakespeare's thirty seven plays as well as his non -- dramatic poems though ill - edited are a legacy to posterity, the vitality of his genius remains undiminished at the end of four centuries and seems to increase with every reading. His form is at once unique and incomparable, his individuality asserts itself with irrepressible power in the form of his plays, though marred by a few glaring faults. The defects of his genius are almost as striking as his merits and the poet is not always restrained by the dramatist in him.

IV.4 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we have learned about the title of the play and other important characteristics of the play which help us appreciate the play as the most delightful of his comedies "full of sweetness and pleasantry" and play of love at first sight inspite of various inconsistencies and improbabilities.

IV.5 - CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- 1) Write a note on the Title.
- 2) Discuss the love theme of the play ?
- 3) Explain the improbabilities in the play
- 4) Write briefly about the plot construction of the play.

IV.6 - SUGGESTED READINGS

- 1) *Twelfth Night* - Edited by K. Deighton.
- 2) John Dover Wilson - *The Essential Shakespeare (1932)*
- 3) S.A. Brooke - *The Plays of Shakespeare*
- 4) A.B. Charlton - *Shakespearean Comedy and Other Studies.*

P.N.V.D. Mahesh

Unit - II - TWELFTH NIGHT - II

IV.II.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * Understand the summary of the play

IV.II.1 - STRUCTURE

IV.II.0 OBJECTIVES

IV.II.1 STRUCTURE

IV.II.2 INTRODUCTION

IV.II.2.1 Out line summary of the play

IV.II.2.2 Scene wise / Act wise summary

IV.II.3 Let us sum up

IV.II.4 Check your progress

IV.II.5 Suggested Readings

IV.II.2 - INTRODUCTION

The second lesson helps you understand the outline summary of the play. In order to understand the play clearly scene wise summary is also given along with critical comments.

IV.II.2.1 OUTLINE SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

It is essential for the student to possess some knowledge of the general sweep of the action before any attempt can be made to interpret the play in greater detail. The following is a brief outline of the plot and this section should be constantly consulted while reading the play and the fuller summary follows.

Orsino, Duke of Illyria, is stimulating his strong streak of sentimentality by assuming the part of a languishing lover and courting his rich neighbour, the Countess Olivia, by deputy. To present his suit he sends to her Cesario, a favourite page who has just entered his employ. He does not know that this page is really Viola a shipwrecked gentlewoman in disguise, who has fallen in love with him. Olivia, like the Duke is a sentimentalist, and is indulging in a season of grief and mourning for a dead brother, refusing to entertain the advances of any man. Although

she admires her royal suitor, she cannot love him. Her sorrow over the loss of her brother is not so profound, however, as to keep her from falling passionately in love with the disguised Viola and from determining to see more of this youthful envoy of the Duke's. In Olivia's household only Malvolio, the melancholy steward, finds a morbid pleasure in the atmosphere of mourning which has been decreed. Her irresponsible uncle, Sir Toby Belch, a riotous gentleman who sponges on her, does not believe in excessive grief; he employs his time in drinking with Olivia's jester Feste and with his dupe, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, a wealthy but foolish and faint-hearted knight, who keeps Sir Toby in funds while the latter pretends to advance his courtship with the countess.

Sebastian, Viola's twin brother, whom she supposes to have been drowned in the shipwreck, arrives in Illyria with a sea captain, Antonio. Olivia, meanwhile, sends a ring to Cesario by the haughty and peevish Malvolio. This conceited fellow has been so arrogant towards Sir Toby and Olivia's servants that her maid, Maria, plots with Sir Toby to get him into trouble with the Countess. This they succeed in doing by placing where he will find it a bogus letter from Olivia in which she professes love for him and begs him, if he responds, to wear yellow hose, go cross-gartered and smile perpetually in her presence.

When Cesario returns to Olivia, the countess can no longer conceal her passion but makes advance to him openly. Fearing that Sir Andrew will leave Illyria in disgust, Sir Toby prods the cowardly knight into challenging the supposed page to a duel. In another part of the city, Antonio parts from Sebastian after having lent his purse to the youth. The revenge plot against Malvolio comes to a successful climax; his unaccountable antics lead Olivia to think him mad, and Sir Toby and Maria have little difficulty in having him committed to a dark room. With Malvolio disposed of, Sir Toby presses the fearful Sir Andrew and Cesario into a duel, but as they draw unwilling swords against each other, Antonio rushes in to rescue - as he supposes - his friend Sebastian. Recognizing the sea captain as an old enemy of the state, officers arrest him, and to his astonishment his appeal to the supposed Sebastian for money is met with a denial from Cesario that he ever saw him.

Seeing Cesario so timid, Sir Andrew rushes after him to complete the duel but encounters Viola's twin brother Sebastian, who readily draws his sword and wounds the astonished knight and also Sir Toby, who has come to his friend's rescue. Olivia interferes and mistaking Sebastian for Cesario, leads him into her house, sends for a priest and promptly marries the astonished young man. Meantime, at Maria's suggestion, Feste, the clown, completes the plot against Malvolio by going to the dark room in the guise of a curate and unmercifully badgering the imprisoned steward.

The Duke Orsino with the disguised Viola and other attendants appears before Olivia's house just as the Duke's officers enter with Antonio. Orsino supports Cesario's claim that he does not have the sea captain's purse, but turns upon him savagely when the Countess addresses the supposed youth as her husband and summons the priest to testify to the marriage. There is still more confusion when Sir Toby and Sir Andrew enter bleeding and accuse Cesario of having wounded them. The appearance of the twin brother astounds all, but clears up the

mystery; and the Duke gladly yields the Countess to the newcomer when he learns that his "page" is a lovely maiden anxious to marry him. Sir Toby weds Maria for her wit, and only Malvolio, released at last from his captivity, seems characteristically dissatisfied with the happiness of the others.

IV.II.2.2 SCENE WISE SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

ACT - I : Scene - 1

The play opens in a room in the palace of Orsino, Duke of Illyria. When the Duke enters with Curio and other attendants, musicians are playing. As the Duke is in love, he says that the music should continue, for it appeals to the emotion which he feels. Soon, however, he orders the players to stop, for the spirit of love is one which can suddenly change.

Curio asks whether his lord intends to go hunting the hart (deer), and with a play on words the Duke replies that he seeks the heart of his beloved Olivia.

Valentine, an attendant on the Duke, enters. He has returned from the house of Olivia, where he was sent by the Duke. She would not, however, see Valentine, for she is in seven years' mourning for her dead brother. The Duke is impressed by the deep feelings which Olivia feels for a dead brother when she marries, then the love which she will show for her husband will surely be a whole - hearted one.

Scene - 2

On the sea coast, we see Viola and a Sea Captain, who have both been saved from a sunken ship. Viola believes that her brother (Sebastian) has been drowned. The Captain, however, claims that he saw Sebastian clinging to one of the masts of the ship.

The Captain knows Illyria well, for he was born near the very place where they now stand. It is governed, he says, by a noble duke, Orsino, whose name Viola remembers having heard from her late father. When last the Captain heard of the Duke - only a month ago - he sought the hand of the wealthy Olivia, whose father died a year before, leaving his daughter in the protection of her brother. The brother died shortly after and now Olivia has declared that she will not have the company of men.

It is Viola's wish that she may serve Olivia, but this the Captain thinks to be impossible, for the countess will not even admit Orsino to her presence. To Viola there then comes the idea that she should, disguised as a boy serve the Duke as his page, and she offers the captain a generous reward if he will help to introduce her into the Duke's household.

Scene - 3

In this scene we are introduced to the hard-drinking Sir Toby Belch and Olivia's servant, Maria, in a room in Olivia's house. Sir Toby, uncle to Olivia cannot understand his niece's long

mourning for her dead brother, while Olivia, Maria says, objects to Sir Toby's late hours and wild habits. In particular Olivia does not like Toby's friend, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, being brought, to her house. Sir Toby brings him, of course, because of his wealth. Maria judges Sir Andrew as being but a fool, a coward and a drunkard. The foolish knight is actually deceived by Sir Toby into believing that Olivia would consider him as a husband.

Sir Andrew Aguecheek then enters, and both Sir Toby and Maria make jokes at his expense. Maria leaves the two men, and Sir Andrew announces that he intends to leave on the following day, for he feels that he has no chance to gain Olivia's hand. Sir Toby, however, talks him into staying, and this the gullible knight agrees to do.

Scene - 4

(In this scene we first see Viola disguised as the boy Cesario. We will, therefore, refer to Viola as "Cesario" and use the pronouns "he", "his", "him", etc., whenever Viola is in the presence of others who believe her to be a male.)

In a room in the Duke's palace are Valentine and Viola (disguised as a page and known as Cesario). It is clear that Cesario has quickly become well liked by the Duke.

Orsino, Curio and attendants then enter. The Duke addresses Cesario (Viola) ordering him to go to the house of Olivia and not to leave there until he sees the countess in person. He must tell her of the deep love which the Duke feels for her. Although the Duke feels sure that his young messenger will do more than would one older, Cesario is doubtful but promises to do his best.

Scene - 5

In a room in Olivia's house are found Maria and Feste (the clown). Maria demands to know why Feste has been away for so long from Olivia's house, but the clown jokes with her and she leaves without knowing the reason for his absence.

Olivia then enters with her steward Malvolio. The countess is at first angry with the clown and orders him to be removed from her presence, but Feste's wit quickly wins her over to his side again. The prim and proper Malvolio, however, is amazed that Olivia can see fun in such a fool as her clown. Olivia accuses Malvolio of being so full of self-importance that he cannot appreciate a joke.

Maria then enters to tell her mistress that there is a young man at the gate who wishes to talk to her, but he is prevented from entering by Sir Toby. Olivia orders that Sir Toby be called away from the gate, but, if the messenger is from the Duke, he must be sent away. Sir Toby then enters, but he is clearly drunk and thus Olivia tells the clown to look after him.

Malvolio, sent to attend to the messenger at the gate, then returns. The young man, the steward says, is determined to see Olivia and will not go away until he does. Although young,

Malvolio says, the youth speaks well and is of good bearing. At last therefore, Olivia grants admittance. Calling Maria, Olivia asks for her veil..

Cesario (Viola) then enters, and asks if he addresses Olivia. At first Olivia is unwilling to hear the Duke's messenger, but Cesario is insistent and Olivia dismisses Maria so that she may hear the youth alone. At Cesario's request, Olivia unveils and the young messenger praises her beauty.

The page then tries to explain to Olivia the love which Orsino feels for her but the countess, while admitting the Duke's good points, feels that she cannot love him. If only, Cesario says, he loved Olivia with the same passion as his master, he could never leave her gate. Olivia, however, is clearly more interested in the page than in the Duke; nevertheless, she tells him to return to his master saying that she cannot love him. Cesario refuses the money which she offers him.

Once Cesario is gone, Olivia thinks deeply and affectionately about the youth. Calling Malvolio, she orders him to go after Cesario and to give back the ring which he left (Cesario, of course, left no ring) and to tell him that if he should call again she will tell him the reason for which she returns it.

ACT II : Scene - 1

On the sea-coast we meet Antonio (a sea captain) and Sebastian (brother to Viola). To the captain, Sebastian explains he and his sister (Viola) were twins. Now, it appears, he has been saved from the shipwreck while his beloved sister has lost her life. So grieved is he at the thought that his sister has been drowned that Sebastian would rather that Antonio should kill him. Nevertheless, heart-sore though he is, Sebastian determines to go to the court of Duke Orsino.

Antonio also wishes that he could go with Sebastian, but he has fought in battle against Duke Orsino and is thus a deadly enemy. In spite of the danger, however, the brave Captain determines to follow Sebastian.

Scene - 2

In a street, Cesario (Viola) is overtaken by Malvolio, who bears Olivia's ring and asks Cesario to take it back. Cesario, being sharply aware of Olivia's feelings, protests that Olivia took the ring from him and thus he refuses to take it back. Malvolio, however, throws the ring on the ground and makes his way back to his mistress's house. Left alone, Viola picks up the ring. She then bitterly realizes the irony of the situation. For while Duke Orsino is deeply in love with Olivia in spite of her showing no love in return, the strange situation has arisen in which Olivia is in love with the Duke's page, not knowing that the page is a woman in men's clothing.

Scene - 3

Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek are up well after midnight in a room in Olivia's house. The clown then enters and both the knights call for a song. Bribed with money, Feste sings them the song, "O Mistress mine", but in the midst of the drunken revelry, Maria enters to warn them of Olivia's displeasure at such scenes in her house.

Almost immediately afterwards, Malvolio comes in, bearing from his mistress a stern request for silence. For, says the steward, although Sir Toby may be his mistress's uncle, she will ask him to leave her house if he does not act in an orderly manner. Sir Toby, however, will not take a reprimand from Olivia's steward, and asks Maria for more wine. Malvolio leaves, urging Maria not to give more liquor to the knight, for the countess would not approve.

As soon as Malvolio has gone, Sir Andrew and Sir Toby suggest challenging the steward to a duel. Maria, however, has a better plan for dealing with the puritan Malvolio. (At the time of the writing of Twelfth Night the Puritans were much in disfavour in the eyes of the king. It is suggested that Shakespeare introduced the idea of Malvolio's being a puritan in order to gain the royal favour of King James-I). Maria's plan is to deliver to Malvolio, in some way or another, a letter that will suggest that Olivia is in love with him, for she can right in a hand very like that of her mistress. The two knights greet this scheme with enthusiasm. Maria retires. Sir Toby having approached his friend. Sir Andrew, for more money, the scene ends.

Scene - 4

In the Duke's Court are Orsino, Cesario(Viola), Curio and others. The Duke calls for music, asking for him who had sung the previous night. Curio explains that it was Feste, Olivia's clown. Orsino then speaks to Cesario, amazed that the "boy" has so deep an insight into love and all that love means. He asks Cesario whom it is that he loves, and his answer is someone of the Duke's age and complexion. One should, the Duke says, marry a woman younger than oneself, for a woman adapts herself to a man, while a man's love is more fickle than that of a woman. Curio then returns with Feste, and the clown sings a song for the Duke, who gives him money for his trouble.

Orsino desires to be left alone with Cesario, and he instructs his page to go once more to Olivia to tell her of his love. Cesario asks, however, what the position would be if some woman were to love him (Orsino) as deeply as he loves Olivia, and yet he were to feel that he could not return the love. The Duke is sure, however, that no woman could love a man as deeply as he loves Olivia. Cesario then tells the Duke of his "sister", who loved a man very dearly but could never reveal it (the significance of this, of course, lies in that Viola is deeply in love with the Duke, but being disguised as the boy Cesario she cannot reveal it). Orsino instructs Cesario to go once again to Olivia's court.

Scene - 5

In the garden of Olivia's palace we see Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Fabian (a servant to Olivia). The time has arrived for the practical joke which Maria is to play on Malvolio, and Maria comes to urge the men to hide behind a tree. Knowing that Malvolio will soon be coming down the path, she drops the letter which she has written.

Malvolio, in all his vanity, walks down the path. It is clear that he believes that Olivia has some affection for him -- he has heard so from Maria -- and other noble women have married their stewards. Meanwhile, it is difficult for the others to keep Sir Toby quiet as they lie hidden behind the tree. The vain Malvolio even imagines the day when he can be patronizing towards his "inferior" -- Sir Toby -- and can urge him to a more sober way of life.

Malvolio then notices the letter, which he picks up. The handwriting suggests that it comes from his mistress, Olivia. The letter is addressed to "M O A I" which the steward interprets as his own name. Reading further, it instructs him to be hostile to a kinsman (Sir Toby) and to the servants; furthermore, he should wear yellow stockings and dress himself cross-gartered. In a postscript, the letter urges him to appear smiling before his lover. (Everything which the letter urges Malvolio to do is, of course, just what Maria knows Olivia to dislike!).

Sure of his mistress's love, Malvolio leaves, while Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Fabian and Maria have a good laugh, for they know how Olivia will react to the yellow stockings, the cross-garters and the smiles of Malvolio.

ACT III : Scene - 1

In Olivia's garden, Cesario (Viola) meets Feste the clown. We have in this scene some examples of the clown's jests, for when Cesario asks whether he lives by the drum (meaning whether he lives by his music), the clown replies that he lives by the church---not that he is a clergyman but his house is near the church. Again, when Cesario suggests that Feste cares for nothing (meaning that he has a light-hearted approach to life) the clown replies that he does care for something but he does not care for Cesario, i.e., he does not like Cesario. On Cesario's asking whether he is Olivia's fool (i.e., clown), he replies that Olivia has no folly and will keep no fool until she marries. Cesario asks whether Olivia is within and gives Feste money. The clown leaves, and presently Cesario is joined in the garden by Sir Toby and Sir Andrew. Sir Toby tells Cesario that Olivia is desirous that he should enter, but before the Duke's page can do so Olivia herself comes into the garden with Maria.

Olivia dismisses Maria and the two knights as she wishes to be alone with Cesario. The page calls himself Olivia's servant; for, since he is servant to the Duke and the Duke is Olivia's servant, Cesario is therefore the servant of Olivia. Cesario explains that the purpose of his visit is to bring to the countess the Duke's love. Olivia, however, asks that no more be said of the Duke for, she admits, she is in love with Cesario. The countess also admits having sent Malvolio after Cesario with the ring, agreeing that she displayed "fearful cunning" in doing so.

Cesario, however, feels pity for Olivia in her emotions (for, naturally, Olivia must eventually learn that the Duke's page is the girl Viola, disguised in men's clothing). Olivia says, however, that she "will not have" Cesario; yet, when the page turns to go, Olivia again tells Cesario of her love. Cesario departs, saying that no woman will ever have his heart (for, since Viola is a woman, it is impossible for her to fall in love with a woman). Olivia begs that Cesario should call again.

(In this scene we see that disguise may carry one successfully to a certain point, but that eventually it will lead to grave complications.)

Scene - 2

This scene is in a room in Olivia's palace, where we see Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Fabian. Sir Andrew has decided to leave the court, for he sees that Olivia is in love with the Duke's page and not with him. (Remember that Sir Toby, wanting to make use of Sir Andrew's money, keeps him in the court by persuading him that he stands a chance of winning Olivia's hand.) Fabian tells Sir Andrew that Olivia paid attention to the page (Cesario) so as to make him (Sir Andrew) jealous; it was Sir Andrew's duty to have shown Olivia how much better a man he is than the page.

Sir Toby says that the only possible way in which Sir Andrew can redeem himself is to challenge Cesario to a duel, and Fabian agrees that this is the right course to take. They therefore urge Sir Andrew to write a challenge to the page.

After Sir Andrew has left, Sir Toby and Fabian joke heartily about the duel. For Sir Toby knows that his fellow knight is an utter coward, while Fabian remarks that Cesario appears too gentle to be a fighter.

Maria then enters, to hear the news that Malvolio, on the strength of the letter which he picked up, is now dressed in yellow stockings, is cross-gartered and smiles all the time. Sir Toby asks only that he be given the opportunity of seeing Malvolio at his antics.

Scene - 3

(In Act II, Scene 1, we saw how Antonio, the sea captain, felt the urge to follow his friend Sebastian (brother to Viola---who, as we know, is now disguised as a page), although he knew that he was in danger in Orsino's dukedom. In this scene, we see Antonio once again with Sebastian.)

Sebastian and Antonio are together, the captain explaining that his love for Sebastian is so sincere that he cannot think of his wandering alone in a strange town. Sebastian is grateful for what Antonio has done, and suggests that they pass some time in looking at the sights of the town. Antonio, however, asks Sebastian to excuse him for not joining him; for Antonio is in danger in the town, having once fought in battle against Orsino's ships. While most of Antonio's fellow citizens had repaid to the Duke what had been taken, he had not done so, and thus he could be thrown into prison if caught. Antonio is nevertheless anxious that Sebastian should not

be robbed of enjoyment, and thus he gives Sebastian his purse and arranges that they meet again at the Elephant Inn.

Scene - 4

Olivia and Maria are in the garden of the countess's palace. Olivia, deeply in love, has sent for Cesario, and she confides to Maria how deeply she feels for the youth. The seriousness of Malvolio is in keeping with Olivia's feelings, and thus she sends for her steward. Maria warns her mistress that Malvolio is in a strange mood. Even when Olivia tells him that she feels sad (because of her love for Cesario) Malvolio smiles and tells Olivia that he comes in the way she wished. (Malvolio, having acted on the letter dropped by Maria, is wearing yellow stockings, is crossgartered, and wears a perpetual smile!)

Malvolio quotes lines from the letter he picked up, but Olivia can only think that he is ill and should go to bed. A servant then calls to announce that Cesario waits to see Olivia. The countess therefore tells Maria to make sure that Malvolio (whom she believes to be mad) is looked after, for she would not like to see him come to harm.

Olivia then leaves, and Malvolio is sure that Olivia has put him in the care of Sir Toby for a purpose, for the letter told him to be "opposite with a kinsman" and to be "surly with servants".

Sir Toby and Fabian then enter, the knight announcing that his niece (Olivia) wishes him to look after Malvolio. The two men and Maria humour the lovesick Malvolio, who soon leaves as the others are not of his class. After the steward has gone, Sir Toby, Maria and Fabian realize that the letter has affected Malvolio more than they ever thought likely. Sir Toby, however, decides that Malvolio must be put in a dark room; for, since Olivia thinks him mad, they can carry their joke to its limits.

Sir Andrew comes in with the challenge which he has written to Cesario. Sir Toby reads it to the company, and agrees to give it to the page. Sir Andrew must now wait his chance to fight Cesario. After Sir Andrew has gone, Sir Toby tells Fabian and Maria that he has no intention of delivering the letter, for it is so poorly written that it will impress nobody. Sir Toby will rather deliver the challenge by word of mouth.

Seeing Olivia and Cesario approaching, Sir Toby, Fabian and Maria leave. Olivia is trying hard to impress Cesario with the love she feels for him. The page, however, asks only that she show love for his master, the Duke. Olivia leaves, imploring that Cesario should come again.

Sir Toby Belch and Fabian then return, and the knight announces to Cesario that his opponent awaits him in the orchard. Cesario cannot understand who could wish to fight with him, for he has no enemies. He therefore asks Sir Toby to find out in what way he has offended. Sir Toby does so, leaving Cesario with Fabian.

While Sir Toby is away, Fabian tries to impress upon Cesario what a great fighter Sir Andrew is. Fabian and Cesario then walk away.

Sir Toby returns with Sir Andrew, and impresses on the latter the bravery and the skill of Cesario as a fighter. Sir Andrew wants to withdraw from the duel and on hearing that Cesario is determined to fight offers his horse to settle the argument.

At this point Viola (Cesario) comes near to disclosing her identity. Sir Andrew is as frightened of Cesario as Cesario is of him but, convinced by Sir Toby that Cesario will not hurt him, Sir Andrew draws his sword.

The duel is interrupted by the arrival of Antonio who, mistaking Cesario for Sebastian (remember that Sebastian and Viola are twins and thus Viola, disguised as Cesario, looks much like her brother) draws his sword to protect Cesario. Sir Toby then wants to fight with Antonio, but the confusion comes to an end when officers arrive and arrest Antonio.

Antonio (still thinking he is talking to Sebastain) asks Cesario for his money (for Antonio had given Sebastain his purse). Cesario is bewildered at the request, but offers to lend Antonio half of all he has in consideration of the kind help the Captain has given against Sir Andrew. Antonio cannot understand what has happened and he bitterly explains to the officers how he had saved Sebastain (whom he confuses with Cesario) from drowning. Viola is thus given to some deep thinking, as it occurs to her that her brother may, after all, have been saved.

After Cesario has gone, Sir Toby convinces Sir Andrew that the boy is a coward. Thus Sir Andrew hastens after him.

ACT IV : Scene - 1

In the street before Olivia's house, Feste the clown meets Sebastian, whom he mistakes for Cesario. Sebastian, of course, cannot understand why Olivia should have sent the clown to call him; he therefore gives Feste money and tells him to go.

Sir Andrew comes in and also mistaking Sebastian for Cesario, hits him. Sebastian, however, forcibly returns the blows. Sir Toby, entering with Fabian, interferes, and Sebastian draws his sword.

Olivia enters and angrily orders Sir Toby to stop fighting. She dismisses the two knights and Fabian. Left alone with Sebastian (whom she thinks is Cesario) She asks him to come into her house. Although he does not understand the situation, Sebastian follows Olivia.

Scene - 2

In a room in Olivia's house, Sir Toby, Maria and Feste are preparing a practical joke on Malvolio now locked in a dark room. Feste has dressed up as Sir Topas, the curate, and they go to Malvolio's room.

Malvolio, from within, greets "Sir Topas" and asks him to call Olivia. The clown replies that Malvolio must be mad, for he says that his room is dark when it is a room with huge bay windows. (Actually, of course, it has no windows at all) After continuing to tease Malvolio in this way for some time, Feste drops his mimicry of a parson; Sir Toby and Maria leave.

Malvolio now pleads with the clown to see that he gets a light and is given paper whereon to write a note to Olivia.

Scene - 3

Sebastian is in the garden of Olivia's house, almost unable to believe that things are real. He knows that he is not mad; but yet he can hardly believe that Olivia is in love with him. He thinks, too of Antonio, and wonders why he was not to be found at the Elephant Inn.

Olivia then enters with a priest. Before the priest, they will "plight their troth". (In shakespearean times it was usual for the contract of marriage to be solemnized privately before a priest some forty days before the official wedding ceremony. The former is what is referred to when Olivia asks Sebastian to "Plight me the full assurance of your faith.")

ACT V : Scene - 1

The clown and Fabian are in the street outside Olivia's house. Fabian is anxious to read the letter which Feste has brought from Malvolio, but the clown will not show it to him.

Duke Orsino enters with Cesario, Curio and others, and asks Fabian and Feste whether they are of the Countess Olivia's household. The Duke, of course, recognizes the clown (who has played before him in his court), and the clown jokes with the Duke, earning handsome rewards for his efforts.

Cesario then calls the Duke's attention to Antonio, whom he sees approaching with officers, and tells Orsino that he is the man who rescued him from Sir Andrew. The Duke recognizes in Antonio the captain of a ship against which the Duke's fleet had fought. The first officer supports this, and reminds the Duke that Antonio captured the ship *Phoenix* after the vessel, laden with freight, had sailed from Crete; he had also boarded the *Tiger*, in a fight in which Orsino's nephew lost a leg. As the officer had seen Antonio in a street fight, he had taken him into arrest.

Cesario adds that Antonio had bravely rescued him from Sir Andrew. Afterwards, however, he spoke strangely. The Duke cannot think why Antonio should have come to Illyria, knowing the danger in which he stands.

Antonio protests that he has never been either a thief or a pirate, although he agrees to being the Duke's enemy. He was drawn to the town through his love for the young boy (she thinks Cesario is Sebastian), whom he saved from drowning after the sinking of his ship. Notwithstanding the danger, Antonio came to Illyria and drew his sword in defence of his friend. The ungrateful youth, however had refused even to return his purse.

The Duke asks when Antonio's young friend came to the town. Antonio replies that it was only half an hour before the duel. This the Duke realizes to be impossible, for Cesario has served him as a page for three months.

Seeing Olivia approaching with attendants, Orsino orders Antonio to be taken to one side. The countess asks Cesario (she confuses Sebastian and Cesario) why he has not kept his word with her. Cesario says that his master would speak with her, and the countess is ready to hear the Duke so long as it is not on the old theme of his love for her. Orsino feels forlorn that Olivia does not return his love, the more so as he can see that she loves Cesario. His jealousy tells him that he must kill Cesario so as to save his own broken heart. Therefore the Duke turns to go and Cesario prepares to follow him for the young page would gladly die for his master.

Olivia (not realizing that it was with Sebastian and not Cesario that she appeared before the priest) chides the page for his faithlessness. and asks if he has forgotten how they swore marriage vows before the holy priest. At that moment the priest himself arrives and he supports Olivia by telling the Duke that Cesario and the countess had only two hours before sworn the holy vows of matrimony.

The Duke is amazed to hear this, and he charges Cesario with deception in that he has sought Olivia's hand in marriage while professing to be pressing his master's suit. Cesario may take Olivia as his wife, but he must never again cross the Duke's path.

Before Cesario can speak, Sir Andrew arrives. Sir Toby needs a surgeon, for he has been wounded by Cesario (it was, of course, Sebastian who had attacked Sir Toby). Sir Andrew tells the others how he had himself been set upon by Cesario (again, of course, he refers to his coming to blows with Sebastian).

Sir Toby then arrives. He is clearly drunk and Olivia orders Sir Andrew, Fabian and the clown to take him away, so that his wounds may be seen to.

Sebastian himself appears on the scene, and apologizes to Olivia for hurting Sir Toby. The Duke is the first to see the likeness in appearance, in voice and in demeanour between Sebastian and Cesario. Sebastian greets his old friend and helper, Antonio, and the captain asks which of the two people really is Sebastian.

Sebastian explains that he has no brother, but had a sister who was drowned in a shipwreck. Cesario announces that he comes from Messaline; his father was named Sebastian and he had a brother also called Sebastian; this brother however had been drowned.

In reply, Sebastian says that if Cesario were a woman he would greet her as his sister Viola. It is then that Viola reveals her identity and admits that, after being received by a sea captain, she had disguised herself as a man and entered the service of the Duke.

The Duke is only too anxious to see Viola in her women's clothes. Unfortunately, however, the sea captain has Viola's clothes and this captain is now in prison on the orders of

Malvolio. (This is introduced by Shakespeare so that the audience will not feel too much sympathy for Malvolio.)

Olivia orders Malvolio to be brought to her, but then remembers that her steward is ill and, she believes, out of his mind. The clown then enters, with Fabian, and gives Olivia a letter from Malvolio. In this letter Malvolio tells of the injustice which he feels at being put into a dark room under Sir Toby, for he is fully in his senses. Whatever he did was the result of the letter which the countess wrote him. (i.e., the letter written by Maria in her mistress's hand). Olivia orders that Malvolio be released.

Malvolio then appears, protesting against the wrong which the countess has done him. He shows Olivia the letter in which she asked him to wear yellow stockings, to dress himself cross-gartered and to smile all the time. Olivia tells Malvolio that, although the writing is very much like her own, it is plain to her that Maria penned the letter. Nevertheless, justice will be done to Malvolio for what has happened.

