

DRAMA AND FICTION

B.A. SPECIAL ENGLISH, THIRD YEAR, PAPER – III

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FOREWORD

Acharya Nagarjuna University, since its establishment in 1976, has been moving ahead in the path of academic excellence, offering a variety of courses and research contributions. The University achieved recognition as one of the eminent universities in the country by gaining A grade from the NAAC 2016. At present Acharya Nagarjuna University is offering educational opportunities at the UG, PG levels to students of 447 affiliated colleges spread over the two districts of Guntur and Prakasam.

The University had started the Centre for Distance Education in 2003-04 with the aim to bring Higher education within the reach of all. The Centre has been extending services to those who cannot join in colleges, cannot afford the exorbitant fees as regular students, and to housewives desirous of pursuing higher studies to study B.A., B.Com, and B.Sc., Courses at the Degree level and M.A., M.Com., M.Sc, M.B.A. and LL.M. courses at the PG level.

For better understanding by students, self-instruction materials have been prepared by eminent and experienced teachers. The lessons have been prepared with care and expertise. However constructive ideas and scholarly suggestions are welcome from students and teachers. Such ideas will be incorporated for the greater efficacy of the distance mode of education. For clarification of doubts and feedback, Weekly classes and contact classes are arranged at UG and PG levels respectively.

I wish the students who pursue higher education through Centre for Distance Education will not only be personally benefited by improving their qualifications but also strive for nation's growth by being a member in Knowledge society. I hope that in the years to come, the Centre for Distance Education will grow in strength by introducing new courses, catering to the needs of people. I congratulate all the Directors, Academic coordinators, Editors, Lesson - Writers, and Academic Counsellors and Non-teaching staff of the Centre who have been extending their services in these endeavours.

Prof. P. Rajasekhar, M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.

Vice-Chancellor (FAC)

Acharya Nagarjuna University

**BA SPECIAL ENGLISH SECOND YEAR, PAPER – III: DRAMA AND FICTION
SYLLABUS**

DETAILED STUDY:

UNIT – I:

(Shakespearean Comedy & Romance)

Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream

Unit – II:

(Classical Tragedy)

Milton: Samson Agonistes

NON-DETAILED STUDY:

UNIT – III: (Modern Drama)

Bernard Shaw: The Apple Cart

UNIT – IV: (Fiction: One Indian and One British novelist)

R.K. Narayan : The Financial Expert

Goldsmith : The Vicar of Wakefield.

ANNOTATIONS:

UNIT – V: Two annotations from each detailed text.

B.A. ENGLISH, THIRD YEAR, DEGREE EXAMINATION, DECEMBER 2010.

Paper III — DRAMA AND FICTION

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

1. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words.

- (a) "Samson Agonistes is a drama of temptation and its conquest" Discuss.
- (b) In "Samson Agonistes" Milton has tried to justify god's ways to men. Do you agree with this view?
- (c) What was the function of the chorus in Greek tragedy? How does Milton make use of the chorus in Samson Agonistes?

2. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words

- (a) Write an essay on the characteristics of A Midsummer Nights Dream.
- (b) Critically examine the central theme of A Midsummer Nights Dream.
- (c) Comment on the aspect of disturbance of normalcy and its restoration in A Midsummer Nights Dream.

3. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words.

- (a) How does the The Apple Cart reveal show as a socialist?
- (b) Discuss the real conflict in "The Apple Cart and point out how successful show has been in bringing out.
- (c) Summarize Bernard Shaw's views on democracy as expressed in "The Apple Cart"

4. Answer any TWO of the following in about 400 words choosing One from each Section.

SECTION A

- (a) Write an essay on the characterisation of Goldsmith's The vicar of wake field
- (b) Bring out the social consciousness in the novel The vicar of wake field

SECTION B

- (a) How R.K. Narayan has succeeded in humanising the character Margayya, despite his lust for money?
- (b) Write an essay on the comic detachment and unpretentious narrative art of Narayan in The financial expert.

Annotate any FOUR of the following choosing any Two from each Section :

SECTION A

- (a) Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook. Did not you tell me I should know the man.
- (b) My Oberon! What visions have I seen me thought I was enamoured of an ass.
- (c) Scratin My Head, Pease – blossom. Where's monsieur cob-web?
- (d) Joy, gentle friends! Joy, and fresh days of love accompany your hearts.

SECTION B

- (e) Dalila, That specious monster, my accomplished snare
I thought it law but from my former act.
- (f) But God, who caused a fountain at thy prayer.
From the dry ground to spring, they thirst to allay after the burnt of battle.
- (g) But chief of all O loss of sight,
Of three I most complain,
Blind among enemies! O worse then chains
- (h) O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,
Irrecoverably dark, total, eclipse
out all hope of day!

B.A. SPL. ENGLISH, THIRD YEAR, DEGREE EXAMINATION, JUNE 2010.
Paper III — DRAMA AND FICTION

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

1. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words. (20)

- (a) Describe 'Samson Agonistes' as a classical tragedy.
- (b) Dalila is indeed an amazing creation by Milton. Do you agree?
- (c) What are the allusions in 'Samson Agonistes' to the social, political and religious conditions of the times?

2. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words. (20)

- (a) Consider 'A Mid Summer Nights' Dream' as a comedy of love-intrigue, fairy magic and force.
- (b) Discuss the role of Theseus, Duke of Athens in 'A Mid summer Night's Dream'.
- (c) Ben Jon son asserted that Shakespeare "was not of an age, but for all time" Discuss.

3. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words. (20)

- (a) Discuss the theme of the play, "The Apple Cart".
- (b) What are the Chief differences between the character of Proteus and Boanerges?
- (c) Write a note on the role of Magnus in "The Apple Cart"

4. Answer any TWO of the following in about 400 words, choosing ONE from each Section. (20)

SECTION A

- (a) Describe briefly how Squire Thornhill succeeded in eloping with Olivia Primrose.
- (b) Discuss briefly the adventures of the Vicar during his stay in prison.

SECTION B

- (a) Comment on the title of the novel "The Financial Expert"
- (b) Make a comparative study of Balu and Margayya.

5. Annotate any FOUR of the following choosing any TWO from each Section. (20)

SECTION A

- (a) Night and silence! Who is here?
Weeds of Athens he doth wear.
- (b) Things base and Vile, holding no quantity
Love can transpose to form and dignity.
- (c) I have a reasonable good ear in music;
Let us have the tongs and the bones

(d) Pyramus is sweet - faced man; a poor man,
One shall see in summer's day.

SECTION B

(a) His might continues in thee not for naught.
Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate thus.

(b) Fair honour that thou does thy God, in trusting;
He will accept thee to defend his cause.
A murderer, a revolter, and a robber!

(c) Blind among enemies, O worse than Chains.
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age!

(d) And though her body die, her fame survives,
A secular bird, ages of lives.

B.A. SPL. ENGLISH, THIRD YEAR, DEGREE EXAMINATION, MAY 2009.
Paper III — DRAMA AND FICTION

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks
(5 × 20 = 100)

1. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words.
- (a) 'Samson Agonistes' is classical in form but Hebraic in spirit'. Discuss.
 - (b) 'Samson Agonistes' has a beginning and an end, but no middle. Elaborate.
 - (c) Write an essay on the autobiographical element in 'Samson Agonistes' and write about Parallelism between Milton and Samson.
2. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words.
- (a) Comment on the part played by Fairies attending their King and Queen Theseus and Hippolyta.
 - (b) Sketch the character of Helena in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream
 - (c) "Shakespearean comedies are not satiric, they are poetic. They are not conservative, they are creative". Discuss with special reference to 'Midsummer Night's Dream'.
3. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words.
- (a) Describe the Magnus's great speech which is the longest of the many long speeches perhaps the most impressive in Shaw's plays.
 - (b) Consider the The Apple Cart as a political play.
 - (c) Comment on the strange innocent relationship between Magnus and Orinthia in The Apple Cart.

4. Answer any TWO of the following in about 400 words, choosing it from Section A or B.

SECTION A

- (a) Write the central theme of 'The Vicar of Wakefield'.
- (b) Attempt an essay on the characterisation of 'The Vicar of Wakefield'.

SECTION B

- (c) Bring out the elements of Irony and Humour in the Novel "The Financial Expert".
- (d) Comment on the story of the rise and fall of Margayya in "The Financial Expert".

5. Annotate any FOUR of the following choosing any TWO from each Section.

SECTION A

- (a) The more I love, the more he hateth me;
None, but your beauty, would that fault were mine.

- (b) What are these lads? Where are these hearts?
- (c) First, rehearse your song by rote to each word a warbling note
- (d) Sweet moon, I thank thee for thy summer
beams;

SECTION B

- (e) Come, come; no time for lamentation now,
Nor much more cause. Samson hath quit
himself,
- (f) I have performed, as reason was obeying,
Not without wonder or delight beheld;
- (g) O lastly over-strong against thyself!
A dreadful way thou-took'st to thy revenge.
- (h) Yet god hath wrought things as incredible
for his people of old; What hinders now?

(DSENG 31)

B.A. SPL. ENGLISH, THIRD YEAR, DEGREE EXAMINATION, DECEMBER 2009.
Paper III — DRAMA AND FICTION

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks

1. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words : (20)
- (a) "Milton's 'Samson Agonists' is classical in structure but Hebraic in spirit". Discuss.
 - (b) Consider Samson as a tragic hero.
 - (c) How will you define Milton's sublimity or Grand style?
2. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words : (20)
- (a) A "Midsummer Night's Dream" is a typical Shakespearean Comedy". Discuss.
 - (b) Discuss the role of Theseus, Duke of Athens in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.
 - (c) Puck's application of a magic love potion makes both Lysander and Demetrius fall in love with Helena. Discuss.
3. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words : (20)
- (a) Discuss the theme of the play, "The Apple Cart".
 - (b) Write a character sketch of Magnus bringing out his greatness as a man.
 - (c) Compare and contrast Jemima and Orinthia.
4. Answer any TWO of the following in about 400 words, choosing ONE from each section (2 × 10 = 20)

SECTION A

- (a) Discuss the character of the Vicar.
- (b) Discuss the story and character of Sophia Primrose.

SECTION B

- (c) Discuss humour and irony in "The Financial Expert".
- (d) Sketch the character of Margayya as a financial expert.

5. Annotate any FOUR of the following choosing any TWO from each section : (20)

SECTION A

- (a) The wisest aunt, telling the saddest tale, sometime for three – foot stool mistaketh me.
- (b) Cupid is a knavish lad,
Thus to make poor females mad.
- (c) Know of your youth, examine well your
blood,
Whether, if you yield to your father's choice.
- (d) Nay, faith, let me not play a woman
I have a beard coming.

SECTION B

- (e) Blind among the enemies, O worse than
chains,
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age !
- (f) Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to men
Unless there be who think not God at all
- (g) O miserable change ! Is this the man,
That invincible Samson, far renowned,
The dread of Israel's foes.
- (h) His might continues in three for naught
Nor shall his wondrous gifts be frustrate
thus.

B.A. SPL. ENGLISH THIRD YEAR , DEGREE EXAMINATION, MAY 2008.
Paper III — DRAMA AND FICTION

Time : Three hours

Maximum : 100 marks
(5x20 = 100)

1. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words.
 - (a) How does Milton Justify the ways of god in Samson.
 - (b) Examine the technical brilliance of Dalila's meeting with Samson.
 - (c) Consider Samson as a Hellenic tragedy restored.

2. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words.
 - (a) Write a note on the character of Bottom.
 - (b) Examine the disturbance of normalcy and its restoration in A Midsummer Night's Dream.
 - (c) Discuss the role of Duke Theseus in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

3. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words.
 - (a) Write a note on the role of Magnus in The Apple Cart.
 - (b) Explain the significance of the little The Apple Cart.
 - (c) Discuss the narrative technique of Shaw in The Apple Cart.

4. Answer any TWO of the following in about 400 words, Choosing ONE from each Section.

SECTION A

- (a) The Vicar as the Chief Character.
- (b) Portrayal of the social life in the novel.

SECTION B

- (a) Comment on the Malgudi ethos in The financial Expert.
- (b) Make a comparative study of Balu and Margayya.

5. Annotate any FOUR of the following choosing any TWO from each Section.

SECTION A

- (a) Lo, she is one of this confederacy
Now I perceive they have conjoined all three,
To fashion this false sport in spite of me.
- (b) If we shadows have offended,
Think but this, and all is mended
That you have but slumbered here
While these visions did appear.
- (c) Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
Whether, if you yield to your father's choice.
- (d) Things base and Vile, holding no quantity,

Love can transpose to form and dignity.

SECTION B

- (e) Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves,
Himself in bonds under philistian yoke.
- (f) O miserable change! Is this the man,
That invincible Samson, far renowned,
The dread of Israel's foes.
- (g) Fair honour that thou does thy god,
in trusting ; He will accept thee to defend his
cause,
A murtherer, a revolter, and a robber!
- (h) Samson hath quit himself
Like Samson, and heroicly hath finished
A life heroic, on his enemies
Fully revenged.

**B.A. ENGLISH, FINAL YEAR, DEGREE EXAMINATION, DECEMBER 2008.
PAPER III — DRAMA AND FICTION**

Time : Three hours

Maximum.: 100 marks
(5 x 20 = 100)

1. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words
 - (a) Write a note on the use of three classical unities in Samson.
 - (b) Examine the theme of regeneration in Samson.
 - (c) Milton tried to justify the ways of God to men in Samson. Explain
2. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words :
 - (a) Consider A Midsummer night's dream a dramatised lyric.
 - (b) Make a comparative study of the characters of Helena and Hermia.
 - (c) Explain the immense variety of human in A Midsummer Night's Dream
3. Answer any ONE of the following in about 400 words :
 - (a) Examine the art of characterisation in Shaw's The Apple Cart.
 - (b) Consider Shaw's The Apple Cart a play of ideas.
 - (c) Discuss the main theme of The Apple Cart.
4. Answer any TWO of the following in about 400 words, choosing ONE from each

Section :

SECTION A

- (a) Main theme of The Vicar of Wakefield.
- (b) The protagonist in The Vicar.

SECTION B

- (a) Discuss the main theme of The Financial Expert.
- (b) Sketch the character of Margayya.

5. Annotate any FOUR of the following choosing any TWO from each Section .

SECTION A

- (a) And ere I take this charm from off her sight,
As I can take it with another herb
I'll make her render up her page to me.
- (b) But O, methinks, how long
This old moon waxes, she lingers my desires
Like to a step-dame, or a dowager
Long withering out a young man's revenue.
- (c) I swear to thee, by Cupid's strongest bow;
By his best arrow with the golden head;
By the simplicity of Venus' doves.
- (d) I was with Hercules and Cadmus once
When, in a word of crete, they bay'd the bear

With hounds of Sparta

SECTION B

- (e) Appoint not heavenly disposition father
Nothing of all these evils hath befallow me
But gently.
- (f) As of a flaw
Select and sacred? Glorious for a while
The Miracle of Mew.
- (g) Acknowledge them from God infliated on me
Justly, yet despair not of his final pardon
Whose ear is even open, and his eye
Gracious to re-admit the suppliant.
- (h) What if, his eyesight (for to Israel's God
Nothing is hard) by miracle restored,
He now be dealing dole among his foes
And over heaps of slaughtered walk his way?

CONTENT

1. William Shakespeare – A Midsummer Night's Dream 3.1.1 – 3.1.18
2. John Milton : Samson Agonistes 3.2.1 – 3.2.16
3. George Bernard Shaw : The Apple Cart 3.3.1 – 3.3.13
4. R.K. Narayan – The Financial Expert 3.4.1 – 3.4.10
5. Oliver Gold Smith – The Vicar of Wakefield 3.5.1 – 3.5.12

Detailed Study

Unit I – Shakespearean Comedy or Romance

Lesson - 3.1

William Shakespeare - A Midsummer Night's Dream

3.1.0 Objectives:

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

- a) Shakespeare as a dramatist
- b) Characteristics of Shakespearean comedy
- c) 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' as a romantic comedy

Structure:

3.1.1 Introduction

3.1.2 Shakespeare as a dramatist

3 Characteristics of Shakespearean comedy

Analysis of the Text

3.1.5 Critical appreciation

3.1.6 Character Sketches

3.1.7 Annotations

3.1.8 Sample questions

3.1.9 Suggested Readings

3.1.1 Introduction:

Shakespeare's life and works:

Though Shakespeare is the greatest dramatist the world has ever produced, we know very little of his life. He was born on or about the 23rd April 1564, at Stratford – on – Avon, Warwickshire. His father was a prosperous businessman, who a little later became the Mayor of the town. At the age of nine Shakespeare was admitted to the local Grammar School, where he "learned a little Latin and less Greek". Financial misfortunes overtook his father, and when he was about eleven he was taken from school so that he might help the family by earning money on his own account. Of the nature of his employment much is not known but he may have also worked for a time as a schoolmaster in the village school. Shakespeare must have done his best to

pull his family through difficult times. In his 19th year he married Anne Hathaway, a woman eight years his senior. This marriage was hasty and ill advised, and appears to have been unhappy. Three children were born to him: Susannah, and the twins, Judith and Hamnet. Roughly about 1587, he left his native town to seek his fortunes in London. Financial difficulties, dissatisfaction with his domestic life, the lure of the city and an innate dramatic tendency might have been some of the contributory causes for his departure. Shakespeare soon turned to the stage and became first an actor and then a playwright. He remained in London for twenty years, working hard, and growing steadily in fame and wealth. The years, which brought prosperity, also brought domestic sorrows. Between 1610 and 1612 he retired to Stratford, where he had bought a house known as New Place. By 1616 his health had broken down completely, and he died on the 23rd April of that year and was buried in the Stratford Church. His house, New Place, has been preserved as a national museum, and Stratford-on-Avon remains till date the most important place of pilgrimage for all lovers of English literature.

Shakespeare's Works:

Shakespeare's dramatic work continued from 1588 to 1612. His non-dramatic poetry, consists of two narrative poems 'Venus and Adonis' and 'Lucrece' and a sequence of 154 sonnets. These sonnets gave rise to endless discussion, and everything about them remains obscure. But it is certain that they contain the finest lyrical poetry of their time.

Shakespeare's activity as a writer for the stage extended over some 24 years, beginning about 1588 and ending about 1612. Shakespeare critics have agreed to subdivide these 24 years into four periods.

1) Apprenticeship (1588-93):

This is the period of apprenticeship and a period of early and experimental works. During this period he was learning the craft of writing dramas. He was revising the old plays, working in collaboration with other known dramatists of his day, and imitating them. To this period belong his first comedies:

- a) Love's Labours Lost, his first independent and original work.
- b) The Two Gentlemen of Verona, a delightful romance
- c) The Comedy of Errors, a farce full of boisterous fun and laughter.
- d) A Midsummer Night's Dream, a fantasy, marking the close of his apprenticeship.
- e) Richard III, his first successful attempt at historical drama, revealing the influence of Marlowe.
- f) Romeo and Juliet, a single, very youthful tragedy.

The plays of this period are immature and reveal superficiality in theme, treatment and characterization. Excessive use of rhymes, puns, conceits, artificiality in treatment and style, excess of wit and imagery are some of the characteristics of his writing during this period.

2) **Period of the great comedies and chronicle plays (1594 – 1600):**

The works of this period are :

Richard II, King John, The Merchant of Venice, Henry IV Part I and II, Henry V, The Taming of the Shrew; The Merry Wives of Windsor, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like It, and Twelfth Night.

During this period Shakespeare leaves behind him the influence of his early masters, his work becomes independent, and reveals immense development in power and technique. He has got mastery and confidence. There is a great growth in the weight of thought. His blank verse has lost its stiffness, and is free and flexible.

3) **Period of the great tragedies, and of the bitter comedies (1601– 08):**

In this period all Shakespeare's powers – his dramatic power, his intellectual power and his power of expression – are at the highest. This is the time of his supreme masterpieces. But some change has come over him and he is depressed. He writes out of the depths of his mind and probes the hidden recesses of the human nature. The plays of the period may be classified as :

- a) The Dark Comedies – All is Well That Ends Well, Measure For Measure, and Troilus and Cressida,
- b) Roman plays – Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, and Coriolanus,
- c) The four great Tragedies – Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear and Othello.

4) **Period of the later comedies or Dramatic Romances:**

During this period we note a sudden and singular change in the temper of Shakespeare's work. It is as if the heavy clouds, which had long hung over the fictitious world of his imagination now roll away, and the sky grows clear towards sunset. In these last plays, the evil is no longer permitted to have its way, but is controlled and conquered by the good. At the same time they show very fully the decline of Shakespeare's dramatic powers. They are often careless in construction and unsatisfactory in characterization.

The plays of this period are: Pericles, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, The Tempest and Henry VIII.

3.1.2 Shakespeare as a Dramatist:

Shakespeare is one of the greatest men of genius the world has ever produced. When we go through his plays we will be surprised about the variety and richness of his plays. But his plays are not original. He either borrowed freely from the old plays or simply re-shaped the older ones. Most of his plays are based upon Plutarch's Lives, Holinshed's Chronicles or other classical translations. Still he is continued to be regarded as the greatest dramatist of all times.

His greatness and superiority lies in the combination of all gifts, which were scattered or isolated in the works of his contemporaries and predecessors. His plays are noted for their diversity. He was always becoming different from what he was before. Ben Jonson said that Shakespeare

was not of an age, but of all ages, not of one country, but of all countries. This statement holds good as Shakespeare's appeal is universal. Though he wrote for Elizabethan stage and audience he is read even to-day throughout the world.

He deals with the passions, joys and sorrows common to all humanity. He has complete command over the complexities of thought and which prompt us to action. His works provide clever psycho-analysis of human nature and are of immense help to man in understanding his own nature and actions.

In the field of characterisation, Shakespeare is supreme and surpasses all his rivals. His characters are all alive, they grow, change and evolve before the eyes of the reader. Shakespeare is entirely objective and impartial. He paints the good and evil, the wicked and virtuous, with the same loving care. His characters have "an unflinching humanity which keeps them within the orbit of our sympathy".

