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Preface

Dear Learner,

We are pleased to make available to you this Self Instructional Material prepared by a team of teachers for English Core Paper V Literature in English: Drama. You can read the syllabus of this paper by visiting the website of our university. It includes general topics on drama and eight plays from Indian, African and Western literary traditions.

Unit 1 of this book deals with such general topics as Rise and Development of Drama, French Drama, Problem Plays, Poetic Drama and Absurd Drama. Units 2 to 9 deal with the eight plays prescribed for your detailed study. Each unit on the prescribed play introduces the life and works of the dramatist, detailed summary of the play, critical commentary on the play followed by the analysis of the major and minor characters, etc.

Some other important features of this book are: Objectives, Introduction and Summary, Terms to Remember, Check Your Progress with Answers, Exercises and Further Readings, All units provide only points of departures. Readers are not expected to rely entirely on this material. They are advised to read original texts and refer to critical books available in different libraries.

All the best for your final examination!

- Editors
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Each Unit begins with the section Objectives -

Objectives are directive and indicative of:

1. What has been presented in the Unit and
2. What is expected from you
3. What you are expected to know pertaining to the specific Unit once you have completed working on the Unit.

The self check exercises with possible answers will help you to understand the Unit in the right perspective. Go through the possible answer only after you write your answers. These exercises are not to be submitted to us for evaluation. They have been provided to you as Study Tools to help keep you in the right track as you study the Unit.
Unit-1
General Topics

Contents
1.0 Objectives
1.1 Introduction
1.2 Rise and Development of Drama
1.3 French Drama
1.4 Problem Plays
1.5 Poetic Drama
1.6 Absurd Drama
1.7 Summary
1.8 Answers to Check Your Progress
1.9 Further Exercises
1.10 References for further study

1.0 Objectives:
After studying this unit, you will be able to –

- understand the salient aspects of the development of Drama as a form of literature in general.
- explain the types or forms of Drama, such as Tragedy, Comedy, Problem play, etc.
- understand and explain the development of Modern Drama.
- explain what Absurd Drama is, and its rise in the 20th century literature.
- understand the forms of Drama such as Problem Play and Poetic Drama.
1.1 Introduction:

Dear student,

Last year, for M. A. Part I, you studied English poetry, through selections of poetical works of different poets from the Medieval to the modern period. In this paper you are going to study, the development of Drama as a form of literature right from the ancient times to the present day. In this paper you are going to study representative plays of the dramatists from the ancient Greek and Indian Sanskrit traditions as well as the Renaissance drama, Modern French and English Drama. There are plays by the representative dramatists such as Euripides, Shakespeare, Moliere and others. There are plays by the modern masters like Ibsen, T. S. Eliot, Edward Albee and Wole Soyinka. These dramatists represent different trends and aspects in the development of Drama as a form of literature. Though some of these writers belong to different countries and different times, and though their plays appear here in their English translations, they are the milestones in the rise and development of Drama as a form of literature. In the course of your reading of the units in this book, you will come across comprehensive introduction to the contribution of these writers of Drama, as well as new trends brought in by them.

In this unit, to begin with, we are going to discuss, briefly, the general topics related to the development of Drama as a literary form. You should read this unit carefully, and study the following units which deal with each play prescribed for this paper. The discussions of the general topics will prove helpful to you to understand each of these plays, their background and significance in the development of Drama.

1.2 Rise and Development of Drama:

Drama, like poetry, is an ancient form of literature. In fact, in the history of the ancient Literature, Drama was described as Dramatic Poetry, because the dialogues in the drama, or the play, were written in a metrical form. In the western literature. Drama as a form of literature began as early as the 6th or the 5th century B. C. Western Dramatic poetry originated in the ancient Greece, through the celebrations of Dionysiac (Dionysus is a Greek god of revelry) festivals. There used to be choric songs sung by a chorus of people. These choric songs evolved into Drama when the character of a speaker was added to it. The character that asks questions, and the other one that answers were the initial ‘dramatis personae’ in the ancient Greek Drama. In performance, these characters presented their distinct personality and
traits. The very word ‘drama’ derives from the Greek word ‘dran’ i.e. to do or act. Drama was not therefore supposed to be merely dialogues. It also meant to be imitation of action in the real life situation or happening.

When the city states in Greece became stabilized in the 6th and the 5th century B.C., there was rise of the Drama, especially Tragedy. The seeds of the tragic drama are found in the choral songs sung in the festival of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and revelry. Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were the three great writers of Tragedy in the 5th century B.C. These dramatists made use of the themes from the myths found in the epic poetry of Homer and other contemporary poets. They wrote their dialogues in iambic meter used in the ancient choral odes and lyrics. Aeschylus was the father of the ancient Greek Tragedy. In his tragedies be tried to show continuous evolution of god, man and the city state. His trilogies, therefore, present conflicts and sufferings, creating characters that are larger than life.

Sophocles did not make use of the form of trilogy. His plays are situated in the crucial moment in the life of his tragic hero. The Aristotelian idea of ‘Tragic Flaw’ properly fits the heroes in his plays. He very effectively uses the device of tragic irony in all his plays. His play, \textit{Oedipus Tyrannus}, is the masterpiece and a model of Tragedy as a form.

Euripides was different from Sophocles and Aeschylus in the sense that he was very innovative, and noted for his experimentation. He was the first to use the form of monodrama, and his play, \textit{Alcestis}, is the first example of mixing of tragic and comic modes. Compared to Aeschylus and Sophocles, Euripides was realistic in the presentation of his plays. His use of diction settings and the story elements of the plot were often taken from the life in Athens of his time. He made use of the realistic details in the contemporary life to satirize the shabbiness of it, contrasting it with the heroic times, and the decadence of Athenian values.

The younger contemporary of these tragic playwrights was Aristophanes, who was the pioneer of the form of comedy. In his comedies he juxtaposed the grotesque and the beautiful, brilliantly satirizing the contemporary social evils. His comedies are extravagant and quite uninhibited.

Greek Dramatic tradition of Tragic and comic mode greatly influenced ancient Roman Drama. Ancient Roman contribution to the development of Drama can be seen in the tragedies of the Latin playwright Seneca, and the comedies of Terence.
and Plautus. Seneca was influenced by the plays of Euripides, especially by the melodramatic elements in his plays. Seneca’s tragedies are marked by excessive use of rhetoric and violence, the use of revenge motifs, ghosts and portents, etc. You will know from the literary history of the English Drama that the Senecan Tragedy exerted great influence on the Renaissance playwrights in England. Similarly, the Comic Drama of the English Renaissance was greatly influenced by the comedies of Plautus and Terence. Roman Comedy writers abolished the role of the Chorus in dividing Drama into episodes, and in the place of chorus they introduced musical accompaniment to its dialogue. The action of all the scenes of the plays mostly took place on the streets. They made use of the device of eavesdropping (listening or looking through gaps in the doors or windows) for what is going on inside. Plautus was the more popular dramatist, who wrote between 203 to 184 B.C., and twenty of his comedies still survive. Terence wrote between 166 and 160 B.C. He produced six comedies, which are known for the complexity of plot. Terence made use of original Greek plays, adding double plots or subplots to them, which enabled him to present contrasting human behaviour.

**Ancient Sanskrit Drama:**

From the ancient Sanskrit Drama, one play, *The Little Clay Cart*, by Sudrak, has been prescribed for your study. Here, we give you a brief survey of the ancient Sanskrit Drama, for you to be able to understand the development of Sanskrit Dramatic literature and Sudrak’s contribution to it.

Sanskrit Drama developed along with Sanskrit poetry. The epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharat* provided rich source material such as popular stories, fables, etc. for the development of Drama. Brihatkatha (longish or great story) was also the source of Sanskrit Dramatic literature. The theory of Sanskrit Drama is elaborately stated in the *Natyashastra* by Bharat. The main purpose of the drama is to evoke a particular emotional response (a Rasa) such as Sringar (Love), Veer (Heroism), Karuna (Pathos), etc. Bharata elaborately states the types of characters, language to be used, stage management, etc. Nataka, the major dramatic type used to have 5 to 10 acts. Besides the heroic Nataka, there were also social drama known as Prakarana, and there was also the shorter form Natika. Sankrit Dramatic literature had considerable variety which included the farce, the monologue of a lover, allegorical and philosophical plays, etc. Like poetry, Sanskrit Drama also aimed at creating a particular kind of Rasa (the emotive effect such as Sringar, Pathos, Fear, etc.), and
the plot as well as characters were subordinated to achieve a particular kind of Rasa or emotion.

The characters in Sanskrit Drama consisted of high society (i.e. personages belonging to the royalty) as well as ordinary people. Naturally, the protagonist and others used standard Sanskrit while the servants, and maids used Prakrit language. This bilingualism was typical feature of the Sanskrit plays, which also was one of its realistic features. Dialogues were also written in verse as well as prose. Sanskrit Dramatic theory did not observe unity of time, place or theme, but it was very particular about sustaining the Rasa, the unity of emotion. In Sanskrit Drama, the main story and the scenes dealt with the dignified royal characters, the emotional aspects of the story, and the mundane action formed part of the interludes enacted by the minor characters. In Sanskrit Drama, there are tragic episodes in the main story, but there is no tragic form as it is understood in the Western (or Greek) theory of Poetics. Indian attitude to Drama does not allow evil becoming victorious in the end. The play should end in the defeat of the evil and the triumph of the virtue. Sanskrit plays are, therefore, more tragi-comedies rather than fully tragic plays.

The history of Sanskrit Drama dates back from 500 B. C., but many of the early works of Drama have been lost. One of the earliest plays is by Subandhu, who was a minister in the court of the Mauryan King. He combined a romance of King Udayan with a court intrigue, and made use of the device of act within act. Then there are plays written by Bhasa, who is known for his simplicity. Bhasa wrote short plays based on the stories from Ramayana and Mahabharata. He is best known for his play Swapnavasavadatta. Yet, his Pancharatra and Pratijna Yaulgandharayanam (The Vows of Yaugandhar) are also his famous plays. His play, Karnabhara, is very much appreciated by the critics, and the modern theatre groups in India are trying to present it with some experimentation. Bhasa is considered to be second only to Kalidasa in the field of Sanskrit Drama. He is also the earlier playwright as he dates back between the 1st century B. C. to 4th century AD.

After Bhasa we have a galaxy of Sanskrit playwrights such as Kalidasa, Sudraka, Ashwaghosha, Dandin and Emperor Harshawardhan. In Kalidasa, Sanskrit Drama reached its height of achievement. Like Shakespeare in the English Literature, Kalidas was the finest flower of the ancient Sanskrit Drama and Poetry. Indian ideals of life, pursuit of virtuous life, balancing enjoyment and duty, spirituality and mundane life are judiciously blended in his plays and poetry. He was the past-master
in depiction of the theme of love and what is called in Sanskrit ‘Sringar Rasa’. Great German poet, Goethe, very much appreciated Kalidasa’s skill of achieving harmony between the earthly life and heavenly aspirations. Kalidasa’s plays are unrivalled in their poetic expression. His Sakuntala is the highest achievement in the dramatic literature. Malavikagnimitra and Vikramorvasiya are his other two celebrated plays.

After Kalidasa, the most noteworthy playwright is Sudrak, whose Mricchakatika (The Little Clay Cart) is the foremost achievement as a social play. In a social play, situations and characters are drawn from the common life of the time. It deals with sufferings of common characters, which make the play interesting to the contemporary audience.

Check Your Progress I :

1. Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each :
   a) How did the ancient Greek drama begin?
   b) What is the origin of the word ‘drama’?
   c) Which festival gave rise to Greek Drama?
   d) Name the earliest Greek dramatists.
   e) Where did the Greek dramatists get their themes from?
   f) What is the Latin dramatist Seneca known for?
   g) Who were the main contributors to ancient Roman Comedy?
   h) What were the forms of ancient Sanskrit Drama?
   i) Where did Sanskrit Drama get its themes and stories?
   j) What is the seminal book on the theory of Sanskrit Drama? Who wrote it?
   k) Who were the foremost Sanskrit dramatists?
   l) Why is there no tragedy as such in Sanskrit Drama?

2. Answer the following questions briefly (in three or four sentences each):
   a) What contribution did the ancient Greek Drama make to the development of Drama as a form?
   b) Explain briefly the theory behind Sanskrit Drama.
c) How was Euripides different from his contemporary dramatists?
d) How did the ancient Roman Drama develop?

### 1.3 French Drama:

One of the plays prescribed for your study is from the French Dramatic literature of the 17th century, a comedy, Tartuffe (or Imposter), by the well-known French playwright of the 17th century, Moliere (1622-1673). Before Moliere came on the scene, French Drama, both Tragedies and Comedies, consisted of imitations from the Italian and Spanish plays, which showed tendency towards bombast and affectation. Boileau was the first French playwright to oppose this Spanish and Italian influence. Boileau, Moliere and Pascal represented reaction against the artificiality and bombast in the Italian models. Boileau’s highest consideration was imitation of nature – ‘let nature be our one study.’ But at the same time he emphasized rational approach. The classical rule of three unities was acceptable to him, because it appeared natural and reasonable. Among the classicists, Pierre Corneille (1606-1699), enjoyed high place on account of his theory of tragedy and the deep psychological presentation of characters. His *Phaedre* and *Andromache* are critically acclaimed tragedies written to the classical formula. Moliere, (the stage name of Jean Baptiste Poquelin), purposefully chose theatre as his career. He founded his own theatre group. Moliere’s comedies were satirical right from the beginning. He was known for his outspokenness. He satirized the imitators, their affected speech and manners, in his plays, along with the ills in the society. Moliere’s Comedy is based on character, a rounded figure that is the main source of comedy. At the beginning Moliere borrowed freely from the Spanish and Italian farcical drama. Moliere’s landmark plays have been *A School for Wives* (1662), Tartuffe (1669), *The Would-be Nobleman* (1670), *Misanthrope* (1666), etc. His *Don Juan* became a box-office hit, but it also created heated debate for its very outspoken dialogues, and it was banned. It was later revised and presented by Thomas Corneille.

During the 19th century, the French dramatic literature developed with the plays produced by Hugo, Musset, Dumas, Rostand and others. And in the 20th century the modern French Drama was developed by Clandel, Girandoux, Cocteau, Anouilh and Sartre. The history of French theatre after 1830 has been one of experimentation in the dramatic idiom. In the 19th century, Hugo rejected the classical axiom of the unities of time and place and attacked also the rule against mixing tragedy and
comedy. In England, Shakespeare had already done it. In the 20th century the French playwrights like Giraudoux (1882-1944), Cocteau (1889) and Jean Anouilh took up themes from the Greek and the biblical mythology and presented them in a modern idiom. Anouilh, for example, adapted Greek themes in his plays Euridice (1942), Antigone (1942) and Medea (1946)

After the World War II

In the second part of the 20th century, the French Drama witnessed mixing of the genres, Tragedy and Comedy, the blurring of class-based distinctions of plot and characters. A new type of drama, a surrealist Drama emerged, to address the post-war society. Appollinaire, with his controversial play The Breasts of Tiresias, had already inaugurated a new type of comedy. Andre Breton, Eugene Ionesco and others established what came to be known as the Theatre of the Absurd, which believes that the world cannot be explained or understood with the help of rationality. This new theatre influenced the field of drama in the other European countries as well as the theatre in America.

Rise and Development of British Drama:

You have already studied the rise of the British Drama from its inception in the Miracle and Morality Plays and its development in the Elizabethan (Renaissance) Drama, as well as Dramatic development in the Restoration period and the 18th century. However, let us briefly revise this story of the British Drama, and trace its development into the 19th and the 20th century to the present day.

The Miracle or Mystery and Morality plays of the 12th century, were based on the religious, especially, Biblical themes and stories. When these plays began to be performed out of the Church, by the actors from various guilds, there were different additions and alterations in their presentation. Miracle Plays presented the legends of saints and the miracles of Virgin Mary, and the Mystery Plays took up subjects from the Bible. The Harrowing of Hell, Mary Magdalene, The Conversion of St. Paul are some examples of the old Miracle plays. In the course of time the element of humour was introduced in these plays, for example Noah’s wife in the story of Noah’s Arc, was made a comic figure; a shrewish, scolding wife. In the 15th century, the place of Miracle Plays was taken by the new form, Morality plays, in which characters represented were personified abstractions of Good and Evil, Vices and Virtues; wisdom – justice, etc. Morality Play is like an allegory dramatized.
Just as the Morality plays replaced the Miracle plays, the Interludes took the place of the Morality Plays. At the beginning of Queen Elizabeth’s reign, Interludes were quite popular. These Interludes had developed from the comic relief provided in the Morality Plays. Vice, the Devil’s attendant had always delighted the common audience by his antics.

**Renaissance Drama : Tragedies and Comedies :**

In the 16th century, the New Learning introduced the classical Greek and Latin Tragedies and Comedies. The Latin Comedy Playwrights Plautus and Terence and Seneca’s Tragedies became models for the British playwrights. Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton produced the first tragedy in the classical mode, known as *Gorbovdue* (or *Ferrex* and *Porrex*), performed by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple. In comedy, the plays of Terence became the models for the British writers in the construction of comic plots. The first English comedy, *Ralph Roister Doister* is a comedy full of incidents and adventure. Gammer Gurton’s *Needle* was another riotous comedy, with realistic touches of rustic life. There were also native historical dramas, which combined tragic with comic elements. However, the Renaissance English Drama really came into its own with the University Wits such as Thomas Kyd, John Lyly, George Peele, Christopher Marlowe, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge and Thomas Nash.

Since there was great influence of Seneca during this period, the tragedy of this period was mostly the revenge tragedy. Thomas Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* set the tone of it. This type of tragedy, the Tragedy of Blood, includes Shakespeare’s, Hamlet, Morlowe’s, Jew of Malta, Webster’s White Devil and Duchess of Malfi. John Lyly, George Peele, and Greene were responsible for developing the Renaissance English Comedy. Lyly became the pioneer in writing comedies in prose, and wrote sparkling dialogues. George Peele introduced Romantic Comedy in his *The Araygnement of Paris*. Robert Greene’s contribution to the English comedy was creating female characters that Shakespeare later developed into Rosalind and Celia. The plays of the University Wits became one of the most important sources for the development of Shakespearean Drama. One very significant contribution of Marlowe and Greene to the English Drama was of fashioning Blank Verse as a medium for it.

In the second unit you are going to study Shakespeare’s Tragi-comedy, *The Tempest*. You are going to read more about Shakespeare and the flowering of the
Renaissance Drama while studying this play. Shakespeare’s Tragedies such as *Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, Othello* hold their sway in the world Drama even after three hundred years. His comedies such as *As you Like It, The Merchant of Venice* and *The Twelfth Night* are still enjoyable. Very successful movies have been made based on his comedies like *The Comedy of Errors* and *Taming of the Shrew.* Shakespeare wrote History plays as well as Problem Plays like *The Measure for Measure.* His contribution to the English Drama as well as the world Dramatic literature is unparalleled.

**Restoration and the 18th Century Drama:**

English Drama in the first half of the 17th century was badly affected by the closing of the theatres during the reign of the Commonwealth. During the second half, when Charles II was restored to the throne of England, he encouraged the theatre and the writers. It was the powerful middle-class and the courtiers that patronized the Drama, so the writers played to the taste of their audience. The types of Drama that developed during the second half of the 17th century was Heroic Tragedy practiced by Dryden, Thomas Otway and others, and the Comedy of Manners, which was strongly influenced by the French and the Spanish playwrights like Moliere and Calderon. It reflected the immoral and debaucherous court life of the time. Compared to the poetic romances of the Elizabethan times, the Restoration Comedy of Manners is polished, witty and shows intellectual control. It used prose as its medium and precision in dialogues. It was cynical in tone, and satirical of the life and manners of the time. Sir George Etherege, William Wycherley, William Congreve, Sir John Vanbrugh were some of the leading writers of this comedy. William Congreve was the greatest of the Restoration dramatists, whose plays were the faithful reflection of the upper-class life of his time. His plays were marked by brilliant wit, polished finish, and the depiction of artificial society. His comedy *The Way of the World* is the finest specimen of the Comedy of Manners.

The 18th century is generally regarded as the period of decline of Drama. It was more the age of the players rather than of the writers. They revived old successful plays, and people went to theatre more for the famous actors than for the plays. In the 18th century, a new type of play, the domestic tragedy, or the tragedy based on the middle-class life evolved out of the romantic tragedy of Massinger and Nicholas Rowe. Rowe’s *The Fair Penitent* was the forerunner of the Sentimental Comedy of this period, which was a tragedy for the four acts and the comedy in the last act.
Colley Cibber, Richard Steele, Richer Cumberland, Hugh Kelly were the prominent practitioners of this Sentimental Comedy. There was a reaction against it during the second half of the 18th century English Drama. The Comedy of Manners was revived by Goldsmith and Sheridan. Both these criticized and opposed the sentimentalism and moralizing in the sentimental plays. Goldsmith’s *The Good Natured Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer*, and Sheridan’s *The Rivals, The Critic* are the finest products of the revival of the social comedy or the Comedy of Manners without its artificiality.

The 19th century was dominated by the Novel, which emerged as a popular form of literature during the latter half of the 18th century. The decline of Drama, continued in the 19th century also. During the second half of the 19th century Tom Robertson’s plays like *Society* (1865) and *Caste* (1867) presented individual characters based on the foibles and frailties of persons in the contemporary society. Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) is modeled on a typical Victorian farce. Its characters like Lady Bracknell appear nonsensical, yet the play, delightfully innocent, appealed to the audience; and they ignored extreme improbabilities in it. Wilde also wrote witty melodramas like *Lady Windermere’s Fan, An Ideal Husband*, and *A Woman of No Importance*. A good number of playwrights emerged during the late 19th and the early 20th century, among them, Maugham, Noel Coward, Terence Rattigan, etc. The new ground was broken by George Bernard Shaw. He introduced Norwegian dramatist Ibsen’s Problem Plays to the English theatre. Shaw’s own plays are based on his own ideas and beliefs, which he elaborately states in his long prefaces to his plays. In his plays he challenged accepted beliefs and conventions, shocking the audience into new awareness. Shaw’s contribution to the British theatre was essentially of the Comedy of Ideas, which was followed, to some extent, by John Galsworthy and J. B. Priestley as well as James Birdie.

There was also Irish dramatic revival represented by the plays of J. M. Synge and Sean O’Casey. Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World* is a masterpiece, which expressed complex feelings of contemporary life in a simplified manner and setting. Sean O’Casey, who was brought up in the Dublin slums, is harshly realistic. His plays *Juno and the Paycock, The Shadow of a Gunman, The Plough and the Stars* are tragic though tinged with humour of the Irish poor. His plays have a background of the sufferings of the Irish people. W. B. Yeats had established the
Abbey Theatre in Dublin in 1931, which produced plays by the dramatists of the Irish Revival.

There was also the revival of the poetic drama in the early decades of the 20th century, by the playwrights like T. S. Eliot, Christopher Fry, W.H. Anden and Christopher Isherwood. We are going to discuss this development in Drama in a separate section in this unit itself.

In the 1950s onward, there was a change in the British Dramatic literature influenced by the American and European Drama. There are three strands of the British Drama represented by three playwrights of the time. One of them, John Osborne, whose play ‘Look Bank in Anger’ (1956) represents the generation of Angry Young Men. The other dramatist is Arnold Wesker, who is committed to socio-political ideology, and whose plays Chicken Soup with Barley Roots etc. are based on personal and political history of the Jewish family. His plays express strong socialist attitude to life. The third strand is represented by Harold Pinter, and Samuel Beckett, who are the foremost dramatists of the Theatre of the Absurd. The Theatre of the Absurd is a trend or movement that is coterminal with Surrealism which originated in France. Absurdist Drama is almost a pan European Drama. In the following section, you are going to study the Absurd Drama in more detail.

It does not mean that there were no dramatists outside the trends represented by Osborne, Wesker and Pinter. There were in the 20th century, the dramatists like Robert Bolt known for his play The Man For All Seasons, John Whiting, the Irish dramatist Shelagh Delaney, Brendan Behan, John Mortiner, Doris Lessing and Angus Wilson. They carried further the tradition of Shawian plays and also showed the influence of the Russian dramatist Chekhov. Their plays were about the middle-class intellectuals.

Check Your Progress II:

1. Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each:
   a) What were the influences on the French Drama before Moliere?
   b) What contribution did Boileau make to the development of French Drama?
   c) Who were the major French tragic playwrights in the 17th century?
   d) What is the characteristic feature of Molière’s comedy?
e) What is Corneille’s important contribution to the development of French Drama?

f) What innovations did the French dramatists make in the 20th century?

g) What was the earliest Drama in the English literature?

h) Which ancient dramatists were the models for the Renaissance English Drama?

i) Which two trends developed in the English Drama during the second half of the 17th century?

j) What did Goldsmith and Sheridan do for the development of the British drama?

k) What was Ibsen’s influence on the British Drama?

l) What were the new developments in the British Drama 1950 onwards?

2. **Answer the following questions briefly:**

   a) What did Moliere and Corneille do to rescue French drama from the foreign influence?

   b) What development came over the French Drama in the second half of the 20th century?

   c) Who were the university Wits, and what did they do for the development of the Renaissance English Drama?

   d) How did the Drama of Ideas develop in England during the 20th century?

1.4 **Problem Plays:**

The critic F. S. Boas in his book *Shakespeare and His Predecessors* (1896) was the first to use the term ‘Problem Play’ to characterize certain plays by Shakespeare as problem plays. Tragi-comedies which do not fit into any classical type of drama, such as *All’s Well that Ends Well, The Merchant of Venice, Timon of Athens*, and *Measure for Measure* are generally known as Problem Plays. They are also called Dark Comedies because though the ending is happy the problem or the issue is not fully resolved. In French Drama, Alexander Dumas wrote a play on the theme of prostitution, *The Lady of the Comelias* (1852) which is a problem play. Problem Plays are related to some serious issues in the society. Though they deal with an
issue in a particular society, they have a universal appeal, because such issues are part of the whole human society. This is the reason why *Lysistrata* by ancient Greek dramatist Aristophanes is also considered to be a Problem Play on the issue of War.

**Problem Plays of Shakespeare**

As pointed out above, some plays by Shakespeare are issue-based, and therefore they can be characterized as Problem Plays. The comedies *Troilus and Cressida, All is Well that Ends Well*, and *Measure for Measure*, are not just carefree, escapist kind of comedies. They are satirical in their tone, and try to expose follies and vices. But they are not pure satire also. They pose a moral problem in the life of the protagonists, which characterizes them as problem plays. The audience feels sympathy for the main characters involved in the moral issue. For example, the moral issue in *The Measure for Measure* is, you will be judged by the same judgment you judge others. The Duke judges Angelo by the Law of the Old Testament. But, Isabella goes by the New Law, which tells her that ‘good should be returned for evil’, and she uses her wit to plead that Angelo is not guilty and therefore the law of ‘measure for measure’ cannot apply. Shakespeare’s *All’s Well that Ends Well* has a happy ending, but this too is a problem play. Helena, the orphan daughter of a famous physician is also the ward of the Countess of Rousillon. She falls in love with count Bertram, the son of the Countess, who would not accept her as she is of low birth. Eventually, Bertram goes to the Court of the King of France. The King is very sick. Helena cures the king, and the King promises her the hand of any man she would like to marry. She chooses Bertram, who marries her but refuses to accept her and flees to Florence. He writes to Helena that she would never be his true wife unless she can get his family ring from his finger and becomes pregnant with his child. Helena cleverly plans to meet these conditions and the play has happy ending. Before this happy end, there is a lot of anxiety and suffering.

Similarly, Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*, is a very confusing play because it is a mix of bawdy comedy and gloomy tragic atmosphere. Troilus, the Trojan Prince is in love with Cressida. But Cressida is sent to the Greek Camp in exchange of a Trojan Warrior. Troilus goes to the Greek Camp to meet Cressida, and finds the Greek hero Diomedes flirting with her. *Troilus and Cressida* is a bit of everything and there is no resolution of the action. Troilus decides to avenge Cressida’s honour but the larger story of Greek and Trojan conflict overshadows the personal tragedy of these two lovers.
However, the concept of the Problem Play arose in the 19th century as a part of an overall movement of Realism. Realism of the 19th century did not allow literature to remain merely an escape from the mundane life. The realist fiction as well as drama tried to focus their attention on the issues arising out of industrialization, growth of the population in the city, inequality, woman’s liberation, etc. Thus the theme of the problem play is typically related to the socio-cultural practices conflicting with the expectations of the new generation. Sometimes the characters come in conflict with the social setting on account of different approaches and opinions about the issues. Problem Plays are thus criticism of the contemporary society or reaction against traditional socio-cultural aspects of life. The Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen, was perhaps the first exponent of Problem Plays in the 19th century. Actually, the French writer, Eugene Scribe was responsible for popularizing the plays based on social problems of the middle-classes. His plays were a kind of light entertainment with good plots, intrigue, surprises and reversals. Ibsen exploited the conventions and techniques of Scribean plays to present his social tragi-comedies, dealing with the problems of the contemporary society. In the Wild Duck, Ibsen presents the problem of an adolescent girl who commits suicide out of despair because she cannot understand the behaviour of the adults in her family. In Hedda Gabler Ibsen presents the problem of an aristocratic woman married to a middle-class academic, who does not understand her complex emotional make-up. Hedda has an affair with one Mr. Brack, a judge, because he is the one who can understand her wit and sarcastic humour. But Hedda really loves uninhibited writer, with whom she can open her heart. But he marries a girl, who changes his life and he becomes a docile, homely husband. Hedda commits suicide for fear of social scandal and blackmail. This play is the problem of a young, intelligent woman emotionally stunted by her upbringing and faced with the repressive values of her social environment.

The Plays of G. B. Shaw:

It was G. B. Shaw who introduced Ibsen’s Drama in England. Shaw’s plays deal with specific Social-culture issues. In his The Doctor’s Dilemma, the issue is who should be saved – bohemian, irresponsible artist or a poor medical practitioner. Similarly, his play Arms and the Man poses issues concerning War. G. B. Shaw writes elaborate prefaces to his plays, which put forward his ideas, which are then presented in the play as problems.
John Galsworthy:

Like Shaw John Galsworthy also took up contemporary issues arising out of industrialization and urbanization. His plays such as *Strife*, *Justice*, present the problems related to contemporary society.

Check Your Progress III:

1. Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each:
   a) Who first made use of the term ‘Problem Play’?
   b) What kind of plays are considered to be the problem plays?
   c) State two plays of Shakespeare, which are considered to be the problem plays.
   d) Who was the first exponent of Problem Plays in the late 19th century?
   e) What problem is posed in Shakespeare’s play *The Measure for Measure*?

2. Answer the following questions briefly:
   a) Explain the reason for the revival of the Problem Play in the 19th century?
   b) What is the contribution of Ibsen in the development of the Problem Play?
   c) State briefly the contribution of G. B. Shaw and John Galsworthy to the genre of Problem Play.

1.5 Poetic Drama:

You are going to study T. S. Eliot’s *The Family Reunion*, which is one of the poetic plays written by him. Poetic Drama was revived in Britain during 1930s, and 1940s, which is called Modern Verse Drama. Before we discuss the emergence of this poetic drama in the 20th century, let us look at the tradition of the Verse Drama in the British literature.

The terms Verse Drama and Poetic Drama are used interchangeably here. T. S. Eliot does not make distinction between the two. But we must remember that verse was used as a medium by the ancient Greek physiologist Empedocles also. But only Homer was called poet You know that Aristotle in his Poetics made distinction between Homer and Empedocles though both used verse as a medium. Verse was
commonly used as a medium for writing subjects such as history, medicine, archery, etc. It shows that everything written in verse was not poetry proper. Verse continued to be the medium of literature as well as other discursive subjects until the advent of prose in the 18th century. Renaissance Drama was mainly written in Blank Verse. Shakespeare did make use of prose dialogues in his comedies for exchanges between the minor characters. The audience of those days also expected drama in verse. Its elevated style appeared natural to them because the characters were of noble birth and they were expected to speak different from ordinary people. Even in the 20th century, the idea of writing drama in prose was not welcome to Yeats, who said:

“I resented being invited to admire dialogue so close to modern educated speech that music and style were impossible.”

But, Ibsen, himself a great practitioner of poetic drama, had a different view. He says that dialogues in the plays should be -

.... as close to ordinary, everyday speech as possible. All turns of speech and inflections that belong only in books must be very carefully avoided in plays ........”

Ibsen himself had earned reputation as a verse dramatist with his plays Brand (1866) and Peer Gynt (1867), but turned towards prose medium with his play Emperor and Galilean (1873). Ibsen’s plays in prose greatly influenced the British writers like G. B. Shaw, Galsworthy and others.

Even though verse or poetry as a medium for writing plays was considered to be unsuitable for realistic presentation of characters, themes and situation, some poets in the 20th century tried to revive Poetic Drama. Turning towards Poetic Drama was a part of a revolt against realism in the theatre. Earlier, in the 19th century, Romantic Poets did write poetic drama, but they were hardly successful. W. B. Yeats, who belonged to the Irish Dramatic Movement, deliberately chose poetry as a medium of Drama. His idea of the theatre was very different. He wanted actors to move slowly and rhythmically, a ritualistic kind of presentation.

Yeats needed poetry in Drama to express high, intellectual play of emotions, which can be spoken aloud only in poetry. Yeats had his own theory of Drama and its presentation, acting, stage decorations, etc. He was influenced by the Japanese Noh plays which made use of decorative gestures and scenery, combining action, speech and dancing. It also made use of music and chorus to reinforce the theme. Yeats used Noh technique to present his plays such as Four Plays for Dancers,
Calvary, Ressurection, etc. Yeats’s plays were not meant for large audience. They were more or less Closet Drama. But, Yeats was the forerunner of the verse dramatists like Eliot, Christopher Fry, and others. The English Dramatists, however, failed to make verse drama popular during the first decades of the 20th century. Allardyce Nicoll, in his English Drama : (1900-1930), points out that ‘most verse dramatists had no thought of the stage. Their attitudes fostered reading texts and closet dramas on the usual themes : religious, medieval, exotic, classical and renaissance.’

The poetic drama, in the words of Abercrombie, was to develop a form that ‘neglects the outer shell of reality, and directly seeks to imitate the core, - the whole effect obviously is to give an exhibition of life intensified, life supposed at a higher pressure than actuality.’ This shows that the Poetic Drama was a revolt against the nineteenth century realistic play. According to the verse-dramatists, the realistic plays dealt with narrow modern city life without much significance. But the playwrights in the early 20th century only imitated the Elizabethans, and did not make attempt to evolve a suitable medium for poetic drama. Ezra Pound commented that these playwrights were using the models which were three hundred years old.

T. S. Eliot rightly diagnosed the reason for the failure of the Poetic Drama in the 19th century. In his opinion, Yeats and others wrote their plays for a small audience that wanted poetry – a dozen to fifty of the elect members only. Eliot understood the importance of public appeal of the Mass and Ballet and thought that it could be used as the model for poetic Drama. Eliot insists that the poets who wish to write Poetic Drama should know the conventions of the theatre and the stage. Besides the playwrights of the poetic drama should evolve a verse form flexible enough to help the dramatist express what he wants. He pointed out that imitation of Shakespeare and others would not help the playwrights writing in the modern period.

Eliot’s earliest attempt to write poetic drama was Sweeney Agonistes (with a subtitle Fragments of an Aristophenic Melodrama). He made use of all devices of crude entertainment of popular songs of the jazz and comic turns of the music-hall. It was his first experiment in versification and diction, which became a foundation for his later poetic-plays. Eliot, in his Selected Essays, objects to the use of prose in Drama saying that the naturalness of prose tends to emphasize ‘the ephemeral and superficial, (and) if we want to get at the permanent and universal, we tend to express ourselves in verse’. Writing to Ezra Pound, Eliot also said that the verse to be used in
the Poetic Drama should be ‘organic, not decoration; a medium to look through not look at.’ Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral* has the structure of Greek Tragedy and he made use of the verse used in Everyman plays. He wrote it in the tradition of mystery and morality plays which had a very strong native appeal. The story of Beckett was also familiar to the audiences in England. The conflict in the play is within the mind of the protagonist, Beckett. There are temptation scenes, which Beckett has to resist and accept martyrdom without desiring its glory. In this play, Eliot successfully solved the problem of handling language in verse drama based on a historical story. Though historical in story and theme, the play was presented with contemporary significance. He did not want to sound archaic nor modern. Eliot judiciously used biblical phrases as well as modern colloquial idiom. Eliot’s next full length poetic drama is *The Family Reunion*, a drawing room comedy on the theme of sin and its expiation. Harry, the protagonist feels guilty about having pushed his wife overboard into the sea. He is not sure if he did it, but the sense of guilt pursues him. (You are going to study this play in detail in the Unit No. 7)

Eliot’s next play, *The Cocktail Party* is modeled on Alcestis an ancient Greek play by Euripides. The theme of the play is maladjustment between the wife and the husband, who are finally reunited through the efforts of a psychiatrist priest, Reilly. In this play Eliot pays close attention to elements of characterization and suspense. In his next play, *The Confidential Clerk*, Eliot takes up the story of *Ion* by Euripides. The mystery surrounds the Confidential Clerk, Colby, employed by Sir Mulhammer. He thinks that Colby is his illegitimate son. His wife also had an illegitimate child, but she has forgotten the name of the woman who she gave the child for bringing up. In the play, *The Elder Statesman*, Eliot uses the model of the ancient Greek play *Oedipus at Colonus* by Sophocles. Eliot’s Poetic Drama inspired other dramatists like Christopher Fry. Eliot showed how speech rhythm, the use of Chorus, and also comic elements can be used in handling the verse in Poetic Drama.

The Group Theatre established by Rupert Doone in 1933 produced Eliot’s Sweeney Agonistes in 1935. This theatre inspired playwrights like Auden, Stephen Spender and MacNeice. Auden’s *The Dance of Death* (1933) shows the influence of the contemporary balle and music-hall, and the theme relates to the death-wish of the modern civilization. His second play *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (1935) was written in collaboration with Christopher Isherwood, and combines comic with didactic theme. The play is satirical, criticizing the corrupt society, throwing spotlight on the social
Poetic drama during the 1930s was inventive in themes and experimental in its spirit. But themes were mainly historical or religious, and their seriousness made them stiff and formal. These plays were ritualistic and some of them were not easily understood by the audience because of their obscure symbolism and hybrid style. Though Eliot’s plays were successful, they did not have widespread appeal. The poetic drama before the second World war lacked the spirit of comedy. After the World War II, the playwrights like Donagh McDonagh and Christopher Fry had the credit of introducing the spirit of comedy in their poetic drama. In the play Happy Larry, McDonagh uses elements of fantasy and burlesque into the texture of the play. Its comic songs, the use of ballad form greatly appealed to the audience. This served as a background for the comedies of Christopher Fry. Fry was influenced by the prose comedies of Oscar Wilde and G. B. Shaw, and also the Russian dramatist Chekhov.

Fry wrote comedies of mood or a comedy pertaining to each season. He claims that in these comedies the scene, the season, and the characters are bound together in one climate. These four comedies for four seasons are Venus Observed, (for Autumn Season), The Lady is not for Burning (for Spring), A Phoenix too Frequent (for Summer), and The Dark is Light Enough (for winter).

In Venus Observed, the characters mostly are middle-aged, the house is in decay. The middle-aged Duke, who would like to marry, asks his son Edgar to choose a wife for him. The comedy symbolizing Winter, The Dark is Light Enough, has a background of grim war. And A Phoenix Too Frequent, (1946) which symbolizes summer, in which the wife (Dynamene) mourning at the Death of her husband, (Petronius) is wooed by a young soldier (Tegeus), guarding six corpses. In the process, one of the corpses vanishes, for which Tegeus must face death punishment. The Lady offers the corpse of her husband to save his life. The Lady’s Not For Burning (1943), (a play of Spring time), has the background of the Middle Ages, but it is not historical. It presents a Lady, Jennet, facing death penalty, for being a witch (she being the daughter of an alchemist), and Thomas, the
misanthropist, who hates human life and wants to be hanged. Beautiful Jennet finally changes Thomas’s mind, and converts his misanthropy to love of life.

There are elements of mystery and comedy in the plays of Fry, which distinguish him from the melancholy, heavy seriousness of the other playwrights of the modern period. He uses puns and verbal practical jokes.

We can see that, in the British literature, there is a continuity of the modern Poetic Drama that began at the end of the 19th century and continued to the middle of the 20th century. It developed alongside naturalistic prose drama. The poetic drama had its own appeal, especially when the people were no longer amused by the illusion of reality in the naturalistic prose drama. As T. S. Eliot said in ‘A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry’, prose drama has ‘a tendency to emphasize the ephemeral and superficial; if we want to get at the permanent and universal we tend to express ourselves in verse’.

But, there are strong opinions against using poetry as a medium for drama. Ibsen, who was himself a poet, deliberately chose prose to write his plays, though he had to struggle with it. In his letter to Lucie Wolf he says:

“Verse has been most injurious to the art of drama. A true artist of the stage, whose repertoire is the contemporary drama, should not be willing to let a single verse cross her lip. ------ During the last seven or eight years I have hardly written a single verse, devoting myself exclusively to the very much more difficult art of writing the straight forward, plain language spoken in real life.” (from Selected Letters p.p. 217-18).

Ibsen maintained that he conceived his plays in the most realistic style, because he wanted to create illusion of reality. Writing to Edmund Gosse, he says, ‘The many ordinary, insignificant characters whom I have intentionally introduced into the play would have become indistinct and indistinguishable from one another if I had allowed all of them to speak in the same metre. We are no longer living in the days of Shakespeare’. In Ibsen’s opinion, prose is for ideas, verse for visions.

Check Your Progress IV:

1. Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each:
   a) What is the distinction between the Verse Drama and Poetic Drama?
   b) When was the Poetic Drama revived in Britain?
c) Why was Yeats opposed to drama in prose?

d) Why was the Poetic Drama revived in the 20th century?

e) What did the Poetic drama writers think of drama in prose?

f) What was T. S. Eliot’s objection to prose as a medium for Drama?

2. **Answer the following questions briefly:**

a) Explain Yeats’ theory of Drama briefly.

b) According Eliot, what was the reason for the failure of the Poetic Drama in the 19th century?

c) How does Allardyce Nicoll account for the failure of the Poetic Drama?

d) How are the plays of Christopher Fry different from other poetic dramas?

1.6 **Absurd Drama:**

In the first section of this unit, the Rise and Development of Drama, we briefly discussed the plays like *Look Back in Anger* (1956) by John Osborne. The Angry plays came up by the time Poetic Drama had lost its novelty. In fact, Poetic Drama was much more literary than suitable for theatrical presentation. The Angry Drama was native in Britain, and it was a reaction to the socio-economic changes that had come up in the society. But The *Absurd Drama* in England is more or less imported from the European countries, particularly from France. *The Theatre of the Absurd* is generally represented by playwrights Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet, and Harold Pinter. The American Playwright Edward Albee is also supposed to be one of this group. Before we discuss Absurd Drama, it is necessary to understand, what ‘Absurd’ means. Ionesco, one of the Absurd Dramatists, defined the Absurd in the following way: ‘Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose --- cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost, all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless’. Dictionary defines ‘Absurd’ as ‘out of harmony with reason or propriety, incongruous, unreasonable, illogical.’ All these meanings applied to the Absurd Drama may be disputable. But it certainly is out of harmony with the human condition. Let us trace the origin of the idea of the Absurd as it occurred in the field of Drama.
Origin of the idea of the Absurd:

Andre Malraux in his book *La Tentation de l’occident* (The Temptations of the West) (1923) made use of the term absurdity, saying ‘at the centre of European man, dominating the great moments of his life, there lies an essential absurdity’. In this book, A. D., the character of a European young man, agrees with his Chinese friend that Western Man is a creature of the Absurd. In the novel, *Nausea*, by Jean Paul Sartre, the protagonist, Roquentin, uses the term ‘Absurd’ to describe his experience of ‘nausea’.

Albert Camus’s novel, *The Outsider*, illustrates his philosophy in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, which underlies the conflict generated by Absurdity. Some critics believe Camus to be the philosopher of the Absurd, though Camus himself has denied it. But his *The Myth of Sisyphus* describes the condition of Absurdity. Sisyphus in Hell, is rolling a huge stone up the hill, as it comes down again and again. According to Camus, the feeling of Absurdity can occur as a result of (a) the mechanical nature of life, which may lead people to question the value and purpose of their existence (b) an acute sense of time passing, or the recognition that time is a destructive force (c) a sense of being left in an alien world and (d) a sense of isolation from other beings.

The hero in Camus’s novel *The Outsider*, is a typical example of the ‘Absurd’, neither good nor evil, moral or immoral. Like the hero of *The Outsider*, Caligula in the play of the same name written by Camus, is the forerunner of the Absurd character. For Caligula, the world is full of lies and self-deception. He realizes that life has no meaning. For him good and evil are the same. Though Camus and Sartre talked about meaninglessness of the world and expressed their disillusionment with it, they put this in their fiction in a very logical and lucid manner. But, the Absurd Drama proper was involved in presenting absurdity itself rather than explaining it or talking about it.

Thus the idea of the Absurd did not come out of the blue. It was already in the air. The Absurd Drama proper has a background of the early 20th century thinkers and playwrights like Andre Malraux, Jean Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and others. They made use of the term ‘Absurd’ in the context of their feeling about the contemporary European world or the condition of human life especially after the World War II.
Robert Brunstein, in his book *The Theatre of Revolt* (1965) argues that the playwrights such as Ibsen, Strindberg, Brecht, G. B. Shaw all express their revolt in their own way against the absurdity of the human condition. But Absurd Drama is different in the sense that it presents the Absurdity as it is; and does not talk about it. According to Brunstein, the hero (or the protagonist) in The Absurd plays is no more a hero, but a person inferior in power and intelligence to the reader/audience, caught in the circumstances of bondage, frustration and absurdity. He is a tramp, a criminal or an old man. This is an ‘existential’ man confined in his own surroundings that are nightmarish. Have you read Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*? The two tramps waiting for someone represent typical Absurdist characters.

Another aspect of the background of the Absurd Theatre is a play Apollinaire wrote, a play of Theatre of Irrationality, *Les Mamelles de Tiresias* (1917) (The Breasts of Tiresias). Apollinaire called it the surrealist drama. It presents the woman protagonist, Theresa, who is bored with her life as a woman bearing children and obediently doing her domestic duties. She wants to transform herself into the roles of a man, of soldier, a Member of Parliament, etc. She immediately sprouts a beard, her breasts turn into balloons, which she throws at the audience. Her husband is forced into the role of childbearing, and in eight days gives birth to 40,051 children. There is famine in the country as a result of this population growth. Theresa finally comes back home repentant. Antonin Artaud, who became almost a myth in the theatre world of Paris, ran a theatre named the Theatre Alfred Jarry, which made use of dream techniques in the presentation of the plays. This considerably influenced the Theatre of the Absurd.

Martin Esslin relates the *Theatre of the Absurd* to the general anti-literary movement especially in Paris. Though the movement of the Absurd Drama was centred in France the dramatists belonging to this group came from different countries like Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, etc.

**The Absurd Drama and the Dramatists :**

You have to study the American Playwright Edward Albee’s play *Tiny Alice*, as the representative play of the Theatre of the Absurd. However, before you read it, it is necessary for you to be familiar with the works of the dramatists wellknown as the Absurdist Playwrights.
As already pointed out, the Absurdist Theatre was the pan-European phenomenon; mainly based in Paris. Adamov, the Russian, who migrated to France at the age of sixteen, in 1924 was influenced by the contemporary surrealist writers and poets. Here he experienced a spiritual and psychological crisis, which he has recorded in his book *The Confession*. His experiences had turned him into a neurotic, which made him acutely aware of the life around him and perceive it with great lucidity beyond the scope of an ordinary being. Adamov started writing plays after the Second World War. His first play, *La Paradie* (1945) deals with the theme of loneliness and lack of communication. Here he uses gestures rather than language and avoids conventional elements like story or plot and characterization. It is in his next play, *Professor Taranne* (1951) he uses the semblance of reality, but the play is a presentation of a dream. His *L’Invasion* is a play that expresses unreality or meaninglessness, which is characteristic of the Absurd. In this play he shows language becoming more and more disintegrating and communication impossible.

Adamov’s masterpiece is his play *Le Ping Pong*, which underlines the futility of human action to find meaning. There are two characters in the play – Victor, a medical student and Arthur an art student, who talk about a pin-ball machine very earnestly, in a lofty language but the lines are utterly nonsensical. The theme of the futility of human endeavour continues in this play. The play presents the men engaged in purposeless action, the meaningless activity leading to senility and death. The ping-pong machine may represent religion or any political ideology.

Ionesco does not say that communication by language is impossible, but insists that it is very difficult to make oneself understood. He further argues that society itself is the barrier between the human beings making communication impossible. The language of society, he claims, to be ‘nothing but cliché’s and empty formulas and slogans.’

Ionesco came to Paris in 1938 on a government grant to carry on his research in French literature. He started writing plays only during 1950s. his first play *The Bald Prima Donna*, *(The Bald Soprano in the USA)* was called an Anti-play, a parody, which used cliched language used in an English primar that he used for studying English. The characters in this play are bored, the situation is static and everything ends where it started. His second play was *The Lesson* (1950), which again deals with the theme of difficulties in communication. The play presents the teacher-pupil relationship, the pupil, a girl gradually losing the power of speech and the teacher
emerging dictatorial. He finally kills the girl. The play has political as well as sexual overtones.

Ionesco’s plays *Jacques or Obedience, The Future is in Eggs, The Chairs* are dominated by the theme of incommunicability, futility of human existence, the absence of God, the unreality of the World or in general the theme of nothingness. His play *Victims of Duty* is the illustration of people who are the victims of the duty, that there is neither consciousness nor personality. Man is always in the process of being, which means there cannot be the final conception of his character. *Am’ed’ee* (1953), *The New Tenant* (1953), *The Picture* (1955), and *The Killer Without Reward* (1957) are some of the noted plays of Ionesco. His play *Rhinoceros* (1958) had a world premiere, which earned him international fame.

**Samuel Beckett:**

Beckett belonged to a Protestant middle-class Irish family, educated in a boarding school and later in Trinity College, Dublin. He went to Paris in 1928, where he met James Joyce. Beckett’s first play *Eleutheria*, is about a young man who would like to be independent of his family as well as free of any social responsibility. Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* was first produced in 1953, and became a great success, running for four hundred performances. *Waiting for Godot* has no story as such. It deals with the static situation of waiting. Two tramps, Vladimir and Estragon, who are waiting for Mr Godot get a message that he would come next day. The same waiting continues in Act II, with the same dialogue. In each act there is another pair of tramps, Pozzo and Lucky, appear on the scene. The pairs and their dialogues are equally complementary. The theme of the play is just waiting. The four characters do have their individual personalities. For example, Vladimir is practical while Estragon is poetic and dreamy. Pozzo is tyrannical while Lucky is a submissive slave. Attempts have been made to interpret this play in terms of Christian faith, since there are a number of allusions to the Biblical stories and characters.

Beckett’s second play, *Endgame*, is set in a room, where two characters play the final game. Hamm, a paralysed old man sitting in a wheel chair is the master, and there is Clov, his servant. There are other two characters, Negg and Nell, the legless parents of Hamm. The game is whether Clov would leave Hamm or not. If he leaves, he would die of hunger, if he does not, eventually everyone would die. Only these four characters have remained in the world. These characters can be interpreted as
personifications, aspects of the same personality. Hamm represents emotional aspect while Clov functions as his senses and the intellect. It can also be interpreted as a morality play.

Another well-known name among the Parisian Group of the Absurd Dramatists is Jean Genet. Genet’s drama expresses the helpless man caught in the hall of mirrors, who cannot escape or even contact others outside. This is the image of man facing despair and loneliness. Genet began as a poet, writing poetry in prison. He was an abandoned child; brought up by a peasant family, and later he led life of a vagrant thief and an outlaw. He wrote poetic prose. He then turned to writing plays. His first play was *Death Watch*, a long one-act play with three prisoners as characters. It presents the characters daydreaming. Genet’s second play *The Maids* is a fantasy acted out by the maids posing as a lady and a maid. The play is acted as a ritual of wish fulfillment, an absurd act because there is wide gulf separating the dream from reality. Genet’s *The Balcony*, is a play set in a grandiose house of prostitutes run by Madame Irma, who caters to the fantasies of little men dreaming of power and sexual potency.

The dramatists discussed so far have been the major figures in the trend of the Theatre of the Absurd. There was no movement as such of the Absurd. However, Jean Tradieu, Boris Vian, Dino Buzzati and Ezio D’Errico (the Italian dramatists), and the Spanish Manuel De Pedrolo have been the major European dramatists who have contributed to the Theatre of the Absurd.

In England, the major contributor to this Theatre was Harold Pinter, who was educated in the Central School of Speech and Drama, and took up acting as a career. Pinter’s first play *The Room* shows the possibilities of his developing style, building up terror and suspense through his dialogues. His second play, *The Dumb Waiter* (1957) presents two men, Ben and Gus, who are hired killers, nervously waiting in a basement room waiting for instructions whom to kill. Atmosphere of suspense is built up here through the agency of the Dumb Waiter, who simply passes on the order from above through the speaking tube. *The Birthday Party* is Pinter’s first full length play, and it got an opportunity of performance in London. Like the play *The Dumb Waiter*, here again there are mysterious sinister characters, who create atmosphere of suspense and terror. Pinter’s *A Slight Ache*, was presented on the B. B. C. in July 1959. Here again a mysterious character, a matchseller, stands at the back of the house of an old couple, Edward and Flora. The matchseller remains utterly
silent throughout the play while the two characters try to talk to him. His second Radio Play, *A Night Out*, is about the adventures of a repressed clerk, Albert Stokes, who is attached to his mother who is very possessive about him. Apart from these Radio Plays, Pinter presented his full length play *The Caretaker* in the Arts Theatre Club in 1960. In his plays, *The Lover* and *The Homecoming*, Pinter presents the theme of reality and the fantasy of wish-fulfilment, the milieu being that of a sophisticated middle-class society. Pinter is different from the Absurdist in France in his handling of language and themes. In Pinter's dialogues language is used by the characters to cover their fear and loneliness, while Ionesco and others used dialogues to show how language does not work. The repartee in Pinter's plays is like rapid fire in language. Most of his plays are menacing tragi-comedies.

Absurd Drama was a widespread phenomenon in the European countries after the Second World War. But the feeling of deep disillusionment and the sense of meaninglessness that characterizes the Absurd Drama in France and Britain, was not experienced in America. As a result, the phenomenon of the trend of the Absurd hardly made any impact on the American field of literature. Only Edward Albee is categorized as the Absurd Playwright because his plays go against the American Optimism and the dream of a good life. Albee's *The Zoo Story* (1958) closely resembles in spirit the plays of Pinter. Albee's plays, *The American Dream* (1960), *Tiny Alice* (1963), and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1960) belong to the Absurd trend because they attack the ideals of progress, optimism and faith in the national mission. Since Albee's play *Tiny Alice* is a prescribed text for you in this paper, you are going to read more about Albee and his plays in that unit.