Fabian explains that Sir Toby and he were the prime movers in the plot, and that Maria had written the letter for them. Sir Toby has, indeed, married Maria. It was, however, all meant as a joke and there was no maliciousness behind their plot. Olivia feels sorry for Malvolio because he has been made to look foolish.

The Clown adds that he had a hand in the plot by posing as Sir Topas. Thus he had had his revenge on Malvolio, who had always looked upon him as a fool.

Angrily vowing vengeance, Malvolio leaves. The Duke orders that they go after Malvolio, however, for he has yet to answer questions about his imprisoning the sea captain. Once that has been settled, he and Viola will marry.

All leave, save the clown, who ends the scene (and the play) with the song "Hey, ho, the wind and the rain".

IV.II.3. LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we have understood not only the outline summary of the play but also the scene wise summary along with critical comments which help us go into the details of the play in order to understand it on sound lines.

IV.II.4 - CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- 1) The dominant theme of the play is love - Discuss.
- 2) Explain the significance of ring episode.
- 3) What is importance of the duel episode ?

IV.II.5 SUGGESGED READINGS

- 1) Notes on Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* Methuen & Co., Ltd.
- 2) S.C. Sen Gupta - *Shakespearean Comedy*
- 3) J.W. Mackail - *The Approach to Shakespeare* (Oxford 1934)

P.N.V.D. Mahesh

Unit - III - TWELFTH NIGHT - III

IV.III.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- analyse the characters of the play

IV.III.1 STRUCTURE

IV.III.0 OBJECTIVES

IV.III.1 STRUCTURE

IV.III.2 INTRODUCTION

IV.III.3 CHARACTERISATION

Major Characters

IV.III.3.1 - Olivia

IV.III.3.2 - Viola

IV.III.3.3 - Orsino The Duke

IV.III.3.4 - Malvolio

IV.III.3.5 - Feste The Clown

IV.III.4 Minor Characters

IV.III.4.1 - Maria

IV.III.4.2 - Sir Toby Belch

IV.III.4.3 - Sir Andrew Aguecheek

IV.III.4.4 - Fabian

IV.III.5 Plot Construction of the Play

IV.III.6 Let us sum up

IV.III.7 Check your progress

IV.III.8 Suggested Readings

IV.III.2 INTRODUCTION

The lesson aims at helping you analyse the nature of all major characters of the play, and the development of action from the beginning till the end.

Character delineation is the strong point of Shakespeare's works. His fame rests more on the exquisite way in which he re-tells a story that he borrowed and recreates the characters and atmosphere, adding new characters and incidents to heighten or sublimate the effects of his narrative. The deep reflective power and subtle insight into the working of minds of characters makes Goethe reflect that Shakespeare's "characters are like watches with dial plates of transparent crystal... they show you the hour like others and inward mechanism is also visible." Characterisation is the really fundamental and lasting element in any play. In matters of characterisation and creating an atmosphere, in a play is different from a novel. The first condition of dramatic art is brevity. The dramatist has to deal with motive and character within the narrowly circumscribed area of a few scenes while a novelist has no such limit, he can enter into a dialogue with the reader directly and explain the implications of a situation, in detail if need be. So concentration as a necessary condition of dramatic characterisation, of course, implies the most carefully considered emphasis upon the qualities which have to be brought into relief. Prof. Tolston states in this connection that only those characteristics of a hero, and for that of any important character "should be made prominent which really influences the course of action, and that these characteristics should be unmistakable".

Impersonality of the artist is another essential feature because the dramatist cannot constitute himself the judge and official interpreter of his characters and commentator on the situations. He has to make the characters his medium of expression to unfold the theme, to disclose the personalities and explain the significance of situations.

The plot is means to characterisation because we know the characters by what they do. Through the very movement of the story, and particularly through its great crises and situations, the larger intellectual and moral qualities of the persons who take part in it are necessarily impressed upon us. The plot shows the man in action and discloses the broad characteristics only. The principal function of dialogue in the drama is in direct connection with characterisation.

Carlyle says, "It is in what I call portrait painting, delineating of men and things, especially of men that Shakespeare is great. All the greatness of the man comes out decisively here. It is unexampled, I think that calm and creative perspicacity of Shakespeare. The things he looks at reveals this or not that face of it, but its inmost heart and generic secret; it dissolves itself as in light before him, so that he discerns the perfect structure of it."

IV.III.3 CHARACTERISATION MAJOR CHARACTERS

IV.III.3.1 OLIVIA

Olivia stands at the central point of the whole action. When seen at the outset, it can be inferred from her bearing that she is a woman of unusual energy. She is mourning the death of her father and brother. For seven years she intends to go veiled; oppressed by melancholy, she laments in cloister-like retirement, and has abjured the company of men. The power of feeling which induces such a resolve, and the strength of character which trusts to itself to carry it out, influence her whole nature.

She is revealed as a dignified aristocrat of free and serious mind - not of a humour to bear the jests of a messenger, but thoroughly capable of thoughtfully receiving the significant thrusts of her jester. Not sufficiently masculine to dismiss with more than words the dissolute relatives who beset her house, she is, nevertheless, carefully considerate of maintaining order through her puritanical steward, whom she holds in honour for the sake of his virtuous zeal.

By various traits she sustains the severely moral character which these qualities indicate; she is an enemy of all fashionable dress; if Viola calls herself her servant, she considers it "lowly feigning"; the manner in which she turns her back on the Duke's suit seems to infer an icy coldness of character; "my mouse of virtue" is the term which the fool confers upon her.

The appearance of Viola in the guise of "Cesario" serves to transform the Countess's personality. She becomes suddenly restless and absent-minded, enquires after the messenger's parentage, fixes her eyes steadfastly upon "him" sends "him", a ring, and invites "him" to come again. Indeed, with the same eagerness as that with which she had before expressed her aversion to Orsino, she now pursues this awakening passion. Olivia is obliged to confess that "a murderous guilt shows not itself more soon than love that would seem hid", and she passes from the one extreme of a somewhat intense melancholy and resignation to the other extreme of ardent passion.

Even her pride-- her last weapon against her overpowering feeling is blunted; a fiend like Cesario, she confesses, might bear her soul to hell, but she would even gain the disdainful youth by bribery. Suddenly she encounters Sebastian, and discovers her imagined Cesario a transformed character. In her "extracting frenzy", as she herself calls her condition, she forgets every other business, but never her own dignity and chains her unexpectedly obtained favourite indissolubly to herself in the bonds of marriage.

Brandes on Olivia

"The Countess Olivia forms a pendant to the Duke: She, like him, is full of yearning melancholy. With an ostentatious exaggeration of sisterly love, she has vowed to pass seven whole years veiled like a nun, consecrating her whole life to sorrow for her brother. Yet we find in her speeches no trace of this devouring sorrow; she jests with her household, and rules it ably and well until, at the first sight of the disguised Viola, she flames out into passion, and, careless of the

traditional reserve of her sex, takes the most daring step to win the supposed youth. She is conceived as an unbalanced character, who passes at a bound from exaggerated hatred for all worldly things to total forgetfulness of her never-to-be forgotten sorrow. Yet she is not comic like Phoebe, for Shakespeare has indicated that it is the Sebastian type foreshadowed in the disguised Viola, which is irresistible to her; and Sebastian, we see at once, requites the love which his sister had to reject. Her utterance of her passion, moreover, is always poetically beautiful. "yet while she is sighing in vain for Viola, she necessarily appears as though seized with a mild erotic madness, similar to that of the Duke: and the folly of each is parodied in a witty and delightful fashion by Malvolio's entirely ludicrous love for his mistress, and his vain confidence that she returns it. Olivia feels and says that herself, where she exclaims

"Go, call him hither, I am as mad as he
If sad and merry madness equal be."

IV.III.3.2 VIOLA

A feminine contrast to the Duke and his assuming self-centred love is presented by Shakespeare in Viola's modest nature, and her quiet reserved passion. From the testimony of her twin brother, she is accounted beautiful by all; the Duke, too, considers her lips "smooth and rubious" as Diana's and her soft maiden-like voice strikes him, when he sees her in the page's dress. "She bore a mind," says Sebastian, "which envy could but call fair"

When shipwrecked and impoverished Viola is driven to the inhospitable shores of Illyria and her first wish is to go to Olivia, in order that she may withdraw from the world; when this appears hard to compass, she goes in man's attire to the Duke. Scarcely is she with him than she wins the favour and full confidence of the tender-hearted lover, and is commissioned with his messages to Olivia. Viola herself just as quickly conceives an affection for Orsino, but she confesses it in secret with one passing sigh -- a serious hope of possessing him never occurs to her, and she dutifully delivers her message.

The man who has no power over Olivia captivates Viola's heart more and more; moreover, he touches her heart far more deeply because of his hopeless position, which is so analogous to her own. On the other hand, she steals gently, though disguised as a boy, into the heart of the man; in a masterly manner, she knows how to speak of the passion which torments Orsino, and his most subtle observations meet with her understanding; she knows how to whisper to the Duke that she shall never love a wife as she does him.

When Orsino at last goes personally to work, and is rejected by Olivia, his shallow love for the countess turns suddenly into hate and jealousy; he wishes to sacrifice Olivia's favourite, Cesario, to his revenge, and the victim offers herself readily to the knife. When matters are explained, Viola confesses her disguise, and the Duke suddenly appreciates what he has learnt from her modest love and its language; Orsino has little hesitation in making his former page his "mistress and his fancy's queen".

Mrs. Jameson on Viola

“Viola is the chosen favourite of the enamoured Duke, and becomes his messenger to Olivia and the interpreter of his sufferings to that inaccessible beauty. In her character of youthful page, she attracts the favour of Olivia, and excites the jealousy of her lord. The situation is critical and delicate, but how exquisitely is the character of Viola fitted to her part, carrying her through the ordeal with all the inward and spiritual grace of modesty ! What beautiful propriety is the distinction drawn between Rosalind and Viola ! The wild sweetness and the frolic humour, which sports free and unblamed amid the shades of Ardenne, would ill become Viola, whose playfulness is assumed as part of her disguise as a court page, and is guarded by the strictest delicacy. She has not, like Rosalind, a saucy enjoyment in her own incognito; her disguise does not sit so easily upon her; her heart does not beat freely under it. As in the old ballad, where sweet William is detected weeping in secret over her man’s array, so for Viola, a sweet consciousness of her feminine nature is for ever breaking through her masquerade

“And on her cheek is ready with a blush

Modest as morning, when she coldly eyes

The youthful Phoebus”

“The feminine cowardice of Viola, which will not allow her even to affect a courage becoming her attire – her horror at the idea of drawing a sword, is very natural and characteristic; and produces a most humorous effect, even at the very moment it charms and interests us.”

IV.III.3.3 Orsino the Duke

Orsino, the Duke of Illyria, represents a type of wealthy young men who live in a world of fancy. Liberal praise is bestowed on him by the other characters. He is described as an attractive figure, “of fresh and stainless youth”, “free learned and valiant,” and “a gracious person”. He is known to be noble “in nature as in name”. Even Olivia admits him to be noble. He is kindly and courageous to all, eloquent and full of poetic thoughts and sentiments.

At the opening of the play, he appears to us to be an egoist, a dilettante in love, who is too much occupied with his own painful and pleasurable emotion to feel very strong or lasting affection for another. But the “passion of Orsino does not spring from those inmost recesses of the heart whence alone draws its irresistible spell; it is a nursling of the fancy and in its lack of fibre and of magnetic force betrays but too clearly the sources of its being. The sympathy he gains by the rejection of his love by Olivia at first is forfeited and it becomes clear that his sorrows are an expression of self-conscious melancholy. They are fine speeches made by a literary artist using his own emotions as a “subject.” His love of Olivia was almost a fiction; she had only “entrenched his imagination, not won his heart”.

An amiable egoist Orsino is in fact blinded by his image of himself as an ardent but despairing lover that he is maimed by the obsession. He is incapable of discerning the fact that he can never inspire love in a woman except as in case of Viola who is wrapt up in him to perceive his defects. It is for this trait that he accepts Viola’s devotion as a matter of course.

Possibly he would have won Olivia had he been driven by his irresistible passion into her presence and made 'a willow cabin' at Olivia's gate and sing the loyal cantons of his condemned love but his egomania comes in the way.

"When at last he nerves himself to plead his suit in person, it is too late, for Olivia is already contracted by Sebastian, whom she has mistaken for Viola, in whom he recognizes a triumphant rival." With the reappearance of Sebastian and the revelation of Viola's true sex, Orsino now finds the cue to the enigmatical speeches of his supposed page on the subject of love and with all the sudden, overwhelming changes of feelings, he transfers his affections wholesale to Viola and proclaims her his mistress and his fancy's queen.

"Though he seems to be favoured beyond his deserts in carrying off so lightly a far richer prize than that for which he had long sighed in vain, the chastened tone of his utterances encourage the hope that his dilettante love in idleness has been but the prelude to genuine manly devotion, driving its roots deep into the secret places of the soul" (Boas)

Stopford Brooke on Orsino

"The Duke's love is love in idleness; and he is always discussing it and holding it in different lights, feelings it in different ways and surroundings, and it seems as if he were at play with it."

"In all the imaginations of an imagined love, he is just like Romeo in love with Rosalind before he met Juliet. It is a fantasy of passion that he feels, not passion itself. Like Romeo he seeks solitude. "I myself am best, when least in company." Like Romeo he unloads his heart in words to Curio, even in the hearing of his court. When Viola joins him, he "unclasps to her" whom he thinks a youth "the book even of his secret soul".

"The deeper passions are not like this. They are surface-smooth and still, like profound waters. Music, to which the Duke, with his love of beauty, is always flying for solace, does not relieve the greater passions but disturbs them into a storm."

IV.III.3.4 MALVOLIO

With Malvolio "self-love" is the "ruling passion". His self-love is responsible for his failure in understanding that "to be generous, guiltless and of free disposition, is to take those things for bird-bolts that he deems cannon bullets". He is cold, austere, repelling, but dignified, consistent and rather of an over -- stretched morality. He has no stretched comprehension of things that do not fall within his sense of propriety and decorum.

He is essentially ludicrous, but becomes comic by accident. Olivia knows his weaknesses -- overweening sense of his own importance, vain and self - conceited -- and other things that recommend him. He is a capable and trustworthy steward who is sober, industrious in discharging his duties, whom Olivia "would not have him miscarry for the half of her dowry".

His rebuke to the knights, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew and their Scottish revellers is spirited and sensible. That Malvolio was meant to be represented as possessing estimable qualities, the expression of the Duke, in his anxiety to have him reconciled almost infers; "Pursue him and entreat him to a peace."

The steward has a positive gift for fault -- finding. He has not a grain of humour and hence he takes things too seriously. Too dull to see a joke, he looks on the clown's jests as offences against sense. It is natural for him to magnify trifles into grave misdemeanours. His sense of dignity brings him to ridicule in the plot against him. He becomes the victim and central figure in the sub-plot. Most of the comic scenes revolve round him and his self - conceit and swelling vanity make him the easy butt for the confederates headed by Maria.

A over virtuous person who loves virtue for its own sake, Malvolio is just in day dreaming to censure Sir Toby and bidding him "amend his ways." Maria considers "the house will be the quieter", if the steward goes mad, and is confined. Handing over the ring his lady gives him to return to Cesario, Malvolio says "You might have saved me my pains".

Maria does not want the steward's austere, cold outlook on things be understood as puritanic. She describes him "an affected ass" that crammed excellencies "a kind of puritan", "a time pleaser". She certainly brings him out in true colours through an ingenuous thick. Malvolio is misled into believing that his lady loves him. To please Olivia, he follows the instructions implicitly and his vanity is tickled. He practises behaviour, he struts like a rare turkey and jets under his advanced plumes", he is presumptuous to wish that Olivia also certainly reciprocates and showers him with affection and some day he will become count Malvolio.

IV.III.3.5 Feste the Clown

Though a clown Feste doesnot "wear his motley in his brain" Weiss compliments him saying "Feste is the best endowed with many-sided mirth" He loves fun and jokes by nature. He is one of Sir Toby's boon companion. Bradley echoes the Feste fans and rightly observes that "Feste, the so-called clown, endears himself to us."

Viola in the very first encounter considers him "wise enough" to play the Fool, "that well craves a kind of wit". He is a professional entertainer and is "for all waters". He gives his audience be it the love-lorn Duke, grief struck Olivia or gay Cesario... what he knows will please them. Though playing a fool, he maintains a certain reserve and dignity. According to the company, his fooling changes and in the company of the knights, his humour is all for wild nonsense. He does not hide his dislike for the proud and puritanical steward and even joins the others in playing the cruellest trick on him.

Feste is conscious of superiority, being witty fool rather than folly-fallen wiseman. Some consider him not to be so wise a fool as some others of Shakespeare but, it is true, "a merrier one is not to be found. We never laugh at Feste. He possesses not only the ready wit required by his profession and an intellectual agility greater than it requires, but also an insight into character

and into practical situations so swift and sure that he seems to supply, in fuller measure than any of Shakespeare's other Fools; the poet's own comment on the story".

Besides fun and jesting, wit and repartee, merry and jovial temperament, Feste, the singer with his mellifluous voice becomes lovable to the audience. His love of music needs no testimony. Lute songs, folk songs as well as catches enchram us so as to make the welkin dance. Music does not only irradiate the play but makes it as play of music and all the music and praise of it comes from Feste. He aptly replies to the Duke, "I take pleasure in singing, Sir."

A "corrupter of words" his retorts are ready, quick and audacious. His skill in the repartees is amusing when he exhibits his talent in a bout of wit with Viola and as well as with the Duke to carry his message of arrival to Olivia. He knows that "a sentence is but a cheveril glove to a good wit... how quickly the wrong side may be turned outside." He enjoys the wit of Viola as a worthy rival. Shrewd Maria is always ready for a bout of wit with him.

Ulrici sums him up as an "impersonation of comic irony." He has not bothere to cultivate a philosophy of life and the only thing he loves is to amuse everyone and at times to instruct, as in the case of Malvolio.

Dover Wilson on Feste

"We must hold, and insist on holding Feste, Master of the Revels, to be the master-mind and controller of *Twelfth Night*, its comic spirit and president, even as Puck is the comic spirit and president of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Unscathed by slabs and side blows of the plot, in the end he get's dismissed out into the cold ; and that is Shakespeare's last word of irony-- as it is with his last word on the poor loyal Fool in *Lear*. But while the play lasts, and his business, Feste has it in charge. Does the Duke demand music? Feste provides it; but it is something other than the Duke demands. As, when he sings, 'O mistress mine,' he is rewarded by Aguecheek with 'A melifluous voice, as I am true knight', so, when he sings that incomparable ditty, 'Come away, come away death', the Duke rewards him with a coin and is answered by the artist with a recommendation to get a tailor to make him a doublet of changeable taffeta to fit an opal-shifting mind.

"I would have men of such constancy put to sea, that their business might be everything and their intent everywhere, for that's it that always makes a good voyage of nothing..... farewell".

IV. III.4 Minor Characters

IV.III.4.1 Maria

Little villain of the sub-plot is Maria, the smart, waiting maid of Olivia. She is "as witty a pece of Eve's flesh as any in Illyria." Clever, quick-witted damsel with a keen sense of enjoyment of humour and jokes, she leads the other members of the confederation. For her short stature,

she is often referred to as "giant" euphemistically, and Penthesilea. She is an admirer of Sir Toby whom she wins as a husband.

She has insight into the character of all the people around her. She gauges through the self-love of Malvolio and correctly lays her finger on his vanity. Her knowledge of the countess and her moods enables her to choose the right moment to play the trick on Malvolio. Olivia is even told of the "most distracting frenzy" Malvolio is suffering from.

Adequately educated she is to adapt herself to those about her. She is demure in Olivia's presence. She speaks the navy dialect to Viola, asking her to "hoist sail", Her contempt for Sir Andrew is no secret as she taunts him at every turn making his gross ignorance exhibited in his talk and conduct.

There are two reasons for supporting the confederacy against the steward and acting as the brain behind it. She is envious of Malvolio for the esteemed position he enjoys in the eyes of her mistress Olivia. Like others she dislikes his over-weening, fault-finding and affected conduct. The most important is her ambition, to become a lady marrying Sir Toby, who promises in recompense to the trick to humiliate Malvolio and make him a laughing stock. She knows well to handle the drunkard Sir Toby, being the "most excellent devil of wit" that prepared the strategy against the steward. She makes Feste to tease Malvolio further, after imprisonment in the dark room declaring him a lunatic, by disguising as Sir Topas the curate.

IV.III.4.2 Sir Toby Belch

Sir Toby Belch is a "bibulous, out at elbows hanger on his niece," the Countess Olivia. With his wit, relish of humour and genius for sociability, it looks odd that he has to depend on his opulent and liberal relative. But he is easy going and his idle disposition makes him to sponge upon gulls who are well off, either by flattery or under threats.

An epicurian by choice, he loves to spend his time drinking and dancing, burning sacks, singing catches and baiting fools. "Care's an enemy to life" is the principal motto of his life. Unhesitatingly he admits that he is a perfect topper and he will drink "as long as there is passage in my throat and drink in Illyria." He disapproves the purposeless grief of his niece Olivia over her dead brother as well as Malvolio's objections to gay life. His retort to Malvolio that "Dost thou think because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" is a challenge to people in every age who believe they have a right to sit in judgement over the deeds of others because of their self-righteousness.

Sir Toby has a rough and ready sort of cleverness that gratifies his love of fun by devising comic situations like gulling Malvolio and the episode of the duel between Sir Andrew and Cesario (Viola). In playing mischief he abandons himself fully. He is the active agent in the mischief on Sir Andrew fleecing him fully and fooling him to the bent but in the mischief against Malvolio he is not the central figure. No doubt he enjoys the mischief in bringing the two unwilling combatants. Sir Andrew and Cesario, face in a duel. His admiration of Maria's scheme to ridicule Malvolio traps him in her net, but he is not repentent.

Though accustomed to easy-going life and revelry, he is brave and manly and he gives it hard to Sebastian on behalf of his friend. Though he has a poor opinion of Sir Andrew, in time of need he chivalrously stands by him. Priestly admires him justly. "There is about this drunken, staggering, swaggering, knight such ripeness and gusto that his humours are infectitious and once we are in his riotous company, decency and order seem intrusive and positively ill-natured.

His love of fun is such that he takes it to the logical extent where it ends with his marriage to Maria, in a "sportful malice."

Quiller Couch describes Sir Toby as "Falstaff Flattened out" a Falstaff in two dimensions, a figure in which vice has lost all its evil by losing all its grossness. Lamb calls him "half-Falstaff." The resemblance between Sir Toby and Falstaff is in accepting the dictum "Care's an enemy to life."

IV.III.4.3 Sir Andrew Aquecheek

Sir Andrew is, according to Maria, "a foolish knight as you brought in one night here to be her wooer." He is one of the comic characters, who is the cause of admirable fooling in others. He is but on whom the others exercise their wit and ridicule him. He lacks individuality to act except at the prompting of someone; on many occasions Sir Toby is the prompter ; Sir Toby's interest in him was the money he brought to Illyria as a suitor to Olivia.

A knight on carpet considerations, he is a miserable coward. The duel episode shows him an imbecile. Even to challenge his rival, Cesario in love he needs the help of Sir Toby. Boasting himself to be a fire-eater, he writes an apologetic statement as his challenge. No sooner imaginary stories of valour of Viola he hears, than he gets terrified and crest-fallen. He offers his grey capilet to Sir Toby to mediate with Ceasario for peace.

Knowing that he must pretend to be intelligent and learned, he claims to have acquired a skill in fencing, dancing and bear baiting. Sir Toby, Maria and Feste make him a fool at every turn, by taking in a strain which he fails to understand. The knight attributes his dull wits to "beer eating. Sir Toby makes fun of him and his colossal ignorance, introducing him as one who "speaks three or four languages word of word without book and hath all the good gifts of nature. the foolish knight confesses that he sometimes has no more wit than a Christian or an ordinary man"

Till Sir Toby in the end calls him an ass-head, a cox-comb, a knave, a thin-faced knave and a juii, no suspicion of his friend's false play crosses Sir Andrew's thoughts. His confidence and admiration remain unshaken. The fantastic fool as he is, he is a contrsct to Malvolio that is the solemn coxcomb. Sir Andrew does not feel humiliated at Sir Toby's words, due to happy unconsciousness and self-content of true imbecility. Shakespeare succeeds making a sheer imbecile a delightful comic character.

IV.III.4.4 Fabian

Fabian, a man-servant in the household of Olivia, is not known till his services are enlisted "to have the niggardly, rascally sheep-bitter (Malvolio) come by some notable shame. He is cool, sober and on the whole dutiful and he becomes a confederate as he also nurtures as all others a grievance against the steward.

Though a trusted servant of the Countess he takes delight in gulling the steward merely as a "sport". He is not carried away by the emotions, it is his sobriety that prevents Sir Toby and Sir Andrew from bursting out against Malvolio's antics at the time of reading the faked letter of Olivia. More than that, with his racy, apt and pithy sentences he gives a running commentary on feelings and passing thoughts of Malvolio reading the letter. Every minute he spends then he considers invaluable fun. Clever as he is in understanding the absence of "presage of cruelty" in Cesario, he knows before hand the outcome of the duel. Engrossed in the fun, he fails to understand her sex.

A trusted servant he makes bold to confess before Olivia not only their mischief against Malvolio out of "sportful malice" but also to plead that the injuries" have on both sides pass'd" If "beneath every comedy lurk elements of tragedy" Fabian checks the development of the tragic element in the sub-plot dissolve in the comedy through his restraining influence on his boisterous companions and timely confession of the plot. He lifts up the theme to high comedy.

IV.III.5 PLOT CONSTRUCTION OF THE PLAY

Exposition

In the opening scene we meet Orsino, Duke of Illyria. His love-sick, sentimental mood is expressed in the very first line that he utters. Then we are told that the Duke is in love with Olivia, and has been courting her by a messenger. We can properly estimate the character of the Duke from his sentimental speech. It does not surprise us that Olivia should have lent no favourable ear to the Duke's courtship. What interests us more to know is that Olivia has shut herself up on account of her brother's death, and she is not going to appear in public until seven years pass. So in the opening scene we are given sufficient glimpses into the two characters--sentimental love in the Duke and sentimental grief in Olivia. The second scene introduces Viola. Viola and her brother are ship-wrecked, and they are separated, Viola being picked up by the captain of the ship. Having landed on a strange shore, she adopts the disguise of a page-boy for her own safety and takes service with the Duke. The complications of the plot are to start from Viola's disguise. If she had taken service with Olivia, as she at first intended, the story would have developed in any other way, and there would have been less scope for the romantic complications, which make the story so interesting. Then we come to the third scene, in which we meet all the characters, who are to play their parts in the comic underworld.

Here we meet some of Olivia's retainers--her uncle, Sir Toby Belch, his companion Sir Andrew Aguecheek, and her maid in waiting Maria, who is the queen of this underworld. In the

beginning the main plot and the sub-plot seem to have little connection. But let it be noted that it is Viola's disguise in the main plot and the antagonism between Malvolio and Sir Toby which set the mainspring of the plot in action. At first our attention is claimed by the affairs of the Duke. Viola in man's attire has won the favour of the Duke. So Viola is employed by the Duke as a messenger of love to Olivia. Viola has her own notion about this business of wooing Olivia: "Whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife." Here is the first hint of the coming complications. Malvolio is introduced to us in Scene V. We also meet Feste, Olivia's Clown. We see how Malvolio dislikes the Clown, and would have liked to put him out of favour with Olivia. We shall soon find that Malvolio renders himself unpopular by his strictness and by his hatred of cakes and ale. We are more interested, however, in the meeting between Viola and Olivia. Viola is disguised as the Duke's page, and comes as the messenger of love to Olivia. The complications already begin, for as soon as Viola departs, Olivia finds herself in love with this handsome messenger. Olivia, unlike the Duke, who can only nourish the sentiment of love in his heart, is more practical in her love, and by a trick which is characteristic of women, sends a ring after Viola, pretending to Malvolio that it was a gift from the Duke, left by the messenger against her will.

Development of the Action.

In the second Act the play is fairly started. On the one hand the Duke is in love with Olivia, and till now Olivia has not returned this love; and on the other, Olivia falls in love with the Duke's page, a woman in disguise. A new interest is now added to the play; we see that Sebastian, Viola's brother, has also been rescued. But neither brother nor sister knows that the other is alive. The play could not have done without Sebastian, for he will be a necessary agent in the resolution of the plot. Sebastian is proceeding to the Count of Orsino. Antonio, who has rescued him, resolves to accompany him in spite of the risk of his being arrested for his hostility to the Duke.

The second scene is linked up with the last scene of the first Act. We perceive Viola's delicacy and sense of honour. She spares Olivia, and keeps the ring with herself without enlightening Malvolio. It strikes her at once that Olivia is in love with her. So the story is getting complicated. Viola cannot foresee how it will work out; she can leave it only to time.

In the third scene, we return to the comic underworld. We now watch how the plot against Malvolio is conceived. It originates in Maria's brain. Maria can imitate the handwriting of her mistress. What she is going to do is to write a letter with veiled hints of love for Malvolio; Malvolio will be entrapped into believing that Olivia is in love with him when he gets this letter. Up till now the main plot and the sub-plot are kept apart.

The fourth scene does not much advance the plot. The confidences between the Duke and Viola may have an interest other than dramatic. There is the fine flower of poetry in Viola's speeches on love. With a pause in the fourth scene we hurry on to the next in which Maria's plot against Malvolio is carried out. Malvolio picks up the letter, which is written in Maria's hand, but purports to come from Olivia. Malvolio is at once caught in the trap. Sir Toby is so delighted with the success of Maria's plot that he declares: "I could marry this wench for this device." It is a hint of the coming event.

Further complications and duplication of the intrigues.