Shakespeare is the greatest humourist in English literature. His laughter is varied, many-sided and all pervasive. It is generally, objective and impartial, kind and sympathetic, refined and noble. He often blends humour skillfully with tragedy and pathos. In his tragedies his humour serves to relieve the tragic tensions. There is the perfect fusion of the dramatic and the lyric in Shakespeare's art. Truth and beauty are excellently blended in his writings.

Even though Shakespeare is great at his work, he has his limitations and defects as well. He wrote hurriedly for the stage. And the signs of hastiness is often apparent in his plays. He designed his plays exclusively for the stage. For their success on the stage he often sacrificed consistency of character. These and some other faults may be conspicuous for one who reads them critically. But they are small things after all in comparison with those paramount qualities which have given him the first place among the world's dramatists.

3.1.3 Characteristics of Shakespearean comedy:

A comedy is generally defined as a dramatic composition with a happy ending. It is also defined as a play aiming at the production of laughter. A Shakespearean comedy is an excellent combination of happy ending and laughter.

A comedy or any drama is of two types – classical and Romantic. The classical tragedy follows the rules laid down by the ancient Greek and Latin masters like Plautus, Terence and Aristophanes. The rules generally followed by the writers of classical drama are i) The observance of the three unities i.e. Unity of Time, Place and Action, ii) The strict separation of the comic and the tragic, iii) Realism, dealing with the everyday life of the common man, iv) Its aim is corrective and satiric. Ben Jonson is the most famous writer of the classical comedy. His comedies mirror the life of his times and he satirises a number of human follies of his time.

A Romantic comedy, on the other hand, does not follow any rules of literary creation. The three unities are not at all followed. There is the free mingling of the tragic and comic elements. Its aim is neither correctiveness nor satire, but innocent good-natured laughter. Human follies are exposed and ridiculed, but the laughter is gentle and sympathetic. The Shakespearean Comedy is a Romantic Comedy. It reflects the national tastes and traditions. In the words of Charlton, "The Shakespearean Comedy is not static, it is poetic. It is not conservative, it is creative. The way of it is that of imagination than that of pure reason. It is an artist's vision, not a critic's exposition".

"Love's Labor Lost", "The Comedy of Errors", "As You Like It", "Twelfth Night", "Measure For Measure", and "A Midsummer Night's Dream" are some of the best comedies of Shakespeare.

Shakespearean comedy is a Romantic comedy as it does not follow the classical rules of drama. It also provides an escape from the unpleasant realities of life. The setting of the play is generally a distant far off land which exists only in the imagination of the dramatist. In this land of romance there will be no activities other than lovemaking. In his comedies, Shakespeare mingles romance and realism. The characterization is realistic. His characters are ordinary human beings and the incidents are what we find in common everyday life. A Shakespearean comedy is musical. Music and dance are its life and soul. In all these comedies laughter is produced either through the fool or a clown. Sometimes the fool is not really a fool, but the wisest character of the play.

A Shakespearean comedy is a love story ending in the marriage of the hero and heroine. In these plays not only the hero and heroine are in love but all are in love. So at the end of the play there will be not one marriage but many marriages. But difficulties come in the way of lovers, misunderstandings arise or parents are hostile. Hence the lovers face many troubles. But everything will be set right by chance at the right moment and all ends well.

The plots of Shakespearean comedies are not original. He did not invent them. He borrowed them from English or foreign sources. There is no logical development of plot in the comedies. Much of the plot is improbable, unconvincing and absurd. Too much depends on chance or fortune. The characters of Shakespearean comedy are kind and humorous. They are all lovable characters. The women characters are charming and they dominate the action. That is why Ruskin remarks that, "Shakespeare has only heroines and no heroes".

Shakespearean comedy has been loved and enjoyed through all these ages. Its charm does not lose its freshness even today. That is why Shakespeare is ranked the greatest dramatist till date.

3.1.4 Analysis of the Text – "A Midsummer Night's Dream":

A Shakespearean play is generally divided into five acts. The first scene or the scenes of the first act form the exposition. In this play the first act is the exposition. In the exposition all the main characters are introduced either directly or indirectly, their relationship is made known and the situation prior to the beginning of the action is also presented.

The first scene of the first act of A Midsummer Night's Dream is laid in the palace of Theseus, the Duke of Athens. Theseus fought with the Amazons victoriously and captured their queen Hippolyta. He fell in love with Hippolyta and is looking forward eagerly to his marriage, which is to take place after four days when the new moon will be in the sky "like a silver bow". He orders Philostrate, master of the revels, to make proper arrangements for their wedding and "stir the Athenian youth to merriment". Philostrate leaves the place to execute his orders.

At that time Egeus comes to the Duke's presence followed by his daughter, Hermia, Lysander and Demetrius. He complains that his daughter Hermia refuses to marry Demetrius as she is in love with Lysander. As the law of the country decrees that a daughter should obey the dictates of her father in the case of marriage, Hermia does not want to obey her father and marry Demetrius. So Egeus requests the Duke to command Hermia to marry Demetrius.

Theseus tries to convince Hermia. Hermia asks the Duke what will befall her if she does not obey her father's orders. The Duke replies that she must be put to death or she has to lead the life of a nun in a convent. He advises her to give up Lysander and obey her father's dictates.

Demetrius appeals to Hermia not to marry Lysander and asks Lysander not to come in their way. But Lysander does not listen to the words of Demetrius. The Duke gives Hermia four days time and asks her to tell him her decision on the day of his marriage with Hippolyta. Lysander tells the Duke that Demetrius was already in love with Helena, daughter of Nedar and so he should marry Helena only. The Duke has also heard about the love story of Demetrius and Helena. He asks Demetrius and Egeus to follow him and leaves the place.

Hermia and Lysander decide to elope and take shelter in the house of a rich aunt of Lysander who lives seven leagues away from Athens. As the place is out of the limits of the state of Athens, the laws of Athens cannot influence Hermia. They have decided to meet in the wood, a league away from the town, the next night.

Helena now arrives there. Helena feels that Hermia has stolen Demetrius from her. She wishes that she were as beautiful as Hermia. Hermia tells Helena that they are planning to elope and after their elopement Helena will be able to attract Demetrius. She wants to tell Demetrius of Hermia's plans to get his favour.

The second scene shifts to the house of Peter Quince, the carpenter. Quince, Snug, a joiner, Bottom, a weaver, Flute, a bellows mender, Snout, a tinker, and Starveling, a tailor gather there to plan a play to be staged on the night of Theseus' marriage. Quince suggests that they are going to play the tragedy of the cruel death of Pyramus and Thisbe. Bottom is given the part of Pyramus, Francis Flute is given the part of Thisbe, the lady whom Pyramus loves, and Snug has to play the part of the lion. Bottom comes forward to play the parts of Thisbe and the lion also. It is decided that they should meet in the wood, a mile from the town the next day at night to rehearse their parts unseen by anybody.

The second act commences in the wood near Athens. To this wood only Hermia and Lysander come on their way to his aunt's house. Demetrius also is going to come to this wood in pursuit of Hermia, followed by Helena. Bottom and other Athenians also have planned to reach this wood to rehearse their play intended to be enacted on the wedding day of Theseus and Hippolyta.

As it is night time, it is the proper time for the appearance of the fairies. King Oberon and his followers enter from one side of the forest and Queen Titania and her attendants enter from the other side of the forest. There has been a quarrel between the king and the queen over a stolen boy. The queen made the boy her boy – servant. Theseus wants to get the boy as his servant. The queen refuses the orders of the king. Oberon wants to drop the love juice of a magical flower into the eyes of Titania when she falls asleep, which will make her fall in love with the creature she sees first on waking. Oberon plans to see that her eyes fall on a lion, or a bear, or a wolf. He can remove the power of the love-juice with the juice of another herb but only after she offers the page-boy to him. He asks Puck to fetch the flower as soon as possible.

Meanwhile Demetrius arrives there followed by Helena. Demetrius scolds Helena for following him. But Helena declares her love for Demetrius and vows to follow him. Demetrius rejects her love and departs followed by Helena. Oberon overhears their conversation and decides to help Helena. Puck returns with the flower. Oberon gives a part of the flower to Puck and asks

him to find out an Athenian youth followed by a sweet Athenian lady and use this love juice on the youth so that he will fall in love with the lady who follows him. He leaves the place in search of Titania.

In the other part of the same wood Titania is seen dancing and merry-making. She is tired and goes to sleep. Oberon enters and squeezes the love juice in the eyes of Titania and departs. Lysander and Hermia arrive there as they strayed from the right path to his aunt's house. They are tired and decide to sleep in the forest. As Hermia is modest and virtuous, she makes Lysander sleep at a distance from her.

As soon as they are asleep, Puck comes there and taking Lysander to be Demetrius, squeezes the love-juice into his eyes, hoping that he will see Hermia when he awakes and fall in love with her.

Demetrius and Helena come there running. Helena is already tired and gives up the chase of Demetrius. She sees the sleeping Lysander, fears that he has been hurt and awakens him. As a result of the power of the love-juice he falls in love with Helena as she is the first person he sees on opening his eyes. She cannot believe his words and chides him for making a mockery of her. Helena leaves and Lysander follows her. When Hermia awakes she does not find Lysander and goes in search of him.

In the third act, Bottom and other artisans arrive there for the rehearsals of the play. Very near to this spot Titania lies asleep. Puck arrives and decides to stay and listen to the dialogues of these actors. Bottom speaks his part and leaves the stage, followed by Puck. The mischievous Puck puts an ass' head on Bottom. The other actors finding Bottom's transformation quit the place in terror. Bottom does not know what has happened to him. Titania awakes and falls in love with Bottom since the first thing she sees is Bottom. Bottom appears to be an angel for her. She calls her fairy attendants Pease Blossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustard Seed and tells them to entertain Bottom.

Puck now informs Oberon that Titania has fallen in love with a monster. He also informs Oberon that he has applied love-juice to the eyes of the Athenian. At this time, Demetrius and Hermia arrive. Puck informs Oberon that the Athenian is not the same man in whose eyes he has dropped the love-juice. Hermia thinks that Demetrius has killed Lysander and asks him to kill her too. Though Demetrius assures her that he has not killed Lysander, she does not believe his words. She tells him that she has always hated him and she will not see his face in future. She departs saying that she will never see him again. Demetrius lies there and falls asleep.

As Oberon understands that Puck has committed a mistake, he orders Puck to fetch Helena there. He will squeeze the love-juice into the eyes of Demetrius and on waking, he may fall in love with Helena on seeing her first.

Lysander and Helena now arrive. Lysander tries to convince Helena that he had no judgement when he loved Hermia. But Helena is not convinced by his words. Demetrius awakes and expresses his passionate love for her. Thus Lysander and Demetrius express their love toward Helena, but Helena refuses to believe both of them.

Hermia, too, arrives there. Lysander informs Hermia that he is no longer in love with her but is in love with Helena. Hermia rebukes Helena for having stolen Lysander from her. Helena

prepares to leave them in anger. Both Lysander and Demetrius try to stop her. Angry words are exchanged between them and they are ready for a duel.

On the instruction of Oberon, Puck makes Lysander and Demetrius exhausted and they lie down to sleep. Hermia and Helena also come there weary and they too fall asleep. Puck then squeezes the juice into Lysander's eyes.

Titania and Bottom soon arrive and Oberon is also present there but unseen. Oberon feels pity for his queen. As she has given the page-boy to him, Oberon intends to remove the spell from his queen's eyes. He asks Puck to remove the ass-head from Bottom's shoulders. When she awakes, Titania realizes how foolish she is to fall in love with an ass. Titania and Oberon go together to attend the wedding festivities of the Duke.

The Duke, Hippolyta and Egeus enter the forest for a hunt. Egeus finds four people sleeping on the ground and recognizes his daughter, Hermia. The Duke asks his huntsmen to wake them up. Demetrius tells the Duke that he is no longer in love with Hermia. Theseus orders Egeus that her daughter should be allowed to marry the man of her choice and Helena should marry Demetrius.

Bottom now awakens. The ass head has been removed and he goes in search of his friends. All the actors meet in the house of Peter Quince except Bottom. Snug now arrives and informs them that the Duke has been married along with two other lords and ladies. Their play is allowed to be staged before the royal audience. Now Bottom arrives. They make haste for the staging of the play.

The actual play ends by the end of Act IV, with the three couples having married happily. Act V is merely concerned with the staging of the play by the artisans. The Duke and the Duchess wait for the other couple to witness the entertainments. Theseus selects the play 'Pyramus and Thisbe' to be staged. Quince comes forward and speaks the 'Prologue'. In reading out the 'Prologue' Quince commits mistakes of pronunciation and also the sense conveyed is quite opposite to what is intended.

When the play begins Pyramus appears and expresses his love of Thisbe through the hole in the wall. They two agree to meet that moonlit night by the tomb of 'Ninus'. The wall part is over, so he goes away. The lion now enters and assures the ladies that he is not a lion at all but Snug, the joiner. He asks them not to be frightened of his roar. Then the Moon speaks and says that the lantern in his hand is the Moon, and he is the man in the Moon with his bush and his dog.

This be arrives at Ninus' tomb. The lion roars and Thisbe runs off-dropping her mantle. The lion tears Thisbe's mantle and exits. Pyramus now arrives, finds the blood-stained mantle and thinks that she has been killed by the lion. He stabs himself to death. Thisbe then returns and kills herself. In the end, a rustic dance is presented and the lovers retire to bed. The fairies arrive to bless the newly married young men and women. The play ends with the 'Epilogue' spoken by Puck.

3.1.5 Critical Appreciation:

Shakespeare wrote his plays for the Elizabethan stage but not for publication. These plays were printed at a much later date. So, it will be much difficult to determine the exact date of the composition of the play. In the case of A Midsummer Night's Dream, it is generally believed that it was composed round the year 1594.

It is a well-known fact that Shakespeare did not invent his own plots, but borrowed from various sources. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is an exception. It is one of the most original plays of Shakespeare. It is an original and beautiful play with a novel machinery, with an enchanting brightness. This perfect fantasy, says Schelling, presents "the ideals of the court drama, but with the infusion of a delicate fancy in the handling of fairy-lore and spirit of their poetry that transformed a drama of occasional and passing interest into an exquisite dramatic poem of permanent artistic worth".

Roman mythology, medieval romance and folk-lore provide the main ingredients in the play. Dowden says "This play is a strange and beautiful web, woven delicately by a youthful poet's fancy. What is perhaps most remarkable about the play is the harmonious blending in it of widely different elements".

Title of the Play:

Shakespeare has a queer habit of giving peculiar titles to his comedies. They are revealing enough. They condense the basic theme of the play and the attitude of the dramatist. The present title *A Midsummer Night's Dream* suggests two things: (i) It is rich in *Midsummer Night's* association, (ii) It has a dream like quality.

The *Midsummer* day falls on June 24th and the dream in the play takes place on April 30th. Shakespeare is not unaware of this. June 24th marks the festival of St. John. It is a day of rejoicing and merry-making. Popular belief speaks of the activity of the fairies and spirits on that day. There is also, as Drake argues, the suggestion of *midsummer* madness. This madness is one aspect of the intense poetic imagination embodied in the play. There is something in the play, which is specially connected with the traditional observances of the day. Some critics think that the play may have been written for a performance on that day.

The play certainly has a dream-like nature. The Epilogue emphasizes the dream-like quality of the play. As Gervinus remarks "it expresses satisfaction if the spectator will regard the piece as a dream". Titania speaks of her adventures as a vision. Oberon desires that all shall regard the matter as a dream. All the rest awake from the sleep and the events leave upon them the impression of a dream. Theseus regards the stories of lovers as nothing else than dream and fantasy. In a comedy of this type, we must accept incongruities and inconsistencies.

At the end of the play Puck asks his audience to think in the following manner. The actions of the principal characters during the greater part of the play are performed under the influence of illusion and enchantment. So the characters themselves are no more responsible for their own thoughts.

Moonlight also has an elusive and dream-like nature. The play abounds in the references to it. A dream belongs to the mysterious world, which is the opposite of daylight. It makes moon and dream virtually identical. *Midsummer* is a time when young people roam in the woods and wild places. Fancy, dream and fairies justify the title of the play. In short, the title of the play is apt and suggestive.

The Theme of the Play:

A Midsummer Night's Dream is basically a story of romantic love. Many characters are in love. It refuses to go hand in hand with reason. A critical study of love is the theme of the play. Here we have three different types of love.

- (i) The love stories of Lysander-Hermia, Demetrius and Helena
- (ii) The love story of Theseus and Hippolyta
- (iii) Love of Titania for Bottom with the head of an ass which is a parody.

Ernest Schanzer rightly points out that love madness is the central theme of the play. This madness is to be found in the story of four lovers Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia and Helena. This play has both a prologue and an epilogue. The prologue is found in Helena's soliloquy.

"Love looks not with the eyes, but with mind. And therefore is winged Cupid painted blind". The victim is intellectually aware of the illusion but is unable to resist it. It is a cruel and capricious love. It begets madness and confusion. Under love's cruel driving Helena betrays Hermia and Lysander. Demetrius and Lysander try to kill each other. The victims are ironically under the delusion that they are following reason in their choice. The love-juice which has brought all this about is a symbol of man's inconstancy and blindness.

All this is in great contrast to the serene and quiet love of Theseus and Hippolyta. Theseus has a broad outlook towards the lovers Lysander, Demetrius, Hermia and Helena. He understands the vagaries and tribulations of passion. He wants them to reconsider their decisions. He has had his own excitements earlier. He has involved himself in dubious adventures with Aegles, Aridene and Antipa. But now he is normal. He balances emotion with reason. He wooed Hippolyta with his sword. So he represents an anti-romantic, sane and balanced attitude of love. This represents the love of middle age which has no ups and downs. The love story of Titania and Bottom is a parody. This love is only due to the whims of Oberon. In his use of love juice he merely usurps the function of Cupid. He uses his power towards beneficent as well as selfish ends.

Chambers observes that the magical love-in-idleness represents symbolically the familiar working of actual love-in-idleness in the human heart. Shakespeare reduces love-madness to absurdity in the Bottom-Titania love scenes. Here the infatuation shows the full absurdity of the kind of the love, which engenders in the imagination only, uncorrected by judgment and the senses.

So the romantic element in A Midsummer Night's Dream is balanced by the anti-romantic element but is not destroyed by it. They complement each other. The play moves from light to darkness and back to light again. The disturbances of the night are over and can be forgotten. The play ends with the reappearance of fairies.

3.1.6 Character Sketches:

1) Helena and Hermia:

Hermia is an emotional character madly in love with Lysander. She is bold. Theseus persuades Hermia to accept her father's wish. But she rejects it and agrees to live like a barren sister. Before she saw Lysander, Athens appeared like paradise. Her love has such 'graces' that the paradise has begun appearing like hell.

There appears to be little to choose between Hermia and Helena in respect of beauty. They are 'two lovely berries moulded on one stem'. Hermia is stout, dark and quick of tongue. She is more alive than Helena. Helena is fair and tall. Hermia was a vixen when she was in school. She can be fierce if the situation demands. She accuses Helena vehemently in these words: "You juggler! You canker-blossom!" Conscious of her shortness, she retaliates against Helena by addressing her as "Thou painted Maypole". But these fits of anger are only occasional. Hudson observes: "Hermia, besides her heaviness of nature, is the more kind and more free in temper and shrewish in speech". Helena is of a milder and softer disposition with less confidence in herself. Hermia can be friendly with anyone. She made Lysander divulge the plan to Helena. She is unable to understand the inconsistency of men. To some extent, Helena is the more well developed character in the play.

The character of Helena bears so many points of resemblance to that of Hermia. Many critics say that no distinction can be made between them either for their outward appearance. A closer study reveals in Helena a more timid and gentler disposition. Helena loves Demetrius deeply. The love has made her blind and senseless. She is unable to understand human beings properly and correctly. So she discloses Lysander's plan to Demetrius. Even at the "expense of pain" she pines for his company.

Helena is weak and sentimental. She has no consideration for her friend Hermia. She lacks judgement and strong will. She is whimsical, capricious and fanciful. She followed Demetrius to the wood without any plan or idea. She lacks faith in her self. She fears to be left alone in the dark and bemoans her own insufficiency. There is no trace of hatred or ill-will in her. Her passionate love for Demetrius made Oberon take interest in human affairs. Sweet, humble and modest, Helena is loyal to her heart. Inherently good, she clings to her ideas. Swayed by misfortunes she has learnt not to trust fortune. When Demetrius is finally restored to her she says "I found Demetrius like a jewel". Drake says that "the characters of Hermia and Helena are beautifully drawn and finely contrasted".

2) Character of Theseus:

According to Dowden, "the central character of the play is Theseus". Theseus is the Duke of Athens. He is a romantic person. Majestic hero, he has a dignified bearing. He is a soldier and a man of action. He wins Hippolyta with his sword. In times of peace, he loves to hear the music of his hounds. His career has been one of conquest. He is a man of action and can appreciate any service done to him. His love for Hippolyta is a romantic passion. He is certainly not unimaginative but he keeps it well under his control.

He is very courteous. He is one of those that believe that justice must be tempered by mercy. He is a kind of benevolent autocrat. He appreciates a good deed and will not mind the way it is done. Unlike Hippolyta to whom the entertainment of his guests is a duty, he enjoys and encourages the honest attempt of imperfect actors. He is not interested in his house only to make them have greater interest in the presentation of plays.

Theseus has a kingly and generous disposition. He has a strong desire to make everyone happy in his kingdom. He proclaims a fortnight's holiday on the occasion of his marriage. He endeavours to persuade Hermia to submit to her father's will. Being himself a ruler, he naturally

upholds Athenian law. When Demetrius expresses his determination to be true to his first love, the Duke unhesitatingly overrides the will of Egeus. During the interlude he apologizes for the imperfections of the actors.

Theseus is also the hero of many adventures. When the Amazons made inroads into Attica, he fought against them aided by Hercules and others. It is in this encounter that he wins the love of Hippolyta. It has often been said that in the character of Theseus, Shakespeare has depicted an Athenian monarch of a pagan age. In reality he had painted the picture of contemporary English hunting squire.

3) Lysander and Demetrius:

Lysander is the lover of Hermia. He is a worthy gentleman of high rank and good fortune. Before the play opens, he has impressed his image firmly upon Hermia's fancy. Being secure in love he treats his future father-in-law with some scorn. He lacks shrewdness and tact. So instead of pleading with Hermia's father for her hand, he says proudly to Demetrius: "You have her father's love, Demetrius let me have Hermia's. Do you marry him?" Even Theseus admits that Lysander is disqualified from marrying Hermia as he is not the man chosen by her father.