Martin Esslin traces the tradition of the Absurd or Absurdity to antiquity saying that 'The Theatre of the Absurd is a return to old, even archaic, traditions, from the Mimes to classical Tragedy and Comedy, comic characters of medieval drama, and to Shakespeare's Clowns. Clowns and court-jesters appear in Shakespeare's plays. The Clowns in the mime-plays were 'absurd' because of their inability to understand simplest logical relations. But Esslin forgets that Shakespeare's fools or clowns are not really stupid. And the comic absurd mimes were not meant to signify the meaninglessness of the human life in general, which the Absurd Drama tries to illustrate, and which is the feeling starkly generated by the horror of the two world wars and gross failure of the religion that was supposed to give meaning to human life. Esslin tries to link the post-war Absurd Theatre to what Edward Lear and Lewis
Caroll wrote. But they hardly had any intention of characterizing the human condition as meaningless and useless. They had no background at all of Sartre’s or Camus’ existential anguish. Esslin tries to relate satirical fantasies like *Gulliver’s Travels* to the tradition of the Absurd. But, *Gulliver’s Travels* is a very rational though satirical, attack on the wars between nationalities and the complacency of human race as the superior creation of God. It is far from being Absurd or meaningless. The Absurd Theatre does not claim to satirize or criticize; it simply presents the meaningless human condition.

**Limitation of the point of View of Absurdity:**

Arnold P. Hinchcliffe has recorded three objections to Absurdity in his contribution to The Critical Idiom Series, on *The Absurd*.

1. He firmly denies the notion that the world is absurd. It is a matter of faith for those who believe it and those who do not. Witnessing Waiting for Godot, he may feel compassion for the predicament of the characters, but the dramatist would strongly disapprove such reaction. This is not what he expects.

2. He also denies that Absurd can be part of the tradition, i.e. he does not agree with Esslin and others that Absurdity was present everywhere; and also claims that it is the contemporary, post-war phenomenon. He (Hinchliffe) agrees that in literature something absolutely new does not happen. There could be the sense of meaninglessness reflected in one work or the other in the history of literature. But it was and even now is a passing phase.

3. Hinchliff thinks that if the writers have such conviction about Absurdity, their writing plays and novels appears to be Bad Faith.

**Check Your Progress V:**

1. **Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each:**
   a) How is ‘Absurd’ described in the dictionary?
   b) Who, according to the critics, is the philosopher of the Absurd?
   c) Which book of Camus describes the condition of Absurdity?
   d) How is Absurd Drama different from the plays of Strindberg, Ibsen and others?
e) Which play is considered to be the masterpiece among Adamov’s plays?

f) What is Ionesco’s view of the language of society?

g) What kind of language does Ionesco use in his Absurd play, The Bald Prima Donna?

h) What is the theme of Beckett’s play Waiting for Godot?

i) What is the typical feature of Harold Pinter’s Absurd Drama?

2. Answer the following questions briefly (in about 3 to 4 lines each):

a) What makes Albert Camus a philosopher of the Absurd?

b) Why is the Theatre of the Absurd called an anti-literary movement?

c) How does Ionesco show through his plays that communication through language is impossible?

1.7 Summary:

This first unit of the Core Paper V, The Literature in English: Drama, deals with the rise and development of Drama as a form of literature from the ancient Greek, Latin and Sanskrit to the present-day trends and movements in the development of Drama as a form. As a dynamic literary form, which is studied not only as a form of literature but also as a performing art, Dramatic literature has witnessed tremendous changes because Drama has been closely related to human life and society, and has reflected social changes from time to time, as well as changes in style and ways of presentation.

Drama, as a performing art, has been the most important means of social entertainment for centuries. At the same time, the playwrights from the ancient times to the present day, have made use of this form for moralizing, instructing, satirizing public vices, communicating complex philosophical ideas, stating problems and conflicting issues. Drama as a form of literature has great social appeal. Like Novel, Drama is also used by the writers to deal with contemporary social ills and problems. Both Drama and Novel are forms of literature that have far greater social appeal and significance. They are not, therefore, considered to be pure art forms like music and painting.
In the foregoing sections of this unit, we have given you only the salient features of the development of this form. We cannot claim that we have covered in this unit the development of Drama in the world literature. Yet, this unit and the following ones should give you succinct picture of Drama as a form and its development over the centuries.

1.8 Answers to Check Your Progress:

1. a) The ancient Greek drama began with the Choric songs with the addition of two characters asking and answering questions.

b) ‘Drama’ is derived from the Greek word ‘dran’ meaning ‘to do or act’.

c) Dionysiac festival.

d) The earliest Greek dramatists were Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.

e) They Greek dramatists got the themes for their plays from the epic poetry of Homer and others.

f) Latin dramatist Seneca is known for his violent revenge tragedies.

g) Terence and Plautus.

h) Natak (a major type), Prakarana (Social drama) and Natika (a short form).

i) From the epics Ramayana and Mahabharat and Brihatkatha.

j) Bharat Muni’s Natyashastra.

k) Foremost Sanskrit dramatists were Bhasa, Kalidasa, Sudraka, Ashwaghosha, Dandin and Harshawardhan.

l) There is no Tragedy as such in Sanskrit Drama because Indian attitude to life does not allow evil becoming victorious in the end.

2. a) Ancient Greek Drama developed two distinct forms such as Tragedy and Comedy. The chief exponents of Tragedy were Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, who artistically presented the stories from the ancient epic poetry, investing them with weighty philosophical themes. Aristophenes developed comedy as a form, which became a model for Roman and later the Western drama.
b) The theory of Sanskrit Drama is stated in Bharata’s *Natyashastra*. The story of a play or Nataka is presented in ten acts gradually unfolding the plot in five elements: The main purpose of the drama was to evoke a particular emotional response (a Rasa) such as Sringar (love), Veer (heroism), Karuna (Pathos), etc.

c) Euripides was realistic in the presentation of his plays. His story elements related to Athens of his times. His use of diction and setting were realistic. He satirized the contemporary life and exposed decadence of Athenian values.

d) The ancient Roman Drama, in the beginning, imitated Greek Drama – Tragedy as well as comedy. Seneca, the Latin dramatist, particularly developed a revenge tragedy emphasizing violent spectacle. He also made use of elements such as ghosts, portents and excessive rhetoric. Roman Comedy writers, Plautus and Terence abolished the role of chorus, and started dividing drama into episodes. They made use of the devices like eavesdropping.

**Answers to Check Your Progress II:**

1. a) Initially the French Drama was influenced by the contemporary Italian and Spanish plays.

b) Boileau opposed imitation of Spanish and Italian plays, and emphasized rational approach, avoiding bombastic language.

c) Boileau and Corneille were the major French tragic playwrights of the 17th century.

d) Moliere’s comedy is based on a rounded character, which is the main source of the comic story.

e) Corneille is known for psychological presentation of his characters.

f) During the 19th and 20th centuries there was experimentation in French Drama, as they rejected the rule of three unities, mixing of types, etc.

g) Miracle and Morality plays were the earliest dramatic forms in English.

h) Seneca for Tragedy, and Plautus and Terence for comedy.
i) Heroic Tragedy and the Comedy of Manners.

j) Goldsmith and Sheridan revived the Comedy of Manners replacing Sentimental Comedy.

k) Ibsen influenced the English drama by his own plays based on social problems and ideas.

l) Revival of the Poetic Drama was a reaction against the drab realistic drama in the early 20th century.

m) In the British Drama, 1950 onwards, there were three different trends, plays of Angry Young Men, the plays committed to Socio-political ideology and the Drama of the Absurd.

2. a) During the second half of the 20th century in French Drama, the playwrights started mixing Tragedy and Comedy. They did not follow the old class-based distinctions of plot and characters. There was a development of Surrealist drama, and later the drama known as The Theatre of the Absurd.

b) Moliere introduced Comedy based on characters and of social satire. He exposed the ills of the society of his time. Corneille developed his own theory of tragedy, and presented characters with deep psychological study of them.

c) The University Wits in England were university educated young men like Robert Greene, George Peele, Thomas Nashe, Marlowe, etc, who took up writing plays as means of livelihood. They wrote Tragedies and Comedies based on the models of Roman Drama. But, they developed a distinct kind of Romantic Comedy and Tragedy. Marlowe fashioned Blank Verse as the suitable medium for writing plays. Playwrights like Green and Peele created heroines in their comedies, who became models for Shakespeare. Thomas Kyd wrote Senecan type of bloody comedy.

d) In England, during the early 20th century, Drama of Ideas and plays based on social problems were introduced through the realistic social drama of the Norwegian playwright Ibsen. George Bernard Shaw, John Galsworthy and others wrote their plays under the influence of Ibsen. Shaw wrote long prefaces to his plays elaborating on the social issues he took up in his plays.
Answers to Check Your Progress III:

1. a) The critic F. A. Boas first made use of the term Problem Play in relation to some plays by Shakespeare.

b) Problem plays are related to some serious issues in the society, and these issues have universal significance.

c) Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure, All is Well that Ends Well* are the problem plays.

d) Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen was the first exponent of Problem Plays.

e) *Measure for Measure* presents the problem of application of the principle, ‘you will be judged by the same judgment you judge others.’

2. a) The concept of Problem Plays came up during the 19th century as a part of the movement of Realism. The Realism made writers to look at the ills of society and changing life and its values and take note of them in their plays. So the themes of the Problem Plays are related to the old socio-cultural practices conflicting with the expectations of new generation.

b) Ibsen’s plays dealing with the socio-cultural problem introduced the issue-based drama in the 19th century. In England, Ibsen’s plays were translated. These plays influenced the British dramatists like Shaw, Galsworthy and others and made them look at the contemporary society critically, and present its problems.

c) G. B. Shaw took up a great variety of issues from medicine to prostitution and war in his plays. He wrote long prefaces for his plays explaining his point of view. For example, his play *Doctor’s Dilemma* presents a moral issue who should be saved. Galsworthy also wrote his plays like *Strife, Justice*, etc presenting the problems arising out of industrialization and conditions of the Working Class.

Answers to Check Your Progress IV:

1. a) Verse was used by the Historians, Physiologists, etc also as a medium, therefore Poetic Drama is the term preferred by some critics. (Everything written in verse was not poetry).
b) Poetic Drama was revived in Britain during the early 20th century.

c) Yeats was opposed to drama in prose because music and style and play of emotions were impossible in prose.

d) Poetic Drama was revived during the 20th century as a reaction against realism in the theatre.

e) They thought that realistic prose dramas dealt with narrow modern life without much significance.

f) T. S. Eliot objected to the use of prose in drama because naturalness of prose emphasizes insignificant and superficial things.

2. a) Yeats believed that Drama should express high, intellectual play of emotions to be spoken aloud. He was influenced by Japanese Noh plays which made use of decorative gestures and scenery, together with speech and dancing, music and chorus.

b) T. S. Eliot says that in the 19th century the Poetic drama writers like Yeats wrote their plays for a small audience, at the most twelve to fifty. They did not have public appeal. They also needed to evolve flexible verse form for speech.

c) Allardyce Nicoll observes that most verse dramatics had no idea of the stage and the conventions of the theatre. Their plays were meant for reading rather than for theatre performance. Besides, their themes were restricted to religious, medieval and exotic subjects.

d) Christopher Fry introduced the spirit of comedy in his poetic drama. He was influenced by the comedies of Oscar Wilde and G. B. Shaw, and the Russian dramatist Chekhov. He wrote comedies to express moods of seasons. Besides, in his plays he used elements of mystery and comedy together to make the plays enjoyable.

Answers to Check Your Progress V:

1. a) Absurd is described in the dictionary as ‘out of harmony with reason or propriety, incongruous, unreasonable, illogical.’

b) Albert Camus, (who wrote The Outsider, and The Myth of Sisyphus, is considered as the philosopher of the Absurd.)
c) Comus’ *The Myth of Sisyphus* describes the condition of Absurdity.

d) The playwrights such as Strindberg and Ibsen express their revolt against Absurdity in a lucid manner, but Absurd Drama presents the Absurdity as it is.

e) Adamov’s play *Le Ping Pong* is considered to be his masterpiece.

f) Ionesco thinks language of society is nothing but clichés, empty formulas and slogans.

g) Ionesco uses cliched language used in an English primar.

h) The theme of Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* is just waiting.

i) Pinter’s Absurd drama has elements of mystery and menace.

2. a) Albert Camus is considered to be the philosopher of the Absurd on account of his novel *The Outsider*, and his book *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Camus explains that the feeling of Absurdity occurs as a result of the mechanical nature of life, an acute sense of time passing and a sense of being alienated. He illustrates this in his fiction.

b) The *Theatre of the Absurd* is called the anti-literature movement because it flouts all the conventions of literary forms. The Absurd drama shows men engaged in meaningless activity. It does not make any rational statement. It has no logical division of a play into acts or scenes, nor does it try to communicate using language because it does not believe that communication is possible.

c) Ionesco, in his play *The Bald Prima Donna* uses cliched language in the English primar. His play *The Lesson* also shows how communication is impossible. The plays, *The Chairs, The Future is in Eggs*, etc. also illustrate the theme of incommunicability.

1.9 Further Exercises:

I Answer the following questions:

a) Trace the development of ancient Greek Drama from the choric songs to the great Tragedies and Comedies.

b) Write a note on Drama in Sanskrit in the ancient times.
c) Discuss how Drama as a form developed during the period of Renaissance.

d) What formal changes occurred in the British Drama during the second half of the 17th century and the 18th century?

II Write short notes on the following:

a) Emergence of Problem Play in the 20th century English Literature.

b) Merits and Demerits of Poetic Drama.

c) Absurd Drama in England.

1.10 References for further study:


The Trojan Women by Euripides

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2.0 Objectives:
After studying this unit you will be –
• familiar with the contribution made by Euripides to the ancient Greek Drama.
• able to understand the characteristics of Greek tragic drama.
• familiar with the theme and plot of the play The Trojan Women by Euripides.
• able to understand and appreciate The Trojan Women as a tragedy.
• familiar with the critical opinions about The Trojan Women.

2.1 Introduction:
Euripides was born about 480 B. C. on the Greek island of Salamis. He belonged to the second generation of the Greek dramatists. Aeschylus was about 40 years his senior and Sophocles fifteen years. Euripides was involved in the
intellectual revolution in Greece of those days. As an artist he never much cared for public opinion of his plays, which was hardly favourable to him. But, finally he forced public opinion to his own views. He is said to have written eighty-eight plays, and presented them in twenty festivals. He was victorious in the competitions five times. He attended lectures of the philosophers of his time, - such as Anaxagoras and Prodicus. He was also a student of Isocrates. Euripides being an intellectual himself, and too much disgusted with the fellow citizens, was unpopular among his contemporaries. He was keenly aware of the social problems of his time. As the foremost literary figure of his time, he was revered in Athens as well as in Sicily, though the two cities were bitter political enemies. The Athenians captured in Sicily were allowed to go free when they recited his verses to the authorities. Rhetoricians and scholars liked his plays for the skillful argumentation in them. Ten of his best plays are *the Alcestis, the Medea, the Hippolytus, the Andromache, the Hecuba, the Trojan Women, the Phoenissae, the Orestes, the Rhesus, and Bacchae*.

As a playwright, Euripides followed the traditional form of Tragedy. He strictly followed the traditional number of actors and the use of chorus. It is said that he deliberately chose the conventional form for his own artistic reasons. Though he strictly adhered to the form, he portrayed his characters realistically, men as they are (unlike Sophocles, who portrayed men as they should be). Euripides humanized his characters. He did not like to ignore the sinfulness or depravity of the characters. For example, Aristophanes recommended that faithlessness of Phaedra and her being the cause of the murder of Hippolytus should be passed over in silence. But, Euripides, without any bias, presented such characters truthfully but with sympathy. This requires profound understanding of human action and character. It shows deep understanding of ethics. Longinus, the Latin critic, says, Euripides liked to give the most tragic representation of the fits of love and madness. Phaedra and Orestes are such extreme examples. Morbid and abnormal in human nature fascinated him. Euripides also liked to exploit sentimental or pathetic effect. The scene of Iphigenia appealing to Agamemnon in *Iphigenia at Aulis* is portrayed very pathetically. Such exploitation of sentimental and melodramatic situations is a marked characteristic of his plays.

Euripides was realistic not only in drawing his characters, but also in their presentation. In performance he paid attention to the details of costume and dramatic technique. The characters in distress and sorrow appeared on the scene in tattered
clothes. In his plays two characters may enter the stage talking to each other in a natural realistic manner, or messenger may come running and interrupt their conversation. Such novelty became later a common practice.

Euripides is considered prosaic in handling the dialogues in his plays in comparison with Aeschylus and Sophocles. But this is in keeping with his realistic presentation of the scenes and characters. In his lyrics, while dealing with a tragic situation, his style rises to the sublime. Euripides is highly praised for the eloquence and logical pleading or debate in his plays. He is superb in handling the emotional scenes and in arousing pity. The forensic eloquence in his plays made him very popular in the later centuries. He is sometimes criticized for not maintaining consistency in character to make a point in the debate. For example, Hecuba in this play talks against the foreigners as if she herself were a Greek. Euripides was primarily interested in ethical and philosophical questions and also the events in his own times. His characters sometimes appear to be Athenians talking philosophically. Euripides used the convention of chorus also imaginatively. He used chorus sometimes to present the background.

You are going to read now comprehensive summary of the play, with vocabulary and critical comments where necessary. Euripides was awarded the second prize for the group of his plays: *Alexander, Palamedes, Trojan Women* and *Sisyphus*. These plays were connected in their subject matter. Together they constituted a group of four plays – a Tetralogy. Out of these, *The Trojan Women* is prescribed here. The play *Alexander* deals with the story of Paris, the son of Priam (King of Troy), who was left to die on the Mount Ida because of an ominous dream of his mother. But he was saved by the Shepherds and was brought back years later to Priam. His coming back to Troy was the beginning of Troy’s later tragic fate. The play *The Trojan Women* is the culmination of the Tragedy of Troy.

The *Trojan Women* has a simple plot. It does not have elements like reversal of fortune, recognition, etc. which you find stated in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. It has no plot as such because from the beginning to the end, it presents episodes of the Captive Trojan Women, their miseries and the horrors of war. In the background there is the burning city of Troy, all its men dead and women captured as slaves.

This play of Euripides has a historical reference to the Athenian invasion of Melos. The Athenians wanted Melos to join them in the war against Sparta. The
Melanians wanted to remain neutral because they had good relations with the Spartans. But, the Athenians did not understand this. They attacked Melos, and killed all the male population and brought their women as slaves. The Athenians, who were watching this play, The Trojan Women’, must have been reminded of the injustice they did to the Melanians, and must have realized the horrors of war described by the Trojan Women.

You can see that Euripides is indirectly criticizing the Athenian atrocities on Melanians, making them realize the horrors of war perpetrated by them once. He is satirizing the Athenian decision to go to war against Sparta, showing the futility of war and how the victor and vanquished both face annihilation. The Greek, though victorious in the Trojan War, are going to face the anger of goddess Athene and the Sea god Poseidon, who would make the Greek suffer at the sea on their return journey.

2.2 The detailed story line of the Play :

2.2.1 The Characters in the Play, the background, and Prologue :

Poseidon: The Greek God of the Sea. The city of Troy and its people are under his protection. Poseidon and the son god Apollo together built the wall around Troy and the towers in the city.

Athene: a Greek goddess of wisdom. She was against the Trojans and their city because the Trojan Prince, Paris, judged Aphrodite (Roman Venus) to be the most beautiful of the three Goddesses, Hera, Athene and Aphrodite. She, therefore, punished the Trojans.

Hecabe: Queen of Troy, the wife of the King Priam, now she is the widow since Priam is killed.

Chorus: The group of Captive Trojan women.

Talthybius: a Greek messenger.

Cassandra: daughter of Hecabe. She is also a prophetess, who is the virgin priestess of Apollo.

Andromache: the wife (now widow) of Hector (the eldest son of Priam)

Menelaus: a general of the Greek army, Helen was his wife, who ran away with Paris. She was the cause of war between the Greek and the Trojans.
Helen: the wife of Menelaus, she is said to be the daughter of god Zeus and Leda. Zeus, in the guise of a swan, raped Leda, who gave birth to Helen. She is the daughter of Tyndreus and Leda, though physically she is the daughter of Zeus, the King of Gods.

**Background of the play:**

*The Trojan Women* presents the end of the ten-year long Trojan War. The Trojan Prince, Paris, who went as a guest to Greece, enticed Menelaus’s beautiful wife, Helen. You are perhaps familiar with the story of three Greek goddesses – Hera, Athene and Aphrodite (Venus) who asked Paris to judge who among them was the most beautiful. They, each one, promised Paris worldly power, wisdom and the most beautiful spouse, respectively. Paris chose beautiful spouse promised by Aphrodite, and judged her the most beautiful, giving her the golden apple. This was the seed of the destruction of Troy, because both Hera and Athene plotted against Troy to bring about war and its destruction.

This play opens with the captive Trojan Women awaiting their fate. They are being distributed as slaves among the Greek warriors. They are weeping and mourning the death of their husbands and sons. Queen Hecabe, and chorus of Trojan Women are gathered outside the shattered buildings of Troy.

**Section I: Prologue:**

In the darkness before dawn, Poseidon, God of the sea, appears on the scene. Troy and its people were under his protection. But, he tells us how, according to goddess Athene’s plan, a big wooden horse, with Greek soldiers hiding in its belly, was presented to the Trojans, who credulously received it as a gift and thought that war had ended. At night, the Greek soldiers attacked sleeping Trojans killing the whole male population, not sparing even male children. The Greek ships gathered measureless gold and the other loot, and are waiting for the favourable wind.

Poseidon tells us how Hera and Athene together achieved the fall and destruction of Troy, and indirectly defeated him.

Athene, responsible for the destruction of Troy, enters. Now, she has a different purpose to visit the burning Troy and meet Poseidon. She is angry with the Greeks for insulting her. Aias, the Greek Warrior, dragged Cassandra, her devotee, from her (Athene’s) sanctuary and the Greek warlord neither punished nor reprimanded Aias.
for violating her sanctuary. She, Athene, therefore needs Poseidon’s help to punish the Greeks making their homeward journey impossible and unfortunate. Zeus shall send torrential rains and hail-storms, burning their ships with lightning, and Poseidon shall agitate the sea creating whirlpools, drowning the Greeks. This should teach them a lesson for not respecting her. Poseidon is more than willing to help Athene in punishing the Greeks. He vows to drown thousands of them.

2.2.2 Hecabe and Trojan Women: mourning their fate.

This play is one continuous action which concerns the weeping and grieving Trojan Women, who have lost their husbands and sons, and are awaiting their fate at the mercy of the Greek lords. The scene opens with Hecabe, the Queen of Troy, sitting near the tent of Agamemnon, the Greek King, mourning the death of her husband, Priam, and his fifty sons. She does not know how to deal with her grief. There is no end to her misery. She remembers the glory that Troy was, which is now being reduced to ashes. She remembers how the Grecian ships came down on Troy to bring back Helen. She describes Helen as the shame of Sparta, and the cause of the destruction of Troy. Helen’s sin is visited on Priam, his sons and the whole of Troy. She proved a curse for Troy. She herself, the proud Queen, is now sitting near Agamemnon’s tent as an exile, no one to pity her or express sympathy. She calls forth the other Trojan Women to mourn with her the death of their dear ones. Once, she used to lead these women in singing hymns and prayers. Now she must sing with them the sad songs to mourn the dead.

The women, in chorus, enter, on hearing Hecabe, and ask her if the Greek Crew were about to take them away. They all are full of fear that they must be forced to leave their land. Hecabe is reminded of her daughter, Cassandra. She should not be taken away. Hecabe cannot bear the thought that Cassandra, the priestess of Apollo, should be forcibly taken to the bed of a Greek lord.

The second woman from chorus enters and asks if the Greeks were going to kill them all. They do not know who their new master is going to be. As slaves they may be sent to any Grecian island. Hecabe is equally distraught and fearful. She might be asked to attend the children of some Greek lord or watch his door. She would just be nameless, aged woman at the door, ignored and useless.

Another woman in Chorus, is sorrowful that she has to leave her weaving shuttle and home-bred fleece and may have to go forcefully to the bed of some Greek Lord.
She would prefer to go to Athens rather than to Sparta, which is the country of hated Helen. She would not like to be the servant in the house of Menelans, who destroyed Troy. Her next choice would be Sicily, the land of rich fruit, lovely rivers and wealth and good life.

[It is interesting to note that a common Trojan woman is quick to pin her hopes on the choice of good life even in the midst of immediate sorrow.]

Talthybius is the Greek messenger, who does the bidding of the Greek general. He informs Hecabe and the Trojan women that lots have been drawn to allot them as slaves to the Greek Lords.

Cassandra was chosen by Agamemnon for himself, for his own bed. (not as a slave). Cassandra was given to god Apollo and was supposed to live a single pure virgin. But, Agamemnon does not pay heed to this. Cassandra’s virginity is violated by the Greek Warrior, Ajax, the son of Oiulus.

[This is one reason why the Greek invited anger of gods on their return journey] Hecabe angrily tells Cassandra to throw away the temple keys and abandon the clothes of the priestess of Apollo. Hecabe has another bad news. Her other daughter, Polyxena, is buried along with the body of Achilles in his tomb. Talthybius informs Hecabe that her daughter-in-law, Hector’s wife, Andromache, was given to the son of Achilles. And Hecabe herself was given to Odysseus, the king of Ithaca. Hecabe is greatly shocked to listen to this because she considers Odysseus to be ‘impious outcast’, who goes against the law of man as well as of gods, and a ‘monster of wickedness. [Odysseus was known in the Greek army to be very cunning, a shrewd and devious plotter].

Talthybius asks his men to bring Cassandra quickly to hand her over to Agamemnon. Cassandra enters with a flaming torch in each hand. She asks women to worship Hymen, the God of marriage. Cassandra is evidently mad with anger. She addresses Hymen and Apollo to take part in the ritual dance. She ironically tells her mother and the Trojan girls to put on the best gowns and join the song and dance to celebrate the marriage. Chorus and Hecabe realize how Cassandra is mad with anger and grief. Hecabe is sorry to see this state of mind of her daughter.

Cassandra, in her madness and anger, tells her mother that she would prove to be ‘a fatal bride’ for Agamemnon, that she would bring about his death and the ruin
of his house and take revenge for the death of her brothers and father. Cassandra prophesies her own death but also the murder of the mother by the son (Orestes killing his mother Clytemnestra, Agamemnon’s wife), and the end of the dynasty of Atreus. She foretells how Agamemnon is going to lose what he most loved, and sacrifice his home and children for the sake of Menelaus, and for Helen, who was unfaithful and went away with Paris of her own free will.

She describes how the Greeks died here, away from their wives and children, how their women became widows. The Greeks were buried in the foreign land without being mourned by their family. And all this for one woman. On the other hand, the Trojans died heroic death defending their city, carried away by friends to their homes, prepared for decent burial by their loved ones. ‘Cassandra, thus, consoles her mother that Hector and the Trojans died heroic death, and even Paris had a distinguished marriage with Zeus’ daughter Helen.

Talthybius wonders how a sane man like Agamemnon, known for his wisdom, happened to choose this mad girl to fall in love with. He himself would not have her even as a gift. He urges Cassandra to board the ship, and tells Hecabe that she would be the servant of ‘Penelope, the wife of Odysseus.

Cassandra violently reacts to the word ‘servant’. She claims that Apollo’s oracle has prophesied her (Hecabe’s) death here itself. She also foretells the sufferings of Odysseus in future – the sufferings far worse than of Troy. Odysseus would not reach home until ten more years, and when he reaches home, he will be alone. Before that he will have to face fearful dangers like Charybdis, the Cannibal Cyclops, the temptations of Circe (who used to turn men into swines), the land of lotuses where men become indolent and do not want to go home, etc.

She throws away the garland of the sun-god, a symbol of the joys of temple-celebrations. She tells her mother not to shed tears, and promises her dead father and brothers that she would soon join them victorious, with her garments red with the blood of Agamemnon’s household. Talthybius takes Cassandra away.

Hecabe cannot bear the grief, and collapses to the ground. Women in the Chorus try to lift her up, but she would like to lie down there in the dust.

Hecabe cannot be comforted. She says gods are treacherous, and yet you have to call upon gods for help when your world is destroyed.
Hecabe tells women how she was born in a royal family, her husband a king, her sons all princes. She used to be proud of her sons. But she had seen them all killed by the Greeks, Priam stabbed to death in her presence, and her daughters given to enemies as slaves. She herself must go to them as a slave, doing menial work such as answering the door, making bread and so on. And all this she must suffer for one woman (i.e. Helen). She concludes her speech saying ‘fortune is a false friend; call no man happy until he dies’.

The Chorus of women ask the Muse (of Poetry) to sing the fall of Troy. They narrate the sad and horrible story of how treacherously Troy was captured. A wheeled wooden horse was left by the Greeks at the gate, The Trojans thought the war was over, and the horse was the offering for goddess Artemis. They brought the horse in, but it hid in its belly the Greek Soldiers waiting for the night to fall. Defenceless Trojans, half awake, were killed and women were raped.

Check Your Progress I
1. Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase, or a sentence each:
   a) What did scholars and rhetoricians appreciate most in the plays of Euripides?
   b) What is remarkable about character-drawing in the plays of Euripides?
   c) What situations did Euripides exploit most in his plays?
   d) What is the specialty of Euripides in presentation of characters and scenes?
   e) How did Euripides use Chorus in his plays?
   f) Who was Cassandra?
   g) What did Aphrodite do for Paris?

2. Answer the following questions in two or three sentences each.
   a) What kind of plot does The Trojan Women have?
   b) What is the background of The Trojan Women?
   c) What was the contemporary relevance of the play The Trojan Women?
   d) How did the Greeks deceive the Trojans?
   e) What role did the goddesses play in the destruction of Troy?
f) What do the women of Troy feel as they sit mourning?

g) Who was Polyxena? What happened to her?

h) What does Hecabe think of Odysseus?

i) What prophesies does Cassandra make against the Greek?

2.2.3 Andromache and Helen/Menelaus episode

Andromache (Hector's widow) is brought by the Greek Soldiers, along with her son, Astyanax (a child asleep on her lap). She is crying aloud. Her husband Hector’s sword and armour are also carried with her. The Achaeans (Greeks) are taking away the loot. Andromache is Hector’s wife. Hecabe and Andromache bewail the loss of their dear ones, the husbands and the sons.

Andromache blames the sparing of Paris at his birth. It was prophesied that this son of Priam would bring about death and destruction of Troy. And for the sake of Helen, Paris invited this trouble. Now vultures feed on the dead Trojans, and their women are being taken away as slaves.

Hecabe weeps for the city lost, and children lost. This, she says, is unheard of destruction. Hector, the general of the Trojan Army, killed more Greeks than anyone. But now his armour and his son are going to the enemy.

Hecabe comments, according to the will of gods, the mean people achieve glory and the noble ones are brought down. Royal family is turned into slaves, says Andromache.

Andromache informs Hecabe that Hecabe’s daughter Polyxena was killed at the tomb of Achilles, as a gift to his dead body. Hecabe weeps bitterly, but Andromache tells her that Polyxena is happy being dead, but she herself is unfortunate to be alive. Hecabe does not agree. In life there is hope, she says. Andromache tries to console Hecabe. She tells Hecabe that the dead have no feeling, but the one who has loved prosperous life is bewildered in the unknown miserable world of slavery. Polyxena would not remember anything as she is dead. But she (Andromache) cannot forget her high life. Andromache describes here the life and routine of an ideal wife she has lived. The death of Polyxena is a lesser evil, but what she has to endure now is far greater evil. She is being given as a slave to the son of Achilles. It is the house of the
man who killed her dear husband, the ideal husband for her. She cannot imagine any happiness there.

The chorus agree with Andromache. Inspite of Andromache’s despairing speech, Hecabe advises her to stop mourning for Hector, and win love of her new husband with goodness and sweetness. Hecabe hopes that Andromache may give birth to a son, who can prove to be the savior of Troy, a founder of a new Ilion and Troy may live again.

Talthybius, the Greek messenger, enters. He has a bad news for Andromache. The Greeks have decided to kill her son, a little child, Astyanax. They do not want any male Trojan child to live. It was Odysseus, who persuaded the others to kill the child, because the son of a distinguished father such as Hector must not be allowed to live.

Astyanax is to be thrown down the battlements of Troy. Talthybins warns Andromache that if she struggled or heaped violent curses against the Greeks, they would not allow her to perform death-rites for the child. Andromache tearfully bids goodbye to her son. She accuses Helen for bringing such horrible end to the city of noble men, for being the ruin of men of Troy as well as Greece.

Chorus also says Troy mourns ten thousand dead for the sake of one woman.

Talthybius orders the soldiers to take the child away to the battlement. He himself cannot do it being a man of feeling.

Chorus tells the story of olden days when, Telamon, the King of Salamis and the famous archer Heracles came to Ilion (Troy). They came to plunder and loot Troy. But, when the King of Troy opposed, Heracles, with his arrow of fire, split the stones of the battlements of Troy; and in that war the city was destroyed. The Chorus points out how this is the second destruction of Troy by the Greeks.

They appeal to Ganymede, the son of Laomedon, who serves wine to Zeus, asking him how he could not help the city of Troy, where he spent his boyhood. It is the land of his birth and it is burning; Wives for their husbands and mothers for their sons are weeping.

The chorus describes the sandy bank where Ganymede ran and wrestled, the fountain where he bathed, everything stamped out by the Greeks. Once, Troy was
loved by gods, and there was bond of marriage between Troy and Olympus. But this Troy is now devastated. How could the Dawn smile down on it?

Menelaus enters along with the attendants.

After ten years, and through the trouble endured by him and the Greek army, finally he is going to meet his wife Helen. But, he explains that he and his army did not come solely for Helen, but to punish the man (Paris), who stole his wife.

Helen is included in the list of female prisoners. He has decided to take Helen to Greece, and hand her over to the families who have lost their sons in this war, who will punish her by death. He orders the soldiers to bring Helen.

Hecabe warns Menelaus that Helen’s beauty and enchantments may trap him, and he may not be able to kill her.

Helen enters followed by soldiers.

Helen very boldly asks Menelaus about his intentions – whether she is to live or die. Menelaus makes it clear that he came to kill her, to punish her for the wrong done to him. Helen is given a chance to reply, supported by Hecabe, who says Helen has done a lot of mischief and she would not escape judgment, but she should be given a chance to defend herself, Menelaus permits Helen for the sake of Hecabe’s argument.

Helen starts with Hecabe, who gave birth to Paris – the source of all trouble, and Priam for not killing Paris at birth, though there was prophesy that his birth would prove fatal to Priam and Troy. Helen tells the story of how three goddesses made him a judge of who among them was the most beautiful, making him promises of wisdom, wealth and power. Aphrodite promised him the most beautiful wife. She claims that the Trojans were defeated because of the curse of the goddesses Athene and Hera. And she, Helen, had to suffer misfortune for the sake of the Greek and the Trojans. Why did she go with Paris? She says a powerful deity like Aphrodite, made her go with Paris. She accuses Menelaus for leaving her alone and going to Crete. She says no one can resist the power of love, even the king of gods, Zeus, could not resist it. And it was Aphrodite who Menelaus should blame and she, Helen, should be forgiven. She tried to run away from Troy, after the death of Paris, and tried to slip down secretly from the battlement wall using a rope. But, her new husband, Paris’s brother, Deiphobus, took her away by force. She asks, if it would be justice to
kill her. You cannot hope to govern gods. (She means what she did was arranged by the goddess).

The Chorus urges Hecabe to answer Helen’s clever defence. Hecabe flatly denies that any god would make such a folly. Goddess Hera could not have given away her city of Argos to the foreigner or Athene could not have given up her Athens to Troy. The goddesses came to Mount Ida only for recreation. Hera did not need to be called more beautiful. Athene herself wanted to remain a maiden. She had no reason to be called the most beautiful. It is stupid to claim that Aphrodite raveled to Greece with Paris to get him a beautiful wife. She could have easily brought Helen on her own to Troy. Helen came away with Paris because Paris, says Hecabe, was extremely handsome. He felt lust for Helen, not love. Helen was impressed by the gorgeous, and glittering Eastern dress of Paris and it was only for love of gold and the riches of Troy that Helen came away with Paris. Hecabe denies that Paris carried away Helen by force. Why did she not cry aloud?

Hecabe accuses Helen of being an opportunist. When Greeks started winning, she praised Menelaus, and when the Trojans had victory, there was no mention of Menelaus.

Hecabe says, any woman of good breeding would try to kill herself if she really loved her husband. Did Helen try to kill herself if she really pined for her former husband, Menelaus?

Hecabe claims that she often told Helen to go away, that Paris can find other women. She even promised Helen help to escape.

Finally, Hecabe sarcastically comments, how Helen has come dressed beautifully to meet her former husband. She should have come crawling and shivering, dressed in rags to show that she really repented her crime.

Then Hecabe advises Menelans to kill Helen there itself as a lesson to unfaithful wives.

The chorus also supports Hecabe’s argument, asking Menelaus to punish Helen and answer people who called him womanish.

Menelans agrees with Hecabe and chorus that Helen shall be punished. He does not accept Helen’s defence that goddess Aphrodite was responsible for her action. He talks of death by stoning for her.
Helen kneels down and prays that she would not be killed for what gods did, and asks for forgiveness.

Hecabe reminds Menelaus of his friends who died on account of Helen. For them and for their orphaned children Helen should be punished.

Menelaus orders the soldiers to take Helen away. Hecabe warns Menelaus telling him not to take Helen on the same ship with him, she is afraid that love for her and her beauty would influence him. ‘Once a lover, always a lover’ she says.

Menelaus agrees with her and promises that Helen shall not be on the same ship with him.

Chorus addresses god Zeus complaining for forsaking the Trojans, giving temples away to the enemies of Troy. The women in Chorus remember the dearest places of their native Troy, the Rock of Pergamus, the mountain of Ida, the rivers swollen by melting snow, the water-falls and so on. They bid farewell to Zeus. They ask Zeus what the wholesale destruction of Troy means to him.

Then the women in Chorus lament their unwashed, unburied husbands. Their spirits would roam the shadows. And these women would sail to Argos, through the land of Cyclops. They wonder what their home would be.

They pronounce curse on Menelaus that a thunderbolt would fall from heaven on his ship, in the mid-ocean, that his oars and the keel would break, and fall on Helen while she is gazing at herself in the mirror, as if she is a girl. The women curse that Helen should never reach home safe in Sparta. She was responsible for the shame of Greece and the ruin of Troy.

The women weep for their bleeding land, for children dead like dead Astyanax murdered by the Greeks, thrown from high towers.

Talthybius enters here, with the body of dead Astyanax on the shield of Hector. Andromache, the child’s mother has already gone with Neoptolemus, whose grandfather has been expelled from home. So he had to quickly leave. Andromache, before going, expressed her wish that Astyanax’s body should be buried putting it in the shield of Hector. Talthybius has brought the body of the child and the shield. The messenger himself could not control his tears at the grief of Andromache.

Hecabe makes preparation for the child’s burial. The body has already been washed by Talthybius. Hecabe accuses the Greeks for killing the innocent child, who
could not have harmed them. Hector with thousands of Trojan soldiers fighting by his side could not defeat the Greeks. Why then should they fear a mere child? Astyanax, the child, once promised his grandmother that he would cut a long curl of his hair to bury with her when she died. But it is ironical that the grandmother is burying the child.

Hecabe philosophizes saying, no man should be sure of his position in life because forces beyond our control guide our life. There is nothing like assured happiness.

Meanwhile the Trojan women gather cloaks from the dead Trojan soldiers to clothe the dead body of the child. They say: ‘Yesterday, so great a prince, now a sight to break my heart’.

Hecabe and the women in Chorus bid farewell to the dead child.

Hecabe remembers how gods have always been unkind to Troy. This was the destiny of herself and of Troy, which gods had already decided out of hatred. The prayers and sacrifices made by the Trojans came to nothing. Why have the Trojans suffered such a tragedy? Is it for poets to write plays about it and for singers to sing their tragic end?

She tells women to lay the body of the dead child in the grave. She says the child does not need costly funeral. A costly funeral only shows the vanity of the living ones. The dead do not care for it.

Talthybius orders the soldiers to bring torches and burn down Troy, and then all should board the ships and sail away. He tells Hecabe to go with soldiers to the ship of Odysseus, to whom she is allotted.

Hecabe tries to jump into the fire and kill herself, but the soldiers seize her. Talthybius tells the soldiers to take care of her; because she now belongs to Odysseus.

Meanwhile Troy is burning like a beacon. The Chorus tells Hecabe not to call on gods any more. It is now time to call the dead. They hear the tallest structure, Pergamus, fall. And all of them bid farewell to Troy, on their way to the Greek ships and slavery.
Check Your Progress II

a) Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each.
   a) Who is Andromache? Who is she allotted to?
   b) Who does Andromache blame for the tragedy of Troy?
   c) Who is Astyanax?
   d) What do the Greeks decide to do with Astyanax?
   e) Who were responsible for the first destruction of Troy?
   f) Who is Menelaus?
   g) What warning does Hecabe give to Menelaus?
   h) Why does Helen blame Priam and Hecabe?
   i) How does Helen blame Menelaus?
   j) What punishment does Menelaus decide for Helen?

b) Answer the following questions briefly:
   a) What grieves Andromache most and why?
   b) Who advised the Greeks to kill Astyanax and why?
   c) How does Helen defend herself before Menelaus?
   d) How does Hecabe refute the defence of Helen?

2.3 Critical Commentary:

You already have the detailed summary of the play. Here we are giving you a brief critical commentary on the play.

Trojan Women (or Troades) was actually one of the group of four plays (a Tetralogy), presented by Euripides in the drama festival. Out of these four plays only The Trojan Women has survived and the other three – Alexander, Palamedes, and the Satiric drama Sysyphus – are not in existence. Alexander was about Paris, the son of Priam returning to Troy in his youth, and being accepted by Priam and Hecuba. The other two plays were also in some way related to the story of Troy and Greece.

The Trojan Women is considered to be the best play by Euripides because of its sustained presentation of tragic spectacle, and the best use of choral drama. The main
intention of Euripides here is to severely criticize the warring mentality or martial spirit. The stark picture of devastation caused by war shows the futility of war. The war is shown to be destructive for both, the Trojans as well as the Greeks. When Euripides presented this play, the Greek expedition against Melos was just over, and they were making preparations to attack Sicily, which was going to prove destructive for themselves. This play of Euripides has, thus, contemporary relevance. It is a commentary on the current war between Athens and Sparta. Euripides shows exemplary moral courage by writing against war when the Athenians were preparing for war against Sicily. Plutarch, the historian, tells us how the captive Athenians facing death were allowed to go free when they recited passages from the plays of Euripides. Euripides shows how the victors and the vanquished both suffered terribly in this war. The Greeks who died in the war had not seen their children. No wife or son came to perform their last rites. The Greeks returning from war did not reach home as Athene had cursed them for ravishing of Cassandra by Ajax. Euripides tried to show how war makes obscure the sense of right and wrong. The moral transgression of Ajax brought further punishment to the Greeks.

In this play the destruction of Troy is presented by Euripides from the point of view of the Trojans. Euripides relentlessly presents one incident after another of the tragedy of Hecabe and the Trojans creating the mountain of suffering. When Hecabe, the grandmother, holds the dead body of her grandson, Euripides flings the following lines to the Greek audience madly preparing for attack on Sicily:

“Dear God, the pattering welcomes of thy feet The nursing in my lap and O the sweet Falling asleep together. All is gone. How should poet carve a funeral stone To tell thy story true? “There lieth here babe whom the Greek feared; and in their fear, slew him.”

There is no refuge from this grief. Hecabe finally realizes that peace can be found only in resignation. Human effort can achieve nothing. Hecabe courageously accepts all the suffering. She does not any longer seek the help of god. Gods have betrayed her and her country.

**Structure of the play:**

As pointed out above, this play does not seem to have plot (as defined in Aristotle’s Poetics). It is mostly episodic, and even the episodes in it appear to be disjointed.
Yet, we can say that the play has unity. One important aspect of this unity is the presence of Hecabe throughout the play; and another aspect is the continuous appearance of Talthybius, the Greek messenger, marking progress of the action. The episode dealing with Helen and Menelaus is interspersed with the two episodes dealing with Astyanax, the son of Hector and Andromache. Every episode is carefully presented, with appropriate tone and the spirit of action. For example, Hecabe’s tone of mourning changes to harsh criticism of Helen, and when Menelaus enters, she turns to be a cunning woman, diplomatic enough to forget her sorrow, and persuade Menelaus to punish Helen there itself, warning him that Helen’s beauty would make him forget her crime, her infidelity.

The unity of the play is also achieved by the scenes presenting fateful and tragic story of each woman of Priam’s household being sent into the slavery of one Greek lord or the other. And each woman’s response to her tragedy is different in character. Cassandra’s entry is immensely dramatic. She enters with the flaming torch in her hand prophesying the ruin of Agamemnon’s house. Andromache blames Hecabe and Priam for keeping Paris, the child alive, and then accepting him on his return as a young man, fully knowing that he would bring downfall of Troy. Andromache would welcome death than be a slave in the house of the son of Achilles. Hecabe herself is deeply grieved for being sent to serve in the household of Odysseus. She has very low opinion of Odysseus. But, to be alive is more important for her. She advises Andromache to accept her fate. She is still a diplomatic queen, as she hopes the son born to Andromache would, in future, revive the glory of Troy.

The scenes of the play are marked by the entries and exits of Talthybius, who comes to take away the female prisoners to send them to the ships of the Greek lords. The chorus is made up of the weeping Trojan widows, who are present from the beginning to the end of the play, giving unity to the action of the play. Every time Talthybius enters, he announces new disaster – Polyxena to be sacrificed at the grave of Achilles, Cassandra the virgin priestess is to be sent to Agamemnon. Astyanax the hope and the lone male survivor of the Trojan dynasty to be killed.

**Characterization**:

In *The Trojan Women*, as already pointed out, the intention of Euripides is to present the theme of horrors of war and the resultant suffering. Secondly, the characters in the play are exclusively Trojan Women, as there is no male Trojan
survivor. Throughout the play there is mourning. The central figure in the play is Hecabe, the queen of Troy, who has lost everything, her husband, her sons and grand-children. And her daughters and the daughters-in-law, as well as herself are being sent to the conquerors as slaves.

**Hecabe:**

Hecabe, though deep in mourning, is quite aware of the reality of her situation. She advises Andromache, her daughter-in-law, to accept her fate and live. She tells her that there is hope in life. She even advises Andromache to win love of her new husband. Hecabe hopes that Andromache may give birth to a son, who could prove to be the savior of Troy in future; a founder of the new kingdom of Troy. Even in the depth of her mourning, Hecabe thinks of the possibility of the revival of Trojan kingdom. Hecabe is practical here. She is angry with gods, for not protecting Troy and tells Cassandra, in a fit of anger, to throw away the temple keys and abandon the clothes of the priestess of Apollo. Much more interesting is the scene with Captive Helen brought before Menelaus. Hecabe wants Helen to be punished by death on the Trojan ground itself. She warns Menelaus that he may be beguiled by Helen’s beauty and may not be able to kill her. Though Helen must be punished, Hecabe tells Menelaus to give her a chance to defend herself. When Helen makes out her case, and pleads that she was the victim of the whims of the Goddess Aphrodite (Venus), Hecabe undertakes to answer this defence, and shows how Helen is herself responsible for her crime, her infidelity. Hecabe forgets her sorrow, and cleverly heaps accusations against Helen. She ridicules Helen’s plea that the goddess compelled her to go with Paris. She refuses to accept Helen’s story that Aphrodite herself came to Greece with Paris. She argues Helen was true neither to the Greek nor to the Trojans. She offered Helen a chance to escape to the Greek Camp. But Helen did not take it. Hecabe, thus, tries her best to denounce Helen and brand her as an unfaithful wife that deserves death punishment. She accuses Helen of being an opportunist. Hecabe cunningly reminds Menelaus how his Greek compatriots died on account of Helen and how their children were orphaned.

Hecabe, thus, shows herself to be very adept argumentator, bent upon taking revenge on Helen, who caused destruction of Troy. But, apart from this, in the face of the tragedy, Hecabe poignantly reaches the conclusion that man’s life depends on ‘the chances of years’ dancing like ‘an idiot in the wind’. Human effort can achieve nothing. Greatness of Hecabe is that she rises above her tragic resignation and
courageously accepts all the sufferings. She does not look to gods for help. She displays the courage of the lonely.

Helen:

Helen appears briefly in this play as a prisoner brought by the Greek soldiers in the presence of Menelaus.

Helen faces Menelaus boldly asking him about what he intends to do. She is properly dressed as becomes her incomparable beauty. But, Helen cannot match the aggressive accusations which Hecabe makes against her. Helen puts all blame on the goddess Aphrodite and Paris himself. But, Hecabe and Menelaus both disregard the role of the goddess in making her run away with Paris. Helen has no answer except the hand of Supernatural elements influencing her life. She even blames Menelaus for leaving her alone with Paris. Her only defence appears to be her beauty. The women in chorus also feel that the weak Menelaus would not be able to punish her. In this play, Helen appears to have rather passive role. She fails to make out a case for herself as a woman wronged.

She is considered to be the cause of the war by the Trojan Women. Hecabe calls her ‘hated Helen’. The myth is, thus, undermined by Hecabe and Menelaus for their own convenience. Only Cassandra clearly states that Paris’s marriage with the daughter of Zeus (Helen was supposed to be Zeus’s daughter) was for him a matter of glory and also a great disaster. Cassandra does not blame Helen for war. Helen tries to argue that Athene and Hera had promised Paris the rule of Hellas (Greece), and she was instrumental to the saving of Greece because Paris chose her instead of the Kingdom of Greece. But this argument is also rejected by Menelaus and Hecabe, as it depends on supernatural intervention in human affairs.

Helen is aware of the fact that she is hated. Yet she keeps her nerve and tries to argue. She also knows that both Hecabe and Menelaus, in their anger, are being irrational and inconsistent. She knows that her logic cannot defeat hatred in the eyes of Hecabe and Menelaus. She again refers to the story of the birth of Paris. Hecabe was warned that her son would be the cause of destruction of Troy. Yet she gave birth to Paris. Priam, who knew the prophesy, allowed Paris to live. But this argument again relates to the involvement of gods, which Menelaus is not in the mood to accept. Helen’s speech is, therefore, more for the Greek audience of the present and future also, rather than for Hecabe and Menelaus.
Andromache:

Andromache, the wife of Hector, is presented as a perfect wife. She says to Hecabe: I made good reputation my aim; I was fairly successful; but now I have lost what I gained. As Hector’s wife I studied and practiced the perfection of womanly modesty.’ To avoid being slandered, she never went out of the house. She would not allow any gossiping in the house by women. She was quite contented in her life. While with her husband, she remained silent (not to disturb him), and behaved in modest manner.

This description of a perfect wife indicates the view of the contemporary Greek audience about woman. Andromache’s portrayal of perfect and ideal life is a contrast to her future life. She is to be the slave of the son of Achiles, and it was Achiles who had killed Hector. Andromache blames Hecabe for saving the life of her son, Paris, who became the cause of all this destruction of Troy. Her only hope was Astyanax, her son. But, he too was snatched away from her at the advice of Odysseus.

2.4 Terms to remember:

- **Nereids**: water goddesses or sea nymphs
- **Poseidon**: Greek god of the sea.
- **Apollo**: Greek Sun god.
- **Argive**: Greek.
- **Concubine**: a woman as a keep.
- **Peirene**: a spring at Corinth, it is said to be struck by the foot of a legendary horse Pegasus.
- **The land of Aetna**: Sicily.
- **Consecrated**: set apart as sacred, devoted (to) (Cassandra was set apart as the devotee of Apollo).
- **Avengers**: these are Furies, the Spirits, who make people kill each other e.g. Orestes killed his mother Clytemnestra to avenge the killing of his father Agamemnon.
2.5 Answers to cheque your progress:

1.  a) Euripides was appreciated for the skill of his argumentation.
    b) Euripides presents his characters realistically.
    c) Euripides exploited sentimental and pathetic situations in his plays.
    d) Euripides is realistic in the use of costumes and dramatic technique.
    e) Euripides used chorus to present the background and comment on the situation.
    f) Cassandra was the daughter of King Priam and Hecabe, and the priestess of god Apollo.
    g) Aphrodite gave Paris Helen, the most beautiful woman as wife.

2.  a) The Trojan Women has episodic plot. And even the episodes in it are disjointed. However, it is suitable for the theme of the play, which is concentrated presentation of the evils of war.
    b) The play, The Trojan Women, has background of ten years of war between the Greeks and the Trojans. The seed of this conflict was sown in the story of three goddesses asking Paris to judge, who among them was the most beautiful. And Paris, having chosen Aphrodite, invited anger of Athene and Hera. The misfortune of Troy had begun even before that. The oracle had prophesied how the son, Paris would bring about destruction of Troy.
    c) The Greek had attacked the island of Melos killing all the males and bringing their women as slaves. Euripides is indirectly telling the Greek audience the evils of war, and the injustice they did to the people of Melos.
    d) The Greeks made a huge wooden horse and put it at the gates of Troy as a gift. The Trojans delightfully brought it inside the city. At night the soldiers hidden in the belly of the horse came out – and killed half awake Trojan men.
    e) The goddesses, (Aphrodite, Athene and Hera) were responsible for the destruction of Troy. Aphrodite wrongfully made Paris take away Helen from her husband. Athene helped the Greeks suggesting how to betray the Trojans by presenting a huge wooden horse.
f) The women of Troy are deeply in sorrow as they weep for the death of their husbands and sons. They are fearful of their fate and their future as slaves. Some of them fear being taken to Sparta. They wish for Athens, as it is a better place.

g) Polyxena was the daughter of Hecabe. At the suggestion of Odysseus, she was sacrificed at the tomb of Achiles, as a gift to the dead man.

h) Hecabe hates Odysseus because she knows how cunning and evil he is. She considers him to be an ‘impious outcaste’, a monster of wickedness.

i) Cassandra prophesies ruin of Agamemnon’s house. She says his son Orestes would kill his own mother. She foretells that Agamemnon would lose everything. It would be the end of his dynasty.

Check Your Progress II:

1. a) Andromache is the daughter-in-law of Hecabe and Hector’s widow, being allotted to the son of Achiles.

b) Andromache blames Priam and Hecabe for the tragedy of Troy.

c) Astyanax is the son of Andromache and Hector.

d) The Greeks decide to kill Astyanax since he is the male Trojan prince.

e) The famous archer and the king of Salamis, Heracles was the first to destroy Troy.

f) Menelaus is the brother of Agamemnon and the husband of Helen.

g) Hecabe warns Menelaus that Helen’s beauty and enchantments may trap him.

h) Priam and Hecabe did not kill Paris as a child and left him alive with the Shepherds.

j) Helen blames Menelaus for leaving her alone with Paris.

k) Menelaus talks of death by stoning her by the relatives of the dead Greek Soldiers.