Viola is sent again as messenger to Olivia in the first scene of the third Act. Viola first meets the Clown. Here is the suggestion of an approach between the serious part of the play and the comic sub-plot. Viola also meets Sir Toby and Sir Andrew. In this scene Olivia confesses openly her love to Viola, and Viola rejects it with scorn.

In the second scene another plot is being formed. It involves Viola. Sir Andrew envies Viola, (or rather Cesario) because he has seen Olivia show special favour to her. Sir Toby and Fabian induce Sir Andrew to send a challenge to Viola.

The third scene brings Sebastian and Antonio again before us. In this scene Sebastian parts from Antonio to have a look round the town, and to him Antonio entrusts his purse; till now Sebastian is kept out of the main plot and the sub. plot.

The fourth scene marks the culmination of the plot against Malvolio. Malvolio appears yellow-stockinged and crossgartered before Olivia, and keeps smiling and talking in what seems to be an unintelligible manner to Olivia. So Olivia is led to believe that Malvolio is out of his senses. In the meantime Viola comes back, entreated by Olivia. While Olivia is busy with Viola, Sir Toby takes charge of Malvolio, and manages that Malvolio, as a madman, should be confined in a dark room.

Linking up of the main Plot with the sub-Plot.

Now Sir Andrew brings the challenge which he has drafted to Sir Toby. They, (Sir Toby and Fabian) intercept Viola when she is returning from Olivia. Of course Sir Andrew's challenge in writing is not delivered to her, but she is informed orally of it. The trick that they play is to frighten both Sir Andrew and Viola by an exaggerated account of the valour of their opponent. Viola finds herself in a very anomalous position. Either she will have to meet Sir Andrew in combat or to confess that she is a woman disguised as a page. Providence at last seems to come to her help. Antonio happens to appear on the scene. He mistakes Viola for her brother, Sebastian, and intervenes on her behalf. Antonio, however, is apprehended by the Duke's officers. Viola, whom Antonio addresses under the impression that she is Sebastian, disowns Antonio, and denies having received his purse. When Antonio is led away, Viola goes over the whole matter, and is persuaded to believe that her brother may be alive.

The Climax.

The last scene of the third act has a great dramatic importance. First, the complications become more complicated. Secondly, the main plot and the subplot become linked up.

Thirdly, the story of Sebastian and Antonio is taken up into the main plot, as indicated by the arrest of Antonio. Now we are nearing the climax in the main plot.

In the first scene of the fourth Act, the Clown meets Sebastian and mistakes him for Viola. Sir Andrew and Sir Toby fall into the same mistake. Sir Andrew, gaining courage from the fact that Viola is too timid strikes Sebastian, thinking that he is Viola, and Sebastian at once returns the blow. Sir Toby intervenes. It develops into a street brawl. Olivia appears on the scene. Now

Olivia mistakes Sebastian for Viola. Sebastian is quite willing to obey Olivia, and follows her to her house. Here is the climax or the turning point of the main plot.

The second scene marks the climax of the sub-plot. Malvolio is shut up as a madman in a dark room. The Clown puts on the gown of a priest, and comes to taunt him. Later the Clown appears in his own character. To oblige Malvolio, he agrees to supply him with ink and paper. In the next scene Olivia persuades Sebastian to be formally betrothed to her.

Denouement or resolution.

The denouement or resolution of the plot starts in the first Scene of the fifth act. For the first time the Duke calls on Olivia. He is attended by Viola. They meet the Clown, and send a message to Olivia by the Clown.

In the meantime, Antonio is brought under arrest to the Duke. He claims the acquaintance of Viola, whom he mistakes for Sebastian. When Olivia appears before the Duke, he dismisses Antonio. Now Olivia claims Viola as her husband, and summons the priest to prove it. Then appear Sir Toby and Sir Andrew--Sir Andrew with a broken head, for which he charges Viola, mistaking her for Sebastian. So there is a series of surprises for Viola. First, against the evidence of the priest, she cannot convince the Duke that she did not go through the betrothal ceremony with Olivia. Secondly, she cannot repel the charge that Sir Andrew brings against her; his broken head is an evidence that cannot be set aside. Things seem to have come to a deadlock, when Sebastian appears. The Duke and Olivia note the striking similarity between brother and sister--each seems to be the other's double. Then follows the recognition between the two. It now appears that Olivia has been engaged to the brother, and not to the sister. The Duke transfers his love to Viola.

There now remains Malvolio to be disposed of. The Clown gives his letter to Olivia. Malvolio is sent for; he produces the letter which he supposes Olivia to have written. Now the trick that has been played upon Malvolio becomes exposed. Fabian confesses the whole thing. Malvolio will receive no apologies, and retires in indignation. The play ends with Malvolio's severance from either world.

To sum up, the plot is fairly complex. First we have the main plot and the sub-plot. In the beginning they are apart. The main plot is developed through Viola's visits to Olivia as the Duke's messenger of love. It is again through Viola that the main plot and the sub-plot are linked together. Viola herself gets involved in the sub-- plot. The sub-plot is developed through the double intrigue.

- (i) The intrigue that involves the gulling of Malvolio;
- (ii) The intrigue that compromises the position of Viola.

The story of Antonio and Sebastian is taken up into the main plot in the last scene of the third Act, and that again through the sub-plot, because Antonio is arrested for coming to the rescue of Viola. The resolution of the plot depends on Sebastian's appearance at the critical

moment. Sebastian first gets involved in the sub-plot, and then the betrothal ceremony brings him into the main plot. The personal visit of the Duke to Olivia also contributes to the resolution of the plot.

The analysis of the plot reveals Shakespeare's marvellous craftsmanship in keeping the different strands of the story separate and distinct, and then uniting them into a harmonious whole.

IV.III.6 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we have studied about the Major characters and Minor characters in *Twelfth Night*. We have also learned about the structure of the play by way of understanding the development of its action, from the beginning to the end.

IV.III.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- 1) To Think *Twelfth Night* is to think of Viola Discuss
- 2) Sketch the Character of Malvolio.
- 3) Role and significance of the fool.
- 4) Give an analytical description of the structure of the play.

IV.III.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

- 1) Hazlitt - *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*
- 2) Hudson - *Shakespeare - His Mind, Art and Literature*

P.N.V.D. Mahesh.

Unit - IV - TWELFTH NIGHT - IV

IV.IV.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * Understand the evolution of Shakespearean Comedy
- * Understand *Twelfth Night* as a Romantic Comedy
- * Learn the opinions of Critics on the play
- * Understand the meaning of Various Technical terms.

IV.IV.1 STRUCTURE

- IV.IV.0 Objectives
- IV.IV.1 Structure
- IV.IV.2 Introduction
- IV.IV.3 Shakespearean Comedy
- IV.IV.4 *Twelfth Night* as a Romantic Comedy
- IV.IV.5 Select Literary Criticism
- IV.IV.6 Let us sum up
- IV.IV.7 Check your Progress
- IV.IV.8 Suggested Readings
- IV.IV.9 Glossary

IV.IV.2 INTRODUCTION

This lesson will make you understand the evolution of Shakespearean comedy and appreciate *Twelfth Night* as a Romantic Comedy. The list of Glossary will help you read and understand the play.

IV.IV.3 SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDY

(OR) THE ROMANTIC COMEDY : ITS EVOLUTION

A Comedy has been defined as a play aiming at the production of laughter, more laughter and nothing but laughter. It has also been defined as a dramatic composition with a happy ending. The world of comedy may appear to be characterized by light-heartedness but the idea is to show humanity its follies so that people may correct themselves. Thus Simon O Lesser points out, "to be sure, comic characters have their faults, some of them seem to be composed largely of faults. Comic characters may be indolent, unreliable, vain, hypocritical, frivolous, acquisitive, and lascivious and sometimes a single character has almost this entire roster of failings". The ancients greatly respected the tragedy as a genre and did not give half its value to comedy. But as George Meredith puts it, "there never will be a civilization where comedy is not possible". A comedy may be of two types--Classical and Romantic.

The classical comedy follows the rules of dramatic composition as laid down by the ancient Greek and Roman masters like Plautus, Terence and Aristophanes. Observing the unities of time, place and action, separation of tragic and comic, relevance and satiric are the characteristics of classical comedy. The chief exponent of this type of comedy in England was Ben Jonson.

The Romantic or Shakespearean comedy violates the three unities and it just grows out of national tastes and traditions. The playwright does not care for rules of literary creation but writes according to the dictates of his fancy. There is a free mingling of the comic and tragic, the serious and the gay. Its aim is not satiric but innocent good natured laughter. Follies are no doubt exposed and ridiculed but the laughter is gentle and sympathetic and there is no zeal of a reformer. In his treatise on Shakespearean comedy, Charlton rightly points out the imaginative basis of Shakespearean comedy, in his view Shakespearean comedy is poetic rather than satiric. It is creative and not conservative. It is an artist's vision and not a critic's exposition. But as Charlton observes Shakespearean comedy is not unreal. People in the Shakespearean comedy are as real as we are. They are not supernatural beings distanced from humanity. Though the ultimate world of Shakespearean comedy is romantic, poetic and imaginative, it is by no means unsubstantial and fantastic.

Classification of Shakespeare's Comedies

Shakespeare's comedies can be classified as follows to understand the way his comic genius has become fruitful.

Love's Labour Lost, The Comedy of Errors, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and The Midsummer Night's Dream are early comedies which are farcical and immature. They are replete with wit, word-play, puns and conceits. ***The Merchant of Venice, As you like It, Much Ado About Nothing and Twelfth Night*** are funny comedies with which Shakespeare's comic genius comes to full flowering. These comedies are rich in the comic spirit which manifests itself at various levels. The atmosphere is that of merry making throughout and essence is Love and Music. The heroines of these comedies Viola, Rosalind, Celia and Beatrice have been admired by all. ***Measure for Measure, All is well that Ends Well and Troilus and Cressida*** are dark comedies. All the materials and methods of Shakespeare's tragedies are to be found dispersed in these comedies. As Albert rightly says, these comedies reflect a cynical, disillusioned attitude to life, and a fondness for objectionable characters and situations ***Cymbeline, The Winter's***

Tale and **Tempest** are the later comedies or romances. They have their own peculiar features which distinguish them sharply from the earlier comedies.

The World of Shakespearean comedy says Raleigh, is a, "rainbow world of love in idleness". It makes us escape from the realities of life. The dramatist transports us on the wings of his imagination to the forest of Arden, to the shores of Illyria, to Messina or to an ancient forest in Greece where the inhabitants have no other business than love making. "The intensities and realities of life shimmer into smoke and film into that delicate atmosphere". The *Midsummer Nights Dream* serves the best example of Shakespeare's romanticism with the presence of the fairies, bright, beautiful, idealised beings of Shakespeare's fancy.

There is a confrontation of the romantic mainplot with a realistic sub-plot. The characterisation is realistic. His characters are ordinary human beings and incidents are common in everyday life. Jacques reminds us of the ingratitude of man in *As you like it*. In *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the homely Bottom and his companions are reminders of the reality of life. The Malvolio episode and the wise comments in *Twelfth Night* are realistic to the core. In the view of Alardyce Nicoll,

Characters and scenes alike are viewed through magic casements which transform reality, the settings are all imaginative - an unknown island Arden, Illyria or Venice - each one conceived in the glow of strong and beautiful fancy. Yet all are related to real life.

Shakespeare and his contemporaries are influenced by the Italian comedy of intrigue. Mistaken identity is one of the devices that Shakespeare uses in his comedies by which the influence of Italian Comedy on him is obvious. In Elizabethan age it was very common that boys used to play the role of women as there were no women actors in Shakespeare's time. Disguise and mistaken identity formed a legitimate part of Shakespeare's comic devices.

Charlton rightly says, that "Shakespeare embodies in his comic heroes the capacity for comparing the world and the balance of mind without which the characters may be rendered unable to distinguish between bushes and bears".

One Shakespearean comedy after another is a tale of the love longings of young people. The hero and the heroine are not alone in loving but all are in love. The entire atmosphere is surcharged with love, as passionate, intense and lyrical, as only love of young people can be. This love is engendered in the eye at first sight. The words of Marlowe, "Who ever loved that loved not at first sight" is perfectly applicable to Shakespeare's lovers. Raleigh says, "that summons is as inevitable and unforeseen as that of death, it comes to all - Clown and Courtier, wayward youth and serious maiden, leading them forth on the dance of love through that maze of happy adventure which is Shakespeare's comedy. This desire of the eyes is exhibited in many beautiful and fanciful guises, transforming itself into passion or caprice and its victims to unexpected goals. This youthful love has no commerce with reason. It is, high fantastical; it can lead to Titania's infatuation for an ass, and we should agree with Helena in *The Midsummer Nights dream* when says; "Things base and vile holding no quantity Love can transpose to form and dignity". According to Symons in *Twelfth Night* "Love is a pose, a wanton playing with the great passion which brought Romeo and Juliet to their untimely end". In *As you like It* says S.A Brooke, "Love lives in many forms; in Orlando and Rosalind, Celia and Oliver, Silvius and Phebe, Touchstone and Audrey". The call comes even to Benedick, the woman hater, one who was ever a 'tyrant to the sex.' Young gallants with no intent to turn husbands go on the slightest errand to the Antipodes and run to meet their fate. Delicate girls brought up in seclusion and luxury put on

hose and doublet and follow their defaulting lovers to the wildwood or to the court of a foreign potentate. This love ennobles, uplifts and inspires both the lover and the beloved. It is the means of all "human fulfilment and the source of all natural fruition". The course of this true love never runs smooth; misfortunes soon cross the path of the lovers. They are opposed by their parents or other members of the family; delusions, confusion of identity, misunderstanding between the lovers etc. often lead to highly comic situations. Sex confusion always had a peculiar fascination for Shakespeare. In *Twelfth Night* it results in Viola's embarrassment as the subject of Olivia's passion and Sir Andrew's challenge. It is true that he does not deal like Shelley, Dante or Spencer with metaphysical love, with love conceived as the animating spirit of the universe.

Music is the food of love and Shakespearean comedy is intensely musical. Music and dance are its very life and soul. *Twelfth Night* opens with music which strikes the key note of the merry tale of love. *As you like It* and *Midsummer Nights Dream* too abound in music. The plays end with music, dance and merrymaking with Hymen the God of love presiding. In deed Shakespeare is prodigal in the provision of light-hearted mirth and revelry in his comedies. This spirit of mirth takes on a graver mood when the dramatist's mind was centered on tragic themes in the later comedies.

Ruskin's sweeping generalisation that "Shakespeare has no heroes, but only heroines" is accepted but this remark is applicable only to his comedies and it is certainly not true of his tragedies and histories. The women of the English History plays are all pathetic figures, playing second fiddle to Man, dissatisfied with their lives for one reason or the other. The histories offer, says Gordon "a harsh and unfavourable soil for the characteristic virtue and brighter graces of women." But the case is entirely different with comedies. All lectures on Shakespearean comedy, says Gordon, "tend to become lectures on his women". A number of glittering heroines, bright, beautiful and witty move across the canvas, and what is more they always hold the front of the stage. "The world of Shakespearean comedy is a world made safe for women", a world in which a girl can prosper and come to flower". "It is a world in which the masculine element drops its voice" and recedes into the background, "When any real business has got to be done, it is woman who does it" says Gordon. Raleigh is of the view that "they are almost all practical", impatient of mere words, clear sighted as to ends and means. They do not accept the premises to bend the conclusion or decorate the inevitable with imaginative loadings. Rosalind, Portia, Viola though they are rich in witty and eloquent discourse are frank and simple in thought. They are never deceived by their own eloquence and never forget the ends they have to achieve. Shakespeare's men cannot as a class, compare with his women for practical genius. Their imagination often masters and disables them. While Orsino remains at home passively enjoying the luxury of Love, Viola courts his lady for him, and brushes aside all obstacles in her way. "The heart and head sway equal" says Gordon in Shakespeare's ideal woman. In his women alone "will you find that perfect harmony which is the basis and first condition of a happy life". These women of Shakespeare says Raleigh "act not on thought but on instinct, which once it is accepted, admits of no argument. They have knowledge, shrewdness, wit and courage, without ceasing to be wholly feminine and objects of desire. They win the hearts of readers with their simplicity and intensity. As Mrs. Jameson shows, whatever courage and heroism they have is not in born in them but they derive it through their affection and sensibilities. Their love is passionate all physical; it is never ascetic or puritanical. According to J.W. Levers "Shakespeare's heroines are quite lacking in the saintly qualities of a Petrarchan mistress." Praising his heroines Hudson writes, "virtue is with them a discipline as well as a joy, a strong upright will is the back bone of it

and a healthy conscience is its keeper", and continues "next to the Christian religion, humanity has no other so precious an inheritance as Shakespeare's divine gallery of womanhood", Helena, Portia, Rosalind Viola, Isabella etc - what a wealth and assemblage of moral beauty. They are all divinely good and virtuous. Gordon rightly says, "Shakespeare was a great student of women, and his portraits of women have never been surpassed. He has women of all ranks and ages, from the queen to the dairymaid - and from fifty to fifteen. The best of artists have their limits, but in this bright particular region Shakespeare would appear to have had none".

The Fool is too often, regarded as a separate growth, and independent creation of Shakespeare's genius. The popularity of the fool was one of the most striking features of the drama in the days of its greatest glory and a play without some recognised fun maker was no likely to be popular. So the playwrights introduced freely the merry-makers in their plays. Dr R.H.Goldsmith opines that Shakespeare's fool is derived from Erasmus. Perhaps the Elizabethan stage fool was a direct descendant of the devil or the vice, the fun makers in the Morality plays. The fool is often the wisest character in the piece and his folly is simply a mask thrown over his essential wisdom. The remark of Duke senior about Touchstone clearly bears this, out, "He uses his folly like a stalking horse, and under the pretence of that he shoots his wit". As Feste in *Twelfth Night* remarks "Better a witty fool than a foolish wit". He impresses Viola with his wisdom and she comments, "This fellow is wise enough to play the Fool." And to do that well craves a kind of wit. Plamer says "A fool of this class is a man of keen observation. He will see things as they are but without malice". The Fool is a superfluous personage, introduced in the play merely to provide fun and has devotion for his master. He loves physical comforts and uses all his wits to obtain money. He is often a coward and often a word monger. He loves music. Sometimes he talks nonsense of all kinds as does Feste with Sir Andrew in *Twelfth Night*. "His sallies of wit often serve as a corrective to the excesses of the romantic characters. Often his comments strike the key-note of common sense in a scene of confused harmonies and serve to put the spectator at the right point of view." It is the clown's office to restore the equilibrium of life which is the essence of comedy, whenever that equilibrium is too much disturbed. Sometimes, his comments may be merely entertaining, but more often than not they are apt and weighty. He serves to underline the essential folly of the so called characters. Often we find him parodying the actions of his master. Thus Launcelot Gobbo imitates the supernatural beliefs of his master the Jew and Touchstone has a love affair in imitation of that of Rosalind. The fools of Shakespeare perform a number of useful functions. The dramatist makes them integral to the action by attaching them as servants to someone or the other character. They carry letters and messages, and reveal the characters of their masters. Moreover his position fits him particularly well for linking a comic sub-plot to the main action ----- a useful office which cannot so easily be performed by an attached clown. No where in English drama do we find a Fool with an importance in the action to be compared even for one moment with that of Feste in *Twelfth Night*. Feste is the centre of interest in the sub-plot as also the connecting link between the sub-plot and the main plot. Shakespearean fool often performs the function of the chorus in Greek drama. he frequently comments on the course of action and different characters, as well as supplies information necessary for proper understanding of the play. He is often the mouth piece of the dramatist.

" Fate in the realm of comedy, appears in the milder and capricious character of fortune whose wheel turns again and again and vindicates the merry heart", says Raleigh. The difficulties of the hero and heroine are unexpectedly and unaccountably removed. Things turn up by chance at the right moment and all ends well. It is as if some unseen power, some friendly

god watches benignly over the lovers and helps them when they stand in need of it. This fortune of the comedies or "circumstance, the mirthful god", as Dowden would have it, is a kindly and sympathetic being who only enjoys a bit of fun like Puck or Ariel, at the expense of poor mortals, but is never unfavourable to them. It is by the intervention of these friendly God that all ships of Antonio in The Merchant of Venice return home safe just at the right moment, that Sebastian arrives in time to save Viola from a bloody duel, that the love tangle in *Midsummer Nights dream* is so satisfactorily resolved and that Dogberry and Verges in *Much Ado about Nothing* overhear the villainous plot and expose it As Viola puts it,

"O, Time thou must untangle this, not I

It is too hard a knot for me to untie".

Humour has been defined as "Kindly amused contemplation of the incongruities of life, and the artistic expression there of". Shakespeare is one of the greatest humourists in English literature. The most important feature of Shakespeare's humour is its variety. He was writing for the public stage, and had constantly to keep all kinds of people in mind. As most of his audience belonged to the lower strata, it is to pander to their taste that he provides indecent jokes and jests at the expense of women. It is for this reason he introduces the clown in almost all his plays. The dramatist manipulates incidents in such a way that laughter is provided either by the ludicrous or by contrast. In *Midsummer Nights Dream* such comic situations are contrived by the mischievous Puck and in *Twelfth Night* the entire Malvolio episode is the best example of this kind of humour in Shakespeare. Dowden writes, Shakespeare's plays abound in kindly mirth; he receives an exquisite pleasure from the wit and bright good sense of Rosalind; he can dandle a fool as tenderly as any nurse, qualified to take a baby from the birth. But Shakespeare is not pledged to deep-eyed ultra amiability with Jacques. He can rail at the world, while remaining curiously aloof from all deep concerns about its interests this way or that. With Timon he can turn upon the World with a rage no less than that of Swift, and discover in man and woman a creature as abominable as the Yahoo. In other words "the humour of Shakespeare, like his total genius, is dramatic; it varies from character to character.

Shakespeare interpenetrates tragedy with comedy and comedy with tragic earnestness. Hudson commenting on this mingling of the comic and the tragic writes, "His humour in tragic scenes carries the power of tears as well as smiles; in his deepest strains of tragedy there is often a subtle infusion of it and this tool, in such a way as to heighten the tragic effect; we may feel it playing delicately beneath his most pathetic scenes and deepening their pathos.

"The best and highest part of Shakespeare's imagination was not concerned with plot architecture" The heart of a Shakespearean play lies in its characterisation and not in its plot" says a critic. S.T. Coleridge agrees with the view and says "the interest in the plot is on account of characters not vice versa, as in almost all other writers, the plot is a mere canvas and no more. The plots of Shakespeare's comedies were borrowed indifferently from English or foreign sources. While in the great tragedies, action issues out of character and develops naturally, without being forced or twisted, there is no logical development of plot in the comedies. There is much that is superfluous, ridiculous, shapeless, grotesque and artificial. Much is improbable, unconvincing and absurd. Too much depends on fortune or chance. Deceits, disguises, mistaken identities and cross purposes are the stock devices used by the dramatist to maintain suspense and prolong the interest. But the absurdities of the plot are concealed by heightening the character interest Raleigh says", He so bathes his story in the atmosphere of poetry and fantasy, his characters are so high spirited and good tempered and resourceful, the action passes in such

a tempest of boisterous enjoyment and is mitigated by so many touches of human feeling, that the whole effect remains gracious and pleasant; and the master of the show is still the gentle Shakespeare. Mackail writes in the same vein, "Shakespeare took no pains to fasten up loose ends. He was concerned with dramatic effectiveness not with the artifice of construction.

The early comedies are replete with Shakespeare's faults. After a few years he matured into the fantastical world of romantic comedies to which *Twelfth Night* belongs. He experienced a period of bitterness after his happy comedies which resulted in the dark comedies like *Measure for Measure* that deal with the problem of morality and demonstrates how even virtue could stoop low and kiss the feet of devil. *The Tempest* that marks the last phase in Shakespeare's comic art is an obvious indication of the maturity of mind the playwright has attained.

The sunny atmosphere, idyllic nature, spirit of kindness, humanity etc of a Shakespearean comedy endears it to all his readers. His comedies are not merely collections of mirth provoking incidents "but pictures of life in its sunnier aspects, its sparking and vivacious moods." One striking feature is that more of Shakespeare's plays have held the stage continuously to the present time than the work of all the other Elizabethan dramatists put together. Further more through all the changes of fashion and taste in four hundred years, if he has never at any moment been the most popular, he has never been forgotten and has never lost his appeal to audiences or to ambitious actors. And the essential reason for this is that the fundamental quality of most of Shakespeare's plays is that they have good plots and entertaining stories. "He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets had the largest and most comprehensive soul" (John Dryden.)

IV.IV.4 TWELFTH NIGHT AS A ROMANTIC COMEDY.

Twelfth Night fulfils all the requirements of romantic comedy. Love in diverse forms is the theme of romantic comedy. In *As You Like It* there are different types of love-romantic love, of Orlando and Rosalind, pastoral love of Silvius and Phoebe, realistic, commonsense love of Oliver and Celia, and even a parody of love in *Touchstone*. The theme is worked out in *As You Like It* by the methods of disguise, mistaken identity, humour, contrast and parallelism, etc. We are referring to *As You Like It* because it may be taken as a good example of romantic comedy. But Shakespeare always varies his means and methods. *Twelfth Night* is the last of his romantic comedies. In *Twelfth Night* again love is the main theme, as it should be in a romantic comedy, but it is sentimental love in Orsino, which is certainly contrasted with the real passion of Viola. It has been noted that Shakespeare works out the main theme by contrast and parallelism. So along with the sentimental love of the Duke, Shakespeare paints the real passion of love in Viola; with the sentimental love of the Duke should be compared the sentimental grief of Olivia, and Malvolio's infatuation, which is the result of his self-Love or egotism. The theme of Shakespeare's plays, as we note here, is amplified on a broad scale, and that lifts the motive and theme of the play to the plane of universality. In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare gives greater scope to rollicking fun, mirth and laughter in the sub-plot than in *As You Like It*. But again, contrasted with it is the serious note-the uncertainty of the issue of Viola's disguised love. The serious strain, as we have observed above, is a characteristic of Shakespeare's romantic comedy, but finally it dissolves into the sunshine of smile. Then there is the sub-plot of *Twelfth Night*, which adds the usual quota of humour and laughter, but reacts on, and supplements, the main plot. The sub-plot has been worked out with elaborate care, and is an integral part of the play, contributing to its artistic triumph. Feste the clown has an important function, at once satirical and interpretative. The need of satirizing certain foibles has not been neglected in *Twelfth Night*. The Duke's sentimental love,

Olivia's sentimental grief, Malvolio's vanity, Sir Andrew's stupidity, all come in for ridicule. Lastly, the setting of the play is ideal; the Illyria of *Twelfth Night* is not identical with geographical Illyria - it is an "airy nothing," that has been given "a local habitation and a name." But this ideal setting is offset by the realistic portraits of minor characters in the play - Sir Toby and his group, the captain who rescues Viola, Feste, etc. Thus in *Twelfth Night* there is a blending of romance, humour, satire, rollicking fun and realism etc.

IV.IV.5 SELECT LITERARY CRITICISM

1. Johnson (1765): This play is in the graver part elegant and easy and in some of the lighter scenes exquisitely humorous. Aguecheek is drawn with great propriety, but his character is, in a great measure, that of natural fatuity, and is therefore not the proper prey of a satirist. The soliloquy of Malvolio is truly comic; he is betrayed to ridicule merely by his pride.
2. A.W.Schlegel (1811): This comedy unites the entertainment of an intrigue, contrived with great ingenuity, to the richest fund of comic characters and situations, and the beautiful colours of an ethereal poetry. In most of his plays Shakespeare treats love more as an affair of the imagination than the heart; but here we are particularly reminded by him that in his language, the same word, fancy, signified both fancy and love. The love of the music-enraptured Duke to Olivia is not merely a fancy, but an imagination.
3. W.Hazlitt : This is justly considered as one of the most delightful of Shakespeare's comedies. It is full of sweetness and pleasantry. It is perhaps too good-natured for comedy. It has little satire, no spleen. It makes us laugh at the ludicrous rather than the ridiculous. It makes us laugh at the follies of mankind, not to despise them, and still less bear any ill-will towards them. Shakespeare's comic genius resembles the bee rather in its power of extracting sweets from weeds or poisons than in leaving a sting behind it.... Folly is indigenous to the soil, and shoots out with native, happy, unchecked luxuriance. Absurdity has every encouragement afforded it, and nonsense has room to flourish in... The poet runs riot in a conceit, and idolizes a quibble. His whole object is to turn the meanest rudest objects to a pleasurable account. The relish, which he has of a pun, or the quaint humour of a low character, does not interfere with the delight with which he describes a beautiful image or the most refined love.

IV.IV.6 LET US SUM UP

In this lesson we have come to know about the classification of Shakespearean comedies and the important features of his comedies. We have also understood that *Twelfth Night* is considered a Romantic Comedy. The opinions of various critics help us appreciate the play. The given glossary gives meanings of difficult words to understand the original text.

IV.IV.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1) What are the characteristics of Shakespearean Comedy ?

2) Twelfth Night is a Romantic Comedy, Evaluate.