Lysander is very alert. With his acute intelligence and ready wit, he hits upon the idea of running away with Hermia to the wood so that they can be out of bounds of the Athenian law. He would have executed his plan successfully if only Oberon and Puck were not there to complicate matters. He is gentle and well intentioned. Sympathetic towards others he gave out the secret plan to Helena. He has a sense of chivalry which does not desert him even under the spell of love juice.

Lysander is resourceful. He is a robust optimist. He is the type of lover who is true to his cherished convictions. He begins first to speak unpleasantly about Demetrius. This leads to the proposed duel. Lysander is one of those foolish young men who can be civilized only by Hermia.

Demetrius is unsteady and changeable by nature. He could transfer his affections from Helena to Hermia overnight without the slightest pang of conscience. This information reaches even Theseus. Demetrius, unable to win the heart of Hermia, wants to marry her by securing the consent of her father. He wags the old law stick by him. He is emotional and sentimental. He is ready even to kill Lysander to get rid of a powerful rival.

With no sense of chivalry in him, he treats Helena badly in the wood. He forgets that it is Helena who has given him the information. He tries to behave like a malicious villain and an obstacle in the lives of Hermia and Lysander. Such behavior makes one feel that he does not deserve Helena.

Contrasting Lysander and Demetrius, Johnson writes that "there is nothing special about their characters. In them the lines of individuality are exceedingly faint. Demetrius is far more short-tempered and spiteful. Lysander is somewhat more open and candid".

Demetrius differs from Lysander only in one respect. He is inconstant. The supernatural power of the fairies is needed to restore him to his "natural taste". Having returned to his first love, he remembers his breach of faith only as youthful playfulness. But for Helena's pleadings with Demetrius, Oberon would not have interfered in human affairs. In a way Demetrius brings on the

dream. As Charlton remarks: "It is one of the triumphs of Shakespeare's dramatic art that the entire complication centres round a character who appears not to be good".

4) **Bottom and his friends:**

Shakespeare has introduced a number of Athenian workmen in the play. In reality, they are common English workmen carrying on various trades. These are the source of much hilarious comedy in the play. They add to its entertainment value. They have no knowledge of dramatic art. Yet they stage the comical tragedy of 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. They leave nothing to imagination. Thus, the lion explains that he is no lion. A man with a plaster is used to represent a wall.

Bottom is the reel of thread used by weavers. Shakespeare took this technical name and called the weaver Bottom. He is the only fully developed character presented by the playwright. He is the most forward, self-confident and interesting of all these Athenians. For self-assurance, audacity and conceit, he has no equal. Though conceited he is good at heart.

From the very commencement, although Quince is nominally the stage manager, Bottom takes upon himself the whole management of the play. His self-confidence is such that he likes to act all the parts himself from the greatest to the least. But he would prefer the tyrant's part: "I could play Eracles rarely". Bottom has a queer way of using words. He uses "generally" "individually" or "severally". This is common to illiterate clowns of Shakespeare's early plays. This is now called Malapropism.

He is a born leader. He has great abilities for work. His companions admire and worship him. He is a Gulliver before these Lilliputians. Even in a better environment, he exhibits the same kind of behaviour and this makes him an ass. He orders his companions about "Call forth your actors by Scroll". His final command is "Take pains, be perfect". But all the while Quince proceeds in a subtle way and persuades him to take over the role of Pyramus. This is done through flattery and all tyrants love flattery.

Nothing daunts him. He is not in the least awed by the imposing audience of courtiers in Duke's palace. He boldly contradicts the Duke twice. He accommodates himself readily to his novel position amongst the fairies. Even his dream, he proposes to turn to practical account: "I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream".

Bottom's troupe consists of the mechanics. They have technical names. Quince is Quoins meaning the wedge-shaped blocks of wood employed for building. So, he is a carpenter here. Snout is the nozzle suggesting the tinker's trade. Snug means tight or compact and so he is therefore a joiner. Flute repairs the fluted church-organs and domestic bellows. Only the name Starveling has nothing to do with such professions. It implies the proverbial leanness of the tailors. About the tailors it is said that it takes nine to take one man.

Quince, Snug, Flute and Starveling evoke our laughter and amuse us by their ignorance. They are labourers who have no intellectual training. Quince is the poet in the play. The prologues suggested by Bottom are to be composed by him. One man has the ideas and the other man has the art. The verses of Quince do not represent the rustic manner. He is shy and is of a retiring disposition. He fails to recite the prologue well. Snout is an imitation of Bottom. Starveling is a nervous, weak tailor who creeps out of the stage even before the stage direction comes.

3.1.7 Important Annotations:

- 1) "One that composed your beauties; yea, and one
To whom you are but as form in wax
By him imprinted, and with in his power
To leave the figure or disfigure it".

These lines are taken from the Romantic comedy A Midsummer Night's Dream written by William Shakespeare.

Egeus makes a complaint with the Duke that his daughter, Hermia has refused to marry Demetrius, who is his choice as she is in love with Lysander. So he requests the Duke to instruct his daughter to obey his orders as per the laws of their country.

Theseus advises Hermia that she should treat her father as a God. He has given her beauty as if he has imprinted her form on wax. He has the power of life and death over her. He may destroy the figure he has created or he may allow it to live.

- 2) "Thrice blessed they that master so their blood,
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage;
But either happy in the rose distilled
Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness"

These lines are taken from the Romantic Comedy A Midsummer Night's Dream written by William Shakespeare.

Theseus informs Hermia that if she disobeys her father, she has to remain for ever as a nun in a convent or will be put to death according to Athenian law. He further says that the girls who are able to control their natural desires are really happy. But as far as earthly happiness is concerned, those who marry are more happy than those who live and die unmarried.

- 3) "If then true lovers have been ever crossed,
It stands as an edict in destiny:
Then let us teach our trial patience,
Because it is a customary cross
As due to love as thoughts, and dreams, and sighs,
Wishes, and tears, poor family's followers".

These lines are taken from the Romantic comedy A Midsummer Night's Dream written by William Shakespeare.

Lysander mentions various obstacles in the path of love. Then Hermia says if true lovers have always been defeated, it means that the misfortunes of lovers are the decree of destiny. She proposes that they should endure their misfortune patiently because it is an inevitable accompaniment of love. The misfortune is as much part of love as fancies, dreams, sighs and tears, which always attend on love.

4. "Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind.
And therefore is wing'd cupid painted blind;
Nor hath love's mind of any judgment taste
Wings and no eyes, figure unheedy haste.

These lines are taken from the romantic comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* written by William Shakespeare.

These are the feelings of Helena. Though she is as fair as Hermia, Demetrius does not love her. Love is an irrational thing and lovers tend to exaggerate their beloved's virtues. Lovers do not possess the power of critical judgement when they fall recklessly in love. This is symbolically represented as Cupid, the god of Love, who is blind. A lover is always led by his fancies and emotions.

5. "But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy free."

These lines are taken from the Romantic comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* written by William Shakespeare.

Oberon, the king of the fairies describes his vision to Puck. In his vision he saw Cupid, the god of love, flying through the air and aiming his arrow at a beautiful virgin seated on the throne in a western country. He shot the arrow from his bow with such a force that it would have pierced a hundred hearts. But the fiery arrow of Cupid was cooled by the chaste beams of the watery moon. The virgin queen at whom the arrow was aimed was left unaffected and she remained free of love as before.

6. "Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
It fell upon a little western flower,
Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound
And maidens call it love-in-idle

These lines are taken from the romantic comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* written by William Shakespeare.

Oberon informed Puck that he had observed the place where Cupid's arrow fell. It fell upon a little western flower, which was milk white before, but became purple after it was hit by Cupid's arrow of love. Maidens call the flower love-in-idleness. The juice of the flower has a magical power. If it is dropped in the eyes of a sleeping person, he or she certainly fall in love with the person first seen after he or she will awakes. This flower plays an important part in arousing of mirth in the play.

7. "Love takes the meaning in love's conference.

I mean, that my heart unto yours is knit,
So that but one heart we can make of it:
Two bosoms interchained with an oath;"

These lines are taken from the Romantic comedy A Midsummer Night's Dream written by William Shakespeare.

Lysander and Hermia enter the forest on their way to the house of Lysander's aunt. He has forgotten the way. They want to take rest in the forest. Hermia asks Lysander to lie at some distance. Then Lysander says that when lovers talk, each understands the other's thoughts completely. His heart is so united to Hermia's that their hearts may be said to be one. As their hearts are bound together and there is but one love between them, he can sleep by her side.

8. "How came her eyes so bright? Not with salt tears:

If so, my eyes are oftener wash'd than hers."

These lines are taken from the Romantic comedy A Midsummer Night's Dream written by William Shakespeare.

Demetrius enters the forest with Helena chasing him. Demetrius asks her not to follow him. He leaves the place asking her to stay there at her own risk. Then she says that the more she prays to him, the less he loves her. Hermia is very happy with her sweet and charming eyes. How are her eyes so beautiful? They are beautiful not certainly by shedding salt tears. If it is the reason her eyes are washed with tears more often than Hermia's.

9 "Who will not change a raven for a dove?

The will of man is by his reason sway'd,
And reason says you are the worthier maid.

Things growing are not ripe until their season.

These lines are taken from the Romantic comedy A Midsummer Night's Dream written by William Shakespeare.

Lysander begins to express his love to Helena under the influence of love juice. Helena does not understand this and asks him not to speak like that as Hermia still loves him. But Lysander says that he repents for the time he has spent with Hermia. Now he loves only Helena and not Hermia. Who would not exchange a raven for a dove? Man's will is guided by his reason and reason tells him that Helena is a better maiden than Hermia. Things that are growing do not attain full maturity till their proper season for such maturity.

- 10 "We, Hermia, like two artificial gods
Have with our needles created both one flower"

These lines are taken from the Romantic comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* written by William Shakespeare.

Lysander praises the beauty of Helena and asks Hermia not to follow him as he hates her. Hermia does not believe Lysander's words. Helena feels that Demetrius, Lysander and Hermia have conspired and are mocking at her. Then she asks Hermia whether she has forgotten their friendship and love. Like two skilled Gods, they have set together, both have sewen one flower. They have been like different parts of one body. And then Hermia has broken the bonds of friendship and joined those young men to mock at her.

11. "Lovers and madmen have such setting brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends
The lunatic, the lover and the poet,
Are of imagination all compact".

These lines are taken from the Romantic Comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* written by William Shakespeare.

In the beginning of the final act Hippolyta says that what these lovers say is very strange. To that Theseus replies that lovers and madmen have such excitable brains and imagination that they can imagine more than cool reason can ever understand. The madman, the lover and the poet are wholly made up of imagination.

12. "The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name"

These lines are taken from the Romantic Comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* written by William Shakespeare.

In these lines Theseus says that the madman, the lover and the poet have imagination. Under the influence of imagination the poet looks upon all things in heaven and earth with his prophetic vision. With the help of his creative faculty he gives a bodily shape to things that do not exist in reality and presents them as if they are concrete things.

- 13 . "Where I have come, great clerks have purposed
To greet me with premeditated welcomes;
Where I have seen them, shiver and look pale
Make periods in the midst of sentences".

These lines are taken from the Romantic Comedy *A Midsummer Night's Dream* written by William Shakespeare.

When Theseus asks Philostrate about the arrangements for entertainment, Philostrate gives a list of entertainments. Theseus asks about the play *Pyramus and Thisbe*. Philostrate replies that it is a short play and there is not one appropriate word and not one suitable player. The players are all hard-working mechanics in Athens. For this Theseus says that they should be kinder in giving them thanks even when they do not deserve them. He has visited so many places where great scholars tried to welcome him with scholarly well-prepared speeches. But at that time he has seen them tremble and look pale, stop in the middle of the sentences.

3.1.8 Sample Questions:

- 1) *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a typical Elizabethan Comedy – Elaborate.
- 2) Sketch the character of Hermia.
- 3) Compare and contrast the characters of Hermia and Helena.
- 4) How do you interpret the title *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
- 5) Write an essay on the supernatural element in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
- 6) Comment on the theme of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
- 7) Sketch the character of Theseus
- 8) Compare and contrast the characters of Lysander and Demetrius
- 9) Write an essay on the part played by Bottom and his friends in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

3.1.9 Suggested Readings:

1. A.W. Verity, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
2. Richard Dutton (ed.), *New Casebook Series: A Midsummer Night's Dream - Contemporary Critical Essays*.
3. Dorothea Kehler (ed.), *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Critical Essays*.
4. C.L. Barber, *May Games & Metamorphosis on A Midsummer Night*.
5. Michael Andrews Cameron. *Titania on Enforced Chastity: Notes & Queries*.

Detailed Study

Unit II – Classical Tragedy

Lesson - 3.2

John Milton : Samson Agonistes

3.2.0 Objectives:

This lesson will acquaint you with

- a) the essential characteristics of the Age of Milton.
- b) the life and works of the Poet.
- c) epic features in Samson Agonistes.
- d) features of classical tragedy in Samson Agonistes
- e) Milton's contribution to English literature.

Structure:

- 3.2.1 The Age of Milton
- 3.2.2 The Poet: His life and works
- 3.2.3 The Epic or Heroic Poem
- 3.2.4 The Biblical Source
- 3.2.5 Analysis of the Text
- 3.2.6 "Samson Agonistes" as a Classical Tragedy
- 3.2.7 Critical Evaluation
- 3.2.8 Glossary
- 3.2.10 Character Sketches
- 3.2.11 Conclusion
- 3.2.12 Sample Annotated Passages
- 3.2.13 Sample Questions
- 3.2.14 Suggested Reading

3.2.1 The Age of Milton:

The first half of the seventeenth century is known as the Age of Milton, as Milton is the major literary figure of the age. It is also known as the Puritan Age as Puritanism was the dominant moral, social and political force during the period. It was an age of transition which saw the decline

of the impetus of Renaissance, the dwindling of the Elizabethan exuberance and optimism. The general atmosphere was one of apprehension, disillusionment, insecurity and restlessness. The later years of Elizabeth's reign was a period of political crisis. There were several attempts to assassinate her. Moreover she had no legal heir to succeed her to the throne. James Stuart of Scotland (James I) who succeeded her was regarded as an alien. He further distanced himself from the English people due to his ignorance of the English tongue, courtly traditions and culture and his immoral and lavish living. The increasing frivolousness and the licentiousness of the wealthy classes, the persecution of religious forces that opposed the ecclesiastical authority, added to the unrest; Charles I who succeeded James I further fuelled the growing animosity of the people against the monarchy, by his monstrous encroachments upon the rights of the Commons and the constitutional rights of the English people.

It was during this period that Puritanism emerged and grew to be the great controlling moral, social and political force. The Puritans, who were a sect of radical Protestants, advocated strict views regarding life and conduct. They forcefully opposed the remnant influence of Popery in the Anglican Church. They held the monarchy responsible for the moral decline of the English society and the misery of the common people. The Puritans with their firm insistence on purity of life based on Christian laws and precepts, their democratic political ideals, their staunch belief in the supremacy of God as ruler or rulers, their respect for the prerogatives of individual conscience, and their intolerance of monarchy became a popular alternative for the English peoples who regarded them as the great custodian and defender of their liberties which were at stake.

The growing unrest and insecurity resulted in the execution of Charles I and the formation of the Commonwealth under the leadership of the Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell in 1649. However their religious fanaticism, destruction of humane culture and repressive measures led to a sweeping reaction against Puritanism ending in its collapse and the restoration of monarchy in 1659.

3.2.2 The Poet: His life and Works:

John Milton was born on December 9th, 1608 in Bread Street, London. He studied at Christ College, Cambridge where he gained a reputation for his remarkable classical learning, his purity of life and his firm devotion to moral principles. In 1619 he wrote his first poems "At a Solemn Music" and "Nativity Hymn". From Cambridge, Milton withdrew to Horton to prepare himself for the noble vocation of a poet, his "high calling" being to "indicate God's ways to men". It was at Horton that he produced his best lyric poetry "L'Allegro", "Il Penseroso", "Comus" and "Lycidas".

With the outbreak of the Revolution in England, Milton, an enthusiast for the cause of Parliament and Puritanism, damaged his eyesight writing pamphlets during the great civil war, which ended in the execution of Charles I and the establishment of the Commonwealth in 1649. Milton was appointed Latin Secretary to the Committee of Foreign Affairs in Cromwell's republican regime. Milton continued writing in defense of the Commonwealth. In 1660 monarchy was restored in England, leading to the execution of Cromwell and many prominent Puritan leaders of the Commonwealth. Milton was spared as he had by then become blind and had also won fame as a poet. He was permitted to live out his life in obscurity. It was during the last period of his life that he completed his masterpieces, "Paradise Lost" (1663), "Paradise Regained" (1666) and "Samson Agonistes" (1667). He died on the 8th of November 1674 and was buried in St. Giles Church, Cripple Gate, London. "On Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty Three", "On His Blindness", "On May Morning" etc. are some of his memorable sonnets.

According to Voltaire, "Milton's poetry is the grandest thing in the English language". Writes John Bailey, "Poetry has been by far our greatest artistic achievement and he (Milton) is by far the greatest poetic artist." Commenting on his classicism, Albert says that "curiously interwrought with the severity of his religious nature, is a strong bent for the classics which is pagan and sensuous. William Hazlitt remarks that "Milton's blank verse is the only blank verse in the language (except Shakespeare's) that deserves the name of verse." Raleigh rightly says that "He left a high road behind him, along which many a tuneful pauper has since limped but before him he found nothing but the jungle and false fires." Tennyson extols Milton as, "the mighty mouthed inventor of harmonies – God gifted organ-voice of England." Mathew Arnold states that "Milton's style is always great. It lifts the low, gives life to the commonplace and dignifies even the vulgar." W.H.Hudson sums up that "He is the most sublime of English poets and our one acknowledged master of what Mathew Arnold calls "the grand style". In sustained majesty of thought and diction he is unrivalled."

3.2.3 The Epic or Heroic Poem:

As "Samson Agonistes" is an epic poem, it is essential that you familiarize yourself with the definition and characteristic features of an epic poem.

An epic poem, also called the heroic poem is defined by literary critics as "a long narrative poem on a great and serious subject, related in an elevated style and centred on a quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the facts of a tribe, a nation, or the human race

Epic poetry is of different types.

- (i). Traditional epics or "primary epics" or "folk epics"

Ex: "Illiad and "Odyssey" by the ancient Greek poet Homer.

"Beowulf" and Anglo-Saxon epic of the Pre-Chaucerian period.

Traditional epics are based on the oral histories and legends of a nation during a period of expansion and warfare.

- (ii). Literary epics or "secondary epics"

Ex: "The Aeneid" by the Roman poet Virgil;

"Paradise Lost", "Paradise Regained" and "Samson Agonistes" by Milton.

"Hyperion" by John Keats.

"The Four Zoas", "Milton", "Jerusalem" by William Blake

The important characteristics of an epic poem:

- (i) The Hero of an epic poem is of great national or even universal or cosmic importance.

Ex: The Greek warrior Achilles, in Homer's "Illiad" and Samson the Israelite leader, in Milton's "Samson Agonistes".

- (ii) The setting of an epic poem is grandiose in scale.

Ex: The setting of Milton's "Paradise Lost" takes place in heaven, in hell and on earth.

- (iii) The action in an epic poem comprises of heroic and superhuman acts.
Ex: Achilles' feats in the Trojan War.
- (iv) The active involvement of supernatural beings in the action of the hero.
Ex: The involvement of the Olympian gods in "Odyssey" and that of God Jehovah and the angels in "Paradise Lost";
- (v) An epic poem uses certain stylistic conventions such as
- the evocation of the Muse.
 - a formal statement of the theme.
 - set speeches in sublime form and language to reveal the diverse temperaments of principal characters.
 - Grand style.

An epic poem also expresses the ideals of an entire nation at a significant period of its history or that of a great religious movement or cultural change.

Ex: Dante's "Divine Comedy" which is an expression of the faith of medieval Christianity.

Edmund Spenser's "Faerie Queene" representing the spirit of Renaissance in 15th Century England.

Leo Tolstoy's "War and Peace", Herman Melville's "Moby Dick" (novels).

3.2.4 The Biblical Source:

Gifted by God with superhuman strength, a Nazarite from birth, Samson is unconquerable as long as his locks of hair, the symbol of his strength are uncut. But having lost the inner light of divine contemplation, Samson, due to the allurements of fleshly lust succumbs to the wiles of his Philistine mistress Dalila who cuts his hair, facilitating his capture. Blinded and enslaved by the Philistines and left to labour at the mill, he finally dies taking his revenge on his enemies and thereby fulfilling the task for which God had called him, i.e., the deliverance of his people from the hands of the Philistines. Milton portrays Samson as the ruler and liberator of Israel, a man of exceptional strength, a tragic lover and a great historical figure whose downfall was caused by his tragic flaw and the treachery of a woman. He is a victim to the perils of passion, a sinner who repents and is restored to grace. He is like the Greek mythological character Hercules, a consecrated Nazarite, a saint of unflinching faith and an emissary of God sustained by the Holy Spirit.

The pre-Miltonic period shows that an extensive tragic literature about Samson had already been written. There were a number of tragic dramas written during the Renaissance also, in Latin and the vernacular languages like French, German, Italian, Spanish and Dutch. They prove beyond doubt that Samson was widely and frequently treated as a tragic hero before Milton. English drama saw its own version of tragic plays on Samson staged at the "Red Lion Inn" in 1567 and at the "Admirals Theatre" in 1602 which are attributed to Edward Juby and Samuel Rowley. Milton however drew his materials from the "Book of Judges" of the Old Testament of The Bible. The story of

Samson is found in the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th chapters of the "Book of Judges". The annals of the Judges records the life and exploits of a succession of Israelite tribal leaders called "Shophet", meaning Judge. A succession of Judges ruled Israel such as heads of clans like Othniel, warriors like Barak and Gideon, men of wealth and honour like Jair, adventurers like Jephthah, priests like Eli and prophets such as Samuel. They were well known far and wide for their wisdom and were approached to settle disputes as they were considered special agents of God. Samson was one of the judges.