2. a) Andromache is being given as a slave to the son of Achilles, who killed her husband. She cannot forget it.
b) Odysseus advised the Greeks to kill Astyanax because Astyanax was the son of Hector. If he grew into a young man, he would be a formidable enemy.

c) Helen mainly argues that the goddess Aphrodite was responsible for making her run away with Paris. She blames Menelaus also for leaving her alone with Paris. She blames Hecabe for giving birth to the son like Paris, who proved the source of all trouble. She blames Priam for not killing Paris at birth. She says the Trojans were defeated because of the curse of goddesses Athene and Hera.

d) Hecabe flatly denies that goddesses had any part in this. Hera could not have promised her own Argos to Paris, and Athene could not promise Athens to him. She says Hera did not need to be called the most beautiful, nor did Athene, who wanted to remain a maiden. She points out how she gave Helen a chance to run away but she did not. Helen willingly came away with Paris tempted by his beauty and the riches.

2.6 Exercises:

I Write short notes on the following:

a) Helen’s defence of herself.

b) Hecabe’s accusations against Helen.

c) Andromache.

d) Cassandra.

II a) Comment on the characterization in *The Trojan Women* by Euripides.

b) State the theme of *The Trojan Women* and explain how Euripides has realized it in the play.

c) Comment on *The Trojan Women* as the play of the greatest denunciation or war.
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3.0 Objectives:

After completing the study of this unit, you will
• Know about the life and works of Shudraka
• Know about the plot of The Little Clay Cart
• Learn the character/s in The Little Clay Cart
• Know about the structure of The Little Clay Cart
• Be able to answer the questions on The Little Clay Cart

3.1 Introduction:

This unit begins with the discussion of the life and works of Shudraka. It also studies his The Little Clay Cart in terms of its plot, character/s, and other critical aspects.

3.2 Life and Works of Shudraka:

We know very little about the life, the date, and the very identity of King Shudraka, the reputed author of Mrchakatika (The Little Clay Cart). We do not know about any other work written by him, and we have no direct information about him except somewhat fanciful statements of the Prologue to this play. The Prologue states: Shudraka was extremely handsome; he walked slowly but majestically like an elephant; his eyes were red like those of a chakor; his complexion was like a full moon; he had an attractive figure; his strength was boundless; he was senior among the dwijas and he was a poet, too; he had made the study of Rigveda, Samveda, Algebra, fine arts, etc.; he excelled among the Vedic scholars; he had done a lot of penance; he was obsessed with the art of fighting; he was especially fond of fighting with the elephants of the enemy; he never committed any careless blunder during the battles; he ruled for a very long time; he performed the Ashwamedh Yadnya; he was suffering from an eye disease, but he regained his sight owing to the Lord Shiva’s blessings; at last, after making his son the next king, he ended his life by entering the fire at the age of 100 years and 10 days.

There are many tales about King Shudraka, but none of them mentions him as an author. Such Sanskrit texts as Skandapurāṇ, Vetalpanchvisi, and Kathasaritsagar mention him as a king. Ban has mentioned him in his Kadambari and Harshacharita.
Dandi even describes Shudraka’s different adventures undertaken in different lives in his Dashkumarcharita. Similar references to Shudraka have been made by Rajshekhar, Vaman and Kalhan. The poets Romil-Somil have known to be the composers of Shudrakkatha. There are also available a story titled Shudrakavadh and a play titled Vikramantashudrak. We have to make a close study of The Little Clay Cart to find out how Shudraka reveals himself in his work. We can compare Shudraka with two other great dramatists of India to discover in what ways he excels them or is excelled by them.

Kalidasa, Shudraka, Bhavabhuti—these are the greatest names in the history of the Indian drama. Kalidasa in the 3rd-4th century CE is arguably one of ancient India's greatest Sanskrit dramatists. Three famous romantic plays written by Kalidasa are the Malavikagnimitram (Malavika and Agnimitra), Vikramuurvashiiya (Pertaining to Vikrama and Urvashi), and Abhijnanasakuntala (The Recognition of Shakuntala). The last was inspired by a story in the Mahabharata and is the most famous. It is true that Kalidasa's dramatic masterpiece, the Shakuntala, is the most widely known of the Indian plays. Kalidasa has been called the "Shakespeare of India."

Bhavabhuti (c. 7th century CE) is said to have written the following three plays: Malati-Madhava (Malati and Madhava), Mahaviracharita (The Life of Mahavira) and Uttar Ramacharita (the Latter Acts of Rama). Among these three, the last two cover between them the entire epic of Ramayana. The austerity of style, lack of humour, and insistent grandeur are some of the important qualities of Bhavabhuti's plays. He will always seem to be the greatest of Indian poets for his insistent grandeur.

Kalidasa is remarkable for "the grace of poetry," and Bhavabhuti, for "the mastery of eloquence." Yet both Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti are intimately allied in spirit. Shudraka differs from them completely. Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti are Hindus of the Hindus; the Shakuntala and the Latter Acts of Rama could have been written nowhere save in India: but Shudraka, alone in the gallery of Indian dramatists, has a cosmopolitan character. Shakuntala is a Hindu maid, Madhava is a Hindu hero; but Sansthanika and Maitreya and Madanika, the characters in The Little Clay Cart are citizens of the world. In some of the more striking characteristics of Sanskrit literature—fondness for system, elaboration of style, love of epigram—Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti are far truer to India than is Shudraka. In Shudraka we find few of those
splendid phrases like Kalidasa's "there are doors of the inevitable everywhere," or Bhavabhuti's "for causeless love there is no remedy." The most important characteristic of The Little Clay Cart is the predominance of swift-moving action, while the most important characteristic of the Latter Acts of Rama is the poetical expression of great truths. Again, Shudraka's style is simple and direct, a rare quality in a Hindu. Although this style, in the passages of higher emotion, is of exquisite simplicity, yet Shudraka cannot infuse into mere language the charm which we find in Kalīdasa or the majesty which we find in Bhavabhuti.

Yet Shudraka's limitations with regard to stylistic power are not without their compensation. The love of style slowly strangled originality and enterprise in Indian poets, and ultimately proved the death of Sanskrit literature. Now just at this point, where other Hindu writers are weak, Shudraka stands forth preeminent. Nowhere else in the hundreds of Sanskrit dramas do we find such variety, and such drawing of character, as in The Little Clay Cart; and nowhere else, in the drama at least, is there such humour.

3.2.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Choose the correct alternative:

1) Shudraka was ----------.
   a. a carpenter               c. a king
   b. a goldsmith               d. a humorist

2) Who wrote Abhijnansakuntala?
   a. Bhasa                    c. Shudraka
   b. Bhavabhuti               d. Kalidasa

3) Kalidasa wrote -------------- plays.
   a. romantic                  c. comic
   b. tragic                    d. tragicomic

4) Bhavabhuti’s style is characterized by --------------.
   a. humour                     c. melancholy
   b. grandeur                   d. charm
5) The title *The Little Clay Cart* is the translation of ----------.
   a. *Uttar Ramcharita*  c. *Mrchakatika*
   b. *Abhijnanasakuntala*  d. *Vikramuurvashiiya*

B) Fill in the blanks:
   1) ------------ has been called the “Shakespeare of India”.
   2) Shudraka has a -------------- character.
   3) *Abhijnanasakuntala* was inspired by a story in -----------.
   4) -------------- is “the master of eloquence”.
   5) Shudraka’s characters are ---------- of the world.

C) Answer in a word/phrase/sentence:
   1) Mention the names of three greatest dramatists of ancient India.
   2) What is the remarkable quality of Kalidasa?
   3) Mention the most important characteristics of Sanskrit literature.
   4) What is the predominant characteristic of *The Little Clay Cart*?
   5) What is Shudraka’s style?

3.2.2 Terms to Remember:
- **identity** – who/what somebody/something is
- **fanciful** – odd
- **austerity** – lack of ornament
- **grandeur** – greatness, magnificence
- **eloquence** – expressive language
- **cosmopolitan** – containing people from different backgrounds
- **compensation** – something good to balance the lack
- **strangled** – prevented the growth of
- **preeminent** – superior to all others
3.3 Introduction to Shudraka’s *The Little Clay Cart*:

One of the earliest known Sanskrit plays, *The Little Clay Cart* was composed by Shudraka in the 2nd century BC. The play is full of romance, sex, royal intrigue and comedy. The juicy plot of the play has numerous twists and turns. The main story is about a young man named Charudatta, and his love for Vasantasena, a rich courtesan or *nagarvadhu*. The love affair is complicated by a royal courtier, who is also attracted to Vasantasena. The plot is further complicated by thieves and mistaken identities. It is thus a greatly hilarious and entertaining play.

The play had been translated as *The Toy Cart* by Horace Hayman Wilson in 1826. It was translated into English, notably by Arthur W. Ryder in 1905 as *The Little Clay Cart*. Ryder's version was enacted at the Hearst Greek Theatre in Berkeley in 1907, and in New York in 1924 at the Neighbourhood Playhouse, at the Potboiler Art Theatre in Los Angeles in 1926, and at the Theatre de Lys in 1953. The play has been adapted in several Indian languages and performed by various theatre groups and directors, like Habib Tanvir. The play was made into a 1984 Hindi movie *Utsav*, directed by Girish Karnad. The Indian play depicted in the film *Moulin Rouge!* may have been based on *The Little Clay Cart*.

Shudraka’s *The Little Clay Cart* is famous for its variety. To gain a rough idea of Shudraka's variety, we have only to recall the names of the acts of the play. Here The Shampooer who Gambled and The Hole in the Wall are shortly followed by The Storm; and The Swapping of the Bullock-carts is closely succeeded by The Strangling of Vasantasena. The story runs from farce to tragedy, from satire to pathos, with a wonderful breadth. Here we have philosophy:

*The lack of money is the root of all evil.* (i. 14)

And pathos:

My body wet by tear-drops falling, falling;
   *My limbs polluted by the clinging mud;*
Flowers from the graveyard torn, my wreath appalling;
*For ghastly sacrifice hoarse ravens calling,*
   *And for the fragrant incense of my blood.* (x. 3)

And nature description:

*But mistress, do not scold the lightning. She is your friend,*
This golden cord that trembles on the breast
Of great Airavata; upon the crest
Of rocky hills this banner all ablaze;
This lamp in Indra's palace; but most blest
As telling where your most belovèd stays. (v. 33)

And genuine bitterness:

Pride and tricks and lies and fraud
Are in your face;
False playground of the lustful god,
Such is your face;
The wench's stock in trade, in fine,
Epitome of joys divine,
I mean your face
For sale! the price is courtesy.
I trust you'll find a man to buy
Your face. (v. 36)

Shudraka chose for the expression of diverse matters a type of drama which gives the greatest scope to his creative power. This type is called "drama of invention," a category curiously subordinated in India to the heroic drama, the plot of which is drawn from history or mythology. Indeed, The Little Clay Cart is the only extant drama which fulfils the spirit of the drama of invention, as defined by the Sanskrit canons of dramaturgy. The plot of the Malati and Madhava or of the Mallika and Maruta is in no true sense the invention of the author; and The Little Clay Cart is the only drama of invention which is "full of rascals."

But King Shudraka was an author of powerful spirit and so he did not follow the minute, and sometimes puerile, rules of the technical works. In the very title of the drama, he has disregarded the rule that the name of a drama of invention should be formed by compounding the names of heroine and hero. Again, the books prescribe that the hero shall appear in every act; yet Charudatta does not appear in acts ii., iv., vi., and viii. And further, various characters, Vasantasena, Maitreya, the courtier, and others, have vastly gained because they do not conform too closely to the technical definitions.
3.3.1  Check Your Progress:

A)  Choose the correct alternative:
1) When did Shudraka compose *The Little Clay Cart*?
   a. 2\(^{nd}\) century BC  c. 3\(^{rd}\) century BC
   b. 4\(^{th}\) century BC  d. 1\(^{st}\) century AD
2) Who translated *The Little Clay Cart* into English in 1905?
   b. Habib Tanvir  d. Girish Karnad
3) Shudraka’s *The Little Clay Cart* is famous for its -------
   a. beauty  c. tragedy
   b. variety  d. dialogues
4) What is the name of a rich courtesan?
   a. Madanika  c. Malati
   b. Shakuntala  d. Vasantasena
5) What is the type of *The Little Clay Cart*?
   a. “drama of invention”  c. “drama of recognition”
   b. absurd drama  d. problem play

B)  Fill in the blanks:
1) The title of the 1984 Hindi movie based on *The Little Clay Cart* was -------.
2) ---------------- is the protagonist of *The Little Clay Cart*.
3) *The Little Clay Cart* was enacted in New York in ---------.
4) The Hole in the Wall is one of the names of the -------- of the play.
5) The lack of -------- is the root of all evil.

C)  Answer in a word/phrase/sentence:
1) What is the title of Horace Wilson’s translation of *Mrcchakatika*.
2) Who directed a 1984 Hindi movie based on *The Little Clay Cart*?
3) Mention the type of drama which draws its plot from history or mythology.
4) Mention the rule about the title of the drama of invention.
5) Who does not appear in acts II, IV, VI, and VIII of *The Little Clay Cart*?

### 3.3.2 Terms to Remember:
- **intrigue** – conspiracy, secret plots
- **juicy** – interesting
- **hilarious** – funny, amusing
- **pathos** – expression of pity or sadness
- **dramaturgy** – art of writing plays
- **puerile** – immature

### 3.4 Play Summary of *The Little Clay Cart*

**ACT I., entitled The Gems are left Behind.**

Evening of the first day.—After the Prologue, Charudatta, who is within his house, converses with his friend Maitreya, and deplors his poverty. While they are speaking, Vasantasena appears in the street outside. She is pursued by the courtier and Sansthanika; the latter makes her degrading offers of his love, which she indignanty rejects. Charudatta sends Maitreya from the house to offer sacrifice, and through the open door Vasantasena slips unobserved into the house. Maitreya returns after an altercation with Sansthanika, and recognizes Vasantasena. Vasantasena leaves a casket of gems in the house for safe keeping and returns to her home. Charudatta allots the responsibility of safe keeping of Vasantasena’s casket of gems to Vardhamanaka for the day and to Maitreya for the night.

**ACT II., entitled The Shampooer who Gambled.**

Second day.—The act opens in Vasantasena's house. Vasantasena confesses to her maid Madanika her love for Charudatta. Then a shampooer appears in the street, pursued by the gambling-master and a gambler. They demand of him ten gold-pieces which he has lost in the gambling-house. At this point Darduraka enters, and engages the gambling-master and the gambler in an angry discussion. Meanwhile, the shampooer escapes into Vasantasena's house. When Vasantasena learns that the
shampooer had once served Charudatta, she pays his debt. The grateful shampooer resolves to turn monk. As he leaves the house he is attacked by a runaway elephant. Karnapuraka, a servant of Vasantasena, saves him.

**ACT III., entitled The Hole in the Wall.**

The night following the second day.—Charudatta and Maitreya return home after midnight from a concert, and go to sleep. Maitreya has in his hand the gem-casket which Vasantasena has left behind. Sarvilaka, who excels in theft, enters. He is in love with Madanika, a maid of Vasantasena's. He is resolved to acquire by theft the means of buying her freedom. He makes a hole in the wall of Charudatta’s house, enters, and steals the casket of gems which Vasantasena had left. Charudatta wakes to find the casket and the thief gone. Initially, he is satisfied with the theft because the thief could find at least a gem of caskets for theft in his otherwise poor house. Maitreya tells him that the gem stolen by the thief belonged to Vasantasena and was kept by her for safe keeping. Charudatta then feels extremely sorry over the possibility of the people attacking his character without taking into consideration the event of the theft. His wife gives him her pearl necklace with which to make restitution. Charudatta sends Maitreya to Vasantasena’s house with the pearl necklace asking him to tell Vasantasena that he has lost the gem-casket in gambling and that he wishes to repay it in the form of the necklace.

**ACT IV., entitled Madanika and Sarvilaka.**

Third day.—Sarvilaka comes to Vasantasena's house to buy Madanika's freedom. Vasantasena overhears the facts concerning the theft of her gem-casket from Charudatta's house. She accepts the casket, and gives Madanika her freedom. As Sarvilaka leaves the house, he hears that his friend Aryaka, who had been imprisoned by King Palaka, has escaped and is being pursued. Sarvilaka departs to help him. Maitreya comes from Charudatta with the pearl necklace, to repay Vasantasena for the gem-casket. She accepts the necklace also, as giving her an excuse for a visit to Charudatta. She decides to meet Charudatta in the evening.

**ACT V., entitled The Storm.**

Evening of the third day.—Charudatta waits eagerly for Maitreya. Maitreya returns after handing the necklace to Vasantasena. He tells Charudatta that Vasantasena has accepted the necklace and that she was going to come to meet him in the evening. He has not liked Vasantasena’s action and, therefore, he abuses her.
He advises Charudatta to end his relationship with Vasantasena. Charudatta tells him that their relationship is different because she was attracted to him in spite of his poverty. He receives a servant of Vasantasena in the garden of his house, who announces that Vasantasena is on her way to visit him. He is so happy to hear this news that he hands over his piece of cloth to the servant. Vasantasena then appears in the street with the courtier; the two describe alternately the violence and beauty of the storm which has suddenly arisen. Vasantasena dismisses the courtier, enters the garden, and explains to Charudatta how she has again come into possession of the gem-casket. Meanwhile, the storm has so increased in violence that she is compelled to spend the night at Charudatta's house.

**ACT VI., entitled The Swapping of the Bullock-carts.**

Morning of the fourth day.—A maid wakes up Vasantasena at Charudatta’s house. She tells her that Charudatta has left for the Pushpakarandaka park and that he has informed Vardhamanaka to keep ready a bullock-cart for Vasantasena’s departure. She is pleased with the idea of going to the park because she feels that she has not seen Charudatta properly at night and would like to see him in the daylight. She returns the necklace to Charudatta’s wife. Charudatta’s wife refuses to accept it saying that since Charudatta has given it to her, she cannot take it back. She further tells Vasantasena that her husband is her real ornament. Here Vasantasena meets Charudatta's little son, Rohasena. The boy is peevish because he has only a little clay cart to play with, instead of a toy cart of gold. Vasantasena gives him her gems to buy a toy cart of gold. Charudatta's servant drives up to take Vasantasena in Charudatta's bullock-cart to the park, where she is to meet Charudatta. But while Vasantasena is making ready, he drives away to get a cushion. Then Sansthanika's servant drives up with his master's cart, which Vasantasena enters by mistake. Soon after, Charudatta's servant returns with his cart. Then the escaped prisoner Aryaka appears and enters Charudatta's cart. Two policemen come on the scene; they are searching for Aryaka. One of them looks into the cart and discovers Aryaka, but agrees to protect him. This he does by deceiving and finally maltreating his companion.
ACT VII., entitled *Aryaka's Escape*.

Fourth day.—Charudatta is awaiting Vasantasena in the park. His cart, in which Aryaka lies hidden, appears. Charudatta discovers the fugitive, removes his fetters, lends him the cart, and leaves the park.

ACT VIII., entitled *The Strangling of Vasantasena*.

Fourth day.—A Buddhist monk, the shampooer of the second act, enters the park. He has difficulty in escaping from Sansthanika, who appears with the courtier. Sansthanika's servant drives in with the cart which Vasantasena had entered by mistake. She is discovered by Sansthanika, who pursues her with insulting offers of love. When she repulses him, Sansthanika gets rid of all witnesses, strangles her, and leaves her for dead. The Buddhist monk enters again, revives Vasantasena, and conducts her to a monastery.

ACT IX., entitled *The Trial*.

Fifth day.—Sansthanika accuses Charudatta of murdering Vasantasena for her money. In the course of the trial, it appears that Vasantasena had spent the night of the storm at Charudatta's house; that she had left the house the next morning to meet Charudatta in the park; that there had been a struggle in the park, which apparently ended in the murder of a woman. Charudatta's friend, Maitreya, enters with the gems which Vasantasena had left to buy Charudatta's son a toy cart of gold. These gems fall to the floor during a scuffle between Maitreya and Sansthanika. In view of Charudatta's poverty, this seems to establish the motive for the crime, and Charudatta is condemned to death.

ACT X., entitled *The End*.

Sixth day.—Two headsmen are conducting Charudatta to the place of execution. Charudatta takes his last leave of his son and his friend Maitreya. But Sansthanika's servant escapes from confinement and betrays the truth. Yet he is not believed, owing to the cunning displayed by his master. The headsmen are preparing to execute Charudatta, when Vasantasena herself appears upon the scene, accompanied by the Buddhist monk. Her appearance puts a summary end to the proceedings. Then news is brought that Aryaka has killed and supplanted the former king, that he wishes to reward Charudatta, and that he has by royal edict freed Vasantasena from the necessity of living as a courtesan. Sansthanika is brought before Charudatta for
sentence, but is pardoned by the man whom he had so grievously injured. The play ends with the usual Epilogue.

3.4.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Choose the correct alternative:

1) __________ is Charudatta’s friend.
   a. Sansthanika          c. Maitreya
   b. Darduraka           d. Karnapuraka

2) Sansthanika is __________
   a. a king               c. a servant
   b. a villain            d. a messenger

3) The Shampooer wishes to become __________
   a. a teacher            c. A servant
   b. a fighter            d. a monk

4) Sarvilaka is in love with __________
   a. Vasantasena          c. Madanika
   b. Malti                d. Malavika

5) Who is condemned to death for murdering Vasantasena?
   a. Charudatta           c. a Buddhist monk
   b. Sansthanika          d. Maitreya

B) Fill in the blanks:

1) Charudatta suffers from __________.
2) Charudatta wishes to offer __________.
3) Vasantasena is compelled to spend the night at __________ house.
4) The Shampooer of the second act becomes a __________ monk.
5) __________ wishes to reward Charudatta.

C) Answer in a word/phrase/sentence:

1) What does Vasantasena leave in Charudatta’s house?
2) Why does Vasantasena accept the pearl necklace?
3) Why does Vasantasena give Rohasena her gems?
4) Who enters Charudatta’s cart by mistake?
5) Who is pardoned by Charudatta?

3.4.2 Terms to Remember:

- **Prologue** – introductory part of a play
- **altercation** – heated argument
- **restitution** – repayment
- **swapping** - exchange
- **peevish** – irritated, annoyed
- **maltreating** – treating with cruelty
- **fugitive** – person who is running away or escaping
- **repulses** - rejects
- **monastery** – building in which monks live
- **scuffle** - struggle
- **confinement** – prison
- **cunning** – cleverness at deceiving
- **execute** – kill as a legal punishment
- **supplanted** – replaced
- **edict** – decree, law
- **grievously** - badly
- **Epilogue** – added part

3.5 Major/Minor Characters in *The Little Clay Cart*:

The characters of *The Little Clay Cart* are living men and women. Even when Charudatta’s character is a type, the character lives, in a sense in which Dushyanta in
Abhijnanasakuntala or even Rama in Uttar Ramacharita can hardly be said to live. Shudraka’s men are better individualized than his women. This fact alone differentiates him sharply from other Indian dramatists. He draws on every class of society, from the high-souled Brahman to the executioner and the housemaid.

Each of Shudraka’s characters has his marked individuality.

**Charudatta:**

In terms of Sanskrit terminology, *The Little Clay Cart* belongs to the type of ‘prakaran’ drama. The protagonist of ‘prakaran’ is a mature and patient Brahmin or minister. Charudatta, a wise and honourable young Brahmana, is the hero of *The Little Clay Cart*.

Charudatta is kind, generous, honest, religious, forgiving, and is endowed with beauty and imagination. He is left impoverished after spending his fortune for the welfare of others. To him, life itself is not dear, but only honour. He values wealth only as it supplies him with the means of serving others. We may, with some justice, compare him with Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Everybody appreciates Charudatta’s personality. He is extremely handsome. He does not tell a lie at all. During the trial, he frankly admits that the gems being carried by Maitreya belong to Vasantasena. Charudatta sends his wife’s pearl necklace to repay Vasantasena for the gem-casket. He is deeply religious. He performs different rites and offers sacrifice. He does not lose his religious faith even when condemned to death for no crime of his own.

Charudatta is very kind. When he discovers Aryaka in his cart in the park, he removes his fetters and lends him the cart for escape from King Palaka. We see the height of his kindness when Sansthanika is brought before him for sentence; he is pardoned by Charudatta in spite of being grievously injured.

Charudatta is an ideal husband. He loves Vasantasena, but he is in love with his wife, too. He is very fond of his son Rohasena. He wishes to see his son before being executed. He advises his son to pursue learning after his death.

Charudatta is a lover of arts. He likes music. He appreciates Sarvalika’s skill in making a hole in the wall of his house.
In love with and loved by Vasantasena, he is falsely accused of her murder and condemned to die. As he is being prepared for execution, Vasantasena appears just in time to identify the true murderer and save her lover’s life. Charudatta’s fortune is restored, and he is made an official at court by the new and just king, Aryaka.

**Vasantasena:**

Vasantasena is a wealthy courtesan who is in love with Charudatta. She is a character with neither the girlish charm of Shakuntala in *Abhijnanasakuntala* nor the mature womanly dignity of Sita in *Uttar Ramcharita*. She is more admirable than lovable. She is witty and wise. She excels in painting. She knows Sanskrit quite well. She knows the art of conversation. She can compose poetry as well.

Vasantasena has no greed for wealth. She refuses to accept the wealth sent by Sansthanika. She pays the shampooer’s debt. Sarvilaka comes to Vasantasena's house to buy Madanika's freedom. Vasantasena overhears the facts concerning the theft of her gem-casket from Charudatta's house. She accepts the casket, and gives Madanika her freedom. When Vasantasena finds that Rohasena is peevish because he has only a little clay cart to play with, instead of a toy cart of gold, she gives him her gems to buy a toy cart of gold. She returns the necklace to Charudatta’s wife. Madanika, her maid, says about her that she would free all her maids without even taking any wealth to do so.

Vasantasena is very beautiful. She has been called the jewel of the city of Ujjayini. Both Charudatta and Sansthanika admire her beauty and use different terms to describe it. When Sansthanika strangles her, the courtier says that beauty has been lost from the earth. He compares her with the Goddess Laxmi.

Vasantasena is as true as steel in her love; this too, in a social position which makes such constancy difficult. She loves beauty and quality, and not wealth as such. She tells Sansthanika that love is generated by quality, and not by force. Charudatta is poor, but she loves him from the bottom of her heart. She accepts the necklace sent by him because it gives her an excuse for a visit to his house. When she goes to the park to meet her lover, she is set upon by Sansthanika. He pursues her with insulting offers of love but she repulses him. He chokes her and leaves her for dead. She is rescued by a Buddhist monk. While Charudatta is being falsely accused and tried for her murder, she is being nursed back to health. She appears at the place of execution in time to save her lover’s life.
In making the heroine of his play a courtesan, Shudraka follows a suggestion of the technical works on the drama; he does not thereby cast any imputation of ill on Vasantasena's character. The courtesan class in India corresponded roughly to the hetæræ of ancient Greece or the geishas of Japan; it was possible to be a courtesan and retain one's self-respect. Yet the inherited way of life proves distasteful to Vasantasena; her one desire is to escape its limitations and its dangers by becoming a legal wife.

Maitreya:

Maitreya is a poor Brahmana. He plays the role of the Vidushaka in Shudraka’s play. In this Vidushaka, we find an instance of Shudraka's masterly skill in giving life to the dry bones of a rhetorical definition. The Vidushaka is a stock character who has something in common with a jester; and in Maitreya the essential traits of the character—eagerness for good food and other creature comforts, and blundering devotion to his friend—are retained, to be sure, but clarified and elevated by his quaint humour and his readiness to follow Charudatta even in death. The grosser traits of the typical Vidushaka are lacking.

Maitreya is Charudatta’s friend and confidant. He likes good food. When Charudatta becomes poor, he eats somewhere else, but resides with Charudatta in his house. His life is associated with Charudatta’s loss or gain. He opposes the idea of returning the pearl necklace after the theft of Vasantasena’s casket of gems. He advises Charudatta to tell lies. He argues that there is no witness to Vasantasena’s handing of her casket of gems to him. He also advises Charudatta not to love Vasantasena because for him, courtesans are cunning. He is sorry for Charudatta’s impoverishment, but encourages him to believe that impoverishment becomes him.

Maitreya does not reveal Charudatta’s condition before others. He tries hard to prevent Vasantasena from knowing his condition in the first Act.

Maitreya is timid. He does not like to accompany Vasantasena in darkness. He is not interested in religion at all.

Maitreya is extremely hot-tempered. He does not care for the fall-outs of his temper. He loses his temper when he comes to know about the advances made by Sansthanika and the courtier to Radanika, Charudatta's maid. In Act IX, there takes place a scuffle between Maitreya and Sansthanika and Vasantasena’s gems fall to the floor. As a result, Charudatta is proved guilty and committed to death for his crime.
In short, Maitreya is neither a glutton nor a fool, but a simple-minded, whole-hearted friend.

**Sansthanika:**

Sansthanika is unquestionably Shudraka’s greatest character. He is a villain. He is a combination of ignorant conceit, brutal lust, and cunning. Nobody knows about his father. He is proud of being the brother of King Palaka’s mistress. He makes use of this connection to manipulate the judiciary. Although Vasantasena hates him, he tries to force his love upon her. He also boasts of his attractiveness.

Sansthanika is extremely timid. He likes to dominate only helpless women. In Act I, he fears the arrival of some man when he hears Vasantasena calling her maids. After discovering a woman, he makes Vasantasena degrading offers of his love. In Act VIII, he is once again shocked to find Vasantasena in his cart. In the last Act, he fears to face Charudatta as he had plotted against him so many times previously.

Sansthanika is absolutely stupid. He does not know what to speak and when, but he goes on parading his knowledge all the time. His stupidity can be seen in his command to the courtier to bring his cart in the park through the narrow passage between the two walls.

Sansthanika is brutal. Enamored of Vasantasena and madly jealous of her attentions to Charudatta, he chokes her, leaves her for dead, and accuses his rival of the murder. He is so ruthless that he asks two headsmen to kill Rohasena along with Charudatta.

**The Courtier:**

The courtier is another character suggested by the technical works, and transformed by the genius of Shudraka. He is a man not only of education and social refinement, but also of real nobility of nature. But he is in a false position from the first, though a true gentleman at the wretched court of King Palaka. At last he finds the courage to break away, and risks life, and all that makes life attractive, by backing Aryaka. Of all the conspirators, it is he who runs the greatest risk. To his protection of Vasantasena is added a touch of infinite pathos when we remember that he was himself in love with her. Only when Vasantasena leaves him without a thought, to enter Charudatta's house, does he realize how much he loves her. Then, indeed, he breaks forth in words of the most passionate jealousy.
Sarvilaka

Sarvilaka is a Brahmana, but he is a thief. He has no wealth. He loves Madanika, Vasantasena’s maid and steals the gems left by Vasantasena in Charudatta’s care to buy her freedom. He has learnt the art of theft from some teacher called Yogacharya. He does not find anything wrong in thieving. He prefers theft to work. He justifies his action by saying that Ashwathama, Dronacharya’s son, would not have secretly killed the sons of the Pandavas, if there was anything wrong in doing so.

Sarvilaka is very intelligent. He reveals his intelligence when he makes a hole in Charudatta’s house for theft.

Sarvilaka is courageous. He does not like to attack women. He believes that wealth accumulates with courage. He maintains a sense of duty even in theft. He is quite considerate. He is quick to understand his duty and when Madanika advises him, he is willing to return the gems stolen from Charudatta’s house.

Sarvilaka is Prince Aryaka’s friend and liberator. He is ready to do anything for his friend. He purchases Madanika as his bride, but leaves her immediately to free Aryaka, his friend, as soon as he learns that he has been captured by the king. He helps Aryaka to escape from the prison.

Sarvilaka is also expert in conspiracy. It is he who enters Palaka’s palace and kills him. It is he who restores Aryaka to the throne. Sarvilaka is also worried about the safety and security of both Charudatta and his wife. He, thus, is a combination of both good and bad qualities.

Aryaka is a captive prince freed through the efforts of Sarvilaka and Charudatta. He later deposes King Palaka and restores to Charudatta his fortune and his rightful place in the world.

Madanika is Vasantasena’s slave and confidant, whom Sarvilaka purchases as his bride.

Rohasena is Charudatta’s son, to whom Vasantasena gives a little gold cart to replace a clay one, which is all his father is able to afford.

Palaka is the unjust king deposed by Prince Aryaka.
3.5.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Choose the correct alternative:

1) Shudraka’s men are --------
   a. types                     c. individuals
   b. conspirators              d. servants

2) Charudatta can be compared with ------------
   a. Antonio                   c. Bassanio
   b. Shylock                   d. Hamlet

3) In spite of being a courtesan, Vasantasena tries to retain her --------
   a. identity                  c. dignity
   b. self-respect              d. charm

4) Sansthanika is King Palaka’s--------
   a. son-in-law                c. brother
   b. father                    d. brother-in-law

5) Who becomes a new and just king?
   a. Palaka                   c. Sarvilaka
   b. Aryaka                   d. Maitreya

B) Fill in the blanks:

1) Vasantasena is ---------- and wise.

2) ---------- is Vasantasena’s clever maid.

3) Maitreya is Charudatta’s simple-minded, whole-hearted------------

4) Aryaka deposes King ------------

5) ----------- spends his money for the welfare of others.

C) Answer in a word/phrase/sentence:

1) What are the characteristics of Sansthanika?

2) What type of a stock character is Maitreya?
3) Along with Charudatta, who tries to free a captive prince?
4) Who nurses Vasantasena back to health?
5) Mention Vasantasena’s slave and confidante.

3.5.2 Terms to Remember:
- **individualized** – have a distinct or a personal character
- **executioner** – public official who carries out a death sentence
- **irresistible** – delightful
- **beau-ideal** – role model
- **constancy** – faithfulness
- **imputation** - accusation
- **hetææ** - ancient Greek courtesans, highly educated, sophisticated companions
- **geishas** – traditional, female Japanese entertainers
- **impoverished** - poor
- **enamoured** - fond

3.6 Structure of *The Little Clay Cart*:

As far as the construction of the play is concerned, obviously, it is too long. More than this, the main action halts through acts II to V, and during these episodic acts we almost forget that the main plot concerns the love of Vasantasena and Charudatta. Indeed, we have in *The Little Clay Cart* the material for two plays. The larger part of act I forms with acts VI to X a consistent and ingenious plot; while the remainder of act I might be combined with acts III to V to make a pleasing comedy of lighter tone. The second act, clever as it is, has little real connection either with the main plot or with the story of the gems. The breadth of treatment which is observable in this play is found in many other specimens of the Sanskrit drama. The lack of dramatic unity and consistency is often compensated, indeed, by lyrical beauty and charms of style. But it seems that the Sanskrit plays are more dramatic poems than
dramas. In *The Little Clay Cart*, at any rate, we could ill afford to spare a single scene.

3.6.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Fill in the blanks:

1) *The Little Clay Cart* is too---------.

2) The Acts II to V are ------------------.

3) *The Little Clay Cart* lack dramatic --------------.

4) Sanskrit plays are dramatic ----------------.

5) *The Little Clay Cart* is remarkable for its richness and ----------.

3.6.2 Terms to Remember:

- episodic – a long series
- consistent – using the same pattern or style
- ingenious – very clever and original
- specimens – examples

3.7 Summary:

The different sections in this unit enable students to know about the summary, character/s, and critical aspects of Shudraka’s *The Little Clay Cart*.

3.8 Answers to check your progress:

3.2.1

A) 1) a king

2) Kalidasa

3) romantic

4) grandeur

5) *Mrcchakatika*

B) 1) Kalidasa

2) cosmopolitan
3) Mahabharata
4) Bhavabhuti
5) citizens

C) 1) Kalidasa, Shudraka and Bhavabhuti
   2) the grace of poetry
   3) fondness for system, elaboration of style, love of epigram
   4) swift-moving action
   5) simple and direct

3.3.1

A) 1) 2nd century BC
   2) Arthur W Ryder
   3) variety
   4) Vasantasena
   5) “drama of invention”

B) 1) Utsav
   2) Charudatta
   3) 1924
   4) acts
   5) money

C) 1) The Toy Cart
   2) Girish Karnad
   3) the heroic drama
   4) the title be formed by compounding the names of heroine and hero
   5) Charudatta
3.4.1

A) 1) Maitreya
    2) a villain
    3) a monk
    4) Madanika
    5) Charudatta

B) 1) poverty
    2) sacrifice
    3) Charudatta’s
    4) Buddhist
    5) Aryaka

C) 1) a casket of gems
    2) to visit Charudatta
    3) to buy a toy cart of gold
    4) Aryaka
    5) Sansthanika

3.5.1

A) 1) individuals
    2) Antonio
    3) self-respect
    4) brother-in-law
    5) Aryaka

B) 1) witty
    2) Madanika
    3) friend
    4) Palaka
5) Charudatta

C) 1) ignorant conceit, brutal lust and cunning
2) Vidushaka
3) Sarvilaka
4) A Buddhist monk
5) Madanika

3.6.1

A) 1) long
2) episodic
3) unity
4) poems
5) variety

3.9 Exercises:

A) 1. Comment on *The Little Clay Cart* as a comedy.
2. Describe in detail the use of Vidushaka by Shudraka.
3. How does Shudraka bring out Charudatta’s character?
4. What are the views of Vasantasena about Charudatta?
5. Describe the role played by a casket of gems in *The Little Clay Cart*.
6. Comment on the ending of the play.

B) Write Short Notes:

1. Charudatta
2. Vasantasena
3. Shudraka
4. Variety in *The Little Clay Cart*
5. Mistaken identities
6. Technique of characterization
7. The importance of sacrifice
8. Significance of the title *The Little Clay Cart*

3.10 Further Readings:


Sunthar V., "The 'Little Clay Cart' (Mrcchakatika) as sacrificial theater” (Essay) - *Digest* 1: Sep-Oct 2009 / Digest 2: May-June 2010
Unit-4
The Tempest by Shakespeare

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4.7 References for further study
4.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit, you will be able to –

- learn about the life and times of Shakespeare as the Elizabethan dramatist in England.
- understand the nature and characteristics of the Tragi-Comedies of Shakespeare in the last phase of his dramatic career.
- learn the plot structure and the story in general of The Tempest.
- study characterization in the play The Tempest.
- Comment on the use of imagery and diction in Shakespeare’s The Tempest.

4.1 Introduction:

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire in England, and the record of the church shows that he was born on 26th April, 1564. His father, John Shakespeare, was supposed to have good business, and he also held jobs, but by the time William was a young man his father’s business was lost. Shakespeare had two sisters and three brothers. Shakespeare went to school at Stratford until he was thirteen. He had fundamentals of classical education. He married at the age of nineteen to a lady named Ann Hathway, who was eight years older. He was not supposed to have a happy married life, though he had three children. He left Stratford and came to London, where he tried to enter the acting profession. He got a footing in Lord Chamberlaine’s Company. Here he acted as well as rewrote plays, transformed them for stage performance. He became well-versed in dramatic technique, needs of the theatre and developed the sense of possibility of the form. Between 1587 to 1611, Shakespeare produced thirty seven plays. His career as a dramatist was so successful that he was a partner in the Globe Theatre, and bought some property called New Place in his native place, Stratford. He also became a part-owner of Blackfriars Theatre. Shakespeare was very popular in his own times, though his contemporary like Robert Greene called him ‘an upstart crow’ out of jealousy.

Shakespeare wrote History Plays, Comedies, Tragedies and Tragi-comedies, along with his Roman Plays like *Julius Caesar, Antony-Cleopatra*, and *Coriolanus*. Among his comedies we have his celebrated plays like *As you Like It, The Twelfth*
Night, The Merchant of Venice, and Much Ado about Nothing. His comedies are dominated by the heroines. It is said that there were two clever boy-actors in Shakespeare’s Company at that time, for whom he created these comedies. His famous tragedies – King Lear, Othello, Hamlet and Macbeth have always engaged critical attention and interpretation from Johnson onwards to this day. In his final period, Shakespeare wrote his tragic-comedies – Cymbeline, Winter’s Tale and The Tempest. These plays of the last phase are more poetic than dramatic, and there appears to be a mood of reconciliation and happiness in these plays. There are serious and tragic events, but they finally lead to the union of the lovers and happy ending.

While writing his comedies and Tragedies, Shakespeare also wrote narrative poems Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Lucrece and quite a few sonnets of his sonnet sequence of 154 sonnets.

As a drama-artist Shakespeare perfected the medium of Blank Verse for writing plays. In his early plays, his blank verse was mostly end-stopped lines. But later, in his celebrated tragedies and comedies there are few end stopped lines and use of rhyme, which gave his blank verse natural tone of speech. Besides, when characters in the play talk about ordinary everyday life, and also in comic dialogues, Shakespeare uses prose which appears very natural. The scenes in which the major characters express their sentiments, have been written in blank verse in a highly poetic manner, but even here Shakespeare gives his blank verse a turn of speech.

The special nature of the Elizabethan stage, surrounded on three sides by the audience, and protruding into the audience. The characters had to speak aloud. Even Soliloquies were to be spoken aloud so that the audience could hear them clearly. It was the need of the theatre of those days. The use of such soliloquies was more natural in those days.

Another thing that you have to note about Shakespeare Plays is that Shakespeare used to borrow stories and plots from the earlier works of the playwrights, from ancient Greek and Roman drama, and from prose works such as The Mirror for the Magistrates by Gascoigne, the works of the University Wits, Holinshed’s Chronicles, etc. Shakespeare introduced changes, added to the plot, created additional characters, and created a new play which turned out to be far better than anything done earlier. Shakespeare did not concern himself with the classical theory of Tragedy or
Comedy. He developed his own genre of Romantic Comedy and Tragedy as well as Romantic-Tragi-Comedy. He was criticized for this by the contemporary classicist like Ben Jonson. He violated unity of time and place and even theme. However, critical opinion vindicated his dynamic approach to Drama. Though he borrowed stories, he made them much more effective by his additions and alterations as well as development of character.

You already have got a more detailed account of the Elizabethan stage and its conventions in the first unit of your M. A. I paper No. IV. In this unit, you are going to study Shakespeare’s Tragi-Comedy Tempest, one of the plays of the last phase of his dramatic career.

4.1.1 *The Tempest*: Its Stage History and Sources:

Generally Shakespeare’s plays have been traced for stories and plots to the earlier plays or romances, ancient as well as contemporary. But the plot of *The Tempest* is not traceable to any older play or romance in Greek, Latin or Contemporary literature. There is a chronicle called *The History of Witold*, which narrates the adventures of Henry Bolingbroke (who later became King Henry IV). Witold leaves his government of Lithuania to the care of his cousin Jagiello, who conspires against Witold himself, and puts him and his daughter Sophia into prison. They somehow escape and try to regain their kingdom with the help of the English Soldiers under Bolingbroke. This is only a slight likeness to *The Tempest*. Another source could be a 200 year older German play *The Beautiful Sidea* by Jacob Ayrer. The main character in this play, a Baltic prince, is a magician, who has an attendant spirit like Ariel (in *The Tempest*). His daughter Sidea, is like Miranda in *The Tempest*. This ruler was deposed from his throne and banished. He took up the study of magic, and the son of the usurper king falls into the hands of this magician prince. He falls in love with Sidea, and her father makes him work like a labourer, making him carry logs of wood. Ultimately the marriage of the two young ones brings about reconciliation between the parents. The main outline of this story has quite a close resemblance to *The Tempest*. It is argued that Shakespeare did not know German. But he must have heard the story. In 1609, there was an expedition of nine ships, which sailed from England to the new colonies in Virginia (America). The ship of Sir John Somers called Sea Adventure was wrecked on one of the islands of Bermuda. The crew on the ship reached the shore of an island safely and had to live there for
about one year. A number of stories of this account were floated. The description of this uninhabited island could have been the source of the island in *The Tempest*. However, the characters of Caliban and Ariel created by Shakespeare, and the way he has invested them with a moral sense cannot be found in any source.

4.1.2 Date of Publication of *The Tempest*:

There is a document called ‘The Vertue M.S.S.’ in which there is a record of payments made by The Lord Treasurer for some plays acted in the court in 1913 before Prince Charles, the Lady Elizabeth and a German Prince. It is believed that *The Tempest* was specifically written by Shakespeare on the occasion of the marriage of Lady Elizabeth and the German Prince. Ben Jonson in the introduction to his play *Bartholomew Fair*, makes a reference to Tempests, Tales, etc., and this play was performed in 1914. Besides the account of the wreck of the ship, *The Sea Adventure*, had appeared only in 1910, which means *The Tempest* could not have been written before that. The scholars have come to the conclusion that *The Tempest*, the last play of Shakespeare must have been written after 1610 and before 1613.

4.2 The Characters in the play *The Tempest*:

- Alonoso: King of Naples
- Ferdinand: Alonoso’s son
- Sebastian: Alonoso’s brother
- Prospero: the rightful Duke of Milan
- Antonio: Prospero’s brother who has usurped the throne of Prospero
- Gonzalo: an honest old counselor
- Adrian & Francesco: Lords
- Trinculo: a jester
- Stephano: a drunken butler
- Master of the ship: Boatswain and Mariners
- Caliban: a savage and deformed slave
- Miranda: Prospero’s daughter

  Ariel, Ceres, Juno, Nymphs, Reapers: presented by spirits

(There are other spirits attending on Prospero)
Scene  : On board a ship at sea, then (after the ship-wreck), various parts of the island.

4.2.1 Story in brief :

Alonso, the King of Naples is returning from the marriage of his daughter, Claribel, to the King of Tunis. There is a great storm. Alonso’s ship is driven towards an island and strikes the coastal rocks. All the passengers, among them Antonio, Alonso, Gonzalo, Alonso’s son Ferdinand and all others, jump into the sea and try to swim ashore.

In the second scene, we see Prospero talking to his daughter Miranda. Prospero was the real Duke of Milan. Miranda does not know this. He now tells her how he came to lose his throne through the treachery of his brother Antonio. Gonzalo, the old nobleman was asked by Antonio to abandon Prospero and his daughter at sea in a leaky boat. But Gonzalo took pity on them and gave Prospero some food, drink, and his books and clothing. Prospero came on an island with his daughter. There he found a twelve year old savage boy, Caliban, whose mother was a witch. She was dead. Prospero had tried to teach Caliban to read and write, but Caliban tried to rape Miranda. Prospero stopped teaching him, and made him do household work. There was a spirit called Ariel on the island captured by Caliban’s mother. Prospero promised to free Ariel on condition that he helped him and obeyed him. Thus Prospero created the storm with the help of Ariel.

Ariel lures Ferdinand away from his father and others to the part where Prospero lives. He does this as instructed by Prospero. Ferdinand finds Miranda and takes her to be some goddess. Miranda had not seen any man except her father and the savage Caliban. Ferdinand and Miranda fall in love with each other. This is what Prospero expected, and he plans to make this bond of love stronger by putting Ferdinand on trial. He makes Ferdinand his prisoner, and makes him do hard work of carrying logs of wood, etc. Miranda pleads with her father but Prospero ignores her pleas.

Alonso thinks that his son, Ferdinand is drowned. They start looking for him and exhausted lie down to rest. Read the rest of the story in the detailed summary given below.
4.3 Summary in Detail

Act I, Scene 1

The first scene takes place on a ship at sea. There is a terrible storm and thunder and lightning. The ship’s master tells the Boatswain to save the ship from grounding. The Boatswain urges the sailors to take down the upper sail. Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio, Ferdinand and Gonzalo enter the scene. The Boatswain tells them to keep to their cabins and not come in their way. The Boatswain tells Gonzalo, since he is a counselor to the king, to counsel the wind and waves to be silent.

Gonzalo tells the king that this Boatswain is not destined to be drowned, and therefore he has great confidence in him. If this Boatswain is born to be hanged (and not drowned), all of them would be saved.

Alonso goes back to his cabin. But Antonio, Sebastian and Gonzalo keep coming in the way of the Boatswain. Meanwhile the sailors come in and tell everyone to say their prayers for the ship was breaking.

[There are a number of words which do not exist in modern English. Some of them are given here. But you have to make use of the annotated edition of this play to refer to additional notes and words.]

mischance : calamity
our office : our duties
lay her a-hold : keep clear of the land
two courses : mainsail and foresail
wide chapp’d : opening the mouth wide
ling, broom and furz : wild vegetation

Scene 2:

The scene is the island before Prospero’s cell. Prospero enters talking to Miranda. Miranda is grieving for the passengers in the sinking ship. Prospero assures her that no harm is done to anyone. He tells her that he did everything for her (Miranda’s) good. Miranda does not know who Prospero really is and what happened to him and herself. Prospero tells her that with the help of his magic, he has ensured safety of everyone on the ship, and asks her to sit down and listen to his story.
Twelve years ago, when Miranda was not even three years old, he was the Duke of Milan. Since he was interested in his studies, he had left the task of ruling Milan to his brother Antonio, who grabbed Prospero’s power and with the help of Alonso, the King of Naples, deposed Prospero to become Duke of Milan. Miranda asks him why they did not kill herself and Prospero. Prospero told her how Gonzalo, the old nobleman, supplied them with food, water and clothing and his books, instead of leaving them to be drowned. Prospero then settled on this small island.

Propero then put Miranda to sleep with the help of Ariel. Ariel reports to Prospero that he had separated Alonso’s ship from the entire fleet and that he had frightened the members on the ship so much that they jumped into the sea. But he had ensured safety of everyone. Alonso’s son, Ferdinand, was separated from the other members as instructed by Prospero. The ship was quite safe in the harbour. Ariel had done all this with magic.

Ariel requests Prospero to free him now. But Prospero scolds him for being ungrateful. Prospero had rescued Ariel from the imprisonment on an oak tree, by a witch called Sycorax. Sycorax was dead, after giving birth to a son called Caliban. Prospero threatens Ariel and asks him to continue to obey him, otherwise he would imprison Ariel again on the Oak tree. He promises Ariel to free him in two days.

Prospero wakes up Miranda, and decides to go to see Caliban. Miranda does not like Caliban, yet agrees to go. But Caliban himself comes there with firewood. Prospero, on coming to this island, had tried to teach Caliban. In return Caliban had shared the knowledge of the whole island with Prospero. But Caliban complains that Prospero then made him a slave. Prospero replies that Caliban had tried to violate Miranda. Caliban does not regret it. Prospero punished Caliban making him a slave. Prospero threatens Caliban with torture on the rack if he does not obey. Caliban, afraid of the punishment, obeys Prospero.

As instructed by Prospero, Ariel lures Ferdinand to Prospero’s cave. There Ferdinand meets Miranda, and they fall in love. Ferdinand thinks that his father, Alonso, is dead in the ship-wreck, so he proposes to Miranda and offers to make her Queen of Naples. Prospero is happy because everything is going to happen according to his plan. But he wants Ferdinand to suffer a little for Miranda. He should not get her so easily. He imprisons Ferdinand with his magical powers and makes him carry logs of wood. Prospero arranges Miranda to be around to make this imprisonment
bearable to Ferdinand. Miranda feels that Prospero would relent and make Ferdinand free in time.

**Words and notes:**

**welkin** : sky

**lie there my art** : Prospero’s gown is the symbol of his magical art. He puts it down for some time.

**bootless inquisition** : useless questions

**abyss of time** : dimly remembered past.

**trash for over-topping** : check someone for becoming too ambitious.

**butt** : a boat which is little better than a tub

**undergoing stomach** : ability to suffer/endure, courage

**Neptune** : the Roman god of the sea.

**Jove** : the king of Roman gods, Jupiter.

**in this sad knot** : (Ferdinand) sitting with his arms folded.

**Bermoothes** : The Bermudas were frequently spelled like this.

**at least two glasses** : at least two hours (hours were measured by an hour-glass)

**to bate me** : to let me off. (my punishment or job)

**the foul with Sycorax** : Sycorax was Caliban’s mother a witch-goddess who was from Algiers, and she was banished from there.

**ravens** : birds with ill-omen, associated with black magic or witches.

**This island is mine** : Caliban claims that this is his island and Prospero has occupied it.

**which any print of** : Prospero claims that Caliban cannot learn anything good.

**red plague** : bubonic plague causing red spots on the skin.

**Setebos** : the name of the chief god of people in South America. (a devil)

**whist** : made quiet
fresh-brook muscles: inferior kind of food.
my foot my tutor?: Shall I take instruction from an inferior being?
imposter: liar

Check Your Progress I:

1. Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each:
   a) Who were the royal inmates on the ship?
   b) Why was the boatswain impatient with the courtier passengers?
   c) Why was Gonzalo ready to give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren land?
   d) Why does Miranda ask her father to help the inmates of the ship?
   e) What does Miranda remember of her life as a child?
   f) Why did Prospero assign responsibility of the dukedom to Antonio?
   g) How did Gonzalo help Prospero?

2. Answer the following questions briefly, in two or three sentences each.
   a. Describe the behavior of the courtiers on the ship beset by the Storm.
   b. How does Gonzalo reassure the other passengers?
   c. How is Prospero responsible for Antonio’s ambition to become Duke himself?
   d. What role does Ariel play in bringing the passengers of the ship on the island?

Act II/scene 1:

King Alonso and others with him have been washed ashore. Alonso is very unhappy because his son, Ferdinand, is found nowhere, and he thinks he is drowned. Gonzalo tries to console him saying that Ferdinand may still be alive. Gonzalo talks philosophically to Alonso, but he is not in the mood to listen to him. Alonso tells him to spare him. Gonzalo, the old man and Adrian, the younger one, go on talking. Antonio and Sebastian try to ridicule them. Gonzalo goes on talking about how his clothes look fresh though they are drenched in the sea water. Alonso is impatient at
these trivial utterances as he grieves the loss of his son. He is afraid that some strange fish might have eaten his son.

Francisco, another nobleman, tries to reassure him. He says, he saw Ferdinand fighting against the waves and making his way to the shore. But Alonso is not to be consoled.

Ariel, invisible, casts a spell upon them and makes them sleepy except Antonio and Sebastian. Antonio (the unlawful Duke of Milan) suggests to Sebastian that he could now kill Alonso and become the King of Naples. Sebastian easily agrees to the proposal, and promises to cancel the tribute that Milan is paying to Naples. They both take out their swords and are about to strike the sleeping Alonso and Gonzalo, but Ariel sings in Gonzalo’s ears and wakes him up. Gonzalo wakes up Alonso. Both of them see Antonio and Sebastian with drawn swords and ask why. Antonio and Sebastian claim that they had heard a noise like roaring of wild bulls or lions. Their explanation is accepted and all of them set out to find Ferdinand.

**Words and notes:**

- **dolour**: sorrow. Sebastian deliberately says ‘dollar’ to make fun of Gonzalo.
- **Temperance**: Adrian uses ‘temperance’ to mean moderate temperatures. But Antonio purposefully interprets it as a girl’s name.
- **Dido**: the queen of Carthage at the time of Trojan War.
- **Aeneas**: Aeneas left Troy when it was destroyed, to establish a new Troy. The legend says that Aeneas married Dido and then left her to found Rome and a new empire.
- **the fault is your own**: Sebastian points out to Alonso that it was his own fault to marry his daughter to an African prince. (This accident then would not have happened.) do not omit the heavy offer of it: do not neglect your sleep.
- **the occasion speaks thee**: the opportunity offers itself to you.
- **Kibe**: sore on the heel (a kind of wound caused by friction)
Act II/Scene 2:

In this scene, Caliban enters with a burden of wood. Caliban is cursing Prospero, that all the disease-bearing frogs should fall on Prospero and make him suffer. Caliban knows that Prospero’s Spirits can hear him; and yet he curses him.