IV.IV.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

1) E. Dowden - *Shakespeare's Mind and Art*

2) Mrs. Jameson - *Shakespeare's Heroines*

IV.IV.9 GLOSSARY

1. Surfeiting : Satiated by excess of food
2. That instant : Allude to the story of Actaeon, a famous hunter, who for gazing indiscreetly on Diana, goddess of the chase, was changed into a stag, and was torn to pieces by his hounds. Here "Hounds " are "Orsino's desire for Olivia".
3. Cloistress : "A nun" a woman in religious seclusion.
4. Brine : salt water or sea water;
5. Golden shaft : "True passion of love" Cupid's golden shaft is believed to cause love while the leaden shaft causes aversion and disdain, repulsion.
6. Illyria : Region bordering the east coast of the Adriatic.
7. Elysium : heaven; the abode of the happy dead.
8. Arion : An ancient Greek poet and musician of the seventh century B.C.
9. ducats : a coin then (1602) worth in England six shillings and eight pence.
10. violde-gamboys : bass veil; an instrument of music.
11. coystril : a mean fellow; a rascal; (literally, a groom who takes care a knight's horse);
12. Castiliano vulgo : it sounds vaguely spanish, to impress Maria and to divert her attention to Sir Andrew coming then, "put on your Castilian countenance i.e. grave solemn looks" (Warburton)
13. Marry : indeed (a mild interjection; originally an oath by the Virgin Mary)

14. pourquoi : Why ? for what (French)
15. distaff : stick used in spinning;
16. galliard : a lively dance in triple time.
17. Mistress Mall's : Mall is a shortened form for Mary; an imaginary character known to Elizabethan audience from her celebrity as a thief.
18. coranto ? : quick running dance
19. Taurus ? : One of the 12 Zodiac signs.
20. address thy gait : direct your steps.
21. Diana's : Goddess of the Moon and hunting ; here the symbol of womanly beauty.
22. lenten : thin; meagre; poor.
23. thou wert as witty a piece of Eve's flesh : you will make as clever a wife (any woman). for you
24. Quinapalus : a sage of the Clown's invention; name of a philosopher coined by the clown.
25. motely : dress made up of different colours; Fool's dress.
26. madonna : my lady.
27. catechize : elicit answers to questions
28. zanies : liberal minded
29. birdbolts : blunt arrows; harmless things.
30. love : Jupiter, chief of the Jewish gods.
31. pia mater : brain.
32. sheriff's post : notice - past at the Sheriff; at the doors of sheriffs usually posts were set up on which proclamations were fixed" - and it served to denote the official residence.
33. my profound heart : my sagacious lady.
34. usurp : betray; wrong (yourself by not giving herself to Orsino).
35. profanation : unholy.
36. heresy : gossip; unholy talk.
37. nonpareil : the peerless queen, the paragon of.
38. babbling gossip : thick with noise of utterance of Olivia's name
39. blazon : a knight's armorial bearings; heraldic insignia; a sign of high birth.

40. decreed : decided by fate as irrevocable; ordained by fate.
41. malignancy : malevolence, a desire to do evil to others.
42. Messaline : an imaginary locality.
43. pregnant enemy : crafty fiend i.e., Satan.
44. diluculo surgere : it is most healthful to rise early
45. stoup : a drinking cup, flask;
46. leman : sweetheart.
47. testril : a tip of six pence.
48. mellifluous : sweat; "flowing like honey".
49. welkin : sky
50. caterwauling : crying like cats; noise and uproar
51. Peg-a-Ramsey : a character in an old song; a term of contempt.
52. consanguineous : related; King (to Olivio)
53. tilly-vally : nonsense
54. St.Anne : The mother of Virgin Mary; a term of swearing.
55. gull him : fool him; gull was considered a foolish bird.
56. a horse of that colour : a sport of that kind.
57. Penthesilea : the queen of Amazons, in classical mythology the Amazons were a race of female warriors.
58. antique : "Old fashioned", quaint.
59. unstead and skittish : changeable and fickle.
60. spinsters : spinners; who spin yarn
61. cypress : a coffin made of cypress wood, hence the three indicates death.
62. sovereign cruelty force : most among the hard - hearted persons; peerless and disdainful lady (Olivia).
63. demask : like a pink or white damask rose
64. sheep biter : malicious fellow; thief
65. contemplative : self centered contemmplative idiot : an idiot with "a tendency to self-deception."

66. tickling : stroking : flattery.
67. overweening : pretentious; proud.
68. "Slight : God's light; an oath.
69. lady of the strachy : an unidentified lady who married beneath her.
70. Jazebel : the wicked wife of Israel King Ahab- an absurd reproach to apply to Malvolio.
71. sinews : strength, texture.
72. Lucrece : noble Roman matron who stabbed herself after she was stabbed by Tarquin, hence a symbol of chastity.
73. staniel : kestrel; a small hawk.
74. O : sound of lamentation; owe.
75. postscript : addition to a letter.
76. Sophy : Shah of persia.
77. aqua-vitae : distilled liquores
78. save thee : God save you
79. tabor : a small drum used by clowns.
80. cheveril : sot kid lather or such material
81. troth : truly
82. loth : unwilling
83. pilchards : a small kind of fish
84. herrings : a species of fish
85. Panduras : the go-between in the disastrous love affair between Triluss and Cressida.
86. Cressida was a beggar : Cressida, heroine in Chaucer's story, is portrayed (being the faithless heroine) in Testament of Cressida as a harlot and a beggar.
87. Dieu vous grade monsieur : God protect you. Sir.
88. Et vous aussi : votre serviteur : and you also sir, your servant.
89. gait : walking
90. lowly feigning : affected humility; pretended humility
91. music from the spheres : the alleged celestial harmony of the revolving stars and planets.
92. unmuzzled : let loose; relieved;

93. westward-ho : cry of Thames boatmen; back to Duke's place
94. maidhood : maidenhood
95. dormouse : sleepy
96. fire - new from the mint : brand new.
97. Brownist : follower of William Brown, who advocated the separation of church and state.
98. licence of ink : freedom that writing permits
99. cubiculo : chamber
100. visage : countenance; face
101. youngest wren : smallest of small birds
102. traffic's sake : on account of our trade
103. Elephant : an inn
104. idle markets : unnecessary purchases.
105. the sweet Roman hand : elegant, clear handwriting modelled on dilicate Italian style.
106. miscarry : come to harm
107. scruple : doubt
108. scruple : one-third of a dram; five drops
109. legion : an army or group of devils
110. bawcock : fine fellow (French beau coq)
111. Cherry-pit : a game in whcih cherry - stones were pitched into a small hole
112. collier : vendor of coals; coal miner; "the devil is called a collier for his blackness."
113. bring the device to the bar reveal the plot and have it judged (by public opinion)
114. May morning : the time of merry - making; May Day pageant.
115. by and by : very shortly.
116. clodepole : dunce ; blockhead
117. cockatrices : fabulous serpents that could kill with a glance
118. dismount thy tuck : unsheathe your rapier; draw thy sword(tuck:rapier)
119. firago : Sir Toby's mistake for virago, meaning shrewish woman.
120. Sophy : Shah of Iran
121. Perditiion of souls : loss of life

122. by the duello : by the law of duel
123. defy you : challenge you to a duel
124. lean and low ability : poor and scanty means.,
125. tempt my misery : try me in my misfortunes.
126. o'erflurished : decorated with carvings and painting.
127. 'sild : God's eyelid (an oath)
128. folish : Greek a flooish, merry person; buffoon
129. after fourteen year's purchase: after a long delay; at a high price.
130. well fleshed : mede eager for a flight after testing blood.
131. malapert : saucy; impuent, haughty.
132. rudesby : ruffian; rough fellow.
133. beshrew : cruse
134. Lethe : in classical mythology, the river of oblivion (forget-fulness) in Hell
135. curate : Priest
136. competitors : conspirtors; plotters; participants in the foolery.
137. Peace in the prison : blessing invoked by the priest on entering a house
138. hyperbolical fiend : wicked devil; biosterous spirit.
139. Barricadoes : obstructions; barricades
140. Egyptians in their fog : reference is to "thick darkness" that lasted three days over Egypt, brought by Moses.
141. Pythagoras : ancient Greek philosopher who expounded the doctrine of transmigration of souls.
142. Perdy : by God
143. five wits : five senses - " comon wit, imagination, fantasy estimation and memory" are the five wits.
144. bibble babble : foolish talk
145. Well-a-day : alas
146. prithee : beseech
147. vice : a stock mischievous
148. lath : wooden
149. this pearl : gem studed ring

150. flood of fortune : sudden turn of events
151. chantry by : nearby chapel
152. consecrated : holy, sacred
153. primo, secundo, tertio : one, two, three
154. covetousness : greed
155. anon : soon
156. Vulcabn : Smith of Gods; Roman god of fire.
157. shallow draught : flat bottomed draught
158. fraught : freight cargo
159. salt-water thief : pirate
160. base and ground enough : with good reason. diate; disown
161. base and ground enough : with good reason.
162. witchcraft : a fascination; a spell.
163. ingrate and unauspicious : ungrateful and unpropitious
164. jocund, apt and willingly : gladly, radily and willingly
165. strangel thy propriety : deny your identity
166. contract : bethrothal
167. coxcomb : head; pate, one who places a comb in his cap i.e., fool
168. 'Ods lifelings : by God's life an oath
169. bespake you fair : addressed you courteously
170. passy measures pavin : a grave and stately but slow dance of eight bars.
171. fear'st thou that : do you doubt.
172. form and suit : body and clothing
173. the rest goes even : everything else corresponds, fits in
174. cohere adn jump : fall together and agree; fit in and agree
175. occurrence of my fortune : all my business
176. orbbed continent : the sphere of the sun, in Ptolemic astronomy.
177. distract : out of his mind
178. Beelzebub : name of a leader of devils.
179. stave's end : at a distance
180. vox : an appropriately loud voice

181. mettle : natural disposition, character,
182. geck and gull : dupe and fool
183. plaintiff : petitioner
184. bothsides passed : equalled, balanced
185. Whirlgig : a toy-wheel; revolving wheel.

2.4.10 SELECTED SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- 1) Twelfth Night as a typical Shakespearean comedy ?
or
The romantic elements in the play
- 2) "To think of Twelfth Night is to think of Viola"
or
Sketch the character of Viola
- 3) Role and significance of the fool
or
Feste is the highest wisdom of the play and its lowest buffoonery
- 4) The element of satire in the play
or
Sketch the character of Malvolio
- 5) Twelfth Night as a "study of love on various planes"
- 6) Bring out the dramatic significance of the ring episode
- 7) The dramatic significance of the duel episode.

2.4.11 SUGGESTED READING

1. A.B. Charlton - Shakespearean Comedy.
2. G. Gordon - Shakespearean Comedy and other Studies.
3. S.C. Sen Gupta - Shakespearean Comedy
4. S.A. Brooke - The Plays of Shakespeare
5. E. Dowden - Shakespeare's Mind and Art.
6. Hudson - Shakespeare, His mind, Art and Literature.
7. Hazlitt - Characters of Shakespeare's Plays.
8. Mrs. Jameson - Shakespeare's Heroines.
9. Twelfth Night - Edited by K. Deighton.

P.N.V.D. Mahesh.

Lesson - IV. IV. 5

SELECT LITERARY CRITICISM

THE TWELFTH NIGHT

HAZLITT ON 'TWELFTH NIGHT'

This is justly considered as one of the most delightful of Shakespeare's comedies. It is full of sweetness and pleasantry. It is perhaps too good-natured for comedy. It has little satire, and no spleen. It aims at the ludicrous rather than the ridiculous. It makes us laugh at the follies of mankind, not despise them, and still less bear any ill-will towards them. Shakespeare's comic genius resembles the bee rather in its power of extracting sweets from weeds or poisons, than in leaving a sting behind it. He gives the most amusing exaggeration of the prevailing foibles of his characters, but in a way that they themselves, instead of being offended at, would almost join in to humour; he rather contrives opportunities for them to show themselves off in the happiest lights, than tender them contemptible in the perverse construction of the wit or malice of others. . . . Absurdity has every encouragement afforded it; and nonsense has room to flourish in. Nothing is stunted by the churlish, icy hand of indifference or severity. The poet runs riot in a conceit, and idolizes a quibble. His whole object is to turn the meanest or rudest objects to a pleasurable account. The relish which he has of a pun, or of the quaint humour of a low character, does not interfere with the delight with which he describes a beautiful image, or the most refined love. The clown's forced jests do not spoil the sweetness of the character of Viola; the same house is big enough to hold Malvolio, the Countess, Maria, Sir Toby, and Sir Andrew Ague-cheek. . . . There is a constant infusion of the romantic and enthusiastic, in proportion as the characters are natural and sincere.

From Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817)

JOHN MASEFIELD ON 'TWELFTH NIGHT'

This is the happiest and one of the loveliest of all Shakespearian plays. It is the best English comedy. The great mind that mixed a tragedy of intellect with a tragedy of stupidity, here mixes mirth with romantic beauty. The play is so mixed with beauty that one can see it played night after night, week after week, without weariness, even in a London theatre.

The play presents images of self-deception, or delusional sentimentality, by means of a romantic fable and a vigorous fable. It shows us three souls suffering from the kind of sickly vanity that feeds on day-dreams. Orsino is in an unreal mood of emotion. 'Love is an active passion. Orsino is in the clutch of its dangerous passive enemy called sentimentality. He lolls upon a couch to music when he ought to be carrying her glove to battle. Olivia is in an unreal mood of mourning for her brother. Grief is a destroying passion. Olivia makes it a form of self-indulgence, or one sweet the more to attract flies to

her. Malvolio is in an unreal mood of self-importance. Long posing at the head of ceremony has given him the faith that ceremony, of which he is the head, is the whole of life. This faith deludes him into a life of day-dreams, common enough among inactive clever people, but dangerous to the indulger, as all things are that distort the mental vision. At the point at which the play begins the day-dream has brought him to the pitch of blindness necessary for effective impact on the wall.

The only cure for the sickly in the mind is reality. Something real has to be felt or experienced. Life that is over-delicate and remote through something unbalanced in the mind is not life but decay. The knife, the bludgeon, the practical joke, and the money-weaponed figure of Sorrow are life's remedies for those who fail to live. We are the earth's children; we have no business in limbo. Living in limbo is like living in the smoke from a crater: highly picturesque, but too near death for safety.

Orsino is cured of sentiment by the sight of Sebastian making love like a man. He rouses to do the like by Viola. Olivia is piqued out of sentiment by coming to know some one who despises her. She falls in love with that person. Malvolio is mocked out of sentiment by the knowledge that other minds have seen his mind. He has not the happiness to be rewarded with love at the end of the play; but he has the alternative of hate, which is as active a passion and as real. All three are roused to activity by the coming of something real into their lives; and all three, in coming to the active state, cease to be interesting and beautiful and pathetic.

From John Masefield's *Shakespeare* (1911)

JOHN DOVER WILSON ON 'TWELFTH NIGHT'

Last and best [of the comedies] came *Twelfth Night*, which for sheer lightness of touch goes as far as even Shakespeare can reach, blending music and revelry, realism and romance, the wittiest prose and the most ravishing poetry.

Twelfth Night is Shakespeare's farewell to comedy for many years. It is fitting that the earliest recorded performance should have been at a feast in the Middle Temple, since this marks the fact that from beginning to end the comedies and histories were composed for audiences of young men. It is *Twelfth Night* also which provides youth with its eternal retort to the cooling blood of age: 'Dost think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?'

From JOHN DOVER WILSON'S *The Essential Shakespeare* (1932).

THE CHARACTER OF VIOLA

Viola undoubtedly lies in most of our minds as an extremely sentimental person, the impression being chiefly derived from the speech, 'She never told her love'. In order to conform to this conception it was necessary to suppress any exuberant gaiety in those

passages in which Viola is tickled by the thought that she, a woman, is about to be loved as a man by Olivia. Those who see Miss Terry in the part will be convinced by the most irresistible of demonstrations that Viola was rather one of those thoroughly healthy and happy young women who, while fraught with the capacity for loving and certain to be true in love, will scarcely pine grievously under their own lovetroubles, or regard those of any ordinary woman as likely to be fatal. It is not very seriously of herself that she tells the story about concealment feeding on the damask cheek. She will not play patience on a monument unless the smiling at grief be very genuine. She feels the pathos of the story. Her frame quivers as she tells it to Orsino with lowered head, and his head presses upon hers in mere brotherly sympathy. But Viola is hearty though not heart-whole. and Miss Terry persuades us readily that the true Viola is one from whose gentle nature gaiety is not likely to be permanently estranged.

From SIR EDWARD RUSSELL, 'Mr. Irving's Work', in
The Fortnightly review, Sept. 1884.

THE CHARACTER OF OLIVIA

Contrasted with the deep, silent, patient love of Viola for the Duke, we have the lady-like wilfulness of Olivia; and her sudden passion, or rather fancy, for the disguised page, takes so beautiful a colouring of poetry and sentiment, that we do not think her forward. Olivia is like a princess of romance, and has all the privileges of one; she is, like Portia, high born and high bred, mistress over her servants-but not, like Portia, 'queen o'er herself'. She has never in her life been opposed; the first contradiction, therefore, rouses all the woman in her, and turns a caprice into a headlong passion. . . .

The distance of rank which separates the Countess from the youthful page--the real sex of Viola--the dignified elegance of Olivia's deportment, except where passion gets the better of her pride--her consistent coldness towards the Duke--the description of that 'smooth, discreet, and stable bearing' with which she rules her household--her generous care for her steward Malvolio, in the midst of her own distress--all these circumstances raise Olivia in our fancy, and render her caprice for the page a source of amusement and interest, not a subject of reproach.

In artificial society men and women are divided into castes and classes, and it is rarely that extremes in character or manners can approximate. To blend into one harmonious picture the utmost grace and refinement of sentiment, and the broadest effects of humour, the most poignant wit, and the most indulgent benignity, in short, to bring before us in the same scene, Viola and Olivia, with Malvolio and Sir Toby, belonged only to Nature and to Shakespeare.

From Mrs. JAMESON'S *Characteristics of Women* (1832)

THE CHARACTER OF MALVOLIO

Malvolio is not essentially ludicrous. He becomes comic but by accident. He is cold, austere, repelling; but dignified, consistent, and for what appears, rather of an over-stretched morality. Maria describes him as a sort of Puritan; and he might have worn his gold chain with honour in one of our old round-head families, in the service of a Lambert, or a Lady Fairfax. But his morality and his manners are misplaced in Illyria. He is opposed to the proper *levities* of the piece, and falls in the unequal contest. Still his pride, or his gravity (call it what you will) is inherent, and native to the man, not mock or affected, which latter only are the fit objects to excite laughter. His quality is at the best unlovely, but neither buffoon nor contemptible. His bearing is lofty, a little above his station, but probably not much above his deserts. We see no reason why he should not have been brave, honourable, accomplished. His careless committal of the ring to the ground (which he was commissioned to restore to Cesario), bespeaks a generosity of birth and feeling. His dialect on all occasions is that of a gentleman, and a man of education. We must not confound him with the eternal old, low steward of comedy. He is master of the household to a great Princess; a dignity probably conferred upon him for other respects than age or length of service. . . . Even in his abused state of chains and darkness, a sort of greatness seems never to desert him. He argues highly and well with the supposed Sir Topas, and philosophizes gallantly upon his straw. There must have been some shadow of worth about the man,; he must have been something more than a mere vapour a thing of straw, or Jack in office--before Fabian and Maria could have ventured sending him upon a courting-errand to Olivia. There was some consonancy (as he would say) in the undertaking, or the jest would have been too bold even for that house of misrule.

From CHARLES LAMB's *On Some of the Old Actors* (1822)

FESTE THE JESTER

Lear's Fool stands in a place apart—a sacred place; but of Shakespeare's other Fools, Feste, the so-called Clown in *Twelfth Night*, has always lain nearest to my heart. He is not, perhaps, more amusing than Touchstone, to whom I bow profoundly in passing; but I love him more.

Whether Lear's Fool was not slightly touched in his wits is disputable. Though Touchstone is both sane and wise, we sometimes wonder what would happen if he had to shift for himself. Here and there he is ridiculous as well as humorous; we laugh *at* him, and not only *with* him. We never laugh at Feste. . . . He is as sane as his mistress; his position considered, he cannot be called even eccentric, scarcely even flighty; and he possesses not only the ready wit required by his profession, and intellectual agility greater than it requires, but also an insight into character and into practical situations so swift and sure that he seems to supply, in fuller measure than any of Shakespeare's other Fools, the poet's own comment on the story. . . . All the agility of wit and fancy, all the penetration and wisdom, which Feste shows in his calling, would not by themselves explain our feeling for him. But his mind to him a kingdom is, and one full of such present joys that he finds contentment there. Outwardly he may be little better than a slave; but Epictetus was a

slave outright and yet absolutely free: and so is Feste. That world of quibbles which are pointless to his audience, of incongruities which nobody else can see, of flitting fancies which he only cares to pursue, is his sunny realm. . . Having thus a world of his own, and being lord of himself, he cares little for Fortune. His mistress may turn him away; but, 'to be turned away, let summer bear it out'. This 'sunshine of the breast' is always with him and spreads its radiance over the whole scene in which he moves. .And so we love him.

We have another reason. The Fool's voice is as melodious as the 'sweet content' of his soul... . Almost all the music and the praise of music comes from Feste or has to do with Feste. In this, he stands alone among Shakespeare's Fools; and that this, with the influence it has on our feeling for him, was intended by the poet should be plain. It is no accident that when the Duke thanks him for his 'pains' in singing he answers, 'No pains, sir; I take pleasure in singing, sir' ; that the revelry for which he risks punishment is a revelry of song; that, when he is left alone, he still sings. . . .

I have a last grace to notice in our wise, happy, melodious Fool. He was little injured by his calling. He speaks as he likes; but from first to last, whether he is revelling or chopping logic or playing with words, and to whomsoever he speaks or sings, he keeps his tongue free from obscenity. The fact is in accord with the spirit of this ever-blessed play, which could not have endured the 'foul-mouthed' Fool of *All's Well*. . . .

The position of the professional jester we must needs feel to be more or less hard, if not of necessity degrading. In Feste's case, it is peculiarly hard. He is perfectly sane, and there is nothing to show that he is unfit for independence. In important respects he is, more than Shakespeare's other fools, superior in mind to his superiors in rank. And he has no Celia, no Countess, no Lear to protect or love him. He had been Fool to Olivia's father, who 'took much delight in him'; but Olivia, though not unkind, cannot be said to love him. We find him, on his first appearance, in disgrace and (if Maria is right) in danger of being punished or even turned away. His mistress, entering, tells him that he is a dry fool, that she'll no more of him, and (later) that his fooling grows old and people dislike it. Her displeasure, doubtless, has a cause, and it is transient, but her words are none the less significant. Feste is a relic of the past. The steward, a person highly valued by his lady, is Feste's enemy. Though Maria likes him and, within limits, would stand his friend, there is no tone of affection in her words to him, and ~ certainly none in those of any other person. We cannot but feel sorry for him. .

This peculiar position explains certain traits in Feste himself which might otherwise diminish our sympathy. One is that he himself, though he shows no serious malevolence even to his enemy, shows no affection for anyone. . . . The fact is, he recognizes very clearly that, as this world goes, a man whom nobody loves must look out for himself. Hence (this is the second trait) he is a shameless beggar, much the most so of Shakespeare's Fools. He is fully justified, and he begs so amusingly that we welcome his begging; but shameless it is. But he is laying up treasures on earth against the day when some freak of his own, or some whim of his mistress, will bring his dismissal. and the short

summer of his freedom will be followed by the wind and the rain. And so, finally, he is as careful as his love of fun will allow to keep clear of any really dangerous enterprise. He must join in the revel of the knights and the defiance of the steward; but from the moment when Malvolio retires with a threat to Maria, and Maria begins to expound her plot against him, Feste keeps silence; and, though she expressly assigns him a part in the conspiracy, he takes none. The plot succeeds magnificently, and Malvolio is shut up, chained as a lunatic, in a dark room; and that comic genius Maria has a new scheme, which requires the active help of the Fool. But her words, 'Nay, I prithee, put on this gown and this beard', show that he objects.

A.C. BRADLEY, from 'Feste the Jester', in *A Book of Homage to Shakespeare*, 1916 (reprinted in *A Miscellany*, 1929).

SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF SONG IN 'TWELFTH NIGHT'

That it was not the original intention to assign all the singing to Feste is evident from the fact that Viola was to be presented to the Duke, not as a page as the event now has it, but as a eunuch who could 'sing and speak to him in many sorts of music'. Further, it is patent that to Viola was to be appointed that 'Old and antique song' in Act II, Scene 4, where by an obvious device Feste is substituted as the singer. If all were known, it is not improbable that in this change is contained an interesting piece of theatrical history. From *Hamlet* and *Othello* we know that Shakespeare's company had from about 1601 until 1604 a leading boy capable of playing upon the lute and of singing ballads of the plaintive kind alluded to by Orsino. Probably on the occasion of a revival there was no boy available capable both of taking such a part as Viola's and of singing. Also the comedian, who personated Feste, may have proved such an excellent 'draw' as a singer, that it was good business not only to allot him all the songs but actually to increase their number. As the play stands now, Feste is not only a witty fool and a plausible beggar, but domestic minstrelsy is his profession, and Malvolio distinguishes him from Sir Topas by his breaking into song. . . .

The context of the song [*Come away, come away, death*, Act II, Scene 4] is not without interest--limits are imposed on the kind of air to be set to the words; we are told that it must avoid 'light airs and recollected terms' (if 'recollected terms' has application to the music it may mean a tune that is 'catchy' in character, that is, one that is easily memorized). In the second place it must be such that

The spinsters and knitters in the sun,
And the free maids that weave their thread with bones,
Do use to chant *it*.

Clearly a folk idiom is indicated, and a rhythm that is too insistent or regular must be avoided. The attention of producers is drawn to this very important point.

In Germany, at Karlsruhe, the song has been rendered by Viola instead of by Feste. While it is agreed that it was the original intention that Viola should sing here, yet it is submitted that the song she sang was other than the one now standing and allotted to Feste. Leaving aside the debatable resemblance of the present song to the Duke's description of it, for Viola, even though disguised as a youth, to sing it were a dramatic impropriety, which Shakespeare was not in the habit of committing. The song, which had been chanted by the spinsters and free maids, might have been appropriate, but not this one. In any case, the scene has been so much altered, and there is now so much matter specially contextual to the song as rendered by Feste, that it is quite impossible for a producer, who has any sense of consistency of effect, to attempt to restore the original—the motive contained in Feste's adieu to the Duke is quite in keeping with the motive of the song. . . .

The third song, *I am gone, sir* (Act IV, Scene 2), occurs at the end of the very diverting scene where Feste tantalizes Malvolio. The interest of the song lies entirely in its illustration of Shakespeare's dramatic craftsmanship, and helps to bear out Irving's remark that no actor could ever complain that Shakespeare had sent him tamely off the stage. Imagine to yourself a stage projecting out into the orchestra and without a drop scene, and try to devise an effective method of ending the situation, and you will then the better appreciate the genius of this song as covering the Clown's exit. Feste is enabled to withdraw gradually and with mock ceremony and to disappear on the final insult 'devil', hurled derisively at the much-wronged Malvolio. I have seen a performance in which the actor was allowed to flutter about the stage while uttering the lines, and I must confess I have never seen anything on the stage more futile or unintelligent.

Perhaps it ought to be explained that the Vice, mentioned in the song, was a buffoon, who appeared chiefly in the old interludes. He wore a long coat (it is not clear that he also had a cap with ass's ears, the statement to that effect in Nares's Glossary is based upon that of Theobald) and was armed with a thin slip of wood fashioned in the shape of a dagger. He was wont to make sport with the devil by leaping on his back and by belabouring him with his lathen dagger, but notwithstanding in the end the devil succeeded in carrying him off. The devil was supposed to keep his nails unpared from choice, hence, when Feste tells Malvolio to pare his nails, it is equivalent to calling him a devil, a spirit that was said to inhabit those whose wits were tainted.

Appropriately enough, Feste winds up this high-spirited comedy with an Epilogue in the form of a song round a popular refrain, which in all probability the groundlings would take up. To Warburton, Steevens, Staunton, and a host of other grave Georgian and Victorian editors the song was anathema, and they would have consigned the ditty to the footnotes as being the gag of an actor. It is important to remember that Shakespeare was not of a dry antiquarian cast of mind like some of his commentators; he was an actor and a practical man of affairs out to entertain all those willing to pay for their amusement, and he well knew, none better, the value of nonsense in attaining that end. Every one, whose life is at all worth living, has capacity for nonsense in its proper season, and when could it

be more timely than at the end of *Twelfth Night*, for the wise nonsense contained in this ditty serves as a commentary on the events of the play, and is a fitting corollary to the first song, *O mistress mine*?

From RICHMOND NOBLE, *Shakespeare's Use of Song* (1928)

JOHN BAILEY ON 'TWELFTH NIGHT'

Twelfth Night is another delightful creation with nearly as much fun in it and much more poetry. Its romance is all poetry and pleasure; it never gets so near tragedy as the business of Hero in *Much Ado*. The only sadness in it is the beautiful sadness of love; there are no villains like Don John and his crew. The only flaw in the mingled romance and comedy of its story is the tiresome and unconvincing business of the confusion between Sebastian and Viola; much more tiresome here than, for instance, in *The Comedy of Errors* because 'the play is so much truer and finer. Of course, one has again to remember that both parts were played by boys, which reduced the absurdity. But it must have remained an absurdity, and have added to the fairy-tale improbability of the action which is, apart from it, much less conspicuous in this than in most of the Shakespearean romances. Only, for probability of the action as a whole the middle Shakespeare cared little, the Shakespeare of the earliest and latest plays nothing at all. Perhaps another defect may be remarked. Olivia, the middle-aged and melancholy, has not charm enough to fill her part. We find it difficult to follow the Duke's infatuation. We almost grudge her receiving even a substitute for the lovely Cesario of her delusion.

One of the happy things to be noted in this enchanting play is that in it is to be found all Shakespeare's best praise, except the famous passage in the *Merchant of Venice*, of the one art outside his own which he understood and loved. Of painting and sculpture he knew nothing. Whenever he speaks of them he falls into the silly old ignorance which supposes that their business is to produce a deceiving copy of nature. But of music he knows much and has felt all. I myself have heard one of the greatest of living musicians say something to the effect that of the three of our poets who speak oftenest of music, Browning is always meaningless or wrong, Milton always, Shakespeare nearly always, beautifully and passionately right. Anyhow, -whatever his actual knowledge of the art and science of music may have amounted to, there can be no doubt about his feeling. One gets the impression that the words which he puts into the mouth of Caesar, and several other of his characters, express some feeling of his own. The man that 'hears no music' is' for him a disagreeable man, even a man not to be trusted. It is pleasant to see that Shakespeare, the contemporary of William Byrd, delighted in the art of voice and instrument, in which his countrymen were then achieving such triumphs. And there is no play in which we see that more clearly than in *Twelfth Night*, which begins and ends with music. . . .

There are a few other points that may be noticed. What an art there is in beginnings! And no greater master of it than Shakespeare. Could this play begin more significantly than with 'If music be the food of love, play on'? It is of music and love that it is made, at least the serious part of it. And the other half, the foolery which is the foil to the

romance, how the note of that also is struck in Sir Toby's first words: 'What a plague means my niece to take the death of her brother thus? I am sure care's an enemy to life.' On the whole, perhaps, no play is fuller than this of Shakespeare himself, that double being, the greatest of all romantics and, at the same time, of all realists too. None exhibits more the madness of the Baconians, whose great man, so utterly unlike Shakespeare, has almost as little of realism in him as he has of romance. What he cared about in men and things was the material they provided for argument or philosophy, not their smack and savour and suggestion in which the poet and the realist find life and truth. The contrast between them is well illustrated in a note of Johnson's on this play. He points out that, while Shakespeare took the story of Diana and Actaeon as illustrating the torture of love which has self forbidden sights, Bacon supposes it to warn us against enquiring into the secrets of princes.' And it is this Privy Councillor who, we are asked to believe, created Juliet and Rosalind one cannot but wish that Johnson had lived to deal with the Baconians as they deserve and as none but he could deal!

Twelfth Night alone would be enough to put these seekers after whimsies in their right place. It is signed all over with the only signature that ever gave us either such things as 'O mistress mine', or such as 'Is it a world to hide virtues in? or 'Dost thou think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?' No play is more Shakespearean or more English. It combines in one, poetry and prose, tragedy and comedy, joy and grief, cakes and ale and tricks, and laughter with bereavement and disappointment, solitude and sorrow. Shakespeare has left us nothing gayer, and nothing lovelier.

From JOHN BAILEY, *Shakespeare* (1929)

A NOTE ON SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

By C.T. ONIONS

VOCABULARY:

As the *Oxford Shakespeare Glossary* shows, there are some ten thousand words in the whole of the works attributed to Shakespeare which require explanation for the general reader, either because they are no longer in ordinary use or because they are used by him in some way that is not now familiar. Among the former are such words as *ballow* cudge, *fill-horse* shaft-horse, and *neaf* fist, which are now only provincial, and such others as *benison* blessing, *foison* abundance, *mow* grimace, *purlous* dangerous, *puissant* powerful, *teen* grief, which may be found still in literary diction, as well as a considerable number that have been used, so far as we know, by Shakespeare alone. With such as these we become acquainted by reference to glossaries and notes. But it is possible to continue to read Shakespeare without properly understanding him because we are unaware of, and sometimes do not even suspect, differences in the meaning of words that are in general use to-day. The following selection of such words will serve to indicate the nature of the differences that may be looked for.

allow approve
argument proof, subject of discourse
brave fine, splendid
churchman clergyman
close secret
complexion habit or constitution of body or mind, look, aspect, appearance
conceit idea, thought, invention
condition covenant, rank, character
difference disagreement, dispute
evil disease
fashion sort
favour appearance, face feature bodily form
gear affair, business
grudge complain
hint opportunity
hope expect, suppose
infer allege
instance cause, evidence, proof
level aim
lewd bad, vile
liberal unrestrained, licentious
mere absolute, downright
merely entirely
miss do without
note sign, stigma, information
obsequious dutiful owe own
painful laborious
passion painful disease, strong emotion.
peevish silly, perverse
present immediate
presently at once
prevent anticipate
quality rank, profession
rate estimation
respect consideration
sad grave, serious
shrewd mischievous, bad
sort rank, class, way, manner
still always, continually
stomach inclination, angry or proud temper
sudden swift, violent
tall fine, valiant
type mark, barge
very true, complete

Among words having a very wide range of meaning the following may be noted:

humour (1) moisture, (2) any of the four fluids of the human body recognized by the old physiologists, (3) temperament, (4) mood, temper, fancy, caprice, inclination;

nice (1) delicate, (2) shy, coy, (3) fastidious, (4) subtle, minute, (5) trivial, (6) critical, precarious, (7) exact, precise;

quaint (1) skilled, clever, (2) pretty, dainty, (3) handsome, elegant, (4) carefully elaborated;

sensible (1) sensitive, (2) of the senses, (3) capable of emotion, (4) rational, (5) tangible, substantial, (6) full of good sense;

wit (1) mental powers, mind, faculty of perception, as in *the five wits*, (2) inventive power, (3) understanding, intelligence, (4) wisdom, good sense, as in *brevity is the soul of wit*, (5) lively fancy producing brilliant talk.

A second adjective dear grievous, severe, dire (distinct from *dear* beloved, precious) is seen in *my dear offence, thy dear exile*.

Many adjectives and participial words show the application of a suffix with a force different from that which is now usual:

deceivable deceitful	grac'd gracious
tuneable tuneful	gulled treacherous
unmeritable undeserving	disdain'd disdainful
questionable inviting question	unexpressive inexpressible
	plausible plausible
careless uncared for	unavoided inevitable
cureless incurable	beholding obliged, beholden
timeless untimely, premature	

Note also the double meaning, active and passive, of artificial (1) constructive, creative, (2) produced by art.

Shakespeare uses a multitude of technical terms of the arts and sciences; these are treated in their historical slitting in *Shakespeare's England* (O.D.P.); note especially the glossary of musical terms in vol. ii, pp. 32 ff. Some general aspects of the vocabulary are dealt with in G. S. Gordon's *Shakespeare's English*, Society of Pune English, Tract xxix (O.U.P.)

The Tempest

The Tempest

List of Characters

Alonso, King of Naples.

Sebastian, his Brother.

Prospero, the right Duke of Milan.

Antonio, his Brother, the usurping Duke of Milan.

Ferdinand, Son to the King of Naples.

Gonzalo, an honest old Counsellor.

Adrian,
Francisco } Lords

Caliban, a savage and deformed slave

Trinculo, A Jester

Stephano, a drunken Butler

Master of a Ship, Boatswain, Mariners.

Miranda, Daughter to Prospero.

Ariel, an airy Spirit.

Ires,
Ceres,
Juno,
Nymphs,
Reapers, } Presented by Spirits

Other Spirits attending on Prospero.

Scene – The Sea, with a Ship; afterwards an Island

Unit V THE TEMPEST –I

V.0 OBJECTIVES

After working through this unit you will be able to

- Explain the state of Drama before Shakespeare
- understand the aspects of the last plays of Shakespeare
- discuss the greatness of Shakespeare
- discuss the time and sources of the play *The Tempest*
- analyse critically the significance of the play *The Tempest*

V-1 STRUCTURE

- V.0 Aims and objectives
 - V.1 Structure
 - V.2 Introduction
 - V.2.1 Drama before Shakespeare
 - V.2.2 Last plays of Shakespeare
 - V.2.3 Aspects of Shakespeare's plays
 - V.2.4 Time and Sources
 - V.2.5 Significance of *The Tempest* and other plays of Shakespeare
- V V.3 Check your progress I
- V.4 Sample Examination Questions
- V.5 Suggested Readings

V.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit enables you to understand the conditions of drama before Shakespeare, his last plays and the contribution and the greatness of Shakespeare as a playwright. You will learn about the significance of *The Tempest* as a play, its time of writing, its sources etc.

V.2.1 Drama before William Shakespeare

Drama started as a religious activity in Britain. The Bible provided themes and plays were performed in Church compounds on Christmas and Easter. There were 'miracle' plays celebrating the important events in the life of Christ from 'Birth to Resurrection'. The 'morality' plays represented the struggle between good and evil with personified qualities like vice and virtue. After the Renaissance, inspiration was drawn from the classical sources i.e., the early Greek dramatists. At the end of the 15th century a new kind of play called 'interlude' came into existence. The playwrights followed the observations of Aristotle which he expressed in his *Poetics*. The three classical unities, the unity of time, place and action were indicated by Aristotle to preserve the general dramatic unity and to protect a play from becoming a disjointed and disconnected event. Further he felt that a play should possess the following divisions.

- a) The Exposition
- b) The Rising Action
- c) The Crisis or Climax
- d) The Falling Action and
- e) The Catastrophe

Drama was given a general artistic form by the university wits like Kyd, Greene, Nashe, Peele and Christopher Marlowe. They introduced the romantic form of drama which was different from the classical one. Shakespeare gave a new direction and made the Elizabethan Drama a unique one. The new drama of Shakespeare opposed the classical style of construction, chiefly - the three unities. It included sub-plots and even under plots besides the central theme.

Shakespeare's greatness lies in his art of presenting entire humanity on the stage. He has given the play, a novel poetic sheen which was not done by his predecessors. He has given his plays an epic quality speaking about human nature. His characters are true to nature and they speak the language of the common man. His contribution to English drama is immense.

V.II.2. LAST PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE

The last plays of every great playwright assume a special significance. In the case of Shakespeare they possess a magical power proclaiming the philosophical essence of human life. They project his 'visions of truth, most intense moments of inspiration, and his discoveries about human life'. This is the period of his spiritual discovery.

If *Timon of Athens* shows Shakespeare's mood of indignation, *The Tempest* displays his august serenity. *The Tempest* is treated as his last play because it exposes the ideal expression of the temper of his mind as a dramatist. Hence Prof. Dowden observes "*The Tempest, Winter's Tale and Cymbeline* are the three complete plays, which represent the final period of Shakespeare's authorship.

These three plays have some common characteristics.

1. Versification and style
2. Scenic spectacle
3. Plot construction etc.,

Though they are the echoes of earlier themes of Shakespeare, they are all “mellowed, refined and exquisite”. They avoid ‘the extremes of broad humour and of tragic intensity’. Prof. Dowden observes “There are moments when Shakespeare was not wholly absorbed in his work as artist at this period; it is as if he were thinking of his own life, or of the fields and streams of Stratford, and still wrote on...” In all his tragedies we observe his serious imagination at work with into the mystery of evil. In the last plays he shows the grievous errors of the heart, the cruel wrongs of man to man beginning with a dissonance and ending with the dissonance, a reconciliation.

The Tempest belongs to the last group of plays known as ‘dramatic romances’ like *Cymbeline*, the *Winter’s Tale* and *Pericles*. All these plays share the following qualities of romances

- a. Tragic elements
- b. Comic moments
- c. Loss and restoration of children
- d. Reconciliation between members of family
- e. Magical elements, with exquisite poetry.

The last plays share all these qualities. They possess a tragic background but they end with reconciliation. ‘Forgiveness and reconciliation’ becomes the chief motif in these plays. Shakespeare has moved away from his earlier plots of vengeance and bloodshed. He proves that wrong and evil can be conquered through love and charity and all his last plays exemplify this.

The Tempest belongs to the last plays though they were placed in the first Folio. The volume opens with *The Tempest* and closes with *Cymbeline*. There are several evidences to show that *The Tempest* belongs to this group.

Shakespeare’s contemporary Fulke Greville mentions them. *Cymbeline* and *Winter’s Tale* were seen by Simon Forman, an astrologer in 1610 and 1611. Critics feel that *Cymbeline* is the loosest and most disorderly of all Shakespeare’s plays. Shakespeare has ignored the three unities, plot- construction and kept all incidents at a perfect tangle of loose ends. This play sustains the interest only because of the episodes and poetry. More than anything else charm lies in the character of the heroine, Imogen. *The Winter’s Tale* also shows the inaccuracy of construction. It has a great poetic appeal and the story is more romantic. Leontes shares the envy of Othello and

that of Posthumus. Critics praise this play for the Partly tragic “opening and pastoral continuation of the Bohemian, the tragic-comic and ‘coup de theatre’ of the ending.”

When compared with these two, *The Tempest* is regular and it is open to none of the objections. This swan song of Shakespeare observes the three unities though the violation of “place” is almost small. The whole plot continues the ‘unity of action’ dealing with the spell of Prospero to bring in a change. The contrast of Caliban and Ariel is classical in appeal and Shakespeare’s use of satire in projecting the base human nature is obvious. Hence the play is praised by critics.

These last plays share a similar concept – loss and restoration of a child; in *Pericles* Marina, in *The Winter’s Tale* Perdita, in *The Tempest* Miranda; in *Cymbeline* the king’s two sons are lost and restored.

These last plays have also a theme in common – reconciliation and forgiveness. Wrong ways are mended and people are restored to their original places. In *Cymbeline* Imogen, the daughter of Cymbeline is wronged by her husband Posthumus. She forgives him with broad mindedness and joy. In the *Winter’s Tale* Queen Hermione is wronged by her husband Leontes and she is restored to him as he recognises his folly. She forgives him. In *The Tempest* Prospero is wronged by his brother (his family member) and it is corrected in the end. Prospero forgives him though he is antagonistic. In all these it is the protagonist that has suffered and has forgiven others.

Hermione, Imogen, and Prospero- all these characters possess ‘gracious powers which extend forgiveness to men’. Prospero’s forgiveness is solemn, judicial, abstract and impersonal. Hence Dowden observes, “The forgiveness of Prospero is an embodiment of impartial wisdom and loving justice”. With Prospero, the play achieved its perfection. The critics praised, “The Tempest is not all Shakespeare :only all Shakespeare is that.”

V.II.3. Aspects of Shakespeare’s plays

You may wonder why Shakespeare is being revered even today. As observed by great critics, his plays are filled with a vague wonder. The greatness of his works lies in his unbridled imagination and portrayal of human nature. He is criticised for taking his plots from old sources; but his magical touch makes the old, familiar material glow with the ‘deepest thoughts and the tenderest feelings that ennoble humanity’. Shakespeare possessed great powers of imagination and observation, and the success of his immortality lies in his delineation of human nature in its true colours. Samuel Johnson says that the plays of Shakespeare are neither tragedies nor comedies but a composition of distinct kind. In short, they are reflections of human life.

V.2.3.1. 1Tragedies of Shakespeare

Shakespeare’s tragic vision is similar to that of Aristotle. He might be defying in presenting them away from the structure of the Greek tragedies, but his approach is more

Aristotelian than Platonic. He presents a kind of intellectual tragedy but not a physical one. His tragedy is a story of exceptional calamity and sorrow leading to the death of the protagonist. All his tragedies are individual and in each play he explores a human folly. *Othello, Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra* – all these bring out the conflict of the inner psyche of his protagonists, each play in their own distinct way. Shakespearean tragic protagonist belongs to a higher stature. He suffers from 'hamartia' or a 'tragic flaw'. It may be pride, suspicion, procrastination or over-vaulting ambition. The action in his tragedy heightens in the release from passion (catharsis) through pity and terror. He achieves 'tragic perfection' in every play in the Aristotelian sense; but in the process he deviates from the physical structure, by ignoring the three unities.

V.2.3.2 Shakespeare's Comedies

The comedies of Shakespeare produce laughter and satisfy the intellect. He exposes human folly in a gentle way. They are full of wit, puns, conceits, music and love. He creates a joyous, funny and romantic atmosphere. They possess a magical, supernatural touch along with the realistic back ground. 1 *Love's Labour's Lost*, 2 *The Comedy of Errors*, 3 *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 4 *The Midsummer Night's Dream*, 5 *The Merchant of Venice*, 6 *As you like It*, 7 *Much Ado About Nothing*, 8 *Twelfth Night*, 9 *All is Well that Ends Well* 10. *Measure for Measure*, 11 *Troilus and Cressida* are his comedies. His early comedies 1-4 are boisterous, 5-8 are joyous and sunny and the remaining are dark in nature. His dark comedies expose the base side human nature and are cynical in tone. His latter comedies are again hilarious and romantic. They are *Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*.

Even in presenting a comedy, Shakespeare flouts the three unities. His comedies are an escape from everyday life. They take place in idyllic surroundings of an Arden or the shores of Illyria, the away from the cruel human society. The characters of Shakespeare speak the ordinary language of everyday life. They are true to life but they possess a typical poetic grandeur. Every Shakespearean comedy ends with the jingling bells of marriage. They are full of songs, dances, love and passionate utterances. His women – may it be Rosalind, Portia or Beatrice – are all gentle portraits of love. The Shakespearean 'fool' is an ever-permissible spirit of mirth and philosophy. He acts as the chorus of the play linking the characters and plots. The characters of Shakespearean comedies face many problems as 'true love does never run smooth', and yet their love culminates in marriage. If 'fate' takes a harsh role in his tragedies, it turns benevolent in his comedies.

V.2.3.3. Shakespeare as a Poet

In a way the success of Shakespeare was established by his poems. *Venus and Adonis*, his first work became immensely popular in London. Even in his dramas, his poetic stance is visible. It was felt that Shakespeare would have retained his place even with his poems. His poetical works, *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece* contain much 'poetic fancy' despite their unpleasant length. His one hundred and fifty-four sonnets express his personal feelings.

V.2.3.4 Greatness of Shakespeare

The greatness of Shakespeare is both 'from within' and 'from without'. His imagination and observation are the two inimitable things with Shakespeare. His genius was shaped and enriched by external influences. His themes are as varied as like his characters. They may differ in stature, but in their virtues and vices but they are all 'flesh and blood' characters, true to life. They are not mere portraits. Caesar, Brutus, Falstaff, Cleopatra, Rosalind, Portia, Touchstone, apart from his great tragic figures- all are strikingly human and realistic and the list is endless. Shakespeare's plays have been immortal and great because of their universal appeal in style, dialogue and characterisation. His plays often present the struggle between good and evil in both serious and comic terms.

V.2.4 Time and Sources

V.2.4.1 Time

The style, metre and general tone of the play The Tempest suggests that it belongs to the last plays of Shakespeare, called 'romances'. It was published in 1623 in the first Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays. It was probably written towards the end of 1610 or at the beginning of 1611. The time of writing is associated with an incident which mobilised the thoughts of England for wider development.

The Virginia Company made the first permanent settlement of the English in America in 1608. In May of the following year a fleet of nine vessels bearing settlers and provisions for the new colony was despatched under the command of Sir George Somers. On 25 July Sir George Somers's vessel, the 'Sea Adventure' was driven ashore on the Bermudas. They remained there for some months, built two new ships and continued their journey. The other vessels had reached safely. As such, the news about the disaster reached England at the end of 1609, creating a feeling about the permanent loss of the 'Adventure'. In 1610 some of the survivors returned home with the tidings of the ship's safety. A narrative of this adventure called *A Discovery of the Bermudas* otherwise called *The Isle of Devils* written by Silvester Jourdain was published in the autumn of 1610. It is thought that a reading of this tract inspired Shakespeare to produce *The Tempest*, with its reference to the island, Bermudas. (Bermoothes)

Verity provides a few more reasons to support his argument that the play might not have been written earlier than 1603 or later than 1613.

1. onzalo's description of an ideal Commonwealth refers to Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essays* which was published in 1603.
2. The record shows that *The Tempest* was one of the plays performed at court in 1613 along with the festivities which accompanied the marriage of the Lady Elizabeth, daughter of James I, and the Elector Palatine.

3. Ben Jonson, in his introduction to his comedy, *Bartholomew Fair* alludes to *The Tempest* and it was supposed to have been written not later than 1614.

Dr. Dowden assigns the following dates: *Pericles* 1608. *Cymbeline* 1609; *The Tempest* 1610, *The Winter's Tale* 1610-11. He describes *Pericles* as 'a slighter and earlier Tempest in which Ceriman is the Prospero". We are asked to compare the storm- scenes of *Pericles* (III.I) and *The Tempest*.

All these last plays have a common incident, i.e. 'the restoration of a child supposed to be dead'. Marina is restored to *Pericles*; Miranda, (*The Tempest*) who is supposed to have been drowned along with her father is restored to her country; Ferdinand to Alonso (*The Tempest*), Perdita to Leontes like sons of *Cymbeline* to himself. (*Cymbeline*). Verity focuses light even on the similarity of the names – Marina, Miranda, and Perdita and so on.

V.2.4.2 Sources of the plot

Shakespeare, like many other writers borrowed his plots from other languages. It is not known whether the plot of *The Tempest* was original or borrowed.

Collins felt that the plot was derived from a romance called *Aurelio and Isabella* (1588), which had versions in English, French, Italian and Spanish. Critics observe that the play and the romance have nothing in common.

Apart from the travel literature which provided material for details of the storm and the enchanted island, the only positive source for *The Tempest* is a passage in Montaigne's essay "*Of the Cannibales*" in Florio's translation of 1603. This provides material for Gonzalo's description of an ideal commonwealth in II .i 147 ff.

The plot of *The Tempest* has some similarities with an old German play *The Fair Sidea* ('*Die Schore Sidea*') of Jacob Ayrer. Dr. Dowden observes that both the plays deal with a magician, his only daughter and an attendant spirit. In both the plays the son of his enemy becomes the magician's prisoner and he is made the bearer of logs for his mistress; in both, the story ends with reconciliation and the happiness of the lovers.

Ayrer died in 1605 and hence he could not have borrowed the plot from *The Tempest*. It is thought that

- a) Shakespeare must have been familiar with the German piece or
- b) Both Ayer and Shakespeare drew from the same source.

The reasons for this may be varied.

- a) Shakespeare should have got his line from the company of the English actors 'The English Comedians' who travelled in Germany and in Nurnberg (where Jacob Ayrer stayed and wrote).

- b) As the majority of the plays of Ayler were not original, he should have got the line from the performances of The English Comedians' plays or Italian romances of some old English. Shakespeare might have borrowed it from the same source.

There is also another supposition that *The Tempest* shows traces of the influence of Jonson's *Masque of Hymen* (1606).

Professor Warwick Bond in *The Times Literacy Supplement* (27 May 1920) feels that Shakespeare had found the names of some of his Italian princes in *The Tempest* in William Thomas' "Historie of Italia" (1549). This remark appears applicable to Shakespeare's 'Italian' plays in general.

V.2.5. Significance of *The Tempest* and other Plays of Shakespeare

The Tempest hence belongs to the last period of Shakespeare's creative career. It belongs to the group of plays called **romances** like *The Winter's Tale*, *Pericles* and *Cymbeline* which deal with reconciliation between estranged kinsmen, of wrongs corrected through repentance and not revenge; of pardon and peace. It was a period of restored serenity for Shakespeare.

It is unique among the plays of Shakespeare. It has the three unities- the 'unity of time', 'unity of place', and the 'unity of action'. All the events, as observed by Verity, take place in less than four hours. The 'unity of place', is also observed because the whole action takes place on the island - most of it at the same spot, i.e., before the cell of Prospero. Only four scenes take place in another part of the same island. In all other plays of Shakespeare, the scenes take place at different locations, or even in different countries. As the main interest of the play is the exercise of magical powers of Prospero, there is no diversion in the unity of action.

Even theatrically the play is considered to be a wonderful display of the resources of the theatre: - dramatic action, special effects, music, magic, monsters, dancing, storms and the like which we find only in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, among Shakespeare's works. Apart from all these, this play is sublime in its philosophy and poetry. As observed by Prof. Ian Johnston, this play reflects all the earlier themes and characters of Shakespeare, and as Stephen Greenblatt calls it is "a kind of echo - chamber of Shakespearean motifs".

As in the other 'romances' *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline*, the play is a 'story of loss and recovery'. It shows the treacherous betrayal of legitimate ruler as in *Richard II*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. It deals with the murderous hatred of one brother for another as in *Richard III*, *As you like It*, *Hamlet* or *King Lear*. It has the passage from court society to the wilderness, with a promise of return, as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As you Like It*. As in *Henry IV*, *Much Ado about Nothing* and *Hamlet*, it has an internal drama. There is a relation between nature and nurture as in *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*. As in *King Lear* there is loss of identity and similar to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* there is manifestation of magical powers. Thus the echoes are not forced but spontaneous in presentation. This has become possible because

The Tempest is the last of his plays and it exhibits a combination of all Shakespearean themes and ideas.

V.3 Check your Progress .

1. How was drama before Shakespeare?
2. What is Shakespeare's contribution to English drama?
3. What do you know about the playwriting career of Shakespeare?
4. What are the aspects of Shakespeare's Comedies?
5. When was *The Tempest* written and what were the Sources?
6. Describe the significance of *The Tempest*

V.4. Sample Examination Questions

1. Describe the greatness of Shakespeare as an Elizabethan dramatist with reference to *The Tempest*?
2. Bring out the greatness of the play *The Tempest* with proper comments on its time and sources?

V.5.Suggested Readings

1. William J. Long- *English literature-Its History and Significance*, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 2001.
2. *A History of English Literature*, Arthur Compton – Rickett, Nelson, London & Universal Book Stall, New Delhi, 1971
3. *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature – CUP/ELBS*
The Tempest Edit. By A.W. Verity 1970, CUP, 1966.

K. Vijay Babu

UNIT V.

THE TEMPEST – II

V. II. O Objectives

After going through the unit you will be able to

- understand the theme of the play
- discuss it critically ,
- analyse the structure
- know about the opinion of critics

V. II. 1 Structure

V. II.O. Objectives

V.II.1. Structure

V.II.2. Introduction

V.II.2.1. Out line summary of the play-with list of characters

2.2. Scene-wise/Act-wise Summary

2.3. Analysis of the Text

2.4. Structure of the Play

2.5. Critical comments on the play

V. II. 3. Check your progress

V.II.2. Introduction

This second lesson,gives you

- An out line summary with a list of characters
- Act/scene-wise summary
- Act/scene –wise critical analysis
- A detailed note on the structure of the play and
- Some critical comments by world-famous critics.

V.II.2.1. Outline Summary of the Play

Prospero is the wise Duke of Milan. As he is an ardent lover of knowledge, he devotes most of his time to philosophical studies. He cannot concentrate on the affairs of administration

and hence he entrusts his brother Antonio to look after his responsibilities. As he is wise and good he cannot think ill of his brother. Antonio, who grows ambitious, conspires to usurp his brother's kingdom. He replaces the existing ministers of his brother with his men. He makes friendship with Alonso, the king of Naples, the inveterate enemy of Prospero. With his help he drives Prospero out of Milan. He puts Prospero and his three year old daughter Miranda in a boat and sets it afloat on the sea.

But Gonzala, a good hearted lord places food, water and books of philosophy in the boat. Fortunately, the boat carries them to an uninhabited island.

(The play begins with this background and all these incidents are explained by Prospero to his daughter Miranda)

Prospero masters the art of magic. He frees many good spirits imprisoned by a witch called Sycorax. Ariel is one of them. Ariel is both good and mischievous. Prospero brings Caliban, the son of Sycorax to his cave and teaches him to speak. Caliban, who inherits his mother's nature, tries to harm Prospero. Prospero employs him as a slave, as he refuses to learn anything good and useful. Ariel is asked to observe Caliban.

Prospero creates a huge storm on the sea and makes the ship of Alonso reach the shore. Alonso is returning home with Antonio, Prospero's evil brother after attending the wedding of his daughter Claribel with the King of Tunis. The ship is drawn to his island. Ariel brings them ashore but everybody feels that all others are lost. Ariel lures Ferdinand, the son of Alonso to Prospero's cell. Miranda & Ferdinand fall in love with each other at first sight. Prospero tests Ferdinand's mettle by ordering him to do menial jobs.

Alonso is convinced about the death of his son. He drifts ashore with Sebastian, Antonio and Gonzalo. Ariel's music lulls them all to sleep except Sebastian and Antonio. They conspire to kill King Alonso and occupy the throne of Naples; but they cannot do anything because of Ariel's watchful nature.

Prospero is pleased by the disposition and the constancy of love of Ferdinand and he decides to leave the couple alone. At Prospero's orders Ariel teases Alonso and others with a mock banquet. Alonso realises that his sinful deed has taken away his son Ferdinand. He feels penitent.

In the mean time Caliban joins hands with Trinculo, the king's jester and Stephano, the royal butler and they plan to kill Prospero and possess Miranda. Ariel over hears this and informs Prospero. Prospero asks Ariel to teach them a lesson. Ariel teases them and chases them out of the place.

After having confirmed about the change in Alonso and others, Prospero asks Ariel to bring them there before him. Ariel lulls them with good music and they are all surprised to see Prospero before them. He warns Antonio and Sebastian. He takes the repentant Alonso into his cell and shows his son. Alonso rejoices to find his son playing chess with the exquisite Miranda.

The captain arrives and informs about the good condition of the ship. Caliban and the other drunken men are brought by Ariel. Prospero frees them all from his magic spell. They spend the night in his cave.

The next day they leave the island for Milan. Prospero regains his position as the Duke of Naples. Ferdinand and Miranda are united in marriage.

V.II.2.1.b List of Characters

(NAPLES)

Alonso – King of Naples.

Ferdinand – Alonso's Son.

Sebastian – Alonso's brother.

(MILAN)

Prospero ---- rightful duke of Milan

Antonio ---- the usurping duke, brother of prospero

Miranda ---- Prospero's daughter

Gonzalo --- an honest, old counsellor

Adrian ---]

Francisco ----] both are lords

Trinculo ----- a jester

Stephano ----- a drunken butler

Master of a ship, Boatswain, and Mariners

Caliban ----- a savage and deformed slave

Ariel - an airy spirit

Iris,

Ceres,

Juno,

Nymphs and

Reapers Are presented by Spirits

V.II.2.2 Act – wise / Scene – wise Summary

Act –I Scene – I

The play opens with the scene of a tempest. The atmosphere indicates a storm with thunder and lightning. The crew of the ship is seen busy making arrangements to fight the storm. Alonso, the king of Naples, his brother Sebastian, Antonio, (the brother of Prospero) and his son Ferdinand are seen searching for the captain of the ship. The boatswain does not offer proper response and is cursed by Sebastian and Antonio. The confused noise on the ship indicates the sinking of the ship.

Scene II

This is the longest scene in the play. With this all the important characters of the play come on to the stage. We see Prospero and his daughter before the cell on the island. This scene has three distinct parts. Prospero narrates his entire story to Miranda. He reveals how by 'heavens and foul play,' (60) they come from Milan to the Island. He was formerly the Duke of Milan. He, being an ardent seeker of knowledge, involves himself in 'secret studies'. His 'perfidious' (68) brother Antonio took over the state. In the words of Prospero himself –

“Being once perfected how to grant suits,
How to deny them, who to advance, and who
To trash for over-topping, ---new created
The creatures that were mine, I say, or chang'd 'em,
Or else new form'd 'em; having both the key
Of officer and office, set all hearts I' the state
To what tune pleas'd his ear; that now he was
The ivy which had hid my princely trunk,
And suck'd my verdure out on 't.”

(I.ii.79to 87)

He joined hands with the king of Naples, an inveterate enemy to Prospero, and ousted him 'one midnight' 'in the dead of darkness'; but he was helped by gentle Gonzalo with "Rich garments linens, stuffs and necessaries". (163) and above all with 'volumes' from his own library. Here he became her 'schoolmaster'. Miranda then asks him the reason as to why he has created the storm. Prospero has brought all his enemies on to the shore with the help of his magic, his spirit Ariel. He says that he would never have his former luck, had he left that chance. He puts Miranda to sleep. Ariel comes with a report of the storm and how they reached with 'not a hair perished' (217). The crew has left 'supposing that they saw the king's ship wrecked'. And his great person perish'. (236,237) Ariel then asks for 'liberty'. Prospero reminds him of his erstwhile slavery under Sycorax, a malignant witch. He reminds him, how he released Ariel from the curse. They speak of Caliban, the son of Sycorax, 'a freckled whelp who is not honoured with a human shape'. (283) He threatens Ariel that he will 'peg' him again if he craved for liberty. Ariel apologises. Prospero orders him to be invisible to all but for himself. He awakens Miranda and they think of Caliban. When Miranda says that she does not like Caliban, Prospero says-

“We cannot miss him he does make our fire,
Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices
That profits us” (311-313)

Caliban also tries to threaten Prospero. He forgets all help received from Prospero. Prospero 'pitied' him, 'took pains' to make him speak and 'taught' him how to speak. Caliban responds like this

"You taught me language and my profit on't

Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you

For learning me you're language!" (362-364)

Prospero forces him back to work.

Ariel enters with a song bringing Ferdinand, the son of Alonso. Ferdinand mourns for the death of his father. Miranda feels thrilled to see him. Prospero observes how his plan succeeds and how

'At the first sight...

They have changed eyes' – (440)

He tells Ariel repeatedly that he will 'free' him in two days for the favour. But outwardly he appears harsh and puts Ferdinand to labour and hardship.

Act II Scene I

This act opens with the sorrowful attitude of Alonso. Alonso worries about his son's death. He has given his daughter Claribel in marriage to the King of Tunis in Africa. They are returning home after attending the marriage. Alonso fears that he has lost his son Ferdinand. Antonio and Sebastian criticise him for his deeds. They blame him for this tragedy. Gonzalo tries to suggest to them to speak gently but they mock at him. Ariel's music puts them all to sleep. Sebastian and Antonio suggest Alonso to take rest. Antonio provokes Sebastian to usurp his brother's kingdom by killing the sleeping Alonso. He says,

"My strong imagination sees a crown

Dropping upon they head".

(208-209)

He takes pride in the act of usurpation. When asked by Sebastian about his conscience, he replies

'Ay, sir; where lies that? If 'twere a kibe

'T would put me to my slipper: but I feel not

This deity in my bosom: twenty consciences

That stand twixt me and Milan, candied be they
And melt, ere they molest!" (275-280)

They both draw swords to kill Alonso. Ariel awakens Gonzalo, who awakens Alonso. When asked, Antonio and Sebastian explain that they have drawn their swords to protect the sleeping king from the evil beasts.

Scene II

This scene offers 'comic relief' after the sight of much conspiracy. Caliban meets Trinculo and Stephano, two jesters from the ship wreck. Trinculo suspects if Caliban was a man or a fish. He passes strange comments on Caliban, his stature, his smell etc., Stephano is surprised to hear Caliban speaking their language.

Caliban thinks that the true drunkards are gods. They get him drunk and Caliban promises that he would be their guide.

Act III Scene I

Ferdinand is seen before the cell of Prospero carrying a log. He is both happy and unhappy. He forgets his strain thinking about Miranda. He feels that she makes his 'labours pleasures' and he is refreshed by her sweet thoughts. Miranda asks him to take rest because his father is at study. Prospero observes them and feels that

"Heavens rain grace

On that which breeds between 'em". (75, 76)

Ferdinand & Miranda want to get united in marriage.

Scene II

We see Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo neck deep in their intoxicated enjoyment. Caliban explains to them about the cruelty of Prospero. Ariel overhears their conversation and they are not aware of it. Caliban asks them to kill Prospero and possess Miranda. Stephano boasts that he will kill Prospero and have Miranda as his queen, with Trinculo and Caliban as his Viceroy. They all enjoy at the thought. Ariel wants to inform Prospero of this.

Scene III

We find Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo, Adrian, Francisco and others in another part of the island. Gonzalo is too tired to move. Antonio and Sebastian plan to implement their thoughts. Suddenly they hear strange music and see several strange shapes bringing in a banquet. Prospero surprises the whole event invisibly. As they are about to have dinner, it is all removed. Ariel enters like a harpy. He reminds them of their past crime and evil against Prospero. Alonso regrets a lot. They all leave the place. Gonzalo remarks that they are desperate and

“their great guilt,
Like poison given to work a great time after,
Now’ gins to bite the spirits”. (104-106)

Act IV Scene I

Prospero realises that Ferdinand’s love is sincere. He gives his daughter to Ferdinand. He says –

“If I have too austerely punished you,
Your compensation makes amends; for I
Have given you here a third of mine own life,
Or that for which I live: who once again
I tender to thy hand: all thy vexations
Were but my trials of thy love, and thou
Hast strangely stood the test: here, afore Heaven,
I ratify this rich gift. (10)

He commands Ariel to entertain the couple. The spirits take the roles of Iris, Ceres and Juno and please them. Ferdinand and Miranda observe the disturbed mood of Prospero: Prospero cheers them up. He makes a philosophical statement that all the material things will vanish away one day

“We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is surrounded with a sleep” - (131-134)

Ariel appears to inform Prospero how he had troubled Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo through

.....and "Tooth'd briers, sharp furzes, pricking goss, and thorns,"
 "left them to
 In the filthy – mantled pool beyond your cell
 There dancing up to the chins". (155-156)

Prospero asks him to bring them there According to him Caliban is,

"A devil, a born devil, on who nature
 Nurture can never stick on whom my pains,
 Humanly taken all, all lost, quite lost;
 And as with age his body uglier grows,
 So his mind Cankers." (162-165)

Stephano, Caliban and Trinculo reach the cell. But they are driven out by dogs and hounds, a spirits created by Ariel.

Act V Scene I

Ariel describes the condition of Antonio, Alonso and Sebastian to Prospero. They are a distracted with 'brimful of sorrow and dismay'. They are still under his charm. Prospero says he feels pity for them, inspite of their wrongs.

"Yet with nobler reason 'gainst my fury
 Do I take part: the rarer action is
 In virtue than is vengeance: they being penitent,
 The sole drift of my purpose both extend
 Not a frown further ". (25-30)

Prospero makes a very long speech addressing the hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves. He likes Gonzalo. Ariel brings Sebastian, Alonso, and Antonio, who still make mad gestures. They all enter the circle made by Prospero. Prospero addresses Alonso and speaks about his crime. He then discloses himself as the Duke of Milan. Alonso regrets and offers an apology.

".....and do entreat
 Thorn pardon me my wrong"- (118)

Prospero hears the 'side talk' of Sebastian and warns them. When Alonso starts worrying about his son, Prospero shows him to Alonso. Ferdinand is seen playing chess with Miranda. Alonso wonders if the maid is a goddess.

"Is she the goddess that hath sever'd us,
And brought us thus together"? (187-188)

Ferdinand is immensely happy for possessing Miranda and a 'second life'.

Alonso says.

"I am hers:
But, o, how oddly will it sound that I
Must ask my child forgiveness". (196-198)

Ferdinand and Miranda get united in marriage. Boatswain enters announcing the preparations for the journey. Prospero frees Caliban and his companions, as they are changed. He commands Ariel to safeguard the ship till they reach Milan and then have his liberty. In the epilogue, Prospero asks the audience to pray for his soul for his sins in practising magic.

V.II.2.3.ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

ACT- I SCENE-I

The first scene of the first act introduces some of the characters belonging to the side of the antagonist. The tempest itself forms the exposition. Shakespeare's knowledge of seamanship is seen. The language is precise and this 'noisy' scene exposes the inner nature of the characters. King Alonso's inability to command the boatswain indicates his loss of control over the event. The haughty and rude nature of Sebastian and Antonio is brought to the foreground. The yielding of human power to extraordinary powers of nature is observed.

ACT- I SCENE-II

This is the biggest scene in the play introducing all the important characters in the play. This scene exposes the sensitive nature of Miranda, kind-heartedness of Prospero and his love towards his daughter. His responsible feelings as father, his invisible agony for losing his kingdom through loss of trust, his painful experience of deceit in the hands of his own brother, his tactful command over supernatural spirits like Ariel, his control over ugly creatures like Caliban etc.

The precision employed in the presentation of the dialogue is interesting. All the past is presented in an excellently precise way. Shakespeare's deft portrayal of human nature is seen in sentences like "The ivy which hid....." (86), "good wombs have borne....." (119), etc

One of the speeches of Ariel gives the suggestion of 'Bermuda episode' which inspired Shakespeare to the creation of the play. (...the still vexed Bermoothes"....) (229)

The whole act stands as the exposition to the play. It is very lengthy but Shakespeare tries to observe the classical unities of time, place and action. We observe that Prospero though not a tragic protagonist suffers from a tragic flaw- 'the inordinate thirst for knowledge'. If Faustus perishes in his pursuit of knowledge with an evil bent of mind, Prospero flourishes with a kind-heart. Here he is aware of his flaw. He again utilises the opportunity of his possession of knowledge by creating a storm, by employing Ariel to make them repent and by taking control over the situation. He uses his supernatural powers to correct his errors. Prof. Campbell compares Shakespeare to Prospero. This act comes to an end with the 'love' of Ferdinand and Miranda, at 'first sight', which is a frequent occurrence and theme in the comedies of Shakespeare.

ACT-II

The first scene is an inter - play of natural and supernatural elements. Ariel's magic exposes the evil nature of Antonio and Sebastian. Both are evil and 'usurping'. The kingdom springs up as the main theme of the play. Caliban feels that his kingdom was usurped by Prospero. Prospero's kingdom was usurped by Antonio, who in turn advises Sebastian to usurp his brother's kingdom. This scene exposes how the greed of human beings leads to their ultimate doom.

The second scene exposes the foolish nature of Caliban and provides some 'comic relief'.

ACT-III

This act is very purposeful. Prospero brings Ferdinand & Miranda together; Caliban joins hands with Trinculo and Stephano; and Prospero, with the help of Ariel creates a sense of fear and guilt in the hearts of the villains. Ariel's invisible power is brought out here. His overall supervision makes Prospero greatly powerful. All the three scenes of this act are crucial to the structural aspects of the play. This act forms the 'rising action'. Towards the end of the last scene of this act, all the characters are brought together.

ACT-IV

This act is a wonderful admixture of natural and supernatural elements. This act projects the gentle and forgiving nature of Prospero as a learned and wise man. It forms the 'falling action' of the play.

ACT -V

As in all plays of Shakespeare this forms the 'denouement'. It is comic in tone. The two lovers come together in marriage, the enemies meet with apologies and reconciliation, the slaves get freedom and the lost kingdoms are regained.

V.II.2.4.STRUCTURE OF THE PLAY

The Tempest is thoroughly 'classical' in structure. Though it is simple in theme, it has a complex design. It is neither a comedy nor a tragedy but as expressed by Dr. Johnson, it belongs to a 'distinct kind'. It is an admixture of comic and tragic elements. The loss of kingdom, deceit, shipwreck and hardships are all tragic, the foolish nature of Caliban, the supernatural humour of magic created by Ariel, the union of the lovers in marriage, the ending of the play on the note of reconciliation and forgiveness form the comic aspect which dominates the play.

Shakespeare has observed the three unities to a large extent and this has resulted in the compactness of its structure. As discussed in the first lesson the three unities are observed and the plot is in no way disjointed. The three unities are the unities of time, place and action.

UNITY OF TIME

In *The Tempest* the action of the play does not extend for days as in the other plays of Shakespeare. In the I Act Prospero asks Ariel about the 'time of the day'.

Prospero: Ariel, thy charge
Exactly is perform'd: but there's more work,
What is the time o' the day?

Ariel: Past the mid season.

Prospero: At least two glasses. The time 'twixt six and now
Must by us both be spent most precisely. (I.2.235-241)

Again in the last act prospero speaks about time and asks about the day. Ariel replies-

Prospero Now does my project gather to a head:
My charms crack not; my spirits obey; and time
Goes upright with his carriage. How's the day?

Ariel On the sixth hour; at which time, my lord,
You said our work should cease.

(V.1.1-5)

From the first Act to the last the time taken is four or less than four hours. The play starts at 2 O'clock and ends by 6 o'clock. As per Ariel, their work came to end by that time.

UNITY OF PLACE

The unity of place demands constancy in the place of action -the action of the play must not shift from place to place and it should occur at the same place. In *The Tempest* the whole action takes on the island of Prospero. Observe the following chart.

Act	Scene	Place
I	I	On board a ship at Sea.
	II	The Island before Prospero's cell.
II	I	Another part of the island
	II	Another part of the island.
III	I	Before Prospero's cell
	II	Another part of the island.
	III	Another part of the island.
IV	I	Before Prospero's cell.
V	I	Before Prospero's cell.

The play has five acts with nine scenes. Of nine, four scenes take place before Prospero's cell while the other four scenes occur on the same island. The first scene which shows the shipwreck occurs near the island. In brief the whole action takes place on the island of Prospero.

UNITY OF ACTION

The unity of action depends on the plot. In all plays of Shakespeare, the main plot runs with two or three sub-plots or under-plots. The unity of a play depends on the central motive. In *The Tempest* the main motive is 'reconciliation and forgiveness' through Prospero's 'exercise of magic power'. The powers of magic are exercised by Prospero from the beginning to the end - the sudden creation of tempest, the frustration experienced by Alonso and others, the magic banquet and masque; the assembly of characters at the cell, the correction of wrongs with the help of Ariel.

The ending is not tragic, it is similar to that of a comedy. The play ends with the marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda, with the reconciliation of brothers and antagonistic friends. The charm of the play lies in its poetry and in its precision.

The First Act of the play forms the exposition. We find all important characters with their motives. The Second Act forms the rising action the third act forms the crisis. The fourth act indicates the falling sense of action and the fifth act forms the denouement.

Act.	Theme	Purpose
I	The background is revealed. The motive is explained.	Exposition Initial incident.
II	Realisation in Alonso. Conspiracy by Antonio & Sebastian Caliban meets Trinculo & Stephano	Rising Action
III	Miranda & Ferdinand love each other; Caliban joins hands with Stephano & Trinculo.	Crisis
IV	Alonso and others experience guilt. Prospero's philosophical attitude comes out alive.	Extension of crisis into falling action.
V	All the characters appear before Prospero; reconciliation and forgiveness and the play comes to an end.	Denouement

The main plot of the play is the 'loss of power' and its regaining through 'reconciliation and forgiveness'

1. Prospero loses his power and regains it by creating the tempest, and by bringing a change in the minds of sinners in a peaceful way without creating any harm to others.
2. Ariel who loses his power as a free spirit in the hands of Sycorax is released by Prospero. After considerable service to Prospero he regains his power.
3. Caliban who loses his kingdom and freedom regains them, after losing his bad nature.
4. Alonso, who finds his power in his son loses him and after the realisation of his sin attains him.

The sub-plot is formed by the love of Miranda and Ferdinand and it suggests a diplomatic device, the need for negotiation through marriage-relations for dissolving enmity between nations. The central motif is about 'virtue' and 'reconciliation'.

Shakespeare introduces masque in the fourth act. Music, magic, poetry and philosophical speeches of Prospero become the important aspects of the play and even theatrically the play turns out to be a good feast. The play also displays the qualities of a pastoral tragi-comedy.

Dowden says that Shakespeare has emerged from the depths of tragic anguish to the heights of serenity and wisdom. This is seen obviously in *The Tempest*.

The romances have certain characteristics. All the romances end happily and they work upon the cruel passions to end in a general reconciliation. The damage of human relationships created by Alonso and Antonio is compensated by the gentle and forgiving nature of Prospero and the love and marriage of Ferdinand and Miranda. Like other dramatic romances, *The Tempest* has a spiritual and philosophical mood of repentance and forgiveness. The play ends not with the note of death but with life and its regeneration through love. The play with these exquisite features belongs to a separate category of 'romances' observing at the same time the unities of 'time and peace'.

V.II.5.CRITICAL COMMENTS ON THE PLAY

A. ON THE SOURCES

1. "The *Tempest* can be dated with some precision, since there is a record of performance of it at court on November 1, 1611, and since it borrows some details from accounts of the travels and adventures of George Somers in Bermuda which were not available in England before the fall of 1610. It is, accordingly, a work of 1611, and the last play Shakespeare wrote except for his collaborative labours in *Henry VIII* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. It is the culmination of a series of dramatic romances which begins with *Pericles* and includes *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*. Aside from the travel literature which provided for details for the storm and some for the enchanted island, the only positive source for *The Tempest* is a passage in Montaigne's essay "Of the Cannibals" in Florio's translation of 1603. This provides material for Gonzalo's description of an ideal commonwealth in II.i.147 ff. Caliban's name is an anagram of "cannibal", but the name originally meant merely an inhabitant of the Caribbean not necessarily an eater of human flesh".....(From *Introduction: The Tempest as a Kaleidoscope* by Hallett Smith, Twentieth century Interpretations of *The Tempest*, edited by Hallett Smith, A Spectrum Book. 1969)

2. "Those who must always be searching for a "source" of every plot of Shakespeare's (as though he could invent nothing) will be disappointed in *The Tempest*. Thomas Warton (or rather Warton misunderstood by Malone) started one false hare by a note in his *History of English poetry*, vol. iii (1781), that he had been informed by the late Mr Collins of Chichester- that is, Collins the poet- that Shakespeare's *Tempest* was formed on a favourite romance, *Aurelio*

and *Isabella*, printed in 1586 (one volume) in Italian, French and English, and again in 1588 in Italian, Spanish, French and English; *The Spanish of Flores* being the original. But Collins' mind was darkening towards madness at the time: and *Aurileo* when found, contained nothing in common with *The Tempest*. Others have followed the clue of a German play, *Die Schone Sidea*, written by one Jacob Ayrer, a notary of Nuremberg, who died in 1605.....”

(from “Introduction to *The Tempest*” by Sir Arthur Quiller – Couch, CUP)

B. STRUCTURE OF THE TEMPEST

“.....In its genre *The Tempest* shows a marked affinity with dramatic forms outside the normal range of tragedy and comedy. Among these is the masque: besides containing an actual masque. *The Tempest* is like the masque in its use of elaborate stage machinery and music. The magician with his wand and mantle was a frequent figure in masques, and Caliban is like the “wild men” common in the farcical interludes known as anti masques. Another is the *Commedia dell' arte*, which was well known in England. Some of the sketchy plots of this half-improvised type of play have been preserved, and they show extraordinary similarities to *The Tempest*, especially in the Stephano-Trinculo scenes. *The Tempest* in short is a spectacular and operatic play and when we think of other plays like it, we are more apt to think of, say, Mozart's *Magic Flute* than of ordinary stage plays. (From *Introduction to The Tempest* by Northrop Frye, 1959, Penguin Books.)

V.2.3.CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. How was Prospero deceived?
2. What did Caliban think of Prospero?
3. Is *The Tempest* a tragedy or a romance?
4. What are the features of a romance?

Do you think *The Tempest* is an incomplete play? If yes, give reasons.

K. Vijay Babu

V. THE TEMPEST -III

V.III.0.OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- Understand and analyse the characters of the play
- Various themes like
 - -the play as a record of British maritime enterprise
 - -the play projecting Illusion and Reality.
 - - the play as an allegory
 - -the play having 'forgiveness and reconciliation' as theme

V.III.1.STRUCTURE

V.III.0.OBJECTIVES

V.III.1.STRUCTURE

V.III.2.INTRODUCTION

V.III.2.1.MAJOR CHARACTERS

V.III.2.2.THEMES AND ISSUES

V.III.3.CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

V.III.4. LET US SUM-UP

V.III.2.1.MAJOR CHARACTERS

V.III.2.1.1.PROSPERO

Prospero is the central figure of the play. He is the personification of wisdom. All the other characters appear by his side as mere silhouetted figures. As *The Tempest* is the fruit of Shakespeare's final period as a writer, it shares some of the qualities of *A Mid Summer Night's Dream*. The magical powers of Prospero remind us the mysterious powers of *A Mid-Summer Night's Dream*. The whole story is rounded about him, about his trials and

troubles and finally about his prosperity. Prospero employs his magic spell chiefly in the interest of his daughter Miranda, who is the jewel of Prospero's bosom. We learn Prospero's past from his own recapitulation.

He is the Duke of Milan. He has neglected his duties and left the control of the whole state to his brother Antonio. Though Prospero is fond of retirement and deep study, he is liked by his people. His brother Antonio becomes the master of the state and in alliance with Alonso is able to expel Prospero and his daughter from the state.

Having reached the island, Prospero masters the art of magic and releases Ariel from the hands of Sycorax, a witch. Prospero is tactful. He makes Ariel his attendant and Caliban, his slave. He reminds Ariel repeatedly how he is delivered from Sycorax and thus keeps him under control. He promises him freedom.

Prospero is not cruel. Though he creates the storm, he asks about the safety of the men on the board. He pities Caliban and tries to teach him civilisation. He orders Ariel to bring Ferdinand to his cell to arrange their marriage. As a responsible father, he tests Ferdinand's constancy of love. He is intelligent. He creates and strengthens friendly relations between Naples and Milan by arranging a marriage between Ferdinand and Miranda. He is highly diplomatic.

Prospero's knowledge is boundless. It looks as if he were providence or God. Every incident in the play is directed and controlled by him. He controls both natural and supernatural forces. The spirits of the Air and the Earth are under his control. Ariel the delicate spirit of Air and he lies at his beck and call. He follows him to 'the syllable'.

He dominates the whole play-some times visibly and some times invisibly. His presence is invisible when Ferdinand and Miranda exchange their love and also during the banquet scene.

Prospero is a kind brother and also a good father. He is a gentle human being and is philosophical in nature. He believes that 'nobler action is in virtue than in vengeance'. He can kill his enemies, but he believes in forgiveness. Hence he sends Ariel to save Alonso from the hands of Antonio and Sebastian. He changes him through love and makes him penitent his magic is not evil, as he does not invoke evil spirits. He forgives even Caliban who conspires against him. Prospero is wise and powerful. He wants to give-up his 'white

-magic' because he is interested in heavenly music. His enunciation of magic elevates him to the level of a 'superman'.

He is painted as a lordly personage. Prospero has been identified with Bacon, James I and Shakespeare himself. Dowden identified Prospero with Shakespeare and it is Chambers that identified Prospero with James I. Prospero is a 'harmonious and fully developed will'. His heart is sensitive and he is profoundly touched by the joy of his loving child Miranda. He is a true Man-in its perfect sense.

V.III.2.1.2 MIRANDA

Miranda is the sweet cherubim and the 'thrid' of Prospero. She has been brought up on an island and she does not know any other human being except her father who is an avid reader and aged magician. She expresses her surprise when she finds Ferdinand, Alonso and others on the island. Prospero and nature are her sole instructors. (I.2.171-174, III. I .36, 37, 58, 59). She is an embodiment of innocence and piety. She cannot bear the idea that a Tempest is raised by her father to torture the members of the ship. Several times she asks her father to feel pity for them. She is highly modest. She cannot bear the sight of suffering. When she hears the sad story of Prospero she says,

"Alack for pity

I, not remembering how I cried out then

Will cry out over again."

She gets surprised to see another human being on their island in the form of Ferdinand. She thinks that he is a spirit. She wants to

"call him a thing divine; for nothing natural

I ever saw so noble" (I.2.418-20)

She falls in love with him at first sight. When Prospero turns cruel towards Ferdinand, she requests him to have pity on him. She advises Ferdinand to bear with her father's cruelty, which is "unwonted". She does not know that her father has been cruel outwardly to test the constancy of the love of Ferdinand. Ferdinand also loves her seriously. She advises him to take rest as her father is at study. She does not know that it is all the design of her father to bring them closer. Miranda is kind, loving and compassionate. She is extraordinarily tender hearted. She is so innocent and she is free from all worldly influences. Though she

is innocent and cannot discern humans from spirits, she recognises the evil nature of Caliban. She says, "'T is a villain, sir, I don't love to look on" (I. 2.308,309).

She expresses her readiness and offers her hand 'with her heart in it' (III.2.86-90), as a response to his love. She makes a perfect match to Ferdinand who is also gentle and sacrificing. Though she appears in I, III and V acts she remains dominant and her position is next to Prospero. Without Miranda, the play loses its charm. Miranda is simple, angelic, pure, delicate and innocent. To borrow the line of Wordsworth, 'she was a phantom of delight'. Many critics have lost their hearts to Miranda. Coleridge praises her much. Though she does not sing and dance like the fairies, she is the music of the play. In the words of Ferdinand, she is "so perfect, and so peerless" and 'every creature's best'(III.1.45-47).

V.III.2.1.3 ARIEL

Ariel is the superhuman force, 'brave tricky spirit' and the merry music. He is the 'blossom that hangs on the bough' of the play. (V.1.93). he leads the play with his invisible presence. He creates the tempest, gets people together, introduces hilarity and makes people to mend their vices. Next to Prospero he occupies the place of the protagonist. His name is a Hebrew one, meaning 'lion of God'. In the play he carries the magic of Prospero. Ariel is airy spirit. And he personifies the qualities of air; swift and restless motion, lightness, buoyancy and freedom. He speaks to Prospero thus,

" I come

To answer thy best pleasure; be't to fly,

To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride

On the curl'd clouds"..... (I.2.189-192). He loves freedom and hates

service. He creates a tempestuous storm on the ship of Alonso bringing 'Jove's lightnings, thunder-claps, fire and cracks' but without harming anybody. He is Prospero's attendant observer, and adviser. He is grateful to Prospero for liberating him from the hands of Sycorax, a witch of the island. He is intelligent and sensible. He is 'delicate', 'quaint', 'dainty' and 'tricky'. He is also mischievous. He takes different shapes to entertain Prospero and to tease the miscreants.

He brings Ferdinand to the cell of Prospero and thus creates love between Miranda and Ferdinand. He is known for his songs and music. He uses music and magic to frighten the villains and to entertain the good ones. He saves innocent people and punishes the wicked ones. In doing this he follows the orders of his master closely. He saves Alonso from the hands of Sebastian and Antonio by waking up Gonzalo. (II. 1, 300 to 305) Though he saves people he does not claim any superiority. He says “

“My master through his art foresees the danger
That you his friend are in; and sends me forth” (II. 1,299)

He over hears the conversation of Trinculo, Stephano and Caliban and informs Prospero of their wicked plan, the comic conspiracy. He raises the Mock banquet and creates a sense of remorse in Alonso and a sense of fear in others. He creates an excellent masque before the lovers. He chases the drunken louts through “tooth’ d briers, sharp furzes, pricking goss and thorns”.

He brings the distracted people Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian to the cell of Prospero and asks Prospero his commander to show some pity. After the scenes of reconciliation and forgiveness, Prospero gives him freedom. Ariel embodies the “torment, trouble, wonder, amazement and heavenly power” (V. I 103-105) of the island.

V.III.2.1.4 CALIBAN

If Ariel is the air spirit Caliban is the Earth spirit. Thus he is the anti thesis of Ariel. Hazlitt feels, “his character grows out of the soil.....it is of the Earth, Earthy”. He is the son of Sycorax, a witch who was banished from Argier for her ‘manifold mischiefs’ and ‘terrible sorceries’. She was left on this island by the sailors. She confined Ariel in a rift of a Pine tree for twelve years. In the mean time she died.

Caliban is “a freckled whelp hag/- not honoured with a human shape”. (I. 2 283,4) Prospero has kept him in his service. Though Miranda hates Caliban, Prospero pities him for his servitude because he makes their fire, fetches their wood and serves them sincerely. But Caliban does not love Prospero. He curses him both inwardly and outwardly.

This island’s mine, by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou tak’st from me. When thou camest first,
Thou strok’dst me, and made much of me; wouldst give me

Water with berries in't ; and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night: and then I lov'd thee
And show'd thee all the qualities o'th' isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile.
Cursed be I that did so! – All the charms
Of Sycorax, toads, beetles, bats light on you!" (I. 2, 330-340)

Despite the pains of Prospero to teach him civilisation he remains foolish. Caliban protests against Prospero for usurping his kingdom. He curses Prospero with his own language;

"You taught me language; and my profit on it
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language". (I. 2, 362-364)

Caliban's curses create much humour. He is frequently troubled by the spirits created by Prospero and Ariel.

Caliban is a fool. He feels that Trinculo and Stephano are spirits and gods. His shape is not clearly determined. As observed by Trinculo he is neither a fish nor a man. He smells like a strange fish but he is legged like a man. He has two voices forward and backward- forward voice to speak well of his friend and backward voice to utter foul speeches. Through Caliban Shakespeare criticises the dual tongued men. Trinculo and Stephano offer him a drink and his intoxication he asks them to help him from his tyrant, his sorcerer. He suggests them to possess his books burn them, and possess his beautiful daughter Miranda.

If Antonio and Sebastian are civilised villains, Caliban is an uncivilised villain. His flaw is his nature and he can never be nurtured. In the words of Prospero

"A devil, a born devil, on whose nature
Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,
Humanely taken, are all lost, quite lost;
And as with age his body uglier grows,
So his mind cankers. I will plague them all,
Even to roaring." (VI. I, 160-167)

He is better fool and better villain than Antonio and Sebastian. He may be disproportioned in his manners and shape but he offers an apology, which is not offered by the real villains. He says "I will be wise here after, and seek for grace".

V.III.2.2.THEMES AND ISSUES

The Tempest is a romance with a several kaleidoscopic elements. The play has music, magic, poetry, love, along with a great enchantment of supernatural powers. Apart from all these, we can observe the following themes and issues.

1. As a Record of the Maritime Enterprise of the Elizabethan England.
2. Illusion and Reality
3. Prospero as Shakespeare
4. Forgiveness and Freedom
5. *The Tempest* as an Allegory
6. *The Tempest* and the Masque and
7. Supernatural element

V.III.2.2.1.Maritime Enterprise of the Elizabethan England

It is a known fact through sources that Shakespeare was inspired by the Virginia Expedition. The 'Sea Adventure', the ship that carried necessary goods for Virginia was reported to have been lost. The news had created sensation and a record of Sylvester Jourdain's 'A Discovery of the Bermudas' was published. Critics observe that this tract for the creation of the play influenced Shakespeare.

Gonzalo's speeches (II. 1, 138) and his ideas on commonwealth refer to the ideas of the expansion of the British Empire. It reflects the country's new movement of thought and interest. The strange tales about the 'torment and wonder' of the islands and the tales of the travellers about the monsters are evident in the play in the speeches of Gonzalo and Sebastian and in the portrayal of the character of Caliban. Sailors used to bring the strange people of the islands, the natives to exhibit in the streets. Trinculo wonders if he can take Caliban, the 'moon-calf' of the island for such a show.

Caliban is not just a monster but he raises up several serious problems connected with the idea of colonisation. Kreyszig says that Caliban is the People. Prof. Lowell

observes that Caliban Understanding apart from Imagination. Daniel Wilson feels that Caliban is the missing link between man and brute. He represents the colony of Virginia in a way. His repeated words and curses expose the anguish of the colonised 'subaltern'. Prospero is a European who has been taking the charge of Caliban's kingdom and has trained the local inhabitants to work for him. Prospero extends to Caliban his European hospitality, teaches him his language and in return is shown all the natural resources of the island in an act of love but Caliban refuses to live by his rules and Prospero fails to vanquish his resistance. He brings a change in Caliban through threat and punishment after his comic conspiracy. Some how, the play has inspired several critics to study the play from the political viewpoint.

V.III.2.2.2.ILLUSION AND REALITY

The Tempest stands as an exploration of the Nature of Art. It stands as a special theatrical play displaying all the resources of the theatre: dramatic action, special effects, music, magic, monsters, dancing, storms, drunken humour etc.

The theme of 'Illusion and Reality' becomes one of the aspects of the play. As observed by Quevedo at the end of 16th century, "there are many things that seems to exist and have their bearing, and yet they are nothing more than a name and an appearance". The whole action on the island itself is the outcome of an illusion and its reality. Critics observed several Comic and Ironic illusions in the play. The tempest created by Prospero creates several illusions in the minds of characters and they come to be aware of reality: their original positions, nature and so on and they realise their sins. As observed by Prospero

"We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is surrounded with a sleep"

(IV 1, 148-150)

The illusion of Miranda about Ferdinand displays her innocence. The illusion created by Ariel in the mock banquet scene opens the eyes of the sinners. The Masque is also an illusion and it heightens the poetic nature of the play.

Stephano and Trinculo take Caliban for a four-legged/animal in their illusion and Caliban also takes them as gods. They plan to kill Prospero and they come out of reality when they are punished.

All the characters think that they are dreaming on the island. Alonso in his pathetic illusion thinks about the loss of his son and feels thrilled when he sees him alive. As Prospero says

“They devour their reason and scarce think
Their eyes do offices of truth, their words
Are natural breath”

They feel that Prospero (who should be dead) is some kind of vision and gasp when they find him alive.

Prospero tricks all people into illusion, even his own daughter Miranda. Ariel deceives people through illusion either to do some favour or to open their eyes. Antonio and Sebastian tried to deceive their master in to an illusion that they are protecting him. All others feel that the island, “full of noises, sounds and sweet airs” it self is a dream. The name of the play itself is a result of an illusion and reality. The aspect of illusion and reality “ stands as a symbol of transformation in the play”.

V.III.2.2..3 PROSPERO AS SHAKESPEARE

Prof. Saintsbury, Bailey and George Brandis feel that Prospero is Shakespeare. Saintsbury feels that the lost words of Prospero expressing his idea of burying the book and breaking the staff symbolise Shakespeare’s own idea of quitting his job as a playwright, his farewell to the stage. Prospero becomes and allegorical figure for Shakespeare.

Prof John Bailey expresses his views directly that “ in creating Prospero Shakespeare had some, at least occasional thoughts of himself”. Prospero’s philosophical reference to his ‘spirits’ is extended to understand Shakespeare’s own ideas about his characters.

“Our revels now are ended: these our actors
As I foretold, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air”.

(IV 1, 123-125) and

“We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is surrounded with a sleep”

(IV 1, 148-150)

Even Ariel becomes symbolically Shakespeare's art of genius-

“My dainty Ariel! I shall miss the
But yet thou shalt have freedom”.

George Brandis explains most of the words of Prospero in terms of Shakespeare and his art.

There is another school with critics like Stopford.A.Brooke, which does not support this. Commenting on a theory of Montegne, that Shakespeare is Prospero, Brooke says, “but Shakespeare was so impersonal in his art, that such argument has not much weight.”

V.III.2.2.4FORGIVENESS AND FREEDOM

V.III.2.2.4.1.Forgiveness and Reconciliation as the theme

This is one of the themes that makes *The Tempest* a romance.

1. Since the beginning of the play, Prospero's noble virtue is forgiveness. His stern nature though seen in the creation of storm is not literally harsh. He creates it only to grab an opportunity of teaching his enemies a lesson. He asks Ariel about their safety and this shows his intention clearly.
2. Prospero forgives even Caliban in spite of his mistake and conspiracy which Stephano and Trinculo.
3. He suggests Ariel to save Alonso from the hands of Sebastian and Antonio.
4. He brings a great change in the sinners and forgives them.
5. As he confirms, he proves that “rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance.”

V.III.2.2.4.2Freedom as the Theme

Freedom becomes the pivotal concept of the play because the whole play moves around Ariel, Who is the very embodiment of freedom. Ariel gains it through gratitude for his sincere service and commitment. Caliban also gets it but through pity and forgiveness.

Ariel knows well about the significance of the freedom but Caliban stands as the misrepresented form of it.

All the characters are free in the island and they are left to utilise the freedom in their own way.

Ferdinand achieves it through service and perseverance. He serves Prospero honestly and wins his freedom along with his prize, Miranda.

Antonio and Sebastian lose their freedom as human beings by becoming guilty: Alonso realises his solitude and finds his freedom the movement he gets rid of his guilt.

Antonio misuses it and emerges out as a set villain and even spoils Sebastian.

Even Prospero achieves his freedom the movement he opens the eyes of his enemies he becomes free from the responsibilities of a parent by giving his daughter to Ferdinand in marriage. He becomes free from the 'wand of magic' after achieving his 'goal'. Prof. Dowden observes, "Shakespeare was aware of – whether such be the significance of this epilogue or not – that no life is ever lived which does not need to receive as well as to render forgiveness. He knew that every energetic dealer with the world must seek a sincere and liberal pardon for many things. Forgiveness and freedom – these are the keynotes of the play".

V.III.2..5THE TEMPEST AS AN ALLEGORY

Criticism on Shakespeare shows that the play has the features of an Allegory. All the characters in the play have some allegorical significance.

If the little island with its four elements – Earth, Air, Fire and Water, stands for the universe, Prospero with his powers of magic represents a shadow of Divine. Ariel represents Air and Fire and Caliban represents Earth and Water. Prospero grip over the sources of nature makes him a super man.

The play is interplay of five stories, which have natural enhancement.

1. The sub-human enchantment of vice
2. The human enchantment of vice
 1. The human enchantment of love
 2. The super human enchantment of service and gratitude
 3. The super human enchantment of forgiveness

The play is an admixture of several themes and it is a celebration of different qualities.

Observe the following chart:

STORY	ELEMENT	QUALITY	CHARACTER/S
1. Story of Love	Human	Affection	Ferdinand and Miranda
2. Story of Vice	Human	Greed for Power	Antonio, Alonso and Sebastian
Story of vice	Sub-human	Greed, lust	Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban
3. Story of service	1. Superhuman	Gratitude	Ariel
	2. Human	Affection, Perseverance	Ferdinand
	3. Sub-human	arrogance	Caliban
4. Story of forgiveness	Human to		
	Superhuman	Virtue	Prospero
5. Story of loyalty	Human	sincerity	Gonzalo
	Superhuman	sincerity	Ariel

The story of love is represented by Ferdinand and Miranda and is guided by their sincere affection for each other.

The 'story of vice' works on human and sub-human levels. On the human level it is greed for power represented by Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian.

On the sub-human plane, it is represented by Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban who stand for greed and lust. Prospero put these three to punishment to control them. As observed by Bonamy Dobree, Shakespeare seems to be suggesting that "the natural instincts have constantly to be disciplined, scourged and whipped: they cannot be integral to a regenerated man".

The story of service works on human, sub-human and super human levels. Shakespeare presents the degrees of differences as it shifts from person to person and plane to plane. On the human level Ferdinand stands for it with affection and perseverance. On the sub-human plane it is represented by Caliban who works in a grudging manner. On the super-human

plane its bliss is bought out through Ariel who works with gratitude, which results in his freedom. The pivotal aspect of the story is the story of forgiveness. It shows how virtue is greater than vengeance. Prospero, the harmonious, fully developed will stands as the embodiment of forgiveness. He shows how man can grow to the level of a super man by forgiving his enemies.

The story forgiveness is further strengthened by the story of loyalty on human and super human planes. On human plane Gonzalo, the old and wise councillor who provides timely succour to Prospero represents it. On the super human level Ariel represents it.

To sum up Prospero stands for forgiveness; Ariel and Gonzalo for sincerity and loyalty; Antonio, Sebastian, Alonso for human vice, Caliban Trinculo, and Stephano for Sub human vice ; Ferdinand for affection, perseverance and love and Miranda for innocence.

The crew of Prospero, the Characters of the play thus stand for different abstract qualities taking the play to Allegorical plane and in the end Shakespeare shows how good wins over evil through forgiveness and reconciliation.

As observed by T.S. Eliot the whole play is a conversation between the upper-class characters and the base people – Ferdinand, Miranda, Gonzalo, and Alonso are the upper-class characters and the remaining Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano are base. Antonio and Sebastian stand between these two. Obviously Prospero and Ariel belong to the highest plane.

The play is also treated as an Allegory on European colonial practices. Apart from the morality angles the depiction of Caliban with his smells etc projects the European perception of alien New World cultures.

V.III.2.2.6.THE TEMPEST AND THE MASQUE

'The Masque' belongs to the Italian tradition. In its earlier form it was enacted by actors wearing masques. It was a kind of mime show. Later on it became more elaborate and came to resemble an opera. It was patronised by the court and the nobility. It was popular during the reign of Elizabeth but it achieved its perfection in the reign of James I. The Masques were performed on special occasions and they used to have elaborate decoration and scenery with amateur actors. Ben Jonson distinguished himself as the writer of masques.

The following are the characteristics of masques:

1. The themes are allegorical and mythological in nature with gods and goddesses as characters.
2. The characters personify abstract qualities like Delight, Love, and Harmony etc.
3. The characters are less in number.
4. The scenes are laid in utopian regions like Arcadia, fortunate isles etc.
5. They are written in rhymed verse.

Generally a masque contains an Anti-masque having the nature of a burlesque. *The Tempest* contains two masques - one a complete Masque in the fourth act of the play and another- an anti-masque in the mock-banquet scene.

The Masque is presented before Ferdinand and Miranda to celebrate their betrothal. The characters with reapers and nymphs, Iris (the messenger of Juno), Ceres [Mother Earth] and Juno are from classical mythology. The Masque is highly poetic and is in rhymed verse. It celebrates fertility and the new couple blessed by the goddesses.

The mock -banquet scene serves as 'anti masque'. It is described as "a living drollery", a dumb show. It is inserted in the play to open the eyes of the sinners.

V.III.2.2.7.SUPERNATURAL ELEMENT IN THE TEMPEST

Shakespeare's use of the supernatural element always carries a special dramatic purpose. As in some of his plays like *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* etc, he has introduced this in *The Tempest* also. The supernatural element has not dominated the human actions and human will, but it is under the control of human will. If he has used it for the fulfilment of tragic purposes in *Hamlet*, it serves a comic purpose in the play. Here Shakespeare does not employ ghosts and witches with an eerie atmosphere, but presents the spirits of air, water and fire for gentler things and to bring reconciliation between enemies. Right from the creation of the shipwreck to the last scene, the whole play depends on the magical powers of Ariel, the spirit of Air. Every act in the play is replete with the merry supernatural music.

The gentle portrayal of characters dominates the supernatural element and it runs only as an undercurrent. Prospero's use of magic is not wicked like that of Faustus. If Faustus perishes under the weight of black magic, Prospero comes out of it successfully by bringing a change among the evil ones. He abjures his magic, though it is white and even proposes to

break the 'staff' and bury it. The supernatural element forms the integral part while elevating Prospero to the position of God or Providence.

V.III.3.CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What can you know about the sources of the play?
2. How is *The Tempest* a romance?
3. Sketch the greatness of Prospero?
4. What differences do you find between Ariel and Caliban?
5. Comment on the supernatural element in the play?

V.III.4. LET US SUM UP

After going through the lesson you will be able to understand how the play occupies an important place among the last plays of Shakespeare. The play is typical in construction because this is the only play that maintains the classical standards. The play has several other issues. The play holds key for the post-colonial critical enterprise.

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K. Vijay Babu

V. THE TEMPEST. IV

V.IV.O. OBJECTIVES

After going through the play you will

- understand the nature of minor characters of the play
- be able to digest the play with the help of the glossary.

V.IV.I.STRUCTURE

V.IV.O OBJECTIVES

V.IV.I.STRUCTURE

V.IV.2.INTRODUCTION

V.IV.2.1.MINOR CHARACTERS

V.IV.3GLOSSARY

V.IV.4. SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

V.IV.2.INTRODUCTION

This unit will enable you to analyse the nature of minor characters and read the play on your own with the help of the glossary.

V.IV.2.1. MINOR CHARACTERS

V.IV.2.1.1. FERDINAND

Without Miranda, Ferdinand does not possess any importance in the play. He is the son of Alonso. He is one of the members on the ship that breaks near the strange island after the wreck. He worries about his father till he is brought to the cell of Prospero by Ariel. The presence of Miranda makes him forget everything. He is kept under the magic spell of Prospero. He falls in love with her and he forgets everything including his father.

He says “my spirits, as in a **dream**, are all bound up.
My father’s loss, **the weakness** which I feel,
The wreck of all my friends, nor this man’s threats
To whom I am subdu’d, are but light to me,
Might I but through my prison once a day
Behold this maid.....” (I.2.486-491)

He is kept under trial by Prospero and he endures it. He is ready to ‘crack sinews and break his back’ for Miranda. He is heroic but he has no opportunity to show his prowess. He works like a puppet to the commands of Prospero. He is a perfect match to Miranda who is extraordinarily innocent. He rejoices to see his father in the last scene. He is emotional, gentle and romantic. He fails to possess the depth to be the protagonist of the play.

V.IV.2.1.2 ALONSO

Alonso, though antagonistic is the least villainous of all the villains. He is the king of Naples. In his zeal for expansion of his kingdom, he joins hands with Antonio, the brother of Prospero. He gives his daughter Claribel to the king of Tunis. During their voyage back to Naples their ship gets caught in the tempest created by Prospero. He swims ashore with all others but loses his son. He worries about him and repents that it is a punishment given for his sin against Prospero. He regrets a lot. In nature, he is superior to Antonio and Sebastian.

He is not aware of the evil plan of Antonio and Sebastian who try to kill him when he is asleep. He feels desperate after the mock-banquet scene. He is conscious of his sin and guilt. He asks Prospero how he has lost his daughter and it seems that he is not aware of the conspiracy of Antonio. He feels immensely happy to find his son playing with angelic ‘Miranda’. He offers apology and asks for pardon.

He says to Miranda “I am hers,
But, o, how oddly will it sound that I
Must ask my child forgiveness!” (V.1.194-196)

He feels himself free from guilt after uniting the hands of Miranda and Ferdinand. He remains a memorable character. He stirs our compassion through remorse.

V.IV.2.1.3 ANTONIO

Antonio is the wicked character in the play. He usurps the kingdom of his gentle brother Prospero when the latter involves himself in a deeper study. He joins hands with the King of Naples, the inveterate enemy of Prospero. Like an 'ivy' on a 'trunk', he 'sucks out his verdure' by replacing all his brother's men with his own. He is the embodiment of all falsehood and villainy. He sends out his brother along with his three year old daughter. He is monstrously greedy.

His evil nature comes out every step. He is very base in nature like Caliban. We see a change in Caliban in the end but we don't find any iota of remorse in Antonio. He encourages Sebastian, the brother of Alonso to follow his footsteps in usurping his brother's kingdom by killing him. He never cares for his conscience. His mind is very ugly. When asked by Sebastian about his conscience, he says-

"ay sir; where lies that? If 't were a kibe,
'T would put me to my slipper: but I feel not
This deity is my bosom: twenty consciences
That stand 'twixt me and Milan, candied be they,
And melt, ere they molest!" (II.1.276-280)

He is inferior to Caliban in some respects. He is perfidious, treacherous and remorseless.

V.IV.2.1.4. SEBASTIAN

Sebastian forms the pair of villains with Antonio. He is the brother of Alonso the king of Naples. He accompanies his brother to the marriage. In his return journey after the ship wreck he swims a shore. Before his meeting with Antonio he does not exhibit any idea of usurping his brother's kingdom. Antonio provokes him and he responds after some hesitation.

He is not totally innocent and gentle. His arrogant and haughty nature appears in the opening scene itself. He is impatient with the boatswain and he tries to mock at the gentle Gonzalo though he is more than a match in wit. As a brother he does not offer any courage or moral support to Alonso when he mourns for the loss of his son in added he adds fuel to his fire.

When encouraged by Antonio he shows some concern for the conscience but allows Antonio to snub it. He joins hands with him to kill his sleeping brother. Though not successful and though

they get warned by Prospero he remains unchanged with out shame and with out guilt. If Caliban is base without education, Sebastian is crude and degraded despite civilisation.

V.IV.2.1.5

STEPHANO AND TRINCULO

It seems that Shakespeare has included these two rogues to provide comic relief along with Caliban. These three characters form a new dimension, a sub-plot in the play. The presence of Stephano and Trinculo is heightened by their friendship with Caliban. Stephano is a drunken butler and Trinculo is a jester. Their entry brings in a new cheer from the heavy tragic moments of conspiracy. It lightens the play. They come across Caliban supposing him to be either a man or a fish. Their description of Caliban provides much laughter. They are drunkards but like other Shakespearean fools, they are not wise. If Antonio, Alonso and Sebastian form the evil-trio, these three form the same group but with a comic spirit.

V.IV.2.1.6

GONZALO

Gonzalo is one of the pleasantest characters in the play. He is loyal, shrewd and witty. He is not heroic but he makes Prospero heroic by offering him timely succour and providing his most valuable books. He arranges food, clothes and books in the boat, when Prospero and his daughter are banished by Antonio. He is loyal and kind. He also tries to comfort Alonso when he is in distress. His good nature becomes conspicuous against the base nature of Antonio and Sebastian. He dominates Sebastian and Antonio in wit. He has a balanced mind and he balances the play with his timely wisdom.

V.IV.3.GLOSSARY

Act I-Scene I

4. Yarely: nimbly;

11. *Play the men*, show yourselves men. A phrase used several times by Marlowe; 24. *work*, produce, bring about

33. the rope, i.e. the halter, with which destiny meant that he should be hung. 'May it (says Gonzalo) serve as a cable to prevent our ship drifting on to the shore.'

37. *Down with the topmast!* because the topmast from its weight and from holding ; the wind causes the vessel to drift to leeward, i.e., nearer the shore. *Lower!* probably the verb.

Lay her a – hold, keep her as close to the wind as possible; another old nautical term

Scene 2

4. Welkin, sky;

13. *fraughting*, i.e. who composed the freight or cargo;

21. *thy no greater father*, thy father who has no other greatness,

22. *meddle with*; literally 'mix with'

31-5. *Betid ...bootless*;

50. *the dark backward*, the dim past.

65. *Which is from*, i.e. passed from. 'Which I have forgotten.'

73. *for*, in respect to

74. *parallel*, equal, rival.

81. *To trash for over-topping*, to check because of their out-stripping others.

87. *Verdure*, life, vigour.

89. *ends*, designs, aims;

95. *falsehood*, perfidy ;

97. *sans*, without;

109. *Absolute Milan*, completely duke of Milan,

111,112. *confederates*, plots.

119. *but nobly*, otherwise than honourably.

125. *presently*, at once, without delay.

138. *impertinent*; in its original sense

143. *colours*, appearances; *butt*; properly 'a cask, barrel' ;

152. *a cherubin* an angel

157. *An undergoing stomach*, an enduring and stubborn courage.

167. *Volumes* ; such as his ;book of magic ;
172. *more profit*, make more progress.
218. *sustaining garments*; either 'that bore up their wearers',
229. *Bermoothyes*, Bermudas, a group of islands in the North Atlantic, the nearest of the West Indian Islands and from the coast of America.
240. *At least two glasses*. 'Yes, it must be at ;least 2 O'clock..'
255. *In the veins*; used metaphorically = 'in the interior'.
258. *Sycorax*. Various derivations have been suggested: Origin Greek . Mother of Caliban.
317. *Quaint*. Dainty:
334. *Water with berries* ; thought by some the mean coffee, which, although not introduced into England till about twenty years after Shakespeare's death
338. *brine-pits*, salt springs
373. *dam*, used generally of animals or birds.
380. *Foot it*; it is a cognate accusative referring to the action
381. *Burden*, refrain.
421. *the goddess* ; Alonso's words
422. *these airs*, Ariel's songs.
438. *brave son* ; note that he does not appear in the play.
439. *more braver* ; control, confute, contradict in a way which admitted no answer.
445. *the third man*; here she recognises Caliban as a man;
469. *foot*, inferior.
484. *nerves*, sinews ; The spell cast by Prospero's wand has robbed Ferdinand of all his strength.

Act II

- 12, 13. *Watches* were introduced from Germany into England about *strike* , like the old 'repeater' watches.
17. *A dollar*, in payment for the 'entertainment':
42. *temperance*, temperature

43. *Temperance*; here a proper name, such as the Puritans liked;
75. *paragon*, model of excellence.
76. *Dido*.....*Eneas*. After the fall of Troy, Eneas came to the court of Dido, queen of Carthage, who fell in love with him;
86. *miraculous harp* ; either the harp of Amphion, the sweet notes of which affected even stones and caused them to form the wall of Thebes of their own accord.
102. *doublet*, the ordinary jacket worn in the house by Elizabethans.
107. *stomach*, appetite, inclination.
126. *Where*, in which country,
- 133,134. Apparently 'they were themselves confident of returning (home), but imagined part of the fleet destroyed'-*Johnson*
143. *plantation*, colonisation.
- 167,168. such perfection *as* to excel.
173. *minister occasion*, supply with a topic of jesting.
183. *moon*; *sphere*, orbit. 186. *good my lord*; a possessive pronoun is often transposed in short phrases of address ;
- 204-9. 'How well the poet prepares the feelings of the reader for this plot.
221. *Trebles thee o'er* , makes thee thrice as great as thou art.
226. *Ebbing*, declining; 'the tide of whose fortunes has turned'
242. *a wink*, the smallest space ; properly used of time, not distance.
274. *fellows*, equals. *Men*, servants;
279. *candied*, congealed;
321. *That's verily*;
- 326,327. The only rhymed couplet of the play (excluding the songs and 'Masque' in Act IV)
- Scene 2**
17. *mind me*. notice.
29. *in England...this fish*. Such exhibitions were common especially at fairs.
- IV. 12. 36, 37

In Shakespeare's plays and in Elizabethan plays generally there is a considerable element of what has been called 'topical allusion', that is, to topics and events of the time, literary customs, pastimes, fashions, current jokes, etc.

40. *Gaberdine*, long cloak

60. *puts tricks upon's*, impose upon, try to frighten, us

80. *I will not take too much*, I will be content with a moderate price.

86. *Give language to yo7u, cat*. 'Alluding to the old proverb that "good liquor will make a cat speak"-Stevens.

98. *Amen!* there, that's enough

121. Shakespeare had in mind stories of the natives' passion for intoxicating liquors ('fire-water') in the New World

159. *puppy-headed*, stupid.

188. '*Ban*'; the final syllable of his own name, which he finds difficult to pronounce in his present state

ACT II Scene I

I, 2. *There be some sports*, etc. 'There are pastimes which are toilsome, but the pleasure they afford us is a set-off against the labour they involve'.

11. *Upon a sore injunction*, under grievous (or 'strict') orders.

21. *Safe*; as we say, 'safe out of the way'.

46. *put it to the foil*, marred (literally 'defeated') it.

66, 67. *than to suffer*; the 'to' is omitted with the first infinitive, 'endure', but inserted with the other, 'suffer'.

70, 71. *invert*. 'Turn my best fortune to misfortune.'

80. *it*, her love.

96. *appertaining*, necessary.

Scene 2

1. *Tell me not*, don't talk to me !

10. *set*; cf. *Twelfth Night*, V.I. 205.206, '*O, he'e drunk*

21. *not run*, away from the enemy ;
32. *Wilt thou tell?* As though Caliban, being only half a monster, ought not to tell a wholly 'monstrous' lie.
63. *this thing*, Trinculo.
88. *A murrain*, a plague on ;
104. *utensils*, implements, goods; referring,
108. *a nonpareil*, one who has no equal.
128. *any reason*, anything reasonable.
136. *the picture of Nobody*. There was an Elizabethan comedy, *no-body and Some-body*, to which was prefixed a print representing a man with head, arms and legs but 'no body'.
161. *Will come?* To Caliban, who would rather go against Prospero.

Scene 3

1. *By'r lakin* = *by our lady kin* ('little lady') cf. *our lady*, i.e. the Virgin Mary, and *marry* (III .2.46), a corruption of *Mary*.
attach'd, seized; the ordinary meaning then.
- 25,26. 'And any other prodigy that people disbelieve, let it come to me and I'll vouch for it.'
39. *dumb discourse*; 'in dumb show'.
48. *Each putter-out of five for one*, every traveller; a reference to an Elizabethan system of insurance.
51. *The best*, i.e. part of his life; he is sad about his son.
- Stage-direction: like a harpy*.
- 61,62. *elements*, materials.
86. *with good life*, in a most life-like manner;
105. *given to work*, administered with the intention that it should act

The close of the scene illustrates well the degrees of guilt in the 'three men of sin' ; Antonio and Sebastian ;being moved to reckless defiance of their ;supernatural visitant, while Alonso is stricken into an agony of remorse-*Boas*.

ACT IV Scene I

2. *a thrid*, i.e. 'a fibre or ;integral part of his own life' –
9. *boast her off*, praise her as if with a view to your accepting her from me.
20. *rabble, band (of spirits)*; now a contemptuous word, but not always so then.
30. Cf. the reference in *Lear*, IV. I. 64, to the evil spirit Flibbertigibbet, prince 'of mopping and mowing'.
36. *Ceres*: in Roman mythology the goddess of agriculture and of all the fruits of the earth;
39. *thatch'd*, covered.
63. *Dis*, a name (said to be contracted from *dives*, 'rich') of Pluto, Greek. Hades, god of the gloomy, infernal regions:
73. *minion*, favourite, darling
77. *by her gait*. Virgil makes Juno say of herself '*divom incedo rigina*'
- 81-4. Juno speaks as the patroness of marriage.
101. *to do* ;the gerundial infinitive, which was originally a verbal noun,
113. *In country footing*, a country dance.
133. *rounded with*, i.e. rounded off, finished with.
139. *with a thought*, quick as thought.
- 160,161. *trumpery*, trash;
168. *blind*; a popular notion;
202. To by *luggage* ;Cf. the contemptuous use of 'baggage'.
215. *pass of pate*, sally of wit.
227. *silver*; used also in the *Taming of the Shrew*, *Induction*,
234. *lies*; so the Folios;

ACT V Scene I

3. *crack not*, do not fail;
4. 10. *line-grove*, grove of lime-trees;
27. *rarer*; perhaps with both ideas,
37. *ringlets*, the small circles of luxuriant, rich-coloured grass often found in meadows.
45. *rifted*, *cleft*.

54. airy charm; a spell 'wrought by spirits of the air' - Schmidt.
69. My...preserver; alluding to the services mentioned in 1,2. 160-8.
96. so, so, very good, that will do ;
112. trifle, phantom, delusive image.
123. taste, experience.
142. of whose....grace, i.e. who in her gracious mercy has given me efficacious aid to bear a similar loss.
200. heaviness, sorrow.
- 218 blasphemy; the abstract for the concrete;
240. moping, downcast,
248. single I'll resolve you, I will explain to you in private.

V.IV.4.SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. "Forgiveness and freedom –these are the keynotes of the play"-discuss Dowden's opinion critically.
2. Sketch the character of Caliban in the light of Prospero's words,"a born devil,on whose nature nurture can never stick".
3. Comment on the structure of the play.
- 4.Compare and contrast Ariel and Caliban.
5. "The Tempest is neither a tragedy nor a comedy; it is a pure romance"-Prove this statement.

V.IV.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

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SELECT LITERARY CRITICISM

V : V . *The Tempest*

The Tempest is one of the most original and perfect of Shakespeare's productions, and he has shown in it all the variety of his powers. It is full of grace and grandeur. The human and imaginary characters, the dramatic and the grotesque, are blended together with the greatest art, and without any appearance of it. Though he has here given 'to airy nothing a local habitation and a name', yet that part which is only the fantastic creation of his mind has the same palpable texture, and coheres 'semblably' with the rest. As the preternatural part has the air of reality, and almost haunts the imagination with a sense of truth, the real characters and events partake of the wildness of a dream. ... Even the local scenery is of a piece and character with the subject. Prospero's enchanted island seems to have risen up out of the sea; the airy music, the tempest-tossed vessel, the turbulent waves, all have the effect of the landscape background of some fine picture. Shakespeare's pencil is (to use an allusion of his own) 'like the dyer's hand, subdued to what it works in'. Everything in him, though it partakes of the liberty of wit, is also subjected to 'the law' of the understanding. For instance, even the drunken sailors, who are made reeling-ripe, share, in the disorder of their minds and bodies, in the tumult of the elements, and seem on shore to be as much at the mercy of chance as they were before at the mercy of the winds and waves.