The following is a condensation of the Biblical story. In the ancient days, the Israelites were attacked by nomadic tribes such as the Philistines, the Ammonites, the Midianites and the Moabites. God raised up leaders from among the twelve tribes of Israel to deliver them from the hands of their enemies. They were called Judges. When the Philistines, a savage race of people attacked the Israelites, they cried out to God to deliver them from the Philistine hordes. In response to their plea, God sent his angel to an old godly couple Manoah and his barren wife of the tribe of Dan. The angel informed them that God would give them a son who would deliver his people from the hands of the Philistines. The child was to be named Samson and he should be brought up as a Nazarite. He should not touch wine or any fermented drink and his hair should not be shorn for it was a sign of his consecration to God. As Samson grew up, God filled him with superhuman strength whenever he fought the Philistines. Samson performed heroic acts and God gave him victory over the Philistines.

An adventurer, Samson made frequent incursions into Philistine land and provoked the Philistines to war. On one such jaunts, he falls in love with a young Philistine woman of Timnah. He takes his parents to visit her and arranges for their marriage. On the way he is attacked by a lion which he kills with his bare hands. On their way back from Timnah, Samson finds a bee hive in the carcass of the lion he had killed. He takes the honey and gives some of it to his parents. During the marriage festivities he poses a riddle to the Philistine men –

"Out of the eater, something to eat,
out of the strong, something sweet."

He offers thirty pieces of clothing if they answered the riddle. Samson's riddle alluded to the dead lion and the honey he had found in the carcass of the lion. Unable to find out the answer the Philistines threaten Samson's wife and her household. Samson's wife pesters him to tell her the answer. Not knowing that this was the work of the Philistines Samson tells her the answer, which is conveyed to the Philistine men. Furious for being deceived Samson goes to a nearby town and killing their men, presents their clothes to the Philistine men who had answered his riddle and then leaves his wife and goes home.

After his anger is spent, Samson returns to claim his wife. To his consternation, he is informed that his wife had been given in marriage to another, during his absence. Enraged, Samson catches three hundred foxes and setting their tails alight sets them loose in the fields of the Philistines destroying their harvest. The Philistines muster an army of thousand and march to Israel to take Samson captive. Wishing to avoid trouble, the Israelites hand over Samson to the Philistines. The Philistines bind Samson and try to kill him at a place called Lechi. Samson retaliates killing a thousand Philistines with the jawbone of a dead ass. The place has since been called Ramath Lechi meaning "Jawbone pile".

Once Samson spends the night with a prostitute in Gaza. On coming to know that he was in Gaza, the Philistines lock the city gates and plan to capture him. Finding the huge city gates closed, Samson uproots them and plants them on a hill near Hebron.

At another time, Samson fell in love with a Philistine woman of the valley of Sorec named Dalila. Tempted by the wealth offered by the Philistine rulers, if she facilitated Samson's capture, Dalila coaxes him into revealing the secret of his exceptional strength. Samson in a moment of weakness tells her that if his hair were to be shorn, he would lose his strength. Dalila cuts his hair. Samson is captured by the Philistines, blinded and forced to labour as a slave at the mill in Gaza.

Later the rulers of the Philistines assemble in the temple of their god Dagon, to celebrate their victory over Samson. Samson is brought into their midst to amuse them. Samson leans against the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Crying out to God to grant him strength for one last time, he pushes the pillars down, toppling the temple and killing the Philistine rulers and people assembled in the temple. Samson also dies and is brought back to Israel by his brethren and buried in between Zorah and Eshtol in the tomb of Manoa his father. Samson had led Israel for twenty years.

3.2.5 Analysis of the Text:

"Samson Agonistes" conforms to the pattern of Greek tragedy, however it has a Christian theme. It is an artistic blend of Hellenism, Hebraism and Christianity. Samson conforms to the Greek tragic hero, in that he exhibits similar traits. A tragic hero is a noble character who suffers a drastic change of fortune from happiness to misery because of a tragic flaw in his character, a mistaken act or an error of judgement. His life ends in a violent and tragic death like that of Othello.

However Samson is different as his life ends in martyrdom. Milton's portrayal of Samson as a blind slave in abject misery, subject to ridicule by the Philistines, estranged from his homeland and an object of mockery to his own, destroying the Philistines, yet meeting his own death in the process, is to justify God's ways to men. The play is a reaffirmation of faith in God and complete surrender to and acceptance of his will.

"All is best, though we oft doubt
 What th' unsearchable dispose
 Of highest wisdom brings about,
 And even best found in the close.
 Oft he seems to hide his face,
 But unexpectedly returns
 And to his faithful Champion hath in place
 Bore witness gloriously"

(Chorus-lines 1754-85)

The poem begins with Samson as a prisoner of the Philistines. Blind and decrepit, Samson is forced to work at the millstone. Though Samson accepts his sin and its consequences, yet

human as he is, laments his loss of sight. His self-centered complaints reveal a wounded pride and doubt in God's providence. The first to visit him are his clansmen from the tribe of Dan. They play the role of the Chorus. The day they visit him is a festive day as the Philistines gather to celebrate their victory over Samson, in the temple of their god Dagon. They are taken aback by his decrepit state for he does not resemble the mighty and glorious Samson they knew. When Samson vents his bitterness, they play the part of "Job's counselors", sympathetic, cautioning Samson not to find fault with God or be severe with himself. They direct his attention to God's grace and providence. As Samson and the Chorus interact, his aged father Manoa joins them. His express desire is to pay a ransom for his son's release and to take him home. The thought of going home fills Samson with despair as he would have to live out his remaining life in retirement and obscurity and as an object of mockery among the people. He prefers death to such a degrading existence. Samson is then visited by his Philistine wife Dalila, who flaunts her ill-gotten gains and new-found status. With her seductive charm and subtle arguments, she tries to justify her actions of betraying and handing over Samson to his enemies. She persuades him to accept her offer of release from prison and domestic happiness with her for the rest of his life. Samson denounces her, accusing her of high treason. He calls her a specious monster, an accomplished snare and the most wicked of women and dismisses her from his presence. Harapha, a Philistine warrior arrives to mock Samson. Samson ridicules him as a "tongue-doughty giant", a coward who hides his fears behind a façade of boisterous argument. After Harapha retreats, the jailor informs Samson that he had been summoned by the Philistine lords to perform at the temple. Initially Samson refuses, but then hoping that God would uphold his cause, accepts to perform for his enemies.

The poem comes to a close with a messenger bringing the momentous news of the destruction of the Philistines by Samson and of his death in the process. Manoa is devastated by the tragic outcome but is comforted with his son's victory over his enemies. He decides to build a monument in his son's honour which would be a symbol of inspiration to future generations. The Chorus reflects on God's ways and his dealings with men.

3.2.6 Samson Agonistes as a Classical Tragedy:

Milton followed the principle of the ancient Greek 'Attic' tragic poets in using the most ordinary kind of title, the name of the protagonist. He followed their example by adding a distinguishing epithet to the name of his protagonist. "Agonistes" may mean many things such as wrestler, an advocate, an actor or a champion. It may also mean an amateur (professional athlete) who competed in the public games. It may also mean simply a physical combat which later came to be used only in the sense of spiritual conflict. In Greek tragedy, Agonistes was commonly used to denote the suffering of the hero. Milton might have used the word to portray Samson as God's chosen, struggling to fulfill his master's purpose. The name Samson is a Hebrew name "Shimshon" meaning "the storm".

Following the principles of classical tragedy, Milton uses a minimum number of characters apart from the Chorus. The characters are Samson, his aged father Manoa and his Philistine mistress Dalila, a Philistine giant and warrior Harapha, a Philistine jailor and a messenger. Samson is a character drawn purely in the classical manner. He takes after the Sophoclean protagonist. He is splendid yet he is human. Milton portrays Samson with great subtlety and delicacy. His motives are subjected to keen analysis. His complex emotions are vividly expressed. Milton's hero is hard,

cold, forbidding, grand, impartial, self-severe and inexorable. Samson's father Manoa is protective, comforting and also sententious. His character is similar to the patriarchal characters in the Greek tragedies. Harapha is portrayed as a bully and a coward. His only attribute is his physical strength and size. He lacks the heroic magnitude of mind. Samson ridicules him calling him a 'tongue-doughty giant' who is aware of the danger of confronting Samson and tries to hide his fears behind a façade of boisterous argument. The portrait of Dalila is more subtle and complex. She shares similarities with the Greek Queen Helen. Dalila not only betrays her husband Samson for her own selfish reasons but also tries to justify her actions. Samson calls her a specious monster, an accomplished snare, a hyena and a serpent. The officer is portrayed as duty-minded. Unlike the typical Philistine nature he is considerate, showing a genuine interest in Samson's welfare. The messenger is Sophoclean in nature. He is used for the sole purpose of delivering the news of the final events. His entry is abrupt. He talks incoherently, makes laconic statements of fact and then begins his formal narrative. He is a secondary character transformed into a serious and important character.

In "Samson Agonistes" one fourth of the entire 1758 lines are allotted to the Chorus and two thirds of the allotted lines appear in the form of Choral odes. Milton's drama has ten speeches of the Chorus between 5 to 10 lines in length which is extremely rare in Greek tragedy. The Chorus is given slightly more than one fifth of the play and there are three times the number of separate speeches.

In "Samson Agonistes" Milton follows the general practice of the "Greek" tragedians in using the semi-Chorus very effectively as in the plays of Euripides. The Chorus in "Samson Agonistes" is given the last word in the poem. This was a fairly general practice among the ancient Greek dramatists. Milton also observes the general practice of keeping the Chorus on stage. Milton adopts a main Chorus. His Chorus is made up of Samson's Hebrew brothers. Samson's Chorus is extremely sympathetic but does not express its interest more actively and more loudly than the Chorus in the dramas of Aeschylus.

3.2.7 Critical Evaluation:

Samson Agonistes is a classical tragedy. Tragedy can be defined as dramatic representation of serious and important actions which turns out disastrously for the protagonist. Aristotle defined tragedy as "The imitation of an action that is serious and also as having magnitude complete in itself". The medium of the ancient Greek tragedies was poetic language, its manner of dramatic rather than narrative presentation compressing "incidents" arousing pity and fear ending in the catharsis of such emotions in the audience, culminating a state of mental relief or even a state of exultation. In simple terms tragedy is the story of an eminent person who whether deservedly or not is brought down from prosperity to wretchedness by an unpredictable turn of the wheel of fortune. "Samson Agonistes" most effectively arouses both pity and fear. In Samson's case the tragic effect is more powerful as he is a person of higher moral worth. He is an individual who has been led by the tragic flaw in his character to an error in judgment resulting in his fall from happiness to misery. In Samson's case it is his extreme self-confidence which leads him to disregard and violate divine law. Samson's debacle moves us to pity as he is not by nature an evil man and he suffers more than he deserves.

In ancient Greek tragedies the Chorus were a group of singers who commented on the action of the characters. They represented traditional, moral, religious and social attitudes: Their primary function however was that of chanting odes. Very few English poets used the Greek type of Chorus like Milton in "Samson Agonistes" and T.S.Eliot in "Murder in the Cathedral".

The plot of "Samson Agonistes" conforms to the principles of classical tragedy. It has a beginning, a controversial middle and a surprise ending. It has unity of action or is an artistic whole where all the parts are closely connected into a single complete and ordered structure of actions to produce the intended effect.

Milton strictly adheres to principles of unity of Time, Place and Action.

- * The action begins at sunrise and ends at noon. The entire action takes place within a time span of seven hours.
- * The action takes place before the Philistine prison at Gaza. Samson's death and the destruction of his enemies takes place at a different location which is only narrated.
- * The action is tragic, ending in the death of Samson but also his victory over his enemies. The epic poem is devoid of any sort of comic element.

Milton's chief purpose in writing "Samson Agonistes" is to justify the ways of God to men. Though it generates much tumult, agony and despair, it however ends on a positive note, on "a calm of mind, all passions spent". The general truth to be learned at the close of the play is that even a blind Samson can be the Deliverer of his people provided God's grace is extended to him. Milton affirms the same thought in his sonnet "On His Blindness" – "those who wait best serve him". The poem expounds the truth that God's dealings with men are always just though inscrutable.

"Samson Agonistes" is also regarded as a "thinly disguised autobiography". It is generally understood as Milton's personal expression of grief on his blindness.

"As in the land of darkness yet in light,

To live a life half dead, a living death:

And buried:"

(Lines 99-101)

Samson's blindness is therefore not merely physical but also alludes to spiritual darkness.

"Myself, my sepulchre, a moving grave,

Buried,"

(Lines 102-103)

Milton's profound faith in God is reflected in Samson overcoming his despair over his blindness and submitting himself to God's providence in the end.

"Samson Agonistes" may also be considered as a political allegory, i.e. Milton represents the Puritanical forces in England as Samson stands for the lost cause of the Hebrews, the Philistines and Dalila may represent the Royalists and the temple of Dagon, the court of Charles II. "Samson Agonistes" is also "a study in regeneration". The play progresses from conflict, doubt and despair, to spiritual enlightenment, moral triumph, restoration to grace and blissful content. Similar to the Phoenix, Samson is regenerated, from "as one past hope" to "all is best".

Goethe observes that "Samson Agonistes" "has more of the antique spirit than any other modern poet". John Bailey remarks "there can be no real doubt that it (Samson Agonistes) is far more like the Prometheus or the Oedipus than it is like Hamlet or All for Love". However Jebb argues that "Samson Agonistes is a great poem; It is also a noble drama..... But neither as poem nor as drama is it Hellenic" while Parker surmises that "Samson Agonistes is Hellenic".

3.2.8 Glossary:

13. Dagon : the Philistine deity, half-fish and half-man.
41. Gaza : the capital city of the Philistines.
- 110-14. Chorus : the Chorus similar to the one in a Greek play comments on the action of the characters in the play. The Chorus in Samson Agonistes comprises of Samson's brethren from the tribe of Dan.
132. Cuirass : a piece of body armour, originally of leather.
133. Chalybean : the Chalybes were famous iron workers of Scythia.
134. Admantean Proof : impenetrable armour.
138. Ascalonite : one who belongs to Askelon, one of the chief cities of the Philistines.
- 142 - 45. Ramath-Lechi : the place where Samson killed a thousand Philistine soldiers with the jawbone of a dead ass.
- 146 - 50. the gates of Azza : the gates of Gaza.
148. Hebron : a city in Israel, supposed to be the seat of the giants.
150. The gentiles : all idolatrous nations.
150. : a reference to Atlas who according to Greek mythology is supposed to bear Heaven on his shoulders.
181. Eshtaol and Zora : valleys inherited by the Israelite tribe of Dan.
219. Timna : the Philistine city of Samson's first wife.
29. vale of Sorec : a valley in the Philistine country.
252. Judea : Land in Israel allotted to the tribe of Judah.
253. The rock of Etham : a lookout point in Israel.
- 277 - 89. Gideon, Jephtha : two judges who delivered the Israelites from the hands of their enemies.
280. Gideon : an Israeli judge who defeated the Midianites who ravaged Israel, but was condemned by his own tribes at Succouth and Penueh, two towns in Israel.

- 282 - 87. ingrateful Ephraim : one of the Israelite tribes who did not come to Jephtha's aid against the Ammonites.
289. Shibboleth : meaning a "stream or flood", which Jephtha made the Ephraimites to pronounce in order to identify them.
318. Nazarite : an Israelite who consecrates himself for the service of God.
370. thrall : a slave.
500. : the allusion is to the story of Tantalus who is punished with excessive thirst and hunger for revealing the secrets of Zeus.
528. Sons of Anak : Anak was a giant and so were his offspring.
543. Dancing Ruby : sparkling red wine.
628. Alp : mountain.
672. Angelic orders : hierarchy of the angelic hordes.
695. Unjust tribunals : apparently a reference to the trial of Henry Vane on charge of treason, condemned and executed in 1662.
- 710 - 24. "sails filled and streamers waving" : Dalila's visit is compared to a stately ship with all sails billowing majestically approaching the harbour.
- 714 - 15. Ship of Tarsus : frequently used in the Bible for sea-going vessels.
936. Adder : a venomous snake.
981. Ecron... Gath : four of the five chief cities of the Philistines.
988. Mount Ephraim : a mountain in Israel where Deborah, the Israelite prophetess sang a song in victory.
1020. Paranymphe : the friend of the bridegroom.
1045. Steers-mate : the steersman of a ship.
1080. Og : King of Bashan who denied passage to the Israelites through his territory.
1080. Emims : a race of giants from Moab.
1081. Kirjathaim : an old town east of Jordan.
1093. Gyves : fetters.
1099. Palestine : Philistia, the land of the Philistines.

1120. Brigandine : armour or coat of mail.
 Habergeon : armour for the neck.
1121. Vant-brass : armour for the fore-arm.
 Greaves : armour for the leg.
 Gauntlet : iron gloves.
1133. black enchantments : black arts.
 1139: forbidden arts : black arts.
1231. Bael-zebub : a Philistine god.
 1242. Astaroth : Phoenician goddess.
1323. sword-players : swordsmen.
 1325. Mummers : masqueraders
1619. Cataphracts : cavalry.
1657. Inevitably : suggests that Samson's death is different from that of suicide committed by Ajax or Cato for this is divine dispensation;
1674. Silo : a sacred place in Israel where the Ark of the Covenant remained for a long time, in the Old Testament days.
1675. Spirit of frenzy : spirit of madness.
1695. fame villatic fowl : farmyard hens, used contemptuously for the Philistines.
1699. self-begotten bird : the Phoenix, a bird which was thought to be immortal as it consumed itself in fire and regenerated itself.
1713. the sons of Caphtor : the Philistines.

3.2.9 Character Sketches:

Chorus:- The Chorus is more Sophoclean in nature as it is excluded from any share in the action. On one occasion, Samson begs his companions to interfere but very sensibly, in the circumstances, they ignore his request.

Though they play a certain part in the hero's regeneration, their influence is comparatively slight. They do not even succeed in fulfilling the purpose of their visit. Instead of comforting Samson they echo his despair. During the meeting between the father and the son they remain silent. When Harapha and the officer come with the threats of force, these Chorus Oracles remain silent. Though they are a large number they are remarkably inconspicuous. Nothing they say diverts our attention to them. Every comment they make only serves to increase one's interest in the protagonist.

Milton uses the **Sophoclean type** of Chorus to preserve the unity of the drama by putting aside the Chorus over **personal fortunes**. The Chorus is bound up with Samson's future, his imprisonment and their release. Yet after the death of Samson the Chorus does not think of itself but of Samson and the terrible end of the Philistines. Milton's Chorus plays the part of sympathetic witness. Its speeches are sober reflections. There is no violent personal passion. The Chorus in "Samson Agonistes" is capable of great kindness but also of great tactlessness. It is eager to give advice but later procrastinates pondering on the sayings of the wise.

Samson : Milton's Samson is a representative of humanity. He is not conceived as an individual. Milton's portrait of Samson has few intimate details which are lost in the sheer magnitude of his conception. Samson follows the tradition of the great heroes of Greek tragedy, such as Oedipus, Prometheus and Hercules who are superhuman. Samson is a character drawn in the classical manner. He is a splendid character, gifted with superhuman strength yet human in nature. His portrait is done with great subtlety and delicacy. His motives are subjected to keen analysis and his complex emotions are vividly expressed. He is Euripidean when it comes to "The human soul at war with itself". Milton's hero is hard. He does not possess gentleness. Samson is not lovable. He is human yet grand in nature. He expresses his agony with anyone who is willing to listen. But to himself he is unsympathetic. His personality is based on the fixed idea that he had been called to shoulder a great responsibility and he had failed to do so. He had failed his God.

Milton's Samson is a slightly modified version found in the 'Book of Judges' of the Old Testament. A divine blessing to aged parents, he is brought up as a Nazarite. He is bestowed with superhuman strength by God for a divine purpose i.e., the liberation of God's chosen people, Israel from the tyranny of the Philistines. But Samson's tragic flaw, his weakness for women, distracts him from the great purpose to which he had been called. His frequent incursions into the land of the Philistines brings him into contact with their women: the young woman of Timna, the Philistine prostitute, and later Delilah. He marries Delilah and makes a home for himself in the midst of his enemies. Delila is a typical Philistine woman. Allured by the riches offered by the Philistines, she reveals the secret of Samson's mighty strength and betrays him. Samson is captured, blinded and imprisoned. He bewails his misfortune. He knows that he himself is responsible for his misery. His primary agony is not his miserable state, but his inability to fulfill God's purpose. Samson's only desire is to get one more opportunity to fulfill God's purpose, even if it calls for his death. Neither the deceitful argument of his wife Delilah nor the uncouth arrogance of Harapha, nor his father's attempts to secure his release succeed in distracting him from his aim. When he is ordered to perform at the feast, he agrees hoping that God would be gracious to him and renew his strength one more time and enable him to destroy his enemies. Samson's agony ends not in defeat but in victory, the destruction of his enemies at the cost of his own life.

Dalila: The portrait of Dalila is subtle and complex. She is more Euripidean because of the realism of her portrait; of the nature of the character and rhetorical device by which she is presented, more like Helen in the "Troades". In the 'Book of Judges' of the Old Testament, Dalila is Samson's Philistine mistress. But Milton in his poem gives her the place of Samson's wife. In "Samson Agonistes" Dalila is portrayed as a deceitful woman. He calls her "a specious monster and an accomplished snare". He seems to declare that no recognized male virtues can win or hold a woman's love:

Dalila enters Samson's life after his unpleasant experience with the Philistines regarding his marriage to the young woman of Timna. The marriage ends in failure and only serves to increase the antagonism between the Philistines and Samson. Samson's adventures into Philistine land brings him into contact with Dalila "a true Philistine by nature". Enamored of her beauty and deceived by her seemingly feminine frailty, Samson reveals the secret of his mighty strength. Dalila on her part succumbs to greed and betrays Samson to the Philistines. As a result Samson is captured, blinded and made prisoner. Thus Dalila is instrumental in his capture and imprisonment.