As Caliban is cursing Prospero like this, he notices a man coming towards him. He is afraid and hides himself under his cloak. The man is Trinculo, a court-jester from Alonso’s court. He listens to the thunder and to save himself from rain, he crawls under Caliban’s cloak, as Caliban pretends to be asleep fearing him to be Prospero’s spirit.

Stephano, Alonso’s butler, happens to come there, drinking and singing. He had reached the island sitting on a barrel of wine, and he had some wine with him. He happens to see four legs from under the cloak, and thinks it is some kind of animal, which can be taken to Naples for exhibition and earning money. He speaks to this animal. Caliban prays to the spirit (i.e. Trinculo) not to torment him. Stephano thinks that Caliban has shivering fit and decides to give him some wine. He makes Caliban open his mouth and pours wine into it. Trinculo, who is listening to all this, recognizes the voice of Stephano, and calls him. Stephano is afraid first. But they recognize each other. Stephano pulls him out of the cloak. Stephano offers wine to Caliban as well as Trinculo. Caliban offers to be the servant of Stephano, show him the fertile parts of the island and carry wood for him.

Stephano thinks that only he and Trinculo have survived and all others have drowned. He tells Trinculo that they can possess the island. Caliban is happy to think that he has got a new master and he can bid good-bye to Prospero.

Words and Expressions:

- inch-meal : inch by inch
- urchin-shows : spirits
- mow : make faces
- bear off : keep off
- bombard : a large leather vessel for holding wine
- Poor-John : a kind of fish (Trinculo thinks that Caliban lying on the ground is a kind of fish)
make a man : make a fortune for someone.

if I can recover him : Stephano thinks of reviving Caliban by giving him wine and then taming him, to sell later on for a high price.

I have no long Spoon: Stephano thinks there is a devil that is speaking. There is a proverb that if you eat with the devil, you will need a long Spoon.

kiss the book : here the meaning is ‘have a drink.’
puppy headed : stupid. Trinculo calls Caliban puppy headed.

Check Your Progress II:

1. Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each:
   a) Why is Alonso so unhappy even though all have safely arrived on the island?
   b) How does Gonzalo try to console Alonso?
   c) What does Ariel do with the castaways from the ship?
   d) Who is Sebastian?
   e) What does Sebastian promise to Antonio?
   f) How does Ariel wake up Gonzalo?
   g) Why is Caliban cursing Prospero?

2. Answer the following questions briefly, in two or three sentences each:
   a) What plan does Antonio suggest to Sebastian?
   b) How do Antonio and Sebastian explain their drawn swords?
   c) What does Caliban suggest to Stephano and why?
   d) How does Prospero treat Caliban?

Act III/Scene 1:

Ferdinand, in this scene, is doing his labour as a prisoner, carrying logs. There is Miranda with him, as planned by Prospero.
Ferdinand is doing hard work, but he is happy to do it because he is doing it for Miranda. When he works hard like this, Miranda weeps. Her sweet company and her love for him gives him relief in his labour.

Miranda implores him not to work hard. She tells him to put the log down and take rest, because her father is in the study and would not come out at least for three hours. Miranda offers to carry the logs for some time for him. But Ferdinand would not allow this. He would rather work until his muscles break than make her do the work. Miranda says she is willing to work so it would be easier for her, while it is hard work for him because he works against his will.

Ferdinand learns that her name is Miranda, though her father has told her not to reveal her name to him. Ferdinand confesses to Miranda, that until now he had come across many beautiful women, but she, according him, is the perfect-one, without any equal.

Miranda has not seen any woman, and she has also not seen any man except her father. But she does not desire anyone else except Ferdinand as her companion. She admires only him. Ferdinand tells Miranda that he is a prince, and perhaps a king also, because he is not sure if his father is alive or not. He says for her sake he does not mind being the carrier of logs.

Prospero hidden nearby is listening to this talk of love. He is happy that these two young beings are talking so affectionately to each other. It is going according to his plan.

Miranda begins to weep because she cannot control her feelings. She cannot offer her love without the permission of her father nor receive Ferdinand’s love also. She cannot hide her love anymore. She finally decides to trust her sacred innocence and simplicity. She plainly tells him that she would like to be his wife if he cared to marry her. If not she would prefer to die a virgin. She would even like to be his servant if not wife.

Ferdinand kneels down before her and confesses his love, and promises to marry her. They offer each other their hand and bid good-bye for half-an-hour.

Prospero, in hiding, is happy to hear all this. But he has to do many things before the final act.
Words and Notes:

sore injunctions: punishment if the given task is not fulfilled.
(Ferdinand has been given the task as a prisoner)

infected: touched with love –
(Prospero notes how the two young ones are affected by love)

dower: gift (Miranda’s modesty is the jewel she can offer)
boded: promised.

Act III/Scene 2:

In this scene, we come across Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo. Stephano declares Caliban to be his subject and a lieutenant. Trinculo keeps on berating Caliban who complains to Stephano about it. Caliban tries to tell Stephano that his master (Prospero) is a magician and he has taken possession of his island by cheating him. At this time Ariel comes there unseen; and says ‘you are lying.’ Caliban thinks it is Trinculo who said it. He angrily retorts to Trinculo – you are the liar and calls him a mocking ape. Stephano warns Trinculo; but actually it is Ariel that is speaking. Caliban tries to incite Stephano against Prospero. He wants Stephano to be the lord of the island and he would become his servant. Stephano asks Caliban how he can meet his master. Caliban promises to take him to Prospero when he is asleep and then Stephano can knock a nail into his head. Again Ariel (unseen) says ‘you lie, you cannot.’ Caliban abuses Trinculo calling him ‘motley fool’ and requests Stephano to give him a blow. Ariel keeps on teasing them. Stephano strikes Trinculo, and makes Trinculo stand away; and asks Caliban to continue. Caliban tells Stephano that it is the habit of his master (Prospero) to sleep in the afternoon. Then Stephano can knock his brain, or split his skull with a log of wood; and get hold of his books first and then burn them. Caliban tells Stephano that his master has a beautiful daughter. Stephano promises to kill Prospero and make her his queen. Caliban tells Stephano that in half hour’s time Prospero would be sleeping, and asks him to kill him. Stephano agrees. Ariel proceeds to tell all this to his master (i.e. Prospero).

Act III/Scene 3:

Alonso, Sebastian, Antonio and all others are still wandering about. Gonzalo is tired and would like to stop and rest. Alonso has lost his hope of finding his son.
Antonio and Sebastian are happy to hear this, and decide to carry out the plan of murdering Alonso and Gonzalo when they are asleep.

Prospero appears with some spirits and they spread a feast out in front of the hungry men. Sebastian calls it a puppet show. He and Antonio say that now they can believe the incredible stories of the travelers. Gonzalo comments that these island people may look like monsters but they are more gentle than the human beings. Sebastian and others prepare to eat. Alonso is reluctant to eat, but Gonzalo persuades him. But, at that moment Ariel appears as a winged monster and the table disappears. Ariel says, ‘you are three sinful men.’ He further tells them that their destiny has thrown them on this uninhabited island because they are not fit to live among the human beings. Alonso and Sebastian, draw their swords. But Ariel tells them that he and his companions are the agents of fate. Their swords might as well try to hurt the wind or water. He tells them that the three of them, Antonio, Alonso and Sebastian have usurped the throne of Prospero in Milan, sent him and his innocent child to the sea. The heavenly powers have not forgotten to punish them for this. They have deprived Alonso of his son and have announced their slow destruction. Nothing can guard them except their sincere repentance and life of innocence afterwards.

Prospero praises Ariel in his own mind for the wonderful enactment of whatever he ordered to do. Prospero leaves Alonso and others bewildered and goes to meet Ferdinand.

Gonzalo asks Alonso why he was standing there staring wildly. Alonso exclaims that all that is happening is supernatural. He says that the supernatural voice sounded his sin with deep voice, and that’s why his son is lying at the bottom of the sea in the soft mud. Sebastian challenges that he would fight the fiends (ghosts or monsters) one at a time. Antonio promises to support him.

Alonso, Sebastian and Antonio go away. Gonzalo follows them to prevent them from doing anything wrong in their frenzy.

by’r lakin : a swear-word/expression which is derived from ‘By Our Lady Kin’, (the Blessed Virgin Mary)

drollery : puppet show. (Sebastian suggests that the scene they see before them is strange like fiction, but it is happening before them, so it is true.)
unicorn : a mythical horse, with a horn on the forehead.
phoenix : a mythical bird, it emerges again from its own funeral pyre.
harpy : a mythical monster (in Greek mythology) with woman’s face and body but wings and claws like a bird.
elements : materials. According to the belief, everything is composed of the elements, - air, earth, fire and water – and the spirits cannot be hurt by objects made from these elements.
dowle : a small feather.
whose wraths to guard you from : if you have to avoid the anger of the powers controlling your destiny, you must repent and lead pure lives.

Check Your Progress III :

1. Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each :
   a) What sweet thoughts relieve Ferdinand of his hard work?
   b) Why does Miranda say to Ferdinand that he can rest for sometime?
   c) What does Miranda offer to do?
   d) Why does Ferdinand think that he is perhaps a king?
   e) What is the next plan of Antonio and Sebastian to kill Alonso?

2. Answer the following questions briefly in two or three sentences each :
   a) How does Miranda express her love for Ferdinand?
   b) Describe Ferdinand’s feeling for Miranda.
   c) How does Ariel create confusion between Trinculo and Stephano?
   d) What does Caliban tell Stephano about Prospero?
   e) What is the purpose of Prospero spreading a feast before the hungry courtiers?

Act IV/ Scene 1 :

The place of this scene is the front of Prospero’s cave. Prospero, Ferdinand and Miranda come on the scene.
Prospero tells Ferdinand that he is making amends for the punishment given to him by giving Ferdinand his daughter Miranda. Prospero says that he was only trying to test the love of Ferdinand for Miranda; and he is happy that Ferdinand has come out very well. He assures Ferdinand that Miranda surpasses all the praise.

Prospero warns Ferdinand to keep in mind the sanctity of marriage and not to have physical relationship with Miranda before it. Ferdinand promises that he would not spoil his honour with lust for physical pleasure.

Ariel enters and asks Prospero what his further orders are. Prospero asks Ariel to bring the crowd to his cell. He has planned a show for Ferdinand and Miranda. Prospero bids Ariel to make quick arrangements for the show.

Prospero advises Ferdinand to control the game of love and passion and keep his vow. Ferdinand assures Prospero that he would keep Miranda’s maidenly purity keeping his passion low.

Then Prospero tells Ariel to start the show for the benefit of the two lovers; and to celebrate their betrothal.

The show (of the Masque) starts with the entry of Iris, the Greek goddess. Iris introduces Juno, the queen of gods, and talks to Ceres, the goddess of harvest. They are celebrating the joys of marriage. Ferdinand is delighted to see all this. The goddesses are invited to bless the happy lovers and offer them gifts.

Prospero remembers the plot of Caliban and Stephano to kill him and goes away. Ariel has already led the three of them into a stagnant pool.

Ariel, as instructed by Prospero, brings glittering shining clothes, and hangs them on a lime tree.

Stephano is displeased with Caliban for heading them into dirty pool. They have lost the bottles of their drink in the pool.

Caliban tries to passify them telling them that they are now at the entrance of Prospero’s cell and they must be ready to do the bloody deed.

Trinculo notices the glittering robe on the lime tree and tells Stephano that there is a kingly wardrobe for him there. Caliban tells him that it is just trash. But Stephano wants that gown and orders Trinculo to give it to him. Caliban does not like it and asks them to concentrate first on the work to be done. If he (Prospero)
wakes up he would make them writhe with pain. But Stephano does not listen to him. He takes the jerkin on the lime tree. Tinculo comments that they ‘Steal by line and level’, which pleases Stephano, and he passes on another garment to Trinculo as a reward. Caliban warns them that (if they do not hurry) Prospero would transform them into geese or apes.

Stephano orders Caliban to carry the garments to the place where he has stored his wine. Both Stephano and Trinulo order Caliban to carry the garments away. There is noise of hunters. Different spirits enter in the form of dogs and hounds; and they hunt the three men. Prospero and Ariel urge the dogs to attack them. He asks his spirits to afflict the joints of these three running; and make their muscles – cramp.

Prospero instructs Ariel to hunt the three down without mercy. He is happy that all his enemies are now at his mercy.

**Words and Expressions:**

- **Hymen**: the Greek god of marriage.
- **Phoebus**: the Sun god in Greek mythology
- **Iris**: the Greek goddess of the rainbow, messenger of gods.
- **Ceres**: Greek goddess of fertility.
- **Dusky Dis**: the dark-coloured god of the under world – called Pluto.
- **Paphos**: a town in Cyprus dedicated to Venus
- **hot minion**: passionate lover. Venus was known for her passionate love affairs.
- **Spring come to you**: - a wish that you may never know the hardships of winter – May Spring immediately follow Autumn.
- **blind mole**: a small furry animal supposed to be blind but having acute sense of hearing.
- **Played the Jack with us**: tricked us, made fools of us
- **by line and level**: accurately, systematically
- **page of pate**: witty remark
- **barnacles**: geese
Check Your Progress IV:

1. **Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each:**
   
   a) Why does Prospero arrange the performance of a masque? 
   
   b) When were masques performed in the Elizabethan times? 
   
   c) Why was the celebration of masque suddenly stopped? 
   
   d) Why does Prospero ask Ariel to spread rich looking garments in the way of Stephano and others. 
   
   e) What does Prospero do to chase away Stephano and Trinculo? 

2. **Answer the following questions briefly in two or three sentences each:**
   
   a) Which goddesses take part in the celebration of the masque? And how do they do it? 
   
   b) How does Ariel deal with the three plotters against Prospero? 

**Act V/Scene 1:**

Prospero enters putting on his magic robe. Ariel is with him. Prospero is happy that his plans are successfully coming to conclusion, his magic has not failed and the spirits have obeyed him.

Ariel informs Prospero how Alonso and others are confined in the lime grove and cannot move until Prospero releases them. Alonso, his brother and Antonio are almost mad and others are weeping for them. Gonzalo is also weeping. Ariel comments that Prospero may feel pity for them if he sees them.

Prospero tells Ariel that he has greatly suffered the wrongs they did to him, and yet he is guided by reason and not by anger. He orders Ariel to release the prisoners and decides to take away the effect of his magic, to make them normal.

Prospero addresses the spirits with whose help he had created storm and lightning. But now he is going to put aside his magic robe, and asks the spirits to play divine music. He would now break his magic staff and bury it deep into the sea and sink his books of magic also.
Ariel enters bringing with him Alonso, followed by Gonzalo. Sebastian and Antonio also follow them along with other courtiers. They stand in the circle made by Prospero. They are still silent under the charm of magic.

Prospero addresses them. He asks all of them to stand there as they are still under the effect of magic. He tells them that by the time it is morning the magic charm will vanish and their reasoning powers will be restored. He addresses Gonzalo, who had saved his and his daughter’s life, promising to repay him for his act of kindness. He tells Alonso that he treated him and his daughter very cruelly with the support of the brother, Sebastian. Sebastian is punished for it. He tells Antonio that he and Sebastian were planning to kill Alonso. They both acted against nature. Prospero decides to put off his magic robe and appear in his normal clothes of the Duke of Milan.

Ariel brings Prospero his clothings. He bids Ariel to go to the ships, wake up the captain and the sailors and bring them to his cell.

Prospero then declares himself to be the Duke of Milan who was wronged. He embraces Alonso. He finds it difficult to believe. But Alonso is happy that the sickness of his mind has now gone. He gives back the Dukedom of Milan to Prospero.

Prospero then embraces Gonzalo. He warns Sebastian and Antonio that he could prove both of them traitors but he would not inform Alonso, the king, about them now. He, however, demands, his kingdom back. Alonso asks Prospero to tell them how he (Prospero) was saved. Prospero tells Alonso to bear his loss (the loss of his son) with patience, as he did the loss of his daughter. (But Prospero means he has lost his daughter to Ferdinand).

Prospero tells Alonso that he is truly the Duke of Milan, who was driven out of his dukedom, and he came to this island and became its lord. But he would not tell them the whole history right now.

He leads Alonso and others to the cell, where Alonso finds Ferdinand and Miranda playing at chess. Alonso wonders if this is one of the visions of the island. If so, he would lose his son twice. Ferdinand kneels to Alonso, who blesses him and asks how he happened to come here. Miranda is pleasantly surprised to see so many wonderful human beings. Ferdinand introduces Miranda as the daughter of the
famous Duke of Milan, who is going to be his second father through his marriage to Miranda.

The captain of the ship, Boatswain and others are brought to the cell by Ariel. They inform Alonso that their ship is quite safe as before. Alonso is greatly surprised to listen to this, and thinks that this is due to some supernatural elements. Prospero promises to explain to them how all this came about.

Ariel then brings Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban. Stephano and Trinculo are drunk and have put on stolen jacket and other clothes. Caliban is terribly afraid of punishment. But Prospero sends him inside the cell and take his new friends with him.

Prospero invites all to his cave. And to stay with him there until morning. He promises them safe journey, and he instructs Ariel that Alonso’s ship soon find the royal fleet.

**Words and Notes :**

- lime-grove : small cluster of lime trees
- azurd vault : sky
- spell-stopped : under the influence of the magic power.
- inward pinches : pangs of conscience.
- discase me : remove my outer dress (Prospero had his magic wardrobe on).
- enchanted trifle to abuse (me) : magic trick to deceive me.
- devour their reason : their amazement has overcome was their reason.
- thing of darkness : Prospero refers to Caliban – he may be referring to his evil nature or his dark skin.

**Check Your Progress V :**

1. **Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each :**
   a) In what state does Prospero keep Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian?
   b) What does Prospero think about vengeance?
   c) Where are the Captain of the ship and the sailors?
d) Do you think Antonio and Sebastian repent their sinful acts?

2. **Answer the following questions briefly, in two or three sentences each:**

   a) Describe how Prospero stops the storm and make the sea calm?
   b) How does Alonso react to the revelation of Prospero?
   c) How does Prospero welcome Antonio and Sebastian?
   d) How does Prospero reward Alonso in return of getting his dukedom?

4.4 **Critical Commentary:**

4.4.1 **Theme, Plot and Structure of the Play**:

The renaissance English dramatists wrote their plays in five acts. Like all other plays of Shakespeare, *The Tempest* is also divided into five acts. Act I and II have two scenes each, Act III has three and Act IV and V have just one scene each. Thus, including the Epilogue, there are ten scenes in the play.

The first scene takes place in the sea itself near Prospero’s island, where Prospero’s magical spirits have caused a great storm bringing all the characters on the ship to the shore of the island. Prospero’s supernatural assistant, Ariel, has performed this task. In the second scene, Prospero tells his daughter, Miranda, why he has caused this storm and how, twelve years ago, his enemies had left him and his little daughter to perish on the sea. But, Gonzalo, the kindly courtier, had provided him with food, clothing and more important, his book. Prospero assures his daughter that he means no harm to anyone. The first act is, thus, setting a stage for the dramatic action in the remaining part of the play.

Prospero’s plan involves first to bring Ferdinand and Miranda together. Ariel has already separated Ferdinand from the rest of the passengers on the ship. Ferdinand, as planned, falls in love with Miranda. As their love episode progresses through the trial and test of Ferdinand, Prospero, with the help of Ariel, keeps close watch on the others. The comic scenes involving the lesser characters such as Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban are interwoven with the main action of bringing the other characters to the cell of Prospero. The main action involves exposing the villainy of Antonio and Sebastian, who plot murder King Alonso and the Old Gonzalo. Ariel, who keeps watch on them, spoils their plan. There is a little element
of a sub-plot in which Caliban, with the help of Stephano and Trinculo, plans to kill Prospero and make Stephano the master of the island.

Antonio, who had betrayed his brother, is now bent upon betraying his benefactor, king Alonso, who had supported him to become Duke of Milan. Prospero’s plan works out well, with the help of Ariel, in frustrating Antonio’s villainy.

The plot of this play is well-organized with the past happenings narrated and cogently related to the present. The characters are presented through their dialogues and action.

The love-story of Ferdinand and Miranda progresses; starting with the 2nd scene of the first act, where Ferdinand and Miranda fall in love with each other. But Prospero has devised a test of hard work for Ferdinand to qualify for his daughter’s hand. And in the first scene of the fourth act Prospero allows Ferdinand to marry Miranda.

There is a Masque arranged by Prospero to celebrate the betrothal of Ferdinand and Miranda. The masque scene being performed on the stage is said to be specially arranged to celebrate the nuptial of Prince Charles and Elizabeth of Bohemia. Such performance of Masque was a well-known method of complimenting and entertaining the royal couple. The blessings spoken by the goddesses like Iris, Ceres, etc. for Miranda and Ferdinand were then for the real royal couple.

The final act of the play is only one scene in which Shakespeare makes the sinners repent and Prospero decides not to spoil the happy union of the young lovers by turning it into an act of a revenge. There is a tone of reconciliation and repentence. The repentence appears to be only that of Alonso. Prospero’s brother and also the brother of Alonso have hardly anything to say by way of repentence. There is happy ending for Prospero, getting his dukedom back, his daughter happily married. It is also happy ending for Alonso. Ariel gets his freedom and Caliban is the master of his small island.

The theme of the play is, therefore, reconciliation and redressal of the wrong done. Prospero himself says that though he has been highly wronged, he is ruled by his ‘nobler reason’ rather than by the ‘fury’ of taking revenge upon the wrong-doers. The ‘virtue’ is in the ‘rare action’ of pardon than in ‘vengeance’.
The play also deals with the themes of sin, repentance, and purgation and forgiveness.

**4.4.2 Post-Colonial Implications of the play:**

The post-colonial view of *The Tempest*, emphasizes that the play is about usurpation of the island that basically belongs to Caliban. Caliban here is the native of the island, and Prospero represents the colonial ruler, who has occupied the island and has reduced the native, Caliban, to the status of a slave. This view is voiced by Caliban in the 2nd scene of the first act, where he says:

“This island is mine, by Sycorax my mother,
which thou takest from me.”

Caliban later claims that Prospero cheated him of his island through magic. Caliban’s complaint is something which can easily appeal to the colonized scholars, who know how the western colonizers have not only forcibly occupied their country, but also exploited them making use of powerful weapons, (magic of Prospero can be compared with the weapons used by the imperialist rulers.)

The question is whether Shakespeare really wanted to focus on the colonial oppression by Prospero. The post-colonial interpretations by the critics imply that the whole play is based upon the theme of post-coloniality. The post-colonial critics try to read this theme of tension between the Oppressive Colonial power and the legitimate claim of the native people even in other relationships. For example, the relationship between Prospero and Ariel is also almost the same as Prospero-Caliban relationship. Caliban is an unskilled native while Ariel belongs to the class of skilled native personnel. Ariel is forced to work for Prospero, though with a promise of freedom later. Another such oppressive colonizing is noticeable between Prospero, the father and Miranda, the daughter.

Is *The Tempest* about colonization? There are critics like Geoffrey Bullough, who flatly deny this, and say that it is not a play about colonization. There is no mention to the new world (America or Virginia, etc), or colonies or colonizing Indians. In fact, Prospero did not go to the island to colonize it. He and his daughter were forcibly left there and had no choice. Prospero tried to educate Caliban, and Caliban was treated as a member of his small group. He was reduced to the status of a slave as a punishment for his attempt to rape Miranda. Prospero, who leaves the
island in the end, had no intention to colonize the island at all. Why then do the critics try to read colonial or post-colonial politics into it?

When Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*, there was no knowledge of the New World inhabitants. There was not even a hint of colonizing the lands and people in the New World. Shakespeare, in creating Caliban, was perhaps prophetic about future colonization. Yet, Caliban’s outrages against Prospero, his sense of injustice done to him and his exploitation by Prospero can render to colonial interpretation. The feeling of Caliban could be the feeling of the native Red Indians in America. We can say that Shakespeare was unique in pointing out future colonialis argument through his creation of Caliban.

The colonialist interpretation of Caliban depends mainly on Caliban’s claim against Prospero, when he challenges Prospero’s right to sovereignty on the island. But was Caliban himself the native of the island? His mother Sycorax was banished there as a witch when she was pregnant. Until then the island was uninhabited. When Prospero came to the island, Caliban was a child just like Miranda. The colonialist critics argue that Prospero creates a binary division between the children. Miranda can be taught but Caliban cannot be taught and reformed. The colonialist critics argue that this is the main strategy of the colonial discourse. The natives are incapable of learning and being reformed. Prospero’s further colonialist strategy is to demarcate male and female potentiality. Female Miranda is invested with the culture and is to be protected. The male Caliban is debased and a rapist, and therefore controlled as a slave. It is argued that this kind of sexual division of the colonial ‘other’ and the white ‘virgin’ is a common factor in the colonialist narrative.

It is further pointed out that the groups of the people on the ship, who land on the island are also divided into two groups – aristocrats and the plebians. The Aristocratic characters, though serious criminals, are corrected and pardoned and are assimilated into the group, while the plebians are laughed at and treated as jokes. The Colonialist argument is based upon such binarist analysis of the play.

A good literary work thus renders itself to several interpretations in different periods of time. What Shakespeare really thought does not remain an issue in such interpretations.
4.4.3 Characterization in *The Tempest*:

**Prospero:**

Prospero in this play is the central character and the prime mover of the action of the whole play. From the beginning to the end he dominates the play and initiates action, as well as controls the action of the other characters in the play. He was treacherously ousted from his dukedom by his own brother, Antonio, and was left to die in a boat along with his three year old daughter. But the trusted and kindly courtier, Gonzalo, helped him, providing him clothes, food and books, which helped him to survive on the uninhabited island.

We come to know of Prospero’s story in the second scene of the first act, when he himself talks about it to his young and beautiful daughter Miranda. Prospero has very carefully planned to get his former enemies together on his own island, and keep them fully under his control. He is helped in this by the spirits, the chief of them being Ariel. He had rescued Ariel earlier from his imprisonment in an oak tree by the witch-woman Sycorax; and has employed these supernatural elements to create storm, separate the ship of the King of Naples, Alonso and bring him and others on the island.

Prospero is a scholarly Duke of Milan, who spent much of his time in studying books on occult magic. He neglected his responsibility as the Duke of Milan and asked his brother Antonio to look after it. Prospero is himself to blame for creating unworthy ambition in the mind of Antonio to become himself the Duke. Apart from this Prospero has been presented as a scholarly character given to his own studies.

On the island, he meets Caliban, and tries to teach him language. Later, when Caliban tries to rape Miranda, he reduces him to the position of a slave. He does not kill him or banish him because he needs Caliban’s services for fetching wood and other duties of the household.

Prospero’s sole intention is to expose the villainy of his brother Antonio, and Alonso, the King of Naples and get back his Dukedom. It is rather lucky for him that King Alonso’s son Ferdinand happens to be on the ship, and he could plan his daughter’s marriage with him. Prospero neatly arranges this plan by separating Ferdinand from others and making him meet Miranda. When Ferdinand and Miranda
fall in love with each other, he arranges to test Ferdinand and allows the lovers to meet only when he is assured of Ferdinand’s resolve to marry Miranda.

Prospero is broadminded enough to forgive his enemies and allow them an opportunity to repent. He, of course, plans to expose the villainy of Antonio and Sebastian later.

Prospero’s treatment of Caliban has invited criticism, branding him to be a colonial oppressor of the native Caliban. But, initially, as stated earlier, Prospero had tried to educate Caliban and had treated him as a member of his household. Of course, this may be compared with the British imparting English education to the Indians, to facilitate complete colonization of India. This charge of colonial politics against Prospero is not universally appreciated because when *The Tempest* was written there was hardly any notion of colonial politics. Prospero does not occupy the island permanently. In the end he leaves the island, and most probably Caliban is left there to possess it.

**Miranda:**

Miranda is the only female character in *The Tempest*. She is only a fifteen year old girl. It would be unfair to compare her with Shakespeare’s remarkable heroines such as Cordelia, or Imogen or Portia, etc. She does not have an opportunity of either formal education or society of courtly men and women, to be able to learn sophistication of the aristocratic society. She does not have an active role to play in Prospero’s struggle. But, she is the cause of the whole plan of Prospero because after his exile from his kingdom the sole intention of his life was to secure the future of his dearest daughter.

Miranda is beautiful. We know this from Ferdinand’s first impression of her. He thinks her to be a goddess. His father, Alonso also exclaims “Is she the goddess that hath ‘sever’d us?’”

Miranda moves about and speaks in a very natural and unaffected manner. She cannot think of ill of others. She entreats her father to help the ship-wrecked men. She feels sympathy for everyone. She had seen only her father and Caliban and no man at all except these two. When she looks at Ferdinand, she thinks he is one of the spirits on the island.
Miranda expresses her feelings of love for Ferdinand directly without any reservation.

“I am your wife if you will marry me;
If not, I'll die your maid.

When she sees Ferdinand carrying logs, she is ready to help him and tells him to rest. She is thus very straightforward. The only initiative she appears to take is to confess her feeling of love to Ferdinand, and she is prepared to take ‘no’ also. In the absence of any human society of men and women, Miranda remains innocent about the ways of the world. It is claimed that Prospero trained her thoroughly. But she does not know that there are other men and women in the world. She takes Ferdinand to be a spirit.

Miranda’s character is appreciated for her naturalness and unaffected manners. Yet, she does not have any decisive role to play in the action of the play.

**Ferdinand**

Ferdinand, the son of King Alonso of Naples, and a prince, is a charming young man. He is different from his father, who had helped Antonio in his evil plotting against Prospero. He is quite noble-mined. Ferdinand is a courageous young man. When the ship broke up in the storm, he jumped into the sea and started swimming to the shore. Francisco, who saw him swim, describes how bravely and confidently he faced the great waves. He is ready to fight against his enemy until the enemy is proved more powerful. He loves Miranda sincerely and is ready to sacrifice his throne and his country for her sake. He says to Miranda:

Let me live here ever,
So rare a wonder’d father and a wise
Makes this place Paradise.

He does not allow Miranda to carry the logs for him. He would rather suffer and break his back than allow her to do such dishonorable work. Prospero was only testing him. And Ferdinand passes the test eminently and wins Prospero’s approval as well as Miranda’s hand.
Caliban:

Caliban is the son of the witch, Sycorax, and he has been on the island before Prospero comes there. From this point of view Caliban is the native of the island. And he also thinks so. He feels that Prospero has forcibly taken his island. But this feeling of Caliban is awakened in him only after Prospero punishes him for his attempted rape of Miranda. Caliban does not refute this charge against him. and it must be true because since then innocent Miranda does not like even to look at Caliban.

Caliban is described as ‘tortoise’, ‘a fish’, and ‘a beast’. He is called by Prospero ‘as disproportion’d in his manners as in his shape.’ Caliban is not only physically deformed, he is also described by Prospero as ‘poisonous slave, got by the devil himself upon thy wicked dam.’ Prospero perhaps said this only after he discovered Caliban’s stupid attempt to rape Miranda. Because, when Prospero came to this island he had befriended Caliban. Caliban says. Prospero made much of him, gave him water with berries in it; and taught him the names of the sun and the moon. And in return Caliban showed Prospero ‘all the qualities of the isle.’ It shows that Caliban’s moral crime had shattered this relationship between Prospero and Caliban.

Prospero tortures Caliban making him obey his orders. His spirits would make Caliban suffer from cramps. Caliban resents this. He is evidently looking for an opportunity to find freedom from the clutches of Prospero. He gets this opportunity when he comes across Stephano and Trinculo. Caliban, like Miranda, is ignorant about the world of the so-called civilized people. And therefore he takes Stephano to be the worthy instrument to get himself free from the slavery of Prospero.

Caliban is not entirely an unintelligent savage. He is intelligent enough to learn Prospero’s language. He knows Prospero is powerful, and his power comes from his arts. He also realizes the importance of Prospero’s books. Therefore he advises Stephano:

Remember,
First to possess his books, for without them
He’s but a sot, as I am,

He warns Stephano to walk without making noise. All this shows that Caliban is not the kind of savage Prospero thinks. Caliban is even better than Stephano and
Trinculo. These two are attracted by the rich garments of Prospero. But Caliban knows that such finery is of no use. He wants them to concentrate on the plan to kill Prospero. He is not stupid or unintelligent, as he appears to carefully plan for Prospero’s fall. Some critics say that Caliban is not a good judge of characters because he thinks Stephano to be a god. We must remember that, like Miranda, Caliban has not seen the world outside the island. We cannot expect him to know the difference between a nobleman and an ordinary person.

Besides, the way Caliban describes the sights and sounds of the island (in the second scene of the third act), he is capable of knowing what is beautiful and pleasurable.

Caliban’s motive for murdering Prospero is to seek his own freedom from slavery and tyranny. It is not wicked betrayal of Antonio, who plots to kill his own brother. Caliban believes that Prospero has cheated him grabbing the island that is his by birth-right. His rebellion against Prospero is, therefore, quite justified.

**Ariel:**

Ariel is a spirit, not a human being. He represents supernatural power at the command of Prospero. Though Ariel can control natural phenomena, such as causing a storm and then quieting it, his magical power is not enough to face the witch Sycorax or Prospero. He was imprisoned by Sycorax, Caliban’s mother, in an oak tree. Prospero rescues him, and in exchange, Prospero seeks his help in his plan to bring his enemies together on the island. The critics often compare Caliban with Ariel, saying that Ariel is superior in many ways to Caliban. However, basically, Ariel is a spirit, a supernatural being, and Caliban is a human being. The only likeness between the two is that both are under the power of Prospero. Both are virtually captives, and he has threatened them with severe punishment if they do not carry out his orders. Ariel is considered superior on account of his supernatural powers. His powers are such that he can fly, swim, dive into the fire, ride clouds, etc.

Since Ariel is a spirit, it has no human ambitions or weakness for wealth, power, etc. He serves Prospero honestly because he has to earn his freedom. Prospero treats him affectionately, and uses terms of love and affection for him.

Ariel plays important part in bringing Ferdinand and Miranda together and creating love for each other in their minds. He performs a key role in causing the tempest and bringing all the inmates of the ship safely on the island. He separates
Ferdinand from them. Similarly, he separates the Aristocratic characters from the others like Stephano and Trinculo. He keeps an eye on everyone, and informs Prospero how Caliban is plotting his murder at the hands of Stephano.

Apart from this Ariel creates romantic and magical atmosphere on the island, providing sweet music. His songs are sweet and have soothing effect on the minds of the listeners.

Gonzalo:

Gonzalo, the important courtier, is a kindly gentleman. He is an idealist and a well-intentioned man. As he is aged, he is rather talkative. When Antonio deposed Prospero and tried to send him and his daughter, to death, Gonzalo very kindly helped Prospero with food, clothing and all his books.

Gonzalo is optimistic. When there is a storm, and everyone is afraid of getting drowned, he assures them that they will not drown. It is because the boatswain does not appear destined to be drowned. It is true that sometimes his talkativeness can be trying. Alonso, sorrowing for his son’s death, cannot have patience to listen to Gonzalo. But he keeps on talking.

Gonzalo was a loyal courtier. Though he was loyal to his King, he had sense of justice. That is why, he saved Prospero and his daughter. When Ariel wakes him up by singing a warning in his ears, his first thought is about the safety of his King Alonso.

Antonio:

Antonio is Prospero’s brother, and he is the present duke of Milan. He plotted with Alonso, the King of Naples, to banish Prospero and usurp the dukedom. Antonio did not kill Prospero and his daughter because he knew that Prospero’s popularity would turn people against him and he was very afraid.

Antonio was virtually running the dukedom, as Prospero was busy with his studies. Prospero himself had given Antonio the charge of his Kingdom. Antonio is ambitious, and his brother, Prospero, is so much preoccupied with his studies, that he does not pay attention to the household as well as to the Kingdom. Antonio, being very ambitious, decides to become a duke whatever happened.

Antonio does not feel scruples of conscience. He says so flatly talking to Sebastian. Antonio is very cunning. He knows human nature so well that he is quite
certain that common people would soon forget Prospero, and start worshipping the new King. He is rather cunning. He asks Sebastian to kill Gonzalo also because he knows Gonzalo would always remind them of their crime. Antonio incites Sebastian to kill his brother, the King of Naples, and Gonzalo together.

Almost all others repent their sin but Antonio does not. Antonio does not thank Prospero for his forgiveness. He does not speak out when he is confronted with his brother, who was supposed to be dead. Even after safely landing on the island after the storm, his wicked plotting does not cease. He plots to get Prospero killed at the hands of Sebastian. His plot fails. But after that he does not speak a single word. He, perhaps, knows that the hardest punishment may be waiting for him after reaching Milan.

**Sebastian**:

Sebastian is the brother of Alonso, the King of Naples. Like Antonio, he is an evil character. Antonio incites him to take this opportunity of the lonely island to kill Alonso. Sebastian thinks that Ferdinand is drowned. And Alonso’s daughter, who is recently married is far away. As a result, if Alonso is killed now, he, Sebastian, is the only one to claim the throne of Naples. He promises Antonio to cancel the yearly levy to be paid to Naples, as a reward for his services. Just as Antonio got Milan, he, Sebastian, would get the kingdom of Naples, by killing his brother.

Sebastian is brave and courageous. When Ariel and his spirits take away the banquet, he realizes there is danger, and he is ready to fight. But his bravery is misplaced. Like Antonio, he too does not show any sign of repentence. But unlike Antonio, he at least makes a show of joy discovering that Ferdinand is safe and alive. He also joins to make fun of Stephano and Trinculo.

4.4.4 Some more short notes:

**Imagery in The Tempest**:

The dominant imagery in *The Tempest* is the imagery related to the sea and the water. The “Sea-storm” makes the first powerful impression on our mind and it lingers throughout the play. The storm and sea are reflected through the speeches of different characters. Miranda, describing the Fierce storm, talks about ‘wild waters in this roar’, the sky would pour down ‘stinking pitch’ and the waves are so high that they might touch ‘the welkin’s cheek’ (the sky). On the other hand Ariel’s account of
the storm uses different imagery, as he describes it to Prospero. He talks about “Jove’s lightning’s, the precursors of the dreadful thunder-claps.’ He concludes his storm-imagery by evoking the image of the sea-god Neptune shaking ‘his dread trident’, making the waves tremble. The sea-imagery pervades the whole play, but in differing contexts. When the sea is calmed down, Ariel, in his song, says “The wild waves whist”, and Ferdinand comments –

    This music crept by me upon waters,
    Allaying both their fury and my passion.

In Ariel’s speech there are references to “the veins o’the earth”, the corals and pearls and sea-change, etc. which take us to the region of magic.

The nature as a hostile force that threatens man’s existence is also emphasized through the imagery. For example, Francisco describes the desperate struggle of Ferdinand against the hostile sea

 - he trod the water,
 whose enmity he flung aside, and breasted
 The surge most Swoln that met him –

The water imagery is also used by other characters like Antonio and Sebastian.

    Sebastian : Well, I am standing water
    Antonio : I’ll teach you how to flow
    Sebastian : Do so : to ebb
                Hereditary sloth instructs me.

Here Antonio is trying to make Sebastian active with evil designs in his mind.

Gonzalo, uses the tempest-imagery to talk about Antonio’s bad humour :

    Gonzalo : It is foul weather in us all, good sir, when you are cloudy.

    Trinculo describes the black cloud as “a foul bombard that would shed his liquor.” (bombard is a pot holding wine). Each character thus reflects the storm according to their nature.

    In his final speech, Prospero promises “calm seas, auspicious gales,” which also signifies happy ending of the play, a contrast to the first-scene of violent storm.
Caliban, while talking to Stephano, evokes the rich nature of the island – jay’s nest, nimble marmoset, clustering filberts, etc. Besides, he talks about mysterious voices and noises on the enchanted island.

Gonzalo at the beginning of the second act describes the grass on the island as “lush and lusty.” This sensuous imagery of the fertile island continues in the speeches of the goddesses Iris and Ceres in the scene of the Masque in the IV act. Their speeches are full of the theme of fertility, growth and ripening. Iris talks about ‘rich leas’ of wheat, rye, barley etc. ‘turfy mountains and live nibbling sheep’, etc. Shakespeare has used in their speeches rich pastoral imagery.

Along with such aesthetically rich imagery there is also the imagery using threats and curses. Prospero threatens Ariel to ‘peg’ him in the ‘knotty entrails’ of the oak tree for ‘twelve winters.’ And Caliban introduced himself saying:

As wicked dew as e’er my mother brushed
With raven’s feather from unwholesome fen
Drop on you both!

Caliban curses Prospero using the following curses:

All the infections that the sun sucks up
From bogs, fens, flats, on Prospero fall and make him
By inch-meal a disease!

A number of such images with rich imagination are interspersed in the play contributing to the theme of the play.

It is interesting to note that the speeches of Caliban, Prospero and Ariel are full of rich imagery, while the speeches of the courtiers are comparatively less studded with images.

**The Tempest as a Dramatic Romance:**

The *Tempest* is one of the three dramatic romances of the last phase of Shakespeare’s dramatic career. The other two are *Cymbaline* and *Winter’s Fale*. These plays are generally characterized as the plays of reconciliation, of happy ending. As Dowden says, in these plays Shakespeare had come out of his plays of ‘tragic anguish’ to reach ‘the heights’ of serenity. In these plays, he looks at life from
a very optimistic point of view – that finally everything is going to turn out well. His younger contemporaries such as Beaumont and Fletcher had developed a romantic tragic-comedy, which had become popular. Shakespeare, the old veteran could not perhaps resist the temptation to try his hand at the tragi-comedy. But this would be a very simplistic way of explaining this last phase of his dramatic career. Lytton Strachey says, “Shakespeare was getting bored with himself – bored with people, bored with real life, bored with drama.” But Tillyard has a different point of view. According to him, this phase of tragi-comedies supplements the tragedies and completes Shakespeare’s dramatic pattern of prosperity, destruction and regeneration. The last phase is that of regeneration and reconciliation. In The Tempest, for example, there is suffering on account of wrongs done by the older generation. Prospero has to face a lot of hardship, even possibility of death, on account of Antonio’s greed and treachery. He and his little daughter have to live on a lonely island, without any human habitation for about twelve years.

Prospero is a learned man. He is quite aware of the injustice done to him. But, unlike in the tragedies of Shakespeare, there is no intention of taking revenge upon the perpetrators of the wrongs done to him. He does not give way to the cruel passions. Alonso and Antonio together plotted against him, and made him suffer greatly. He, however, pardons all the wrong-doers and creates normal, healthy atmosphere in the family.

In The Tempest, the final scene is that of atonement for the sins committed in the past, forgiveness, and reconciliation. But bringing about this reconciliation is a long process. The wrongs done must be presented, the wrong-doers and the sufferers should be finally brought together, the ill-will and the feeling of revenge should be changed into forgiveness. All this needs a long period of time. In The Tempest, Shakespeare has solved this problem by making Prospero narrate to Miranda the whole story of the injustice done to him twelve years ago. All this is managed by Shakespeare in the dramatic action of three hours.

Even though this is a romantic tragi-comedy, Shakespeare has woven into it his socio-political ideas. For example, the old wise Gonzalo talks about turning this island into a commonwealth in which there would be ‘no name of magistrate.’ – riches, poverty, and use of service, none; contract, succession, bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard none.’ Gonzalo envisages a commonwealth where all men would be of equal status. The men and even women would not have to labour, all things produced
by nature would be in common. This is only a dream, a utopian world, and scholars and poets have indulged in such dreams.

In this last play, Shakespeare appears to give a message that “the human passions like envy, greed, ambition, fear and remorse follow the natural storm and they like the tempest, are followed by peace and calm.”

The Use of Masque in *The Tempest*:

In the IV act of the play Shakespeare has introduced the Masque in which Greek goddess Iris, the goddess of the rainbow and the messenger of the gods appears. She introduces Juno, the queen of gods and then there is Ceres, the goddess of fertility and of harvest. The scene of the Masque has been introduced here to bless Ferdinand and Miranda. Generally, the characters in the Masque are gods and nymphs or personified qualities such as Love, Laughter, etc. In the Elizabethan times the Masques were developed by rich lords and courtiers for performance at the court, with a lot of scenery and stage-machinery. The Masque was mainly for celebration on the occasion of a marriage. It assumed the form of a musical play with the use of magnificent scenery. Gradually it developed into an opera with poetic dialogues or speeches by divine characters.

In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare must have introduced the scene of the Masque to celebrate the marriage of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Charles, to compliment the royal couple. The characters are from classical mythology. The lyrics in the Masque are sung by Ariel. The speeches of the goddesses express the joys of marriage. Iris summons the spirits of the waters, the naiads to come and bless the couple. They are followed by a group of reapers. They dance together and then go away. This introduction of the Masque in this play supports the view that it may have been written for the celebration of the royal wedding.

The Sources of *The Tempest*:

There is no definitive source of the story of *The Tempest*. It is well-known that Shakespeare wrote his plays based upon the chronicles of history, old romances, the Greek and Roman comedies and tragedies, etc. But in the case of *The Tempest* there is no conclusive source as such. There is an old historical chronicle called *The History of Witold*. It is about the adventure of Henry Bolingbroke (who later became King Henry IV). It is a story of a prince named Witold, who gave the charge of government of Lithuania to his cousin Jagiello. This cousin was afraid that Witold
would come back one day and claim his throne. So Jagiello put Witold and his daughter Sophia into prison. They both escaped and Witold tried to get back his throne, in which he took help of the English Soldiers in the army of Bolingbroke. This story has some likeness with Prospero being driven out by Antonio. But the likeness stops there. There is a German play called *Jacob Ayrer*. In this play, the Baltic Prince is a magician, and he too has an attendant spirit like Ariel. The Prince’s daughter is called Sidea, who is like Miranda, innocent and pure princess. The Prince is also banished from his throne. The Prince, like Prospero, has studied magic, and the son of the usurper king falls in love with Sidea, and he is made to carry logs of wood by the magician father. Finally, they get married. There is reconciliation of their parents.

In this story of *Jacob Ayrer*, there are many elements common to the story of *The Tempest*. Shakespeare did not know German. He cannot have read the play in original. His knowledge of the story must have come by word of mouth. Perhaps the German story also is a borrowed story from some other source. There is also a Spanish story by a scholar named Dorer, some forty five years before *The Tempest*. In this story, King Dardanus also possessed magic power, like Prospero. He was forced to leave his Kingdom. He created a palace in the sea with the help of his magic powers and lived there with his daughter Seraphina, assisted by the sea-elves and the fairies. After some years the usurper king, Nicephorus, died. His elder son, Valentinianus should have become the king. But the deceased King’s younger brother, Julian, disinherited him because Valentinianus was rather quiet and busy in his scholarly activities. Valentinianus went to Constantinople, to seek help of the emperor. But he was led to the sea-shore by the magic power. There he fell in love with Seraphina, the King’s daughter. They marry. Julianus also happened to be sailing through the Adriatic sea. His ship was wrecked. He was also denounced for his wickedness by Dradanus, who came back to regain his kingdom. This story itself might have been taken from some Italian novel. And perhaps that novel may be the common source for all these dramatic versions. Shakespeare might have borrowed names from Thomas Handy’s *History of Italy*. The name Prospero Adorno occurs in this history. In 1609 Sir John Somers took the fleet of his nine ships to go to Virginia. But his own ship, Sea Adventure, was caught in the storm and wrecked on one of the islands of Bermudas. The members of the crew were saved and landed to
the shore safely. Shakespeare might have used such stories while describing the storm and the island.

4.5 Answers to Check Your Progress:

1.1.

a) The royal inmates on the ship were King Alonso of Naples, his brother Sebastian, Antonio the Duke of Milan, and Gonzalo the old courtier of Naples.

b) The courtier passengers on the ship were coming in his way and obstructing his work.

c) There was violent storm and Gonzalo longed for setting foot on the firm land even if barren.

d) Miranda is by nature kind and sympathetic and knows well that her father had created the storm.

e) Miranda remembers only how there were three or four women taking care of her.

f) Prospero was engrossed in his study of occult science and so he entrusted the administration to Antonio.

g) Gonzalo provided enough food, clothing and books for Prospero and his little daughter.

2.

a) The courtiers like Antonio, Sebastian, and Gonzalo frequently came in the way of the boatswain and the sailors. They kept asking questions, swearing at him and worrying him. The boatswain could not concentrate on his work of saving the ship on account of their interference.

b) Gonzalo, the old man, understands the ability of the boatswain. This boatswain would not die by drowning in the sea, he says. If at all, he would die on the gallows rather than by drowning. In other words the boatswain would be able to save the ship in the storm, and save his life as well as the life of all.

c) Prospero, as the Duke of Milan, neglected his duties of governing. He busied himself with his books giving the whole charge of the dukedom to Antonio.
Naturally, Antonio began to dream of becoming a duke himself. Prospero was, therefore, responsible for creating temptation of the throne in Antonio’s mind.

d) Ariel created violent storm in the sea. He first separated the ship of Alonso from other ships in his fleet. And then creating fear that the ship was about to sink, he made the courtly passengers jump into the waters and try to swim to the shore. He took care that all of them reached the shore without any harm.

**Answers to Check Your Progress II:**

1. 
   a) Alonso is unhappy because he believes his son to have been drowned.
   b) Gonzalo tries to divert Alonso’s mind from his thought of Ferdinand, talking about idea commonwealth, etc.
   c) Ariel manages to help castaways reach the shore safely.
   d) Sebastian is the brother of Alonso, the King of Naples.
   e) Sebastian promises Antonio to cancel the requirement of payment of the tithe to Naples.
   f) Ariel sings in the ears of Gonzalo to wake him up.
   g) Caliban curses Prospero because Prospero makes him do hard work like gathering wood, and punishes him frequently.

2. 
   a) Antonio suggests to Sebastian that there is a very good opportunity for Sebastian to become the King of Naples. They together could kill Alonso and Gonzalo. Ferdinand is already drowned. So Sebastian can easily become the King of Naples.
   b) When Gonzalo wakes up on account of Ariel’s singing in his ears, he happens to see Antonio and Sebastian with swords drawn in their hands. Gonzalo asks them why. They then tell Gonzalo that they were afraid of danger to the life of the king, so they were trying to defend him.
   c) Caliban takes Stephano to be a god or some powerful man. He decides to get Prospero killed with the help of Stephano. He knows that Prospero sleeps for
two hours in the afternoon. And this is the best time for Stephano to kill Prospero and become the lord of the island.

d) Prospero treats Caliban as a slave. He makes Caliban work hard, bringing wood, cleaning, washing, etc. If Caliban does any mischief, he makes the spirits torment him causing cramps and making him suffer.

Answers to Check Your Progress III:

1.

a) Ferdinand has sweet thoughts about beautiful Miranda as he is working, which give him relief.
b) Miranda knows that her father is sleeping so Ferdinand could take rest from his work.
c) Miranda offers to carry logs for sometime and help Ferdinand to take rest.
d) Ferdinand thinks that his father Alonso is drowned, so he may perhaps be the king now.
e) Antonio and Sebastian plan to kill Alonso and Gonzalo at night when they are tired and sleepy.

2.

a) Miranda is a very straightforward girl. She has not learnt the ways of women in the aristocratic society. She therefore frankly expresses her love for Ferdinand. She asks him if he could take her as his wife. If not, she is ready to be a maid in his house.
b) Ferdinand took Miranda as some goddess. He confesses to Miranda that she is the most beautiful lady that he has come across. He tells Miranda that he instantly fell in love with her. He is working hard, carrying logs of wood, for her sake. He confesses to her that he loves her beyond all limit.
c) Ariel speaks imitating the voice of Trinculo, as Stephano and Caliban discuss a plan to kill Prospero. Stephano is irritated by this disturbance and scolds Trinculo threatening him.
d) Caliban tells Stephano that Prospero sleeps in the afternoon. This is the time when Stephano could knock out his brains. But first Stephano should take
possession of Prospero’s books. Then Stephano could kill Prospero by driving a wooden stake in his stomach. He tells Stephano that there are other spirits that obey Prospero’s orders, and they also hate him.

e) Prospero makes Ariel to arrange a grand feast of variety of food and fruit, etc. in front of the tired and hungry courtiers. He does not want to give them a treat. He asks Ariel to make a show of it and suddenly take away everything. And then he makes Ariel speak after thunder and lightning. Ariel tells them that they are the three sinners, and they have betrayed Prospero committing a foul crime. The powers above have caused this storm to punish them. The purpose of the feast was thus to make them aware of the sin committed by them.

Answers to Check Your Progress IV :

1.

a) Prospero arranges the Masque to celebrate the betrothal of Ferdinand and Miranda.

b) In the Elizabethan times, it was the convention to present Masques at the time of royal marriages to entertain the guests.

c) The celebration of the Masque was suddenly stopped because Ariel came and informed Prospero of the plan of Stephano to kill him.

d) Prospero intends to divert attention of Stephano and Trinculo by spreading rich looking clothes.

e) Prospero asks Ariel to attack the plotters (Stephano and others) giving them pains in their joints and hunt them down.

2.

a) The goddesses Iris, the goddess of rainbow appears first. Iris introduces Juno, the queen of gods. She is followed by Ceres, the goddess of fertility and harvest. Their speeches are poetic and about joys of marriage. The spirits under the command of Prospero are enacting the roles of the goddesses.

b) Ariel drives Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban to the area of muddy ooze and thorny bushes. They are driven to a stagnant pool of water. They are covered with mud. Then Ariel calls up the spirits in the shape of hounds and chase the three away from Prospero’s cell.
Answers to Check Your Progress V :

1.

a) Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian are kept by Prospero in a very distracted state with the help of Ariel.

b) Prospero does not want to take revenge upon his enemies because he thinks that virtuous kindness is better than vengeance.

c) The Captain of the ship and the sailors are safe on the ship.

d) Antonio and Sebastian do not show any sign of repentence.

2.

a) Prospero had created the storm with the help of various spirits under the control of Ariel. Now he orders all the spirits to chase away the waves. He now asks these spirits to create heavenly music. He decides to give up his magic robe and the staff.

b) Alonso confesses to Prospero that he was affected by madness when he allowed the plot against him. He repents his act of sin; and gives back Prospero his dukedom. He asks Prospero to forgive him for all the wrongs done to him.

c) Prospero addresses Antonio and Sebastian as the wicked ones. He tells Antonio that he forgives him the most heinous crime committed by him. He tells Sebastian and Antonio that he could easily expose them before the king. But he would not do so now.

d) Prospero gets his dukedom back, and in return he reveals to Alonso how his son Ferdinand is safe and sound, and enjoying the company of beautiful Miranda. Alonso also takes Miranda to be a goddess and is very happy to see that his son and Miranda love each other.

4.6 Further Exercises :

1. Comment on the structure of the play *The Tempest*, pointing out how the unities of Time and Place and Theme are observed in the play.