The Tempest, among Shakespeare's later plays, is a counterpart to the *Midsummer Night's Dream* of his lyric youth. Here, too, is a dream, or, if you will, a fairy tale, in which the protagonists are not men and women but imagined beings, taken partly from folk-belief and partly from literature, to be the symbols of forces dimly perceived by the poet as ruling that life, which is itself, after all, in another degree, but such stuff as dreams are made on. And, like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the play must interest the spectator less through a strictly dramatic appeal to his emotions, than by the strange romantic charm of its setting and its sensuous realization of the delicate and the grotesque in the mysterious personages which it brings before him. It is, in fact, to be classed as dramatic *spectacle* rather than as drama proper, and the elaboration with which it has been put upon the stage by modern managers may be regarded as not, in this case, wholly out of keeping with the intention of the dramatist.

From W. HAZLITT, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817)

The Contemporary Significance of the Play

While then the drama before us is apparently so remote in locality and detail from Virginia, it is most curious to observe how many of the topics brought up by colonies and colonization are indicated and characterized in the play.-The wonders of new lands, new races; the exaggerations of travellers, and their truths more strange than exaggeration; new natural phenomena, and superstitious suggestions of them; the perils of the sea and shipwrecks; the effect of such fatalities in awakening remorse for ill deeds, not unremembered because easily committed; the quarrels and mutinies of colonists for grudges new and old, the contests for authority of the leaders, and the greedy misdirection of industry while even subsistence is precarious; the theories of government for plantations, the imaginary and actual characteristics of man in the state of nature, the

complications with the indigenae, the resort, penally or otherwise, to compelled labour, the reappearance on new soil of the vices of the older world, the contrast of moral and intellectual qualities between the civilized and the savage, and the gradual apprehension of the wondrous strangers by the savage . . . all these topics, problems, and conjunctures came up in the plantation of Virginia by James I; and familiarity with them. . . would heighten the sensibility of the audience to every scene.

From W.W. LLOYD, *Critical Essay to Singer's Shakespeare* (1856)

The day of warring armies and revengeful ghosts was passing, but the audiences' craving for novelty was unceasing, and it is amply cared for . . . in *The Tempest*. *The Tempest*, to us a beautiful poem full of beneficent idealism, on the Elizabethan stage must have seemed largely an effort to satisfy this craving. Caliban, that immensely taking Elizabethan stage-beast, who has proved so prophetically philosophical, must have been the hit of the play. Then there was the old device borrowed from the *Midsummer Night's Dream* of the invisible Ariel bewildering the courtiers, and the still older business of the vanishing banquet, 'accomplished with a quaint device'. Then there were the drunken scenes; such as Shakespeare had used before, but now made especially diverting when the climax was reached and the dogs chased the drenched and filthy boors about the stage, while Prospera and Ariel cried on quarry! Prospera himself, with his magician's robes and wand, must have made an imposing spectacular figure.

From A.H. THORNDIKE, *The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare* (1901)

The playwright, least of all craftsmen, can pursue his art along fixed and unvarying lines. He must be alert to perceive changes in the public taste, he must be conscious of the value of novelty, he must study the successes and the failures of his fellows. As he grows in maturity and insight, he must put the best of his ripened powers into his work. If he fails to do these things, he will soon find himself falling behind, and becoming, not the entertainer of the present, but the memory of a bygone generation. Shakespeare made no such mistake. He was singularly quick to perceive changes in theatrical fashions, to provide his public with new varieties of amusement, and to pour out the best which he had to give for their deeper reflection. This was characteristic of him down to the very end of his active career in the theatre. In the *Tempest*, perhaps the last play wholly from his pen, he adapted effective elements from the Court masques and from current tales of adventure in the New World, which were then stirring the imagination of Englishmen, with no hint of the fatigue or the indifference of the magician about to break his staff and drown his book.

From W.W. LAWRENCE, *Shakespeare's Problem Comedies* (1931)

The Construction of the Play

Enchantment is a thing wholly outside our experience, it has no associations of memory interweaved with it, nor has it ever appealed to our sympathies in real life. The artist who drama-

tizes a supernatural story is perpetually facing the practical difficulty-how to bridge over the gulf between his supernatural matter and the experience of his hearers or readers. There are three modes of treatment open to a dramatist by which he may meet such a difficulty. First, he may *derationalize*, or remove as far as possible from commonplace experience, the general surroundings amidst which the supernatural is to appear. Again, he may *rationalize* the supernatural element itself, that is; give it as many points of contact as possible with thought and experience. Yet again, he may give further support to the supernatural element by uniting with it as much as possible of what is nearest akin to it in the world of reality. All three modes of treatment are combined in Shakespeare's handling of Enchantment in the present play. . . .

The very scene, insulated like a magic circle, is excluded from the commonplace, and is confined to that remoteness of nature in which distance from the real presents itself as nearness to the unseen. On the enchanted island there is nothing to break the spell by a suggestion of every-day experience, and the atmosphere is electrical with enchantment; while the inhabitants, untouched by social influences, are formed equally by nature and magic. As the story moves before us, the laws of nature the basis of our sense of reality-appear suspended, and it is the unnatural which presents itself as a thing of law. When at last personages of familiar experience are introduced, they fall wholly under the mysterious influence, and their realism-their tender loving and brutal carousing--only serves to remind us how much of real life is permeated by Enchantment.

From R.G. MOULTON, *Shakespedre as a Dramatic Artist* (1888)

In handling enchantment one point of art will be to mark the process of passing from the real to the supernatural. . . . Shakespeare's play recognizes only a single transition stage between reality and enchantment-music, strangely linked with dreamy slumber. . . . The sleepy atmosphere seems a fixed quality of the climate, dulling the critical faculty that might question the visionary appearances. The music, however, that breaks out from time to time is always an immediate herald of some supernatural effect: it is through this gate alone that we pass out into the world of enchantment.

Ibid.

Just here, however, comes in the dramatist's difficulty. Shakespeare is henceforth occupied, and to the end, with reconciliation. But (as I have pointed out) reconciliation, forgiveness, the adjustment and restoration of goodwill between injured and injurer must be, in the nature of things, a slow process. And this, of all themes, is the most heartbreaking for a dramatist, who has to tell, and by presented action, his complete story in two or three hours. Again and again this difficulty beat Shakespeare; and on our way through the later plays we have seen the devices by which he covered defeat. . . . And then of a sudden, in *The Tempest* Shakespeare brings off the trick! The whole action of the play, with the whole tale of ancient wrong unfolded, the whole company of injuring and injured gathered into a knot, the whole machinery of revenge turned to forgiveness, takes place in about three hours of imagined time, or just the time of its actual representation on the stage!

'Marvellous stage craft? ' Yes. I would not make too much of the famous Unities, but though discredited as *laws*, they abide as *graces* of drama; and pre-eminently a grace is this *Unity of Time*, whereby the author in Dryden's words—

sets the audience, as it were, at the post where the race is to be concluded; and, saving them the tedious expectation of seeing the poet set out and ride the beginning of the course, suffers you not to behold him till he is in sight of goal and just upon you.

From ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH, *Shakespeare's Workmanship* (1918)

The Supernatural Element

That the character and conduct of Prospero maybe understood, something must be known of the system of enchantment which supplied all the marvellous found in the romances of the Middle Ages. This system seems to be founded on the opinion that the fallen spirits, having different degrees of guilt, had different habitations allotted to them at their expulsion, some being confined to Hell, some, as Hooker, who delivers the opinion of our poet's age, expresses it, 'dispersed in air, some on earth, some in water, others in caves, dcns, or minerals under the earth'. Of these some were more malignant and mischievous than others. The earthy spirits seem to have been thought most depraved, and the aerial the least vitiated. Thus Prospero observes of Ariel,

--Thou wast a spirit too delicllte
To act her *earthy* and abhorred commands.

Over these spirits a power might be obtained by certain rites performed or charms learned. This power was called the Black Art, or knowledge of enchantment. The enchanter being, as King James observes in his *Demonology*, one who commands the Devil, whereas the witch serves him. Those who thought best of this art, the existence of which was, I am afraid, believed very seriously, held that certain sounds and characters had a physical power over spirits, and compelled their agency; others who condemned the practice, which in reality was surely never practised, were of opinion, with more reason, that the power of charms arose *only* from compact, and was no more than the spirits voluntarily allowed them for the seduction of man. The aft was held by all, though not equally criminal, yet unlawful, and therefore Casaubon, speaking of one who had commerce with spirits, blames him, though he imagines him 'one of the best kind who dealt with them by way of command'. Thus Prospero repents of his art in the last scene. The spirits were always considered as in some measure enslaved to the enchanter, at least for a time, and as serving with unwillingness; therefore Ariel so often begs for liberty, and Caliban observes that the spirits serve Prospero with no good will, but hate him rootedly. --Of these trifles enough.

From S. JOHNSON, *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (1765).

The delineation of Prospero, the noblest conception of the *Magic* character which ever entered the mind of a poet, is founded upon a distinction which was supposed to exist between the

several professors of this mysterious science. They were separated, in fact, into two great orders: into those who commanded the service of superior intelligences, and into those who, by voluntary compact, entered into a *league with*, or submitted to be the *instruments* of lower powers. Under the first were ranked *Magicians*, who were again classed into higher or inferior, according to the extent of the control which they exerted over the invisible world; the former possessing an authority over *celestial*, as well as infernal spirits. Under the second were included Necromancers and Wizards, who, for the enjoyment of temporary power, subjected themselves, like the Witch, to final perdition.

Of the highest class of the first order was Prospero, one of those Magicians or Conjurors who, as Reginald Scot [author of *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, 1584] observes, 'professed an art which some fond divines affirme to be more honest and lawfull than *necromancie*, which is called *Theurgie*; wherein they work by good angels'. Accordingly, we find Prospero operating upon inferior agents, upon elves, demons, and goblins, through the medium of Ariel, a spirit too delicate and good to 'act abhorr'd commands', but who 'answered his best pleasure', and was subservient to his 'strong bidding'.

Shakespeare has very properly given to the exterior of Prospero several of the adjuncts and costume of the popular magician. Much virtue was inherent in his very garments; and Scot has, in many instances, particularized this fashion. A pyramidal cap, a robe furred with fox-skins, a girdle three inches in breadth, and inscribed with cabalistic characters, shoes of russet leather, and unscabbarded swords formed the usual dress.

From N. DRAKE, *Shakespeare and his Times* (1817)

The Style of 'The Tempest'

Shakespeare mingles everything, he runs line into line, embarrasses sentences and metaphors; before one idea has burst its shell, another is hatched and clamorous for disclosure.

From C. LAMB, *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets* (1808)

The style of these last plays is a further development of the style of the Tragedies. The thought is often more packed and hurried, the expression more various and fluent, at the expense of full logical ordering. The change which came over Shakespeare's later work is that which Dryden, at an advanced age, perceived in himself. 'What judgment I had', he says in the Preface to the *Fables*, 'increases rather than diminishes and thoughts, such as they are, come crowding in so fast upon me, that my only difficulty is to choose or to reject, to run them into verse, or to give them the other harmony of prose.' The bombasted magniloquence of the early rhetorical style has now disappeared. The very syntax is the syntax of thought rather than of language; constructions are mixed, grammatical links are dropped, the meaning of many sentences is compressed into one, hints and impressions count for as much as full-blown propositions. An illustration of this late style may be taken from the scene in *The Tempest*, where Antonio, the usurping Duke of Milan, tries to persuade Sebastian to murder his brother Alonso, and to seize upon the kingdom of Naples. Ferdinand, the heir to the kingdom, is believed to have perished in the shipwreck, and Antonio points to the sleeping king:

Antonio. Who's the next heir of Naples?

Sebastian.

Claribel.

Antonio. She that is Queen of Tunis; she that dwells
Ten leagues beyond man's life. . .

Here is a very huddle of thoughts, tumbled out as they present themselves, eagerly and fast. This crowded utterance is not proper to anyone character; Leontes in his jealous speculations, Imogen in her questions addressed to Pisanio, Prospero in his narrative to Miranda, all speak in the same fashion, prompted by the same scurry of thought. It would be right to conclude, from the mere reading, that there was no blot in the papers to which these speeches were committed.

The later style of Shakespeare, as it is seen in the Tragedies and Romances, is perhaps the most wonderful thing in English literature. From the first he was a lover of language, bandying words like tennis-balls, adorning his theme 'with many holiday and lady terms', proving that a sentence is but the cheveril glove to a good wit, so quickly the wrong side may be turned outward. He had a mine of phrases in his brain, an exchequer of words; he had fed of the dainties that are bred in a book; his speech was a very fantastical banquet. This early practice gave him an assured mastery, so that when his thoughts multiplied and strengthened, he was able to express himself. There has never been a writer who came nearer to giving adequate verbal expression to the subtlest turns of consciousness, the flitting shadows and half-conceived ideas and purposes which count for so much in the life of the mind--which determine action, in deed, although they could not be rationally formulated by a lawyer as a plea of action. His language, it is true, is often at its simplest when the thought is most active. . . . But where the situation allows of it, Shakespeare's wealth of expression is bewildering in its flow and variety. Ideas, metaphors, analogies, illustrations, crowd into his mind, and the pen cannot drive fast enough to give them full expression. He tumbles his jewels out in a heap, and does not spend labour on giving to any of them an elaborate setting. 'His mind and hand went together', but his mind went the faster.

From W. RALEIGH, *Shakespeare* (1907).

The Songs in 'The Tempest'

As to the last two plays we have no difficulty as to date; we have fairly strong evidence that both *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest* were first produced in 1611. The songs therein contained are therefore the final development. Both contain a new kind of action song--set songs so deeply embedded in the text as dialogue that it is unnecessary to stop the action to permit them to be performed, for they are essentially a part of it. Had we possessed no information as to the dates of the two plays, there would even then have been no hesitation in assigning a late date to all the songs of Autolycus and Ariel.

From B. NOBLE, *Shakespeare's Use of Song* (1923).

Shakespeare and 'The Tempest'

Of dramatic action in the stricter sense of the term there is little or none; for the action is throughout, down to its smallest details, planned and ordered by Prospero. He is the magician--one might almost go further and say the playwright--and the other figures are his puppets. This peculiar character of Prospero's has gone far in its unconscious influence towards creating the belief that Prospero is in effect Shakespeare himself, that we can hear in *The Tempest* Shakespeare speaking in his own voice rather than giving speech to a dramatic creation. . . . There is much, certainly, towards the end of the play, to suggest this view and impress it on us; and with due caution, it may be largely accepted. It is based not only on the epilogue; not only on Prospero's announcement of his own purpose to

retire me to my Milan, where
Every third thought shall be my grave;

not only on the earlier passage where he orders Ariel to introduce the masque of goddesses and the dance of nymphs and reapers, with the curious soliloquizing words:

I must
Bestow upon the eyes of this young couple
Some vanity of mine art: it is my promise.
And they expect it from me;

though, indeed, 'my Milan' we must inevitably think of as Stratford, and 'this young couple' as the new generation. Nor is it only in that marvellous passage--the most famous as it is the most magnificent in all Shakespeare if not in all literature beginning 'Our revels now are ended'. . . . Not only in those concluding scenes, but more subtly throughout, Prospero is, as I have suggested, the playwright; controlling, evolving, suspending, varying, interrupting, or resuming the action; the other characters, though alive with the full Shakespearian vitality, being, so far as concerns their action, figures that move at Prospero's manipulation. The dramatist has projected himself bodily into the drama. For once, and for once only, he lets us see him actually at work. It is perhaps this double consciousness--as though we were simultaneously in front watching the play as spectators, and behind seeing it being handled--that makes *The Tempest* not in fact. . . . highly effective on the stage. The illusion or hallucination to which, in seeing a play acted, we are asked to abandon ourselves, has not its full chance. But when we read it, if we read it carefully enough, it brings us nearer than almost anything else to understanding Shakespeare's art. It gets us closer to Shakespeare himself than we are likely to come by other means, whether by building insubstantial fabrics of arbitrary hypothesis, by searching in the plays for theories or obsessions, or by extracting from them revelations about Shakespeare's own experiences.

From J.W. MACKAIL, *The Approach to Shakespeare* (1930).

I believe that *Measure for Measure* and *The Tempest* are Shakespeare's greatest plays of forgiveness.

From R.W. CHAMBERS, *The Jacobean Shakespeare
and 'Measure for Measure'* (1937)

The Tempest was probably his last play--in the sense, at least, that he designed it for his farewell to the stage. The thought which occurs at once to almost every reader of the play, that Prospero resembles Shakespeare himself, can hardly have been absent from the mind of the author. ... In all the work of Shakespeare there is nothing more like himself than those quiet words of parting--'Be cheerful, sir; our revels now are ended'.

From W. RALEIGH, *Shakespeare* (1907).

But as Shakespeare never wholly enters into his characters, as in every case only a part of his personality is contained in them, we cannot regard Prospero as an embodiment or symbolization of Shakespeare merely because his ripeness and serenity of mind may possibly reflect apart of Shakespeare's nature as it was at that time. It is surely an amazing piece of irony that critics seek to discover the greatest humorist the world has ever known precisely in that creation of his genius which is the least gifted with a sense of humour.

From L.L. SCHCCKING, *Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays* (1922)

Yet I cannot believe that there is any allegory, or symbolism, or even 'veiled biography' here. *The Tempest*, like every other Shakespearian or popular Elizabethan drama, stands like a tub on its own bottom, is a story in its Own right and for its own sake; and unless the intention of the author be of no primary importance, and meanings be not derived from the text but imparted to it, this must be only a rather simpler story of his than usual, a sort of glorified fairy-tale on the stage, precious, not indeed because of the structure or situations, but because of the characters, the poetry, and the rich and dreamy spirit which for the most part informs it. That the story is slight is no proof that there is another within or behind it. And Prospero is not Shakespeare any more than (as fewer think) he is James I. . . . Ariel is not genius, or the lawless imagination, craving liberty but kept in servitude; Miranda is not the drama; Caliban, not the vulgar public; Milan, not Stratford; and the enchanted isle, not the stage, or London, or the world. . . . Not only do I think such an interpretation unwarranted by the text and the spirit of the poet, I think it actually troubles and disturbs the artistic effect.

Above all this is true of the characters, especially the mythical ones most eagerly seized upon as symbols-Ariel and Caliban. Where does the beauty or greatness of these creations lie if not in their reality? They are not single abstractions personified, but many-sided conceptions incarnated. They are not spirits such as are to be found in Shelley's verse dramas, but beings more actual and convincing than Miranda and Ferdinand themselves.

From E.E. STOLL, *The Tempest*, P.M.L.A., vol. xviii (1932).

Shakespeare's Last Plays

A comparison naturally suggests itself, between what was perhaps the latest of Shakespeare's completed works, and that early drama which first gave undoubted proof that his

imagination had taken wings. The points of resemblance between *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, their common atmosphere of romance and magic, the beautiful absurdities of their intrigues, their studied contrasts of the grotesque with the delicate, the ethereal with the earthy, the charm of their lyrics, the *verve* of their vulgar comedy--these, of course, are obvious enough; but it is the points of difference which really make the comparison striking. One thing, at any rate, is certain about the wood near Athens--it is full of life. The persons that haunt it--though most of them are hardly more than children, and some of them are fairies, and all of them are too agreeable to be true--are nevertheless substantial creatures, whose loves and jokes and quarrels receive our thorough sympathy; and the air they breathe--the lords and the ladies, no less than the mechanics and the elves--is instinct with an exquisite good-humour, which makes us as happy as the night is long. To turn from Theseus and Titania and Bottom to the Enchanted Island, is to step out of a country lane into a conservatory. The roses and the dandelions have vanished before preposterous cactuses, and fascinating orchids too delicate for the open air; and, in the artificial atmosphere, the gaiety of youth has been replaced by the disillusionment of middle age. Prospero is the central figure of *The Tempest*; and it has often been wildly asserted that he is a portrait of the author--an embodiment of that spirit of wise benevolence which is supposed to have thrown a halo over Shakespeare's later life. But, on closer inspection, the portrait seems to be as imaginary as the original. To an irreverent eye, the ex-Duke of Milan would perhaps appear as an unpleasantly crusty personage, in whom a twelve years' monopoly of the conversation had developed an inordinate propensity for talking. These may have been the sentiments of Ariel, safe at the Bermoothes; but to state them is to risk at least ten years in the knotty entrails of an oak, and it is sufficient to point out, that if Prospero is wise, he is also self-opiniated and sour, that his gravity is often another name for pedantic severity, and that there is no character in the play to whom, during some part of it, he is not studiously disagreeable. But his Milanese countrymen are not even disagreeable; they are simply dull. 'This is the silliest stuff that e'er I heard', remarked Hippolyta of Bottom's amateur theatricals; and one is tempted to wonder what she would have said of the dreary puns and interminable conspiracies of Alonzo, and Gonzalo, and Sebastian, and Antonio, and Adrian, and Francisco, and other shipwrecked noblemen. At all events, there can be little doubt that they would not have had the entree at Athens.

The depth of the gulf between the two plays is, however, best measured by a comparison of Caliban and his masters with Bottom and his companions. The guileless group of English mechanics, whose sports are interrupted by the mischief of Puck, offers a strange contrast to the hideous trio of the jester, the 'drunken butler', and the 'savage and deformed slave', whose designs are thwarted by the magic of Ariel. Bottom was the first of Shakespeare's masterpieces in characterization, Caliban was the last: and what a world of bitterness and horror lies between them!

From LYTTON STRACHEY, *Books and Characters* (1922).

The remaining three plays of the traditional Shakespeare canon exhibit an altered mood, a kindlier and happier view of man's life and character. It is true, as Mr. Lytton Strachey has pointed out, that there are no worse characters anywhere than Iachimo and others, and that these plays are full of hideous crimes. But when he makes this a ground for questioning the 'serenity' of Shakespeare's final outlook, the answer is simple. These last plays end on a new note. The crimes

do not triumph as they do in the tragedies. They fail. And the criminals are forgiven. The final word is no longer mere acquiescence in fate; it is forgiveness, reconciliation, recovery, peace. And the curtain falls now on life, not on death. In the tragedies those for whom we have most cared--Othello, Desdemona, Brutus, Hamlet and Ophelia, Lear and Cordelia--all die at or before the end of the play. Now they all live. If they have died or seemed to die, they are miraculously restored to life. The sins of the stupid--a Cymbeline, a Leontes--are not now irretrievable or repented in vain. The end is atonement: the lost are found, the estranged are reconciled, the quarrelling fathers and daughters, husbands and wives, whose quarrels have made the play, end it by becoming one family again.

From JOHN BAILEY, *Shakespeare* (1929).

PROF. R. SARASWATHI

Paper II - SHAKESPEARE

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

**Q.No. 1 in Unit I is compulsory. Answer TWO questions
from Unit II and TWO questions from Unit III.**

All questions carry equal marks.

Unit - I

- 1. Annotate any FOUR of the following : (4 x 5 = 20)**
- (a) I will from hence forth rather be myself,
Mighty and to be feared, than my condition
Which has been smooth as oil, soft as young down
And therefore lost that title of respect
Which the proud soul never pays but the proud.
- (b) Thy spirit within thee hath been so at war
And thus hath bestirred thee in thy sleep
that beads of sweat have stood upon thy brow
Like bubbles in a late disturbed stream.
- (c) I had rather be a kitten and cry mew
Than one of these same metre balied mongers
I had rather hear a brazen canstick turned
Or a dry wheel grate on the axile tree.
- (d) Rebellion in this land shall lose his sway
Meeting the check of such another day
And this business so fair is done
Let us not leave till all our own be won.
- (e) For he himself is subject to his birth;
He may not as unvalued persons do
Carve for himself; for on his choice depends
The sanity and health of this whole state;

- (f) Get thee to a nunnery. Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself in different honest, but yet I would accuse me of such things as it were better my mother had not borne me.
- (g) ... Diseases desperate grown By desperate appliances are relieved Or not at all.
- (h) Absent thee from felicity a while And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain To tell my story.

UNIT - II

- 2. Bring out the rich relationship between history and comedy in King Henry IV Part I.
- 3. Comment on the unity of King Henry IV Part I.
- 4. Hamlet through out the play is rather an instrument than an agent. Discuss.
- 5. Comment on the role of soliloquies in Hamlet
- 6. Evaluate Shakespearean tragedy.

UNIT - III

- 7. Discuss Twelfth Night as a romantic comedy.
- 8. Evaluate the Tempest as the culmination of Shakespeare's art.
- 9. Bring out the achievement of Shakespeare in his sonnets.
- 10. Write short notes on any FOUR of the following :
 - (a) Caliban
 - (b) Malvolio.
 - (c) Boy actresses.
 - (d) Supernatural element.
 - (e) Kingship in historical plays.
 - (f) Play within the play in Hamlet.
 - (g) Tragic flaw.
 - (h) Prince Hal.

M.A. English 1st Year DEGREE EXAMINATION, JULY 2005.

Paper – II SHAKESPEARE

Time: Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

Q. No. 1 in Unit I is compulsory.

Answer TWO questions from Unit II and Two question from Unit III.

All questions carry equal marks.

UNIT – I

1. Annotate any FOUR of the following: (4 x 5 = 20)

- a) Therefore, friends,
As far as to the Sepulchre of Christ, -
Whose soldier now, under whose blessed cross
We are impressed and engaged to fight, -
Forthwith a power of English shall we levy.
- b) As the honey of Hybla, my old lad of the castle. And is not a buff jerkin a most
sweet robe of durance.
- c) This is no world
To play with mammets and, I to tilt with lips
We must have bloody noses and crack'd crowns
And pass them current too.
- d) But thought's the slave of life, and life time is fool,
And time, that takes survey of all the world,
Must have a stop.
- e) Let me not think on't. Frailty, thy name is woman! –
A little month, or eve those shoes were old
With which follow'd my poor father's body
Like Niobe, all tears – why she, even she.
- f) What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form
and moving, how express and admirable!
- g) To be, or not to be – that is the question :
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles.

- h) So shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts;
Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters;
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause.

UNIT – II

2. Give an account of the historical background of Henry IV Part – I.
3. Falstaff is entirely the darling of Shakespeare's imagination. Explain.
4. Discuss Hamlet as an existential play.
5. Comment on the supernatural element in Hamlet.
6. Write note on Shakespeare's idea of a man.

UNIT – III

7. Consider Shakespeare's Twelfth Night as a romantic comedy.
8. Comment on the character of Caliban in The Tempest
9. Discuss the theme of love in Shakespeare's Sonnets.
10. Write short notes on any FOUR of the following:
 - a) Chronicle play
 - b) Three unities
 - c) Elizabethan stage
 - d) Shakespeare's treatment of history
 - e) Soliloquies in Hamlet
 - f) Romantic comedy
 - g) The Fool
 - h) The Tragic irony.

M.A. (ENGLISH) (Previous) DEGREE EXAMINATION :: MAY 2006

Paper - II :SHAKESPEARE

Time: Three hours

Maximum : 100 Marks

**Q. No.1, in Unit I is compulsory.
Answer any TWO questions from Unit II and TWO questions from Unit III.
All questions carry equal marks.**

UNIT - I

1. Annotate any FOUR of the following:

(4 x 5 = 20)

- (a) Forth with a power of English shall be levy
Whose arms were moulded in their mother's wombs
To chose there pagans in those holy fields
Over whom acres walked those blessed feet
Which fourteen hundred years ago were nail'd
For our advantage on the bitter cross
- (b) Have you any levers to lift me up again, being down? S blood, I'll not bear mine
own flesh so far afoot again for all the coin in thy father's exchequer.
- (c) He came to be Duke of Lancaster,
To sue his livery and beg his peace.
With tears of innocency and terms of zeal.
- (d) Come bring your luggage nobly on your back
For my part, if a lie may do the grace
I'll gild it with the happiest terms I have.
- (e) Neither a borrower nor a lender be
For loan oft loses both itself and friend
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
- (f) What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! in form
and moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehen-
sion, how like god! The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! And yet to me,
what is the quintessence of dust?
- (g) How dangerous in it that this man goes loose!
Yet must-not we put the strong law on him:
He's loved of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgement but their eyes;
- (h) That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once. How the knave joules it to the
ground, as if it were coin's jaw-bone, that did the first murder! This may be the fate of
a politician, which this an now overreaches;

UNIT - II

2. Discuss the theme of honour in Henry IV Part - I.
3. Bring out the use of history in Henry IV Part - I.
4. Examine the theme of delay in Hamlet.
5. Attempt an essay on the soliloquies in Hamlet.
6. Write a critical note on Shakespeare a tragedy.

UNIT - III

7. Discuss the thematic contents of the sonnets prescribed.
8. Describe Twelfth Night as a romantic comedy.
9. Bring out the elements of mosque in The Tempest.
10. Write short notes on any FOUR of the following:
 - (a) Prince Hal
 - (b) Kingship in Henry IV Part I
 - (c) Prospero
 - (d) Caliban
 - (e) Polonius
 - (f) Sonnet
 - (g) Boy Actresses
 - (h) Super natural element.

(కర్తించి పంపవలెను)

అధ్యాపకులు, విద్యార్థుల సలహాలు, సూచనలు :

అధ్యాపకులు, విద్యార్థులు ఈ స్టడీ మెటీరియల్ కు సంబంధించిన సలహాలు, సూచనలు, ముద్రణ దోషాలు తెలియపరచినచో, పునర్ముద్రణలో తగు చర్యలు తీసుకొనగలము. తెలియపరచవలసిన చిరునామా : డిప్యూటీ డైరెక్టర్, దూరవిద్యా కేంద్రం, ఆచార్య నాగార్జున విశ్వవిద్యాలయం, నాగార్జున నగర్ - 522 510.

Course

M.A. English

Year

1st Year

Paper No. & Title

Paper - II : Shakespeare

(కర్తించి పంపవలెను)

(కర్తించి పంపవలెను)

(కర్తించి పంపవలెను)