Dalila enters at line 732 in the drama attended by a damsel train. Her purpose in visiting her blind husband is to justify her actions towards him. It could be the shock of seeing Samson's wretched condition that compels her to justify herself and silence her feelings of guilt. Outraged by her audacity in trying to justify her actions in betraying him, Samson denounces her as a "specious monster" and the "serpent Manifest" who would be remembered as the most wicked of women in human history.

To sum up, Dalila is one of the most important characters in the drama and serves as a catalyst to provoke Samson's deepest feelings about the sacredness of marriage and the fidelity of a wife towards her husband. Milton's "Samson Agonistes" contains a single female character "Dalila". Her character is an adaptation of the actual one in the sixteenth chapter of the 'Book of Judges' in the Old Testament of the Bible, a Philistine woman of dubious nature living in the valley of Sorok. Nothing of her character or her relationship towards Samson or her later life are given except for a straightforward account of her collusion with the rulers of the Philistines and her betrayal of Samson.

3.2.10 Conclusion:

Samson Agonistes is a heroic poem written according to the principles of Greek tragedy. Like the Greek tragedies it contains from the beginning expectation of an inevitable tragedy at the end. Milton follows the rules laid down by Aristotle in portraying Samson as a tragic hero. Samson is a noble warrior gifted with superhuman strength, yet due to a tragic flaw in his character, falls victim to the wiles of his Philistine mistress Dalila. His blindness, imprisonment, slavery, remorse, repentance, and his heroic feat resulting in the destruction of his enemies culminating in his death form the content of the epic poem. There are also other themes running parallel to the main theme such as Samson's blindness which gives the poem an autobiographical element, the providence of God and the Greek tragic element of fate. He suffers more than he deserves. He also moves us to fear because he stands as a reminder of similar possibilities of error in our own lives.

3.2.11. Sample Annotated Passages:

- 1). Ease to the body some, none to the mind
From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm
Of Hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone,
But rush upon me thronging, and present
Times past, what once I was, and what am now.

(Lines 18-22)

Reference:- These lines are taken from the epic poem "Samson Agonistes" written by Milton.

Context:- Samson expresses intense anguish at past memories and present thoughts which torment him, inflicting great pain.

Meaning:- Isolated and alienated, mourning his misfortune, Samson reviews his harsh life as a slave in the Philistine prison. His brief respite from gruelling labour at the mill is shortlived as he is tormented by thoughts of his glorious past and of his ignoble present. Samson compares his thoughts to a deadly swarm of Hornets causing grievous injury with their deadly stings.

- 2) Light the prime work of God to me is extinct,
and all her various objects of delight,
anull'd, which might in part my grief have eased; (Lines 70-73)

Reference:- These lines are taken from the heroic poem "Samson Agonistes" written by Milton.

Context:- Samson deplures his loss of sight.

Meaning:- Of all the ills that had befallen him, Samson considers his blindness as the worst. His loss of sight is worse than the chains that bind him, the dungeon in which he is imprisoned and his decrepit state. Everything is darkness to him as light, the prime work of God's creation, he had been denied. He would have derived solace by witnessing God's wondrous creation had he not been robbed of his eyesight.

- 3) Ask for this great Deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves,
Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke; (Lines 40-42)

Reference:- These lines are taken from the heroic poem "Samson Agonistes" written by Milton.

Context:- Samson derides himself for his fall from divine grace to unholy misery.

Meaning:- In a state of abject misery, Samson in a mood of despondency and careless desolation, questions God's providence in the form of his miraculous birth, his consecration to a "High Calling" his exceptional strength and his heroic feats. He also expresses anger for allowing himself to be subjected to such extreme degradation. He who was admired and feared as the Deliverer of his people was now in need of deliverance as a slave of Philistines.

- 4) Tax not divine disposal, wisest Men
Have err'd and by bad Women been deceived; (Lines 210-12)

Reference:- These lines are taken from Milton's classical tragedy "Samson Agonistes".

Context:- The Chorus exhorts Samson on God's providence and to stop being severe with himself.

Meaning:- Holding himself responsible for his misery, Samson refuses to be consoled by the presence and the words of his brethren. He severely castigates himself for his folly in divulging the secret of his mighty strength to his deceitful Philistian wife Dalila. He had abused his body which

was destined to fulfill God's purpose. The Chorus advise Samson not to allow himself to be consumed by self-humiliation as the wisest men under the deceitful influence of bad women had erred in the past but had repented and had been restored to grace.

- 5) But patience is more off the exercise
of saints, the trail of their fortitude.

(Lines 1230-32)

Reference:- These lines are taken from Milton's epic poem "Samson Agonistes";

Context:- The Chorus exhorts Samson to exercise patience in adversity.

Meaning:- When Samson despairs and longs for death even if it is at the hands of his enemies to put an end to his ordeal, the Chorus reproves him, reminding him that God is never indifferent to the sufferings of his saints. God in his own perfect time acts swiftly catching his enemies off guard, destroying them completely. The response of God's saints is to be patient in trials and wait for his deliverance.

3.2.12 Sample Questions:

1. Discuss "Samson Agonistes" as a classical tragedy.
2. Delineate Samson as a tragic hero.
3. Show how Milton justified God's ways to men in "Samson Agonistes".
4. What role does the Chorus play in "Samson Agonistes"? Discuss.
5. Comment on the autobiographical element in "Samson Agonistes".
6. Sketch the character of Dalila.

3.2.13 Suggested Reading:

1. M.H. Abrams: A Glossary of Literary Terms.
2. William Henry Hudson: An Outline History of English Literature.
3. John Milton: Samson Agonistes Macmillan's - Annotated Classics.
4. The Holy Bible, New International Version.

Lesson Writer

N. Suresh Chandra Rao

Non-Detailed Study

UNIT III – Modern Drama

Lesson - 3.3

George Bernard Shaw : The Apple Cart

3.3.0 Objectives:

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

- a) The life of G.B Shaw and his views on democracy and
- b) 'The Apple Cart' as a play of ideas.

Structure:

- 3.3.1 Introduction : Shaw's life and works
- 3.3.2 Analysis of the text
- 3.3.3 Critical appreciation
- 3.3.4 The title of the play
- 3.3.5 Satire in the play
- 3.3.6 Bernard's views on Democracy as revealed in the play
- 3.3.7 Character sketches
- 3.3.8 'The Apple Cart' as a drama of ideas
- 3.3.9 Conclusion
- 3.3.10 Sample questions
- 3.3.11 Suggested Readings

3.3.1 Introduction:

Bernard Shaw was born on July 26, 1856 in Dublin. His father was a civil servant and after retirement became a grain merchant. His mother was the daughter of an Irish country gentleman. From his mother he inherited his love of arts, especially music. In his early life, a clerical relative undertook the responsibility of his education. Later he was sent to Wesley College in Dublin, where he remained till he was fourteen. He used to frequent the Irish national gallery to study the pictures there. He spoke of his early years as, 'rich only in dreams'. On leaving school he was placed in a land agent's office, but at sixteen he was chosen to fill a responsible position which he held for four years, the life was distasteful. At twenty he threw himself out of employment and journeyed to London.

He tried Journalism, but in ten years he earned very little. He then began to write novels. Between 1879 and 1882 he wrote four novels. The first, 'Immaturity', dealt with the problem of marriage. The second, 'The Irrational Knot' was written in 1880. The third 'Love Among the Artists,' was serialized in 1887-88. His fourth novel, 'Cashel Byron's Profession' is the best of his novels. In 1885 he was on the staff of the 'Pall Mall Gazette' as a reviewer. Later he was appointed as an art critic to the 'World' under Edmund Yates. In 1889-1890 he acted as musical critic to the 'Star' and then began the play-writing period.

His first play 'Widowers' Houses' appeared in 1892, and 'Arms and the Man' in 1894. From 1895-1899 he was dramatic critic of the 'Saturday Review'. He became the member of the Fabian Society in 1884. One of his best known papers was that on 'Ibsen' and it was later published as 'The Quintessence of Ibsenism'. In 1898, Shaw published the first collection of plays, entitled 'Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant', in two volumes. They showed that a new and powerful genius had appeared on the dramatic horizon whose main purpose was to shake the people out of their beliefs. The playwright was a combination of the artist and the preacher. In 1901 appeared another volume entitled, 'Three Plays for Puritans'.

In 1903, 'Man and Superman' was published. It proved a tremendous success in New York and in England. From then onwards Shaw became a great force in the literature of the day. He wrote 'Fanny's First Play' in 1911, 'Back to Methuselah' in 1921, 'Saint Joan' in 1923, 'The Apple Cart' in 1929 and many more.

This great literary giant was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1925. He breathed his last in November 1950.

3.3.2 Analysis of the Text:

The Apple Cart is a play in two acts with an 'Interlude'. The first act opens in the office in the royal palace of king Magnus. Sempronius and Pamphilius, the two personal secretaries of the king, are seen engaged in their work. Pamphilius starts the conversation about Sempronius' father. Sempronius replies that his father was a ritualist and arranged grand shows, public ceremonies and coronations. That is how Sempronius got his job in the palace. He also informs Pamphilius that his father died in 1862, of loneliness.

Pamphilius reminds Sempronius that he has to ready the king's letters by 12 o'clock, otherwise he will lose his job. Sempronius complains that Pamphilius is responsible for the delay in his work. Pamphilius informs Sempronius that Boanarges has just been taken into the cabinet as President of the Board of Trade and he has an appointment with the king on the crisis.

Boanarges enters, dressed in a Russian blouse and a peaked cap on. He is angry because the king has kept him waiting. Sempronius hurries out to inform the king about the arrival of Boanarges. Boanarges complains to Pamphilius about the rude behavior of the servants in the palace.

The king arrives, goes to Boanarges and offers his hand cordially. But Boanarges does not rise from his chair. The king asks Boanarges to sit down to which Boanarges replies that he has already been sitting down. Magnus expresses his great pleasure in meeting Boanarges. The king flatters Boanarges with a view to taking his support in the crisis which he faces.

Boanarges tells the king frankly that the country has to be governed not by him but by his ministers. The king is only a constitutional monarch and in Belgium the king is called an indiarubber stamp. The king replies that both Boanarges and he are indiarubber stamps as they have to sign the papers brought to them. The king says that the old divine right worked because there is a divine spark in all the kings and the ministers. But the indiarubber stamp does not work because a king or a minister is more than a stamp, a living soul.

King Magnus continues to flatter Boanarges. He says that no common man could have risen to such position as he has done. He became a king not because of his merit but because he was the nephew of his uncle and two elder brothers died. Boanarges contradicts the king and says that he is not a fool. The king continues that if at all England becomes a republic, Boanarges is the only man to be elected as the President of the republic. Magnus says that the king is a puppet in the hands of a group of plutocrats but Presidents are elected by the people who always want a strong man to protect them against the rich. Magnus prefers to be a king than a President. Thus Magnus continues to flatter Boanarges pretending to be greatly impressed by his various good qualities.

A young lady interrupts their conversation. Magnus introduces her to Boanarges as his eldest daughter Alice. She asks Boanarges why he is in such a strange dress. He informs her that it is the uniform of labour, which he is proud of. The king takes leave of Boanarges saying that they will meet soon as there is a meeting with the Prime Minister and his ministers. The king by his smile and kind behavior wins the heart of Boanarges and Boanarges has formed a good opinion of the king.

Proteus, the Prime Minister enters along with Pliny, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nicobar, Foreign Secretary, Crassus, Colonial Secretary and Balbus, Home Secretary. Balbus, Nicobar, Crassus and Pliny comment on Boanarges' dress. When Proteus asks Boanarges about his talk with the king, Boanarges says that he knows how to handle the king and adds that if he had been in the cabinet for these last three months, there would have been no crisis. Proteus asks them to discuss the crisis they are going to talk with the king.

Proteus informs the ministers that the king is working the press against them. The king is making speeches. While opening the new Chamber of Commerce building the other day, the king said that his veto is the only remaining defence of the people against corrupt legislation. Boanarges speaks in support of the view point of the king. Republic is the best alternative as the President will be elected by the people and he will exercise more powers than a king. Proteus gets angry and offers his resignation saying that Boanarges is the king's man and he has lost his health and reason in trying to keep the cabinet together against the most cunning enemy to the popular government. But he is asked not to do such things at such a moment. Proteus informs the ministers that he is going to propose an ultimatum to the king. If he refuses to sign the ultimatum the Cabinet will resign.

Before he reads out the ultimatum the king arrives along with two women members of the cabinet - Amanda, the Postmistress General and Lysistrata, the Powermistress General. Proteus protests against the conduct of the two ladies who instead of attending the cabinet meeting, accompanied the king.

Proteus makes a reference to the king's speech the other day in which he referred to the royal veto. The king replies that when the ministers freely talk about their powers and the supremacy of the parliament there is nothing wrong in his statement about his right to veto. The main issue is again lost in the noisy quarrel of the ministers.

Proteus makes it clear to the king that they cannot allow him to make speeches that express his own opinion and not theirs, he should not tell the people that only his power of veto can protect them against the rich, and that the cabinet ministers do nothing for the people. The king must stop all such statements once for all.

Magnus asks Proteus if he should keep quiet even though they are taking the country in the wrong direction. But this view is contradicted by the Cabinet. Proteus says that people have confidence in them as they have been successfully removing poverty from the country. But the king does not agree with him. He says that the government has done nothing to remove poverty. The rich businessmen are investing money in foreign countries where labour is cheap. The people of England have become rich on the imported profits and this will not last for long.

After many arguments and counter arguments, Proteus reads out the conditions of the ultimatum. The first condition is there will be no more royal speeches even, if they are dictated by the cabinet. The second condition is that the king should not influence the press from the palace backdoors. Magnus informs them that the press is not influenced by him but by richer persons. When Proteus says that the king's secretary writes articles against the government, the king says that one of the newspapers writes against the king in which the last sentence of the article ends in "once for all" which is probably written by the Prime Minister. The last condition is that veto must not be mentioned again.

Magnus tells them that in a democracy the Cabinet merely carries out the wishes of the public, but the king is balanced if at all anything goes wrong. The power is always controlled by a cleverer person and he does not want to lose power. That is why he does not want to sign the ultimatum. Amanda's comments make Proteus angry and he rushes out of the room in anger. The king goes out to bring the Prime Minister back.

The king returns along with the Prime Minister. He tells the ministers that he had a serious discussion with the Prime Minister in which he made it clear that if the king does not accept the ultimatum, the whole Cabinet along with the Prime Minister will resign. The Prime Minister will make a speech in the House of Commons asking the people to choose between Cabinet government and monarchical government. He declares that he cannot carry on without the support of the Cabinet whose existence gives the English people a sense of self-government.

Magnus asks the Cabinet not to limit his power because the real danger for them is that the king may defeat them but that the king may bow down to them, if they insist. He asks them to consider where they will be without him.

Amanda and Lysistrata praise King Magnus' speech. Balbus then refers to his brother-in-law, Mike. He wants him to be taken into the Cabinet as he represents Breakages Limited, the biggest industrial corporation in the country. Lysistrata comments that Mike is a drunkard and he should not be taken into the Cabinet. The king realizes that none in the cabinet supports him, he wants time to think over it till five in the evening and he departs.

The first act is followed by an interlude.

The scene is Orinthia's private room. She is Magnus' beloved. The king enters the room and waits at the door. She says that he does not love her and spends much time with the lady ministers. She wants to be his queen. But he says that he has already got a queen. Orinthia compares the queen to a cabbage and herself to a rose. But he says that all these old cabbages were once roses. The husbands of these cabbages do not forget this. Orinthia had two husbands and she says that they were common men and she was superior to them. She asks the king to divorce his queen and marry her. He rejects all her suggestions and says that he cannot do without his queen Jemima. Moreover he comes to her only for a change and to get relief from the tiresomeness of the responsibilities of being a King. The king rises to leave but Orinthia tries to stop him. He tells Orinthia that his wife will be waiting for him for tea. She tries to hold him by force. The king tries to free himself but she drags him down to the floor. They roll over and over on the carpet. Sempronius enters the room, sees the scene and quickly goes out. He knocks loudly and the king and Orinthia quickly stand up. Sempronius tells the King that tea is waiting. The king departs.

The second act commences later in the afternoon on the terrace of the palace where the King and the Queen are seen sitting. The Queen asks the king why he asks the servants to leave so many chairs. The king replies that he wants to meet the Cabinet there in the open air. Pamphilius announces the arrival of the American Ambassador. The queen asks him whether the ambassador has any previous appointment and the secretary says that he has none but he says that he must see the king at once. Vanhattan, the American Ambassador, informs the king that America has decided to rejoin the British Empire. They shall enjoy only Dominion Home Rule under the Presidency of Mr. Bossfield. One of the conditions is that Magnus will be Emperor.

King Magnus wants time to think upon this matter. He requests Vanhattan to tell his President that the King of England would give his reply after a thought of it. He tells the ambassador that he will tell him his decision after the Cabinet meeting which is to take place shortly. Vanhattan goes out.

The Cabinet arrives. The queen Jemima leaves. The king wants to discuss the American issue with the cabinet. But Proteus wants to take the question of the ultimatum first. He demands that the king should reveal his decision about the ultimatum. Proteus says that what they require is an unconditional surrender of the king. If not he will go to the people and ask them whether England is to be an absolute monarchy or a constitutional one. Magnus declares that he is in favour of a constitutional monarchy. But at the same time he refuses to sign the ultimatum. He is ready to abdicate i.e. to give up his throne. He says that he wants to abdicate to save the monarchy, not to destroy it. He will be succeeded by his son Robert, Prince of Wales. He will make an admirable constitutional monarch.

The Prime Minister and other ministers are happy. The Prime Minister delivers a powerful leave-taking speech. Some of the ministers are even wiping their tears. Boanerges and the male ministers start singing. Magnus stops them. He announces that he is not withdrawing from an active part in politics. He wants to dissolve the Parliament and announce fresh elections. He will give up all his titles and become a common man. He will be a candidate in the general elections. This statement causes a great uproar among the ministers.

The king tells them that when he is elected to the parliament, he will form a party. The king, his son Robert, will invite the majority party to form the government. Magnus and Proteus may speak frankly about each other in public. Proteus knows well that in the elections Magnus will get majority of votes. He takes the ultimatum from the King and tears it into pieces. He says that there is no abdication, no going to general elections and no ultimatum. The crisis is washed out. He warns the king saying that he will never forgive him for playing the trump card at the last moment and defeating him.

Magnus says that he has not upset the Apple Cart. Nicobar declares that he is leaving politics because it is a game of fools, and so he does not care what happens in the future. Crassus decides to follow Nicobar. Pliny is happy as there is no change in the situation.

The King is worried that by accepting the American proposal, England will lose its power and glory. Lysistrata tries to remove his fears by saying that it will not be possible. Amanda and Lysistrata also leave. The Queen comes back to take the king to dinner. The king does not want to have his dinner at that time, as he is upset but the queen takes him away. She consoles him and tries to make him forget his worries for the time being.

3.3.3 Critical appreciation:

This is perhaps the last major play of Bernard Shaw. It is essentially a political drama. Shaw has called it a political extravaganza. But there is very little of it in the play. From the beginning to end it is sound common sense interspersed with wit and humour. The only exotic episode is Vanhattan's proposal for the reentry of America into the British Commonwealth. No American statesman in his sense can make such a proposal seriously. Apart from this slight farce, the play is on quite orthodox political lines.

Shaw's main concern in the play is to debunk the common man's ideas about democracy and royalty. In Magnus, he creates an ideal constitutional monarch. As a king, as a lover and as a husband, he is above the common run of humanity.

Shaw shows us the inefficiencies and weakness of a Cabinet of popularly elected ministers. He insists that before we accept democracy, we should understand what we want from it. Equally penetrating are his observations on economics. To him there can be no political equality unless there is equality of income among individuals. In *Breakages Limited*, Shaw has given us an impressive example of the ravages committed by private enterprises. Lysistrata's protest that *Breakages Limited* has undermined the economic soundness of the country rings in our ears. For Shaw there can be no political progress unless capitalism with its motive of profits is kept under check.

The Apple Cart also dwells on the eternal theme of the relationship between man and woman. Magnus is an ardent worshipper of beauty. But as a responsible king he must have a more dignified woman to fulfill the functions of a queen. He refuses to exchange Jemima for Orinthia.

Shaw always stressed the didactic value of his plays. The Apple Cart delights us by its high dramatic quality. Wit and humour, satire and irony dazzle the spectator. Shaw proves that characterization need not be only through action. Dialogues can pin-point personalities. Even in respect of formal characterization Shaw has taken some pains in *The Apple Cart*.

If we analyse the cabinet, we shall find the ministers paired and contrasted admirably. Proteus is matched to the king in his astuteness, while the two provide a sharp contrast in manners. The humourless Boanarges is set off by the wise-cracking Amanda. The censorious Nicobar is contrasted with worried Crassus. The selfish Balbus is the antipode of the devoted Lysistrata. Again Orinthia who is haughtily conscious of her beauty is contrasted with plainer but saner queen Jemima.

3.3.4 The Title of the Play:

The term "The Apple Cart" is delightfully appropriate. 'To upset an apple cart' is an old English idiom. It means to ruin carefully laid plans. We can imagine the plight of a farmer who has arranged his apples on a cart and then finds the cart suddenly overturned. It is a sad blow to his hopes. Upsetting the apple cart implies the blighting of one's cherished hopes.

In the play the phrase is used twice. The Foreign Secretary Nicobar uses it once. Later the king makes fun of the phrase. The Apple Cart in question is the carefully laid plan of Proteus to reduce the king to zero. Proteus realized that Magnus is too clever a ruler to be easily robbed of his powers. So he presents before the king a nice constitutional problem. He flourishes an ultimatum before the king and wants him to sign it.

Magnus proposes to abdicate. His son will occupy the throne. When the king announces this, Nicobar protests that Magnus is overturning their apple cart. But this is not justified. Magnus agrees that a King should act on the advice of his ministers, otherwise he is unfit for that position. But he wants to contest for the post of the Prime Minister. This is the real upsetting of the apple cart. Proteus is sure of the king's success. So he tears up the ultimatum. He has lost all his apples. When Nicobar is taking leave, the king points out that after all the apple cart has not been overturned. The relations between the king and the cabinet continue to be what they are. Everything has been restored to statusquo. So Nicobar cannot complain that the apple cart has been upset.