2. Explain the Post-Colonial implications of the play *The Tempest*. 
3. Do you think Prospero is himself responsible for the loss of his dukedom? Justify your answer.

4. Examine *The Tempest* as a tragi-comedy.

II Write short-notes on the following:

a) Caliban as an oppressed colonial subject.
b) The theme of Reconciliation in *The Tempest*
c) Prospero
d) Ariel’s role in the action of the play.
e) The scene of the Masque.

4.7 References for further study:


Unit-5
*Tartuffe* by Moliere

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5.0 Objectives:

After completing the study of this unit, you will

- Know about the life and works of Moliere
- Know about the plot of Tartuffe
- Learn the character/s in Tartuffe
- Learn the use of Moliere’s comic technique/s in Tartuffe
- Be able to answer the questions on Tartuffe

5.1. Introduction:

This unit begins with the discussion of the life and works of Moliere. It also studies his Tartuffe in terms of its plot, character/s, and other critical aspects.

5.2 Life and Works of Moliere:

Molière is the pseudonym for Jean Baptiste Poquelin, one of the greatest comic geniuses the world has seen, and unquestionably the master of "social comedy." Almost singlehandedly, he encouraged international acclaim for French social comedy, and established the form as one of the more lasting types of comedy. In the plays, he analyzed many aspects of his contemporary society and fully grasped the essential characteristics of various types of people. His critical insights into the nature of types like the hypocrite, the misanthrope, and the miser remain almost as refined today as they were when they were written. Molière was born in Paris, France, in 1622, the son of rather prosperous middle class parents who sent him to good schools to be trained in law. However, somewhere along the way, Molière fell in love with the theater and later decided to devote his entire life to the theatrical profession.

He possibly received a law degree in about 1641–1642, but later he joined three other people to form a theater company called L'Illustre Théâtre. At this time acting was not held in the highest respect, to begin with, so when Molière associated with a woman in his troupe named Madeleine Béjart, his middle-class parents were anxious about losing their son. In fact, Molière’s association with this woman was to be lifelong. In 1662, he married nineteen-year-old Armande Béjart, a spirited flirt who gathered numerous admirers around her, that led to annoyance and anger of her
husband. It is said that soon after four years, Armande became the model for the whimsical and flirtatious Célimène in The Misanthrope. She did however, give birth to three children before his untimely death in 1673, the third child being born in 1672, the year before Molière’s death.

The company Molière helped establish did not run well and was almost penniless during its second season. During this time, he was often pressurized by creditors and hence he began to use the name "Molière."

Before he turned his hand to playwriting, he continued in his career as an actor in another company for about ten more years. In the meanwhile, he also gained experience in directing and managing. By the time he began to write, he was known as one of the greatest comic actors of his time, and the experience he gained by acting, managing, and directing added to his understanding of what was theatrically effective and provided him with a systematic knowledge of the theater.

The production of Molière's first play, The Romantic Ladies, established a reputation for him that was to endure for the rest of his life. Since this play, like his later ones, dealt rather harshly with certain aspects of society, satirizing artificialities of speech, among other things, many people of high society objected to the portrayal because it was too close to the bitter truths. Almost every play that Molière wrote met objections, usually from the section in society which he ridiculed. The most open and hostile objections centered upon the production of Tartuffe, a play which mocks religious hypocrites and certain aspects of the church. Tartuffe was eternally banned, and Molière had to resort to using his influence with the king to get permission for the play to be produced.

Even after Molière became a successful and rather wealthy playwright because of his shrewd business ability, he continued acting in his own plays. It was during a production of his last play, The Imaginary Invalid, in which Molière had a part that he complained of ill health; he died the same night.

Because of his criticism of many aspects of life, Molière was denied a proper burial and was only unwillingly allowed a burial plot in holy ground. His plays, however, have transcended the times and the society for which they were written; and the very analyses of human nature which caused him such difficulty during his lifetime have gained for him a lasting reputation as dramatist and satirist.
5.2.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Choose the correct alternative:

1) Moliere belonged to --------
   a. Germany               c. Ireland
   b. France                d. England

2) Moliere was the master of ----------
   a. tragi-comedy           c. social comedy
   b. black comedy           d. romantic comedy

3) Armande became the model for the whimsical and flirtatious Célimène in --
   a. *The Misanthrope*          c. *The Imaginary Invalid*
   b. *The Romantic Ladies*      d. *Tartuffe*

4) *The Imaginary Invalid* was Molière’s ---------- play.
   a. Third.                  c. Second
   b. First                   d. Last

5) Molière died in the year-------
   a. 1672                    c. 1683
   b. 1673                    d. 1674

B) Fill in the blanks:

1) Molière married a nineteen year old young lady called---------.

2) Molière is a pseudonym for ---------.

3) Molière joined the theater company named --------- with three other people.

4) *Tartuffe* is a play which ---------religious hypocrites and certain aspects of the ---------.

5) Moliere’s ---------parents sent him to good schools to be trained in---------.

C) Answer in a word / phrase / sentence:

1) Which form of comedy did Moliere establish?
2) What was the name of the woman in his troupe associated to Molière?
3) Which was the first play of Molière?
4) How many children did Armande give birth to?
5) Which experience added to Molière’s understanding of theater?

5.2.2 Terms to Remember:
- **Genius (n)** - intelligence, brilliance
- **Pseudonym (n)** – pen-name, false name
- **misanthrope (n)** – hater of mankind, cynic
- **satirize (v)** – make fun of, criticize, mock
- **contemporary (adj)** – of the time, of the day, modern
- **endure (v)** - last, live on, go on, continue
- **creditors (n)** - money-lenders
- **ridicule (v)** - laugh at, mock, deride
- **flirt (v)** – play with, tease, toy with
- **reputation (n)**- good name, status, position

5.3 Introduction to Molière’s Tartuffe:

Molière's *Tartuffe* displays a religious hypocrite — a fraud — who almost succeeds in his plot to jail an inexperienced friend and his family and thereby cheat them out of their home. This social comedy, that mocks at false goodness, hypocrites, and certain features of the Catholic Church, was eternally banned. Molière had to use his influence with King Louis XIV to get permission for the 17th-century French play to be performed in public.

Madame Pernelle, visiting her son Orgon's house, uses the opportunity to criticize all the members of the house and to praise their paying guest, Tartuffe, because he is a man of such holiness and passion. This invites the protest from others to Tartuffe, maintaining that he is false and deceitful, but Madame Pernelle is not ready to believe them. She warns everyone to follow Tartuffe's commands as she leaves.
After Madame Pernelle's departure, Cléante and Dorine talk about Tartuffe and both agree that he has won over Orgon. Damis, Orgon's son, wonders whether his father will still allow Mariane to marry Valère; Damis must know Orgon's feelings because he wants to marry Valère's sister. He asks Cléante to question Orgon about his promise to allow the marriage to take place.

Orgon arrives and seems much more concerned about the welfare of Tartuffe than he is about his wife's illness. Cléante tries to discuss Tartuffe with Orgon, but fails and discovers that Orgon is only interested in singing Tartuffe's praises. When Orgon is questioned about the proposed wedding, he avoids the issue and refuses to give a direct answer. When his daughter arrives, Orgon tells her that he wants to assist Tartuffe with his house; this can best be done by Mariane's marrying Tartuffe. Mariane is too shocked to believe her ears.

After Orgon leaves, Dorine, the maid, scolds Mariane for accepting to marry Tartuffe. Mariane's beloved, Valère, arrives and blames her of agreeing to the marriage. Dorine listens to their argument and then, after they are reconciled, she promises to help them in their plan to uncover Tartuffe's hypocrisy.

On the other hand, Damis, angry about Tartuffe, is also firm to reveal Tartuffe's hypocrisy, and, as he hears Tartuffe's approach, he hides in the cabinet. Elmire, Orgon's wife, arrives and Tartuffe, thinking that they are alone, makes declaration of love to Elmire and suggests that they become lovers. Listening to Tartuffe's proposal, Damis comes out from the hiding and threatens to expose Tartuffe. When Orgon arrives, Damis tries to inform his father about Tartuffe's scheme, but Orgon is so blind that he thinks his own son is evil in trying to spoil Tartuffe's good name. He instantly cuts his son from his will. When nobody is around Orgon declares that he plans to make Tartuffe his single heir and also his son-in-law. They leave to carry out this plan.

Cléante later challenges Tartuffe and tries to argue with him, but Tartuffe is clever enough to answer only in religious clichés, and as soon as he gets the opportunity he hurriedly excuses himself from the room. Orgon and Elmire arrive, and when she hears Orgon's plans, she takes a promise from him to hide in some secret place and keep a close watch on Tartuffe’s actions. Orgon agrees and Elmire sends for Tartuffe. When Tartuffe arrives, he is confronted by Elmire, and soon he
begins to make not only his declarations of love to Elmire but also insulting comments about Orgon.

Finally certain of Tartuffe's hypocrisy, Orgon comes out and orders him from the household. Tartuffe then reveals that legally he is now the owner of the house, since Orgon has signed over all his property. Alone with his wife, Orgon reveals that he is frightened because, earlier, he had handed over some secret documents to Tartuffe's care — documents which could destroy Orgon's trusted position in the court.

When Madame Pernelle arrives, he cannot convince her that Tartuffe is a hypocrite; it is only when news arrives that Tartuffe is having the entire family driven out that she is convinced. Tartuffe brings with him officers of the court, but, as the family is about to be turned out, the officer reveals that the king has understood the hypocrisy of Tartuffe. Fortunately, the King has ordered Tartuffe to be imprisoned for this and for other crimes. The king has also given back all of his rightful property to Orgon.

5.3.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Choose the correct alternative:

1) Tartuffe was a --------------century play.
   a. Sixteenth                          c. Seventeenth
   b. Fourteenth                        d. Fifteenth

2) Moliere had to take permission of King---------- for the performance of the play, Tartuffe.
   a. King Louis XIV c. King Charles IV
   b. King Louis XV d. King Henry VII

3) Madame Pernelle visits her --------house.
   a. Son-in-law’s c. Brother’s
   b. Son’s d. Cousin’s

4) Valere wishes to marry ----------who is Orgon’s daughter.
   a. Elmire c. Dorine
   b Madame Pernelle. d. Mariane
5) Orgon is afraid of Tartuffe because he has handed ----------- to him.
   a. secret documents              c. important keys.
   b. important secrets            d. secret treasure.

B) Fill in the blanks:
1) Damis, angry about Tartuffe, is firm to reveal Tartuffe's hypocrisy and hides in a -------.
2) Tartuffe is a religious -----------.
3) Tartuffe is in love with -----------.
4) Orgon declares his plan that he wishes to make Tartuffe his ------ and ------.
5) When Madame Pernelle arrives, he cannot ------- her that Tartuffe is a hypocrite.

C) Answer in a word/phrase/sentence:
1) What does Tartuffe, as a social comedy mock at?
2) Who challenges Tartuffe and tries to argue with him?
3) Who are not ready to believe about Tartuffe’s hypocrisies?
4) What happens when Damis tries to reveal Tartuffe to Orgon?
5) Who gives all his rightful property back to Orgon?

5.3.2 Terms to Remember:
- **Hypocrite (n)** - liar, deceiver
- **departure(n)** - leaving, going
- **scheme(n)** - plan, line of action
- **clichés(n)** - stock phrase, hackneyed expressions
- **cabinets(n)** - cupboard
- **confronted(v)** - challenge, meet, accost
- **reveal(v)** - disclose, make known
- **convinced(v)** - make certain, satisfy, prove to
- **fortunately (adv)** - luckily
- **imprisoned (v)** - put in jail
5.4 Play Summary of Molière’s *Tartuffe*

**Act I: Scene 1**

Madame Pernelle is ready to leave her son Orgon's house because she finds it terrible that no one pays any attention to her. Her good advice is either opposed or ignored by everyone. She tells her grandson, Damis, that he is a fool; her granddaughter, who seems so shy and modest, is blamed for being so secretive. She accuses her daughter-in-law, Elmire, of being too free with money, and she accuses Cléante, Elmire's brother, of being too shrewd. Tartuffe is the only person who wins her heart; he is the epitome of perfection for her.

Madame Pernelle is unmoved though Damis and the maid Dorine both argue that Tartuffe is a bigot and a hypocrite. She thinks that the others don't like Tartuffe because this "good man reminds them of their sins and reveals their moral flaws." She is also firm that there are too many visitors who come and, upon leaving, gossip about the family. Dorine roughly remarks that the old woman finds fault out of jealousy. While she was young Madame Pernelle was a part of the world and now, fearing that the world is going to drop her due to her old age, she wastes her time criticizing it. Madame Pernelle hates such comments and upon leaving, reminds the company that they are lucky to have such a holy man as Tartuffe lodging beneath their roof.

**Act I: Scenes 2–3**

When Madame Pernelle leaves, Cléante refuses to see her to the door because he has heard enough of her foolish chatter. He cannot understand how Tartuffe has so totally duped her, but then Dorine points out that her master, Orgon, is even more deceived: what great folly Orgon has fallen into should be actually witnessed in order to believe. She explains the many ways in which Tartuffe has already deceived Orgon and the many boring sermons that they all have to listen to constantly.

Elmire returns and tells Cléante that, because her husband is coming, she feels the need of a rest before seeing him. Damis requests Cléante to question Orgon about Mariane's wedding because if Mariane is not allowed to marry Valère, Damis would not be accepted as a suitor for Valère's sister.
Act I: Scenes 4–6

When Orgon arrives from the country, he directly inquires about his family. But he ignores Dorine's report of his wife's illness and, instead, inquires about the health of Tartuffe. Dorine tells him more bad news about his wife each time he shows worry for Tartuffe. Orgon continually feels sorry for Tartuffe and is totally indifferent to his wife's problems.

After Dorine leaves, Cléante tries to get Orgon to be more sensible. Orgon, however, will hear no criticism against Tartuffe and characterizes him as an excellent man. Orgon describes some of the pious things of Tartuffe which have appealed to him and, when Cléante tries to point out that some of these acts are clearly false holiness, Orgon accuses Cléante of being too much a part of the current anger against true goodness. Cléante points out those good deeds portray a religious man, not loud protestations of devotion.

Orgon listens to Cléante, but ignores every word and is about to leave when Cléante stops him to ask about the approaching wedding between Mariane and Valère. He points out that Orgon has already given his promise that the marriage will take place. Orgon, rather than answering Cléante directly, maintains that he will be guided by the will of heaven in this and all other undertakings. Cléante realises that something is going wrong and plans to warn Valère.

Act II: Scenes 1–2

Orgon finds his daughter alone and asks her if she will obey him in all things. Being a dutiful daughter, she tells him it is her pleasure always to please her father. Therefore, Orgon tells her to say that she finds Tartuffe to be a very worthy man and that she would be happy to be his wife. Mariane then points out that if she said such a thing, she would be lying. However, Orgon announces that he is determined to have Tartuffe related to the family by marrying Mariane.

Dorine, the maid, interrupts the conversation by arriving suddenly. She laughs out at a joke she has heard — a joke about Orgon's plan to allow Tartuffe to marry Mariane. When Orgon tells her that it is no joke, that it is the truth, Dorine laughs harder, thinking that it is still a joke; she refuses to believe her master.

Orgon insists to have his own way, so Dorine points out that Tartuffe has no property and no social contacts; such a man should be pleased to devote his time to
his prayers. She cleverly points out that Tartuffe, who supposedly boasts about his poverty, also brags about his lands and birth — a matter which seems, for Dorine, a contradiction. Yet she fails to convince Orgon and then suggests that if a girl is forced to marry a man whom she dislikes against her wishes, she is sure to be disloyal.

Orgon tries a lot to ignore her, but at last orders her to be quiet, and Dorine goes to the side as Orgon continues to try and control his daughter. Then Dorine comments to herself about the silliness of the situation which angers Orgon so much that he has to go out for a walk to calm himself.

**Act II: Scenes 3–4**

After Orgon leaves to get back his peace of mind, Dorine immediately begins to attack Mariane, who did not oppose her father and openly refused to marry Tartuffe. Mariane defends herself by saying that she has lived for so long under her father's strict control that she can't fight him now. Dorine then begins to paint a picture of what it will be like to marry Tartuffe. She is realistic enough to reject Mariane's idea that she will kill herself rather than marry Tartuffe or disobey her father. Dorine outrightly declares that such a talk is sentimental foolishness.

When Mariane protests that she knows of no way to defy her father, Dorine then begins to show all of the horror of what it would be like to be Madame Tartuffe. Mariane is then so upset of the possibility of having to marry Tartuffe that she is in total misery. Dorine consoles her by promising that they will surely find some way out to prevent this strange situation.

Valère, Mariane's fiancée, arrives and asks Mariane if it is true that she will marry Tartuffe. Mariane answers that it is her father's wish and innocently says that she does not know what to do. Valère feels that she is not seriously opposed to the marriage and then he insultingly advises her to get married. Mariane mistakenly thinks that Valère no longer cares for her. The two then begin a ridiculous lovers' quarrel until Dorine can no longer stand it. Just as Valère is about to leave, she drags him back, then stops the departing Mariane and forces them both to admit their love for each other.

Dorine's advice is to pretend to go along with Orgon's plan but to keep postponing the wedding until something better can be planned. She says that she is going to take the help of anyone she can find.
Act III: Scenes 1–2

Orgon's son Damis is wild because he has just heard of his father's plan to force Mariane to marry Tartuffe. He tells Dorine that he is determined to expose Tartuffe as a hypocritical scoundrel. Dorine wants Damis to calm down because she has already arranged for Orgon's wife, Elmire, to talk with Tartuffe, and she also believes that Tartuffe is very much fond of Elmire's charms. The hot-tempered Damis is determined to hear the meeting, and when Dorine cannot get rid of him, she hides him in the closet when she hears Tartuffe coming.

Tartuffe arrives, pouring out pious comments, and when he sees Dorine he dare not look at her until she takes his handkerchief and covers her bosom with it because "the flesh is weak" and cannot resist too many temptations. Dorine daringly tells him that she could see him completely naked and not have any dirty thoughts. She then announces that Elmire is coming and she excuses herself.

Act III: Scenes 3–4

After Tartuffe inquires about Elmire's health and pays her some clear compliments, he then expresses his joy at being alone with her. She tells him that she wants to discuss something confidential with him and he responds by saying that he has long wanted to open his heart to her. He takes her hand and expresses his great admiration for her and Elmire draws back. She moves her chair just as he begins to feel her knee and to comment upon the softness of her gown.

Tartuffe continues, declaring his passion for Elmire. She reminds him that such declarations do not suit a pious man, but he replies by pointing out that even religious men can feel the power of such charms as those of Elmire. He then offers her his love with the promise that she will be safe from gossip and defame because he also will want to protect his name. He shamelessly assures her that she can feel quite secure, in having an affair without being discovered.

Elmire criticizes him and tells him that if he does not put an end to the forthcoming marriage between himself and Mariane, she will inform her husband of his proposal.

At this moment, Damis cannot control himself any longer and comes out, asserting his determination to expose Tartuffe for the hypocrite he is. Elmire tries to
hold him back, but his hot temper and hatred for the fraud are too strong for him to listen to reason.

**Act III: Scenes 5–7**

Orgon arrives at the right moment and Damis tries to reveal that Tartuffe has been trying to attract Elmire which is a proof of his betrayal. He explains that Elmire was not going to reveal the crime because of her refinement, and Elmire responds that she sees no need of ruining her husband's peace of mind when her own sense of honor does not demand it. Then she leaves.

Orgon turns in wonder to Tartuffe, who exclaims in the most religious language that he is wicked, immoral, and worthy of being driven away from the house. He would not defend himself against any charge Orgon or Damis wish to level against him.

Immediately, Orgon turns on Damis and scolds him for trying to accuse a good man's name. Tartuffe suggests that Orgon should believe Damis' story because while the world takes him to be a good man, he feels that he is the most worthless and the most sinful man in this world. He kneels down and tells Orgon to heap upon him all of the abuse in the world.

Orgon, instead, is again deceived by the wicked Tartuffe and turns against his son, calling him a villain and an ingrate. Tartuffe, on bended knees, requests that Orgon be gentle with Damis and not harm him. The more Tartuffe begs for forgiveness for Damis, the more Orgon turns against his son. Damis refuses to ask pardon of Tartuffe and immediately Orgon disinherits him and throws him out of the house.

Alone with Orgon, Tartuffe offers to leave the house, but Orgon will not hear of it. Instead, he is firm to make his family jealous and to displease them by making Tartuffe his heir and son-in-law. As they leave to draw up the proper documents, Orgon reaffirms his belief that Tartuffe is worth more than his wife, his children, or his relatives.

**Act IV: Scenes 1–3**

Cléante meets Tartuffe and suggests that it is not the act of a religious man to cause such conflict in a family and to allow a father to disinherit his son. Tartuffe argues that he would love to see Damis reinstated, but he is afraid that people would
then take his act wrongly. Cléante points out the deformed reasoning in this argument and suggests that he leave revenge to God. Tartuffe maintains that he has forgiven Damis but finds it wrong to live with someone who spoils his name. He also explains that he hates wealth and the only reason he allows Orgon to transfer his property to him is so that it will not fall into wicked hands where it might be used for crime and sin. When Cléante begins to point out the falsity in this argument, Tartuffe leaves hurriedly, saying that he has to attend to certain religious offices.

Elmire, Mariane, and Dorine arrive, asking Cléante to stay and help them convince Orgon of his errors. When Orgon arrives, he presents the marriage contract to Mariane. She goes on her knees that he should not force her to marry Tartuffe. She says she does not dislike her father's love for Tartuffe and, if he wishes, Orgon can take all of her property and donate it to Tartuffe, but she requests that she be left free to choose a husband for herself.

Orgon argues that the more one hates a man the more noble it will be to marry him because, by so doing, one will be able to put down one's flesh and make it pure. Cléante starts to offer advice, but Orgon tells him that even though his advice is sound, he will not follow it. Elmire is wordless at Orgon's ability to be continually wrong. She wonders if he would believe his eyes and challenges him to become a part of a plot which would reveal Tartuffe's hypocrisy. Orgon has such faith in Tartuffe that he accepts the challenge.

Elmire sends the others away and tells Orgon to hide under the table and to observe what is about to take place. She asks him to break off the interview between her and Tartuffe at any moment that he is convinced that Tartuffe is not the man he pretends to be.

**Act IV: Scenes 4–8**

Alone with her husband, Elmire instructs Orgon to hide under a table and not to be surprised by some strange behavior on her part. She informs him that she will be only too glad to drop the entire act whenever he is fully satisfied that Tartuffe is a hypocrite who is determined to seduce her. She also reminds Orgon to save her in case Tartuffe advances too far too rapidly.

When Tartuffe arrives, Elmire has him close the door so that they will not be caught as they were earlier by Damis. She then confesses how glad she is to see him. Tartuffe is at first confused by her change until Elmire explains that women are by
nature hesitant to admit their love and that her objection to the marriage with Mariane was caused by jealousy. Tartuffe says that he will not be fully convinced until he has more solid proof and advances toward Elmire. She controls him by asking time to catch her breath. To delay his advances, she inquires if her love might not be unpleasant to Heaven for which Tartuffe shows such respect. Tartuffe assures her that his purity of aim will be accepted in Heaven's eyes and that when the sin is committed in secret it no longer remains a sin. Only the shame of having the sin known can make the act a sin.

Elmire says loudly that she will have to give in to his desires, and if it is a sin for her to yield, then the person who made her sin must be held responsible. She delays him by asking him to open the door and look out to see if anyone is around, especially her husband. Tartuffe says unsympathetically that Orgon is so stupid that even if he saw them he would not believe his sight. But, Elmire insists that he go out to look.

After he is gone, Orgon comes out from his hiding place, completely astonished. Elmire tells him to return to hiding until he is completely satisfied, but Orgon is now convinced of Tartuffe's hypocrisy. As Tartuffe is returning, Orgon hides behind Elmire and then immediately accosts Tartuffe and orders him to leave the house. Tartuffe then reminds Orgon that the house now belongs to him and that Orgon — not Tartuffe — is the one who must leave.

When Orgon is alone with his wife, he confesses that he is worried about the deed he signed and also about a certain strongbox that should be in Tartuffe's room upstairs. They leave to discover its location.

**Act V: Scenes 1–2**

Orgon explains that the strongbox contains some papers which were left in his keeping by a friend. If the papers were made public, both Orgon and his friend would be in serious trouble. Earlier, Tartuffe had convinced Orgon to allow him to keep the entire strongbox and now Tartuffe has taken the secret papers and left.

Orgon cannot understand how anyone could be as mean and evil as Tartuffe; he vows to hate the entire race of men. Cléante advises him to learn to practice self-control. At this point, Orgon's son, Damis, rushes in and tells his father that he will be really happy to put an end to Tartuffe's life. Again, Cléante has to suggest self-discipline and control.
**Act V: Scenes 3–5**

Madame Pernelle, Orgon's mother, arrives and hears her son explain that he has been the victim of the hypocrite Tartuffe. Madame Pernelle reminds her son that the righteous are always maligned and that the people of the house have been falsely blaming the dear, pious Tartuffe. Orgon tries to explain that he was present and saw everything, but Madame Pernelle refuses to believe anything bad about a man so pious and worthy as Tartuffe. Orgon is completely confused when suddenly there appears an officer at the door.

The officer, M. Loyal, announces that he comes with news about Tartuffe. He says that he served Orgon's father and he feels sorry to give Orgon an order of eviction, to vacate the house. As everything in the house now belongs to Tartuffe, he expects that surely Orgon will honor the law and leave immediately with his family. He hopes that Orgon will honor justice and leave peacefully. Orgon can be allowed to stay till the next morning, but M. Loyal and ten men must stay in the house until then.

When M. Loyal leaves for a moment, Orgon confronts his mother with Tartuffe's treachery, but Dorine reminds Orgon of what he had just said earlier in the day — that material things bind the spirit and that one's salvation can be endangered by money and property. In a state of confusion, each person maintains that some decision to act immediately must be taken.

**Act V: Scenes 6–8**

Mariane's fiancé, Valère, arrives and explains that he has heard in confidence that Orgon is in awful trouble about some secret documents which Tartuffe handed over to the king. Tartuffe, he says, has denounced Orgon as a traitor to the king and, since there is a warrant out for Orgon's arrest, Valère has brought money and a carriage and will help Orgon take refuge in the country.

As they are about to leave, officers, accompanied by Tartuffe, arrive. Tartuffe announces that Orgon is now under arrest and the only journey he is going to take is to prison. When Orgon reminds Tartuffe of his gratitude, Tartuffe simply replies that his first duty is to serve the king and to do that he would sacrifice anything. Cléante tries to use logic against Tartuffe, but Tartuffe only tells the officers to carry out their duty.
The officers, however, perform their duty by arresting Tartuffe and then explain to the rest of the company that the king, who knows the real nature of all his subjects, knew that Tartuffe was a hypocrite and a liar. The wise and thoughtful king could never be deluded by such an imposter. Furthermore, the king has cancelled the deed and has pardoned Orgon for keeping the documents of an exile. The intelligent king thinks much more of a man's virtues than he does of a man's mistakes; Orgon's past loyalty to the king is rewarded, and his mistakes are now forgiven.

As Orgon is about to say something to Tartuffe, Cléante advises him to forget the poor wretch and turn his attention to better things. Orgon then gives his daughter Mariane to Valère to be his wife. Thus the play ends on a pleasant note.

5.4.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Choose the correct alternative:

1) Cleante is Mariane’s———
   a. brother c. uncle
   b. cousin d. friend

2) Elmire is Lady Pernelle’s ————
   a. daughter c. sister
   b. daughter-in-law d. paying guest.

3) Dorine asks Mariane to ———— the wedding with Tartuffe.
   a. accept c. postpone
   b. refuse d. cancel

4) Cleante feels that something is wrong and decides to warn ————
   a. Valere c. Tartuffe
   b. Orgon d. Lady Pernelle.

5) Orgon ignores Dorine’s report about his ———— illness.
   a. mother’s c. maid’s
   b. daughter’s d. wife’s
B) Fill in the Blanks
1) Valere is the ----------- of Mariane.
2) -------------- interrupts the conversation between Orgon and Mariane.
3) Orgon says that the ------------contains some ---------- which were left in his keeping by a friend.
4) Tartuffe declares his love for ------------.
5) Dorine points out that Tartuffe has no ------ and no ---------- when Orgon refuses to believe.

C) Answer in a word / phrase / sentence:
1) How does Lady Pernelle accuse Elmire?
2) Why does Cleante refuse to see Lady Pernelle to the door?
3) Who is the epitome of perfection for Lady Pernelle?
4) From where does Orgon arrive?
5) What kind of a daughter is Mariane?

5.4.2 Terms to Remember:
- modest (adj)-humble, shy
- Epitome(n)- model, example, embodiment
- Gossip(n)- hearsay, rumour
- Bigot (n)- racist, dogmatist, partisan
- Dupe (v) –deceive, cheat
- Sermons( n)- speech, talk
- protestations (n)- declaration, announcement
- interrupt (v)- cut in, break in
- boast (v) – show off, talk arrogantly
- contradiction(n)- clash, conflict, disagreement
- ignore (v) – disregard, pay no attention
• sentimental (adj)- emotional, tender, soft-hearted
• misery (n)- unhappiness, suffering
• postpone (v) – put off, delay
• temptations (n) – desire, urge
• forthcoming (adj) – approaching, about to happen
• betrayal (n)- disloyalty, deception
• ingrate (adj)- ungrateful person
• heir (n) – successor, inheritor
• seduce (v) – take advantage, attract
• salvation (n) – deliverance, means of escape
• traitor (n) – betrayor, one who deceives
• gratitude (n) – gratefulness, thankfulness
• imposter (n) – fraud, pretender

5.5 Major/Minor Characters in Tartuffe

M. Orgon

While Tartuffe is clearly a hypocrite and a scoundrel, Orgon is a much more complex character. In the past he obviously had served the king honorably and had taken care of his estates in a rational and noble manner. It is understood that before the opening of the play, he was a sensible man who was respected by his family and friends. What turns him into a silly and ridiculous person is therefore a curious question.

Some critics have suggested that Orgon, having reached middle age, now needs to attach himself to some type of a religious person and Tartuffe is the most readily accessible. Many scenes in the play laugh at the type of character who can no longer participate successfully in society and who then retires from society and attacks it. Orgon's religious passion, however, seems more directly linked to his basic nature. Cléante characterizes it as being overgenerous and uncontrolled in all respects.
Orgon who has completely given himself to religious faith and tried to become the epitome of the pious person, later goes to absurd extremes both in his words and deeds. In contrast, when he discovers the hypocrisy of Tartuffe, he reverses himself and determines to hate and persecute all pious men. Orgon, then, seems to be a man who goes to the extremes without least consideration of any middle course available; instead he keeps tossing between absurd extremes.

It is interesting to note that one of the objections to the play was that Orgon, while expressing many of the basic beliefs of the church and, while performing deeds consistent with the devout man, was presented as a cheat whose actions confirmed that he did not live by the standards of common sense, good taste, self-control, and the other qualities accepted by Molière's age.

Tartuffe

In various editions of the play, Tartuffe is called "The Impostor" or "The Hypocrite." He is a superb scoundrel who can put on any pose and become a master of it. As a religious ascetic, he convinces Orgon and Madame Pernelle that he is a sincerely pious and humble man; his apparent hypocrisy, however, is visible to the reader and to the audience.

Tartuffe's superiority lies in the fact that he can perfectly study the weaknesses of his victims and then take advantage of these flaws for his own gain. He is no simple or ignorant fraud; instead, he is an alert and skillful hypocrite who uses every means to bring about his success.

Molière humanizes Tartuffe by endowing him with one flaw. His eventual downfall is caused by his lust. Instead of making Tartuffe into an inhuman monster, Molière shows how too much greed causes the clever hypocrite to lower his mask and reveal his hypocrisy.

Dorine

Dorine is a stock character found in many of Molière's comedies and, in fact, has become a type found in comedies of all periods. She is the wise servant who sees through all deception. Although inferior in terms of social position, she is superior in any match of wits. Surrounded by the deluded and cruel Orgon, the hypocritical Tartuffe, and the incompetent Mariane, Dorine appeals to us through her winning wholesomeness, her directness, and her simple honesty.
In the social structure of the day, Dorine would be part servant and part companion to Mariane. This accounts for her open manner in contrast to a typical servant. She always comes across as the person highly gifted of perceiving the truth in the midst of hypocrisy and fanaticism; she is the person who satirically expresses much of the annoyance felt by the audience.

**Elmire** Orgon's second wife who represents a reasonable attitude toward life.

**Damis** Orgon's son and Elmire's stepson who tries to prove Tartuffe a hypocrite and succeeds only in having himself disinherited.

**Mariane** Orgon's daughter who is in love with Valère and who is being forced to marry Tartuffe.

**Madame Pernelle** Orgon's mother who is totally deluded by Tartuffe.

**Valère** Mariane's suitor who is rejected by Orgon in favor of Tartuffe.

**Cléante** Orgon's brother-in-law who tries to get everyone to view things with thoughtfulness and calm.

**Flipote** Madame Pernelle's maid.

**M. Loyal** An officer of the law who serves Orgon's expulsion papers.

**5.5.1 Check Your Progress:**

A) **Choose the correct alternative:**

1) Tartuffe’s downfall is caused by -------.
   - a. lust
   - b. power
   - c. anger
   - d. jealousy

2) -------------- appeals to us through her directness and honesty.
   - a. Mariane
   - b. Flipote
   - c. Dorine
   - d. Elmire

3) Damis is Elmire’s --------------
   - a. brother
   - b. suitor
   - c. son
   - d. stepson
4) Dorine is part servant and part------------- to Mariane.
   a. sister  
   b. maid  
   c. companion  
   d. teacher  
5) Valere is -------- by Orgon in favor of Tartuffe.
   a. rejected  
   b. liked  
   c. accepted  
   d. considered 

B) Fill in the blanks
1) Dorine is a -------- character found in Moliere’s plays.
2) Damis is the -------- of Lady Pernelle.
3) Elmire is Orgon’s -------- wife who shows reasonable attitude.
4) --------is Orgon’s brother in law who tries to maintain peace and calm.
5) --------is Lady Pernelle’s maid.
6) In various editions of the play, Tartuffe is called -------- and --------.

C) Answer in a word/phrase/sentence:
1) Who are the people easily convinced by Tartuffe?
2) Whom did Tartuffe serve in the past?
3) What type of a life has Orgon adopted?
4) What causes the downfall of Tartuffe?
5) What type of attitude towards life does Elmire have?
6) Name any two qualities acceptable to Moliere’s age.

5.5.2 Terms to Remember:
• scoundrel (n) – rascal, cheat, good for nothing
• complex (adj) – complicated, difficult, tricky
• rational (adj) – sensible, intelligent, logical
• accessible (adj) – reachable, available
• overgenerous (adj) – too kind, open-handedness
• **absurd (adj)** - ridiculous, laughable, foolish
• **pious (adj)** - religious, God-fearing, saintly
• **deeds (n)** - act, action
• **devout (adj)** - religious, devoted, godly
• **wholesomeness (n)** - ethical, pure, virtuous
• **perceive (v)** - recognize, see, realize
• **fanaticism (n)** - extremism, partisan, diehard
• **deluded (v)** - deceive, fool, trick
• **expulsion (n)** - dismissal, removal

5.6 Critical Aspects of *Tartuffe*

**Neoclassical Comedy**

The "romantic comedy" (Shakespeare's variety) belonging to the earlier period than Molière's highlighted a kind of plot development which was to be rejected by Molière. Comedies written during the Renaissance period were often similar in outline: a complex situation involving a number of characters, misunderstandings, mistaken identities, and the like is created, then an element of suspense is added, and finally all of the complications are discovered to the satisfaction of most of the characters. "Romantic comedy" had nothing directly to do with contemporary society; indeed, the settings of most of the plays are in faraway kingdoms or "exotic" foreign countries. Any immediate social reference would usually be set in the imaginary story of the play.

In the neoclassical period, however, contemporary society became one of the central concerns of the comic dramatist. The neoclassical age is generally considered an age of balance, accuracy, and regularity. It requires certain norms of behavior in society. The "irregular," whimsical individual had to be laughed at and brought back to normality. While the same principle may have applied to Shakespearean comedy in general, the identification of actual social types in the plays was not quite as noticeable as it was in Molière's plays. Problems unspoken in society became the very subject matter for neoclassical comedy. Although this type of drama, "social comedy," demands a certain faith in the value of society, the dramatist does not
necessarily ignore all of the aspects of his particular contemporary society. Laughter is evoked when a character deviates from his behavior from the sanctioned norms of society, but it is also often aroused from the very "norm" itself.

Repeated emphasis in neoclassical comedy is placed upon "rational" perspective and behavior. As late as Voltaire's *Candide* the irrational acceptance of a popular philosophy is laughed at. In England, earlier, Jonathan Swift was concerned with rationality in a similar fashion. In many of Molière's plays, the characters, even when they are in fault; maintain that they are acting from purely normal motives and in a most composed manner. They repeatedly express the passionate desire that the rest of the world would act equally as rationally. The word "reasonable" does really surprise reader with the number of times it appears in this situation in Molière's plays. It is often used by opposing characters to add strength to their own conflicting points of view.

Neoclassical comedy also calls for a degree of intellectual detachment, being mentally separate from the audience which other types of plays do not. Tragedy demands sympathy for the protagonist; other kinds of comedy — like "Romantic comedy" — individualize characters and allow for a certain identification with them. This objectivity or distancing forces us to see a fop as a fop (the type) and invites laughter, rather than as an individual evoking pity. The more complex of Molière's characters succeed in winning our sympathies for the moment — but more in the sense that we can see his point of view in ridiculing society than in feeling a deep pity for him as a suffering human being.

**Molière's Comic Technique**

Molière was a master of the neoclassical comedy. He possessed a wide knowledge of the society in which he lived, and had long training in the theater before he actually began writing. As an actor, he knew the various technical difficulties connected with acting and he understood all the various problems connected with staging a play. His wisdom about theater was unmatched.

As a top representative of neoclassical comedy, Molière actually accepted the importance of society and emphasized throughout his plays a concern for man in the social order of things. He was also an insightful observer of the changeable manners of his age and was able to present his plays with a logical detachment and wisdom which has preserved the plays through the centuries. To use terms associated with the
period, Molière possessed that "sweet reasonableness" and "critical serenity" which allowed him to view mankind with enough aloofness to see both the comic follies inbuilt in the individual and the flaws also inherent in the society in which man must function.

Molière's technique, therefore, grows out of those qualities emphasized for all neoclassical comedy. First, his characters were chosen to represent types of people or some generalized aspect of human nature. Thus, in his plays we have the "misanthrope" or the man who hates people, the "religious hypocrite" in Tartuffe or the new passionate convert in the same play, the miser as a type, or the middle-class bourgeois who has pretensions to being a gentleman.

Second, after choosing the type of character, Molière would create certain situations which would show the absurdities of this type. He builds in situations that expose the character and exhibit the character's deviation from the normal, socially accepted behavior. In this way, the audience soon becomes aware of both the nature of the type and the nature of his clash with the society. Such technique is cleverly used in Tartuffe or The Bourgeois Gentleman. In both plays, there is a series of scenes in which the actions of the main character are seen to be totally absurd and totally in conflict with the common accepted behavior of the society at large.

These situations must continue until the audience is able to completely evaluate both the type and his deviations from the norm. On this point, there is critical disagreement as to how successfully Molière achieves his aim. For example, in The Misanthrope, the full extent of Alceste's absurdity is not completely revealed until the final and closing scenes. However in The Bourgeois Gentleman, the absurdity of the type is fully revealed by the midpoint of the play and it is uncertain whether the last part of the play can be acceptable as essential in terms of this theory.

Fourth, in continuation of the above point, the play should end when the characters have been fully exposed and we can satisfactorily evaluate their absurdities. In a play like Tartuffe, however, Molière, for various reasons, continues the play for an entire act longer than is often thought necessary. The fifth act of Tartuffe contributes little or nothing to the total view of the play and is an obvious piece of flattery to the king.

Last, as Molière's aim was to reveal characters in typical situations and reveal their absurdities, he never included any background of the characters. All we know
of the person consists of those basic traits seen operating at the moment on the stage. Molière's purpose, then, was to have characters that represent certain human traits and no additional background material is necessary. For example, in *Misanthrope*, we know that there is an awaiting court case which later in the play is decided against Alceste, but we are never given any clear idea of what the case is all about.

5.6.1 Check Your Progress:

A) Choose the correct alternative:

1) Comedies written during ------- period were quite similar in outline.
   a. Victorian        c. Edwardian
   b. Renaissance      d. Neoclassical

2) -------------- is evoked when a character departs in his behavior from sanctioned norms of society.
   a. Anger               c. Envy
   b. Hatred              d. Laughter

3) Moliere was a peak representative of the --------- comedy.
   a. Neoclassical        c. social
   b. romantic             d. Shakespearean

4) The --------- is a type character who despises people in Moliere’s plays.
   a. miser                c. misanthrope
   b. hypocrite            d. pious man

5) In *The Misanthrope*, the full extent of Alceste’s absurdity is revealed by ------ of the play.
   a. beginning          c. mid-point
   b. final scenes       d. anti-climax

B) Fill in the blanks:

1) As an --------- Moliere knew the technical difficulties connected with acting.
2) The middle-class --------- is a stock character that has pretensions to being a gentleman.

3) Moliere would create certain situations to illustrate the ---------- of the type.

4) The word ---------- appears a number of times in Moliere’s plays.

5) The play should end when the characters are fully ---------- and we can satisfactorily ----------------- their absurdities.

6) Moliere’s aim was to -------------- characters in typical situations, he never included any ---------- of the characters.

C) Answer in a word/phrase/sentence:

1) What are the settings of Romantic comedy?

2) In which period did the contemporary society become one of the central concerns of comic dramatists?

3) What does neoclassical comedy repeatedly emphasize?

4) Who had to be laughed back to normalcy?

5) Which play of Voltaire ridiculed the irrational acceptance of popular philosophy?

6) To which country did Jonathan Swift belong?

5.6.2 Terms to Remember:

- **contemporary (n)** – belonging to the same period, of the same time
- **exotic (adj)** – foreign, far-off, distant
- **accuracy (n)** – correctness, truthfulness
- **whimsical (adj)** – mischievous, playful, fanciful
- **identification (n)** – recognition, discovery
- **evoke (v)** – bring to mind, awaken
- **arouse (v)** – excite, trigger, cause, provoke
- **sanctioned (n)** – authority, approval, agreement
- **emphasis (n)** – highlight, focus, underline
- **irrational (adj)** – unreasonable, illogical, baseless
- **protagonist (n)** – central character, hero or heroine, leading character
• **fop (adj)** – person who takes too much interest in his clothes
• **detachment (n)** – disinterest, objectivity, indifference
• **serenity (n)** – peacefulness, calmness, relaxed
• **aloofness (n)** – distant, detached, formal
• **bourgeois (adj)** – middle-class, conventional, conformist
• **exhibit (v)** – display, show
• **deviation (n)** – run counter to, contrast with, digress
• **flattery (n)** – praise, compliments
• **traits (n)** – quality, habit, mannerism

5.7 **Summary:**

The different sections in this unit enable students to know the summary, character/s, and critical aspects of Moliere’s *Tartuffe*.

5.8 **Answers to check your progress:**

5.2.1

A) 1) b  2) c  3) a  4) d  5) b

B) 1) Armande Bejart
   2) Jean Baptiste Poquelin
   3) L’ Illustre Theatre
   4) mocks, church
   5) middle-class, law

C) 1) Social comedy
   2) Madieleine Bejart
   3) *The Romantic Ladies*
   4) Three
   5) Acting, managing and directing.

5.3.1

A) 1) c  2) a  3) b  4) d  5) a
B) 1) cabinet
   2) Hypocrite
   3) Elmire
   4) heir, son-in-law
   5) convince
C) 1) False goodness, hypocritical features of church
   2) Damis
   3) Lady Pernelle, Orgon
   4) Orgon disinherits Damis
   5) The King

5.4.1
A) 1) c  2) b  3) c  4) a  5) d
B) 1) fiancée
   2) Dorine
   3) Strongbox, papers
   4) Elmire
   5) property, social contacts
C) 1) being too free with money
   2) Had enough of her foolish chatter
   3) Tartuffe
   4) The country
   5) dutiful

5.5.1
A) 1) a  2) c  3) d  4) c  5) a
B) 1) stock
   2) grandson
3) second
4) Cleante
5) Flipote
6) Imposter, Hypocrite

C) 1) Lady Pernelle, Orgon
2) The King
3) Life of piety
4) lust
5) reasonable
6) common sense, good taste, moderation

5.6.1
A) 1) b 2) d 3) a 4) c 5) b
B) 1) actor
2) bourgeois
3) absurdities
4) reasonable
5) exposed, evaluate
C) 1) Faraway kingdoms, exotic or foreign countries
2) Neoclassical period
3) rational perspective and behavior
4) *Candide*
5) England

5.9 Exercises:
A) 1. Comment on *Tartuffe* as a social comedy.
2. Describe in detail the use of comic technique by Moliere.
3. How does Moliere bring out Tartuffe’s character?
4. What are the views of Lady Pernelle and Orgon about Tartuffe?
5. How does Tartuffe fail in his plan to send Orgon to jail and get his property?
6. How does Elmire reveal the true nature of Tartuffe to Orgon?
7. How does Damis try to convince Orgon about the hypocrisy of Tartuffe? What is the result?
8. Describe the role played by Dorine in revealing the true character of Tartuffe.
9. Comment on the ending of the play and the element of comedy in it.

B) Write Short Notes:
   1. Lady Pernelle
   2. Cleante
   3. Moliere’s life
   4. Development of plot in Tartuffe
   5. Technique of characterization
   6. Romantic relationship between Valere and Mariane
   7. Significance of the title Tartuffe

5.10 Further Readings:


Unit-6

A Doll’s House by Henrik Ibsen

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6.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit you will be able to:

- understand Henrik Ibsen as a playwright.
- explain plot, characters, themes and ideas in the play.
- find relationship between plot, character and other elements of the play.

6.1 Introduction

Friends, in the previous unit you have studied the growth of drama since ancient times and this is a moment for you to try to understand the concept of modern drama, in particular, modern tragedy. It is widely believed that Ibsen is the pioneer of modern concept of drama. Generally speaking we know the drama grew through classical and Shakespearian drama to meet the modern concept of drama. Your study of Ibsen’s play *A Doll’s House* would give you a new perspective to understand the Modern Tragedy.

George Bernard Shaw wrote on Ibsen: “Ibsen’s message to you is : If you are a member of society, defy it, if you have a duty, violate it, if you have a sacred tie, break it, if you have a religion stand on it instead of crouching under it, if you bound yourself by a promise or an oath, cast them to the winds, if the lust of self-sacrifice seize you, wrestle with it as with a devil, and if in spite of all, you cannot resist the temptation to be virtuous, go drown yourself before you have time to waste the lives of all about you with the infection of that fell disease. Here at last is a call to arms with some hope in it!”

Shaw’s remark on the Norwegian playwright speaks volumes on how Ibsen championed socialism, feminism and new forms of artistic expression. Ibsen had laid a profound cultural influence on late nineteen century London though this playwright never set foot on British soil.

On 7th June, 1889 the first production of *A Doll’s House* was performed at London’s Novelty Theatre. Dazzling intellectuals such as Bernard Shaw attended the show and thereafter he almost become a publicist of Ibsen in England.

*A Doll’s House* presents the story of a wife Nora who left her husband Torwald Helmer. It gives a radical message of woman’s liberation from the shackles of the
society and family in search of her individualism. It was a trumpet call of the time ahead in the British society.

6.2 Henrik Ibsen life and works:

Henrik Ibsen was born on 28th March 1928 in Skien in south-east Norway which is a Timber port at the distance of about hundred miles from today’s Oslo which was called Christiania then. His father was a businessman engaged in importing and trading of a variety of goods. At the very early age when Ibsen was only seven years old, his father’s business collapsed and his family had to shift to a smaller house in Wenstop few miles away from Skien. There was a stigma of illegitimacy on Ibsen’s birth and that belief continued in Ibsen’s mind throughout his life. He just could not get out of the impression that he was an illegitimate child.

On December 27, at the age of 15 he became an apothecary’s assistant in Grimstand where he worked for six years living in great poverty which did not deter him from his studies for matriculation. He studied Greek and Latin and was interested in painting, wrote few verses too. At the age of 18 he fathered an illegitimate child with a servant girl who was ten years older than he.

After passing matriculation he joined Christiania University though he had his first love to become a painter which he could not accomplish. His knowledge at the chemist shop at Grimstad helped him to know about medicine. When Ole Bull of national theatre came to know of Ibsen’s interest in the theatre and also knowing that Ibsen had already written two plays Catiline and The Warriors Barrow encouraged him in the theatre activities. Thus Ibsen got into the theatre.

At Bergen, the headquarter of national theatre he was almost a complete failure as a playwright because he wrote the plays under the demand of National Theatre which wanted Norway’s glorious past to be presented through the plays. However, Norway had no glorious past. This fact conditioned Ibsen to set his plays in middle ages. He did not feel comfortable while writing under these conditions and decided to go away from the narrow environment of National Theatre at Bergen. While at Bergen he was acquainted with a clergyman in a Church named Thoresen who had a daughter named Susannah. Ibsen got married to her and she proved a pillar of strength for Ibsen throughout his life. In the year 1859 a child Sigurd was born to them.
Even by this time Ibsen was not a successful playwright. Disappointment drove him to drinking so much so that he was even seen by the people lying drunk helplessly on the streets. He was even rejected the pension usually granted to the writers by the government. This fact too deepened his agony.

At the age of 36, that is in the year 1864 with the play *The Pretenders* he tested the success. He had realized that his own country Norway had not recognized his merit that is why he decided to leave Norway and went to Rome. His twenty seven long years stay in Italy realized his dreams. His play in verse ‘Brand’ ‘Peer Gynt’ became successful and he saw the successful day of his life.

Ibsen’s true success lies in the sociological dramas he had written. The most successful and illustrated ones are *The Pillars of Society* (1877), *A Doll’s House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881) and *An Enemy of the People*. These plays deal with social problems, individuals and human relationship. He raised many questions of social concern, individual freedom and political ends. In a real sense he turned a stage into a debating platform. Apart from the above he wrote plays like *The Wild Duck* (1884), *Hedda Gabler* (1890) and *When We Dead Awaken* (1899) to name a few of great recognition.

When Ibsen turned 61 an interesting thing happened. A teenage girl Emile Bardach fell in love with him. Though initially agreeing to her proposal Ibsen felt guilty at his possible infidelity to his wife and gave up the thought. He was even scared by the scandal the relationship will give birth to, thus the affair led to nothing.

After his return to Norway to spend remaining years of his life, one finds Ibsen inwardly empty which got reflected in his plays like *Little Eyolf*. Ibsen was one way lucky to have the array of great admirers like G.B. Shaw, Thomas Hardy, Gilbert Murray and many such around him. He breathed his last in the year 1906 at the age of 78.

6.2.1 Check Your Progress-1

(i) Choose the correct alternative:

1. *A Doll’s House* is __________________
   a) a comedy  b) a tragedy  c) a tragedy-comedy  d) a classical tragedy.

2. The first production of *A Doll’s House* was performed on ___________
3. Ibsen was ________________
   a) Romanian   b) Indian   c) American   d) Norwegian
4. Ibsen’s teenage engagement was in ________________
   a) chemist’s shop   b) medicine   c) journalism   d) writing
5. Ibsen was called to the National Theatre at Bergen by ________________
   a) G.B. Shaw   b) Ole Bull   c) Ruskin Bond   d) Mathew Mavle
(ii) Fill in the blanks:
1. Henrik Ibsen was born on ________________
2. Ibsen’s first play was __________________
3. The name of Ibsen’s wife was______________
4. *The Pillars of Society* was written in the year __________
5. Emile Bardach is the name of Ibsen’s ________________
(iii) Answer the following questions with one word/phrase/sentence each.
1. What is the main theme of *A Doll’s House*?
2. Who became Ibsen’s publicist in London after watching *A Doll’s House*?
3. Why had the family of Ibsen to shift?
4. Why do you think Ibsen was an unsuccessful playwright at National Theatre, Bergen?
5. Why did Ibsen turn away the proposal of Emile Bardach?

6.2.2 Terms to Remember:

**Modern Tragedy:** A kind of tragedy generally believed to have started from Ibsen.

**pioneer:** A person who explores in new region or area.

**Classical Drama:** Greek Drama (like Shakespearean drama)
**defy:** refuse to obey, follow, resist

**profound:** very great, deep

**shackles:** bondages, chains, (literal meaning: a pair of rings used to fasten a prisoner’s wrist or ankle)

**trumpet call:** an alarming signal

**stigma:** a mark of disgrace

**pillar of strength:** support, motivation, power behind someone

**array:** display or wide range of arrangement

### 6.3 Summary of the plot:

*A Doll’s House* is the story of Nora Helmer, wife of Torvald, who realizes her individualism as a woman and awakens to find freedom from her previously unexamined and routine domestic life and wifely comforts. She has been ruled in her whole life by either her father or her husband Torvald. Nora finally comes to realize and find the meaninglessness of the institution of marriage when it is put to the test. She had borrowed the loan of twelve hundred dollars from a man of ill-repute named Krogstad by forging her father’s signature as she wanted to save the life of her ailing husband and take him to warmer place on doctor’s advice. Torvald was unaware of the loan and believed that the money came from Nora’s father. Since then, Nora was worried on how to pay back her loan.

When the play opens, it is Christmas Eve, and we come to know that Torvald has just been promoted to the post of manager in the bank which will bring him a handsome wage and enormous power. Nora obviously is thrilled at this news because she thinks that she will finally be able to pay off the loan and get rid of it. However, her happiness proves to be short-lived, when an angry Krogstad approaches her. He informs Nora that his position at the bank has been promised to Mrs. Linde. Torvald being an officer at the bank has found Krogstad to be dishonest in his affairs in the same bank where he himself is employed. Somehow Krogstad has escaped the prosecution. Another reason for Torvald Helmer’s disliking of Krogstad is that, though he is working in the subordinate position he behaves as an equal to Helmer. Frustrated thus Krogstad tells Nora that he will expose her secret if she does not
persuade her husband to let him keep his position. Nora tries to convince Torvald in this regard using all of her feminine tricks but she fails. Torvald tells her that Krogstad is of morally corrupt nature and is physically repulsive to him and it is impossible for him to work with. Nora becomes very worried.

One important fact is that Krogstad and Mrs. Linde had been in love in their pre-marital life and Mrs. Linde could not keep her promise with Krogstad to marry him because of certain family pressures. Consequently she married a rich and wealthy man and having lost her husband, now she is a widow. Krogstad too had married and had children but his wife died and he too is a widower. Both of them are meeting each other after many years at Nora’s house.

Krogstad being a crafty man wants to use Nora to retain his position in the bank which only Nora’s husband Helmer could do. When he fails, he decides to use the weapon in his hand knowing that Nora has forged her father’s signature in order to avail loan from him for her husband’s medical treatment. He even threatens her to make a public disclosure of the crime she had done unknowingly and being innocent of the crime. When his repeated urges to Nora do not meet the desirous end, he drops a letter addressed to Helmer in Helmer’s letter box and leaves.

Meanwhile Nora shares the secret to Mrs. Linde who feels that she could help Nora come out of this distressful situation. She believes that she could talk to Krogstad and influence him to change the thought of defaming Nora. She arranges a private meeting with Krogstad and tells him about the circumstances for not marrying him then and under what circumstances she had to marry other man.

Her husband being dead now, she finds her life empty and meaningless. She expresses her desire to be reunited with him and look after his children. Obviously, this proposal of Mrs. Linde makes Krogstad happy because he too was experiencing a kind of void in his life without wife. He decides to take back the letter he had dropped in Helmer’s letter box but this time Mrs. Linde changes her thought and tells Krogstad not to do so because she thinks that the content of the letter will make Nora and her husband understand each other better.

Nora being under uncomfortable situation intends to get some money from a man called Dr. Rank who has been in love with her. Nora wants to get rid of Krogstad by paying him the loan she had borrowed before her husband knows about it.
When Helmer reads the letter that has been already dropped by Krogstad, he becomes furious to know what Nora had done to get the money from the man he detests most. He begins to scold Nora without listening to her. He calls her hypocrite, liar and even criminal. He is afraid that a public disclosure of his wife’s act would defame him and bring his reputation down. Nora, as she knew the intention behind her act was honest had expected that her husband would stand firmly by her side after knowing the fact but to her surprise he was more concerned of his own status. She had even thought of ending her life in order to protect her husband’s honour but Helmer proved unworthy to her trust. She is completely disillusioned with the idea of marriage and relationship between husband and wife.

At this point of time another letter comes from Krogstad stating that there is no danger of any public disclosure of Nora’s criminal act from his side. Helmer is happy to know this and now expresses his concern to his wife Nora but by now Nora has discovered the reality of the character of her husband. Her devotion, love and commitment had no meaning. She had realized her place in her husband’s life. Though Helmer now assures her of his love she doesn’t want it as she is a changed woman. She no longer wants to continue with him in the role of a doll in his house. She decides to leave this doll’s house and find ‘herself’ in real. She no more will be influenced by any kind of dominance, be it of husband, society or religion. She says that her real duty is not to either her husband or to her children. She returns the marriage ring to Helmer and asks him to return her ring. Despite Helmer’s urging her not to leave him and the children she slams the door behind her and leaves.

6.3.1 Check your progress

(i) Fill in the blanks:

1. The name of Nora’s husband is---------.
2. Nora borrowed the loan of ----------.
3. The play opens on-----------.
4. Krogstad was in love with-----------before his marriage.
5. ----------- is in love with Nora.

(ii) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence:

1. When does Nora realize the meaninglessness of her married life?
2. Why did Nora borrow loan from Krogstad?
3. What was Nora worried about?
4. What did Krogstad demand from Nora?
5. What fear did Helmer had, not to listen Nora in Krogstad case?

(iii) Choose the correct alternative:

1. Krogstad was hurt because ----------
   a) Nora did not respond his love       b) He was dismissed from his office
   c) His reputation was at risk.          d) Nora had forged his signature.

2. Nora leaves the house in order to -------------
   a) find her own ‘self’             b) search for a job
   c) marry Dr. Rank                   d) avenge her husband.

3. Nora had felt that at the crucial time her husband would-------------.
   a) scold her b) stand by her side c) abandon her d) commit suicide

4. Nora had forged her -------- signature.
   a) husband’s  b) children’s       c) father’s      d) friend’s

5. Mrs. Linde’s proposal to Krogstad is to------------------
   a) divorce him                     b) accept bribe to take back letter
   c) leave his job for her           d) marry him.

6.3.2 Terms to Remember:

- **forgery**: unlawful work.
- **handsome wage**: good salary, amount.
- **urge**: encourage or earnestly asked to do something.
- **slam**: shut forcefully and loudly
- **prosecution**: take legal step against someone for crime
- **crafty**: clever at deceiving people
- **unworthy**: not deserving
6.4 Act-wise summary with analysis:

Act-I

The play A Doll’s House opens with Christmas Eve in Helmer family's apartment. Nora, the heroine of the play and Torvald’s wife, enters with Christmas parcels. She nibbles on some macaroons she has bought, but she hides them too when her husband, Torvald, comes out of his study. Torvald has been promoted to a new job as a bank manager. Discussing her purchases with him, Nora is keen to spend money lavishly believing that her husband’s new job will make no difference with spending thus. Torvald advises her to be economical in her spending and even tells her that the spendthrift habit she inherits from her father. Even then he gives her extra money to spend on presents. Torvald then asks her if she has bought any sweets or cakes in town—she lies and says no. We come to know from the way he talks to his wife that Torvald addresses her endearingly as ‘my little skylark’ and ‘my little squirrel’.

The maid interrupts, announcing two visitors: an unknown woman, and Dr. Rank. Torvald exits to his study, and Nora greets the stranger and finds that she is a decade old friend of her named Mrs. Christine Linde. Mrs. Linde is a widow. She was forced by the circumstances to marry a wealthy man not for love but to provide financial and domestic security to her bedridden mother and her two younger brothers. But since her husband died, she has had to work extremely hard for the past few years in order to support her kinsmen. In the course of this conversation about their lives Nora mentions Torvald’s new job and Mrs. Linde reveals that she came to see the Helmers to try to get a job from Torvald at the bank.

In her talk, Nora tells Mrs. Linde that she and Torvald both have had to work very hard to fund the life they live. In fact, she reports, life had not been so easy in their marriage. Torvald fell ill and was to be taken to a warmer climate which had made her a very costly vacation to Italy in order to recover her husband. Since Torvald refused to borrow money, she borrowed it secretly, pretending it had come from her father. But actually she had loaned money from the man named Krogstad.

Mrs. Linde asks Nora whether she ever plans to tell the secret she had to Torvald. Nora replies that she may someday do so. Presently she has no mind for it.
At this point of time the doorbell rings, and the maid informs Nora that Krogstad, who works at the bank, desires to see Torvald. Krogstad had loaned Nora the money. Nora is afraid of him for he may reveal the secret to Helmer. When Krogstad goes into the study, Dr. Rank comes out to chat with Nora and Mrs. Linde. Dr. Rank discusses with them the pleasantries and human urge to sustain life. He then begins to discuss moral corruption, denouncing Krogstad as his immediate example.

After the departure of Krogstad, Torvald returns to the living room. Nora immediately asks him to give Mrs. Linde employment, and Torvald suggests that he can probably get her a job. A nurse shows in the three children. While they are lost in a game of hide-and-seek, Krogstad knocks and half enters the room. The game abruptly stops when his presence is recognized. Nora, somewhat shocked, directs the children out to the nurse and speaks to Krogstad.

Krogstad then asks Nora to persuade her husband so that he (Krogstad) will be able to keep his position at the bank. Nora is confused and tells him that she has no influence in such matters. Krogstad reveals that he knows that Nora, by signing her father’s signature and dating it three days after his death, committed fraud in order to secure her loan. He even keeps two choices before her either to influence her husband to protect his job or to be ready to face the disclosure, and leaves. Nora is very much disturbed by the threat. When her children come to play with her she sends them away and keeps busy decorating the Christmas tree. Torvald enters and reveals his intention to dismiss Krogstad from the bank. He even tells her that Krogstad had escaped the punishment by some trick. Nora will not allow the children to come into the same room with her. Prompted by Torvald’s comments about moral corruption over forgeries had a profound effect upon her so much so that she is terrified that she will “infect” her own children.

**Analysis:**

Traditionally speaking well-made plays used the first act as an exposition, the second to treat an event, and the third to unravel the issue. But Ibsen breaks away from the usual pattern in the third act. Beginning is traditional, establishing the tensions that will explode later in the play. Ibsen sets up the act by introducing the central topic, Nora’s character.
Basically the act deals with Nora’s relation to home or the world outside home. Nora is a symbol of the women of her time, who were thought to be content with the luxuries of modern society without worrying about the men’s world outside home. Nora takes delight in material wealth. Torvald can’t be blamed for labeling her a spendthrift from an early age. She seems to project the attitude that money brings all the happiness of the life. However, the issue is not quite so simple, though, for Nora’s one great expense was to serve her husband’s need to travel far from home for the sake of his health.

Nora’s character demonstrates her personal complexity, but generally she seems to have a fairly simplistic interaction with the outside world. This is because she hardly had any opportunity to take her chances there. Her journey had been limited to her father’s home and to that of her husband’s. Torvald’s treatment of Nora as a small, helpless child exacerbates Nora’s isolation from reality.

In this context it can be seen that a doll’s house is a child’s toy that often allows children to play at being adults. The world outside is hardly presented on the stage. Nora is the doll in the house, and the house is the only location we see. Torvald controls the stage on which Nora is an actor who generally believes that this pretended world is the real one. Just as Nora relates to the exterior world primarily through material objects, Torvald relates to Nora as an object, a doll to be controlled within a small sphere. Torvald's attitude to Nora is reflected through every word he speaks to Nora, and his objectification of her is most evident in his pet names for her. She is his little “lark” and “squirrel” and, later, his “songbird.” Similarly, Torvald repeatedly calls Nora his “little one” or “little girl,” maintaining the atmosphere of subordination more appropriate to a father than a husband. As for Nora, we see in this first conversation that she seems entirely dependent on Torvald for her money, her food, and her shelter, despite the fact that she is keeping a secret. This secret is the kernel of her individuality and her escape from the doll’s house.

Nora’s vision of the world is most evident in her interactions with Mrs. Linde. Whereas her old school friend is more wise and understandable. On the contrary Nora is impetuous when she shares her secret with Mrs. Linde. It seems to be more the boast of a child than the actions of a thoughtful adult. Even Mrs. Linde refers to her as a child. Nora’s innocent view of the law—that the law would not prosecute a
forgery carried out for the sake of a good purpose like love—reinforces the idea that Nora is fundamentally unaware of the ways of the real world.

Torvald’s position as the manly provider and lawgiver is something that she is willing to manipulate, at least from within the home. She knows that other women, like Mrs. Linde, have different levels of freedom and autonomy but she feels that her influence would work at some different level. It is important to examine the language of the opening scene between Nora and Torvald in this context. Nora’s words could be partly sincere and partly insincere; the text suggests an ambiguity in Nora’s awareness of her situation. She believes that material wealth will render her “free from care,” allowing her to live beautifully and well.

The lie about the loan can be preserved. She seems content with her one great secret, her knowledge that she has done something for Torvald entirely without prompting her not just to repay the debt but also to play with her children and keep the house from him. Domestic situation with children and a husband, and this ideal of domestic tranquility is reiterated throughout the text.

The first act is a presentation of a happy family but Krogstad’s arrival launches the crisis that will capture Nora’s attention. The family seems to be, as Aristotle might have had it, at the height of happiness—from which they will tumble downhill, a change of fortune from good to bad. Nora’s secret, which might come out before its time lingers like an ominous cloud over the doll’s house. The outside world now invades the home in the form of Mrs. Linde and then Krogstad. Nora’s secret is bound to come out. Ibsen has set up an ironic inevitability. All who know are waiting for the moment at which the lie will fall apart.

ACT II

Mrs. Linde enters on the call of Nora to help her in fancy dress mending which she intends to wear at the ball. She wants to please her husband Helmer as he has expressed his wish on how Nora should dress up for the ball. After some casual talk she asks Helmer about what kind of offence Krogstad has done in the bank and how serious it is, on which Helmer strongly condemns him. He even expresses his view that his own family should be saved from the evil shadow of Krogstad. He is disgusted even with the feeling to work with the man like him. These words of Helmer toll the bell of a dangerous advance of the coming future in Nora’s life, and she too feels that she being guilty like Krogstad for having forged the signature of
her father must protect her children from her own evil influence. She is terrified at the thought of corrupting her children. She takes care to keep away the children from her.

Nora and Mrs. Linde had a brief talk on Dr. Rank’s suffering from tuberculosis. Mrs. Linde is under the impression that Nora had borrowed money as a loan from Dr. Rank but Nora informs her that Dr. Rank had no money then and if now she asks for it, he would certainly help her. We learn that Nora had made up her mind at this stage to avail help from Dr. Rank and after giving it to Krogstad put an end to the matter with him and be in peace. Helmer’s arrival dismisses Mrs. Linde. Nora takes up the topic of Krogstad with her husband, who declares that he cannot do anything to help him out, on the contrary he wants to give Krogstad’s job to Mrs. Linde. Nora tries to plead Krogstad’s case by saying that he may trouble Helmer by some malicious propaganda against him and the family but Helmer remains undeterred from his decision to throw out Krogstad from his office. As a man he does not want to take any criticism from the people around him that he can be influenced by his wife.

Helmer gives another reason to dismiss Krogstad, for he is using his old friendship in order to equate himself in status in the bank and exploiting his once upon a time intimacy for his selfish ends. Nora, though worried, somewhere feels that at the crucial time Helmer will stand by her side and take up all the responsibility on himself of what Nora has done at the revelation of Krogstad.

We see a small flirting scene between Nora and Dr. Rank in which Nora had an intention to seek the help from Dr. Rank in terms of money, so that she can pay off Krogstad and get rid of him forever. But her thought remains unexpressed because Dr. Rank has expressed his love for her, which she knew already. Nora feels that in a changed relationship between them, it would be unfair on her part to demand money from Dr. Rank because of which she gives up the thought.

Another visit of Krogstad this time makes Nora’s life more troublesome. Krogstad threatens Nora if she does not convince Helmer of his case he will definitely open the secret she has kept with her so far. He tells her the contents of the letter he has addressed to Helmer. He has mentioned in it about Nora’s forgery. This time he expects that Nora should influence her husband not only to maintain his earlier position but even promote him to higher post so that his lost reputation is
compensated. If she fails to do so he would hand over this incriminating letter to Helmer and thus their life would be in problem. Nora expresses her inability in this regard.

Thoughts of suicide come to her mind. Krogstad drops the letter in Helmer’s letter box while Nora awaits the trouble. By this time Mrs. Linde comes to Nora’s help, who says that she may speak to Krogstad about withdrawing the letter. In a highly dramatic situation when Mrs. Linde goes to speak to Krogstad, Nora is speaking to her husband and Dr Rank about the ball dance Tarantella. She wants somehow to pass the time so that Helmer would not open the letter box till the time Mrs. Linde speaks to Krogstad. Mrs. Linde comes back and informs about the unavailability of Krogstad which means that she would speak to him later on. Nora is much disturbed and intends to put her life to an end. She does not intend her husband to suffer for her mistake.

**Analysis:**

Maintaining the unity of place, this act too takes place at the Helmer apartment and the developments in the plot are communicated through the dialogues between almost all the characters that have been presented in the earlier act. We understand that the nurse had her own past in which she had given birth to an illegitimate child from a faithless lover and had to leave the infant to the strangers. The same nurse had looked after Nora as a child who had lost her mother. Nora’s question to the nurse about what would happen if she leaves her children is indicative of Nora’s state of mind, who, under the threatening of Krogstad, is contemplating either leaving home or to commit suicide.

Nora tries her level best to keep the situation under control by requesting her husband Helmer to fulfill expectations of Krogstad which Helmer dismisses. He has his own reasons because of which he would never spare Krogstad. This decision of Helmer alarms further the danger in Nora’s family life. However, Nora speculates, if time comes Helmer would stand beside her and protect her.

Dr. Rank’s presence in this act throws more light on Nora’s life. He was in love with Nora and is approaching his end because of a very dangerous disease. Before Dr. Rank’s revelation of his love for Nora, she had thought of asking a loan from him but she gives up the thought later on as it would sound the exploitation of his sentiments for Nora.
Krogstad appears again threatening Nora. This time he demands from Nora not only to stop his dismissal but even to restore his reputation by her husband Helmer, failing which he would disclose the secret of Nora’s forgery. Nora expresses her inability on which Krogstad brings about the crisis in Nora’s life by dropping the letter in Helmer’s letter box.

Nora opens her mind to Mrs. Linde who assures her help to Nora that she would speak to Krogstad on behalf of Nora and would try to mend the worsening situation and even promises to take out Nora from the predicament likely to come.

This act exposes Nora’s inward decisions, her conflict, anxiety and many more complex feelings she undergoes. This act also presents us some startling developments, dramatic situation, pathetic scenes etc. There are examples of dramatic irony too. For example Helmer address Nora as “You helpless little mortal” but later on at the end of the play we come to know that Nora stands head and shoulder above her husband in her decision to leave him and remains a strong character. This act is important from the view point of character development as well. Helmer’s attitude towards Nora in the first act has been of a possession of a property which is strengthened when he denies Nora’s request regarding Krogstad. He always seems to be proving superior to his wife Nora and behaves as if playing a role of patron to her. His address to her by various names like ‘child’, ‘Skylark’ etc. reflects his possessiveness regarding her.

Dr. Rank’s character too is revealed in this act. He is taken as a sincere man by Mrs. Lind: however, Nora tells her that Dr. Rank is Torvald Helmer’s most intimate friend. The act brings about the one-way love relationship between Nora and Dr. Rank. Much of the pathos in this act comes out of the story of Dr. Rank, his love for Nora, his approaching death brings about pathos in the act.

Mrs. Lind strikes us as sincere, helpful and well meaning kind of woman. She relieves Nora, though for a short time, from the tension by promising her help in Krogstad’s case. In the real sense the character of Krogstad brings much of dramatic element in the act. He becomes a great means to sustain the tension in the act.

Finally this act presents Nora as a caring wife and mother. Her expectations from husband that he would support her at the time of crisis, though proves to be false in the end, portrays Nora’s womanly nature, her acceptance of subordinate position before a man. It is her character that offers us the inner conflict in this act. In
short the plot development in this act offers us surprises, dramatic situations, suspense, use of dramatic irony, character development and the inner conflict, the elements that make any plot complex and enjoyable.

Act. III

Act III begins with Mrs. Linde going to Krogstad to inform him how he has put Nora’s life in trouble and, as promised to Nora, to convince him to take the letter back. Through the talk of Krogstad and Mrs. Linde at the Helmer’s apartment we come to know that they have been in love relationship. However, the circumstances before Mrs. Linde were such that she had to terminate that relationship and marry another man. Krogstad had been broken like a ship-wrecked man at knowing the breakup. In the passage of time Krogstad too had married and fathered children. But now both Krogstad and Mrs. Linde were living a life as a widower and a window respectively. Both of them feel a deep void within and are lonely. Mrs. Linde suggests to him that she can marry Krogstad now and even look after his children. Obviously Krogstad feels happy at Linde’s proposal and reacts positively even to withdraw the letter he has dropped in Helmer’s letter box. By this time Mrs. Linde asks him not to do so because she feels, let the content of the letter be known to Helmer and let Nora and Helmer resolve the problem with an understanding. She feels the matter of secrecy and deception between them should come to an end.

Nora and Helmer return from the party. A brief seductive scene between them takes place and after that Mrs. Linde asks Nora to tell the secret to Helmer else he will come to know it through the letter. Nora is not ready to disclose it out of fear. Helmer decides to take up the letters lying in the letter box in which he finds Dr. Rank’s visiting cards crossed in black signifying his death. For a while they are worried about Dr. Rank’s life. Helmer proceeds to read other letters, while he is doing so Nora becomes nervous because she knows that her secret would be out now. However, she even feels that after knowing the motive behind, Helmer would support and stand by her side firmly. Contrary to the expectation of Nora, Helmer becomes furious to know the content of Krogstad’s letter and does not consider Nora to be lovable in this regard. He intends to continue their relationship as husband and wife as if he is doing some favour to her. He even demeans her saying that she is even not worthy to bring up the children. Helmer’s reaction to Krogstad’s letter comes as a great shock as it proves contrary to Nora’s expectation from her husband.
By that time another letter from Krogstad comes stating that Mrs. Linde has decided to marry him and even apologizes his words about Nora. He states that he doesn’t have any grudge against her. Helmer is happy with this letter and expresses his readiness to forgive Nora for whatever she has done. He can consider her to be, as previously, loving, protecting and guiding her as husband.

Though Krogstad’s second letter has put every confusion and conflict at rest from Helmer’s point of view, Nora has discovered her own ‘self’ through the happening. It has revealed the true character of her husband and, it dawns upon her what her own worth is. The moral hollowness in his principles has been disclosed through his behavior. After realizing her place in Helmer’s life that she is nothing more than a doll, an object, a possession and even a thing to take care of, she decides to leave him in search of her own identity, her own self not shadowed by men in general. She now wants to go for the first hand experience of life even at the cost of leaving her own children. She says her duty to herself is more sacred than her duty to her husband and even children. With this firm thought she takes back the wedding ring she has given to Helmer and slams the door behind her on a journey to find her own ‘self’.

Analysis:

The third act moves ahead with certain developments like Mrs. Linde’s proposal of marriage to Krogstad which is related to their past life. This proposal obviously makes Krogstad happy but he wants to know that Mrs. Linde is marrying him out of love and not as her duty towards Nora. He is ready to correct his mistake by writing another letter to Helmer however; Mrs Linde changes her mind in this respect and complicates the life of Nora. As the plot progresses we find that Helmer brings back Nora from the fancy dress ball by force, as he is strongly driven by sexual desire. This throws light on husband wife relationship where a woman is reduced merely as an object of sensuous pleasure. Though Helmer is romantic, an ardent lover, he expresses his possessiveness for Nora by considering that her beauty belongs only to him. She is his treasure. At the crucial time of the play when Helmer gets Krogstad’s letter his real character is revealed to Nora. She finds him to be a self-centered moralist ignoring her intention behind taking the loan from Krogstad. He accuses Nora calling her hypocrite, liar and even criminal. He is judgmental about her in his own way. With another letter of Krogstad to Nora, which Helmer himself reads
changes his attitude towards Nora but this time in vain, as Nora has realized her place at the Helmer house. She discards her husband’s patronizing support and decides to leave him forever in order to get the first hand experience of life.

6.4.1 Check your progress:

(i) **Fill in the blanks:**
1. Torvald advises Nora to be -------- in matters of spending.
2. The opening of the play is usually called an---------
3. Nora opens mind over her secret to --------
4. Nora’s life in Helmer house was just like a --------
5. Mrs. Linde had to marry a rich man because --------

(ii) **Answer in one word/phrase/sentence:**
1. What had made Mrs. Linde to come to Nora?
2. What did Krogstad expect from Nora?
3. What kind of attitude Helmer show to Nora?
4. What makes Mrs. Linde think that Krogstad should not write another letter to Nora?
5. In what way did Nora react Helmer in the end?

(iii) **Choose the correct alternative:**
1. Nora was eating--------- while her husband came out from his room.
   a) Maggie    b) Pizza     c) Macaroons     d) Upama
2. Nora is -------- in understanding the law.
   a) smart     b) innocent     c) fool     d) slow
3. The most pathetic story in the play is that of--------.
   a) Nora     b) Doctor Rank     c) Helmer     d) Krogstad
4. Dr. Rank’s visiting cards marked black cross signify---------.
   a) death     b) life     c) danger     d) hope
5. Helmer brings back Nora home midway the fancy dress ball because- -------
   a) he was bored     b) he was angry
   c) Nora was not well     d) he was driven by sex.
6.4.2 Terms to Remember:

macaroons: an eatable thing, a chewy, sweet cookie made with sugar and egg whites.

spendthrift: a person who spends money irresponsibly

kinsman: Close people, relatives.

exposition: beginning of the drama

unravel: to bring to the light, make open

explode: burst or shatter violently

patronizing: condescending; expressing the idea that someone is lower than oneself

ominous: suggesting that something bad is going to happen

incriminating: cause to appear guilty of a crime

crisis: a time of severe difficulty or danger

predicament: a difficult situation

6.5 Major/Minor Characters:

Nora Helmer:

The play *A Doll’s House* mainly centers around the character of Nora. It has been vividly drawn from the beginning to the end of play. Though the action of the play is confined to only three days of her life we see her character undergoing a total transformation from a dependent wife, and a caring mother to a woman enlightened in the worth of being “herself”. All the roles like a wife to her husband Torvald, mother to her children, a woman seeking help from a man like Krogstad, a friend to Christine Linde, her relationship with Dr. Rank who secretly loves her and even her association with the Nurse have been explored in a very short span of her life. She is a devoted wife to her husband, who gets a loan from a man like Krogstad in order to save the life of her ailing husband. Though she had adopted unlawful means to avail the loan by forging the sign of her father, she is innocent about her act till the time Krogstad makes her realize how she has done a criminal act in the eyes of the law. Nora has tried to pay the installments on regular basis even by cutting expenses on
herself and at the same time undertaking some copying work that will add to her income by which she can repay the installments. She does not make any show of what she has done for her husband, on the contrary keeps it secret as much as possible. She feels pride in the act.

Nora has such a good nature and tendency to trust others that she instantly gets into a very amiable, friendly relationship with Mrs. Linde. She shares her secret with Mrs. Linde and is moved by the account of her past life. She offers a helping hand to Mrs. Linde by recommending her to her husband to take her in the bank. She does not hesitate to share with Mrs. Linde her relationship with Dr. Rank.

She is a loving mother and finds pleasure in being with her children. She is extremely sensitive about their upbringing. When she anticipates her future is going to be in a problem, when Krogstad would disclose the secret between them, she intends that her children should remain away from her ill influence, and even contemplates a hard decision she would need to take.

Nora has a great faith in her husband. She expects that he would support her at crucial time and stand behind her like a firm rock but to her dismay it does not happen. When Torvald Helmer comes to know about the secret she has harboured in her mind for almost eight years, through Krogstad’s letter, he blames her and goes to the extent of keeping children away from her. He says that he does not love her any more, but at that time she maintains her decency while going through a great torture at the threatening of Krogstad, meditating about suicide. It was possible for her to avail loan from Dr. Rank but she gives up the thought at the disclosure of Dr. Rank’s love for her, thinking that accepting money from him at that point of time would be an exploitation of his feeling for her. There is a scene of an innocent flirting she does with Dr. Rank, using her womanly gestures, but when her fidelity is in question she mends herself quickly.

Right from the beginning she has been shown a conventional wife who leads her life to the directions, expectations of her husband. This has been shown by Ibsen through the words of Torvald, her husband who calls her by several names like ‘Skylark’, ‘Squirrel’, ‘little darling wife’ etc. Even minor and insignificant suggestions like what not to eat are also given to her by her husband. She allows herself to be treated like a ‘property’ and ‘possession’. She feels happy about her ‘state’ in marital life. She believes it is Torvald’s love which will protect her at
crucial time of her life. But when she realizes it was not the love but more of a man’s pride to take woman as his possession, her eyes open and she searches for her own ‘self’. Nora, after this realization, is totally a transformed person. The meek, dependent wife changes to a firm and independent individual being. No pleading or requests of her husband, even a social decorum, weakens her decision to leave her home in search of her own ‘self’, which she does.

**Torvald Helmer:**

As the play opens we find Helmer’s character as a loving husband who addresses his wife Nora with fond words like ‘My little skylark’, ‘my little squirrel’ etc. Though he has been shown as a lawyer by profession his address to Nora with endearment brings about the romantic aspect of his personality. He is a very affectionate husband but at the same time his tone of speaking gives glimpses of his possessiveness and a sense of superiority over his wife. He seems always to take a stance while speaking to his wife as if he is patronizing her. He also appears to be a moralist giving advice to her about the economical way of living, the way of living by not being extravagant. He has a great antipathy to debts, so he tells his wife not to borrow money. His criticism on Nora’s spendthrift nature does not make him a miser because at times he shows his generous nature, and would not mind spending extra on certain special occasions like Christmas Eve.

Helmer is profoundly rooted in the moralistic ground which is seen when he rejects Nora’s appeal to show a favor to Krogstad. At the same time he is not unmindful to her request regarding Mrs. Linde. He kindheartedly agrees to give Mrs. Linde a job in the bank and help her. This shows his helpful nature but when it comes to upholding moral principles, he is resolute about it. This is why Nora’s recommendation regarding Krogstad go unheeded by him. On the contrary he opines that the act of forgery by Krogstad must be punished without having any second thoughts. He seems to be disgusted with the nature of men like Krogstad who could infect other families as well. That is why he takes care to keep away his own family from the shadow of Krogstad, who has no conscience at all. He feels extremely sick in the presence of people like Krogstad.

The moral stance Helmer takes while speaking about Krogstad while Nora pleads with him for the second time under the pressure of Krogstad falls down when he says that, he would have condoned the moral lapses in Krogstad’s character but he
cannot tolerate his familiar way of addressing him as his school friends. Helmer and Krogstad had been the friends once, but Krogstad is exploiting their intimacy which he seems not to tolerate. In this regard it can be seen that Helmer’s decision regarding Krogstad’s placement does not seem to be directed by moral principles he seems to hold but it seems to be directed by his sense of superiority. In the present situation, he does not like Krogstad speaking to him on the same footing. When Nora points out his petty mindedness he not only feels hurt but acts so hastily by sending dismissal letter to Krogstad.

Helmer seems to be governed by the exaggerated sense of idea of his own importance. He is an egoistic person and more than the principles he follows his ego seems to be determining his decisions. Helmer has a feeling that his professional conduct is flawless and beyond reproach. His patronizing attitude is seen in small matters such as his guidance in the Tarentell dance, on how to spend money etc.

Though professionally Helmer appears as a man of head, he shows himself as a sensualist and a romantic lover. Nora’s sensual body movement at the dance arouses him to the extent to make love to her. His strong desire for her physical closeness makes him take Nora away from the dance floor and find himself along with her in her warmth. This amorous quality in Helmer is coupled with a romantic quality in him. He behaves like a youthful romantic lover with Nora in his words and actions too. His stealing secret glances, his secret longing for her, his fancy about her which puts his blood on fire makes him a romantic lover at the core.

Despite all the love Helmer has for Nora he considers her as his ‘most treasured possession’. As a master at home he expects Nora to follow him and the rules, moral ideals he has laid down should be observed by her. One of the reasons why he rejects Nora’s recommendations in Krogstad’s case was that he feared a blame of listening to his wife. He has many times wished that a time should come when he would risk his life for Nora but when it actually does come he fails miserably to show himself as the wife’s protector. His moral values prove to be false and a boast. He goes to the extent that he no more loves Nora at the crucial time and when that time is gone with Krogstad’s another letter he again declares his love for Nora. At the time of crisis he prove to be weak which harms him beyond repair and he becomes a pathetic figure in the end when Nora leaves him. He tries at most to make Nora change her decision to leave him but all his appeals prove to be futile because by the time Nora has made
certain firm decisions about her life. She is resolute in such a way that all his appeals, hopes, helping hand he offers is rejected by her simple and yet emphatic ‘No’. One feels sorry for him but nobody excepts him to be blamed for that. His ego-centric attitude, false ideas of respectability and self-complacency have dug a grave for his married life.

Krogstad:

If Krogstad had not been there the life of Nora and Helmer would have been without any problems. But we find it is with the arrival of this man named Nils Krogstad the doors of problems are opened in Nora’s life. He is the man from whom Nora had borrowed a loan of twelve hundred dollars by forging the signature of her dead father, so that she could cure her husband Helmer. To the sharp eyes of Krogstad Nora’s forgery is a weapon he can use at crucial time which he has kept intact till the time comes. When he himself is in trouble, his job being at risk, he decides to use Nora to retain it. He comes to Nora and demands from her that she should influence her husband in this regard, else he would make public disclosure of her crime. Nora is innocent of the seriousness of the breach of law that could lead her to serious consequences. She firstly tries to put him off by expressing her inability to influence her husband in official matters but Krogstad wants to use the weapon at his hand against Nora, which brings an alarming situation in her married life.

Before threatening Nora, Krogstad has already spoken to Helmer and pleaded with him not to take any action against him, but when he fails in getting favor from Helmer, he turns to Nora. Dr. Rank too has not a good impression about him. This has been clear from his talk to Nora and Mrs. Linde. According to Dr. Rank Krogstad is the case of ‘Moral affliction’ and is rotten to the core.

From the talk of Helmer we learn that Krogstad was his school time friend. This past relationship is used by Krogstad for his benefit and he calls Helmer by his name in order to show his closeness with his Manager. Helmer does not like it. Helmer’s indifferent behavior hurts him and that is why he expects Nora to intervene in his case. We even learn that Krogstad and Mrs. Linde had been in love in the past and were intending to get married, however, the prevailing circumstances then were not favourable consequently separating them. Miss Linde had to marry another man and Krogstad too tied knot with an other lady. Both of them had walked their own way.
separately. After a great passage of time they are together once again at Helmer’s house, but he is a widower and Mrs. Linde a widow.

Krogstad is disappointed with Helmer as he does not show any favor to him and sends a letter of dismissal for his misappropriation of the power. This leads Krogstad to take a serious step towards Nora for the second time. In which he asks Nora to get the worsening situation mended by influencing her husband. When Nora fails to do so he drops the letter in Helmer’s letter box stating how Nora forged her father’s signature and thus threatening to defame them. In the letter he demands Helmer to withdraw the charges against him so that he can maintain his status. This shows his evil nature.

At the crucial time when Nora shares her secret with Mrs. Linde and tells her how Krogstad has cornered her, Mrs. Linde comes up with a helping hand to Nora. Mrs. Linde being a beloved of Krogstad in the past and now a widow can offer a proposal of marriage to him. Krogstad who is a widower now accepts the proposal and is overjoyous to reunite with Mrs. Linde. When Mrs. Linde narrates him about her inability to marry him in the past and she intends now to tie knot with him, Krogstad wants to know the reason behind it. He wants to make sure if Mrs. Linde is marrying him in order to save her friend Nora’s life or her intention is beyond this sacrificial role. When he comes to know the genuine feelings of Mrs. Linde, he accepts her proposal. Krogstad now changes his mind and expresses his wish to withdraw the letter he had dropped at Helmer’s letter box. However, Mrs. Linde asks him not to do so because she intends to let Nora and Helmer evolve in the relationship of husband and wife after knowing the facts. At these words of Mrs. Linde, Krogstad shows remorse and writes a second letter to Nora apologizing his earlier letter. A small piece of good luck dawns upon him in the form of marriage. An offer from Mrs. Linde brings about such a change in him speaks volumes about his basic good nature. He is not an evil incarnate but a man who has sinned but ready to correct himself when time comes. He is not an evil minded person nor thoroughly a wicked man too, but a man trapped in a certain situation, who tries to save his skin by using the weapon in his hand. His blackmailing of Nora is a struggle for his existence and an effort to retain his job. He is a man who makes mistakes and if the time demands is ready to mend those mistakes provided his life is safe. He is a man with vices and even of basic virtue of a human being.
Mrs. Linde

An old friend of Nora Mrs. Linde appears in the play as a widow. We come to know that after having lost her husband and the mother she is left all alone and has come to Nora to find a job. Nora promises her that she would help her in seeking a job through her husband, Helmer. Nora’s husband offers her a job as Krogstad has been served a notice and would lose a job at the bank. Mrs. Linde feels very grateful to Nora for the help in such a difficult situation. Mrs. Linde had a hard life in the past as she had to look after her ailing mother and help her brothers to be independent. She worked round the clock to bring up her children. Her arrival in Helmer’s flat brings her across her old friend, Krogstad, with whom she was in love in her youthful days. Krogstad too was in love with her but their relationship did not last as she had to marry another man. He was rich but she did not love him and thus her marriage was devoid of love. Her husband died and she was left alone.

Mrs. Linde’s arrival in the play also brings a problem in Nora’s life. As Mrs. Linde is given a job, Krogstad is at the risk of losing his job that’s why he opens his trump card against Nora, which introduces Mrs. Linde to Krogstad. She plays a role of Nora’s confidante and her adviser helping her to come out of the conflicting situation in Krogstad’s threatening Nora to disclose her forgery. Mrs. Linde soothes her and promises her that she will handle Krogstad by using her past relationship with him. She knew Krogstad well and is confident that he will not do any harm to Nora’s life. She approaches Krogstad with a marriage proposal that makes him extremely happy because he too is a widower and needs someone to take care of his children. However, he wants to know and confirm that Mrs. Linde still loves him. He wants to confirm that it is love and not duty towards Nora that influences her decision to marry him. At this point of time realizing what he has done, Krogstad wants to take back the letter he has dropped in Helmer’s letter box, but Mrs. Linde advises him not to do so. Her intention is not to worsen Nora’s situation and further harm the married life of Nora, because she feels married relationship should evolve by a profound understanding of each other. That is why though Krogstad wishes to take back the letter, she advises him not to do so. She feels the unhappy secret between Helmer and Nora must come out. Though there is no danger to Nora from Krogstad, as she has settled with him, still Mrs. Linde urges Nora to tell everything to her husband. She expects that the foundation of marriage must be of mutual admiration and trust.
Mrs. Linde plays an important role in the action of the play. She comes as a balm to Nora’s aching mind with a sense of guilt. She stands as a contrast to Nora, who prefers to be under the illusion throughout the play except her realization at the end. Mrs. Linde appears to be a mature lady understanding the importance of relationships between human beings. She is on the side of truth, though bitter. She shines out in the play as a person who is led by high moral standards.

**Dr. Rank:**

Dr. Rank is a close family friend and a frequent visitor to Helmer family. Helmer is in his private room. At the arrival of Krogstad on the scene he gets a chance to be with Nora and Mrs. Linde where we learn more about the characters. We come to know that he is ailing and somewhat prolonging his life because one must live. He talks on the living instinct of human beings and tells them how even the morally diseased people too live. He thinks of Krogstad as ‘rotten to the core’. As a moralist he thinks that the society is ignoring the moral lapses among its members, which is turning the whole society into a clinic or a hospital.

Mrs. Linde has an unfavorable opinion about Dr. Rank. This is revealed through her talk with Nora. Doctor Rank for no fault of his is suffering from tuberculosis of spine which he has inherited from his father. He estimates his own life as one of the most wretched and concludes by saying that he will be lying rotten up in the churchyard very soon.

Though he hears very clearly the “time’s winged chariot” bringing him nearer death, he admits that he has been secretly in love with Nora. Though Nora by her womanly instinct has perceived but never given a signal of having known this. However, Dr. Rank declares his love as soon as he gets the opportunity. In Nora’s flirting with him in order to avail some money to pay back Krogstad, he gets emboldened and even expresses his desire to look at her bare legs. He even tells her that Helmer is not the only man who would give his life for her implying that there is another one like himself. This expresses his jovial mood. At the serious moments also he comments jovially that in the next fancy-dress ball he would be an invisible man covered under the cloak.

As the man, who is nearer death, is full of life and is light-hearted, jovial, enjoying every mood that he goes through, makes Dr. Rank one of the worth remembering characters.
6.5.1 Check Your Progress:

A. Choose the correct alternative:

1. Nora takes up the _________ job so that she can increase her income to pay loan installments.
   a) Copying    b) singing    c) office    d) stitching
2. Nora is extremely sensitive in upbringing her_______.
   a) husband    b) children    b) Linde’s children    d) Nurse
3. Helmer is deeply rooted in ________.
   a) superficial values    b) artistic approach
   c) moralistic ground    d) Nora’s love.
4. Krogstad uses his past relationship with Helmer so that he can ________.
   a) secure his job    b) show equal to him    c) impress Nora    d) woo Linde
5. Dr. Rank desires to have a look at_______.
   a) Nora’s bare legs    b) Nora’s purse    c) Nora’s bedroom    d) Nora’s children

B. Fill in the blanks:

1. Nora adopted ________ means to avail loan from Krogstad.
2. In the extreme moment of anxiety Nora meditates of______.
3. Helmer feels extremely sick about moral degradation of______.
4. Dr. Rank calls Krogstad ________.
5. Initially Mrs. Linde had ________ opinion about Dr. Rank.

C. Answer in one word/phrase/sentence:

1. What do you mean by ‘herself’ in the above section?
2. Why did Nora give up the thought of getting loan from Dr. Rank?
3. What Helmer is often critical about Nora’s nature?
4. Why did Helmer take away Nora from the mid of the dance?
5. When did Krogstad finally accept Linde’s proposal of marriage?
6.5.2 Terms to Remember:

amiable: friendly or likeable

anticipate: be aware of and prepare for future event.

Tarantella: a fast, whirling southern Italian dance, usually performed by a single couple, once supposed to be a remedy for a tarantula bite. This is the dance which Nora dances for Helmer at the party.

dismay: distress resulting from an unpleasant surprise

antipathy: strong dislike

misappropriation: dishonestly take for your own use

moral lapses: lacking moral values, want of moral values

jovial: cheerful, happy, full of life

6.6 Critical Aspects of the Play

Woman’s Place in marriage:

In view of Edward Beyer A Doll’s House is the conflict between woman and existing society. The play goes far beyond the other tragedies of Ibsen. There are many strong and well-drawn women characters in Ibsen’s plays and majority of them have a quality to make the right choice out of their instinct. In the plays like The Pillars of Society they are pushed to one side in the bourgeois society, however, A Doll’s House develops into a conflict between woman and existing society.

Nora is an ideal wife to her husband, a mother to her children. She has saved money secretly in order to pay back the loan she had taken from Krogstad in order to save the life of her husband. She has even gone to the extent of forging the signature of her father. Her action in this regard was out of love and she innocently believes that the law of society, including her husband, would understand the motive behind this. Helmer thinks about the act of Nora in a different way. The act of forgery is deeply disturbing him so much so that he goes to the extent of thinking that it will cost his family much in the moral consequences. To him, a person who lies thus (Nora) may corrupt the children. On the contrary Nora never thought her act to be a threat to her marital happiness and security. Her expectations from her husband is that when time comes he would stand by her side firmly. But it dismays her when he
stands contrary to her expectations. She had even thought of a supreme sacrifice she would make by dying rather than to make her husband suffer for her.

Krogstad’s letter creates a deep gulf between Helmer and Nora. She comes to face the illusion and reality. The edifice of marriage collapses all of a sudden when she realizes that they were living under the same roof without being together. She finds that she never knew about herself and even about Helmer. She realizes that she has committed a crime against her own human worth in a marriage based on false premises.

As A Doll’s House is called a modern tragedy, it does not end up in death or a ruin but in a new start. Old values collapse because Nora is true to herself. She makes no compromises with Helmer, once she realizes her own self. To her she is the most important one. She grows in stature and is purged by suffering. Though she is defeated in her marital life she is victorious as an individual. Nora represents the celebration of an individual will. Leaving home may cause her many troubles as the world outside her ivory tower is not so good, but her struggle would perhaps find a diamond in her persona. Death of a wife and mother in her gives birth to a new woman that is Nora.

Symbols in A Doll’s House:

A Doll's House poses many questions like “Did Nora do right to leave her husband?” “Was their marriage an ideal one?” “Is a marriage that is not ideal a real marriage?” “Ought Nora to have deceived her husband?” “Was she justified in forging the note?” “Is one ever justified in breaking a law?” “Was Nora's conduct ideal?” “Does Ibsen believe in marriage without mutual trust?”

The real problem of the play does not confine only to the above questions but goes beyond to meet them on the universal level. The problem play is one in which some problem of modern life is discussed by the characters and worked out in the plot. Ibsen’s plays deal with situations and characters from modern life and are, in so far, allied to the problem play. But they do not present problems, in the ordinary sense of the word, nor do they solve them.

Ibsen's meaning may not be found in the tale nor it is enveloping like a haze around it but it found partly within and partly without as if in a mysterious fashion. The symbol is clearly given and still one feels that there is a hidden meaning. One
tries to find it by reading deeper into the text but it eludes him. It is not there. The real problem will not be guessed till he looks outside the play itself, and then only as it is revealed that too in flashes. If one would understand a play, one must first understand the character about which the play is and grasp the symbol that lies at the heart of it.

The problem of *A Doll's House*, for instance, is not concerned with the marriage relations of Nora and Helmer, but with the character of Nora. The question whether she had a right to forge the note that saved her husband's life is of far less importance than the fact that she is what she is, and that as she is, she will face life and find herself. When the play opens, seven years after the forging of the note, and she comes upon the stage, dancing, twittering, laden with Christmas gifts, a horse and sword, trumpets and dolls and cradles. She carries a little bag of macaroons on which she nibbles but when questioned by husband tells that she has not touched one. His "little lark" he calls her, his "squirrel" and "spendthrift". She is charming and dishonest. It surprises that this flippant creature has been carrying for years a secret and a burden that would have wrecked a heavier nature. It is here the character sounds improbable, impossible. She is to dance the tarantella, the Neapolitan dance that her husband has taught her. She is eager to dance it well for his sake and for her own. The tarantella is the symbol of Nora. Its wild and unresting movement is the tragedy of her nature, light and frivolous on the surface but concealing underneath a dread secret, a wound that carries death within. It is the climax of Nora's doll life and it is placed where the chief symbol of Ibsen's play is always placed that is at the climax of the play. It is the culmination of the plot. Looking backward, Nora is no longer an inconsequent, impossible character. She is consistent throughout. Her inconsequence is the essence of her nature.

The symbol of tarantella is obvious and more subtle than many of the other symbols used. The symbol is, however, less finished than in other plays and will not bear too close application in detail, though it fits the play in its essential points. Dr. Rank, and Krogstad, her double in crime both appear upon the scene for the last time during the tarantella dance -- that is, at the climax of the play. All the movement is directed toward this symbol. Everything hinges on it. The meaning of the play cannot be understood unless this symbol and its bearing on the character of Nora are clearly seen.
A Doll's House is the second play in which Ibsen made use of the kind of symbolism discussed here. In the later ten plays his mastery of symbol increased, growing more detailed, more minute, and intricate. In A Doll's House we have the main features of his method plainly indicated. In later plays he grows more skilful in his use of the device.

**Individual verses society:**

The themes of A Doll's House recur throughout most of Ibsen's works. The specific problem of this drama deals with the difficulty of maintaining an individual personality in this case a feminine personality within the confines of a stereotyped social role. The problem is personified as Nora. She strives to become a self-motivated human being in a woman denying man's world.

Ibsen refused to be considered a feminist, nevertheless expressed his view of a double-standard society. As he once forced a female character in an earlier play The Pillars of Society to say "Your society is a society of bachelor-souls!" in A Doll's House he seems to have personified this male-oriented viewpoint by creating Torvald Helmer. In his notes for A Doll's House Ibsen writes that the background of his projected drama "is an exclusively masculine society with laws written by men and with prosecutors and judges who regard feminine conduct from a masculine point of view." Since a woman is allegedly motivated out of love for her husband and children, it is unthinkable to her that laws can forbid acts inspired by affection. The outcome of this tension is that "the wife in the play is finally baffled on what is right and wrong"; she therefore loses her foothold in society and must free from the man who cannot dissociate himself from the laws of society. She can no longer live with a husband who cannot identify with her and accomplish the wonderful thing. It is quite impossible, however, to write a whole play with such a specific problem in mind. As characters and situations are formed by the dramatist's imagination, a more general, abstract thesis develops, with the specific problem becoming only a part of the whole. Thus A Doll's House questions the entire edifice of marital relationships, investigates the development of self-awareness in character, and eventually indicts all the false values of contemporary society which denies the worth of individual personality.
Play in the socio-critical perspective:

In his realistic dramas Ibsen mercilessly uncovered negative sides of society, hypocrisy and dissimulation, use of force, and manipulative behaviour, and he made untiring demands for truthfulness and freedom. To him truth, emancipation, self-realisation and personal freedom are key terms. In *The Pillars of Society* Lona Hessel has the last word and concludes by saying that “the spirit of truth and the spirit of freedom – they are the pillars of society” In *Ghosts* Ibsen throws light on the pillars that support bourgeois society, marriage and Christianity, and he takes up typical taboos, incest, venereal disease and euthanasia. This made him controversial figure in his own time. Works of his and of many who shared his ideas created violent controversies. One can see what enormous importance some of these works have had for different social movements. There is hardly a literary work that has meant so much to women's liberation in practically all cultures all over the world as *A Doll's House*.

Inheritance:

Nineteenth-century saw a major breakthrough in genetic science that led to a growing interest in inherited disease and traits. *A Doll's House* contains several references to the idea that both physical disease and moral traits are passed down through generations. Torvald's reaction when he reads Krogstad's first letter rejects Nora, forbids her from bringing up their children as he thinks she will taint them morally. She herself is already convinced of this and has begun to distance herself from them. Torvald believes that Krogstad's children will be poisoned by their father's moral crimes. Dr Rank has inherited tuberculosis of the spine, the disease that kills him, from his father, who led a promiscuous life and contracted venereal disease.

Morality:

The theme of morality relates closely to that of the individual and society. *A Doll's House* satirizes the suffocating moral climate. Nora begins to question society's morals when she realizes how it would criminalize her for forging her father's signature, an action that she believes to be morally acceptable in the circumstances though legally reprehensible. The most heroic action of her life, her sacrifice to save her husband's life, becomes an unforgivable crime in the eyes of society and its dutiful representative, Torvald. It is not surprising that part of her
journey of self-discovery at the play's end is to consist of finding out "who is right, the world or I."

**Title of the Play**

We find Nora almost in every scene as the play rotates around her character. The whole play takes place in one room. Until the last act, Nora is in every scene. The action of the play centers her persona. She is literally trapped in domestic comfort. She is given her “housekeeping” money by her husband Helmer as though she is a doll in a doll's house. She is living in the house without being conscious of the fact that she is treated like a doll who does not have her own mind and personality. She is a lady with all womanly devotions to her man and the children. She is so dependent on her husband that she takes his advice on all occasions like when what kind of costume she should wear and what dance steps to rehearse. Her devotion is so great that she even forges her father’s signature in order to avail of loan from Krogstad. But when time comes she realizes her place in the house and in the eyes of Helmer. It dawns upon her that she had been living a life of non-entity. Helmer's attitude of self-supremacy and patronizing over her reduces her to a mere commodity in the house. She decides to overcome the situation and search for herself where she would be no more a doll but a personality of her own. The title of the play aptly underlines that this treatment is condescending and not an appropriate way to treat one’s wife. Though Nora is a doll in the beginning but she leaves as an individual who has her own blood and spirit and is free of any bondage including children.

**Gender**

This play focuses on the ways that women are perceived in their various roles, especially in marriage and motherhood. Torvald in particular, has a very clear but narrow definition of women's roles. He believes that it is the sacred duty of a woman to be a good wife and mother. Moreover, he tells Nora that women are responsible for the morality of their children. That is why when he finds Nora has committed a moral sin he finds his house at the risk of moral degradation. In essence, he sees women as childlike, helpless creatures detached from reality on the one hand, but on the other hand as influential moral forces responsible for the purity of the world through their influence in the home.

Ideas of 'manliness' are also present in the play in more subtle ways. Nora's description of Torvald suggests that she is partially aware of the inconsistent
pressures on male roles as much as the inconsistent pressures on female roles in their society. Torvald's own conception of manliness is based on the value of total independence which he exercises to extremity that he feels below his dignity to listen to his wife Nora in Krogstad case. He abhors the idea of financial or moral dependence on anyone. His strong desire for independence may put him out of touch with the reality of human interdependence that could bring about blissful moments in human life.

References to Nora's father often equate her with him because of her actions and her disposition. Although people think he gave Nora and Torvald the money for their trip to Italy, it was actually Nora who had managed it. She has more agency and decision-making skills than she is given credit for. Nora seems to wish to enjoy the privileges and power enjoyed by males in her society. She seems to understand the confinement she faces simply by virtue of her sex.

Religion:

The play takes place around Christmas. The first act occurs on Christmas Eve, the second on Christmas Day, and the third on Boxing Day. Although there is a great deal of talk about morality throughout the play, Christmas is never presented as a religious holiday. Moreover, religion is directly questioned later by Nora in the third act. In fact, religion is discussed primarily as a material experience. Once again, what normally are important values for people and their relationships—children, personal contact, and, here, religion—are subordinate to materialism and selfish motives.

6.6.1 Check Your Progress:

A. A Fill in the blanks:

1. The women characters in Ibsen’s plays make right choice out of their ------.
2. The conflict in A Doll’s House is between woman and----------.
3. Old values in A Doll’s House collapse because Nora is---------.
4. Nora gives birth to a new -------- in her persona.
5. Tarantella is an --------- dance.
B. State true or falls:
1. Helmer stood right to the expectation of Nora at the time of crisis.
2. *The Pillars of Society*, other play of Ibsen, deals with aristocratic society.
3. Nora becomes victorious in the end on the social ground.
4. Ibsen claimed to have solved the social problems in his plays.
5. Society portrayed in *A Doll’s House* is a double standard society.

C. Answer in one word/phrase/sentence:
1. Which other play of Ibsen is referred in the above section that deal with bourgeois society?
2. What is the force that drove Nora to do forgery?
3. What do you think the society by and large denies to an individual?
4. Does Nora feel guilty for her act of forgery?
5. What question haunts Nora in the end of the play?

6.6.2 Terms to Remember:
- **instinct**: an inborn tendency of ability
- **bourgeois society**: middle class, in being conventional
- **motif**: (here) purpose
- **edifice**: big structure (Read context)
- **stature**: persona (literal: a person’s height)
- **purge**: rid of undesirable people or things
- **Ivory Tower**: a privileged position remote from normal difficulties (away from common experiences)

6.7 Answers to check your progress:

- **Check Your Progress (6.2.1)**
  (i)  1-b  2- c  3-d  4-a  5-b
  (ii) 1-1828 2-Catiline 3-Susannah 4-1877 5- Beloved
(iii) 1. Women liberation / search for self-identity.
   2. G.B. Shaw
   3. Because his father’s business collapsed.
   4. For writing under certain conditions.
   5. Because he felt guilty for the infidelity to his wife and the possible scandal

★ Check Your Progress (6.3.1)

(i) 1. Torvald Helmer  2.Twelve hundred Dollars  3.Christmas eve
   4. Mrs. Linde  5. Dr. Rank

(ii) 1. When Torvald reacts to Krogstad’s letter.
   3. Public exposure of her crime.
   4. To influence her husband to retain his job
   5. That he would be considered a man dancing to the tunes of his wife.

(iii) 1-b  2-a  3-b  4-c  5-d

★ Check Your Progress (6.4.1)

(i) 1. Economical
   2. Exposition
   3. Mrs. Linde
   4. a Doll
   5. Family responsibilities

(ii) 1. To find a job
   2. Influence her husband to retain his job
   3. Patriarchal
   4. She thinks their relation should evolve
   5. by leaving him
Check Your Progress (6.5.1)
(A) 1. - a  2.- b  3.- a  4-b  5.- a
(B) 1. Unlawful  2. Suicide  3. Krogstad  4. Rotten to the core  5. Unfavourable
(C) 1. Nora’s self
   2. It may seem to be an exploitation of his (Dr. Rank) love for her.
   4. He was aroused by sex.
   5. When he realized that she wants to marry out of her love for him and for no other reason

Check Your Progress (6.6.1)
(A) 1. Instinct  2. Society  3. True  4. Woman  5. Italian
(B) 1. False  2. False  3. False  4. False  5. True
(C) 1. *The Pillars of Society*
   2. Love for her husband
   3. It’s Individualism
   4. No
   5. Who is right? World or I.