Nicobar's answer to the king's taunt is also characteristic. He says that he does not mind how many apple carts the king overturns. He does not realize that the king has no option. This is an apple cart that he cannot disown.

A.C. Ward points out, "Although it may be felt that the conflict in The Apple Cart is between the virtue and clear-sightedness of Magnus and the muddle-headedness or worse of most of the cabinet, the solution at the end of the play, which leaves things as they were before the play began, is the solution which the British constitutional system provided centuries ago for its political problems and has maintained since namely, a balance of power between an elected parliament and a monarch who always has in reserve (even though he may never have occasion to use) the right to withhold consent to any act or proposal which threatens the ultimate sovereignty of the people. It is this system of check and countercheck that the play maintains through Magnus' refusal to be robbed of his reserve powers, and through Proteus's refusal to give Magnus the opportunity to assume what might prove to be far more extensive powers".

Thus the tussel between the king and the cabinet is a well balanced apple cart swaying this way and the other and finally coming to rest on its old props.

3.3.5 Satire in the Play:

Satire is defined as a composition in verse or prose holding up vice or folly to ridicule. The *Apple Cart* is a satire on society. It exposes the illusions and hallucinations that people cherish about democracy and monarchy.

Shaw shows that those who float into politics are usually people most unfit to be in charge of administration. An individual becomes a minister not because he has capacities but because he can command the maximum number of votes. Parliament is filled with many such political climbers who are there only to line their own pockets.

Balbus, the Home Secretary, is not concerned with the progress of the country but only about getting his brother-in-law, the drunkard Mike into the cabinet. Similarly the Colonial Secretary Crassus, admits that he is a man of the monopolistic firm, Breakages Limited. It is only by chance that an efficient administrator like Lysistrata gets into the cabinet. Democracy has no meaning as long as it is run by capitalism.

Shaw debunks the popular notions about royalty. Some people have a blind reverence for the institution, while others consider it to be an anachronism to be swept away at the earliest opportunity. Shaw exposes the unreality of both these points of view. He uses king Magnus to satirize the popular notions about monarchy and democracy. A king is supposed to have the privilege of getting angry and making scenes. Shaw satirises the childish way in which high matters of state are dealt with in the highest council of the land.

He ridicules the king's court also. Magnus bewails that half of the court consists of women who want to be looked upon as infamous. The king gains a reputation of being a man of loose morals. The paradox is that people are eager to drink up stories of the king's libertinism. If a king happens to be an individual of strict morals he becomes unpopular. High society is a misnomer for low men and women.

Shaw also lampoons the American women. The queen says that American ladies pay more respect to her than her own court ladies. King Magnus, however, points out that it is vanity and not sincerity that is at the bottom of this adoration.

The *Apple Cart* shows that in whatever direction we turn, hypocrisy reigns supreme. The only bright feature is the integrity of individuals like Magnus and Lysistrata. Shaw seems to say that no amount of reform will have lasting effect unless men and women are made good.

3.3.6 Bernard Shaw's views on Democracy as revealed in the play:

"The *Apple Cart*" is a political play. Its central theme is the conflict between king Magnus and Prime Minister Proteus about the reserve powers of the king. Proteus objects to the king using the press and the platform to air his views. The king replies that he is not prepared to be a mere figurehead. He is willing to stand for election to Parliament. This stuns Proteus and his cabinet. They withdraw the ultimatum and allow the king to carry on as before.

This seems to suggest that the hereditary has won over the popularly elected ministers. But that is not the idea that Shaw wants to convey. He is merely showing the defects of democracy to set it right for the benefit of the people. Shaw points out that everybody swears by democracy

but few think about the real meaning. People have to be governed. So there should be a government of the people. It is the selection of worthy representatives that presents the problems. It demands intense training and a high level of intelligence. But the men who stand for election do not have these qualifications. Shaw says it is the bull-roarer that becomes the boss. As a result they have to depend on civil servants.

The only man who need not be guided by a consideration of the likes and dislikes of voters is the king. He is more permanently and continuously in office than his ministers. He need not fear a rival candidate. But he is not a free man. He can act only on the advice of his Prime Minister. A king without any check will be a supreme disaster. The king has to be controlled.

People foolishly believe that votes for everybody mean democratic rule. Those who get into Parliament are usually there because they have power enough. All the male members of cabinet except Boanarges are least interested in politics. The only individual who has a sense of mission and devotes all her energies to the advancement of her department happens to be a woman. Shaw stresses that only a few elected people are really interested in good government. Corruption, inefficiency and ineptitude rage free in the cabinet. If this is democracy, it is a detestable thing.

The cabinet acting as a check on the king is right. But today it is outmoded machinery. Shaw warns that if this continues there will be a revolution. It is the failure of democracy that leads to the rise of dictators.

Shaw is a staunch believer in the virtue of democracy. He confesses that Parliamentary legislation cannot eradicate evil out of administration. So in "The Apple Cart" we have no enduring solution for the shortcomings of democracy.

3.3.8 Character Sketches:

1) Proteus:

Joseph Proteus is the Prime Minister of England in The Apple Cart. He is every inch a politician just as Magnus is every inch a king. He is an experienced parliamentarian. He is determined that the ultimate power of the land shall be in his own hands. He does everything necessary to secure this. He loves only power.

Proteus is forced to take into his cabinet men of different opinions and temperaments. His foreign secretary, Nicobar is a suspicious man. Boanarges, the newly nominated President of the Board of Trade, thinks that Proteus can be bettered either by the king or by himself. The three male members of the cabinet are concerned only about their selfish ends. The two women members of the cabinet Lysistrata and Amanda are headaches to Proteus.

Magnus is a constitutional king but he refuses to be a dummy. He insists on his power of veto when the occasion demands it. It is on this issue that Proteus clashes with his king. The constitution is in favour of the Prime Minister. The drama is really the play of wits between Magnus and Proteus.

Proteus states the position of cabinet to the king. He says that the king is using the press and the platform to undermine the authority they have derived from the people. Proteus realizes

that his cabinet is getting divided. He cannot face the wily king with a divided cabinet. He proposes to resign. Three of the ministers get upset and plead with him not to resign. Nicobar and Boanarges do not mind if he steps down from his pedestal and give a chance for other men. When Proteus discovers this trend he cleverly stops pursuing the threat of resignation. He flourishes the ultimatum, which he has prepared for the king to sign. Thus he gets the cabinet back to support him.

The king, however, is a very dangerous antagonist. Proteus must use other weapons to score over the king. So when the king appears along with the two women members of the cabinet, Proteus puts up a show of righteous indignation. When Lysistrata protests that Proteus has no business to interfere in her affairs, the king jocularly points out that it is the business of the Prime Minister to interfere in everyone's affairs. Proteus can only sit down with his face buried in his palms and allow the storm to blow over.

Proteus is thoroughly alive to the tactics of the king. When the other ministers gloat that the king has surrendered, he calls them fools and establishes that the king has not surrendered a jot. Finally he is able to impress on the king that however divided his cabinet may be in other matters, all the ministers support him regarding the constitutional issue. The king sums him up very well when he says that no one knows better than Proteus when to talk and when not to talk, when to be angry and when to keep calm.

Proteus believes in his brand of politics as firmly as the king believes in his. He is sure that people are at his back. But the king is a superior duelist. He also threatens to abdicate and to appeal to the people himself. This is a move that Proteus does not anticipate. He is caught. He knows that at this stage further arguments are useless. He does not lose his presence of mind. Quietly he takes back the ultimatum from the king and tears it. He declares dramatically that the crisis is over and walks out of the hall in a hurry.

Thus Proteus, the Prime Minister, is replete with different types of weapons to deal with different types of situations.

2) Boanarges:

William Boanarges is the newly nominated President of the Board of Trade in king Magnus' Cabinet. He is older than the king. He looks like a typical worker. He is heavily - built and a born talker. He is of the people and he is sure that he is the only one for the people.

Boanarges has an inferiority complex and tries to make a virtue of it. He knows that his manners are imperfect. Throughout his life he moved with working men only. So he has fallen into the habit of speaking without any formality or grace. He believes that politeness in words conceals hypocrisy. When he goes to the palace for the first time to present himself to the king he is deliberately rude and unceremonious. When the king enters he remains seated.

Boanarges is an ardent believer of democracy. But in his simplicity he has not paused to analyse what real democracy means. It is not merely a piece of flattery. The king says that if he steps down the throne will be removed. Then it is Boanarges who stands the best chance of becoming the first President of the Republic. His brief contact with the Princess and the king transforms him. When he attends the Cabinet meeting in the evening he is in a splendid uniform. He asks his colleagues to conduct themselves with dignity and show the king the courtesy his position demands.

Boanarges has no sense of humour. All the others quarrel with him on this account. When Amanda giggles, Boanarges protests that it is unmannerly. He is too simple-minded to follow the intricacies of diplomacy. He does not know when the king is in earnest and when he is pulling other people's legs. Boanarges is an honest individual. He swears stoutly by what he believes in. But he is always open to correction. He is honest enough to admit his error and change his views. He is a genuine patriot.

He is the only man in the Cabinet who has real guts. He has plenty of experience in handling women in key positions. With a little training he will surely prove himself a capable ruler. This non-compromising promising Republican is really the only rival of king Magnus for power.

3) Magnus:

Magnus is the king of England. He is a very interesting character. He is a middle-aged man, tall and studious-looking. The name Magnus means great and magnanimous. The play depicts the conflict between the King and the Prime Minister for supremacy. All the ministers appear to be dwarfs before him. He is the key figure in the play and the real apple cart-upsetter. He is a self-possessed man of thought. He refuses to shed his veto and become a cipher. He does not yield to the demand of the Prime Minister and other ministers. He feels that in a democratic country there must be an authority which can think not only for the present but also for the future and the past. Magnus symbolizes a strong man who can lead a nation towards a better destiny.

The wiles and charms of Orinthia do not make him swerve from morality and a sense of duty. His subjects suspect him to be a libertine. Lysistrata, his staunch admirer in the cabinet says "Your Majesty's private affairs do not concern us in any case". In the 'Interlude', Orinthia raises the question of her name: 'Orinthia, the Beloved' has been taken from a book of romance. But the king turns the tables on her saying that 'Orinthia, the Beloved' is a magic name for him which he had been cherishing since his childhood. When Orinthia compares the queen to cabbages and herself to roses, he says that cabbages are more useful than roses. Every woman in her youth is a rose but becomes a cabbage with the advance of years. He does not want to divorce his wife and marry Orinthia. He knows that his wife has to have men friends from whom she gets something that she cannot get from him. "If she did not do so she would be limited by my limitations, which would end in her hating me."

Magnus is very polite. He does not get angry with the mad manners of Boanarges who does not have the common decency of standing when the king enters. He tactfully tries to correct his faults. He does not lose his temper not even once though the minister behaves rudely. When the Prime Minister rushes out of the meeting room in anger with the behaviour of his ministers, the king convinces him and brings him back into the meeting room. Magnus is an example of patience, cool-headedness, tolerance and forgiveness.

He is a loving father and a good husband. He believes that in future the government will be controlled by huge business organizations like Breakades, Ltd. He wants to make his son a trained businessman but not a politician.

He is a master politician. He does not use his trump card up to the very last moment. Everybody thinks that Magnus has been defeated and outwitted. But when he plays his trump card - abdication and contesting the general election - his opponents are filled with amazement and dismay.

Shaw has shaped the king's character well as a ruling monarch. He has invested him with dignity and grace while making him speak like a normal upper class gentleman. Magnus, says Ward, is one of Shaw's most successful creations. Magnus has wisdom, humour, a teasing wit and a remarkable gift of irony.

3.3.9 The Apple Cart as a drama of ideas:

Shaw's dramas are dramas of purpose. He is mainly interested in politics, philosophy, morals and social reform. Once he wrote "I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinions... I have no other incentive to write plays". By propagating his ideas he wants to bring social reform. For this purpose he used drama as an instrument.

All his plays are about some important aspect of contemporary social life or some important social evil or social institution which he considers as evil. Even in "The Apple Cart", a number of such ideas are discussed and readers are left to think for themselves.

We generally think that democracy is the best form of government as it is the government of the people, for the people and by the people. But here Shaw wants to show that democracy has its own limitations and shortcomings. This is exposed by the behaviour of the cabinet ministers in the cabinet meetings. They constantly quarrel and care for their own good rather than for the good of the country. They are corrupt and seek their own interests. A strong man is needed to govern the people. "Democracy then cannot be government by the people: it can only be government by consent of the governed".

What Shaw wanted to show in the play is that the monarch in a democracy should be a mere figure-head, a mere India rubber stamp who does what his ministers advise him to do. He should not show any self-assertion. The complaint of the Prime Minister is that the king is using his veto, he is making statements and using the press against the elected members of the cabinet. But the king stresses the difficulties of a monarch, the various ways in which he can be of help to the elected representatives of the people, and the services he can perform for the good of the people. Finally the king wins.

It is generally believed that in a democracy the ministers are able men and they enjoy complete freedom. Shaw exposes the real nature of the elected representatives of the people. The ministers are mere puppets in the hands of the bureaucrats. The bureaucrats prepare their speeches which they have to read in public and the ministers have to sign the papers brought to them. The bureaucrats have more power because unlike the ministers they continue in their job till the end of their career. Shaw shows that democracy in the modern age has degenerated into bureaucracy.

Shaw in this play deals with the role of big powerful industrial companies like Breakages Limited. They cause great harm to the nation. They have their own vested interests and they always care for their own good, and never for the nation. With the help of their money they induct their men into the cabinet. As a result we get Plutocracy instead of democracy. The real power lies in their hands. Unless their powers are curbed there will be no meaning at all for democracy and monarchy.

3.3.10 Conclusion:

Shaw has focused on many important ideas in this drama. It is essentially a political drama. He debunks the common man's ideas about democracy and royalty. While Magnus is shown to be an ideal constitutional monarch, the Cabinet of ministers is found to be inefficient. Shaw's plays have a didactic purpose. Wit and humour, satire and irony are used brilliantly. The title is significant as it shows the conflict between the king and his ministers in a balanced manner. This play is a good example of a drama of ideas. It sets forth Shaw's views regarding monarchy, democracy, economics, man-woman relationship and other themes.

3.3.11 Sample questions:

- 1) Consider Shaw's "The Apple Cart" as a play of ideas.
- 2) Comment on the significance of the title of Shaw's "The Apple Cart".
- 3) Comment on Shaw's views on democracy as revealed in "The Apple Cart".
- 4) Sketch the character of King Magnus.
- 5) Sketch the character of Proteus, the Prime Minister
- 6) Sketch the character of Boanarges.
- 7) Comment on the satire in the play "The Apple Cart".

3.3.12 Suggested Reading:

1. A.C. Ward : The Apple Cart. Orient Longman.
2. C. Sengupta: The Art of Bernard Shaw. Macmillan.

Lesson Writer

P.J. VARDHANA RAO

NON-DETAILED STUDY

Unit-IV (Fiction)

Lesson - 3.4

R. K. Narayan: The Financial Expert

3.4.0. Objectives:

1. To acquaint the student with the Indian novel in English.
2. To apprise the student of the novelist's life and works.
3. To familiarize the student with Narayan's style, Indianness, humor and wit.

Structure:

- 3.4.1 Introduction
- 3.4.2 Author: Life and Works
- 3.4.3 Analysis of the Text
- 3.4.4 Characterization
- 3.4.5 Critical Appreciation
- 3.4.6 Glossary
- 3.4.7 Conclusion
- 3.4.8 Sample Questions
- 3.4.9 Reference Books

3.4.1 Introduction:

The Indian novel in English is characterized by a variety of themes and techniques. The origin of Indian English novel dates back to June 6th, 1835 with the publication of Kytash Chunder Dutt's literary fantasy—A Journal of 48 Hour of the Year 1845. Novelists from all parts of the India contributed their mite to the development of Indian English novel. They have given expression to their hopes, dreams, motifs, aspirations, beliefs and culture of the nation. R.K.Narayan writes admirably clean English. Mulk Raj Anand has tried to solve the problem of medium by Indianisation of English words, by literal translation into English of Indian expressions, proverbs etc. Raja Rao successfully transmutes into English, the idiom, the rhythm and the tone of the natural speech of the characters. R.K.Narayan is the most widely read novelist of all times. For him English is an 'absolutely 'swadeshi' language. He has made his fiction with great care and industry. He explores the tremendous possibilities of the comic in his fictitious creative world of Malgudi. His ironic dimension is an integral part of his comic vision. His style is pure and simple. His presentation of life is realistic. Narayan's The Financial Expert is a springly written novel, which deals with avarice.

The book first came out in the 1952. The novel deals with the rise and fall of the hero, Margayya. He gives importance to money and to his son Balu. Financial speculations and gains and his son's deficiency in social and moral aspects cause unhappiness in Margayya's life.

3.4.2 Author: Life and Works:

R. K. Narayan was born in Madras in 1906 and educated there and at Maharajah's College in Mysore. He has lived in India ever since, apart from his travels. Most of his work, starting from his first novel *Swami and Friends* (1935) is set in the fictional town of Malgudi which at the same time captures everything Indian while having a unique identity of its own. After having read only a few of his books it is difficult to shake off the feeling that we have vicariously lived in this town. Malgudi is perhaps the single most endearing "character" R. K. Narayan has ever created.

R. K. Narayan's full name is Rasipuram Krishnaswami Ayyar Naranayanaswami. In his early years he signed his name as R. K. Narayanaswami, but apparently at the time of the publication of *Swami and Friends*, he shortened it to R. K. Narayan on Graham Greene's suggestion.

In 1980, R. K. Narayan was awarded the A.C. Benson award by the Royal Society of Literature and in 1981 he was made an Honorary Member of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. In 1964 he was awarded the Padma Bhushan. In 2000 he received the Padma Vibhushan. In 1989 he was made a member of the Rajya Sabha (the non-elective House of Parliament in India) for his distinguished contributions to India's cultural life. During his six-year term as MP, he had made it a point to speak up for India's children. He received the Sahitya Akademi Award for *The Guide* (1958) Since the 1930's when Narayan – in the company of Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao – cleared the path for modern Indian fiction in English, there has been a remarkable flowering of literary talent of Indian origin in English.

Narayan is concerned with a number of themes and ideas. Human relationships in general, family matters in particular are his chief concerns. Apart from novels, he has also written short stories, prose essays translations of Indian epics and myths, and travelogues. The following are the works of R. K. Narayan:

Novels:

1935- *Swami and Friends*; 1937- *Bachelor of Arts*; 1938- *The Dark Room*; 1945- *The English Teacher*; 1949- *Mr. Sampath - The Printer of Malgudi*; 1952- *The Financial Expert*; 1953- *Grateful to Life and Death*; 1955- *Waiting for the Mahatma*; 1958- *The Guide*; 1961- *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*; 1967- *The Vendor of Sweets*; 1974- *Reluctant Guru*; 1976- *The Painter of Signs*; 1983- *A Tiger for Malgudi*; 1986- *Talkative Man*; 1990- *The World of Nagaraj*; 1993- *The Grandmother's Tale: Three Novellas*;

Stories and Prose Essays:

1947- *An Astrologer's Day and Other Stories*; 1956- *Lawley Road and Other Stories*; 1965- *Gods, Demons, and Others*; 1970- *A Horse and Two Goats*; 1982- *Malgudi Days*; 1985- *Under the Banyan Tree and Other Stories*; 1988- *A Writer's Nightmare: Selected Essays* 1989- *A Story-Teller's World Stories, Essays, Sketches*, 1992- *Malgudi Landscapes*; 1960- *Next Sunday: Sketches and Essays*.

Translations of Indian epics and myths:

1972: The Ramayana; a shortened modern prose version; 1978: The Mahabharata: a shortened modern prose version; Gods, Demons and Others.

Autobiography : 1974: My Days; Travelogues: 1964: My Dateless Diary: An American Journey: The Emerald Route.

3.4.3 Analysis of the Text:

The Financial Expert relates the story of an ambitious financial expert. Krishna is his name. But he is popularly known as Margayya. He begins his career as a small money lender; he does his business under a banyan tree in front of the Co-Operative Land Mortgage Bank in Malgudi. His aim is to help the simple villagers in getting loans from the Co-Operative Bank. In order to better his financial prospects, he performs pooja to Goddess Lakshmi for forty days. He meets Dr. Paul, who is a journalist, socialist and an author. His new friend proposes a formula for earning more and more money. He forces his script *Bed Life or The Science of Marital Happiness* on Margayya and adds that he can make millions by publishing this book. Margayya instantly purchases the manuscript for Rs.25/- and publishes it with the help of Madan Lal of Garden Printery. He gives a new title *Domestic Harmony* for this book. Money begins to flow after the publication of this book. When the sale of the book dwindles, Margayya sells his share to Madan Lal and moves away from him.

Again with the aid of Dr. Paul, he starts a new business i.e. money lending business. He even sets his office in the Market road. With all his money, he fails to guide his son properly. His son Balu hates education. He throws his father's accounts book containing important transactions into the gutter. It is not possible to Margayya to rescue his old practice. To add to his worries Balu runs away from home and reaches Madras. Margayya has no time to think about his son. But his wife compels him to go to Madras for finding his son out. He gets his son back and advises him to eat, rest and put on fat. If necessary he can take as much money as he likes. Balu acts on his father's advice and runs after wine and women.

Now Margayya decides to marry his son to Brinda, the daughter of the owner of a tea estate in Mempi Hills. Balu and his wife are forced to have separate establishment in Lawley Extension. Margayya's final enterprise is to attract deposits on 20% interest. Dr. Paul acts as his tout. Paul's contacts make Margayya fall short of money. Margayya suspects Dr. Paul's hand in ruining his son. When Dr. Paul comes to drop Balu at his gate, Margayya catches him red-handed and thrashes him since Balu is in the company of two flippant girls. As a result Dr. Paul tries his vengeance on Margayya by disclosing his business secrets and persuading people to withdraw their money from this bank. Margayya's house and office are flooded with people demanding their amounts. He is reduced to a state of a dreadful poverty and finally decides to eke out his livelihood by taking up his old profession under the banyan tree opposite the Co-Operative Land Mortgage Bank.

R.K. Narayan's *The Financial Expert* is a well-knit novel. The novel ends where it begins. There are five distinct phases in the life of Margayya that constitutes the novel. 1. The financial adviser to the peasants with his great discoloured knobby tin trunk, transacting business under a banyan tree in front of Malgudi Central Co-Operative Land Mortgage Bank; 2. The prosperous

publisher; 3. The financial adviser to the peasants with his own offices in Market Road; 4. The financial Wizard who receives deposits and pays fabulous rates of interest and; 5. Insolvent Margayya with a prospective return to where he had started. Like a boomerang the curve of Margayya's career comes full circle in the end.

Irony: Narayan's *The Financial Expert* bubbles with irony. The very title of the novel echoes with ironic overtones. The name of the hero Margayya is ironical. It is ironical to call a little-read man as an expert. Margayya is a financial mountaineer and just like a mountaineer, he has set his mind to reach the summit but not to retain it. Margayya is supposed to show the way to the people in crisis. But he himself meets an unexpected crash. He craves for social respect because he suffers from inferiority complex. His forefathers were corpse bearers and with great struggle they could get rid of this job.

The narrative of the novel is based upon realism but because of its theme, Narayan infused into it a fable element. The entire description of pooja pervades with mystery. The old priest is a very strict man who does not accept anything for his advice. When the pooja is over, ironically, he manages to disappear from the narrative. The Madras madman is a strange character in the entire novel. He thinks that he is God's agent. The most important part of his mission is to inform at least ten mortals about death each day and educate them. This is how he informs Margayya falsely that Balu is dead but after some time he comes into contact with Margayya. The mad man's report about Balu's death develops in Margayya an excessive love for his son which ultimately causes his crash.

Dr. Paul, a sociologist and psychologist, comes into contact with Margayya. He proposes to publish *Domestic Harmony* in order to amass wealth. Dr. Paul thinks that his book will serve as a guide to married couples. His main purpose is to create happiness in this world. But the irony is that he himself is not really happy in his life. The printed copies of the book brought great wealth to Margayya. This wealth makes Margayya start a new business i.e. money lending business. Within a short span of time it flourishes beyond measure. Margayya's fall comes through his friend Paul. Professor Naik says: The central theme of the irony of fate, by its very nature demands a treatment in which pure realism must be modified by a strong admixture of an imaginative element.

The way Margayya ascends the ladder of fabulous wealth and his final crash makes us believe that the rise and fall in man's career is quite ironical. Margayya desires to amass riches but is unable to retain it. He wants his son to be an educated gentleman but he turned out to be a man in the gutter. Through financial prosperity he wants to achieve domestic harmony but in vain. There is no harmony at all right from the beginning to the end either in his family life or in his professional life. The hidden irony of a man like Margayya is that he hardly learns from his experiences.

Besides the author's ironic vision, we have traces of local irony. For example, we find irony when Margayya's brother comes to rescue him when he is in disaster. The compactness of his work confirms our opinion that Narayan has gradually mastered his job and irony has taken the shape of a vision of life.

3.4.4 Characterization:

Margayya: R.K. Narayan's novel *The Financial Expert* deals with avarice of a middle class man Krishna, popularly known as Margayya. The name Margayya means 'one who shows

the way.' He has experienced the dominant role that money plays in life. He performs a rigorous ritual to Goddess Lakshmi for forty days to amass wealth. He is immeasurably obsessed by the power of money and judges everything in terms of money. According to him: "A man whom the Goddess of wealth favors need not worry much. He can buy all the knowledge he requires. He can afford to buy all the gifts that Goddess Saraswati holds in her palm." He becomes more and more interested in accumulating money. The ups and downs in his life make him a great thinker.

Margayya is a man of progressive ideas. He shuns the old beliefs regarding Astrology. He puts aside the predictions of the Astrologer when the question of his son's marriage grips his mind. Though Brinda's horoscope did not tally with Balu's, he performs their marriage. But just as a mark of formality he consulted the Astrologer.

He believes in the dignity of labour. He is awfully busy in his affairs throughout the day. Even during the meal time his mind is preoccupied with different calculations. His practical way of thinking and hard-working nature make him shine brilliantly in business. But the element of chance lands him in deep distress. In spite of his rise in fortune, he does not live in luxury. He lives moderately and travels only in third class with all inconveniences and discomforts. This shows that Margayya has not changed even after acquiring riches.

Margayya is a great visionary. But his excessive love for money and immense fondness for his son prevent him from seeing the facts. Though he provides everything to Balu, he fails in the matriculation examination and turns out a black sheep. His vision of Balu's college studies and building a new house crumbles down. His optimistic dreams of making his son a doctor and sending him to England for specialization in Surgery remain unfulfilled.

The book *Domestic Harmony* paves a smooth way for Margayya in his financial career. But it does not improve his domestic harmony. Margayya never set his heart in maintaining his new financial status. He never tries to learn from his life experiences.

Balu: Balu's character raises our curiosity and interest in the novel. After the close of the day's heavy work when Margayya reaches home, Balu comes out running with a question, 'what have you brought today?' He satisfies his son by promising a new engine. Stubborn Balu snatches the accounts register and dashes off. Margayya fails to snatch the book from him. Meanwhile Balu throws the Red Accounts book into the gutter. Thus the register is lost beyond recovery. Balu becomes the chief concern for Margayya. Slowly he grows into a spoilt child. One day when there is no ghee in his food he throws away the rice and kicks off his plate. At the age of six with great pomp and show he is admitted to the town Elementary School. Balu receives special attention in the school because his father is the secretary of the school. But later on Balu is daily caned in the school. At the end of the academic year with the progress card marked zero, Margayya desires that his son should go abroad for higher education.

Margayya engages teachers for Balu to teach his lessons at home. Balu reaches the fourth form when he attained thirteen years of age and his father dreams of his son passing into a college. This dream is partly shattered when he sees his son's room in great disorder. The fact that his son is developing an attitude of disrespect towards Goddess Saraswati brings pain to Margayya. In spite of his two attempts Balu has not cleared his Matriculation examination. He has even picked up the new habit of smoking cigarettes. He does not return home before nine in the night. His

mother is aware that his son is a slave of cigarette smoke. Margayya and Balu come to an understanding of 'live and let live' philosophy. Spoilt Balu deserts home. Margayya locates his son in Macras. Thinking that marriage will bring transformation in Balu, he gets his son married to Brinda. After the marriage Balu is allowed to live separately. Now Dr. Paul enters his life and extracts money from time to time. Balu forgets his responsibilities towards his wife and child. Margayya is shocked to learn that his son returns home everyday at 2 O' clock and that Dr. Paul has put him in the evil company of women. Margayya is not too late in understanding Dr. Paul. When he was about to leave his son's house Dr. Paul's car arrives and his son gets down from the car. In a fit of emotion Margayya drags Dr. Paul out of the car and slaps him with his sandal. Balu's greed for his father's money ruined him a lot.

Brinda: One of the most important characters in the novel is Brinda, Balu's wife. She is the daughter of a wealthy tea estate owner. Margayya cleverly manages to marry his only son to Brinda. Though horoscopes did not match, Balu marries Brinda, a girl of seventeen years. After their marriage they shift to a new house in Lawley's Road. Dr. Paul enters into their life and disturbs them greatly.

Brinda is a submissive wife. A baby is born to Brinda and Balu. Balu is not on good terms with his wife from the beginning. But Margayya knows well that Brinda is a nice girl. She does not hide her husband's character from her father-in-law. She is not an old fashioned girl. Though she is a minor character in the novel she plays an important role in the progress of the novel. She reveals the true character of Dr. Paul, her husband's most dependable companion: "Dr. Paul was his constant companion. They gathered in a house of a man who called himself the theatrical agent. ... They chewed tobacco and betel leaves, sometimes they drank also and men and women were free and all of them dropped where ever they sit, and slept and became sick when they drank too much." Very bravely she exposes Balu in his true colours.

Meenakshi: She is the wife of Margayya. She is always anxious about the welfare of her husband and her son. She is an embodiment of Indian womanhood.

Dr. Paul: He is a journalist, sociologist and the author of the manuscript *Bed Life*. In the beginning he renders all possible help to Margayya and later on turns out to be instrumental in the fall of Margayya. He is the cause for the ruin of Balu's career.

Mad man: He is the owner of The House of Enlightenment. He is a rich fellow gone mad. His house resembles a zoo. He owns a theatre, which is managed by his relatives. His mission in life is to inform at least ten mortals about death each day and educate them. He is in the habit of picking up addresses and writing messages to them.

Madan Lal: He is the proprietor of Gordon Printery in the Market Road. He is a hefty rose-cheeked man and a voracious eater. He is the printer of *Domestic Harmony* which yields Margayya sizeable profit. He actually commands business and income.

Temple Priest: He is a wise and well-versed Pandit in ancient studies. Margayya happens to meet this priest all of a sudden and believes that he is the most suitable person to give him advice on all important matters.

Arul Doss: He is the head peon of the Co-operative Bank. He is an old Christian who has grown up with the Banking institution. He has been serving the department for twenty-nine years.

Guru Raj: He is a dealer in blankets and becomes the first client of Dr. Paul, the tout in Margayya's banking business. He is the owner of the house of Margayya's office.

Sastry: He is Margayya's accountant. He is very punctual and works sincerely without wasting time. His main work is to copy down the mortgages of those villagers that come for financial assistance. He is paid fifty rupees a month. He helps in settling the marriage of Margayya's son with Brinda.

Police Inspector: He is a sincere and sympathetic police inspector who renders timely help to Margayya. While going to Madras, Margayya meets this police inspector in a train. He is firm in his duty and finds out the whereabouts of Balu.

Mr. Murthy: He is the Arithmetic and English teacher of the Town Elementary School. He wears a long coat and carries a cane in his hand. He is Balu's tutor at home and feels a sense of pride in being the tutor of his school secretary's son.

Mr. Nathaniel: One of the important teachers of Balu in the Town Elementary School. He is a mild Christian who loves children very much. He takes delight in telling the children numerous stories.

Margayya's Brother: He is a real rival to Margayya. He is very clever and manages to cut Margayya off with half a house, while he himself remains a respectable man.

Gorden Printery: It is a fairly big printing press in the Market Road. Madan Lal is the owner of this Printery.

Lawley Extension: An important residential area in Malgudi.

Co-Operative Land Mortgage Bank: A Mortgage bank situated in Malgudi.

3.4.5 Critical Appreciation:

R.K. Narayan's *The Financial Expert* is a well formed novel. He does not forget to censor social evils like dowry. The writer shows his total understanding about child psychology. Narayan has made use of simple sentences in his dialogues. For instance the conversation between a peasant and the financial expert can be cited: "Please, said a peasant, 'be careful, sir. That Arul Das is a bad fellow'. 'I am also a bad fellow', snapped Margayya." We find novelty in the use of comparisons in his writings: "The disorderly box of Margayya was as hateful to him as the thought of Arul Das"; "Vinayak Modili Streets like an oven in summer.

An experience has to be communicated precisely by the novelist. Narayan correctly points out in his novel: "The musician hums the right note of birth; the writer goes to the precise phrase in the face of an experience". Narayan appears quite conscious of the use of certain words. Margayya, the financial expert, differentiates with subtlety between mopey, riches and fortune. The novelist has freely used those Hindi words for which English words are difficult to be found; for example: *pooja*, *purohit*, *karma*, *ghee*, *mantra* etc.

In short and simple sentences Margayya describes his predicament at the end of the novel. In all his novels Narayan has used and utilized the valuable treasure of Indian epics and myths. His consistent use of myths earns him a unique position in the field of Indian novel in

English. The temple-priest in the novel emphasises the importance of pooja in life and refers to the well-known religious story of Markandeya who won over Yama through pooja. Narayan's style of using myth in his novels makes the readers understand human life more vividly. Besides these epic references he lashes out at the evils of dowry and corruption in offices. Narayan always maintains harmony of style with the subject matter.

Walsh holds the view that "If Anand is the novelist as the reformer, Raja Rao the novelist as the Metaphysical poet, Narayan is simply the novelist as novelist". According to Harish Raizada, "The creation of Margayya, a tragi-comic and an ambiguous financial expert, is R. K. Narayan's special contribution to Indo-Anglian fiction." According to M. K. Naik, "The central theme of the irony of fate, by its very nature demands treatment in which pure realism must be modified by a strong admixture of an imaginative element." Graham Greene says that "Margayya's son Batu whose progress from charming childhood to spoilt frustrated manhood is perhaps the saddest episode Narayan has written". William Walsh comments that "The run of the language here is easy and natural, the tone cool, bantering and even."

3.4.6 Glossary:

1. dwindle : to become smaller in size or amount.
2. thrash : to hit a person or animal hard many times.
3. journalist : a person who writes news or articles for newspapers or magazines.
4. enterprise : an organization or a business that will make money.
5. sociologist : one who studies sociology or is an expert in sociology.
6. accumulate : to collect a large number of things over a long period of time.
7. profession : any type of work which needs special training or skill.
8. overtone : something that is suggested but is not clearly stated.
9. summit : the highest, most successful point in something.
10. inferiority complex : a feeling that one is not as good, as intelligent etc. as others.
11. realism : a way of thinking and acting based on the facts of a situation and what appears to be possible, rather than on hopes for things which are unlikely to happen.
12. psychologist : someone who studies the human mind and human emotions and behaviour, and how different situations have an effect on them.
13. harmony : a pleasant musical sound made by different notes being played or sung at the same time.
14. disaster : great harm, damage or death, or serious difficulty.
15. snapped : immediately accept someone's offer to join your company or team; to buy or get something quickly and enthusiastically because it is cheap or exactly what you want.

16. fortune : a large amount of money, goods, property, etc.; chance and the way it affects your life.
17. predicament : an unpleasant situation which is difficult to get out of:
18. epic : describes events that happen over a long period and involve a lot of action and 19. difficulty; or a film, poem or book which is long and contains a lot of action, usually dealing with a historical subject
20. myth : an ancient story or set of stories, especially explaining in a literary way the early history of a group of people or about natural events and facts
21. unique : being the only existing one of its type or, more generally, unusual or special in some way
22. rigorous : careful to look at or consider every part of something to make certain it is correct or safe
23. obsessed : unable to stop thinking about something; too interested in or worried about something
24. shun : to avoid something
25. astrology : the study of the movements and positions of the sun, moon, planets and stars, and the skill of describing the expected effect that these are believed to have on the character and behaviour of humans
26. visionary : a person who possesses the ability to imagine how a country, society, industry, etc. will develop in the future and to plan in a suitable way
27. optimist : someone who always believes that good things will happen
28. crumbles : to break, or cause something to break, into small pieces
29. stubborn : someone who's determined to do what they want, refuses to do anything else
30. gutter : the lowest level, especially of society
31. desert : to leave someone without help or in a difficult situation and not come back

3.4.7 Conclusion:

Narayan is one of the major novelists in English. All his novels are woven round the fictitious town Malgudi, created by Narayan. He was honoured with 'Sahitya Akademi' Award for his novel *The Guide*. Our present novel *The Financial Expert* deals with the financial adventures of an illiterate village gentleman, Krishna, popularly known as Margayya. Having tasted the five phases of his

career—the financial adviser to the simple folk, the prosperous publisher, money lender in Market Road, the financial wizard and the insolvent Margayya—he comes back to his first stage to restart his profession. The title of the novel as well as the name of the hero echo with irony. Child-psychology and the average Indian mother and wife's thinking are beautifully portrayed by the novelist. Probably the novelist wants to show through this novel that financial practices of an average India may raise him to great heights, but they can be mercilessly shaken by rumours.

3.4.8 Sample Questions:

1. Justify the title of *The Financial Expert*.
2. Sketch the character of Balu.
3. Sketch the character of Brinda.
4. Write a note on the character of Margayya.
5. Write a note on the Irony in the novel *The Financial Expert*.
6. Comment on the theme of Narayan's *The Financial Expert*.
7. Write a note on Narayan's characterisation.

3.4.9 Reference Books:

1. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar: *Indian Writing in English*
2. M.K.Naik: *The Ironic Vision: A Study of the Fiction of R.K. Narayan*
3. J.K.Biswal: *A Critical Study of the Novels of R.K.Narayan.*
4. R.K.Narayan: *The Financial Expert.*
5. P.P. Mehta: *Indo-Anglian Fiction: An Assessment.*
6. William Walsh: *R.K.Narayan: A Critical Appreciation.*
7. M.K.Naik: *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English.*

Lesson Writer

P. GOPI CHAND

Non-Detailed Study

Unit-IV (Fiction)

Lesson - 3.5

Oliver Goldsmith: The Vicar of Wakefield

3.5.0. Objective:

1. To acquaint the student with the early British novel.
2. To develop the skills of literary appreciation.
3. To familiarize the student with Goldsmith's style, humor and gentle wit.

Structure:

- 3.5.1 Introduction
- 3.5.2 Author: Life and Works
- 3.5.3 Analysis of the Text
- 3.5.4 Characterization
- 3.5.5 Critical Appreciation
- 3.5.6 Glossary
- 3.5.7 Conclusion
- 3.5.8 Sample Questions
- 3.5.9 Reference Books

3.5.1 Introduction:

The discovery of the modern novel is the typical growth of the 18th century. It is the contribution of England to the world of literature. The idea of the modern novel seems to have been worked out largely on English soil. With regard to the quantity and the quality of the novelists, England has hardly been rivaled by any other nation. The novel has been the prevailing type of popular literature since 1740. The real beginning of the English novel took place with the publication of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. By rejecting all the conventions of the romance and by adopting with studious precision, the manner and tone of actual biography, it became very near to the genuine world. Writers like Addison and Steele contributed much to the evolution of the realistic novel. Richardson's *Pamela* is the first true novel that appeared in any literature. During this period Richardson, Smollet, Sterne, Fielding are known as the four wheels of novel because all of them seem to have seized upon the idea of reflecting life as it is in the form of a story, and to have developed it simultaneously.

Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* was published in 1766 with the sub-title of 'A Tale Supposed to be Written by Himself.' It had been written as early as 1764. When Dr. Johnson called at his lodgings, he found him about to be arrested by his landlady for debt. The book was sold to a book seller for sixty pounds. By the time of Goldsmith's death this book went for six editions. It was translated into almost all of European languages. The novel is an unusual one, a moral and didactic tale made up of a series of appalling misfortunes suddenly redeemed by an abruptly contrived happy ending. Dr. Primrose passes through happiness poverty, sorrow, imprisonment, unspeakable loss of his daughters –but emerges triumphantly by his faith in God.

3.5.2 Author: Life and Works

Oliver Goldsmith was born at Smith-Hill House, Elphin, Roscommon, Ireland, in 1728. Soon after his birth his family moved to Kilkenny West, where Oliver first went to school. At the age of nine he left the little school at Kilkenny, and attended several academies. In 1744 he went to Trinity College, Dublin, where he barely managed to make a living. His personal ungainliness and crude manners prevented his making many acquaintances, and his life at college was miserable. He graduated in 1749, after the death of his father, and went to live with his mother. He cast about him in search of a profession. He was a tutor at one time, but lost his position as the result of a quarrel. He decided later to immigrate to America, but missed his ship. He then determined to study law, and once again set forth to Dublin, where he gambled away the fifty pounds which had been given him.

When he was twenty-four he was again endowed and went to Edinburgh to study medicine, where for a year and a half he made some slight pretence at attending lectures, and then went to Leyden, presumably to continue his studies. From Holland he proceeded on a walking tour through Flanders, France, Switzerland, and the north of Italy, earning his board and keep with his flute. In 1756 he returned to England, without a penny in his pocket, although he had, according to his own statement, received a doctor's degree. In London he turned his hand to every sort of work: translation, the writing of superficial histories, children's books, and general articles. One of the works of this period which is still included in the Works is the *Enquiry into the State of Polite Learning in Europe*. Through the publication of *The Bee* and the *Life of Beau Nash*, Goldsmith achieved considerable popularity, and his fortunes began to mend. He belonged to the circle of Johnson, Burke, Reynolds, and was one of "The Club." *The Traveller* appeared in 1764, and his reputation as a poet was firmly established. *The Vicar of Wakefield*, published two years later, increased his popularity, and when he produced his first play, *The Good Natur'd Man* (1768), though the play was not a success, it was widely read in book-form. In 1770 came *The Deserted Village*, and three years after his dramatic masterpiece, *She Stoops to Conquer*, which was highly successful. Goldsmith was meanwhile busy with a great deal of hack-work — *The Natural History*, *The Histories of England, Rome, and Greece* — which was very remunerative. But Goldsmith's carelessness, his intemperance, and his habit of gambling, soon brought him into debt. Broken in health and mind, he died in 1774.

His works:

The Vicar of Wakefield, 1766

The Traveller, 1764

- The Deserted Village, 1770
- She Stoops to Conquer or The Mistakes of a Night, 1773
- The Letters of a Citizen of the World, 1762
- The Good Natured Man, 1768
- A Trip to Scotland, 1770
- The Present State of Polite Learning, 1759

3.5.3 Analysis of the Text:

Dr. Primrose, the Vicar of Wakefield, is a happy married man. Mrs. Primrose is a good housewife. Their sons George, Moses, Dick and Bill are dutiful. Their daughters Olivia and Sophia are charming. All of them are simple and kind-hearted. Misfortune, however, overtakes the family. The Vicar's banker runs away with most of his money. The engagement of George with a rich heiress, Arabella, is broken off. The Vicar sends George away to seek his fortune. He himself takes charge of a smaller parish, in a distant village. The family shifts there. On the way they make friends with one Burchell. He was once rich, but he was over-generous with his money and is now poor. He rescues Sophia from drowning and wins her affection.

In their new place, their landlord Squire Thornhill visits them. The Vicar does not like his free and easy ways, but Mrs. Primrose thinks that the Squire might marry Olivia. To impress the Squire she and her daughters begin to live in grander style. This leads to many amusing situations. Moses and the Vicar are sent to the fair to sell their horses. Both are cheated by the smooth rogue, Jenkinson. The Squire introduces two ladies from London. They tempt Olivia and Sophia to accompany them to London. But Burchell learns about their bad intentions and warns them off the house. Mrs. Primrose thinks that he has spoilt the chances of her daughters. She asks him not to visit the house in future.

To see whether the Squire is serious about Olivia, Mrs. Primrose tries a trick. She encourages farmer Williams to woo the girl. But one day Olivia disappears. She has been kidnapped by someone. The sad Vicar goes in search of her. Accidentally he meets George who left home three years back. George narrates many strange adventures as author, actor and wandering musician. The Squire is meanwhile courting the rich Arabella. He gets George out of the way by securing him a commission in the army. Then the Vicar, by another accident meets Olivia in an inn. He learns it was the Squire who seduced her. The Vicar pardons her and brings her home. Further misfortunes pour in. The Vicar's home is destroyed by fire. The shameless Squire wants the Vicar to consent to his marriage to Arabella. The Vicar, who considers Olivia to be the wedded wife, will not agree to this. The Squire gets the Vicar arrested for some imaginary debts.

In the prison, the Vicar meets Jenkinson, a cheat, who regrets his misdeeds. Jenkinson wants to help the Vicar. He makes the good man believe that Olivia is dead. He persuades the Vicar to write to the Squire that he has now no objection to his marriage to Arabella. But the Squire treats the letter with contempt. News arrives that Sophia has also been kidnapped. George too is brought to the jail on a charge of having killed one of the Squire's men in a fight. The Vicar does not lose his faith in God. He prepares himself and George for death.

Suddenly the tide turns. Sophia comes in. Burchell has rescued her. It turns out that Burchell is in fact the wise and just Sir William Thornhill, the uncle of the Squire and the real owner of the estate. He conducts an enquiry. George is proved innocent and released. Arabella arrives and says that she wants to marry only George. Jenkinson brings proof that it was the Squire who arranged the kidnapping of Sophia. He also proves that the Squire is legally married to Olivia. He produces Olivia herself. The Squire is a shamed and asks his uncle's pardon. Sir William now asks for the hand of Sophia. The Vicar gladly agrees. George weds Arabella and Sir William marries Sophia. The Vicar's lost fortune is restored. Virtue is fully rewarded. Everything ends happily.

Goldsmith in his simple story of common life has accomplished three important results: 1. He has made human fatherhood almost a divine thing. 2. He has glorified the moral sentiments, which cluster about the family life as the centre of civilization. 3. He has given a striking and enduring figure in Dr. Primrose, who seems more like a personal acquaintance than a character in a novel.

Plot, Structure and Technique:

The Vicar of Wakefield is the story of Dr. Primrose and his family. He is a pious and sincere clergyman with six children. In the beginning he has a handsome house and rich friends. Suddenly a series of misfortunes engulf him. First, he loses his wealth, then he moves to a new living under the patronage of Squire Thornhill. His second misfortune is the elopement of his eldest daughter with Squire Thornhill. His third calamity is that all his belongings, his house, furniture books are reduced to ashes in a fire accident. His fourth misfortune is that he is thrown into prison for his debts. His fifth calamity is that he hears of the death of Olivia and the abduction of Sophia. Lastly, his eldest son George is imprisoned for challenging Squire Thornhill.

Dr. Primrose's cup of sorrow was full, but comfort was at hand. One after the other all his misfortunes cleared up. Olivia was not really dead. Sophia had been rescued by Mr. Burchell (Sir William Thornhill in disguise). George was set free from prison and married Miss. Wilmont, an heiress. Olivia's marriage to the Squire, which was believed to be false, was shown to be legal and valid. At last the old Vicar was released from prison and he reestablished his lost fortune and honour.

The novel consists of thirty-two chapters, which can be divided into three parts:

Part-1 chapters 1 to 3 (beginning); Part-2 chapters 4 to 29 (main part) Part-3 chapters 30 to 32 (denouement); chapter 17 is the climax as well as an essential turning point of the novel (Olivia is reported to be fled). From this chapter onwards the novel changes from a comical account of 18th century country life into a pathetic melodrama with didactic traits. There are quite a few interpolations of different literary genres like poems, histories and sermons which widen the restricted view of the first person narration. The novel can be regarded as a fictitious memoir as it is told by the Vicar himself by retrospection. Comic situations come from the fact that the reader is often leading in knowledge. Sometimes hints are given which point to the happy ending of the novel.

The structure of the novel **Vicar of Wakefield** is simple. The earlier chapters of the book show the leisurely life lead by the Vicar and his family. From these heights the Vicar will fall and then the misfortunes begin to pile up more and more rapidly. In chapter Twenty-eight they come with such rapidity that the reader is hardly able to absorb them. This represents the low point of the Vicar's fortunes. The sermon to prisoners in chapter Twenty-nine represents an interlude.

Although several of the characters go off in several directions the story line remains simple. It is like the plot of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. The reason for this is Goldsmith's use of the first person narrator. It is always the Vicar's version of the story that we hear, which means that he must always be present at the events he narrates. We do not have a novel in which the author breaks his plot into several sections and moves back and forth from one section to another. It is only the omniscient author who can do that. The point of view, i.e. first person narration determines to a large extent the structure of the novel.

Goldsmith frequently uses coincidence as a narrative technique. The use of co- incidence by a story-teller is for literary convention. It is a means for economically organizing fictional material. It is a kind of distortion of strict realism for literary or aesthetic purposes. One of the world's outstanding novelists, Dostoevski, was not reluctant to make use of this device in his novels. It is a convenient way through which the novelist can bring his characters together quickly. A possible problem arises when a novelist relies too much and frequently upon this convention. For purposes of moving the story along, Goldsmith has done this in the novel *Vicar of Wakefield*. He acknowledges as much in Chapter thirty one, where he depends a great deal on coincidence to bring his characters together and to reverse the downward spiraling of the plot. He pauses in his quick relation of events to make the following explanation: "Nor can I go on without a reflexion on those accidental meetings, which, though they happen every day, seldom excite our surprise, but upon some extraordinary occasion." An over reliance on coincidence may very well be 'one of the hundred faults in this thing' which Goldsmith refers to in the preface to his novel.

3.5.4 Characterization:

Dr. Primrose: Dr. Primrose is the chief character in the *Vicar of Wakefield*. With a few masterly strokes Goldsmith astonishingly presents a very lively picture. Rev. Dr. Charles Primrose is a clergyman of great piety. Every one in Wakefield adores him and comes to him for spiritual guidance. Macaulay writes that "The earlier chapters have all the sweetness of pastoral poetry, together with all the vivacity of comedy". Though they are delightful absurdities in the first few chapters, they only endear the Vicar to us. The Vicar supports the Whitsonian Theory of forbidding the priest of the Church of England, to marry after the death of the first wife. The Vicar's action of placing his wife's epitaph over the chimneypiece evokes humor. Another weakness of the Vicar is literary vanity. In strange contrast to his heavenly wisdom and acquired learning, is his utter ignorance about worldly wisdom. When calamities fall upon him, his fortitude and patience give us a sublime picture. Goldsmith shows his Vicar busy at good works; even in the jail he makes him preach his sermon in the midst of his troubles. He strongly believes that the primrose of happiness must be sought in heaven, for philosophy can bring the miserable no comfort: "As we grow older the days seem to grow shorter, and our intimacy with time ever lessens the perception of his stay. Then let us take comfort now, for we shall soon be at our journey's end."

He has ultimate faith in humanity as well as in another world where things will be better. Unlike his wife, he does not like to encourage Squire Thornhill's attentions: because he wisely recognizes that unequal combinations are always dangerous. In suffering the inner fragrance of the soul blooms in all its splendour. Real heroism, profound moral loveliness coexists in Dr. Primrose. Even when surrounded by criminals in the prison, he appeals to the better side of them and seeks

to restore their virtue and save their souls: "In less than a fortnight I had formed them into some thing social and humane." There are true Christian virtues i.e. charity and forgiveness in the heart of Dr. Primrose. As a priest, husband, parent and a human being, the Vicar is superb.

Sir William Thornhill (Burchell): Sir William Thornhill is the uncle of Squire Thornhill. He appears in the story in a double character. First he appears as the poor and generous Burchell. But towards the end of the novel we see him as the wise and just Sir William. The Vicar's family first meets him at an inn. Burchell has given three pounds to an old man who has no money to pay his hotel bill. The Vicar is attracted by his generosity. It is from Burchell that the Vicar learns about Sir William. Burchell explains that Sir William's friends deserted him when he became poor by his generosity. Sir William got wealthy again but decided to test his friends before accepting them.

Burchell moves closely with the Primrose family. He saves Sophia from the stream and wins her love. The children, Dick and Bill, find in him a lovable uncle. Burchell comes to know of the evil intentions of the two ladies from London. He writes to them a letter of warning. A copy of the letter falls into the hands of the Vicar. He and his wife think that he has spoilt their daughters' chances. They ask him not to come to their house.

Next we meet him after he had saved Sophia. George recognizes him to be Sir William. Then the Knight conducts an enquiry. All his nephew's bad deeds are exposed. He orders the release of George and the Vicar. He makes over one third of his estate to Olivia and makes the Squire dependent on her. To tease Sophia he suggests that she might marry Jenkinson. She feels hurt. Then he expresses his love for her. He gives Jenkinson five hundred pounds for his services to the Vicar. His marriage with Sophia is celebrated the next day.

Squire Thornhill: Squire Thornhill is the villain of the story. Sir William allowed him to enjoy the fruits of his estate. The Squire uses this opportunity in a bad way. The Squire is handsome and refined in manners. He lives only for pleasures. He seduces girls and abandons them. The simple Primroses are deceived by him. The Vicar does not like the Squire's free and easy ways. But Mrs. Primrose encourages Olivia and Sophia to win his favour.

The Squire does not want to be tied down by marriage. He brings two bad women to take the girls to London for him to seduce. But Burchell's letter frightens away the women. The Squire then persuades Olivia to run away with him. He goes through a mock marriage with her and then deserts her.

Afterwards he courts the rich Arabella. When George appears on the scene he manages to send him away by getting him a commission in the army. He tells Arabella many fairy tales about George's conduct. He gets Arabella's father to transfer to him all Arabella's property. To keep up appearances he wants the Vicar and Olivia to attend his proposed marriage. When the Vicar refuses, he imprisons him for not clearing his rent arrears. Then he gets George arrested on a false charge of killing his servant Baxter. He makes Baxter carry off Sophia so that he would rescue her and win her love. Suddenly Burchell appears and spoils his plan.

In the jail Jenkinson, Baxter and another servant expose his misdeeds. Jenkinson proves that his marriage to Olivia is legal. The Squire has to beg his uncle's pardon. Sir William makes him a dependent on Olivia. The Squire becomes a gentleman and a faithful husband finally.

Characters at a Glance:

- Dr. Charles Primrose:** The Vicar of Wakefield, the narrator and the hero of the novel. He is an exceptionally good man with deep faith in God and the courage of conviction.
- Deborah Primrose:** Wife of the Vicar. She comes to grief for her attempts to live a high life.
- George:** The eldest son of Dr. Primrose.
- Moses:** The second son of Dr. Primrose.
- Olivia (Livy):** Dr. Primrose's first daughter. She loves Squire Thornhill and marries him.
- Sophia (Sophy):** Dr. Primrose's second daughter.
- Dick and Bill:** The youngest children of Dr. Primrose.
- Arabella Wilmot:** Daughter of Mr. Wilmot; Marries George, the eldest son of Dr. Primrose.
- Farmer Williams:** A good man who is an admirer of Olivia. He is encouraged to woo Olivia in order to find out if Squire Thornhill was true in his love for Olivia.
- Miss Flamboroughs:** Daughters of Mr. Flamborough. The eldest marries Jenkinson and the younger Moses.
- Wilmot:** Vicar of a village near Wakefield. His daughter Miss Arabella Wilmot, marries George, the eldest son of Dr. Primrose.
- Lady Blarney and Miss Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs:** The two ladies of fashion from London.
- Squire Thornhill:** Nephew of Sir William Thornhill. He is the perfect villain and a scoundrel of the first water, responsible for all the miseries of Dr. Primrose and his family.
- Baxter:** A tall red-haired man with long legs. He is the best runner in England. He is employed by Squire Thornhill to abduct young ladies. He abducts Olivia and Sophia. He later joins Ephraim Jenkinson to expose the villainies of Squire Thornhill.
- Ephraim Jenkinson:** A cheat. He cheats Moses, Flamborough and Dr. Primrose at the market. But in jail, he turns a new leaf. He becomes repentant and helps Dr. Primrose and his family to regain their lost position. He exposes the villainies of Squire Thornhill. He marries the Elder Miss Flamborough.
- Wakefield:** The parish of which Dr. Primrose is the Vicar.
- Mr. Symonds:** The inn-keeper who first tells the vicar about Squire Thornhill's disreputable character.
- Solomon Flamborough:** Neighbour of the Primrose family. He is extremely garrulous and repetitious. One of his daughters is the object of Moses' affections.

3.5.5 Critical Appreciation:

With little doubt, *The Vicar of Wakefield* is Oliver Goldsmith's most enduring novel. It was written between 1761 and 1762 and published in 1766. Dr. Johnson sold it for Goldsmith at a

price of £60. We begin and occasionally return to a state of idyllic calm in the parish of the eponymous clergyman, Dr Primrose, but disaster strikes quickly. Primrose is made penniless by the bankrupting of a merchant. Squire Thornhill makes his appearance on the scene and in his dashing manner encourages questionable attitudes and behaviour in Primrose's wife and children, while there are various subsidiary adventures such as poor Mr. Burchell's valiant saving of Sophie Primrose and later suspicion for the disappearance of Sister Olivia. The novel follows the vicar's fruitless quest to find his daughter, his accidental discovery of his son George, and the wretched Thornhill's vulgar treatment of women. The moral tale is notable for Primrose's strength of character in times of great difficulty and for its rejection of the ostentatious style of other novels of the time.

Dr. Johnson impatiently called it "a mere fanciful performance." The mood of the seventeenth sixties did not suit it; gradually, however, its popularity spread. During the Victorian age it was translated into a dozen languages and its characters became a part of the English literary folklore. And yet by any standards it is a slipshod piece of work. Improbability is heaped on improbability until the mechanics of the plot become quite outrageous. The characters, too, will scarcely bear analysis. The good are very, very good and most of the wicked damnable: only the rogue, Jenkinson, is allowed to be betwixt and between – otherwise the heart is overwhelmingly in the right or the wrong place. And the dialogue, considering that Goldsmith possessed a good ear for music and wrote excellent plays, is remarkable for its artificiality. Yet millions of people have loved it, and tens of thousands still read it every year with immense pleasure, alien as it is to current literary interests or techniques. Why? Primarily because:

- i) It radiates goodness, and goodness most writers have found almost impossible to convey without being either sententious or tedious or both. Dr. Primrose, the hero, however, is a very good man. Of course, he is silly, gullible, too prone to charity, and a natural victim of all who are tyrannical and vicious. So he suffers, and he suffers badly.
- ii) The whole novel is an odyssey of undeserved disaster. Primrose is stripped of everything—home, daughters, son, and reputation—only through trusting human beings. Yet he never loses hope, never, even in jail, tires of life. His spirit proves unbreakable. He retains a relish for living in the worst of times. And that, of course, is the experience of humanity. Men and women do not break under public disaster or private grief: they endure, and maybe as they go on they find they still like living. And that is the moral of *The Vicar of Wakefield*.
- iii) The buffets of a wanton Fate cannot destroy the human spirit. This is the theme of the novel and although it still appeals deeply to its readers, it probably appealed even more intensely to the rougher, more uncertain world of the nineteenth century, where feudal tyranny still flourished. Men at that time could still violate justice, suborn witnesses, browbeat the poor, and stamp on the humble. Men by the very nature of their status were at the mercy of their social superiors, and much that seems wildly improbable to us appeared not so singular to our grandfathers.
- iv) That a rich squire should get his way not only with girls but also with the law might be the material of melodrama, yet it was never a figment of the imagination. It happened. Doubtless Goldsmith could have given chapter and verse, for many of the blows that Dr. Primrose suffered, from his memories of his father's time as a

country parson in Ireland. And, of course, Goldsmith himself knew the outrages that the powerless and the poverty-stricken had to endure at the hands of their richer superiors. Also he knew the reverse of this: how a man of generous instincts could shower unexpected blessings on those inferior to himself as Sir William Thornhill did on the Primrose family. In Goldsmith's day, and for long after, the wheel of chance could whirl with astonishing speed.

- v) *The Vicar of Wakefield* may be light, romantic, improbable, but embedded in it is both moral and social comment. And this, as well as its charm, gives it enduring worth. It also contains many incidental felicities: there are excellent lyrics, charming anecdotes, and one of the best expositions of Toryism in eighteenth-century literature. And every scene is beautifully written.

Goldsmith wrote as a bird sings; the words flowed from his pen as naturally as he breathed. No wonder that the envy was not all on Goldsmith's side and that Dr. Johnson found it hard at times to restrain his malice. And perhaps the jealousy that Goldsmith roused ran deeper than this. His irresponsible spirits, his fecklessness, and absurdities indicate, like his gifts, a direct response to life that most men of ability find hard to achieve. Goldsmith's works are full of gentle wit and humour. His style is simple, clear and pleasant. Many great men like Dr. Johnson, Garrick and Burke were his friends and they made fun of his childish mistakes but they all loved and admired him.

Horace Walpole (18th Century) dismissed Goldsmith as 'an inspired idiot'. David Garrick immortalized him in the biting lines: "Here lies Nolly Goldsmith, for shortness called Noll, Who wrote like an angel, but talked like poor Poll". Dr. Samuel Johnson wrote the epitaph inscribed on the tablet beneath Goldsmith's bust in Westminster Abbey:

A poet, Naturalist, and Historian
Who left scarce any style of writing untouched,
And touched nothing that he did not adorn;
Of all the passions,
Whether smiles were to be moved or tears,
A powerful yet gentle master
In genius, sublime, vivid, versatile,
In style, elevated, clear, elegant.

Sir Walter Scott says that, "We read *The Vicar of Wakefield* in youth and in age. We return to it again and again, and bless the memory of an author who contrives so well to reconcile us to human nature". William Makepeace Thackeray passes his opinion on Goldsmith: "Who of the millions whom he has amused does not love him? To be the most beloved of English writers what a title that is for a man?"

3.5.6 Glossary:

- heiress : a woman or girl who will receive or already has received a lot of money, property or a title from another person, especially an older member of the same family, when that person dies
- rescue : to help someone or something out of a dangerous, harmful or unpleasant situation
- seduced : to persuade someone to have illegal physical contact, often someone younger and innocent
- debt : something, especially money, which is owed to someone else
- contempt : a strong feeling of combined dislike and lack of respect
- virtue : a good moral quality in a person, or general quality of goodness in people
- abduct : to force someone to go somewhere with you, often using threats or violence
- repent : to be very sorry for something bad you have done in the past and wish that you had not done it
- garrulous : having the habit of talking a lot, especially about unimportant things
- quest : a long search for something that is difficult to find, or an attempt to achieve something difficult
- tyrant : a ruler who has unlimited power over other people, and uses it unfairly and cruelly
- vicious : people or actions that show an intention or desire to hurt someone or something very badly
- gullible : easily deceived or tricked, and too willing to believe everything that other people say
- ridiculous : stupid or unreasonable and deserving to be laughed at
- clergyman : a priest, who is a member, especially in the Christian Church
- misfortune : bad luck, or an unlucky event
- patronage : the support given to an organization by someone
- elopement : act of leaving home secretly in order to get married without the permission of parents
- absurdities : ridiculous or unreasonable; foolish in an amusing way
- forbidding : unfriendly and likely to be unpleasant or harmful
- epitaph : a short piece of writing or a poem about a dead person, especially one written on their gravestone
- evokes : to make someone remember something or feel an emotion
- splendour : great beauty which attracts admiration and attention

3.5.7 Conclusion:

The *Vicar of Wakefield* was Oliver Goldsmith's only novel and the first in any language that gives to home life an enduring romantic interest. It is a sentimental novel which displays the belief in the innate goodness of human beings. In making the narrative partly autobiographical, Goldsmith's essayed something new in technique, something which also stirs one to the depths of one's being. He presents a very lively picture of Rev. Dr. Charles Primrose and a world where men and women behave according to the situation. Fate plays a vital role in the ups and downs of human beings. Even when Primrose passes through all rough weather, he always sticks to his virtues. The wheel of fortune turns full circle and he regains all those he had lost in his life. At last he is happy and looks forward to a happy old age in the contemplation of his children's wellbeing. The author not only reports the actions and reactions of the characters but also describes his characters and comments on them. The characterization is marked by the philosophical principle that men are much weaker than wicked and that human nature is largely a mix of good and bad, neither overwhelming the other. His use of antithesis and other verbal techniques enhances his style and raises the general tone of his narrative. He establishes and maintains a strong moral tone throughout the story in which good predominates over evil. We are taught that perseverance in the will of God, a cheerful view towards work, patience in the face of adversity, and an indulgent forgiving attitude to the failings of others — are all virtues to be obeyed and revered. Yet these virtues need not be achieved by superhuman effort, but can exist in a person side by side with vanities, weaknesses and follies. The general appeal of *The Vicar of Wakefield* lies not in its charm, whimsy or humour but in its didactic elements. Goldsmith's theme is sparse, his characters are by no means profound, and his plot is simple, yet he has rare moments in which all his readers feel the didactic impact of his narrative.

3.5.8 Sample Questions:

1. Sketch the character of Olivia.
2. Comment upon Goldsmith's frequent use of coincidence as a narrative technique.
3. Discuss the structure of *The Vicar of Wakefield*.
4. Critically estimate the character of Dr. Primrose.
5. Sketch the character of Sir William Thornhill (Burchell).
6. Sketch the character of Squire Thornhill.
7. Write an essay on the theme of *The Vicar of Wakefield*.
8. Evaluate the Plot of *The Vicar of Wakefield*.
9. Write a note on the characterization of *The Vicar of Wakefield*.

3.5.9 Reference Books:

- 1 A.C. Baugh: A History of English Literature.
2. William J. Long: English Literature: Its History and Significance.
- 3 E.M. Forster: Aspects of the Novel.
4. Norman A. Jeffares: Oliver Goldsmith (Writers and Their Work)
5. F.W. Hilles: The Vicar of Wakefield and Other Writings.
6. R.M. Wardle: Oliver Goldsmith.
7. W. Irving: Oliver Goldsmith: A Biography.

Lesson Writer

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