6.8 Exercises:

Questions for long answers:
1. *A Doll’s House* is a play that deals with the status of woman in the patriarchal society’ Discuss.
2. Discuss the structure of the play *A Doll’s House*.
3. Discuss *A Doll’s House* as a play that gives a radical message in feminism.
4. In what way *A Doll’s House* embodies the elements of a Modern Tragedy?
5. Illustrate the use of dramatic irony by Ibsen in the play.
Short notes:

1. Plot Construction of *A Doll’s House*.
2. Dr. Rank
3. Mrs. Linde
4. Opening of the play.
5. Ending of the play.

### 6.9 Reference for further study:

2. Downs, Brian. *Ibsen: The Intellectual Background* (1946)
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7.1.1 Introduction

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7.8 Further Reading
7.1 Objectives:

After studying this unit, you will

- know about the Life and Works of T.S. Eliot
- know about the plot of The Family Reunion
- know about source and structure of the play The Family Reunion
- learn the character/s in The Family Reunion
- learn Eliot's Theory of Poetic Drama
- be able to answer the questions on The Family Reunion.

7.1.1 Introduction:

This unit begins with discussion of the life and works of T. S. Eliot. It also studies the play in terms of plot, structure, source, characters, historical importance and other critical aspects.

7.2 Life and Works of T.S.Eliot:

Thomas Stearns Eliot (26 Sept. 1888-4 Jan 1965)

T.S. Eliot's father Henry Ware Eliot was president of the Hydraulic-Press Brick Company. His mother Charlotte Champe Stearns a former teacher, an energetic social worker and volunteer at the Humanity Club of St. Louis, and an amateur poet with a taste for the writings of Emerson. Eliot was the youngest son of seven children. His paternal grandfather William Greenleaf Eliot was founder of the Unitarian church in St. Louis and was pillar of city's religious and civic life. T.S. Eliot was attended by Irish nurse Annie Dunne, as he was suffering from attack of double Hernia. Annie sometimes took him to catholic mass. He attended Smith Academy in St. Louis until he was sixteen. In his school days he was considered a brilliant student and won the gold medal for Latin.

He joined Harvard University. There he was attracted towards his teachers - Irving Babbit for his forceful moralizing and George Santayana for his stylish skepticism. He attained a B.A. in comparative literature and M.A. in English literature. There he studied classics, German, French and English Literature. By nature he was introvert.

Reading of Arther Symons’ The Symbolist Movement in Literature (1895) changed Eliot's life. This book introduced him to the poetry of Jules Laforgue and his
combination of ironic elegance and psychological nuance that gave Eliot's literary efforts a voice. By 1909-10, it became certain that Eliot was to be a poet. He joined the board of Harvard's literary magazine the Advocate and became its Secretary.


In 1911, Eliot again came back to Harvard for his doctoral programme. He worked among a group of Santayana, William James, the visiting Bertrand Russell and Josiah Royace. Eliot wrote dissertation on Bergsoris neoidealistic critic F.H. Broadley and produced a searching philosophical critique of the psychology of consciousness. He also read deeply on anthropology and religion. He took maximum possible course in Sanskrit and Hindu thought while doing his course in philosophy.

In 1914 Eliot's closest friend Aiken introduced his poetry to Ezra Pound. Through him lively Literary circles of London became familiar to him.

In 1915, he married Vivien Haighwood on impulse at the Hampstead Registry office. Eliot's family was shocked at it and got profoundly disturbed to know Vivien's history of emotional and physical problems. Vivien refused to leave London and Eliot had to take his place in Literary London.

Bertrand Russel allowed Eliot and his wife to share his flat in London and also introduced them to his social resources. After brief involvement of Russel and Vivien, arrangements could not work out. Eliot was trying to support himself by becoming a school teacher and doing review work as well as extension Lecturing. He also completed his Ph. D. thesis “Experience and Objects of Knowledge in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley”. In 1916 he became assistant editor of the magazine Egoist. In 1917, he was employed in foreign section of Lloyd’s Bank which gave him financial security. Then again Eliot turned to poetry. In 1917 his first book Prufrock and Other Observations was published with the silent financial support of Ezra and Dorothy Pound. It was a great boost to Eliot’s literary career.

With the help of Rusell, he became familiar with political figures, writers, artists and philosophers. He also entered international avant-garde, where he mixed with
Irish Poet W.B. Yeats, the English painter and novelist Wyndham Lewis, and the Italian Futurist writer Tamaso Marinetti. Soon he received reputation as an observer who could judge both accepted and experimental art. He published only the works of the first quality and created an aura of mystery around him.

In 1919 after the death of his father, he suffered a lot and at the same time his wife’s physical and emotional health deteriorated. Financial and emotional strain caused nervous breakdown of Eliot. He took rest for many months and after recovery he wrote his poem, *The Waste Land* which is highly acclaimed (1922).

In 1925 he joined *Faber and Faber*, then became director of it and continued to work till his death. During this period he was writing poetry and his fame as a poet was constantly growing. He followed his belief that poetry should aim at a representation of the complexities of modern civilization.

**British Citizen**:

Eliot became a British Citizen in 1927, and joined British (Anglican) Church that year. After 1927, his poetry became explicitly religious. In 1930 he wrote *Ash-Wednesday*. To reach wider and varied audience, he started writing dramas. Eliot’s religious nature along with his interest in philosophy, is reflected in his poetry as well as his poetic dramas.

After the Second World War, Eliot did not write poetry. He devoted entirely to his plays and literary essays. His wife Vivien died in January 1947, Then Eliot led a protected life as a flat mate of the critic John Harvard. He was awarded *The Order of Merit* and *The Nobel Prize for Literature* in 1948. In Jan 1957, he married Valerie Fletcher and attained contentedness for the first time in his life. He died in London in 1965 and as per his wish his ashes were interred in the church of St. Michael’s in East Coker ((Village) from where Eliot’s ancestor Andrew Eliot had departed for America in the Seventeenth century. He chose epitaph lines from Four Quartets; “In my beginning is my end. In my end is my beginning” to be hung on the church wall.

**The Works of T.S.Eliot**:

a) **His poetic works fall in five Phases**:


2) The Second Phase : 1909-17 - Prufrok and Other Observations
Portrait of Lady ............ Mr. Apllinax

3) The Third Phase : 1918-25 - Significant period as a poet.
   The Waste Land, "The Hollow man"

   'Ash Wednesday', Choruses from "The Rock" etc.

5) The Fifth Phase : 1935-43 - 'Four Quartets' religious poetry - dealing with
   eternal problems of human life without reference to Christian tradition.

b) Poetic Plays: Eliot took efforts to revive English poetic drama. His poetic plays
   are:
   1) The Rock, a Pageant Play, 1934
   2) Murder in the Cathedral, 1935
   3) The Family Reunion, 1939
   4) The Cocktail Party, 1950
   5) The Confidential Clerk, 1954
   6) The Elder Statesman, 1959

As a dramatist his range is narrower than that of a poet. There is a touch of
artificiality in his plays. These plays are of serious nature.

c) His Prose Work: Essays and Articles on criticism. His criticism is important
because he writes with authority and conviction. His prose style is as precise
and memorable as his poetry. His essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'
and 'other critical essays' are very influential.

To understand Eliot's plays, it is necessary to understand his theory of poetic
drama.

Theory of Poetic Drama

In Eliot's works of literature, we find dramatic element even within his poetry.
His dramatic genius led him to concentrate on poetic drama. At times, he has
expressed his views in different essays like 'The four Elizabethan Dramatists', 'A
Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry', 'Rhetoric and Poetic Drama' and 'Drama and Poetry'.
T.S. Eliot made it clear that as modern age problems are complex and varied, the dramatic laws laid by Aristotle or Dryden are not useful. Today drama has to be considered in relation to politics, religion and ethics. A dramatist has to have moral attitude. He felt the need of evolving a form of drama which would be important for the future of poetic drama. For Eliot, drama's having its origin in religion led him to think that moral or religious aim of the drama and a suitable form are of great significance. Eliot thinks that verse is suitable for drama as intense emotions are better expressed in verse as Poetry or verse expresses the permanent and the universal.

According to Eliot, poetry and drama cannot be separated, all poetry leads towards drama and all drama towards poetry. Poetry and drama are the two aspects of one and the same creative activity and the best example of it is Shakespeare's plays. Eliot thought that human passion for poetic drama is permanent, so revival of poetic drama in the modern world is also possible with the evolution of suitable dramatic conventions such as new form of verse and dramatic unities. Eliot also suggests dramatic use of language in drama. In his opinion poetic drama can offer much more to the audience than the prose drama. But use of poetry should justify itself dramatically.

**Practice of Poetic Drama.**

Eliot, while writing *Murder in the Cathedral* realized that the dramatist has to practise great self-control and always keep in mind Laws of dramatic effectiveness. Therefore he used neutral style, as the subject of the drama was from the distant past and religious also. He aimed at developing verse for general use but with little success. He made full use of chorus. He used prose for sermons of Archbishops and speeches of knight.

*The Family Reunion:*

While writing this play, Eliot took contemporary theme and characters. In this play he has depicted modern life and has developed versification close to the rhythm of modern life, but the development of plot and characters has suffered. For chorus, he used minor characters collectively as chorus and this was suitable for general use. The speeches of these characters are not related to the action but poetry is related in some mysterious way both to the characters and action. These poetic passages are not
justified dramatically and there is no proper adjustment between the Greek story and modern situation. The appearance of the furies seems to be ridiculous.

As compared to above plays, *The Cocktail Party* is more successful as he avoided in it all earlier faults. He practised full artistic self restraint and used poetry as the dramatic device of suspense. The use of poetry was to cater to all the needs of the stage.

In the 19th Century nearly all Romantic poets wrote poetic dramas but could not make revival possible. It should be remembered that those were poets, only they tried to write poetic drama. In the beginning of the 20th century Stephan Phillips Wrote *Herod*: a poetic play. Irish dramatists like W.B. Yeats J. M. Synge, Sean O'Casey are key figures in the movement for the revival of verse play. John Masefield, Cristopher Isherwood, W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender and Christopher Fry wrote poetic dramas. Eliot, both through his theory and practice of poetic drama, achieved considerable success in establishing a tradition of poetic plays in the 20 century. Eliot through his critical writings tried to demolish many misconceptions about verse drama. He emphasized its superiority over prose drama and created favourable atmosphere for the flourishing of poetic drama.

**Personality of T. S. Eliot**: T. S. Eliot was a great literary force in English literature. His personality had many sides and complexity. He was both classicist and traditionalist, a great innovator; a critic and social thinker; a philosopher and a mystic, all in one. He was profoundly learned, profoundly poetic and profoundly spiritual person.

Eliot will be remembered for his masterly poetic syntax. As a poet he shuddered to repeat himself, as a dramatist he showed terrors of inner life and of the evasion of conscience. Eliot is one of the major twentieth century poets.

**7.2.1 Check your Progress**

**A) Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate alternative**

1) T.S. Eliot, by birth, is …………………
   a) an English  b) a Canadian  c) a French  d) an American

2) T. S. Eliot was awarded Nobel Prize for Literature in …………
   a) 1927  b) 1935  c) 1945  d) 1948
3) T. S. Eliot dedicated his poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” to his friend …………
   a) Jean Verdenal  b) Bergson  c) Russell  d) Conrad Aiken

4) T. S. Eliot concentrated on Poetic dramas to …………….
   a) fulfill his desire of being dramatist
   b) to reach wider and varied audience
   c) to practice his theory of poetic drama
   d) both b and c

5) T. S. Eliot became an assistant editor of …………… in 1917.
   a) Criterian  b) Faber and Faber  c) Poetry  d) Egoist

B) Answer the following questions in one phrase/sentence.
   a) Who were the teachers who influenced Eliot in his university days ?
   b) Which book changed the life of T. S. Eliot ?
   c) What is the name of Harvard Literary magazine ?
   d) Why does T. S. Eliot consider verse/poetry suitable for plays ?
   e) Who are the key figures in revival of poetic drama ?

C) Fill in the blanks with appropriate answer :
   a) T. S. Eliot wrote ………… poetic plays.
   b) The Family Reunion was published in …………
   c) T. S. Eliot accepted the ……………… citizen ship.
   d) T. S. Eliot wrote Ph. D. thesis on ………………
   e) Eliot’s ancestors came from ………………

7.3 SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

Characters in the Play : Amy, Dawager Lady Monchensey
Ivy, Violet and Agatha; Amy's younger sisters
Gerald Piper, Charles Piper - brothers of Amy's deceased husband
Mary, daughter of Amy's deceased cousin
Denman, a parlourmaid
Harry, Lord Monchensey - Amy's eldest son
Downing - Harry's servant and chauffeur
Dr. Warburton
Sergeant Winchell
The Eumenides
Arthur and John - Harry's brothers

Setting: Country House in Wishwood, in North England
Time: Late March, afternoon, birthday of Amy

Act I

Scene I

The Scene opens in the drawing room of Amy, Dowager Lady Monchensey's house. As it is her birthday, many relatives, her sisters have already arrived to celebrate the occasion. Ivy, Violet, Agatha, Gerald, Charles, Mary are present. All are expecting Amy's sons Harry, Arthur, and John at any time. After eight years, it is going to be a family Reunion, as all the blood relatives have assembled under one roof.

Denman comes to draw curtains but Amy stops him saying it is quite light yet. Amy complains about the longer winter and says that the spring never comes. She is very old and suffers from cold. Agatha tells Amy that she has grown old hence she feels cold. Amy ignores her comment. Ivy advises Amy to go to the South in winter as the South is cosy and warm. But Violet says that the South is full of vulgar people. Charles agrees with Violet and says that the South will not be agreeable to Amy. Gerald who had served in the East as a military officer, wants to go to the East for better service from the servants.

In the conversation, Violet and Charles criticise the people in the South. They say that the younger generation is decadent, they have lot of money, from where and how they have got it God knows. Younger generation lacks stamina and is totally irresponsible. Gerald defends the younger generation by saying that they are living in totally different world and some freedom should be given to them. To bring Mary into conversation Gerald asks her opinion about the young people as she belongs to the younger generation. Mary is offended by this remark, and says she belongs to no generation. Mary is thirty years old and yet unmarried and it is difficult age for her.
In fact, Amy had planned Harry's marriage with Mary, but the plan failed as Harry married a woman of his choice and left Wishwood. Now his wife is dead and he is returning to Wishwood after eight years. Amy, now again plans for Harry and Mary's marriage and their settlement at Wishwood to look after their ancestral property. Amy wishes to revive life at Wishwood. She wants all relatives to live under one roof. As she has grown very old, she wants Harry to settle at Wishwood and shoulder the family responsibilities.

Amy is expecting her sons in the evening. She is going to cut her birthday cake in their presence after dinner which is contrary to her custom. Eight years ago Harry married a woman, who never tried to adjust with the Dowager family, not even with Harry, leave apart friends and relatives. She made Harry travel all over Europe and moved in society of her liking. Once, as they were on voyage, she disappeared from the ship under the fit of drinking and committed suicide by drowning herself. It must have been a great shock to Harry. Hence Amy doesn't want anybody either to talk about the past; or to say or do anything to remind her of this painful past. She wants Harry to feel, there is no change in their house. Everything is as it was when Harry left the house.

Agatha is of different opinion. She says that the past is irremediable and the future can be built on the real past only. That past cannot be forgotten, everything at Wishwood would remind Harry of the past. Other relatives do not agree with her. They uphold the view of Amy and they would behave as if nothing has changed at Wishwood. Agatha again says that all of them are helpless puppets in the hands of destiny; no one knows what there is in the womb of time. It may upset the plans and calculated thoughts.

Here the chorus of Ivy, Violet Charles and Gerald expresses their nervousness, confusion and fear of uncanny. Curtain rising is symbolic. All of them express their dissatisfaction and discomfort at Wishwood and wish for another place to live. Then once again they speak as chorus comparing themselves to be actors of, monstrous force who are going to play their roles at the command of Amy Dowager.

Harry arrives before seven in the evening and is welcomed and greeted very enthusiastically by all. But he does not pay any attention towards them. He stops at the door and looks distracted at the windows. He sees there the Furies or the Euminides. Others are not aware of it. He asks them whether they see anything in
the window. He says that he has always felt that somebody pursues him all the time. But for the first time he has seen his pursuers.

Everybody is surprised at Harry's speech. Amy thinks that he is tired and needs bath, dinner and rest. Everybody plays the role as per the wishes of Amy. They tell him that nothing has changed. Now he has to look after this property. Agatha suggests that they should understand each other and pretence is unnecessary. But Harry says it is very difficult to communicate and understand, many things have happened to him and nothing has happened to them, therefore it is difficult to understand each other.

As Harry insists on talking about himself, he tells them that he is lonely and emotionally isolated, he suffers from spiritual anguish. The past haunts him in the present. He uses concrete imagery to describe his emotional state e.g. "an old house with noxious smell', 'The stain tainting the flesh and discolouring the bone' etc. He thinks that he has pushed his wife into sea while travelling. He thinks that he is guilty of murder and this sense of guilt has haunted him. After pushing her over the railings, he returned to his cabin to find her there. He could not believe that he murdered his wife as if in a dream. He made inquiries about her and the ship’s crew were very sympathetic to him.

Harry's aunts, uncles are shocked to listen to Harry's statement, they think that Harry is indulging in self-inflicting fancies. As a matter of fact, he had not killed her. As per the report, either she committed suicide or fell over accidentally." Harry should not repent, as his conscience is clear. But Harry does not agree with them. He says that his sense of guilt of wishing her dead is like cancer which is eating him up. All the time he is aware of her presence near him. The Furies always pursue him. They are here also at Wishwood.

All are shocked; Amy advises him to take bath and rest. Agatha who understands Harry somewhat, suggests further talk. Harry agrees with her but goes for bath.

All talk about Harry's mental health, decide to call the family doctor, Dr. Warburton. He should talk to Harry and tell his opinion. As the doctor is an old friend of the family, Amy goes to give an invitation of party to him.

Charles, though others oppose him, summons Downing to talk about the event of that fateful night, Downing is not able to tell anything more. He says it was either
suicide or an accident. He says Harry's wife used to get excited very easily, and often
talked about suicide. Harry was all the time depressed. On that day Harry was much
more depressed and unusually nervous as if he had premonition. After Downing
retires, and the chorus expresses that something ominous and fearful is about to take
place, misfortune is going to fall on the family. They wish for everything to remain
as it is.

Amy is anxious for Arthur and John as they have not yet arrived. All others go
to dress for dinner.

This scene provides necessary exposition to the characters, theme of the play.

**SCENE - II**

Mary and Agatha are talking. Mary is uneasy and uncomfortable at Wishwood.
As per Amy's designs, Mary lives there, Amy wants Mary to marry Harry. But Mary
doesn't want to live in Wishwood. She wishes to go away. Seven years ago Agatha
had advised her to take up academic career. But at that time Mary did not listen to
her and now regrets her decision. Mary seeks Agatha's advice but Agatha tells her to
wait and watch. She says that if she had gone away earlier it would have been
courage, now it is only fear and pride. After saying this Agatha goes to be ready for
dinner.

Then Harry comes and has a long talk with Mary. The talk reveals that they
were companions from their childhood days, and were always together. They had
very little freedom as everything was well thought out and planned for them. Harry
says that he has become hopeless about everything. Mary argues that he has hope
that’s why he has come to Wishwood, otherwise he would not have come. Harry
feels comforted and soothed in her company and a ray of hope rises in his heart. But
at the same time Harry sees the Eumenides staring at him through the window. Mary
does not see them. That’s why Harry feels that Mary also is dull like others. He
thinks that she is of no use to him. He has to face and fight the Furies alone. Harry
rushes forward and draws curtains aside but there is no one. Harry realises that there
is no place for Mary in his life.
SCENE - III

All are ready for dinner, already it is late but Arthur and John have not arrived. Doctor Warburton has arrived and all of them decide to go for dinner without waiting for Arthur and John.

Again there is chorus, voicing something uncanny is going to take place. Agatha prays that "eye that is on the house may be diverted", "till the knot is unknotted", "the cross uncrossed" and "the crooked is made straight" Her prayer terrorises everyone.

The scene is very important as it reveals that the characters are living on two planes, material and spiritual. The chorus reveals fear of arrival of mysterious and unfortunate things. Audience & Readers prepare themselves for introspective tone of the play.

7.3.1 Check Your Progress

A) Rewrite the following sentences using the most appropriate alternative.

1) The setting of the play The Family Reunion is
   a) Wishwood b) Country house of Amy, Dwager
   c) Agatha’s house d) Mary’s house.

2) Relatives are assembled for ............
   a) Amy’s birthday b) Harry’s arrival
   c) ritual of Amy d) ritual for Harry’s wife.

3) Harry is returning to Wishwood after ............... years.
   a) ten  b) five  c) eight  d) two

4) Ivy advises Amy to go to the ............ in winter.
   a) North b) East c) South d) West

5) Violet comments that the south is full of ............... people.
   a) Education b) High Class c) Vulgar d) Low-class people.

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence each.

a) What is the complaint of Amy?

b) How does Violet and Charles criticise the people in the South?
c) Why does Mary say that she does not belong to any generation?
d) Whom did Harry marry?
e) Why does Amy ask everybody not to talk of the past?
f) Why does Harry say that it is difficult to communicate and understand?
g) Why does Charles summon Downing?
h) What is Amy’s plan?
i) What is Agatha’s advice to Mary?
j) When did Harry see the Eumenides for the second time?
k) What is Agatha’s prayer at the end of the part I?
l) What fear the chorus reveals at the end of the part I?

C) Fill in the blanks in the following sentences:

a) Amy wishes to ……………. at Wishwood in the beginning of the play.
b) Amy wants Harry to ……………. of ancestral property.
c) Harry’s wife died of …………….
d) Agatha’s opinion about the past is that …………….
e) The chorus expresses ……………. about life in Wishwood.
f) Harry sees ……………. at the window.
g) Harry expresses his emotional state by using expressions such as ……………., …………….
h) Harry is haunted by the guilt of …………….
i) Amy invites Dr. Warburton to …………….
j) Arthur and John do not arrive because …………….
k) Harry and Mary talk about …………….

PART II

After dinner, Harry and the Dr. Warburton are sitting in the Library. Doctor wants to talk about Amy's health which is deteriorating, but Harry wants to ask him about his father. He wants to know about his father as he knows that his parents were
not happy together and got separated when he was a child. His father went abroad and died afterwards there only. When the news of his death came, his mother and aunts were happy instead of being sorry. Harry asks the doctor whether he is taken after his father (resembles his father). Doctor tells him that he resembles his father but does not know anything more about him.

Then the doctor tells Harry that he is worried about Amy's health. Amy is alive only because of her strong will. Her heart is weak, any shock will kill her. Therefore they should not do anything that would disturb her. As a son it is his duty to make her happy as her hopes are concentrated upon him. He must fulfil her expectations.

Demnan enters and interrupts the conversation. He tells them that Sergent Winchell wants to talk to them. Harry calls him in, Sergeant tells him about John's accident. John ran into a lorry and has suffered minor injuries and is taken to the Inn the Arm where he is still lying unconscious. Dr. Warburton goes to the Inn to treat John. At this moment all relatives come on the scene. Amy is shocked at the news of John's accident. She wants to go to Inn The Arms but Dr. Warburton persuades her to stay at house and says that he will look after him. As Harry has not expressed his emotions about his brother or mother, his aunts say that Harry is indifferent to his brother's health. But Amy covers him and says that Harry looks like his father. At this, Harry gets touched by affection and for the first time he escorts his mother to bedroom with very much affection.

In the Library, now, all others agree to stay inside the house instead of going to see John. They also express that it is difficult to understand Harry. Agatha says that they should leave Harry alone to establish relationship with his mother.

When Harry comes back, he tells them that Amy is asleep and she looks like a child in sleep. He also sensed that they were discussing his behaviour. He tells them that individual life and misfortune should be regarded as a part of all embracing universal design. Here, Denman enters and tells them that there is a call for Ivy. Ivy goes to attend the phone. All think that it must be from Arthur and they are worried about him.

Agatha continues conversation and advises Harry that he should not suffer in isolation. He should understand other private worlds of makebelieve and fear. Harry says that though he is healthy, he is sick at soul. He thinks that he is a puzzle to himself. He thinks that he is rotten from inside and that makes him miserable.
On returning, Ivy tells them that Arthur too had an accident but was not injured; so he can reach home tomorrow.

The scene ends with Chorus. Chorus expresses sense of presence of the past and hanging disasters. As everything is predesigned and certain, cannot be changed. The Laws of destiny are rigid and unchangeable. Hence they should not worry about future and should live normal life.

SCENE II

This scene is very significant. Harry talks about his spiritual or internal misery to Agatha. He feels isolated from the moment the deed was done. He thinks that his sin is unredeemable. He comes to Wishwood for some peace but the Eumenides prevent it. They haunt him, pursue him. He feels that the cause of misery lies in his childhood. He wants to understand the origin of it. He requests Agatha to tell him about his father.

Agatha was the principal of women's college. She was regarded as strong and efficient but she thinks that she was not, rather she was weak. His questions have disturbed her. She tells Harry that Harry's parents did not love each other, his father was strong but yielded to his mother's wishes. Amy wanted company, so Agatha came to live with them. But she fell in love with Harry's father. Harry's father wanted to kill Amy so that he could marry Agatha. Agatha found out that he planned to kill Amy in various ways, when Harry was in the womb of Amy. Agatha felt as if Harry was her own child. She saved Amy, consequently Harry also. Harry's sin is not his sin but his father's sin. The father's sins are always visited upon their sons. Therefore to be free from curse, for redemption he must suffer for both himself and his family. Suffering only can give him salvation.

This story of mystery of his birth and original sin enables Harry to attain spiritual insight and understanding the nature of trouble. He realises the importance of predestined role. Man does not have much freedom of action, yet he should make right choice. Agatha advises him of going on a long journey. At this moment the Eumenides reappear, but now Harry is not afraid of them, on the contrary he thinks of them as benevolent angels.

Amy appears or the stage and he tells her about his decision of leaving Wishwood and going on long journey. John would take his place. With these words, he goes to prepare himself for the journey.
Harry thinks that he must leave to escape from insanity. So far he lived in ignorance. But now where he is going is a world of love and terror. But that world remains mystery to the audience as nothing is talked about Harry's choice or future mission.

SCENCE III

Quarrel between Amy and Agatha takes place. Amy accuses Agatha of stealing her husband thirty years ago and now taking her son away from her. Amy says that she had tolerated her husband for seven long years and three sons she borne that the family may continue. She ignored love affair between Agatha and her husband for the sake of Wishwood. All alone she looked after estate and managed to keep it going. She suffered greatly. All her hopes were centred on Harry but now Harry is taken by Agatha. Mary arrives and inquires about why Harry is leaving the place early. Amy tells her to ask Agatha about it. She accuses Agatha of taking her husband and son away from her. Agatha answers that she has 'watched and waited' and and whatever is inexplicable in this world will be resolved and explained in the other world. She is also as ignorant as others are.

Mary who is in love with Harry, is much worried about Harry's safety. Agatha tells her that Harry has crossed the frontiers of this world and has entered a different world. The Eumenides have cleared everything to him and he is safe with them.

Amy much troubled, dismayed, wants that she be left all alone. Gerald and others arrive. Amy tells them that Harry is going to become a missionary. Her will is broken. She, broken-hearted woman, soon dies. The clock strikes in the dark.

The scene and the play ends with Agatha and Mary performing the ritual. They hope the curse would be ended.

The falling action of the play leaves the audience baffled. It is not clear where Harry is going. It shows Eliot's growth towards becoming a mystic. We do not know where Harry is going, whether he will fulfill his aim. His exit is nothing but the beginning, it seems.

To sum up, the play has religious tone, Christain philosophy of sin and suffering and expiation.
**Plot:**

Plot construction of the play is remarkable. The action moves on two different levels, physical and spiritual. There is close integration between two actions. The unities of time and place are strictly observed. Downing provides for understanding Harry's suffering, shows concern for his master. There is complexity with unity of action.

The play is in two acts. It is set in Wishwood, in a big country house of Lady Monchensey. At the beginning of the play the family of Amy Dowager are assembling for the birthday party. Amy is clinging to life with sheer strong will power. As she says:

I keep Wishwood alive
To keep the family, to keep them together,
To keep me alive, and I keep them.

Except Amy's sons, other relatives are present. They discuss the death of Harry's wife, who is now Lord Monchensey. Only Harry arrives after sometime. He is haunted by the belief that he had murdered his wife by pushing her over in the sea on a ship. We don't know whether Harry killed her or not, but he wished her dead and that his feelings of guilt force the play ahead. Amy thinks that Harry's mental state needs care of doctors; so she invites her family doctor for the party. Mary, who has been seen as future wife of Harry, also wants to escape life at Wishwood. But Agatha, Amy's sister whom Amy's husband loved, tells her to wait and watch.

In the second act, Agatha reveals to Harry that Harry's father attempted to kill Amy when Harry was in her womb. But Agatha came to know of his plans and prevented him from doing so. Agatha encourages Harry to take the path of salvation. Harry announces his departure from Wishwood; asking John to shoulder the responsibilities at Wishwood. Amy is so disappointed and dismayed that she accuses Agatha of depriving her of her husband and her son. She dies and Harry and his servant, Downing, leave.

Drawbacks of the play: It lacks conflict and suspense. Harry the protagonist has to choose between the material life and spiritual life of suffering and expiation. The inner struggle has not been properly depicted by Eliot. It seems that Harry's tension
is forced and motiveless. There is no dramatic action. Versification kills plot and characters. There is no important event in the play.

The Eumenides, rather difficult to be believed unless properly presented on the stage, seem to be ridiculous. Chorus is rather awkward. Some of the poetic passages are beyond characters. The end is forced or unnatural, the audience do not come to know a motive behind it or what Harry is going to do in future, away from the ancestor's place. It is a total bafflement for the audience.

The play can be called as a tragedy of Amy, mother of Harry. Harry upholds the advice of Agatha and leaves Wishwood against the will of his mother. But for Eliot, it is a play of redemption of Harry. As Eliot, later in life grew a mystic, he uses unseen forces to make us believe the things and his theme. Yet the end baffles.

**Structure of the Play**: Eliot practises his theory of poetic drama very skillfully in *The Family Reunion*. The play is partly in blank verse and partly in prose. Eliot uses the Greek theme and devices in the color of contemporary life: 1) Aunts and Uncles become chorus detaching themselves from being characters of the play 2) Harry is pursued by the Eumneides, the avenging Furies who pursue 'Orestes' in the Oresteia. They are seen by only Harry.

**Origin/Source of the Play**:

*The Family Reunion* is based on the Orestes' myth in Aeschylus’s *Choephoroe*. In *Choephoroe*, Clytemenstra has had a bad dream and therefore she is sending offering to appease the ghost of her husband Agamemnon whom she had murdered with the help of her lover Aegisthus. Electra, her daughter, prays that Agamemnon may be avenged, Orestes and Pylades are waiting to introduce themselves. Electra and Orestes recognize each other as brother and sister and plan to avenge their father. Orestes disguises as a stranger from Daulis sent by Strophius to Argos and then calls on Clytemnestra to report Orestes' death in a chariot race. When Clytemenstra sends out Aegisthus for further details, Orestes slays him. Then he slays his mother too on the request of his friend Pylades. When mother is slain, Orestes sees the Eumenides who constrain him to depart. The Eumenides remain invisible to the chorus. This chorus is composed of women of Argos, while other characters are old nurse of Orestes and servant. This old nurse was sent to tell Aegisthus the supposed news. The servant first admits Daulian messenger in the palace and runs to tell Clytemnestra that Orestes has slain Aegisthus.
Eliot has changed the plot to some extent and has used it as a starting point for *The Family Reunion*. Harry in place of Orestes; Amy in place of Clytemnestra. The false accident becomes two real motor accidents which prevent Harry's brothers Arthur and John from reaching Wishwood for the birthday party. The Furies are duly visible to Harry and Downing his faithful servant. Mary is Electra. Aegisthus is medical adviser Dr. Warburton who is invited to treat Harry. The comparison can go on but the earlier plot has been obscured by Eliot by doubling roles.

**Equivalents in both plays are as follows:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choephoroe</th>
<th>The Family Reunion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Orestes</td>
<td>Harry, Earl of Monchensey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Arthur + John)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Chorus of captive women</td>
<td>Ivy + Violet + Gerald + Charles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Electra</td>
<td>Agatha and Mary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Nurse</td>
<td>Sergeant Winchell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Clytemenstra</td>
<td>Amy Dowager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Aegisthus</td>
<td>Dr. Warburton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Serving man</td>
<td>Denman, a parlour maid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Pylades</td>
<td>Downing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Title of the play : Its significance**

The title is ironical. The title *The Family Reunion* suggests coming together of family but in the end it shows disintegration, separation of family members and death also.

The play opens with assembling of members of the family for celebration of birthday party of Amy Dowager who actually dies on the same day. After eight years her eldest son arrives; but *The Family Reunion* is not complete as her two sons never arrive and Harry again departs.

Those who are present, they are emotionally divided and not united. They are isolated from each other on every level. Union implies hopes for love and
understanding but there is no emotional bonding among sisters, rather hatred or animosity. Amy accuses Agatha of depriving her of husband and her son.

Mary is also frustrated and isolated. She wants to leave Wishwood. Harry is also emotionally isolated from his family. His distraction and agitation is not understood by his family. He suffers from sense of sin which he wants to expiate and atone. Amy wants him to get married again and lead comfortable life at Wishwood. Nobody understands Harry. Only Agatha understands him and reveals to him of the origin and true nature of sin. This union, ironically, leads to the disintegration of the family. Amy's dreams and hopes are shattered when Harry departs to lead different life. Amy dies at the shock of her son's departure. She is the victim of tragic irony of life.

7.3.2 Check Your Progress:

A) Rewrite the following sentences using the most appropriate alternative.

1) Doctor Warburton tells Harry that he ..............
   a) looks like his father  b) looks like his mother
   c) looks like his grandfather  d) looks like his grandmother

2) Dr. Warburton tells Harry that Amy is alive only because of
   a) her strong will  b) his care
   c) her intention of marrying Harry to Marry d) Care taken by her family.

3) ............... informs about John’s accident
   a) Denman  b) Sergent Winchell  c) Dr. Warburton  d) Agatha.

4) ............... informs about Arthur’s accident.
   a) Charles  b) Sergeant Winchell  c) Ivy  d) Agatha.

5) Agatha tells Harry about his father's wish of ............
   a) Murdering Amy  b) his wish of marrying Agatha
   c) desire to go abroad  d) both a and b.

B) Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence each.

1) What does Harry want to know from Dr. Warburton ?

2) According to Dr. Warburton, What is the duty of Harry ?

3) Who goes to treat John ?

4) Where has injured John been kept ?
5) What is Agatha's advice to Harry?
6) What is Harry's anguish?
7) What is the origin of Harry's sin?
8) What is the reason behind the quarrel between Amy and Agatha?

C) Fill in the blanks in the following sentences:
1) Harry becomes upset when sergeant Winchell enters because ............
2) According to Harry, an individual life and misfortune should be regarded as a part of ............... design.
3) The chorus in the second part expresses that the laws of destiny are ............... and ............... 
4) Agatha plays the role of ............... guide to Harry.
5) In the end, Harry thinks of the Eumenides as ............... 

7.4 Characters: Harry, Amy, Agatha, Mary, Chorus

AND

Critical aspects of the play

HARRY, LORD MONCHENSEY

- the central figure
- the eldest son of Amy, Dowager Lady Monchensey
- Typical Eliotierian Hero
- Isolated individual with religious sensibility.

Harry is emotionally isolated from the family and deeply frustrated. He is haunted by the sense of guilt of murdering his wife. He comes back to Wishwood after long eight years, for the birthday of his mother, Amy, Dowager. Eight years ago, he married a woman against the wish of his mother, left Wishwood and went on travelling throughout Europe. His wife did not adjust herself either with Harry or with his family. In his mind he wanted to kill her. She commits suicide or slips over railing into the ocean, Harry doesn't know. But then afterward he is haunted and pursued by the guilt that he wished to kill his wife. His spiritual anguish is externalised by the dramatist with the help of his distractions and strange behaviour. When he enters the house, he does not respond to the greetings of his relatives but
stares at the window where he sees the Furies for the first time. In fact, he has come to Wishwood to escape from the Furies.

When Sergeant Winchell arrives to give the news of the accident of John, Harry behaves strangely and thinks that he has come to arrest him. He is bewildered, distracted and does not know how to set the matter right. He is not able to communicate his feelings to the rest of the family members. His deeper sensibilities, inwardness of experiences, he thinks, are very difficult to communicate. He compares himself with the old house with noxious smell.

At Wishwood, he gets insight into the true nature of his sin, and he realizes the curse/consciousness of his family. Agatha tells him that his father tried to kill his mother. Harry comes to know that his wish of killing his wife is nothing but the repetition of his father's wish. He must suffer for both and not only for himself. He must sacrifice himself for the redemption of his family from its curse. So he decides to depart from Wishwood, which in turn, kills his mother. Agatha helps him to take the right decision. Harry is tempted for a moment to live a regular marital life marrying Mary. At the same time he sees the Furies which Mary cannot see. Harry thinks that Mary is insensible and he turns away from her.

Harry realizes that for him living on physical level is impossible and with resoluteness he leaves Wishwood to lead spiritual life.

A Contemporary Review described Harry as "an unresolved amalgam of Orestes and Hamlet."

Some modern critics see in Harry a parallel with Eliot’s own emotional difficulties of the time, with his estrangement from his first wife, Vivien.

In the beginning Harry is Hamlet-like figure but in the end he is a martyr-saint, who decides to undergo crucification for the redemption of his family.

Amy, Dowager Lady Monchensey

- Harry's old mother
- dominating personality
- strong willed person
- egocentric
Amy is very old but living with the help of her strong will. She has dominated Wishwood throughout her life and has run it as per her will. She dictates and others obey.

The opening of the play shows drawing room of Amy, where Amy is at the centre and other relatives have gathered around her to celebrate her birthday. She is waiting for her three sons and the family reunion. Harry, the eldest is coming after eight years. His family life is tragedy, as his wife has committed suicide. Amy wants him to forget the past and build happy future in Wishwood. She wants him to shoulder the responsibility of the ancestral property.

Amy knows that her life has been a failure and loveless one. She could not understand her husband or her husband could not understand her, and sympathize with her. He forced three children on her. Then they were separated. Amy strongly felt that Agatha and her husband had love relationship between them but pretended not to know about it to avoid scandals. She has somehow protected family reputation. Amy's husband goes abroad and dies there. Amy doesn't feel anything about him.

As marriage has catered to her neither love nor a sense of feeling of belonging, Amy has become possessive and wants loyalty, affection from her children. Her dominating possessive attitude is expressed in the following lines:

I keep Wishwood alive
.........................................
.........................................
....................... and I live to keep them.

Before Harry's arrival she directs everyone to behave as if nothing has happened, no change has taken place at Wishwood.

Amy always looks towards future and cares least for the past. Once again Amy plans Harry's marriage with Marry. She is unable to understand Harry's mental state. She invites Dr.Warburton to treat Harry for his mental sickness without the cognizance of Harry.

Harry refuses to stay at Wishwood after he understands the nature and origin of his sin. Harry's decision of departure shocks her and she dies. Before that Amy told Harry that Agatha had taken away her husband from her in the past and now she was taking away her son.
If we compare characters of Amy and Agatha, Amy seems to be more feminine and human. She has faced the cruel realities of her life. She does not show self-pity or any weakness. But when Harry decides to depart, she crumbles down.

According to Eliot, Amy is the only complete human being in the play. She considers time as mechanical. Therefore there are repeated references to the clock.

It will be wrong to compare Amy with a clock and consider her a machine. Amy is truly life like. Though she resists change, there are signs of change in her. She understands her drawbacks. Because of her ego, she limited herself and could not understand many things. This change makes her alive and human.

Amy has feminine temperament; it is revealed through her effective remarks like "You looked like your father/when you said that".

Amy collapses when Harry departs. She reveals the family tragedy to Harry. But Harry is firm. That kills Amy. Her death is an end of loveless existence.

Her death is symbolic. It is very silent and solemn. It assumes the dignity of ritual and depth of tragedy. It is moving.

Amy's character is very significant in the play as everything revolves around her. She is more humane than any one else in the play.

**

Agatha

- Amy Dowager's younger sister
- Beloved of Amy's husband
- Harry's spiritual guardian
- An efficient principal of women's college
- Harry's mother in one sense.

Amy was dissatisfied with her marriage, she was lonely and needed companionship. She requested Agatha to accompany her to her place. She comes with Amy but falls in love with Amy's husband. Amy's husband wants to marry her. So he thinks of killing Amy in various ways. Agatha, for the first time, had experienced love; but when she came to know Amy's husband's intention of murdering Amy; she stopped him from doing so. In this way, Harry was saved in the womb. Agatha, in this sense, is Harry's mother. She correctly understood the nature
of the couple: Amy self-centred and her husband, though of unusual strength, weak-willed. Agatha's true understanding of the nature of Amy and her husband enabled her to play very significant role in the play.

Agatha talks of cold and mechanical, loveless life at Wishwood. She does not like it. Agatha guides Harry, tells him the origin of the sin. Agatha is free from desire and self-interest. She comes into conflict with Amy.

Agatha helps Harry to take right decision of leaving Wishwood. Agatha has spiritual insight. She advises Mary to watch and wait.

Agatha plays a key role in the play. She is a gifted woman, an efficient principal of women's college, very intelligent person who understands other characters very well. She has clear conscience. She is not confused like other characters. She is prophetic. She directs Harry without any hesitation. Without her, we can not imagine this play.

**

Mary

- daughter of deceased cousin of Amy.
- Submissive, timid
- Wishes to marry Harry

Mary is a childhood companion of Harry. Amy planned Mary's marriage with Harry to make him lead a very comfortable life, but Harry rejects Mary and marries another woman. After the death Harry's wife, he comes to Wishwood. Amy again plans Mary's marriage with Harry. Amy sees in Mary a good housekeeper and good wife.

In fact, Mary is frustrated, she is thirty years old and unmarried. She says she does not belong to any generation. She seeks advice of Agatha but Agatha asks her to watch and wait.

Mary is symbolic of temptation. She tempts Harry to marry and lead material life. She lives on material plane while Harry is fast approaching spiritual plane of life. Harry sees the Furies but Mary cannot. That makes Harry aware of Mary's dullness and he moves away from her.
Mary wants to pursue academic career but it is too late now. Therefore, Agatha advises her to watch and wait for future; what it has got in store for her.

Mary obeys Agatha. In short Mary is a passive character; indecisive and frustrated person.

**

**Chorus of the play**

Eliot's Chorus of aunts and uncles in *The Family Reunion* radically differs from the Greek Chorus. The Chorus is a convention which was used by the Greek dramatists. The present play shows technical evolution of the convention. Eliot has handled Chorus in a very beautiful way. He adopted the Chorus for contemporary setting and he evolved verse form for it.

The Greek Chorus consisted of dancers who were involved in dramatic action as well as stood outside it. They used to comment upon character, action and interpreted drama to the audience. The Chorus provides useful necessary information about the events off the stage, analyses motives and foretells future events. The Chorus contributes to the proper understanding of drama.

The Chorus in this play is more original. It has its own peculiar features e.g. 1) Its members take part in the action of the drama. It is made up of uncles and aunts. At certain moments, they become passive watchers and express their opinions unitedly. These members of chorus live on the physical plane, fail to understand conflict between sin and expiation which is the core of the play. Therefore the chorus is absent in the scenes of Harry's awakening at spiritual level. On the other side, the Chorus expresses bewilderment, fear, insecurity and uncanny apprehension of something bad is going to happen. According to Eliot, these family members are spiritually dead, hollow and lost souls. But the Chorus fails to throw light upon the theme of the play. The Chorus does not help understand the play in better way.

Immediately after speaking together, they show disintegration and express different opinions. In other words, the Chorus is an extension of aside.

Such adaptation of the Chorus poses problem for stage presentation. To some extent it appear artificial and unnatural on the stage. The Chorus first comes on stage in the middle of the first scene of Part I. Unrest is voiced through it. At the end of the first scene again the Chorus appears. Now it voices fear, insecurity and danger of
doom. Immediately after they speak as individuals and then again become the Chorus expressing uncanny fear. Eliot expresses his views through the Chorus. He speaks of culture spiritually dead and how people shrink the spiritual responsibility and want to live only on physical level.

The second scene does not have the Chorus as it provides for closer view of central figure Harry. Harry's distractions, worries spiritual urge are explained by Agatha. In the scene III of the Part II there is Chorus which expresses that they have to adjust themselves and do right things.

The versification of Chorus is brilliant. It captures attention of the audience. It is partly in blank verse which is close to conversational rhythm. It has fluency, and pace. In short the Chorus befits in this poetic drama. Comments of the Chorus do not serve as enlightenment of the audience but they are nothing but expression of their own perplexity.

There is nothing at all to be done about it;
There is nothing to do about anything.
And now it is nearly time for the News;
We must listen to the weather report
And the international catastrophes.

Whether it is comic relief for audience or Eliot's comments on common people's inability to understand the spiritual plane and departure from religion; one cannot decide.

Critical Aspects of the Play:

ROMANCE AND RITUAL IN THE FAMILY REUNION

According to Theress Towner, The Family Reunion is a complete play. T.S. Eliot has created Christain comedy out of the materials of Pagan tragedy. T.S. Eliot often thought that his audience, their life, literature were corrupted because of secularism and they do not understand or even wish to understand the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life. He also wished to reinstitute poetry as a dramatic medium. In 1942, he stressed the importance of "a verse medium for the theatre, a medium in which we shall be able to hear the speech of contemporary human beings,
in which dramatic characters can express the purest poetry without high falutin and in which they can convey the most common place message without absurdity”.

In this play to get response from audience he gave more attention to the music of poetry. His concept of poet is of a popular entertainer. As T. S. Eliot was a poet turned playwright, he sought to show a stratified and unpredictable audience the principles of the logical and aesthetic truth.

Eliot used the comic and tragic masks for purposes of conversion. He rigidly organised play, that begins with romance - a repressed and lonely man whose life prior to the action of the play is noting but a frustrated search for love. The source of play is Aeschylus’ *Orestes*. Eliot uses three figures from *Orestes* - the chorus, the Enmenides and Orestes to suggest the timelessness of the situation enacted at Wishwood, Though Eliot uses several themes as worked out in Orestes; eg- Curse on the house of Monchensey and Harry both victim and the exorcist of that curse, there is difference between these two plays. Harry abandons his house while Orestes wants to rule the house. By the end of the Part I, two things become very clear 1) Eliot shows that the Chorus is nothing but the confused masses both in need and in terror of spiritual rebirth; 2) Harry is superior to the chorus. In the second part, Eliot to speed up the play, increases the action to catch the audience's attention, while he worked out the spiritual dilemma of Harry. In the second part Harry inquires about his father, he characterizes his absent brothers, takes charge of Amy and dangerous fancies.

Harry is shown both a tragic and romantic figure, a more perceptive and intelligent man than those around him, his experiences separate him from his contemporaries. Eliot makes Harry conscious of him being a player in the drama. Harry is in dilemma of 'Hamlet'. Then for making Harry more humane Eliot takes him off the stage. Eliot drifts audiences' attention towards family members, their responses to Harry according to their level of spirituality. They live on different levels of spiritual awareness. They react to Harry's words at very different levels. Here, Eliot successfully dramatises audience’s response to his poetic material even as the action unfolds. Audience is as baffled as Gerald, some of them as Charle's desire to discover the facts of Harry's case, then they also agree to watch and wait with Agatha and Mary. Eliot desired for such a kind of reaction and what he praised in Shakespeare. For simple audience there is a plot, for more thoughtful audience the character and the conflict of characters or for more literacy audience his style, for
more musically sensitive audience the rhythm and for audience of greater sensitteness and understanding, a meaning which reveals itself gradually. Eliot's success lies in the fact that audience do not bother by which they don't understand or the things present in which they are not interested.

According to Eliot, goal of a dramatist, a successful popular entertainer is to raise the spiritual awareness of his audience. He does so in *The Family Reunion*. He practised the theory of poetic drama in *The Family Reunion*. First he decided the pattern of the play then the characters. Like Aeschylus and Shakespeare, he withholds the announcement of his 'meaning' until after he has traced his hero's situation for the audience. (Nature of the curse of the Atrides is already known before the audience meet Orestes. In *Hamlet* 'Hamlet's disgust with Gertrude is discovered in Act III scene IV, long after the ghost of Sr. Hamlet has asked Jr. Hamlet to avenge. Eliot makes his audience first hear Harry's confession about the murder of his wife. Then it becomes known to us/audience that he avoided an arranged marriage with Mary and ran away with a 'weak' woman who did not adjust either with him or with his family and was afraid of family; and that is through Agatha and Mary. Afterwards at the end of the Part I, we come to know that his childhood was not happy, he was not free. These conversations reveal in reverse chronological order the events that shaped Harry's character. We first see how he behaves towards his family and then we begin to understand the pattern of a life that produced this behaviour. Then we move towards the very origin of Harry's troubled existence. Then action moves towards a ritual which contains the significance of the events that precede it. Rituals are to explain and to commemorate the stages of human life. Human beings understand both the need for order that demands rituals and the actual order they provide.

When Harry becomes the object of a ritual, he becomes more comprehensible and sympathetic character, and the ritualization of his personal experience unites aesthetic elements of the play.

Eliot gives equal treatment to Harry and Agatha, Mary, he also shows Agatha and Mary's superiority over other characters. Harry, Agatha and Mary are in conflict with other characters in the family.
Agatha is Mary's former teacher. Agatha's status as a principal and teacher/adviser is very crucial to the action of the play. She understands Mary's dilemma but asks her to wait and watch:

"I would like to help you: but you must not run away. / Any time before now, / it would have shown courage. / And would have been right. / Now the courage is only the moment and the moment is only fear and pride. / I see more than this; More than I can tell you, more than there are words for". This conversation encourages Mary to speak honestly with Harry. Agatha prepares Mary to help Harry to recognize the nature of his spiritual burden. Eliot constructs a sequence of spiritual stages through which Harry is guided, directly and indirectly, by Agatha.

The appearance of the Eumenides is the most important of the revelations occurring in the Part I. There is difference between Harry's imaginative vision of these ghosts and the ghosts who appear on the stage. He is horrified by the Eumenides. Harry is not able to see that the Eumenides are kindly ones rather than Furies.

Part II presents Eliot's moral point in the Aristotelian way - i.e. the plot, character and thought and the action of the persons on stage.

The Chorus declares that Whatever happens begins in the past. Harry inquires about his father, he characterizes his absent brothers, takes charge of Amy and admonishes the chorus. His talk with Agatha produces vision of rose garden which is for Eliot, a symbol of state of spiritual purity, throughout his literary career.

Agatha reveals to Harry that his father wanted to murder Amy. This is the curse upon the family and Harry should see the significance of that event. Agatha draws Harry's attention towards the spiritual realm. Eliot's purpose to write this play is to show the soul in the process of liberating itself from the flesh and blood that holds it. Eliot has shown that Agatha is freed from the family curse and now she is guiding Harry to the path of salvation. Agatha points out Harry's psychological and sexual limitations. She understands sexual passion, what it brings - the desire to be consumed by that passion, the fear bred by that desire. Agatha understands the possibility of spiritual passion or martyrdom. She tells Harry that there is "another kind" of love to which Harry is diverted. In fact Agatha is not featureless but she has strong feature that she bears the mark of love.
After receiving Agatha's instruction, Harry moves quickly from the love of mortals to the spiritual love symbolized by his meeting Agatha in the rose garden. Harry says 'Family affection' was 'a kind of formal obligation' at Wishwood. Harry perceives that it is necessary to leave Wishwood. Harry sees again the Eumenidies but his vision of them is changed. He accepts them as his guides and decides to leave the place. It deaccelerates the play.

Yet the play cannot be called a tragedy because Eliot showed that man need not succumb to what Harry's aunts and uncles call "certain inexorable laws. Eliot believed in Law of Christian universe in which everything tends towards reconciliation, rather than towards the eternal repetition of a form of pagan curse. Eliot believed in the old patterns, the ancient forms of both art and theology and he tried to reinvigorate them by just such an infusion of Christian principles.

Many critics have criticized the ritualistic final scene as "an unintentional parody of liturgy rather than a reinvigoration from it. This criticism itself represents Eliot's successful integration of the play's aesthetic elements. From the dramatic point of view the blowing out the candle of Amy's birthday while announcing the end of Monchensey curse is very powerful. The play ends with a blessing, a promise of redemption. Our attention concentrates on the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life. The play has structural symmetry and the last chant fulfills the hope expressed in the first.

The Family Reunion has a theory behind it that Eliot carefully did not obscure. He presented his meaning to the audience. The meaning originated in his desire to show his audience that human sight must give way to spiritual vision. Eliot was of the opinion that poetic plays could give us some perception of an order in life and the task of writing such plays gave him an opportunity to reunite two genres, poetry and drama. By moving Harry's experience through the forms of tragedy and romance and subsuming it into Agatha's runes, Eliot made a ritual with an ancient verse.

7.4.2 The Family Reunion: Its importance as a poetic drama

T. S. Eliot used the verse which has the naturalness and flexibility of spoken language, yet it sounded like remote and dignified enough to be called poetry. The verse of the play is the finest one in the 20th century. It is flexible to express the trivialities and banalities of everyday conversation along with being emotional,
reflective and contemplative. It expresses all types and various shades of mood and emotions.

T. S. Eliot believed that secularism is the malady of the modern age. Therefore he chose the theme of the play religious one – the Christian theme of sin and atonement. He also believed that the poetic plays could express vast areas of feeling and sensibility which remain outside the range of the prose drama. The Family Reunion is successful in expressing the unnamable; unclassifiable emotions and motives of the subconscious. Harry’s psychological complexities, sufferings, sensibilities were aptly expressed in the dramatic poetry.

Expression of subconscious, irrational and mystical was made possible by Eliot with skillful use of symbols and images. The poetic play has a poetic under-pattern which increases its range of expression and also gives aesthetic beauty and subtness. This doubleness of action and poetic under pattern was made possible by the use of the mythical technique. As already stated Eliot has used Orestes as a source, and grafted the Christian myth of original sin and expiation on it, the play gets complexity of texture and a rare kind of richness.

The 19th century poetic plays were failures on the stage; though they made good reading. The Family Reunion makes a good reading as well as it provides good acting experience. According to Helen Gardner, “The Family Reunion is more effective when acted than when read." Theressa Towner also supports this view through the review of the play. There are melodramatic thrilling and sensational elements in the play. There are clashes that provide excitement. Charles provides drama of detection. There are also the dramatic scenes between Agatha and Harry, tragedy and death of Amy.

The play has its drawbacks. The Eumenides appear unreal, they present problem for staging. The minor actors cum chorus ask too much from actors. Lyrical duets are differentiated from the rest of dialogues as they are written in shorter lines with only two stresses, compel the speakers to fall into a trance to speak them. These passages are beyond characters. Harry’s conversion is not suitably motivated and it is not dramatically realized in the true sense of the word. Though these drawbacks are there, the play is very important in the history of the revival of the poetic plays. T.S.Eliot successfully showed that poetic plays are possible in the modern age and fit to express its complexities through poetry.
7.4.3 Check your Progress

A) Complete the following sentences filling in the blanks.

1) The action of the play *The Family Reunion* moves on both …………… and …………… levels.

2) Harry is …………… of the play.

3) The Play *The Family Reunion* lacks ……………

4) The theme of the play *The Family Reunion* is …………………

5) *The Family Reunion* is based on the Greek myth of ………

6) In the end of the play Dowager family …………… instead of coming together.

B) Answer the following questions in one Word/Phrase sentence each.

1) What is the reason of Harry’s frustration?

2) Describe Harry’s mental condition

3) How does Harry come to know that his wish of killing his wife is nothing but the repetition of his father’s wish of killing Amy?

4) Who helps Harry to take right decision?

5) What is the right decision for Harry?

6) Who tempts Harry to lead material life?

7) Describe Amy’s nature.

8) What is Amy’s plan about Harry?

9) What is the reason of Amy’s death?

10) What is Agatha’s reaction when she comes to know that Amy’s husband wants to kill Amy?

11) What is the purpose of chorus in the play?

12) What is the concept of poet according to T.S.Eliot?

13) What is the purpose behind using myth of Orestes in the play?

14) What is the goal of a dramatist, according to T.S.Eliot?
15) Why do critics say that Harry, Agatha and Mary are superior to other characters?

16) What is the significance of ritual?

17) What is the Christian concept of sin and expiation?

18) What does 'rose garden' stand for?

19) What is the purpose of Eliot behind writing this play?

20) What is the meaning of the play?

7.5 Terms to Remember

Eumenides (also known as Furies) : Great deities of vengeance.

- the third part of Aeschilus' Greek tragedy the Oresteia.
- In this final part of Oresteia Orestes, Appollo and the Erinyes (Eumenides) go before Athena and eleven other judges chosen by her from the Athenian citizenry at the Arepagus (Rock of Ares) to decide whether Orestes' killing of his mother, Clytemnestra, makes him guilty of the crime of murder, or not.

Furies : In Greek mythology the Erinyes, sometimes referred to as 'infernal goddesses', were females.

Three goddesses of vengeance : Tisiphone (avenger of murder), Megaera (the jealous) and Alecto (constant anger). They were also called the Daughters of the Night, but were actually the daughters of Uranus and Gaea. Another name for them is the Erinyes.

Chorus

A Greek Chorus is a homogenous, non-individualised group of performers in the plays of classical Greece, who comment with a collective voice on the dramatic action.

Sin/expiation

Sin : Deliberate disobedience to the known will of God

expiate : to make amends for, to atone for or redress (sin of wrong doing), redeem, do penance for
Sin causes spiritual death. Death means separation and spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God. Yet we are all born spiritually dead because we are in sin. The penalty for sin is spiritual death. Christian belief is that penalty of sin is paid for us by Christ by His death on the cross. This is the doctrine of expiation (cancellation of sin).

The expiation of sin may be viewed from two different standpoints. A satisfaction to Divine Justice for Adamic sin is, first of all, necessary. The decree of the great supreme Judge of the Universe - that the human race must die - went forth because of the disobedience of Adam; and no one can be released from death until that decree shall have been revoked because of its requirements being complied with. The annulling of that decree of Justice, however, will not make the individual at once a perfect man.

Purgation:

1. The purification or cleansing of someone are something.
2. (In Roman Catholic doctrine) The spiritual cleansing of a soul in purgatory.

liturgy: a fixed form of public worship used at churches.
high-falutin: trying to be serious/important but in a way that often appears silly and unnecessary.
annul: state officially that something is no longer legally valid.
rune: a symbol that has a mysterious or magic meaning.

7.6 Answers to check your Progress

3.1 A) 1) d 2) d 3) a 4) b 5) d
    B) 1) Irving Babbit and George Santayana
       2) Arthur Symons’ The Symbolist Movement in Literature (1895)
       3) Advocate 4) Intense emotions are better expressed in verse
C) 1) Six 2) 1939 3) British 4) Experience and the objects of knowledge in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley 5) East Coker

4.1 A) 1) b 2) a 3) c 4) c 5) c

B) a) Amy Complaints of cold
   b) younger generation is decadent, they have lot of money, and they are vulgar.
   c) Mary is thirty years old, yet unmarried, and is frustrated.
   d) Harry ran away and married a weak woman who never adjusted with either Harry or his family.
   e) Amy asks everybody not to talk of the past because she thinks that it will hurt Harry and she wants Harry to feel that there is no change in their house.
   f) because many things have happened to him and nothing has been changed to them;
   g) Charles summons Downing to get factual information about Harry's wife.
   h) Amy's plan is to settle Harry in Wishwood by marrying him to Mary.
   i) Agatha's advice to Mary is to watch and wait; not to leave Wishwood, yet.
   j) When he was talking with Mary.
   k) Agatha prays that eye that is on house may be diverted 'till the knot is unknotted', 'the cross uncrossed' and the crooked is made "straight" (In short, the house must be redeemed from its curse).
   l) The chorus reveals the fear of arrival of mysterious and unfortunate things.

C) a) to revive life
   b) shoulder the responsibility
   c) Committing suicide or by falling down in the sea accidently.
   d) it is irremediable
e) uncanny fear
f) Eumenides
g) 'an old house with noxious smell', 'the stain tainting the flesh and
discolouring the bone'.
h) murdering his wife.
i) talk to Harry and treat Harry's mental condition.
j) of accidents
k) their childhood.

PART - II

A) 1) a  2) a  3) b  4) c  5) d

B) 1) about his father  2) to take care of her, to make her happy as her hopes are
    concentrated upon him  3) Dr. Warburton  4) In the Arm  5) not to suffer in
    isolation  6) spiritual, he is sick at soul, rotten from inside  7) his father's wish
    was to kill Amy and Marry Agatha.  8) Amy accuses Agatha of taking away her
    husband away in the past and now her son is being taken away by Agatha.

C) 1) he thinks that he has come to arrest him  2) Universal  3) rigid and
    unchangeable  4) spiritual  5) benevolent angles  6) material and spiritual  7)
    Central figure / Protagonist  8) Conflict and suspense  9) sin and expiation  10)
    Orestes  11) disintegrates.

5.1 1) Earlier he had run away and married a weak woman whom he thinks, has
    killed her; this sense of guilt had made him frustrated.

2) Disturbed, distracted, bewildered

3) When Agatha talks of Harry's past, she tells him the truth.

4) Agatha  5) to leave Wishwood and start life on spiritual / religious level.  6)
    Mary  7) Amy's nature is dominating  8) Amy has planned Mary's marriage
    with Harry and wants him to shoulder the responsibility of the ancestral
    property.  9) Harry's decision to leave Wishwood  10) Agatha prevents Amy's
    husband from his plan of killing Amy  11) to provide useful necessary
    information about the events off the stage, analyse motives and foretell
    future events.  12) Popular entertainer  13) to suggest the timelessness of the
situation enacted at Wishwood 14) to raise the spiritual awareness of his audience. 15) because other members are spiritually dead 16) Rituals explain and commemorate the stages in life. 17) Human beings are born out of sin and Christ has paid for the sin. 18) 'Rose garden' stands for a symbol of state of spiritual purity 19) to show the soul in the process of liberating itself from the flesh and blood that holds it. 20) meaning is that human sight must give way to spiritual vision.

7.7 Exercises

1) Discuss the significance of the chorus in the play.
2) Write a note on the conflict in the play.
3) Examine The Family Reunion as the Poetic Drama.
4) Write notes on:
   Eliot’s handling of Orestes myth
   Irony in the Title of the play
   Plot construction of the play
   Charactersketch of Harry
   Agatha as a spiritual guide

7.8 Further Reading:

Raymond Williams: Drama from Ibsen to Eliot
George Williamson: A Reader’s Guide to T.S.Eliot
Halen Gardner: The Art of T.S.Eliot
Grover Smith: T.S.Eliot: Poetry and Plays
H. Carol Smith: Dramatic Theory and Practice of T.S.Eliot
Unit-8

Tiny Alice by Edward Albee

Contents

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8.4 Major/Minor Characters
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8.7 Further Exercises
8.8 References for further study

8.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit you will be able to –

• state Edward Albee’s contribution to the field of Drama.
• understand what the Theatre of the Absurd is and how it emerged.
• identify and state the theme or the idea behind Tiny Alice.
• illustrate how the play unfolds in terms of its structure and content.
• evaluate the play in terms of the general movement of the Absurd Theatre and its contribution to it.
8.1 Introduction:

Edward Franklin Albee (born 1928)

Albee is the American playwright wellknown for his plays – The Zoo Story (1958), The Sand Box (1959) and Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf (1962). He is known for being very critical of the modern conditions in the American Society. His play, The Zoo Story, is considered to be the Americanization of the Theatre of the Absurd.

Albee is an adoptive child of Reed Albee and Frances Albee. He was supposed to be born somewhere in Virginia, in America. The Albees were very rich. Reed Albee was part owner of a chain of theaters. Albee had an exposure to theater performances even as a child. He often attended matinee performances in New York City. Many show-business personalities used to visit Albees. Albee began writing poetry in his childhood.

His school life was not particularly happy. His academic record was poor. He was sent to a series of boarding schools. His teachers at Choate school encouraged him in his writing; and he tried his hand at almost every kind of literary type – poetry, short story, plays and even novel. In 1946, he attended Trinity College in Connecticut, America. But he left it after a year and a half, came back home and worked as a writer for a radio station. He was financially supported by a trust fund left to him by his grandmother. Besides, he supported himself by working in various jobs. He went to Italy for six months, where he came in contact with great literary personalities like W. H. Auden and Thornton Wilder, who advised him on writing.

At the age of thirty, he wrote his first play, The Zoo Story, which premiered in September 1959, in Berlin. Four months later it was shown in the Princetown Playhouse in Greenwich Village, along with Samuel Beckett’s plays. Since then Albee was recognized as a formidable talent.

Albee has received three Pulitzer Prizes for Drama, for A Delicate Balance (1967), Seascape (1975)] and Three Tall Women (1994). He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1972 and received a Special Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement, in 2005, the Gold Medal in Drama from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters in 1980.
8.2 Detailed summary of the text:

Act One

Scene I

The first scene opens on the garden of the Cardinal. (The Cardinal is one of the highest officials of the Christian church).

The Lawyer, who has come on a visit to the Cardinal is waiting for him, and talking to the two birds in the cage. The birds are also ‘cardinal’ birds. There is obviously a pun intended on the Cardinal and the birds. Saint Francis was a Christian Saint known for his ability to communicate with the birds. So the Cardinal enters and addresses the lawyer as Saint Francis. The lawyer is a little annoyed for being discovered talking to the birds in childish gibberish.

From the conversation between them we come to know that the Cardinal and the Lawyer were both classmates in the school.

The Lawyer has come to talk to the Cardinal about some financial matter. The lawyer sarcastically comments that he hasn’t come for a light small talk in the afternoon.

Both jocularly remind each other how they used to hate each other. The Lawyer suggests to the Cardinal that he should use ‘I’ rather than honorific ‘we’ on this occasion. He means that the Cardinal need not be so formal with him. The Cardinal says that he uses ‘I’ for himself only when talking to the equals (meaning the Lawyer is not of equal status to him). The Cardinal reminds the Lawyer that he (the Lawyer) used to cheat in the examinations and was a liar, an indecent, dirty boy, that the Lawyer used to bully other boys and was a sycophant to the stronger ones.

The Lawyer, on his part, reminds the Cardinal that he (the Cardinal) was the son of ‘an arrogant, pompous profiteer’ (a businessman) and a whore. This, he says, is a fitting background for being an officer of the church.

The Cardinal remembers that the Lawyer was called a ‘hyena’ while in school. The Lawyer is very angry and tells the Cardinal that he (the Cardinal) was not sure who his father really was as the Cardinal’s mother was known to be a loose woman.
The Lawyer wants to avoid this kind of talk slandering each other. He has come to offer a lot of money to the Cardinal on behalf of his rich client. But the Cardinal persists teasing him, calling him, hyena – ‘the resourceful scavenger’, etc.

The Lawyer has to offer some money to the church on behalf of his client, a hundred – million as the first installment, and the same amount each year. This client is a young woman; and overburdened with money, which is wasted as not being used. The young lady is giving away large amounts to the other religious establishments also – to the Protestants and Jews, and to the hospitals, universities, etc. The Cardinal wants to know how the lady chose him to be her lawyer. The Lawyer says, he is very good lawyer, which is the only reason for the lady to choose him.

In the excitement of getting so much money the Cardinal forgets himself and says, ‘Shall I just go to the house and pick it up in a truck?’ He uses the first person ‘I’, which amuses the Lawyer, because the Cardinal had said, he would use ‘I’ to the equals and superiors. The Cardinal is flustered. The Lawyer taunts him, how he (the Cardinal) has come down from his high pedestal for the sake of so much money.

Scene II

This scene opens in the library of a big mansion of Miss Alice, the rich lady. Julian, the lay Brother in the service of the Cardinal, is waiting for the lady. He has come to receive a cheque for the donation the lady was to offer to the church.

There are arched doorways to the left and the right; and there is a big doll’s house in the rear wall – twelve feet long and moderately high.

The doll’s house is a miniature replica of the castle. In the hall of the doll’s house, there is another library hall and in the hall there again is a similar doll’s house.

There is a small exchange between the Butler of the house and Julian. The Butler is by name and the profession the same – Butler. The Lawyer enters, enquires after Julian, offers him Port wine. The Lawyer knows that Julian’s father was a Vintner (a wine-seller). He wants to know from Julian the account of six years of his life when Julian was about thirty years old. But Julian avoids giving him any information.
The Lawyer points out how Julian’s appointment as the Cardinal’s secretary is unconventional and unique. He suggests a kind of homosexual relationship between the Cardinal and Julian. The Lawyer tells Julian how he hates the Cardinal, and describes him as ‘a cynic, and a hypocrite posturer.’ The Lawyer appears to slander the Cardinal and perhaps turn Julian against him, but Julian does not pay heed to the Lawyer’s slandering of the Cardinal.

The Butler brings up again the question of the period of six years in Julian’s life. Julian, in the course of conversation tells him that he had lost his faith in God during that time. He admitted himself in a mental home. His problem was how to reconcile the nature of God and the men’s use of God. He seems to suggest that man has reduced God to a puppet. He considered God to be the creator and the mover of all things, but God in men’s eyes is just a tool, a puppet, a false god in their own image.

The Butler takes Julian to the room of Miss Alice.

**Scene III**

The scene opens in the upstairs room of Miss Alice. The Lawyer is already there talking to the lady, whose back is to the stage. The Lawyer is talking to her about the instinct of giving (money) to the charitable institutions.

When there is a knock on the door, the Lawyer knows it must be Julian. He tells Miss Alice ‘That will be our bird of prey.’ He puns on the word ‘prey-pray’. It later becomes clear that the Lawyer and Miss Alice as well as the Butler are together in a sort of conspiracy against Julian and/or the Cardinal.

Miss Alice poses here as an old woman, with a wig and a lined, puckered face. She is hard of hearing. Julian is puzzled because he was told that she was a young woman. He speaks to her in a loud voice.

The Lawyer leaves both of them. After a brief play-acting as an old woman, Alice removes her wig, takes off the mask of an old woman. Julian watches the transformation open-mouthed.

In the conversations, Miss Alice drops a remark about the Butler that he was once her lover; and now she is the mistress of the Lawyer. He (the Lawyer) is a pig, she says. It appears there is no love lost between them. She says she is bored with the Lawyer. She, like the Lawyer, brings up the topic of six years of his (Julian’s) life. Julian repeats what he said to the Butler. He explains that he admitted himself to the
mental home because he had lost his faith (in God). Miss Alice brazenly asks him if he had slept with many women. Julian tells her he is a celibate (an avowed bachelor) as he is a lay brother; and is required to be chaste.

Julian has not yet accepted the priesthood. He prefers to remain a lady brother because he still feels that his God is different from Man’s God. Julian, while in the mental home, used to hallucinate. He used to lose his control of reality. In his section of the Mental Home, there was a woman about 40 years old, who believed herself to be Virgin Mary. Julian used to hear people’s voices from a great distance, the noise of the surf roaring, his body would feel light and he felt as if he was floating or gliding. In this state Julian was not able to distinguish between reality and his imaginings.

One night, he says, he was walking in the garden (he imagined so). He heard a sound of sobbing and someone crying in low tone. He (imagined) he saw this woman lying on the ground, in her nightdress. When she saw him, she held out her arms as if asking for help, and cried out ‘please help me’. Julian describes using suggestive words that he (imagined) he had sex with her. He is not sure if this really happened or not. It was later learned that the woman was pregnant. The woman, he says, was also subject to hallucination. Later, when he asked his doctor about it, he was told that the woman had cancer of the womb. The woman died in a month’s time. Miss Alice tells Julian that she is rich and beautiful, and she has no relatives. She lives with a companion from time to time. She says she has a secret. But she does not tell it to Julian.

Miss Alice tells Julian that he has to see her often to give information, answer questions, etc. regarding the business. She suggests he had better live here in her castle, and Julian agrees.

She kisses him on his forehead, offers her hand to him to be kissed. Julian feels embarrassed, but kisses her hand the way he would kiss the Cardinal’s hand.

The Lawyer and Alice have a private talk when Julian goes away. It appears the whole conspiracy is planned by the Lawyer. Julian would be called again only if and when the Lawyer decides. Miss Alice asks the Lawyer if they are really wise doing all this. It suggests that Miss Alice, the Lawyer and even the Butler are together in this conspiracy. But it is not clear what they plan to achieve.
Check Your Progress I

1. **Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each:**
   a) Why has the Lawyer come to visit the Cardinal?
   b) Why does the Cardinal address the Lawyer as Saint Francis?
   c) What was the Lawyer called by his schoolmates?
   d) What kind of relationship is there between the Lawyer and the Cardinal?
   e) What is peculiar about the Doll House model in the library hall of Miss Alice?
   f) What is the relationship of Miss Alice with the Lawyer and the Butler?
   g) What does the Lawyer want to know from Julian?
   h) Why did Julian admit himself to the mental asylum?

2. **Say whether the following statements are True or False, and write the correct statements if they are false.**
   a) There were two parrots in the bird case in the Cardinal’s garden.
   b) The Lawyer was talking nonsense to the birds.
   c) The Cardinal and the Lawyer were very good friends at school.
   d) The Cardinal and the Lawyer talked about pleasant memories of their school days.
   e) Julian was a full-fledged priest in the church.
   f) The Lawyer wanted to know about the period of six years in Julian’s life.
   g) Miss Alice is an old woman.

**Act Two :**

**Scene I**

The place again is the library hall. Miss Alice enters running, and the Lawyer after her. She must have freed herself from him and entered the stage. She is rather angry.
Miss Alice angrily tells the Lawyer to keep away and go. She is almost hysterical. The Lawyer wants to touch her affectionately. But Miss Alice protests saying there are people around. The Lawyer argues that he loves her and therefore would possess her. By people, she might mean Julian.

But the Lawyer tells her that the priest, Julian, is not around, and he is sick of him.

It is quite evident from this that Julian has come to stay in the castle as suggested by Alice in the first act. The Lawyer tells Alice to do what was planned by them. Julian is in the wine-cellar inspecting the old wines. Alice points out that the Butler might be around. But the Lawyer does not care. He has some plan in mind about the Butler also.

Miss Alice hates the Lawyer and tells him so. He forces her to come near him. The Lawyer kisses her at the neck, fondles her, but she does not react to this as she told him. She tells the Lawyer that she dislikes him for his clinical, and methodical ways, suggesting that he has no real feeling in him, that he is uninvolved in his love making, and impersonal. The Lawyer does not agree. Alice talks about how ugly he is, the hair on the back, his ugly sex, etc. The Lawyer warns her not to mess up their plan, that she must behave the way he has asked her to do and play her part straight.

The Butler enters and says Brother Julian has examined the wine-cellar and may come any time. Alice complains to the Butler, but he does not take her seriously. Alice complains that the Lawyer suspects her of having sex with Julian. In fact, the Lawyer wants her to seduce Julian. It is part of her play-acting. She says she would do it willingly.

The Butler casually tells them how the wine-cellar is in bad shape. And Alice shouts at him asking him to fix it. She is angry with the Butler as he does not support her. The Butler tells them how Julian is helpful in the garden as well as with his knowledge of wines, etc.

The Lawyer suggests that Julian would very soon be living with them. The Butler suggests that he could be put up in the chapel. Julian is enthusiastic about the wine-cellar and the chapel. He would like to make improvements. Julian suggests that she should ask for a specialist to tend the wine-cellar.
Julian, who is watching the model of the castle, wonders whether Alice’s father put up the castle. There is a lot of philosophical quibbling about the model or its replica. The actual hall they are standing in is the replica of the model in the hall. Meanwhile, the Lawyer suddenly realizes that he has to act as the lawyer (in the presence of Julian), and he checks himself. He would like to stay overnight, and asks Miss Alice for permission. But, she takes her chance of exercising authority and says no. Julian at this time invites attention of all telling them that the chapel is on fire. He notices it in the model. The Butler leaves, and Julian follows. The Lawyer hangs back, grabs Alice’s hand and threatens her to play her part, watch her step, and runs out after the others.

Miss Alice remains alone on the stage. She prays for the chapel to be saved. Her wrist hurts as the Lawyer had grabbed it tightly.

Miss Alice has a faint memory of a boy who had grabbed her wrist like this. She remembers how it had hurt like now. She talks of herself, how she has tried to be careful, controlled her nature. This shows that she is evidently obeying the plan of the Lawyer, rather unwillingly, without any understanding.

Meanwhile Julian returns after putting down the fire. He wonders how the fire actually started in the rear chapel, was seen in the chapel of the model. When the fire was put out, it is seen put out in the model also. It is mysterious. He asks Miss Alice if there is anything to be frightened of, and she cryptically answers there always is.

**Act Two/Scene two:**

The scene is again the library hall. There is the Butler on the stage. The Lawyer enters. He is very angry.

The Lawyer enquires of the Butler where they (Alice and Julian) are. The Butler does not know, but he tells the Lawyer how nicely they move together. The fire incident might have brought them closer. Julian and Alice spend time together. The Butler says it is going on as planned. They may have gone out, enjoying, partying. The Butler says she knows her business, so it is not necessary to watch them. But the Lawyer says they cannot allow any error in the planning. Actually, the Lawyer is jealous of Julian. On the one hand he is a ruthless planner, but he shows such weakness occasionally.
The Butler says she (Alice) is clever, though human. The Lawyer does not trust her. She does not act her part straight. The Lawyer does not like the idea that they (Julian and Alice) could be sleeping together. He feels jealous, and says Julian does not deserve her. The Butler consoles him saying this won’t go on for a long time, suggesting the plan must end soon. The Butler remarks that the Lawyer has lost control on his feelings, showing possessiveness and jealousy.

The Butler observes that the Lawyer is cruel, and does not hide it. He is hard and cold. But, he wonders how he could give in to emotion sometimes. The Butler says the Lawyer is acting like the man he wished he was – a man of feeling. The Lawyer complains that she (Alice) is using Julian to humiliate him. He suspects that she cares for Julian. The Butler reassures the Lawyer that she would play her part and would not allow her feelings to get in the way. He (the Butler) says, it’s time for the Lawyer to go and see the Cardinal. The Lawyer wants the Butler to go along with him because the Butler’s simplicity and guilelessness may impress the Cardinal.

The Lawyer and the Butler play-act as the Cardinal and the Lawyer, the Lawyer playing as the Cardinal. The Butler, as the Lawyer, tells the Cardinal (the Lawyer) that Brother Julian is being taken away from him, that Julian is getting married to Miss Alice. They think of the Cardinal to marry them. The Butler says Julian would not be able to tolerate this play of deception. Julian is still trying to reconcile himself to men’s idea of God. He was once in the asylum for his doubts about God in his mind and men’s God. He was disturbed greatly by men’s use of God in the routine life. They think Julian would go mad again. The Butler and the Lawyer together rehearse how they can force Julian to accept men’s idea of God, and cut himself off from the abstraction of God in his mind.

They plan to go to the Cardinal with this idea in mind, that the Cardinal is losing Julian forever. The Butler tells the Lawyer to leave Julian to Alice until they come back. The Lawyer does not like the idea of Julian making love to Alice. But the Butler consoles him saying it’s only for a short period.

The Lawyer addresses the Model promising that it will have its Julian. It appears that Julian is to be given to the Doll House or whoever lives in it.
Scene III:

The scene opens in the sitting room of Miss Alice. There is Julian near the fireplace. He has just come back from his riding exercise, and has enjoyed it. He had enjoyed riding as a child since he had a play-mate whose family had horses.

Julian remembers a very hairy Welshman, one of the grooms of the friend’s family. His description of the hairy Welshman reminds Miss Alice of the verse by D. H. Lawrence, that she had recited at school. It is a very erotic poem. Julian is embarrassed listening to it.

Miss Alice tells Julian that she likes the hairy body of man, but not the hairy back. (The Lawyer has a hairy back, which she does not like).

Julian has no hair on hands and chest; and no hair on the back also, except at the small of the back.

Julian is now living in the castle with Miss Alice. He remarks, in the course of conversation, that he would like to discuss his life in her luxurious castle. There is lot more than a person wants. He, for example, talks about gluttony, too much comfort, ease. He knows very well that he has come to this place for the purpose of his church. But he wonders if he is being tempted or tempt-tested (by providing such ease and comforts). He mentions how Miss Alice allows the Lawyer to ridicule and tease him. Miss Alice tells him that she is his friend here. Julian talks about how as a young man he was filled with self-importance, wanted to be of service to others. And he was intolerant if anyone who came in his way. He felt proud of his being ready to serve others. He, as if, wanted to publicize his humility and humbleness. He did not understand that he was only exhibiting his pride. To be obedient or the humblest is also an ambition.

Miss Alice tries to flirt with him, but Julian is embarrassed. The conversation turns towards the church. Miss Alice tells Julian that the history of the church is full of saints martyred for the church or by the church.

Julian insists that he should be allowed to do his job for which he has come. And Miss Alice assures him that he has been rightly chosen for this job. Any other priest, or even a bishop would have spoiled it. She assures Julian that she is not playing any games. The promise of money to the church is in dead earnest.
Miss Alice goes round him, touching him, ruffling his hair, kissing his neck. Julian tells her of his reading about the Romans, in his school days, how the Christian saints were thrown in front of the beasts – the lions. He says, he has been aware of martyrdom since then. At this moment, Miss Alice softly murmurs in his ear asking him to marry her. But Julian is still in a trance thinking of his martyrdom. His description or the vision of the lion pressing on his chest is mixed with a woman sinking on the mossy little hillock by the rose bushes. This is perhaps his hallucination of sex experience in the mental asylum.

Miss Alice is all the time encircling him, her hands on his neck or chest. The words she utters have sexual overtones. She urges him to come to her, a sort of sacrifice he would make. But when she asks him to marry she specifically says ‘come to Alice’, ‘marry Alice’, not ‘Miss Alice’. [Miss Alice and Alice are made two distinct persons here. There is Alice in the Model, the replica of the castle. And later, it is made clear to Julian that he married Alice and not Miss Alice. Miss Alice was only a proxy bride.]

Miss Alice goes on telling him, ‘Alice tells me so, come to her’. She clearly distinguishes herself from Alice (in the Model). The last words of Miss Alice in this act are addressed to Alice, promising Alice that he (Julian) will be ‘yours’.

Check Your Progress II

I Answer the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each:

a) Why does Miss Alice hate the Lawyer?

b) What does the Lawyer suspect about Miss Alice and Julian?

c) What does the Lawyer expect Miss Alice to do?

d) How is Julian helpful to the Butler in the Castle?

e) What, according to the Lawyer, is the replica?

f) What does Julian notice as he is peering at the model?

g) What is the mystery about the fire?

h) What does the Butler warn the Lawyer about?

i) What does the Lawyer complain to the Butler about Miss Alice?

j) Why does the Lawyer wish to take the Butler with him to see the Cardinal?
II Answer the following questions briefly (in 3 to 4 sentences each)

a) What is the plan the Lawyer and the Butler have devised for Julian?

b) How does Julian dream of Martyrdom?

c) What does Miss Alice say about the history of the church and the saints?

Act III

The third act has only one longish scene. It takes place in the same library hall.

Julian enters dressed in a suit as he is recently married. There is the Butler in the hall gathering and piling gray sheets. Julian wonders where everyone has gone. He is left alone.

No friends of Miss Alice came to the wedding. And when Julian asked her, she said to him – ‘it’s you, Julian, who are getting married’. The Butler quotes these words to Julian. But he does not take a hint from it. He gets a feeling that something, a secret, is being kept from him.

The Cardinal enters when the Butler exits. The Cardinal, who appears to be one of the conspirators, is embarrassed when Julian asks him to bless him. The Lawyer, enters and talks to Julian sarcastically. When Julian goes away in search of his newly-wed life, the Lawyer gives the Cardinal the briefcase with money. The church lawyers have examined the deal. The Lawyer taunts the Cardinal saying it was quite a dowry mother church got.

The Lawyer takes out a pistol from the drawer, and tells the Cardinal that they may have to shoot Julian. The Cardinal does not appear to know the possibility. The Lawyer has evidently planned the murder of Julian after the marriage with Alice (NOT Miss Alice). He callously tells the Cardinal that a little blood is necessary to roll the great machinery (the church/society) to run smoothly. The Cardinal does not appear to like the idea. But he does not do anything to stop it.

Miss Alice, who is unwilling to enter the hall, is dragged in by the Butler.

All of them stand keeping distance from Julian. The Butler fills the glasses of Champagne and gives them to all. They toast to the marriage. Even Miss Alice offers toast to Alice, but Julian does not notice it.
Miss Alice, the Lawyer, the Cardinal together ask Julian to accept his marriage to Alice (and NOT Miss Alice). Miss Alice tells him that he is married to Alice through her. Julian refuses to accept the hallucination ‘Alice’, but Miss Alice tells him that she is the illusion and ‘Alice’ in model is the real Alice. The Lawyer says that Julian’s marriage with Alice is legal and accomplished. The Cardinal also tells him that he, Julian, has no choice. The Cardinal finally orders him to accept it. But Julian says he would prefer to go to the asylum, his last refuge.

The Lawyer shoots him. Julian stumbles and sinks to the floor in front of the model. No one, not even the Cardinal, helps him. The Lawyer hands over the briefcase of two billion to the Cardinal, ‘all legal’ he says, ‘for no work; no labor’.

The Lawyer asks Miss Alice if she is ready to go. Miss Alice ironically asks him if they have to go on the same kind of trip, some kind of mystery, conspiracy, plotting. (Suggesting, together they seem to have made all this their profession).

At the end of the scene there is a very long soliloquy of Julian as he is dying. He addresses the model, asking Alice to show herself to him, because it is for her that he has gambled his soul. He demands the presence of Alice. There is movement of light in the model. He appeals to God to hear him before he loses his consciousness and has the final sleep, the sleep of death.

There is a great shadow, the shadow of a great presence, only the area where Julian is lying is lighted. Is this Alice? he wonders.

In his delirium, Julian addresses Alice and God – he mumbles the words ‘God, Alice ……… I accept thy will’. He dies in the pose of crucifixion, his hands spread.

Check Your Progress III :

I Answers the following questions in a word, a phrase or a sentence each :

a) Why is Julian confused at the end of his wedding?

b) Why were there no friends of Miss Alice at the wedding?

c) What dowry does the Lawyer talk about?

d) What does the Lawyer mean by lubricating the machine with the oil that is blood?

e) Why does the Lawyer call himself and others as agents?
f) What special priesthood, the Lawyer says, Julian has got?

II a) Why is the Cardinal embarrassed when Julian talks about great wealth the church got?

b) How does Miss Alice explain to Julian that he is really married to (Tiny) Alice?

c) What act of faith the Lawyer and others talk about?

d) What does Julian decide to do?

e) Why does the Lawyer shoot Julian?

8.3 Critical Commentary:

This play of Albee is described by Albee himself as a ‘metaphysical dream play’. It is also called a ‘mystical mystery’. What is its theme? It could be the faith on every level. Albee said, “It’s about all religions we create in our own image and the personifications we make.” Talking to the Butler about six years of his life in the mental asylum, Julian tells him, ‘I lost my faith when I realized men create a false god in their own image’. After his years in the mental asylum, he realizes that ‘my faith is my sanity. They are one and the same. Sometimes hallucination is desirable’. This shows that the theme of the play revolves round this problem that Julian faces – true God versus the false god created by others, i.e. by the church and other men.

The plot/story of the play centers round the protagonist, Julian, who is thus caught in his confusion about true God and the god created by the church and other people. He admits himself to a mental asylum because he is terrified by the world around him. But even there he does not get relief from his sense of insecurity. The asylum may be here the modern world, because the Lawyer remarks that Julian comes ‘from the heartland of the country, from the asylum’. From this world of asylums, Julian migrates to the world of church, where he might be able to serve people. It has been his wish to be of service to the people. He was rather passionate about it as a young man, snatching luggage from the hands of the passengers. He intended to sacrifice himself, be a martyr. Even in this wish, he nurses a kind of pride.

Julian’s life in the church as a secretary to the Cardinal is a kind of compromise. His search for true God has not yet ended. But here he can be of service to humanity
through the church. But this also proves to be his illusion. Julian is really a misfit in
the world of the Cardinal, the Lawyer and the Butler.

The Cardinal, the Lawyer and the Butler have no names. They are identified
here by their professions. The Butler is said to have the same name, Butler. Miss
Alice is an enigmatic character. Her name may be assumed. She is playing a role like
others. She is to be distinguished later from ‘Alice’ in the Model castle that stands on
the stage. The stage really is only the library hall. There is a model within the model,
and so on to infinity.

The Cardinal and the Lawyer, were once school mates. They play a slanging
match in the scene at the very beginning. The Lawyer has come to offer huge amount
as donation to the church, on behalf of his client, Miss Alice, a rich young woman.
We come to know that these two and the Butler as well as Miss Alice conspire to get
Julian into the castle, and marry him off to ‘Alice’ in the model, or rather sacrifice
him to ‘Alice’.

Julian is to be enticed into this plan through beautiful Miss Alice, who plays a
proxy or substitute for ‘Alice’ (this is Tiny Alice, though the ‘tiny’ is not mentioned
in the play itself). We can see that the role of Miss Alice is to seduce Julian, and
make him marry ‘Alice’ through herself. Julian is so far a free agent, one who can
make a choice for himself. He must choose and accept ‘Alice’. Who is Alice? This is
really a mystery. In the final scene, Julian, dying at the base of the Model, cries out,
‘I accept thee Alice, for

thou art come to me. God, Alice …………..

I accept thy will’.

This acceptance of Alice and God is the mystery because Alice is nothing but an
abstraction. Miss Alice tells Julian that true Alice is the one in the model, and she is
only the replica, a representation, just as the Library hall is the replica of the same
hall in the model.

It is suggested here that true God is unknowable, an infinite mysterious being.
Julian as he is dying, notices a ‘great presence’, the shadow of this great presence
engulphing everything. It is this Alice that he appears to accept. He appears to equate
this Alice with God, and spreads his hands wide in the prose of Crucifixion.
The Great Presence in this last scene may be Julian’s vision of ‘God, Alice’. The Great Presence appears when he cries out “My God, why hast thou forsaken me!”, and in this cry he goes beyond his individual self and represents the whole humanity. Julian’s acceptance of ‘Alice’, (the one that does not exist physically), is his acceptance of unknowable God. Albee, commenting on *Tiny Alice*, says “Once Julian accepts what does not exist (i.e. physically), his concept (his faith) exists for him.”

But, what do we make out of the four characters – the Cardinal, the Lawyer, the Butler and Miss Alice -? They seem to be only functions. They have no name and individuality as such. Their function appears to be to bring Julian from his state of doubt and uncertainty to his final sacrifice at the altar of Alice, the Tiny Alice, who is as unknowable as God.

**Some Observations on *Tiny Alice***:

Ben Brantley in his Theatre Review (1998) says :

“The play, all too fittingly, is about a crucifixion of sorts.”

He describes the play as :

“bizarre, verbally dence, and sexually lurid allegory, about a man in search of God”. Describing the plot of *Tiny Alice*, he says :

“Brother Julian, a lay secretary to a Catholic Cardinal, is enlisted as an intermediary between the church and the glamorous Croesus – like Alice, who is considering donating a hefty chunk of her millions to the institution.”

“Julian, who years earlier, suffered a nervous breakdown over his inability to reconcile his idea of God with its earthly representations, finding himself drawn into the sinister ménage of Alice and her present and former lovers, the amoral attorney, and a droll, breezy Butler. Alice’s castle of a home becomes Julian’s home also, and he falls in love with his hostess, while everyone around him conspires to bring him to the sensational martyrdom he has, on some level, always sought.”

Jean Schiffman in her review says :

Albee calls it *(Tiny Alice)* ‘a metaphorical Melodrama’. It is metaphorical explanation of religious faith specifically of Catholicism, and more specifically of the dichotomy between the God we have invented to suit ourselves and a possibly true unknowable God.
Beyond that, to many, Tiny Alice, (a name by the way, that’s never mentioned as such in the play) is simply unacceptable.

She summarizes the plot as below:

The world’s richest woman – the seductive and cloistered Miss Alice has offered a local church a huge grant, to be apportioned annually.

The business details are arranged between her nasty lawyer-lover, and the church’s Cardinal, the two once schoolmate enemies.

The central character, the humble lay brother Julian, ……….. a butler named Butler, who is also Miss Alice’s former lover, and the enigmatic Miss Alice, who at various times tricks the hapless Julian, seduces him, teases him, rejects him, and ultimately seems to comfort him.

The Lawyer, the Butler and the employer relate to one another in odd and ambiguous ways.

Julian is fascinatingly complex, unworldly, with a tenuous grasp of reality, and a yearning for religious faith and martyrdom that resembles sexual lust.

Looming upstage is an elegant model of the very castle they are all in. It represents a sort of parallel universe-another dimension, as it is described-in which resides, insist the trio, the ‘real’ Alice.

The Corporeal Miss Alice herself, they tell Julian, is a mere surrogate. Which Alice is the true Alice, perhaps the true God?

We are as confused, and at times as intrigued as the gullible Julian.

**Tiny Alice as the Absurd Drama :**

Martin Esslin in his seminal book on the Theatre of the Absurd has included Edward Albee in the group of the Absurd playwrights. Talking about the set of a model castle on the stage, he says:

“The central image of the play is the mysterious model of the great mansion in which the action takes place, that occupies the centre of the stage. Inside this model every room corresponds to one in the real house, and tiny figures can be observed repeating the movements of the people who occupy it. Everything that happens in the macrocosm is exactly repeated in the microcosm of the model. And no doubt inside
the model there is another smaller model, which duplicates everything that happens on an even tinier scale, and so on ad infinitum, upwards and downwards on the scale of being. It is futile to search for the philosophical meaning of such an image. What is communicated is a mood, a sense of the mystery, the impenetrable complexity of the universe.”

Esslin appears to have characterized this play as ‘Absurd’ on the basis of the bizarre model at the centre of the stage, that cannot be logically interpreted.

Does Albee really belong to the Theatre of the Absurd? According to Arnold P. Hinchliffe, Albee himself thinks that it is an unfortunate label from a movement that is over. Hinchliffe says that Albee shares traits of the Absurd Drama but does not accept the label.

Some of the important traits of the Absurd Drama are: meaninglessness, lack of movement, static situation, the irrationality of the human condition and the sense of metaphysical anguish at this absurdity of human condition. We have to think of Albee’s *Tiny Alice* in terms of such traits. We must remember that the writers like Sartre, Camus were also very much aware of this human condition. But, their plays are lucid and logical in their presentation. The Absurdist Playwrights present the very absurdity of human condition.

We have to examine *Tiny Alice* in terms of these traits; if we have to apply the label of Absurd Drama to this play.

To begin with, the play opens with a scene at the garden of the Cardinal’s house, where the Lawyer is talking gibberish to the Cardinal birds in a cage. The Cardinal and the Lawyer, the old schoolmates and sworn enemis play a vicious slanging match. But, finally they come round to talk of the business that has brought the Lawyer to the Cardinal’s place. His extremely rich client, Miss Alice, wishes to donate billions to the church annually. It is decided that the Cardinal’s secretary, the lay-brother, Julian, should go and see Miss Alice to discuss the details of the grant.

The first Act (with its three scenes) ends with Julian meeting Miss Alice, and Julian and Miss Alice talk about his hallucinations and sex life in the asylum. It is in the second act that we come across things that cannot be logically explained. For example, Julian notices fire in the chapel that is in the Model. But, there is fire at the real chapel also. The model is explained to be the micro world representing the real macro world outside. And the characters in the macro world appear in that micro
world also. And it is suggested that this goes on ad infinitum, a model within the model. This may be illogical, meaningless even, but all this is lucidly stated. The characters, the Lawyer, Miss Alice try to impress upon Julian that this micro world is the reality and ‘Alice’ in it is the real thing, while Miss Alice is only a representation. Julian is confused and finds it difficult to accept ‘Alice’, something that does not exist, something unknowable. This is the mystery element in Tiny Alice. Tiny Alice itself is the mystery. Is Tiny Alice God? God is unknowable, so is Tiny Alice. What does the Model of the Castle stand for? This Model is represented as the original and controlling entity, while the big castle, the library hall in it, is only a replica, a stage on which other characters act as puppets, and (Tiny) Alice directs them.

It is quite evident that in certain aspects Tiny Alice is inscrutable and uninterpretable like the Absurd Drama. But, at the same time, it appears to be satirical of the church and its Cardinal. The Lawyer exposes the Cardinal making him show his greed for money, and ruthlessly sacrifice his lay-brother, Julian by cooperating with the Satan-like Lawyer, who finally shoots Julian. Albee himself describe the play as ‘a metaphorical melodrama’. The claim of Tiny Alice as the Absurd Drama is, therefore, rather tenuous.

Theme of Tiny Alice:

Albee says, “It (Tiny Alice) is about all religions we create in our own image, and the personifications we make.” The theme of Tiny Alice is the search for true God. Julian, the protagonist is not contented with worshipping a symbol.

Julian’s anxiety to find true God lands him in the mental asylum, where he experiences hallucinations. Here he is still more confused. Julian is torn between his desire to know the truth and his illusions. He wants to worship God in the abstract form (not as a symbol), and he criticizes those people who create God in their own image and for their own purpose.

In the final death scene, Julian cries out in an anguish ‘God why hast thou forsaken me?’ It is then that he perceives Great Presence that engulfs not only the library hall but the Model also. He accepts Alice that is not Tiny Alice now, but the all-pervading Great Presence. This is the end of his quest and he accepts it.
8.4 Major/Minor Characters:

In this play, apart from Julian, the other characters are professional representations. They are not fully developed individuals. So they do not have names. The Cardinal, the Lawyer, the Butler are representatives of their professions.

The Cardinal:

The Cardinal is a cardinal of the local church. He represents church. When the Lawyer approaches him with Miss Alice’s offer of huge donation, he clearly shows his temptation, and loses his lofty bearing. The Cardinal and the Lawyer were schoolmates, and not only that they know each other very well, they are also sworn enemies. They indulge in slanging each other. We know from this that the Cardinal was perhaps a bastard child. He uses honorific ‘we’ for himself while talking to the Lawyer. But, when the Lawyer puts before him the proposal of huge donation, he forgets himself and starts using ‘I’ instead of we. He is a pompous, greedy man, who is ready to sacrifice his lay-brother, Julian, to get the money and conspires with his enemy, the Lawyer, to sacrifice Julian at the altar of Alice’. In the last scene, he leaves Julian to the mercy of the Lawyer. The Cardinal knows that the Lawyer is going to shoot Julian, but he simply goes away.

The Lawyer:

Like the Cardinal, the Lawyer has also no name, which means it is a functional character. He represents his profession, as the Cardinal represents church. But, the Lawyer is shown to be a vicious and a ruthless, wicked person. He and the Cardinal were schoolmates, but even at school they were enemies. The Cardinal describes him as hyena. The Lawyer is like Satan, the way he plans to seduce and finally destroy Julian. But, he is also in love with Miss Alice, the accomplice, in his plan. He cannot tolerate Miss Alice drawn towards Julian, their nearness and the idea that they have sexual relationship. The Butler describes the Lawyer as a cruel person, hard and cold. But, the Butler also tells him that lately he (the Lawyer) is acting like the man he wished he were. The Butler refers to feeling of jealousy the Lawyer feels. Though he looks ruthless and tough, he confesses to Miss Alice that it hurts him, everything hurts him. But, his feelings do not come in the way of his plan. He wants to assure that Julian accepts Alice (Tiny Alice), but when Julian says that he would go back to the asylum, he shoots Julian. He, thus, accomplishes his plan by exposing the
Cardinal’s greed and hypocrisy and sacrificing Julian at the altar of Tiny Alice, the Model.

**The Butler:**

The Butler is the butler in the castle of Miss Alice. He says his name is also Butler, but it is doubtful. Like the Lawyer, he too is a function rather than an individual. As Miss Alice tells Julian, the Butler is her former lover. The Butler is a breezy character. He is one of the conspirators in trapping Julian. But he seems to be friendly with Julian. Julian also likes him and considers him to be a friend. He says so while talking to Miss Alice. However, the Butler is one of the conspirators. He is not as ruthless as the Lawyer. But, he does not forget to advise or give hints to the Lawyer to go further in the plan to victimize Julian.

**Miss Alice:**

Miss Alice is a mysterious character. The Lawyer, talking to the Cardinal, describes her to be a young and beautiful, and an extremely wealthy lady, who is interested in giving huge donations to the church as well as to other religious establishments and institutions. When Julian comes to see her, she is in the disguise of an old woman, but soon she reveals herself to be a young and beautiful woman. She is one of the conspirators to trap Julian. But, she appears to be forcibly operating under the instructions of the Lawyer. She hates the Lawyer, and is disgusted with him. She arouses jealousy in him, making him believe that she is amorous engaged with Julian. Is Miss Alice her true name? We do not know. She is to be distinguished from (Tiny) Alice in the Model.

Miss Alice seduces Julian, which is a part of the plan. In play-acting this role, she at times appears to be really in love with Julian. She marries Julian as planned, but later tells him that it was a proxy marriage. She was substituting for (Tiny) Alice, the real bride. She is only the illusion. She teases Julian and, finally, rejects him. In the last scene she tries to comfort him as he is dying. In the camp of the villains, she is a more lively character than any one. She is witty, teasing and playful.

**Julian:**

Julian is the protagonist in this play. When we come across him in the play, he is a lay-Brother in the church acting as a secretary to the Cardinal. Julian had a crisis of faith before coming to the church. He could not reconcile himself with the image of
God created by people for their use in their own image. They did not worship God, but only the symbol. As a result of this crisis he became uneasy and admitted himself into a mental asylum. He went through hallucinatory experiences. Which he could not distinguish from reality. As a young man he always wanted to be of service to others. He took pride in it. He almost imposed his service on others. This, of course, did not help him. He came out of the asylum realizing that his faith is his sanity. They are one and the same.

Julian is sent to Miss Alice for making arrangement for the transfer of the money of the donation. Julian is very simple and straightforward. The Lawyer tries to find out from him what happened during the six years untraceable in his record. Julian refuses to answer, but later he talks about that period with the Butler and later with Miss Alice.

Julian is seduced by Miss Alice, and he agrees to marry her. He has no idea at all that through Miss Alice he is being married to (Tiny) Alice in the model. Julian is gullible and becomes a play-thing in the hands of the Lawyer, Miss Alice and the Butler. They urge him to accept his marriage with Alice. He at first refuses to do so. But as he lies there dying, he has a vision of Great Presence, which pervades the model as well as the hall and he finally accepts, what he calls Alice/God.

1. Illusion and Reality:

Julian, the main character in the play, is torn between his desire to know the truth and his illusions. He claims to respect only that which is real. But, at the same time, he is drawn to the world of his imagination. He wants to worship God in the abstract form, and he criticizes those people who create God in their own image for their own purpose. This incompatibility of illusion and reality caused him to lose his faith, and his sanity, forcing him to live in the mental asylum. While in the asylum, he experiences greater confusion about what is real and what is illusion. He is never sure whether the sexual experience that he remembers really happened. When he tells Miss Alice about this, she wonders, ‘Is the memory of something having happened is the same as it having happened?’ Julian later tells Miss Alice that the woman with whom he felt he had sex, was also given to hallucinations. She hallucinated even about routine, mundane matters.
Symbolism:

There are five characters in the play. The Lawyer represents civil law. The Cardinal represents divine law. The Lawyer, though he represents justice, is engaged in perversion of power and hypocrisy. The Cardinal, though he represents God’s love, he too perverts the divine law and engages himself in corruption by becoming Julian’s pimp, handing him over to the Lawyer, for huge amount of money. The papers transferring the money are signed on the day of wedding. The Cardinal tells Julian, ‘the grant is accomplished through your marriage-your service’. The Lawyer arranges for this transaction, obtaining a human under the guise of making a donation. As the Cardinal points out, though the Lawyer was a ‘Cheat in his examination in the school, a liar in all things, he remained true to his promise in this deal. The two men are made increasingly powerful through Miss Alice’s money.

The Lawyer is made out like Satan engaged in temptation of Julian, who is in search of true God.

8.5 Terms to remember:

- **ascetic**: the one living simple life avoiding physical pleasures.
- **croesus**: millionaire, very rich
- **gibberish**: nonsense words
- **obeisance**: respect, obedience
- **sycophant**: the one who praises the people in authority.
- **surrogate**: substitute (Miss Alice was a surrogate bride for (Tiny) Alice.
- **nouveaux riches**: newly rich people.
- **crotchets**: bad tempers, whims
- **celibate**: the one who avoids sex (for religious reasons)
- **connoisseur**: expert (in a particular field)
- **cabalas**: secret groups (planning some political action)
- **Pieta**: a pose holding the head (as Virgin Mary held Christ)
8.6 Answers to Check Your Progress:

1. a) The Lawyer has come to visit the Cardinal to offer a huge donation to the church from his client.
   b) St. Francis used to talk to birds, and the Lawyer was talking to the Cardinal birds in the cage.
   c) The Lawyer’s schoolmates used to call him a hyena.
   d) The Lawyer and the Cardinal were schoolmates but sworn enemies in those days.
   e) The Doll House Model was the entire castle within which there was a library hall, and within that library hall again there was a Doll House and so on.
   f) The Butler was the former lover and the Lawyer was the present one of Miss Alice, but she hated the Lawyer.
   g) The Lawyer wants to know from Julian the account of six years of Julian’s life.
   h) Julian admitted himself to the mental asylum because he had crisis of faith in God.

2. a) False. There were two Cardinal birds in the cage.
    b) True.
    c) False. The Cardinal and the Lawyer were sworn enemies in the school days.
    d) False. They were slanging each other.
    e) False. Julian was a lay-Brother in the service of the Cardinal.
    f) True.
    g) False. Miss Alice, at the first meeting with Julian, was in the disguise of an old woman.

Answers to Check Your Progress II:

1. a) Miss Alice hates the Lawyer because he is hairy and too impersonal, dry, uncaring and rubbery.
    b) The Lawyer suspects that Miss Alice really loves Julian and has physical relationship with him.
c) The Lawyer expects Miss Alice to behave the way he had told her.

d) Julian helps the Butler in the garden and in the wine-cellar.

e) According to the Lawyer, the Library hall is the replica of the one in the model.

f) Julian notices that the chapel in the model has caught fire.

g) The mystery is that there is fire in the chapel outside, and also in the chapel in the model.

h) The Butler warns the Lawyer about his emotional involvement with Miss Alice.

i) The Lawyer complains to the Butler about Miss Alice humiliating him using Julian.

j) The Butler has the appearance of a simple layman, which could be useful in the meeting with the Cardinal.

k) Julian suspects that the ease and comfortable life at the castle is for testing him.

2. a) The Lawyer and the Butler devise a plan to marry Julian and Alice (not Miss Alice) at the hands of the Cardinal, and make him part of their conspiracy. They intend to convince Julian to worship Alice. And if he does not accept it, he would be killed. But they should not tell the Cardinal about it.

b) As a child Julian had read about Christian saints being killed by the gladiators in the Roman era, or they are being thrown into the lion’s cage and the beast putting its big paws on the chest of the saint, its saliva dripping and the fangs ready to cut the throat. Julian has nursed such dream of martyrdom since his childhood.

c) Miss Alice knows Julian’s fascination for martyrdom. She tells Julian that the history of the church is full of the stories of saints who were martyrs. They were martyred either by the church or for the church. The martyrdom was thus only bloodbath to immortality.
Answers to Check Your Progress III :

1. a) Julian is confused because after the wedding he cannot find his bride (Miss Alice), and he is left almost alone.

   b) Alice, and not Miss Alice, was the real bride, so the symbol in the Doll House had no relations.

   d) The Lawyer is going to give billions of (dollars) to the Cardinal in exchange of Julian.

   e) The Lawyer clearly hints that Julian’s blood (his murder) is necessary to make the machine (of their system) run smoothly.

   f) The Lawyer, the Butler and Miss Alice were agents in getting Julian married to Alice (in the Doll House).

   g) Julian, after the marriage, is going to be the priest of Alice in the Doll House.

2. a) The Cardinal, who is greedy and corrupt has virtually sold Julian at the hands of the Lawyer and his gang. When Julian says that ‘God’s Church has been blessed with great wealth for the suffering world’, the Cardinal is embarrassed because he knows that it is not true.

   b) Miss Alice tells Julian that she was only substituting for Alice. Her lips were the lips of Alice. The physical pleasures Julian enjoyed were for Alice though through her. She was representing Alice. She says Julian belonged to Alice, not to her.

   c) The Lawyer and others ask Julian repeatedly to accept his marriage to Alice as the act of faith. There is no physical presence of Alice. But the Lawyer and the Cardinal say that they believe it. And faith is knowledge. So Julian should accept (Alice) as the act of faith, God’s will.

   d) Julian does not accept the Lawyer’s and the Cardinal’s argument of an act of faith. He knows they are cheating him. Julian tells them that he has not come so far to be mocked like this. He tells the Cardinal to stay away. Everyone, the Lawyer, the Butler and Miss Alice ask him to accept. But Julian tells them that he fought the nightmares, the demons and suffered years of despair not for this. And he decides to go back to the asylum.
e) When Julian talks about going back to the asylum (to the heartland, the world), the Lawyer realizes that his, the plan of the conspirators, has failed. Julian would not accept a symbol for worship. He was striving for True God, not for a symbol. The Lawyer has to shoot him according to their plan.

8.7 Further Exercises:

1. Examine the claim that *Tiny Alice* belongs to the Theatre of the Absurd.
2. Explain what conspiracy is hatched against Julian and who the conspirators are.
3. Did Julian’s dream of martyrdom come true? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Write short notes on the following:
   a. Alice/Miss Alice mystery
   b. The Lawyer
   c. The Cardinal as a representative of church.
   d. The Butler
   e. The Theme of the play.
   f. Tiny Alice as a criticism of Modern materialism and modern Institutions.

8.8 References for further study: