



SHIVAJI UNIVERSITY, KOLHAPUR

CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

M. A. Part-II : English

Semester-III : Paper C-7

Drama in English up to 19th Century

Semester-IV : Paper C-9

**Drama in English : Modern and
Postmodern**

(Academic Year 2019-20 onwards)

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Kolhapur. (Maharashtra)
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Preface

Dear students,

It gives us immense pleasure to provide you the self-instructional material for core papers VII and IX. Core paper VII is entitled Drama in English up to 19th century and core paper IX is entitled Drama in English: Modern and Postmodern. These papers aim to acquaint you with drama as a literary genre and impart you the comprehensive knowledge of major literary works and literary movements of different periods with the help of representative texts.

Please see the detailed syllabus prescribed for these papers. Each paper contains four general topics and four representative plays from different periods ranging from Greek and Sanskrit drama to modern and postmodern drama. The general topics provide the background for the study of the prescribed plays.

The list of reference books given at the end of the unit will help you to pursue your study of these topics. Eight texts prescribed in the syllabus are included in this book but they are in the form of study material not the original texts. The unit writers have made them simple and brief. You must read the original texts to get the feel of the original and understand them in the right spirit. These units are only notes for your guidance. You must refer to the original materials in the books prescribed in the syllabus.

We hope that the study material in this book will prove to be of great use for your study and advancement of knowledge.

We thank all those people who helped in accomplishing the great task of preparing this book for students of Distance Education.

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Drama in English up to 19th Century
Drama in English : Modern and Postmodern
M. A. Part-II English Semester III & IV, Paper-C7 & C9

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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 understand the unit in the right perspective. Go through the possible answers 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 keep you in the right track as you study the unit.

Dear Students

The SIM is simply a supporting material for the study of this paper. It is also advised to see the new syllabus 2018-19 and study the reference books & other related material for the detailed study of the paper.

Unit-1

General Topic : Sanskrit Drama *Mudrarakshasa*

By Vishakhadatta

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1.0 Objectives

After reading this unit you will get acquainted with :-

- ❖ Sanskrit Drama in detail.
- ❖ Historical Background.
- ❖ A general survey.
- ❖ An account of the representative playwrights and their work.

1.1 Introduction :-

In this unit you will learn origins of Indian traditional theatre particularly the Sanskrit Drama. Indian Theatre is mainly related to the popular culture and Indian society. The purpose of this unit is to acquaint the students to Indian Theatre which is prominently contributed by Sanskrit Drama. Though Sanskrit Drama and its ancient tradition could not developed in the later years of medieval periods, but it paved the way of development of Indian drama in several languages. It developed through the ages uninterruptedly. The Indian art and culture takes us closure to the rich tradition of India and genre drama has the main contribution in it.

1.2 Presentation of Subject Matter – Drama

1.2.1 Sanskrit Drama –

In Rigveda we find the various forms of music, dance and poetry, but we don't have any certain proof of the art of drama included in above mentioned forms. In Rigveda Pururava and Urvashi romance is significant. Sanskrit drama got inspiration from these romantic verses.

Thus Sanskrit drama got origins in Rigveda. All the Vedas were written in Sanskrit. Some critics believes that Sanskrit was the dialect as well as the authentic language of India i. e. 'Bharat Varsha' in ancient times. So as the beginning of the traditional ancient theatre of India is in Sanskrit language. It is also a belief that the Sanskrit Drama has its origins in the folk arts of the ancient period. Sanskrit drama and its tradition was faded by the passage of time but the folk traditions continued unrestrained. These folk traditions having variety as per the regional impact is developed since the ancient centuries. The details are as follow :-

- Ramlila & Raslila – North India

- Itra – Bengal
- Akiya Nat, Kirtana & Bidesai – Bihar & Assam
- Khyal & Kathaputali – Rajasthan
- Tamasha – Maharashtra
- Swang & Nautanki – Punjab
- Bandhajashan – Kashmir
- Karcala – Himachal Pradesh
- Bhawai – Gujrat
- Manch – Madhya Pradesh
- Kadiattam & Chabitta – Kerala
- Bhagwatmel – Tamilnadu
- Yakshagan – Karnataka
- Kuchipudi – Andhra Pradesh

All above different forms are still existed and they are flourishing in different parts of the country as on date.

Sanskrit dramas were faded in the period of time because they were mainly written or performed for the educated audience who could digest them detached and could understand and feel with enough emotions. The limited audience was targeted through those plays. On the contrary the folk art was flourished day by day because though the stories were taken legendary but the target audience was the common human being from common society which was large in numbers.

The prime aim of Sanskrit Drama was to bestow the strong expressions to the human emotions with forceful mode. The storyline was taken from the scriptures, myths, historical books and classical poetry through which the readers or the audience could get the experience of joy and happiness. Basically drama is the part of poetry. It can be called as visual poetry. In poetry visual poetry (Drama) is placed at the top, because it imparts the audio as well as visual experience to the audience.

The genesis (birth) of Sanskrit drama is assured to be in the Vedic period. In ‘Katyayan Shrut Sutra’ we find the reference of acting. In the Vajasaneyi – Samhita (Vajasameyi – name of the author, Samhita – script or collection) the professional performances by the Shailash (dancer & actor) are mentioned prominently. Sanskrit dramas were played in the age of Ramayana by the Kushilavas (actor–dancer) and in the time of Mahabharata Ramayan Natak and ‘Kuberrambhabhisar’ were played.

The scholars and analysts have the different opinion about the genesis (birth) of Sanskrit Drama. Indian and western critics have their own assertions about the Sanskrit Drama and they do not match neither with the Indian critics nor with the western critics. They established their own theories (isms) as per their opinions.

The following definitions of Sanskrit drama can be studied for the better understanding.

1) Dhananjaya’s Definition – (Dashrupak)

Awasthanukrutirnatyam, Rupam drishyalayachyate I

Rupakam tatsamaroped dashdhevia rasashrayam II

As per the above Sanskrit Shloka Imitation of the situation (stage, condition) is drama, the same act is in visualized condition then, it becomes dramatic form, through the elevation of the character it forms as a dramatic composition, which has ten various types.

2) Dhananjaya -

A mimicry of the exploits of gods, the Asuras, Kings as well as of householders (dwellers) in this world, is called as drama (Natya)

3) Dhanika’s Definition – As per the Critic Dhanik the following is the definition of drama.

Kavya paribadhadhirodatt adyavastha nukarashchatur

vidhabhinayen tadat mya pattitnatyam I

Tadiv natyam drishyamanatayarup

mityauchare neeladirupavat II

Performance of the hero (protagonist) in form of imitation (mimicry) of the four stages as bravery having sportiveness, Laughtiness, Courage and calmness with the

help of Gestures (Angik) and properties (Aharya) that entire part is drama and it is performed on stage so it is called as dramatic composition (Natak)

4) Bharat Muni had interpreted drama as follows –

Definition of Drama by Bharat Muni – As per Bharat Muni's Natyasastra Sanskrit Drama Consists Eleven Elements which are very much essential for drama.

Drama is such a composition which is having emotions (rasas) feeling or expressions (bhava), acting (abhinaya), behaviour (Vritti)

Bharat Muni's Natyasastra

Sanskrit Drama as per Bharat Muni

Drama is such a composition that actors and actresses should enact with complete emotions (Rasas) and feelings or expressions (Bhava) through acting (Abhinaya) by implementing course of conduct (Vritti) and tendency or inclination (Pravritti), rendering with ups and downs of the voice (swara) based on musical instruments (Aatodya) Songs (Gaan) as per situations and colours (Rang), as per emotions (Rasa) concerned with the story according to the script (Dharmi). Its total impact should be the accomplishment or fulfillment (Sidhi) of the play (Natak).

1.2.2 Characteristics of Sanskrit Drama

1. End of the play should not be in a tragic way.
2. Prose of Sanskrit Drama is mostly accompanied by the poetics which carries a lot emotions.
3. The king, the hero or any upper class character should speak in Sanskrit. The rest of the characters e.g. women, lowly people etc. should speak in Prakrit language.
4. The play should be consist of joy and sadness but the comedians (vidushakas) are to provide laughter.
5. Depiction of death strictly prohibited on the stage.
6. Eating, Biting, Scratching, Kissing and Sleeping such actions are not to be depicted on stage.
7. The dramatic themes are to be taken from mythological and Historical stories and writer is free to modify those stories.

8. Love is major theme of mostly all plays.
9. Acts are varied in number and length.
10. Depiction of nature is prominently applied.
11. To provide the relief to the tired, the mourners and tapasvis, is the aim of drama.
12. Drama is unification of all arts.
13. As per Bharat Muni – Drama should also become instrumental in leading to intellectual and spiritual development of spectators apart from providing them entertainment.

Dance, Music, Song, Dialogues should be in poetic manners as well as in prose style these are the mandatory ingredients of Sanskrit drama. It has aesthetic importance. The theme is always in intricate form of performance. The outline formula of Sanskrit drama is mainly common i. e. opening progression, development, pause, intricate action and conclusion. Ancient English Drama ends in tragic manner and Sanskrit Drama ends almost in happy manner, this is the counter difference in Ancient English Drama and Sanskrit Drama. In ancient English Drama the protagonist meets death at the end, on the contrary in Sanskrit Drama protagonist achieves the goals practically all the time.

Rasas of Bharat Muni :-

This is the main theory of 'Natyashastra'. Nine rasas signifies the nine emotion of human nature. Bharat Muni had mentioned only eight rasas 1) Shringara (love), 2) Hasyam (mirth), 3) Raudram (fury), 4) Karunyam (Compassion), 5) Bibhatsam (disgust), 6) Bhayanakam (Horror), 7) Viram (Courage), 8) Adbhutam (Surprised). Later on in 9th century Anand Vardhanam added the 'ninth rasa' that is Santam (peace) but it was fully developed by Abhinav Gupta.

1.2.3 Sanskrit Dramatists :-

1) Bhasa :- Predating Kalidasa, Bhasa was the famous and celebrated Sanskrit dramatist. He was mentioned in Kavymimansa on poetics which was written probably during 880-920 AD. Date of Bhasa is uncertain from which century he belonged that is also uncertain. His language is closer to Kalidasa, but it cannot prove Bhasa's date. Bhasa was one of the earliest dramatists. Bhasa was considered to be the father of Sanskrit Drama.

Plays of Bhasa are divided into two parts –

I) Plays based on Ramayana –

- i) Pratima – nataka
- ii) Yogna – Phalam
- iii) Abhisheka – nataka

II) Plays based on Mahabharata –

- i) Panch – ratra
- ii) Madhama – vyayoga
- iii) Duta – Ghattotkacha
- iv) Duta – Vakya
- v) Urubhanga
- vi) Karnabharam
- vii) Harivamsa or Bal-charita

If we go through above plays, categorised in both part we believe that Bhasa did not follow all the characteristics of Natyasastra. In many plays the end is tragic which cannot match the happy end and fulfillment of the expectations of the protagonist.

His other plays besides Ramayana & Mahabharata were as follows –

- 1) **‘Pratigya Yaugandharayanam’** – In this play the story is of the great King Udayana how he married his first wife the princess Vasavdatta.
- 2) **‘Swapnavasavadattam’** – This play tells the story of King Udayana with the help of loyal minister Yaugandharayana, later married the princess Padmavati, a daughter of the king of Magadha and thus made this king his ally rather than enemy. This story explicits that the marriages also are the part of diplomacy of the kings.
- 3) **Bhatta Narayana Mrigajalaksman** – A Sanskrit scholar and writer his age probably was before 800 A. D. He was quoted by evidence by Vamana in about 800 A. D. He referred severely Anandvardhanam. It is a belief that Bhatta Narayana converted to Buddhism. He was a follower of Dharmakirti. Dharmakirti

was Buddhist philosopher and was working at Nalanda. He was theorist of Buddhist atomism and scholar of epistemology in Buddhist Philosophy. Thus Bhatta Narayana has a scholarly background. He was a co-author of 'Rupavatara' with Dharmakirti. Bhatta Narayana wrote three books. Some incidents from Mahabharata were dramatized in six acts. The book was entitled as 'Venisamhara'. Duryodhana is the hero of this play. All the story of Mahabharata is included in this play. Draupadi was dragged by Dursasana clutching her hair at the Dyotsabha. Bhima took an oath that he would break the thighs of Duryodhana and with the blood he would braid the hair of Draupadi. The same story interprets the title Venisamhara. But all the play consists of whole Mahabharata. Total play is in poetic style. Though it is in undramatic style it is of impressive professional diction and has vigorous characterization.

- 4) **Bhavabhuti** – Bhavabhuti was a dramatist as well as a poet. He belonged to 736 AD. His birth place is Padmapura (Vidarbha). He was a scholar. His real name was Srikantha Nelakantha. He got education at 'Padmapawaya' near Gwalior. He was the poet of the court of king Yashoverman of Kannauj. His major plays are as follows –
 - a. **'Kalpi'** – It is a historical play he composed it at a place on bank of 'Yamuna' river.
 - b. **Mahavircharita** – This play is based on the part of Ramayana. Particularly it depicts the story of highly courageous man i. e. Lord Rama. The early life of Rama is depicted in this play.
 - c. **Uttararamcharita** – This play is also based on Ramayana. The later life of Rama is the major focus of this play. It depicts Rama's coronation, the abandonment of Sita and their reunion at the end.
 - d. **Malatimadhava** – This play based on the city Padmavati. It also a historical play. Malati loved Madhava. She made a portrait of Madhava and presented him as a token of love. Madhava made her portrait and presented her as an exchange. On the other side the King desired to marry Malati to a young one Nandana. There is a subplot to the play Makarandu and Madhyantika a couple who helped for the union of Malati with Madhava. Then the travel scene made the play interesting and the end of the play both

couples were reunited. The end of the play is happy. Here Bhavabhuti followed the characteristics of Bharata's Natyasastra.

5) Kalidasa – (C-4th – 5th Century CE)

Kalidas was a poet as well as dramatist. We don't have much information about his life. Just by the inference of his plays and poetry we can surmise about his life. Like other Sanskrit writers Kalidas poetry and plays are also based on Vedas, Puranas Ramayana & Mahabharata.

Kalidasa where he was living, his parents, his friends & how he was brought up all that information nobody could get. The scholars tried to get all the where abouts of Kalidasa by detailed description in his plays. The detailed description of Himalayas in Kumarasambhava, description of Ujjain in Meghadutam. Description of Kalinga in Raghuvamsa. We can guess through all that Kalidasa has spent all his life in North India and the province of Himalayas. In the book entitled The Birth Place of Kalidasa (1926) write Lakshmi Dhar Kalla (1891-1953) who was a Kashmiri Pandit he mentioned that Kalidasa was born in Kashmir.

Plays of Kalidasa –

- 1) **Malvikagnimitram** – This is a love story of king Agnimitra and an exiled servant girl Malavika. The king is already married but he is passionately in love with Malavika. The queen becomes furious by the lower social status of the servant girl. She disagrees and imprisons Malavika. But later on it is exposed that Malavika is true-born princess. Then the total story takes counter turn and the love affair of Agnimitra and Malavika made validate.
- 2) **Abhijatsakuntalam** – King Dushynta was on a hunting trip where he meets Shakuntala, Saga's adopted daughter. Both fall in love with each-other and marries through gandharva vivah custom. Later on King Dushynta is called back to his Kingdom. Shakuntala was pregnant. She was engrossed in the sweet memories with Dushynta, saga Durvara appears, but he was neglected by Shakuntala unknowingly. She did not performed the proper hospitality. Saga Durvasa cursed her that for whom she mistake he (Dushynta) would forget her. He would remember her only when he will have a sight of the ring he has presented her. The ring is swallowed by a fish while Shakuntala is travelling by the river. Dushynta has forgotten her. But the ring is recovered and Dushynta remembers his past and accepts happily Shakuntala with her son.

- 3) **Vikramorvasiyam** – The story of this play belongs to Puranas. It is a love story between mortal lover and celestial nymph. Mortal lover is King Pururava and the celestial nymph is Urvashi. Pururava saved Urvashi and Chitraleka from the clutches of demon Keshin. He fell in love with Urvashi. But Urvashi was summoned to heaven. The separation was unbearable to both. Urvashi was cursed and sent on earth. After many ups and downs Urvashi was allowed to live on earth as long as Pururava lived. The play, of five acts. Earthly and heavenly characters made the play interesting and closes with happy end.
- 4) **Meghadutam** – It is an epic poem but dramatised and presented several times as a dance drama. The story of this drama is Yaksha who is trying to send his message of love through a cloud i. e. ‘Megha’ in Sanskrit. The play is structured in the meter of ‘Mandakranta’. The Yaksha was cursed by Kubera for delaying service. He should leave, separate from his beloved with for entire year. The separation is unbearable to Yaksha and he sends his message through a cloud to his wife and when the year passes the Yaksha was free from curse. He has happy union with his beloved wife.
- 5) **Viswanatha Kaviraj** – Viswanatha was born in educated family which was well versed with poetry. Enact period of his life is also the problem like others. But the period of 1378 AD – 1434 AD can be accepted as the timeline of Viswanatha. He had a strong instinct as a libertarian. He was very easy in all branches of literature. He wrote poetry, prose, criticism and drama. His major works as drama are ‘Chandrakala Natika’ which can be called playlet or short play. ‘Prabhavati Parinaya’ was his full length drama. Sahitya Darpan is the most famous work of him. The aesthetic pleasure is the soul of poetry. It’s definition is “Vakyam rasatmakam kavyam”. The composition which gives tasteful (aesthetic) pleasure is real poetry. In brief we can say that Sahitya Darpan is most comprehensive work which is most famous too.
- 6) **Nandikeshvara (5th – 4th cent BC)** – He was the best theorist of stage craft of ancient India. He wrote a great book ‘Abhinaya Darpana’. It means the mirror of gesture. There are ‘324’ shlokas in Abhinaya Darpana. It consists origin of drama acting, drama, dance and the characteristics of dance. It is related to ‘Anjaneya’ creed. (tradition of the society named Anjaneya). The characteristics of an actor (a dancer) are analytically described scientifically by Nandikeshvara. So for as Indian ancient drama is considered dance is an inevitable part. Later on

the subparts are made by the concerned critics. 'Abhinaya Darpana' is accepted as the base of Indian classical dance of ancient India.

- 7) **Sudraka – (200 AD – 251 AD)** He was a king as well as the playwright. He was great warrior and elephant trainer. He read all Vedas and especially had studied mathematics. He had performed Ashvamedha Sacrifice (Yagnya) and proved his superiority. We don't have proof about his kingdom, his kingship and even his authorship of the plays. It is a myth only that he was a king he died by self immolation after encrowning his son as a king.

Sudraka's Plays –

- i) **Mrichchhakatika (The little clay cart)** – The play is set around the Ujjaini (ancient city). Young Brahmin Charudatta falls in love with a Nagarvadhu. It means the bride of the city. In those days it was a tradition that the most beautiful and talented woman was chosen as Nagarvadhu. That was the prestigious status to that woman. Name of that Nagarvadhu was Vasantsena. She was respected like a queen or Goddess. King Palaka's younger brother Samsthanaka intervened and the story has many ups and down. Charudatta was arrested for killing Vasantsena. At the time of the execution Vasantsena appeared and Charudatta was set free. Good Prince Aryaka desposed king Palaka and arrested Samsthnaka. Charudatta was set free and appointed on the honourable post in the court.
- ii) **Vinavasavadatta** – King Chintamani's son Kandarpaketu is dream he has a vision of a most beautiful girl he falls in love with her. When he awakens from dream, he decides to search the girl. Makaranda become ready to help. After paintaking journey he searches her. She also comes across the same dream. Both fall in love with each-other. The dream story is revealed by the bird. Vasawadatta's father king Sringarsekhara has arranged her marriage with Pushpaketu Kandarketu and Vasavadatta flee. Then the calamities falls upon them. After struggle they successfully marries with the consent of Sringarasekhara.
- iii) **Bhana (one act monologue)** – Bhana is an innovative one act monologue in those days. Only one character named Vita is talking with imagery character and repeating the answers given by those characters to the audience. The single character creates number of characters with mono-acting. It is called as

‘Ekaharya Abhinaya’. It courtesan (a whore or a heroine) sends a person on errand (travel to give the message) to the noble friend. This is the only story of the short play – ‘Bhana’.

8) **Vishakhadatta –**

Like all above Vishakhadatta was also a famous poet and dramatist. Vishakhadatta belonged to **750AD**. He wrote two plays Mudraraksasa and Devichandraguptam. The plays were written in Sanskrit language by using beautiful words. He narrated his father and grandfather as characters in Mudraraksasa. Not much information is available about Vishakhadatta. He was a scholar he used metres and figures of speech in an excellent way. He had studied logic, astrology, philosophy and dramaturgy theory and practice of dramatic composition.

He used all his knowledge skillfully and politely. His plays are fine blendings of high and unorthodox themes outwitting of the characters, intrigues, love, affection, action, reaction etc.

His plays –

- 1) **Mudrarakshasa** – This play is based on the protagonist Amatyarakhsa. There are many characters political themes, controversial, scenes songs, prose dialogues etc. we are going to study this play in next unit in detail.
- 2) **Devichandraguptam** – This is his second play. The later years of life of Chandragupta are presented in this play. But the concept and theme both are the same as they are in Mudrarakshasa. King Shaka treacherously defeated King Ramgupta and put peace treaty before him. He will excuse Ramgupta and offers peace if he surrenders his beautiful queen Dhruva-devi. Ramagupta agrees it. But Chandragupta is against. He informs Ramagupta that he will go to Shaka in disguise of a woman. But Ramagupta says he will give away his queen like a straw. But Chandragupta goes in disguise of a woman and kills Shaka. The people of the kingdom are very reluctant for Ramagupta’s decision of surrounding Dhruva-devi to Shaka. On the contrary they were very happy with Chandragupta as he killed Shaka. Ramagupta grows jealous of Chandragupta. In the extreme anger Chandragupta kills Ramagupta and marries Dhruvadevi and the people happily accept the marriage of Chandragupta and queen Dhruvadevi.

Thus the Sanskrit drama got origins from the ancient folk drama and flourished in the ancient era. Sanskrit drama paved a way for the Indian Drama and many writers of various languages got inspiration and enriched the genre drama and developed it dimensionally.

1.2.4 Check your progress

I) Match the pairs.

(Column 'A' contains the folk art forms of ancient drama, and the column 'B' contains the area where they flourished)

A	B
1) Ramlila & Raslila	- Andhra Pradesh
2) Itra	- Karnataka
3) Akiya Natyam, Kirtana & Bidesai	- Tamilnadu
4) Kathaputali	- Kerala
5) Tamasha	- Madhya Pradesh
6) Swang and Nautanki	- Gujarat
7) Bandhajashan	- Himachal Pradesh
8) Kerala	- Kashmir
9) Bhawai	- Punjab
10) Manch	- Maharashtra
11) Kidiattam	- Rajasthan
12) Bhagawantmel	- Bihar & Assam
13) Yakshagana	- Bengal
14) Kuchipudi	- North India

II) Write the following statements true or false.

- Sanskrit dramas were faded in the period of time.
- Sanskrit drama got origins in Ayurveda.
- End of the Sanskrit play should be in a tragic way.

- d. Folk traditions in India were not faded by the passage of time but they continued undertrained.
- e. Sanskrit dramas were played since the age of Ramayana.

III) Fill in the blanks with correct alternatives given below each –

- a) 'Dasharupaka' is written by _____.
i) Bhasa ii) Dhanika iii) Dhananjaya iv) Kalidasa
- b) A classic Sanskrit play 'Meghadutam' is written by _____.
i) Bhasa ii) Dhanika iii) Kalidasa iv) Sudraka
- c) _____ was considered to be the father of Sanskrit Drama.
i) Kalidasa ii) Bhatta Narayana iii) Vishakhadatta iv) Bhasa
- d) _____ was the first writer who wrote 'Bhana' (one act monologue) in the history of drama.
i) Kalidasa ii) Vishakhadatta iii) Sudraka iv) Bhasa
- e) 'Sahitya Darpana' the most famous book was written by _____.
i) Bharat Muni ii) Dhananjaya iii) Dhanika iv) Vishwanatha
- f) The stage craft theory Abhinaya Darpana is written by _____.
i) Bharat Muni ii) Abhinav Gupta
iii) Nandikeshvara iv) Anand Vardhanam
- g) Bharat Muni stated _____ rasas in Indian Dramatics.
i) nine ii) eight iii) seven iv) four
- h) In Bhana (mono acting) _____ creates the number of characters.
i) two character ii) a man and woman
iii) single character iv) one man & two women

1.2.5 Key to check your progress :-

I) Match the pairs.

1) North India

2) Bengal

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 3) Bihar & Assam | 4) Rajasthan |
| 5) Maharashtra | 6) Punjab |
| 7) Kashmir | 8) Himachal Pradesh |
| 9) Gujarat | 10) Madhya Pradesh |
| 11) Kerala | 12) Tamilnadu |
| 13) Karnataka | 14) Andhra Pradesh |

II) Key to check your progress :-

- a) True b) False c) False d) True e) True

III) Key to check your progress :-

- a) Dhananjaya b) Kalidasa c) Bhasa
d) Sudraka e) Vishwanatha f) Nandikeshwara
g) eight h) single character

1.2.6 Exercise :-

- Write about the various definitions of Sanskrit Drama.
- Write a note on the characteristics of Sanskrit Drama.
- Write a note on the impact of the folk art on Sanskrit Drama.
- Write a note on the contribution of various writers to Sanskrit Drama.

1.3 The play :- Mudrarakshasa

By – Vishakhadatta

Historical background of the play –

Mudrarakshasa is a political as well as historical play by Vishakhadatta. Original script of the play is written in Sanskrit. The play is translated by 1) Mr. Telang and Mr. Druva in 1900 2) Mr. M. R. Kale in 1911 and 3) Mr. R. S. Pandit in 1923.

Numerically it is translated by three different writers. In background of the commentary all three had given the same history.

326 B. C. Alexander the great invaded India. He defeated the small Kingdom of Punjab and Sindha. Before Chandragupta Maurya Dhanananda was the king of Patliputra 322 B. C. Alexander the great returned and on the return he was attacked by the same kingdom which were defeated by him previously. Alexander is known as a Sikander also. Many historians wrote that Alexander did not return alive it is said so.

With the return of Alexander the rise of Chandragupta and Chanakya prominently occupied the history of India. The established the Magadha empire over the ruin of Patliputra. King Dhanananda was cruel he hurt Chanakya. Furious Chanakya a brilliant Brahmine took an oath to destroy Dhanananda. Chandragupta was illegal son of Nanda and was the student of Chanakya. He trained Chandragupta by all dimensions. He made Chandragupta perfect in warfare, politics and social affairs. He has collected all the kings which were troubled by Nanda and formed the army. Nanda was defeated and was escaped. Later on Magadha empire was developed and spreaded all over India. Even Afganistan and Baluchistan were under the control of Magadha i. e. Chandragupta Mourya. Chanakya applied his Chanakyaneeeti (Machiavellianism) and handled all affairs as he was playing a game.

Rakshasa who was called as 'Maha Amatya' was the prime minister of Nanda. He was brilliant and above all he was very much honest to the Nanda Dynasty. Chanakya wanted him to be a prime minister of Chandragupta's court. He believed that under the guidance of Rakshasa Chandragupta would develop his empire and Chanakya himself would be free.

In 'Dasharoop' by Dhananjaya there are some references which explicit that Chanakya lived in the house of Shakatar and killed Dhanananda along with his descendants and made Chandragupta the king. In 'Samadeva's Saritsagar' the same matter is mentioned. But in 'Kathasaritsagar' Rakshasa is not mentioned. The historical story was adopted and converted poetically in the play Mudrarakshasa by Vishakhadatta. All credit of the story is rendered to Chanakya by Vishakhadatta. 'Vishnu- Puran and Kautilya - Charit' proposed the concept of Prosperous Country (Welfare State) which was thoroughly applied in this play. Vishakhadatta did not allow drab reality of politics along with that he honoured the human qualities, like honesty, devotion and affection towards the duty, life and character. The reality of Kautilya Charit has decorated with the suitable imaginary characters and events Vishakhadatta adored the play.

Thus the historical background mentioned by various historians of his age or of previous age Vishakhadatta employed or incuse in this play and made a play legendary.

1.3.1 Summary of the play – Mudrarakshasa

- by Vishakhadatta

Prologue

Drama begins with prologue, in Sanskrit it is called as (Upoddhata). In this prologue the sutradhara first praises Siva & Parvati. Then this sutradhara (Manager) informs that the play Mudrarakshasa is written by Vishakhadatta who was the grandson of the tributary prince of Vatswaradatta and the son of Pruthu. Further he expresses to the audience that now he is performing the play with the actresses and actors which are the excellent and will touch the great satisfaction of the spectator.

Further he declares that first he has to go to home to call his wife for singing. Then he enters in the house and is little surprised seeing the festival inside. Then he calls his wife. Then the actress enters and asks him for the further command. Now the two characters are on the scene the Manager and the actress his wife introduce the story (Kathopoddhata). Actress says that she has been invited by Brahmanas and they profess that the moon is to be eclipsed. The manager responses that it would not be. Actress explains that the prince Malayaketu prepared to attack Chandragupta. Here Chandragupta is 'Moon' and Malayaketu's attack (devour) that means he is the 'eclipse'. Behind the certain the loud voice strikes "Who is he that desires to attack Chandragupta while I am alive?" Manager explains that is the voice of Kautilya (Chanakya). Further he clears up the character of Chanakya as he is a crooked intellect. He perforced Nanda to get burnt up in the fire of his wrath. This is the anticipatory announcement of Chanakya that he will entangle all the enemies of Chandragupta and will enforce them to go on knees before Chandragupta. Then Manager asks the actress to get exit from the stage. Thus the prologue (Upoddhata) closes the wings by prognosticating (predicting) the diegesis (plot) of the story with its intense flavor.

Act – I

(Acquiring of Signet Ring)

As in the prologue Chanakya continues his roaring. He is informed that Malayaketu is assembling the army to attack Chandragupta. In his soliloquy Chanakya describes the strength and power of Chandragupta. He says who dares to thrust the hands into bloodstained lions jaw. If they dare so they will be destroyed more than earlier. Nandas are uprooted by the roaring lion. (Chandragupta) for the noble cause. Chanakya is angry because Rakshasa has not taken the lesson from destruction. Still Rakshasa is busy in assembling army with Malayaketu to destroy Chandragupta. Then he (Chanakya) controls his anger and thinks about the future. He is firm with intense thought that if Rakshasa becomes the minister of Chandragupta then there will be no danger to the empire. First he used poison girl against Parvataka the father of Malayaketu and killed him. But he carefully took precaution that all the blame should go to Rakshasa. Then he traps Malayaketu by surrounding with spies. All the so called loyal servants of Malayaketu and Rakshasa are the spies of Chanakya. It is also true that he is paving the way that Rakshasa should not be harmed though he is escaping and conspiring against Chandragupta. In other words we can say that all the web is woven by Chanakya, so as all the activities of Rakshasa and the enemies should be in favour of Chandragupta and would timely benefitted too.

After the soliloquy other character appear on the stage Chanakya summoned Chandandasa. He is suspected for giving shelter to the family of Rakshasa, in his house. Nipunaka found the signet ring of Rakshasa. This is the ring which is used sagaciously (shrewdly) by Chanakya. All the actions and events of the play are based on the shrewd use of the signet ring of Rakshasa. Chanakya writes the letter which should create the doubt in the mind of Malayaketu for his other king friends along with Rakshasa. He writes a letter without mentioning the names and that is sent to Sakatdasa, the loyal man of Rakshasa as his handwriting is excellent. Sakatdasa is unknown about the secret plan of Chanakya. He copies the letter with his own handwriting. Then it is sealed with signet ring of Rakshasa by Siddhartaka.

The matter of the letter is very cleverly arranged it is as follows -

“Greeting from one high ranking person to another. The rival has been removed, the best course now is to effect an alliance by granting the reward as

promised earlier. That would permit both to help their benefactors. And more some are after the wealth others after elephants, and still others after land. And more. The set of three ornaments sent has been received. Something has been sent by me, so that the letter only may not appear insignificant. Accept it-it is yours. Siddharthaka will tell you the rest. You can trust him”.

Then Chanakya orders Siddharthaka to allow Sakatadasa to escape as it would create suspicion (doubt) in the mind of Rakshasa about Sakatadasa. To prove himself to be most loyal servant Siddharthaka abducts Sakatadasa and hands over to Rakshasa. Now Rakshasa feels Siddharthaka could be a loyal servant to him.

The next chapter is of Chandandasa the close and loyal friend of Rakshasa. The main suspect Chandandasa is summoned by Chanakya. He is presented and is asked about the whereabouts of the Rakshasa family which is under the shelter of Chandandasa. No doubt Chandandasa is fearful but he is at content that he has sent the family of Rakshasa at safer place through Dhanasena. He tries his tricks as he used in the reign of Dhanananda. He asks Chanakya in what way can he help him. Chanakya notices Chandandasa's intention. He warns him that now they are not in the reign of Dhanananda who loved only wealth, but they are in reign of Chandragupta who loves only peace. Through this statement Chanakya makes clear his intention. He warns that if he wants to live with happiness and peace he has to follow the orders of Chanakya. He charges Chandandasa that he has given shelter to Rakshasa's family. Chandandasa rejects disdainfully. Chanakya threatens him not to deceive because the clouds are grown over his head. Further he says that he is not asking where is the family of Rakshasa because he confirms that they are under his shelter. So he orders him to present the family. On this Chandandasa is in dilemma because he is the close friend of Rakshasa, as per the friendship is concerned he has to keep the matter as a secret. On the counter side his own life is in danger. But after thinking he remains loyal to Rakshasa. He firmly replies Chanakya now the family is not with him and if at all it would have been in his house he would not have handover in any circumstances. Chanakya is very angry but Chandandasa says that he has prepared himself to pay whatever the penalty for the crime he has committed.

Chanakya orders to throw Chandandasa in the prison. Chanakya smiles because he knows it very well that Chandandasa would remain loyal to Rakshasa. The trap is coveted not for Chandandasa but for Rakshasa. The news of capturing Chandandasa would spread purposefully and Rakshasa will present himself to save the life of his

friend Chandandasa. Chanakya is contented that his plan is taking the desirable shape. He whispers himself indicatively -

“I have you where I want you, Rakshasa. As a wild elephant is tamed, so shall you be tamed and your strength and brilliance added to our side.”

Chanakya knows very well that Rakshasa is as powerful as the elephant. Elephant implies power but without a proportionate acuteness of intellect it is destructive. But the power of Rakshasa would be implied constructively for the prosperity of the reign of Chandragupta because Rakshasa has a power and the acute intellect hand in hand. With the curiosity of the further action of the play which is already designed by Chanakya the first act get closed.

Act – II

(What Rakshasa Thought)

In this act Rakshasa is eagerly waiting for his spy to get all detail information whether they occurred as he planned against Chanakya. In the very beginning of the second act the secret agent of Rakshasa in disguise of a snake charmer enters onto the forestage in front of the curtain. His real name is Viradhagupta. He brought the information of Kusumpur. Very suggestively says

“Amature snake charmers, riders of mad elephants and fool king’s servants flirts with death and invites their destruction.”

Further he refers that Chandragupta is guided by Chanakya and Malayaketu is guided by Rakshasa. But the battle between them results with two counter ends. At one hand Chanakya’s intellect keeps stable the royalty of Chandragupta. On the other hand Rakshasa’s plans snatch away the royalty of Malayaketu. So as his meeting with Rakshasa is inevitable.

The curtain raises Rakshasa is alone on the scene. He is talking himself. He is very upset. He thinks that he worked so faithfully to Nandas but they have destructed completely. He had a due respect from Nandas. Now he is a slave of Malayaketu. He complains the goddess of fortune why she deserted the finest family king Dhanananda and turned to a low burn Chandragupta. But he believes that tables may still be turned. His family is safe under the shelter of Chandandasa that is the only comfort for him. He is anxiously waiting for his secret agent. He asks Priyamvadaka to look outside the gate whether anybody is waiting. Priyamvadaka informs that there

is a snake charmer and intends to see him, he is a poet and wrote something on the leaf, Rakshasa reads the poem.

**“ The bees drinks juice,
And sucks the flower dry,
The bee’s juice helps
Others by and by”.**

He understands ‘bee’ is his ‘spy’ and ‘juice’ means ‘the news’. He summons him inside. Viradhagupta in disguise of a snake charmer enters and convey the sad news. Chandragupta has besieged Pataliputra with the assistance of Shakas, Yavanas, Kiratas, Kambojas, Pararikas, Balhikas and others. They all whipped into action by the schemes of Chanakya like furious waves breaking on a beach. In the confusion Parvateshwara was killed by the poison girl you had employed to murder Chandragupta. Then after prince. Malayaketu, frightened at the murder of his father, had fled away. Chanakya ordered the carpenters of Pataliputra to get busy decorating the eastern gate in the honour of Chandragupta into the abode of Nanda at midnight. Entrance of the gate was already been embellish with the construction of golden arches. Vairochaka the brother of Parvateshwara had been taken into confidence. He was seated armed on the elephant. Chanakya was informed that at the front gate of royal palace has already been decorated with special care with the construction of golden arches by the carpenter Daruvarman. All that was done by the carpenter without any order, Chanakya detected the smell of conspiracy. Immediately Chanakya made the counter plan against the conspiracy. He planed that on the astrologer’s advice that Chandragupta would take place at midnight owing to a favourable juncture of star. Further he planned that Virochaka and Chandragupta would be seated the same throne. As the elephant entered the palace of Nanda, Daruvarman kept his mechanical gateway ready to drop down on him but that was Vairochaka not Chandragupta about what Daruvarman was unknown. Elephant driver holding a small dagger, reached Vairochaka to whom he had taken for Chandragupta. Daruvarman drew the bolt of the arch which had fallen down and Vairochaka along with elephant driver (Varvaraka) both killed by fate. Daruvarman was fallen down on the path and he was stoned to death by the footmen who were marching before Vairochaka. The physician Abhayadatta was appointed to prepare the poisonous medicine he prepared it for Chandragupta but Chanakya observed the

change of the colour in a golden plate he prevented Chandragupta to drink and ordered to taste by any other Person. He forced Abhayadatta to drink that potion for test and it was poisonous and prepared by Abhayadatta himself and he died consequently.

Then another plan to kill Chandragupta was made failure. The bed chamber : Chanakya entered and he noticed a row of ants from the wall the holding food particles. He had a doubt in his mind he ordered to set fire. The interior part was perished by the flames along with that the secret chamber was burnt out and the followers of Rakshasa appointed to kill Chandragupta in bed chamber all were suffocated and burnt alive. Chanakya spreaded the news that Sakatadasa had instigated Daruvarman to kill Chandragupta.

Siddhartaka helped Sakatadasa to escape. But it was apparently, in reality Siddhartaka was a secret agent of Chanakya. He pretended to be loyal to Rakshasa. Thus Chanakya is successful in his plan.

Viradhagupta gives the fresh news that Chandragupta is not pleased with Chanakya as he disregards Chandragupta's order. Rakshasa is very happy to listen the news. Rakshasa orders Priyamvadaka to send Karabhaka to Pataliputra for the further news.

At the end of the second act indication of concocted quarrel between Chanakya and Chandragupta, that is the production of another trap by the crooked (kutil) mind of Chanakya for Rakshasa and his team.

ACT – III

(The Concocted Quarrel)

This is the act which is the counter plot of conspiracy decided by Rakshasa at the end of the second act. The concocted quarrel between Chanakya and Chandragupta is deliberately designed because the enemies should get confused and in confusion they would make the mistake again that would be handled very cleverly. Reason behind the concocted quarrel between Chanakya and Chandragupta is very trivial. Moonlight Festival which was announced by Chandragupta is banned by the orders of Chanakya. It becomes the prestige issue of Chandragupta. Chandragupta calls Chanakya and asks why he has banned Moonlight Festival, Chanakya shows that he is surprised and says “Oh! Pupil rises against teacher”. On this Chandragupta

replies and says “No, the pupil wishes to know the purpose of the teacher’s commands”, on this Chanakya says “The teacher never acts without purpose”, Chandragupta asks him to explain the reason. Chanakya counts the priorities to Chandragupta which are far more important than the moonlight festival further he realises the meaning underneath. Chanakya explains Chandragupta the theory of three aspects of administration – 1) There is a sphere exclusively under the king. 2) The second sphere exclusively under the minister. 3) And third is that which is jointly controlled by minister and the king. The matter of the banning of the festival is under the sphere belonging exclusively to the minister, so as it is done. Chandragupta is very angry. Meanwhile the poets praises the king through his poems Chandragupta orders to give a thousand gold pieces to the poets. Chanakya objects by saying that it is a needless waste of money. Chandragupta angrily replies that he is not in the kingdom but in the prison. But further Chanakya explains that he got the message letter of the enemies. They want the elephants, cavalry, land and the money and they have prepared a plan. On this Chandragupta asks why the action against them has not been taken. Chanakya explains that all they are planning under the leadership of Malayaketu and with the consent of Rakshasa, further he says father of Malayaketu is killed, the blame is pointed towards us and if we arrest Malayaketu then the wrong message would go to the people. The another part is that we allowed Rakshasa to escape because the people respect him, admire his loyalty and devotion to Nanda. Now he can sting us the outside. But he has prepared the plan how to handle Rakshasa. He is doing all that because the first – class brain should not be wasted. We should tame him as a wild elephant is tamed. But Chandragupta shows that he is not properly convinced. He orders to make an announcement that Chanakya is disgraced from his post and further all matters would be conducted by Chandragupta himself. Then all other characters get exit. Chandragupta is alone he speaks himself that whether he overdid the concocted quarrel and all that pains him.

But the news to the outside is doing its work properly and it is expected by Chanakya. With raising the curiosity the third act closes the eyes.

ACT – IV

(Rakshasa’s Activities)

This act also carries the outwitting and conspiracy. As the conspiracy against Chandragupta is planned before it is implemented, the counter plan against the

conspiracy is already planned by Chanakya through his crooked mind. In this act the venue is the unknown house where Rakshasa has taken shelter and living secretly. He is talking to himself that he is so frightened even in the snap of a sleep he sees Chanakya everywhere. All the time he is worried due to the crooked schemes of Chanakya. He mumbles –

“Will this happen? – Will that happen? – Why not this? – Why not that?”

Thus all that fear keeps Rakshasa awake and the nights even pass away under threat. Now he is suffering from strong headache. He gets assurance that Chanakya would get success in all his crooked moves and he himself would be duped at all levels. But again he collects the courage and says that he should not give up his efforts.

Doorkeeper informs that Karbhaka is waiting at the door. Rakshasa allows to take him in. Karbhaka informs that prince Malayaketu has come to enquire after Rakshasa's headache. Malayaketu is outside accompanied by Bhagurayana and Chamberlain. Malayaketu is agitated because all the funerals of his late father are remained unperformed. Now Malayaketu enters in and approaches Rakshasa and asks about his headache. Rakshasa replies that unless and until his plans would get success his headache would not get relief. Again the reply of Rakshasa creates doubt and confusion in the mind of Malayaketu. Rakshasa further informs Malayaketu that the dispute between Chanakya and Chandragupta has created humbug in the mind of the people. The people which are loyal to Nanda would be active against Chandragupta and they would definitely be to their side and they would help their army. Chanakya will not be available to guide Chandragupta. Unexpectedly the proper time will invite us to attack and their army will get victory. Rakshasa knows it very well that without Chanakya Chandragupta is nowhere. Further he expresses –

“Everything is always in Chanakya's hands and when Chanakya goes, chaos comes. How can Chandragupta act when Chanakya is not behind him to guide him (Chandragupta)”.

Then the holy man is summoned to suggest the auspicious date for the army to march. Jivasiddhi the holy man suggests the full moon day from noon onwards. Malayaketu agrees and decides that armies can march on the auspicious date which will offer them the victory. But Rakshasa says that it is better to take the second

opinion of the another astrologer. He asks Jivasiddhi whether he is displeased. On this Jivasiddhi gives a significant reply –

“Why should I be displeased when the fates are displeased with some and pleased with some others?”

Thus the fourth act closes with decision of attack over Chandragupta.

ACT – V

(The Cunning Letter)

When the act opens Siddhartha enters with the letter and sealed casket (box of ornament) in front of the curtain of the stage. The casket is sealed with the signet ring of Rakshasa. He is pretending that he is on the road of Pataliputra. A Jain monk enters. As he is a monk his name is Jivasiddhi, Siddhartha salutes him. Jivasiddhi informs him that it is a camp of Malayaketu. Those who have the seal of signal ring of Rakshasa are permitted to enter. Bhagurayana is the authorised person to give the seal. He ordered that the person doesn't have the seal, will be arrested immediately by the officers of Malayaketu. Siddhartha knows all that very well but he is pretending to be unknown about that. Jivasiddhi sends him to get seal to Bhagurayana. Malayaketu enters and is worried about the movements of Rakshasa. Chanakya is far from Chandragupta so he doubts that Rakshasa would get closed to Chandragupta as a loyal consultant. Jivasiddhi asks the permission for seal and he is in front of Malayaketu and Bhagurayana, as Bhagurayana knows that Jivasiddhi is the friend of Rakshasa, he asks him why he didn't follow the mission allotted him by Rakshasa. Jivasiddhi behaves in such a way that Malayaketu suspects him. It happens accordingly. He is forced to tell the truth. Now Siddhiki speaks which is directed by Chanakya. He says that Rakshasa has secretly appointed a poison girl to assassinate Parvateshwara. Malayaketu is shocked to hear the news. As Chanakya expected the anger of Malayaketu switched over from Chanakya to Rakshasa. Thus the doubt of Malayaketu becomes stronger towards Rakshasa. He cancels the plan of Rakshasa to attack on Chandragupta. In reality Chanakya promised Parvateshwara to offer half of the kingdom for helping Chandragupta. But Chanakya was not ready to offer so he poisoned Parvateshwara through a poison girl and he is successful to impose the accuse over Rakshasa. So far as the plan of Chanakya is concerned it is an achievement for him. Malayaketu accuses Rakshasa as a killer of his father. Movements and behaviour of Jivasiddhi, Siddhartaka and Bhagurayana all that is the

part of the trap which is the mind game of Chanakya. All above persons appeared to be the enemies of Chanakya and Chandragupta but in reality they are the enemies of Malayaketu & Rakshasa and are honest followers of Chanakya and Chandragupta.

The signet ring of Rakshasa which is stolen through the spy of Chanakya is used against Malayaketu and Rakshasa himself. The enigmatic (mysteries) letter is sent by Chanakya which is imprinted the seal of signet ring of Rakshasa with the following details – that the high – ranking persons of the alliance of Malayaketu expect their apportion as follows some wants the land, some wants the elephants, some wants the treasure etc. Malayaketu is confused and orders Siddhartaka to clear the meaning. Siddhartaka says Rakshasa sent him to Chandragupta with the same letter. The details of the letter are that five friend kings of Malayaketu Chitravarman (Lord of Kaluta) Sinhananda (Ruler of Malaya) Pusharaksha (Lord of Kashmere) Sindhusena (King of Sindhu) and Meghanda (from Parasika) are interpreted as follows first of them is Chitravarman and he wants Malayaketu's land, Sindhusena wants the elephants and Meghanada covets the treasure. Further it is written that if Chandragupta removes Chanakya, Rakshasa will be in place of him to advice Chandragupta. After listening all Malayaketu summons Rakshasa. He scolds him for plotting against him. Rakshasa knows that he can not explain because all the situation is against him. He knows very well that Chanakya has trapped him. He is unable to speak a single word. Malayaketu shows the letter to Rakshasa. Rakshasa says that the letter is fake and it is a clever forgery against him. But Malayaketu doesn't believe the pleading of Rakshasa. Malayaketu accuses Rakshasa as a killer of his father. Then Malayaketu orders Sikharsena than Chitravarman, Singhananda and Pushkaraksha all to be buried alive. Sindhasena and Meghananda are to be trampled down death by elephants.

Malayaketu tells Rakshasa that his murders are straightforward and he (Rakshasa) can go to Chandragupta. If he can fight with two that Chanakya and Chandragupta, then he can fight with three that, third one is Rakshasa. Rakshasa is very sad. He is punished for the crime which was not committed by him. Due to the conspiracy of Chanakya Rakshasa is forced to face the punishment. Rakshasa blames himself for all, because he has no proof to present his honesty towards Malayaketu. Thus with the plot and counter plot the act five closes.

ACT – VI

(The Fake Noose)

In this act Siddhartaka enters before curtain. He is quite happy and talking himself that plans of Chanakya are bearing fruits now. He is searching for Samiddharthaka his friend. Samiddharthaka enters both embrace each other. He is a beaver (hard working spy) for Chanakya and Chandragupta as well. Siddharthaka opens the box of news. Chanakya has played maneuver (secret game) in such a way that Malayaketu was forced to banish Rakshasa and order to put all the five kings to death, once who were his friends. But actually they are still Malayaketu's friends. Who was under the wrong impression by the trap of Chanakya and he is mentally forced to make blunders not the mistakes. The remaining kings got terrified. Mlecchas are captured by Chanakya. Then Samiddharthaka asks about Rakshasa. Siddharthaka reports that he might be followed by a first class spy Udumbara. He is trying to rescue Chandandasa. Siddharthaka and Samiddhartaka both are appointed as executioners to destine the punishment of Chandandasa. All this part of the sixth act is prelude. The curtain raises and another plan of Chanakya is waiting. Meanwhile a man is seen with a rope and he is also the spy planted by Chanakya. He is ordered to wait Rakshasa by hiding himself behind tree. The task is given to him the fake noose (death by encircling rope around the neck for suicidal). This is also the part of the scheme of Chanakya. Rakshasa is in dejected mood. He tried his best to save Dhanananda but all the fates are against him. All his efforts and games are boomeranged with the heavy loss. Now Malayaketu discarded him (Rakshasa). All the fates turned against him. But there is a doubt in his mind that how and why Chanakya allowed him to escape every time and it is creating a big chaos in his mind. Deliberately Chanakya kept him alive. Rakshasa is taking revise of the incidents. Now he is seated in the garden.

Now the another story is waiting Rakshasa to trap him to the final destination. A man on the scene carrying a rope in his hand. He tied the one end of the rope around the cross branch of a huge tree and he is trying to fasten another end of the rope around his own neck. Rakshasa prevents him and asks the reason behind it. He explains that his close friend Vishnudasa, made his mind to die because his close friend Chandandasa is being executed very soon.

The news of the death of Vishnudasa would be spreaded any time Vishnudasa went to the Majesty early in the morning and begged to free Chandandasa and altered all his money in turn of the freedom of Chandandasa. But the Majesty told Vishnudasa that he arrested Chandandasa for giving shelter to Rakshasa's family and he refused to surrender the family so he would be executed. Vishnudasa could not bear the shock so he is ready to die before Chandandasa is executed. Rakshasa concerns with sigh that Chandandasa is still alive. Rakshasa orders the man not to noose himself and asked him to go to Vishnudasa and stop him from suicidal, he (Rakshasa) would surrender himself and would save the life of Chandandasa. He says himself that Chandandasa's life must be saved not to be sacrificed. He will give himself as the ransom to Chandragupta. Both depart separately and curtain falls.

ACT – VII

(The Reconliation)

This is the final and reconciliation act. In this act very less action is presented but the explanation of all questions in the mind of Rakshasa and the spectator are satisfactorily answered by Chanakya.

The act opens with the scene Chandandasa is being taken to the place of execution. Here the woman character that is the wife of Chandandasa is presented on the scene. Chandandasa pleads her not to get ashamed of anything. Nothing wrong is done by your husband. He is going to be executed for the noble cause which he shown to his friend Rakshasa honestly. Instead of presenting the family of Rakshasa he accepted the punishment of death. He is a true friend of Rakshasa. He embraces his son and advises him to go to such a place where there is no Chanakya. Further he tells his son that the death comes sooner or later in the life of every human being, but he is dieing honourably having done his duty towards a friend. (Rakshasa)

Suddenly Rakshasa enters there and announced that he is the man for whom they are punishing Chandandasa. Now he himself surrenders, the garland of death should be put around his neck instead of Chandandasa. He assures Chandasdasas wife and requests her not to weep he will save the life of Chandandasa his best and true friend. Vajraloman delivers the message to Chanakya. Chanakya appears on the scene. Vajraloman says Noble Chanakya's plans have succeeded. Chanakya salutes Rakshasa by touching his shoulders. Rakshasa says not to touch his body as it is made filthy by the touch of Chandalas. Chanakya explains they are not executioners

(Chandalas) but they are the officers of the king one is Siddhartaka and Samiddhartaka and are spies in his service. Here Chankya admits all the story is being planned by him. But all they were for the noble cause about the reunion between Rakshasa and the King. All the letters were written by Sakatdasa for him without knowing that he was being tricked. There is no fault of Sakatdasa Rakshasa sighs with concern that Sakatadasa has been cleared from charges.

Chandragupta enters with his retinues and also salutes to Rakshasa. Chandragupta confesses that if he has Chanakya and Rakshasa on his side, he lacks nothing in the world. Rakshasa is surprised to listen all that. Chandragupta offers him the sword of office as the Prime Minister of his court. Chanakya says if he accepts the sword Chandandasa would be free. There is no choice to Rakshasa he has to accept the sword. Prince Malayaketu is brought captivated. Chanakya refers that the matter is under the control of Rakshasa, he is incharge. Rakshasa requested to free him. Chandragupta accepts. Chanakya further announces that Prince Malayaketu would receive his kingdom and the coronation should be performed as soon as possible. His Majesty Chandragupta henceforth would act on the advice of his noble minister, Rakshasa. Chandragupta has again appointed to Chandandasa as a Chief Merchant of all cities of the empire.

Epilogue

(Bharat Vakyam)

At the end of the play the word of Bharata (epilogue). It is in honour of Bharata the father of Indian Drama. It is a belief that the king is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. This word of Bharata is spoken by Rakshasa as follows. May Chandragupta with his prosperous connections long protect the each against all calamities. This is the prayers to god. Thus the play closes with happy note.

1.3.2 Major Characters of the play Mudrarakshasa.

a) Chanakya :-

The most active character in Mudrarakshasa is Chanakya. His father's name was Canin or Chanak. He is the son of Chanaka so he was called as Chanakya but his name was Vishnugupta. His crooked policies entitled him as Kautilya. In Sanskrit, the meaning of 'crooked' is 'Kutil'. Name of his mother was 'Canesvari'. Chanakya

was Brahmine. He got his education in Takshashila the very ancient and topmost university of the world. As a teacher he started his career at Takshashila after getting the education. A very strange and controversial trait is his personality and character is that he got degree in Ayurveda as a teacher of Ayurveda he started his career. Later he started teaching 'Rajneeti' (Political Science) Then after he was appointed as a judge due to his firmness towards impartial justice he became the enemy of the evil people. He was truly a king maker. In the play Malayaketu mentions 'Chanakya is the backbone of Chandragupta', further he says

'When Chanakya is there the conspiracy stifles (Suffocates)'. Chanakya has the contrivance. (counter plan) of all traps and conspiracies. He was the writer of the book 'Kautilya's Arthasastra'.

Chanakya was called as 'Kautilya' but all his crookedness, intelligence, conspiracies, plans and counter plans were destined towards the strength, prosperity and welfare of the Maurya Empire. He was the teacher and the honest minister of Chandragupta Maurya. He was celibate (person who abstains from marriage and sexual relations.) and was living in the hutment outside the palace of Chandragupta. Truly he was a selfless person.

In Mudrarakshasa he is presented in a subtle way. Rakshasa was the honest minister of Dhananada. Though Dhananada was destroyed but Chanakya allowed Rakshasa to escape. He did not harm him, because he has a due respect for him. He had decided to convert Rakshasa's mind to become minister in the court of Chandragupta. He had firm belief that, Rakshasa would accept the offer and he would be the honest minister to Chandragupta. By his consultancy Maurya Empire would be flourished and would be reached to the prosperity. If we observe throughout the play Chanakya has created problems and they troubled and tortured Rakshasa a lot, but Chanakya has taken the extreme precaution that there should not be any harm to the life of Rakshasa. He misused the signet ring and made Rakshasa the enemy of Malayaketu. Even he played such a game that death of Parvateshwara (father of Malataketu) through poison girl should be imputed to Rakshasa.

Vairochaka instead of Chandragupta was mounted on elephant and was killed through Duruvarman. Varvaraka the mahout (elephant driver) who was planted to kill Chandragupta was killed by the bolt which was fallen on him instead of

Chandragupta. All that was the full proof plan of Chanakya against the conspiracy of Rakshasa.

The concocted quarrel is the height of the brain of Chanakya. On the trivial reasons that Moonlight festival banning and the prevention of the reward money to the poet created really the havoc in the mind of the enemy and the enemy tried to implement the plans. But again they were made unsuccessful with heavy loss of lives. Written matter of the letter sealed with the signet ring forced Malayaketu to banish Rakshasa. He ordered his men to kill Chitravarman and the four other kings. The leaderless Mlecchas were captured by Chanakya.

The last stroke was the Chandandasa's execution. Chandandasa refused to handover the family of Rakshasa to Chanakya. Chanakya announced the punishment of death to Chandandasa and ordered to execute. That was the effective step. To save Chandandasa Rakshasa presented himself before Chanakya. He requested Chanakya to release Chandandasa. Chanakya accepted the request with the condition that he should accept the Ministership of the court of Chandragupta by accepting the traditional sword. Rakshasa accepted helplessly as he had no other alternate. As per his own nature he was bound to be honest to the empire of Chandragupta. Chandandasa was released and made chief of the merchant. Malayaketu was set free and was reinstated as the king. Chanakya covers entire play whether is present on the scene or not present on the scene. His personality proves that he had no space in his mind for unnecessary emotions. He was always alert even in the deep sleep. Chanakya really was an outstanding and an incomparable personality in the ancient Indian history.

b) Chandragupta –

Chandragupta is heroic, quiescent (steadfast), energetic, talented and young. All the adjectives proves him as a hero of Mudrarakshasa. He defeated Danananda and overpowered Pataliputra. Through he is a mighty emperor of Maurya empire yet no conceit (arrogance) even touched him. As per the dramatics of Bharatmuni he is the perfect hero having all characteristics. He is one of the best emperors of Indian history.

So far as the play Mudrarakshasa his character is discussed by his followers and by his enemies too. He is presented on the stage only for two or three times in seven acts. His physical presence does not create any special impression of his character as

he is discussed by the all characters. His low birth makes the serious issue. Because ancient Indian culture does not accept any person outside the royal dynasty as a King. Chanakya who made him a king also mentioned his name as the King Chandragupta only once at the end of the play. He did not mentioned him as a king throughout the play. Even Rakshasa describes Chandragupta as –

“Bal Eva Hi Lokesmin Sambhavit – Mahodaya : ”

This child (Chandragupta) is strong in this world. Satirically he says Chandragupta is a child. But at the end of the play he accepts the offer of Chandragupta as a Prime – Minister of his court. It is a comfort for Rakshasa at least he is in service of the dynasty of Dhanananda. As per the historians the low birth maid Nura is the mother of Chandragupta and Dhanananda is his biological father. Thus Rakshasa has to be contented that though indirectly but he is in service of Nanda dynasty.

Chandragupta in the best and favourite student of Chanakya. Additionally he is the blind follower of Chanakya. He has sufficient knowledge how to deal with the people. He is a great warrior and always under the control of his teacher i. e. Chanakya. He is having all qualities of a kingship. In this play he is not Characterized fully. He is visual on the scene for two times only. But Vishakhadatta described him as a great king through the other Characters. Even his enemies though they criticize him but they accept his valour. Chandragupta is the real hero of the play because though Chanakya sets the plans and totally successful in getting victory over all enemies without war, but the benefit directly goes to Chandragupta. Really Chandragupta is fortunate that he has got such a teacher and supporter who was selfless and honest.

c) Rakshasa :-

He is the central figure of this play but not a hero. In the history he is called as Rakshasa. The real meaning of the word ‘Rakshasa’ is ‘Demon’ but he is cent percent the human being. He is Mahaamatya i.e. prime minister in the court of King Dhanananda. But when Dhanananda is defeated by Chandragupta he fled away. Though he is an enemy of Chanakya yet he is favourite to him. Because Chanakya has belief that Rakshasa is the only suitable person for the post of a prime minister in the court of Chandragupta. For the only reason he was not arrested and purposefully allowed to escape all the time throughout the play. In other words we can say that the total plot of the play is not to defeat Rakshasa but to persuade him.

The character of Rakshasa is fully controversial in the play. He is excessively emotional as he swayed away in any conditions. He is easily deceived by Jivasiddhi Siddhartaka and Nipunaka which are the agents of Chanakya. Due to the unstable mind he invites calamities. Unwillingly he takes the side of Malayaketu only for getting back the power of Dhanananda as he is really the loyalist. He is a great warrior and master of political affairs of the court. His character is developed dimensionally in the play. Throughout the play the total plot is around Rakshasa whether he is present on the scene or out of the scene. He is selfless like Chanakya. His only aim is to reinstate the Nanda's Empire. Even he is ready to scarify his life for that. He has an honest friend i.e. Chandandasa. In lifetaking condition Chandandasa is honest to Rakshasa. He is ready to accept noose for the sake of the true friendships with Rakshasa. That is the weak point of Rakshasa and Chanakya hammered on the same to compel Rakshasa to surrender. Raksaha does the same. He is ready to accept the sword of Chandragupta to save the life of Chandandasa. He becomes the Prime Minister of Chandragupta and by his request Malayaketu is pardoned and reinstated as a king. That is the destination of the play.

The character of Rakshasa is despondent and miserable. He is the oblivious person. Even he forgets what task he has given to his followers. All the steps he has taken are unsuccessful. He is defeated by all. He is deceived very easily by Chanakya. In the thematic bracket of the play Rakshasa is a tragic hero who is defeated at all the fronts. The western critics decides this play as a tragedy and Rakshasa is the tragic hero of the play.

d) Malayaketu :-

Malayaketu is the son of king Parvateshwara. His character is developed as a prince. He is not mature enough to understand the counter plans of Chanakya. Whatever he listens from his attendance he believes in them blindly. His father Parvateshwara was killed through poison girl by Chanakya. But it was insubstantially indicated that the said plan was made by Rakshasa. Without asserting Malayaketu conceded. He did not tried to cross check on the contrary he expresses in the following way –

Mitram mamayamiti nivrutachittavruttim,

Vishrambhatastvayi niveshitasarvakaryam I

Tatam nipatyam, sahabandhujanakshitoyei,

Ranvarthatoupi nanu Rakshasa! Rakshasosi:II

“I believed you Rakshasa as my honest friend and my father entrusted all his affairs to you, but you caused my father to fall along with the tears of his relations. You are indeed, a Rakshasa in the full sense of the word.” (It means in real sense you are Rakshasa)

In above words Malayaketu slanders Rakshasa. Rakshasa is totally innocent but he has no proof to prove his honesty, only in despairing voice he expresses his helplessness.

Ayumpari galasthopari sphot : I

Shantam papam, shantam papam,

Naham Parvateshwara Vishkanyanan prayuktvan II

“This is the pimple on a boil.

God Forbid, God Forbid! I never set

The poison maid against Parvateshwara”!

Thus Malayaketu has a misunderstanding about Rakshasa that is what expected by Chanakya happened exactly. Thus Rakshasa and Malayaketu both are trapped easily.

Malayaketu is very much eager to snatch the throne of Pataliputra from Chandragupta, and wanted to become king. Due to the impatience, incapability, in discretion and evil nature Malayaketu himself is responsible for the total destruction of his own. He disbelieves Rakshasa and ordered to kill five kings who were not only the friends but the honest followers.

Despite all his weaknesses Chanakya spared the life of Malayaketu and he reinstated him as a king. It was Rakshasa who saved Malayaketu's life to whom Malayaketu wrongly taken as his enemy. That way he is really a lucky person. He belonged to the royal family that was the only advantageous part by his own side.

As a prince Malayaketu seems to be immature. He has no plans of his own. He has to rely on the plans prepared by Rakshasa. Though he has taken Rakshasa wrongly yet Rakshasa helped him to save his life. He proved that he (Rakshasa) has

not killed Malayaketu's father king Parvatheshwara and he was not the enemy of Malayaketu.

e) Chandandasa:-

He is the close friend of Raksahsa. He is reputed jeweller of Kusumpur. In the past he had been appointed as chief of the merchants by the king Dhanananda. But Dhanananda was overthrown by Chanakya. He was very honest to Raksahsa. Raksahsa kept his family under the shelter of Chandandasa and he escaped. To clutch Raksahsa Chandandasa was only the bait. Through him Chanakya could easily reach to Raksahsa. Chandandasa is arrested and charged to help Raksahsa which is the stark enemy of Chandragupta. He has the alternate that he should report about the family of Raksahsa otherwise he would be punished to death. But Chandandasa is firm with his decision that he would not expose anything and is ready to pay consequences. It shows his loyalty towards his friend Rakshasa. His total character is selfless, honest and ideal. He loves his friendship more than his life. He is the only person who is true to Raksahsa.

When he is asked for the whereabouts of Raksahsa and his family by Chanakya he answers in the following words.

Chandandasa :- Aarya kim mam bhayam darshayasi

Santammapi gehe Amatya rakshasasth gruhajanam I

Na samarpayami ki punarsantam II

Chandandasa :- “Arya! Why do you frighten and intimidate me? I would not have delivered up the family of the minister Raksahsa, even if it were in my house. What then, when it is not in my house?”

Chanakya :- Chandandasa! Esh te Nishchayi?

Chanakya :- Chandandasa is this your resolve (answer)?

Chandandasa :- Badham eisome sthiro gichhao!

Sajjoni, anuchithaduajjo,

Antano ahiaarasth anuram I

Chandandasa :- Ay it is. I am firm with my decision.

I am prepared. I am ready to pay whatever the penalty may be for the crime I have committed. Your honour may do what befits your (high) office.

The conversation between Chanakya and Chandandasa proves how he is determined and firm towards the loyalty and friendship of Raksahsa. Later on, in the request of Raksahsa Chandandasa is set free and again honoured as a chief of merchant in the reign of Chandragupta.

Thus the character of Chandandasa is painted by Vishakhadatta with the broad and light touch. We feel proud for him as he is ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of the friend.

f) Bhagurayana :-

He is the younger brother of chief of army Sinhabal. He is a spy, and especially appointed for Malayaketu by Chanakya. He is really a warrior, heroic loyal and dutiful person. On the advice of Chanakya he became the minister of Malayaketu and makes him puppet. He deceives Malayaketu for Chanakya. Inwardly he feels sorry for that. He is the one of the persons who brings Rakshasa and Malayaketu at the dead end.

g) Siddharta :-

He is also Chanakya's agent. He is the most trustworthy spy of Chanakya. He is straightforward, clever and diplomatic person. He sacrifices all for the sake of the service to Chanakya. He accepts to become 'Chandal' (The person appointed for death punishment). He prefers to follow the order of Chanakya than anything else. He is also appointed in the inner circle of Malayaketu as a spy. All the spies seem to be working for Rakshasa and Malayaketu but they are planted to drag them to the dead end.

1.3.3 Notes:-

i. The Time of Action of the Play –

Events of the play seem to be the period of round about one year. After the fall of Dynasty of Nanda the all equations are changed. Total dynasty of Nanda is destructed in the battle and Chandragupta accesses to the palace of Nanda and captures. Here the play Mudrarakshasa begins. Murder of Parvataka, Sarvasiddhi's removal from the scene of action and Rakshasa's flight to the camp of Malayaketu. Then the end of the journey is with the reclamation of the minister (Rakshasa) of the

Nanda family. But this reclamation is in opposite Nanda and Rakshasa has to accept it in inevitable condition.

We can have the proof of the time of action of the play in the dialogue of Malayaketu. He remarks in the middle of the month of Margashirsha i.e. the month of December. Further he says that yet my father's funeral rights are not performed. That means very short period is passed.

If we go through the play right from the beginning to the end all the events are chronological conducted. Play is of seven acts, every act is carrying nearly the one month period. Every act is logically and timely depend on the previous act. The first act begins with the acquiring of Signet Ring of Rakshasa which is the major tool of the action of the play. Rakshasa is escaped already and he is preparing to attack Chandragupta with the help of his own followers which are honest to Nanda. The second act covers the mindset and the future plan of Rakshasa. He is purposefully informed by the spy of Chanakya in disguise of a snake charmer. How the plan of the murder of Chandragupta is failure and how the attackers themselves had to meet their own death. All the amount of this act is immediately after the first act. The third act opens after one and half month after second act. Another counter plan that is concocted quarrel between Chanakya and Chandragupta. It is only the inducement for Rakshasa. Would take such a step which would take him into the clutches of Chanakya. Malayaketu is also trapped by this concocted quarrel. The result of that is the another surmount over them by Chanakya.

Mind of Malayaketu is made suspicious about the honesty of the Rakshasa. Plan of action of the battle is prepared and the day of full moon is decided. It shows that this act is timely very close to third act and the action is also coherent.

The fifth act begins fifteen days after the first act. The letter sealed with the signet ring of Rakshasa plays a crucial role in this act Malayaketu misunderstands Rakshasa completely. He is wrongly informed that his father Parvateshwara was killed through a poison girl planted by Rakshasa. Then the message through the letter again malasthe chaos in the mind of Malayaketu. His five friends are his enemies and they are going to kill him instead Chandragupta. Out of rage Malataketu orders to kill them all. The fourth and fifth acts occur by the middle of Margashirsha.

In the sixth act the fake noose story is the last trap for Rakshasa which is immediately after fifth act. The seventh act is reconciliation. Rakshasa has to accept

the ministership of Chandragupta for the sake of Chandandasa and on the request of Rakshasa Malayaketu is set free and reinstated as the king. The maximum limit of time to the events mentioned in the play the span of time for the incidents may well be taken to have accupied nearly a year.

Thus the time of action is observed for one year and not more than that. The unity of action is carefully maintained with time line and the major character i. e. Rakshasa.

ii. Dramatic art applied in Mudrarakshasa –

As per Indian Dramatics fundamentally drama is organized on three major factors hero, theme and Rasa (emotions). So far as hero is concerned Mudrarakshasa fulfills partially the characteristics mentioned by Jagdishchandra Mishra. His characteristics of the play are as follows –

- 1) The hero interwoven the minor plots with the major plot and coherently carry towards destinations, it is carefully done in this play.
- 2) The presence of the hero should be right from the beginning to the end of the play, it is also carried out.
- 3) He should be the recipient of the success, but Rakshasa is defeated at the end.
- 4) The impact of such hero should be over all other characters.
- 5) The theme of the play should be around the hero.

Then the second part is the theme of the play. The aim of the play is taming of Rakshasa by hook or crooke. It is successfully done. The third part the rasa (emotions) theory. Major rasas are applied in this play except ‘Shringar Rasa’ (romance) So far as the theme of the play is concerned the romance is used to kill the king Parvateshwara through a poison girl. After all it is a part of diplomacy of Chanakya.

As per Indian dramatics Mudrarakshasa is a comedy. Comedy means the happy end of the play. But as per western theory of dramatics it is a tragedy. As per Indian dramatics main rasa (emotions) of this play is ‘Veera rasa’ (heroism or courage) and on the contrary western dramatics main rasa of this play is Karuna rasa (sorrow or compassion).

All the incidents of the play are around Chanakya, Chandragupta, Rakshasa and Malayaketu. Chanakya and Chandragupta are victorious everywhere. All the time Chanakya roars as the lion and that is the pulse of the play. Shringara Rasa is totally absent. Not a single scene is having any romance in this play. Plan counterplan and victory – defeat that is the equation of the plot of the play. Only one incident i. e. the punishment for Chandandasa is full with Karuna Rasa. The female character in this play are three in number.

One is shonottara the attendant of Chandragupta second is Vijaya the attended of Malayaketu and the third one is the Kutumbini (Wife of Chandandasa). The dialogues between Chandandasa and his wife come out with karuna rasa. The spectator feel sorry of the condition of Chandandasa his wife and his son.

All the acts are interwoven in such a way that the intensity mounts by every act and it destines with proper effect and intensity.

Proper arrangement of incidents proper characterization with decorative leyer, proper movement of the characters and the proper representation of heroism through, dialogues and actions all that lifts the play at the peak. Thus the play Mudrarakshasa is the excellent example of Indian Sanskrit Drama.

iii. The title of the play –

‘Mudrarakshasam’ is the title of the play in Sanskrit. In English it is translated as ‘The Signet Ring’.

The translation of the title of the play is really subtle. The title of the play itself opens the subject before the eyesight of the spectator or the reader.

In the history it was the customery part that the authenticity of any letter was based on the seal of the signet ring at the end of the said letter. Now a days we use stamps for the authenticity. But in olden days the signet rings of the authorised persons were used for the seal.

As per the Indian dramatics in ‘Sahitya Darpana’ the definition about the title is given in a clear way.

(Nam karyam Natakasya garbhi larthaprakashakam)

It means the title of the play should display or evince the implication or the connotation of the story and main plot.

In other words we can say that the title should give the hint of the story of the play. The title Mudrarakshasa (The Signet Ring of Rakshasa) not only gives the hint but makes us acquainted with the crafty intensions of Chanakya.

The spy of Chanakya found the signet ring which was slipped off from the finger of a woman when he was spying at the house of Chandandasa. Chandandasa was the honest friend of Rakshasa. It was only a coincidence that the spy got the ring. As per the Shakespearean theory it is a chance element of getting the ring as in Othello the scene of handkerchief which Emilia found in the bed of Desdemona which becomes the tragic destination of the life of Desdemona and Othello himself.

The play Mudrarakshasa is based on such an incident which turns defeat into victory and victory into defeat. Chanakya used this ring to write a letter.

“Greetings from one high ranking person to another : The rival has been removed, the best course now is to effect an alliance by granting the reward as promised earlier. That would permit both to help their benefactor. And more some are after the wealth, others after elephants, and still others after land. And more. The set of three ornaments sent has been received. Something has been sent by me to that the letter only may not appear insignificant. Accept it is yours. Siddharthaka will tell you the rest. You can trust him.....”

This letter has been copied by Sakatadasa a professional writer and friend of Rakshasa, and it is sealed with Rakshasa’s signet ring. Thus it became authorized.

Chanakya craftly did not mentioned any name in the letter. It is a major part of his plan. Along with the letter the ornaments (which were presented by Malayaketu) were sent to the concerned person. As per the plan the letter was purposely delivered to Malayaketu. The letter created a doubt in the mind of Malayaketu about his five friends Bhadradata, Purushadatta, Dingarata, Balagupta and Rajasena. Malayaketu took them as his enemies along with Rakshasa. He ordered to kill all the five.

King Parvateshwara was killed through the poison girl planted by Chanakya. But it was wrongly taken by Malayaketu and he blamed Rakshasa that he killed Parvateshwara.

The Signet Ring creates the problems in the actions and plans of Rakshasa. Due to the sealed letter Rakshasa surrenders himself before Chanakya to save the life of Chandandasa. With help of the signet ring Chanakya controls over Rakshasa and

compels him to accept the sword of ministership of Chandragupta. For the sake of Rakshasa Malayaketu was also relieved and reinstated as the king on the throne of his dead father Parvateshwara.

From the outset of the play very action and reaction of the characters of both sides all that is based on the letter sealed by signet ring. The development of the plot of the play from first act to the end of seventh act is totally woven around the letter and it is carried to the catastrophe of the play.

Thus the title Mudrarakshasa is cent percent suitable to this play.

iv. Mudrasakshasa a Political Drama –

Mudrarakshasa by Vishakhadatta is no doubt a political drama. The subject of the play is the history of political conditions of the period of Chandragupta Mourya. How the political condition handled and are turned in favour of Chandragupta that is the central idea of this play.

The play follows the characteristics also.

Political drama a work that examines the human conditions through the lens of politics or political affairs.

A political play used to deal with the political affairs.

According to above characteristics Mudrarakshasa carries them cent percent. Throughout the play writer holds the theme of political affairs. The play is of seven acts, every act is linked with the same theme. There is no interlude, no subplot in this play. The canvas of the play is vast but the proportionate incidents are woven in the proper plot. Thus it does not divert the reader or the spectator from the theme.

Dhanananda is overthrown with help of the collected army. Chandragupta is made king by Chanakya. The hidden enemies are hunt down by Chanakya and are punished. The task of Chanakya in this play is only to eliminate the enemies and to clear the way of Chandragupta. But the real motto of Chanakya is to persuade Amatya Rakshasa on the side of Chandragupta and compel him to accept the Ministership in the court of Chandragupta. Chanakya is successful in this task. All that he did it is related to the political affairs. If we go to the background of the play we find that then king Dhanananda was careless about the people of the kingdom. He behaved with the people very brutally. He had driven out Chanakya from his court. Chanakya collected army and attacked over Dhanananda and defected him.

Chandragupta was proposed as a king. Chanakya expects the king should be the real care taker of the people. He should look after and solve all the problems of the people. He should think about the security. By observing the ground reality of India at the time of the invasion of Alexander was very crucial. The country was divided into various kingdoms. No central power was existed. Thus the condition of India was very miserable. He decided that there should be one center of power i. e. emperor and all the kings should follow the orders of the emperor. There should be strong and systematic power at the centre. Chanakya's all movements were according to same ideal concept. Chanakya was very much aware about the political ethics. He did not violate purity of political ethics. He thought that politics does not simply mean diplomacy as a whole it means social reformation and it must do good for society, and only the development in every sector. It must nourish and cultivate the society which must bring the happiness to all the living beings of the country. The country must be made strong economically, socially and politically.

In this play the signet ring is used to diplomatically to defeat all the enemies.

Signet ring is found in the first act and the counter plan of Chanakya is prepared. In the second act the attack on Chandragupta is made failure. The death of Parvateshwara through a poison girl is purposely brought out by Chanakya. The concocted quarrel between Chanakya and Chandragupta over the celebration of Moonlight festival is intentionally high lighted by Chanakya himself in third act. Rakshasa's reaction against the concocted quarrel is developed in fourth act. The cunning letter with the seal of signet ring of Rakshasa makes Malayaketu and Rakshasa against each other. The fake noose incident compels Rakshasa to surrender before Chanakya. Through the fake scene of the punishment of Chandandasa Rakshasa is constrained to accept the offer of ministership in the court of Chandragupta. In exchange of the acceptance Chandandasa is set free and is made the chief of the merchants. On the request of Rakshasa Malayaketu is also set free and reinstated as the king. If we observe the play, carefully we find that all the characteristics as a political drama are effectively followed.

Here we may get angry over Chanakya for his activities but we must consider that whatever tools are applied by Chanakya they may be unlawful but they are destined lawfully. That was the real task of Chanakya. Thus we can call *Mudrarakshasa* as a political Drama.

1.3.4 Check your progress

I) Fill in blanks with the correct alternatives given below each -

- 1) _____ is traditionally identified as Vishnugupta.
a) Rakshasa b) Chanaka c) Chanakya d) Chandandasa
- 2) Chanakya was chief adviser of _____.
a) Dhanananda b) Parvateshwara c) Chandragupta d) Malayaketu
- 3) Rakshasa was the minister of _____.
a) Malayaketu b) Dhanananda c) Parvateshwara d) Ambhiraj
- 4) The signet ring which played a vital role in the play Mudrarakshasa is belonged to _____.
a) Rakshasa b) Chanakya c) Chandandasa d) Chandragupta
- 5) Chandandasa was the honest friend of _____.
a) Malayaketu b) Chanakya c) Siddhartaka d) Rakshasa
- 6) Throughout the play the total plot is around _____.
a) Chandragupta b) Malayaketu c) Rakshasa d) Chandandasa.
- 7) On the request of Rakshasa Malayaketu was _____.
a) punished b) imprisoned c) arrested d) reinstated
- 8) Chandandasa was appointed as the chief of the merchants by _____.
a) Dhanananda b) Malayaketu c) Ambhiraj d) Puraraj
- 9) Kutumbini is the name of the wife of _____.
a) Rakshasa b) Malayaketu c) Dhanananda d) Chandandasa
- 10) Bhagurayana and Siddhartaka are the most trustworthy secret spies of _____.
a) Rakshasa b) Chanakya c) Malayaketu d) Chandandasa

II) Fill in blanks with the correct alternatives given below each -

- 1) Events of the play 'Mudrarakshasa' cover the period of _____.

- a) two years b) one year c) three years d) five years
- 2) Nipunaka found the signet ring of Rakshasa at the house of _____.
a) Rakshasa b) Chandandasa c) Bhagurayana d) Jivasiddhi
- 3) Due to the letter sealed by signet ring Rakshasa became the enemy of _____.
a) Malayaketu b) Chitravarman c) Bhagurayana d) Chandandasa
- 4) The unity of action is _____ observed and maintained in this play.
a) carelessly b) partly c) carefully d) loosely
- 5) Mudrarakshasa is a _____ drama.
a) political b) social c) family d) mythological
- 6) Alexander the great invaded India during the time of _____.
a) Bindusara b) Chandragupta c) King Ashoka d) Dhanananda
- 7) _____ is the prominent rasa in this play.
a) Shringar Rasa b) Veera Rasa c) Hasya Rasa d) Shanta Rasa
- 8) There are _____ female characters in this play.
a) two b) four c) three d) five
- 9) _____ was killed through poison girl planted by Chanakya.
a) Parvateshwara b) Malayaketu
c) Dhanananda d) Balagupta

III) Match the pairs.

(The column 'A' contains the sequence of acts of the play. Column 'B' contains the major actions of the act.)

Column 'A'

- 1) Act – I
2) Act – II
3) Act – III

Column 'B'

- Rakshasa's Activities
The Cunning Letter
The fake Noose

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| 4) Act – IV | The Reconciliation |
| 5) Act – V | The Concocted Quarrel |
| 6) Act – VI | What Rakshasa Thought |
| 7) Act – VII | Acquiring of Signet Ring |

1.3.5 Key to check your progress.

I) Key to check your progress.

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1) Chanakya | 2) Chandragupta |
| 2) Dhanananda | 3) Rakshasa |
| 5) Rakshasa | 6) Rakshasa |
| 7) Reinstated | 8) Dhanananda |
| 9) Chandandasa | 10) Chanakya |

II) Key to check you progress.

- | | | |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1) One year | 2) Chandandasa | 3) Malayaketu |
| 4) Carefully | 5) Political | 6) Dhanananda |
| 7) Veera Rasa | 8) three | 9) Parvateshwara |

III) Key to check your progress.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) Acquiring of Signet Ring | 2) What Rakshasa Thought |
| 3) The Concocted Quarrel | 4) Rakshasa's Activities |
| 5) The Cunning Letter | 6) The Fake Noose |
| 7) The reconciliation | |

1.6 Exercise –

- Evaluate Mudrarakshasa on the basis of various definitions of Sanskrit Drama.
- Compare and contrast the character of Chanakya and Rakshasa.
- Compare and Contrast the character of Chandragupta and Malayaketu.
- Role of a signet ring in Mudrarakshasa.

1.7 Reference Books

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2) The Natya Sastra

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[Pub. :- Satguru Publications
Delhi – 110007.]

3) Bharat Muniche Natyasastra

A Critical book :-

Written in Marathi by – Dr. Saroj Deshpande

(Pub. :- Snehavardhan Prakashan, Pune)

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by

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Hindi Translation by – Parameshwardeen Pandeya

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(Critical Book in Hindi)

By

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Unit-2

Greek Drama Euripides's – *Medea* (431 BC)

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2.2 Life and works of Euripides

Check your progress

Answer Key

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Answer key

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2.5 Brief Summary of *Medea*

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2.9.1 Symbols and Motifs in the play

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2.0 Objectives:

After studying this unit, you will be able to

- understand the development of drama after Euripides.
- know about the life and works of Euripides.
- know the detailed summary of the play *Medea*.
- understand themes and characters in the play.
- know about the symbols and techniques of the play.
- able to answer the question in this unit.

2.1 Greek Drama:

2.1.1 Introduction:

Drama is a literary composition written to be performed by actors. In a Greek tragedy a central character called a tragic protagonist or hero suffers some serious misfortune and the misfortune is logically connected with the hero's actions. You've already read one drama before: The modern word "drama" comes from the Greek word *dran* meaning "to do".

The art of theatre began in Ancient Greece and flourished in the city-state of Athens in the 6th century B.C. The birth of theatre took place in the City of Dionysia, during a religious festival which honored the god Dionysus, the Greek god of wine. At this festival, the Greeks would sing and dance, dress up as goats, sacrifice goats, imbibe lots of wine, and worship Dionysus.

Greek Drama Origins-At this festival, the Greeks sung dithyrambs (or hymns) as a form of worship. Specifically, a group of about 50 people who officially performed the dithyrambs in the festival were collectively called The Chorus. Sometime during the 6th century, a priest named Thespis of Icaria added to the typical singing at this festival speaking and pretending to be someone else and thus became the first person to act. Thespis is thus dubbed the first actor or Thespian as they are called today to honor him.

The festival of Dionysus-Each year at the festival there was a contest for the best tragedies written and performed .The festival allowed three playwrights to have their plays performed in the tragic contests. Each contestant was required to submit three tragedies and one satyr play (a form of comedy that required the chorus to dress as the satyr companions of Dionysus).It is assumed that the tragedies were required to be in the form of a trilogy.

Tragedy is an imitation of a serious action, which will arouse pity and fear in the viewer. The protagonists are unable to overcome the obstacles against them, often due to a "fatal flaw" or negative character, which is often hubris or pride "Tragic Hero- A character, usually of high birth, neither totally good nor totally evil but possessing great characteristics and strengths, whose downfall is brought about by some weakness in error in judgment. During the festivities for the God, a goat was being sacrificed and the satyrs were singing the lamentation song for the sacrificed goat. "

2.1.2 The Literary Genre

Having already studied Shakespeare's *Othello*, it won't surprise you to learn that the word "tragedy" refers primarily to tragic drama: a literary composition written to be performed by actors in which a central character called a tragic protagonist or hero suffers some serious misfortune which is not accidental (and therefore meaningless), but is significant in that the misfortune is logically connected with the hero's actions. Tragedy stresses the vulnerability of human beings whose suffering is brought on by a combination of human and divine actions, but is generally undeserved with regard to its harshness.

2.1.3 Reading versus Viewing Tragedy

Tragedy was a public genre from its earliest beginnings in Athens; that is, it was intended to be presented in a theater before an audience. In the fourth century Aristotle points out in his *Poetics* that it is possible to experience the effect of tragedy without public performance (i.e., by private reading). Tragedy was still being written and produced in the Athenian theater in Aristotle's day, but the plays of the three great tragedians (Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides) and no doubt of other playwrights were also being read privately. Reading, of course, is our primary means of access to ancient tragedy except for occasional modern productions, which help us to a certain degree to appreciate its theatricality, but for the most part provide quite a different theatrical experience from that offered by the ancient productions.

Private reading of tragedy deprives us of the visual and aural effects, which were important elements of this genre. The author of a tragedy was not just a writer of a script. When his work was approved for presentation at the state religious festival in honor of the god Dionysus (the City Dionysia), the state assigned him actors and a chorus. The author then had to perform the additional tasks of training the actors and chorus and of composing the music for the various songs of the actors and chorus and providing choreography for the chorus. Because we usually read tragedies rather than seeing theatrical productions of them and also because our reading is usually in translation, we miss the following elements which are additional aids to interpretation beyond the script of the play: scenery, inflection of actors' voices, actors' gestures and postures, costumes and masks, singing, dancing, sounds of the original language and its various poetic rhythms. These handicaps, however, are no reason to neglect tragedy. We still have the most essential element of drama, the words, the playwright's most important medium of communication. According to Aristotle, "the plot is the soul of tragedy," and the plot is communicated to the audience primarily by means of words. You should, however, keep in mind that words are not all there is to tragedy. Use your imagination as much as possible in order to compensate for those theatrical elements lost in reading tragedy.

2.1.4 Tragic Festival

The Athenian theater was financed by the Athenian state as an integral part of an Athenian religious festival in the city Dionysia. Three tragic poets were chosen to present their plays; each presented a *tetralogy* (a group of four plays), three tragedies

and a satyr play (a comic entertainment to lighten the atmosphere). All the extant [still existing, not lost] tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides do not belong to connected trilogies, but are self-contained dramas. The tragic poets competed with one another and their efforts were ranked by a panel of judges. Aeschylus won thirteen first place victories; Sophocles, twenty four; and Euripides, five. Euripides's relatively small number of victories is due more to his unpopularity among the Athenians because of certain radical themes in his plays than any lack of ability as a tragedian.

2.1.5 Theater Space

The theater of Dionysus was, like all ancient Greek theaters, an open-air auditorium and, due to the lack of lighting, performances took place during the day. Scenes set at night had to be identified as such by the actors or the chorus; the audience, upon receiving these verbal cues, had to use its imagination. In general, the action of tragedy was well served by presentation in an open-air theater since interior scenes, which are common in our typically indoor theaters, are non-existent in tragedy. The action of a tragedy normally takes place in front of palaces, temples and other outdoor settings. This seemed natural to the ancient audience because Greek public affairs, whether civic or religious, were conducted out of doors.

The theater of Dionysus in the earliest days of tragedy (late 6th–early 5th century BCE) must have consisted of only the most basic elements. All that was required was a circular dancing area for the chorus (and the orchestra) at the base of a gently sloping hill, on which spectators could sit and watch the performance. On the other side of the orchestra facing the spectators there probably stood a tent in which the actors could change their costumes (one actor would play more than one part). This is suggested by the word *skene* which means “tent,” and was used to refer to a wooden wall having doors and painted to represent a palace, temple or whatever setting was required. The wall, which eventually became a full-fledged stage building, probably acquired this name because it replaced the original tent. The construction of the wooden *skene* (compare our theatrical terms “scene” and “scenery”) and of a formal seating area consisting of wooden benches on the slope, which had been hollowed out, probably took place sometime toward the middle of the fifth century. This was no doubt the form of the theater in which the later plays of Aeschylus and those of Sophocles and Euripides were presented. The actors

positioned themselves either in the orchestra with the chorus or on the steps leading to the doors of the *skene*. The theater of Dionysus as it survives today with the remains of an elaborate stone *skene*, paved orchestra and marble seats was built in the last third of the fourth century BC. This stone theater had a capacity of approximately fifteen thousand spectators; the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides in the earlier wooden theater were viewed by audiences of comparable numbers.

2.1.6 Mechanical Devices

Two mechanical devices that were part of the ancient Greek theater deserve mention. One device is the *ekkyklema* (“a wheeled-out thing”), a platform on wheels rolled out through one of the doors of the *skene*, on which a tableau was displayed representing the result of an action indoors (e.g., a murder) and therefore had not been performed for the audience. The other device is called a *mechane* (“theatrical machine”), a crane to which a cable with a harness for an actor was attached. This device allowed an actor portraying a god or goddess to arrive on scene in the most realistic way possible, from the sky. The *mechane* deposited the actor on top of the *skene* so that he as a deity could address the human characters from an appropriately higher level. This device was not exclusively limited for use by divine characters, but was employed whenever the plot required any character to fly. On the other hand, not every god arrived on scene by means of this machine. The Latin phrase *deus ex machina* (“the god from the machine”) is often used to refer to the appearance of gods by means of the *mechane* in tragedy. (Just so you know, the phrase *deus ex machina* is also employed in a disparaging sense in modern literary criticism to refer to an improbable character or event introduced by an author to resolve a difficult situation; this secondary meaning of *deus ex machine* developed from the practice of inferior ancient dramatists who introduced a god at the end of a play in order to untangle a badly snarled plot.)

2.1.7 Actors and their Masks

The actors in tragedy were hired and paid by the state and assigned to the tragic poets, probably by lot. By the middle of the fifth century three actors were required for the performance of a tragedy. In descending order of importance of the roles they assumed they were called the *protagonist* (“first actor”—a term also applied in modern literary criticism to the central character of a play), *deuteragonist* (“second

actor”) and *tritagonist* (“third actor”). The protagonist took the role of the most important character in the play while the other two actors played the lesser roles. Since most plays have more than two or three characters (although never more than three speaking actors in the same scene), all three actors played multiple roles. [Note that in modern literary criticism, i.e. how we analyze literature today, the term “protagonist” refers to the central character of the play, not the actor.]

Since women were not allowed to take part in dramatic productions, male actors had to play female roles. The playing of multiple roles, both male and female, was made possible by the use of masks, which prevented the audience from identifying the face of any actor with one specific character in the play and helped eliminate the physical incongruity of men impersonating women. The masks with subtle variations also helped the audience identify the sex, age, and social rank of the characters. The fact that the chorus remained in the orchestra throughout the play and sang and danced choral songs between the episodes allowed the actors to exit after an episode in order to change mask and costume and assume a new role in the next episode without any illusion-destroying interruption in the play. The main duty of an actor was, of course, to speak the dialogue assigned to his characters. This, however, was not the only responsibility of the actor. He occasionally had to sing songs solo or with the chorus or with other actors (e.g., a song of lament called a *kommós*). The combination of acting and singing ability must have been as rare in the ancient world as it is today.

2.1.8 The Chorus

For the modern reader the chorus is one of the more foreign elements of tragedy. The chorus is not one of the conventions of modern tragedy. We associate the chorus with such musical forms as opera and musicals. But tragedy was not just straight drama. It was interspersed with songs sung both by actors and chorus and also with dancing by the chorus. The modern parallel for tragedy is actually opera (along with its descendant, musicals), a dramatic form containing song and dance.

The chorus, unlike the actors, were non-professionals who had a talent for singing and dancing and were trained by the poet in preparation for the performance. The standard number of members of a chorus was twelve throughout most of Aeschylus's career, but was raised to fifteen by Sophocles. The chorus, like the actors, wore costumes and masks.

The first function of a tragic chorus was to chant an entrance song called a *parodos* as they marched into the orchestra. The entrance song took its name from the two ramps (*parodoi*) on either side of the orchestra that the chorus used as it made its way into the orchestra. Once the chorus had taken its position in the orchestra, its duties were twofold. It engaged in dialogue with characters through its leader (called the Coryphaeus), who alone spoke the lines of dialogue assigned to the chorus. The tragic chorus's most important function was to sing and dance choral songs called *stasima* (singular = *stasimon*). The modern reader of Greek tragedy, whether in English or even in the original Greek, finds it very difficult to appreciate the effect of these choral songs, which lack their original music and dance.

2.1.9 The Structure of Greek Tragedy

Tragedy has a characteristic structure in which scenes of dialogue alternate with choral songs. This arrangement allows the chorus to comment in its song in a general way on what has been said and/or done in the preceding scene. Most tragedies begin with an opening scene of expository dialogue or monologue called a *prologue*. After the prologue the chorus marches into the orchestra chanting the *parodos*. Then follows a scene of dialogue called an *episode*, which in turn is followed by the first *stasimon*. The alternation of *episode* and *stasimon* continues until the last *stasimon*, after which there is a final scene of dialogue called an *exodos* ("exit scene"). In general the *exodos* is a scene of dialogue, but, as in the case of *episodes*, sometimes songs are included, especially in the form of a *kommos*, a song of lament. To visualize the structure, here is the structure of a typical Greek tragedy, but keep in mind that some tragedies have one more or one less *episode* and *stasimon*; in fact, Euripides' *Medea* has five *episodes/stasima*; the specific structure of *Medea* is explained below.

Prologue

Parodos

First Episode

First Stasimon

Second Episode

Second Stasimon

Third Episode

Third Stasimon

Fourth Episode

Fourth Stasimon

Exodos, perhaps with Kommos.

2.2 Life and Works of Euripides

Historians posit that Euripides, the youngest of the three great tragedians, was born in Salamis between 485 and 480 B.C.E. During his lifetime, the Persian Wars ended, ushering in a period of prosperity and cultural exploration in Athens. Of the art forms that flourished during this era, drama was by many measures the most distinctive and influential. Among Euripides' contemporaries were Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Aristophanes, and these four men dominated the Athenian stage throughout the fifth century B.C.E. Though scholars know little about the life of Euripides since most sources are based on legend, there are more extant Euripidean dramas than those of Aeschylus and Sophocles combined. In his own lifetime, however, Euripides was the least successful of his contemporaries, winning the competition at the *City Dionysia* only four times.

Though his plays sometimes suffer from weak structure and wandering focus, he was the most innovative of the tragedians and reshaped the formal structure of Greek tragedy by focusing on strong female characters and an intelligent serving class. Although his contemporaries also depicted complex women (Aeschylus' Clytemnestra and Cassandra; Sophocles' Electra, Antigone, and Deianeira), Euripides concentrated on the interiority of his characters. Because of this focus on psychological motives, some have called Euripides the father of the modern psychological tragedy.

Euripides would often take a myth and delve into a problematic event or action that calls the rest of the myth's ideology into question. In *Alcestis*, for example, he takes a story of a wife's goodness and transforms it into an indictment of her husband, and, by extension, an indictment of the patriarchal values that the old legend promoted. His *Orestes* can be seen as a brilliant anti-tragedy, a work that questions the aesthetic assumptions of Greek drama. In this work, he includes the

happy conclusion of his original mythic source but leaves us knowing that the characters are undeserving of this happiness.

As one of the darkest and most disturbing of the Greek dramatists, Euripides questions authority, and, in his plays, he reveals a fascination with the oppressed, including women, barbarians, and slaves. His complex representations of perverse, violent, and monstrous women demonstrate his interest in the role of women in society. He further questions hollow or hypocritical ideals. While Aeschylus depicts a vision of history and teleology and Sophocles portrays heroes, Euripides creates real men with all-too-human weaknesses. His is a voice of conscience, unafraid to reveal the world underneath Athens' veneer of cultural and social advancement. The views expressed in Euripides' tragedies seem almost prescient. After years of warfare (the Second Peloponnesian War began in 431 B.C.E.) and internal political strife, Athens fell to Sparta in 404 B.C.E., two years after the death of Euripides.

At the invitation of King Archelaus of Macedon, Euripides left Athens in 408 B.C.E. (although he may have faced danger in Athens for his subversive ideas). In Macedonia, he wrote *The Bacchae*, a complex play that depicts the destructive power of chaos and the godly wrath of Dionysus. The play is arguably Euripides' masterpiece, but he did not live to see it performed in Athens. He died in 406 B.C.E., and in 405 B.C.E., his son returned to Athens to produce Euripides' last works at the *City Dionysia*. *The Bacchae* and its companion pieces won first prize.

I) Answer the following questions with one word/phrase/sentence each.

- 1) What are the major plays of Euripides?
- 2) Who dominated the Athenian stage throughout the fifth century B.C.E.?
- 3) Which is Euripides' last work?

2.3 Brief Introduction to *Medea*

The play is set in Corinth, where Jason and Medea have sought refuge with their two sons after the murder of Pelias. As the play opens we hear from Medea's nurse that Jason has married the princess of Corinth, and that Medea is devastated. As the play progresses we see Medea determine to take her revenge on Jason, deciding that the only way to hurt him as he has hurt her is to kill their children. Although she agonises over the decision, Medea does eventually kill her sons, as well as Jason's new bride. The play closes as Medea takes the bodies of her sons in the chariot of her

grandfather, Helios. She will go to Athens where she has been promised asylum by King Aegeus, and she leaves Jason with a prophecy that he will live out his life alone, finally to be killed by a beam falling from the rotting hull of his ship, the *Argo*.

2.4 Characters List

- Nurse of Medea
- Tutor to Jason and Medea's children
- Medea daughter of Aietes, King of Colchis
- Chorus of Corinthian women with their leader
- Creon king of Corinth
- Jason leader of the Argonauts
- Aegeus king of Athens
- Messenger servant in Jason's household
- Children Jason and Medea's two sons

2.5 Brief Summary of *Medea*

The Golden Fleece. Medea is a native of Kolchis on the edge of the Black Sea, a region which was identified by the Greek world as on the fringes of civilised society. As the daughter of King Aietes, Medea is the granddaughter of Helios, the sun god, and niece to Kirke, the sorceress famed in Homer's *Odyssey*. Medea's mythic life is generally activated by the arrival of Jason and the Argonauts when they come to Kolchis to capture the Golden Fleece. Jason has been set this seemingly impossible task by his uncle Pelias, who is attempting to prevent the young heir from taking the throne in Iolkos. Medea falls in love with Jason and uses her magical powers to help him overcome the obstacles which Aietes puts before him. She leaves Kolchis with Jason, and kills her own brother Apsyrtos in the process. During the journey home, Medea causes the death of Talos, a bronze giant who threatens the Argonauts.

Medea comes to Greece as Jason's wife and uses her powers to rejuvenate Aison, Jason's father. There are also references to Medea rejuvenating Jason himself.

In Iolkos, Medea causes the death of Pelias, either on her own initiative or at Jason's request as he attempts to secure his position (there are no accounts which

show Jason succeeding in gaining the throne of Iolkos). Medea demonstrates to Pelias' daughters (the Peliades) how she can rejuvenate the old, by killing an old ram which then emerges from her cauldron as a much younger animal. Inspired by this, the daughters decide to procure the same anti-ageing treatment for their father, and proceed to kill him. Medea fails to perform the trick for the old man, who thus remains dead. Medea and Jason are forced to flee.

The story moves to Korinth, where Medea, Jason and their children find sanctuary. The most famous narrative resumes when Jason marries the princess of Korinth, who is sometimes called Glauke or Kreousa. Outraged by this betrayal, Medea causes the death of the princess and exacts terrible revenge on Jason by killing her own children, leaving Jason childless. This is the famous version told by Euripides, but other variants of the myth give different reasons for the death of Medea's children which do not make her a deliberate child-killer. In some accounts Jason is the ruler of Korinth and Medea his consort, or Medea herself is the legitimate ruler. In the Euripidean version, Medea then flees from Korinth and goes to Athens.

Medea is offered refuge in Athens by King Aigeus, who marries her in some versions of the story. When Aigeus' illegitimate son, Theseus, arrives in Athens Medea attempts to poison him, but Aigeus recognises his son at the last minute and dashes the poison cup away. Medea may also have tried to set Theseus an impossible task to perform. After Theseus and Aigeus are reunited, Medea flees from Athens.

The final chain in the story involves one of a number of geographical moves. Medea may go to the East, where her son Medus/Medios/Medeios becomes the founder of the Medes. There are also accounts which make Medea return to Kolchis. Her final resting place is said to be Elysion, the paradise afterlife, where she becomes the wife of Achilles.

2.6 Chapter-Wise Summary of *Medea*

Opening scene (*prologos*) 1-130

The prologue consists of three distinct but interconnected parts: a formal opening speech by the Nurse (1-48), a dialogue-scene between the Nurse and the Paidagogos (49-95), and a lyric exchange (sung and chanted anapaests) between

Medea and the Nurse (96-130). The Nurse's opening remarks on the mythical background to the play (the Argo's voyage, the death of Pelias, Jason and Medea's exile to Corinth) are remarkable for being an extended wish that the legendary past be undone: 'If only the Argo had never sailed .. .' (1-15). Significantly, the Nurse's monologue introduces us to the dramatic situation from a perspective that is sympathetic to Medea: Jason, she says, has betrayed his wife and acne by marrying Creon's daughter. Medea now abandoned, bewails Jason's broken oaths and false promises, an expression of Jason's treachery that will recur throughout the play. Though Medea does not appear in the opening scene, the Nurse vividly pictures her off-stage condition inside the house, where she lies weeping and refusing to eat or see friends. The house is thus made a symbol of Medea's desolation and sense of betrayal.

The Nurse's speech is programmatic for the entire plot-structure in another important respect, for she raises the fearful possibility of Medea harming her own children: 'She hates her children and does not delight to see them. The entry of the Paidagogos (literally 'child-leader') with Medea and Jason's two sons sharpens the foreboding of maternal violence by showing us its potential victims. The focus on innocent childhood is intensified by the identity of the two speakers, Medea's childhood Nurse and the tutor of Medea's own children. Moreover, this is the only scene in extant tragedy between two slaves, and their view of the domestic crisis 'from below' generates a particular sympathy for Medea and her children. The familiarity of their conversation contrasts with the Nurse's formal monologue, creating a more intimate domestic atmosphere. The reluctant Paidagogos is forced to reveal that Creon has another blow in store for Medea: she and her children are to be exiled from Corinth (61-73). Both slaves find Creon's decision cruel and excessive, and when the Nurse wonders that Jason can allow his children to be banished, the Paidagogos sums up their father's new loyalties: 'Old family ties have been left behind for new ones; that man is no friend to our house' (76-7). By urging the Nurse not to tell Medea the bad news, the Paidagogos creates even more sympathy for her. Since from Medea's first entry, the audience knows that there is more distress in store for her. The Nurse breaks off the dialogue by sending the children back into the house, but she instructs the Paidagogos to keep them well away from Medea.

The children's movement towards the house is accompanied by Medea's first cries of despair from inside it. The effect is ominous, as Medea's sons enter a house

of lamentation. The spoken iambics of the slaves' dialogue give way to Medea's agitated lyric anapaests and the Nurse's less frantic, but still emotionally heightened, recitative (or chanted) anapaests. While Medea wishes she were dead, the Nurse hurries the children into the house and warns them not to approach their mother, whose spirit she describes as 'swollen [in anger], hard to resist' (109). The adjectives well express Medea's formidable temper. As the children exit, Medea wishes they too would die with their father: 'may the whole house be destroyed!', she screams from within (114). Dreading that innocent children might be punished for the sins of their father, the Nurse now criticises Medea from her low social position, relating her mistress's savage temper to her insulted royal status.

First choral song (*parodos*) 131-213

In response to Medea's cries the Chorus of fifteen Corinthian women enter from the city. The prologue's gradual movement from individual speech to share a song and recitative makes for a skilful transition to the Chorus' entrance song. At first, they sing and dance in the anapaestic metre used by Medea and the Nurse, but quickly move into dactylic iambic and then more elaborate polymetric forms, as they develop their own distinctive voice within the action. The Chorus is sympathetic to Medea and anxious for the welfare of her household: it is immediately clear that their female choral identity will have an important influence on their response to Medea's crisis. The Nurse replies, 'There is no household; it's gone' (139), but her measured explanation is followed by Medea's impassioned cry from inside the house, wishing that she were dead.

The Chorus now sing the first of two metrically identical songs, the first (*strophe*) directed towards Medea, the second (*antistrophe*) towards the Nurse. In the strophe they criticise Medea's desire for death, calling her a 'foolish woman' (152), but they also reassure her that Zeus will defend her cause. In her reply Medea takes up the Chorus' invocation of Zeus, Earth, and light, the gods of oath-taking (148, 157), and calls upon The mis and Artemis to witness Jason's betrayal of his pledge. She wishes once more for vengeance upon Jason. Significantly, however; she also envisages the destruction of Jason's new bride and the royal palace. Medea's off-stage cries thus raise multiple targets for her anger: herself, her children, Jason, Creon's daughter, and the royal household. By having Medea pray for a revenge that has not yet taken firm shape, suspense is created over the identity of her final victims. As the

Nurse goes in to speak with her mistress, the Chorus recalls Medea's curses upon Jason and her invocations of divine support.

Second scene (first *epeisodion*) 214-409

Medea enters from the house, followed by the Nurse. She begins by addressing the Chorus of Corinthian women, and the significant contrast between her previous off-stage exclamations and her self-possessed speech ensures that 'we understand the effort that her apparent calm is costing her'. Since her abandonment by Jason has left Medea friendless and vulnerable, her long opening speech is geared to win the Chorus' sympathy and support. Medea outlines her pitiful situation point by point: Jason's treachery, her powerlessness as a woman, and her desperate status as a foreigner without relatives to protect her. The scale and detail of the second argument are particularly striking, as Medea emphasizes the disadvantages of being female and appeals to the Chorus' shared sense of sexual misfortune. The purpose of Medea's speech becomes clear in its closing lines, when she asks the Chorus to keep silent about her (still developing) plan to punish Jason. They promptly agree to Jason's 'just' punishment and express sympathy for Medea's predicament. But just as Medea secures their support, the Chorus announce Creon's arrival, and since we, unlike the Chorus, have already heard of Creon's decision to banish Medea and her children, his entry 'to announce his new plans' for bodes a further unexpected blow to her fortunes.

Creon does not delay his bad news. His opening words are blunt and aggressive and he orders Medea to leave Corinth immediately, taking both her children. Medea's confrontation with Creon drastically limits the time available to perfect her revenge, as she is first banished directly, and then granted one day to prepare her departure. The increased pressure propels the action forward and tests Medea's ingenuity. Having failed to convince Creon that her reputation for cleverness is undeserved, she resorts to the most powerful means of entreaty possible, clasping Creon's knees in ritual supplication. But Creon remains unmoved and it is only when Medea modifies her plea to ask for just one day's respite that Creon reluctantly agrees. Ironically, in view of her future actions (against his and her own children), Medea persuades Creon by appealing to his love as a parent.

Although Creon returns to his palace insisting that Medea and her children must either leave Corinth or die, we see that he has in fact failed to impose his original decision. This is a crucial turning point in the action, for it gives Medea a brief but

priceless opportunity to perfect her revenge, as her following speech makes clear. Not only does she answer the pessimistic Chorus in a tone of unexpected confidence and defiance, but she also puts the previous confrontation in a new light by describing her supplication of Creon as tactical fawning and by deriding Creon's foolishness. Continuing the play's use of plot misdirection, Medea now says she will kill Creon, his daughter and *Jasonas* well, a prediction which colours the following scene, where Jason enters to justify his conduct to Medea. Finally, as preparation for the arrival of a rescuer, Medea wonders if she will find a safe refuge from her crimes. If she does not, she is prepared to sacrifice her own life to ensure the death of her enemies. Medea's heroic obsession with honour and revenge thus opens up a variety of potential outcomes and keeps the audience intrigued by the developing plot.

Second choral song (first *stasimon*) 41G-45

The Chorus has so far been concerned to comment directly on events before them. Now, in their first full-scale choral ode, they extend their range of reference and reflection more widely. They sing and dance two pairs of metrically responding stanzas, the first pair criticises the unjust treatment of the female sex as a whole, while the second addresses Medea and her predicament directly. Such a movement from general reflection to a particular example is found in many choral songs. The Chorus begins by launching a daring attack on the sexual bias of the Greek poetic tradition itself, an attack that is all the more forceful for being delivered by a female Chorus. They not only offer a remarkable insight into the exclusively male control of poetic memory, but also challenge its adverse effects on women's cultural status. The limited access to story and song in Greek society is thus exposed as an instrument of women's oppression.

In the eyes of the Chorus, however, Jason's infidelity explodes the stereotype of female deception. The muses, female guardians of poetry, will no longer sing of women's faithlessness. In the second strophic pair the Chorus turns from women's undeserved reputation to Medea's undeserved suffering. She no longer has a husband or civic rights; both her own and her father's house are closed to her. In a vivid metaphor the Chorus describe respect itself as having 'flown through the air', leaving Greece altogether, along with the reciprocity of oaths. Jason's betrayal of his oath thus takes on a more elevated moral significance and the Chorus' condemnation of his conduct could hardly be stronger.

Third scene (second *epeisodion*) 441-626

Jason enters from the direction of the royal palace in Corinth. It is no coincidence that he appears just after a powerful choral meditation on the faithlessness of men: the ordering of events makes us more alive to his imminent lies and evasions. Whereas Medea was forced to dissimulate and abase herself in her encounter with Creon, here she is utterly forthright and spares no energy in detailing Jason's "shamelessness" and ingratitude. He begins by blaming Medea for her banishment: if it were not for her 'foolish words' against the royal household, she could have stayed in Corinth. In fact, he says, she should be thankful to get away alive. Perhaps the most galling thing for Medea, however, is Jason's claim that he is still her 'friend' and has her best interests at heart: no matter how much she hates him, he could never wish her ill! Jason's hypocrisy and self-deception are manifest, and when he announces that he has come to offer Medea and the children money for their exile, his 'generosity' appears grotesque.

Jason's opening speech provokes Medea to a lengthy and bitter response, and their meeting soon takes on the form of an *agon* (or 'contest'). Medea's speech is answered at equal length by Jason and the scene concludes with angry dialogue. Within this simple framework, however, the characters are able to articulate the central themes and conflicts of the play. Jason has abandoned Medea and married Creon's daughter, and the purpose of each speaker is to impugn or defend this action from their own point of view. The *agon* form thus expresses Jason and Medea's complete alienation. Appropriately, Medea begins her speech in a tone of ardent invective, attacking Jason's cowardice and shamelessness. The start of her argument is then signaled by a formal *agon* marker: 'I shall begin my speech from the very beginning' (475). By foregrounding Medea's skilful use of rhetoric, the scene reveals another side of her character, for she is capable of logical argument as well as passionate feeling. Medea's rhetorical display thereby challenges the stereotype of women as creatures of emotion rather than reason.

Medea's first point is that she saved Jason's life in Colchis, a substantial service, but only one of many; for she also killed the snake that guarded the Golden Fleece, betrayed her own family, and ruined the house of Pelias. Yet despite these favours, and despite the birth of their two sons, Jason has betrayed her. Medea's response mixes argument with biting sarcasm: 'In return for these favours, you've made me the

envy of many Greek women! What a wonderful husband I have in my misery, and what a trusty one, if I am to be driven into exile from this land!' (509-11).

As is usual in *agones*, a brief remark by the Chorus separates the two speeches. When Jason begins his defense, he does so with marked rhetorical self-consciousness, but 'in this speech, in contrast to Medea's, the use of rhetoric implies the insincerity of the speaker. Using the rhetoric of Greek superiority *to* barbarians, Jason tries *to* claim that Medea has herself benefited by being brought *to* Greece. However, as the circumstances demand, Jason spends most time defending his decision *to* marry Creon's daughter. In this context his claim to be 'a great friend *to* you and my children' (549-50) is too much for Medea, whose gesture of protest is smothered by Jason's 'Be quiet now!' (650). In defence of his remarriage Jason argues that his main intention was to give his children a better future, but his rhetoric of concern rings hollow, since he has apparently made no attempt to keep the children at Corinth. Significantly, the Chorus, who generally maintain distanced neutrality in such debates, immediately condemns Jason's use *of* rhetoric for an unjust cause. Medea reinforces their criticisms and, in the bitter dialogue that follows, exposes the hypocritical secrecy of Jason's conduct.

Third choral song (second *stasimon*) 627-62

As Jason returns to the royal palace, the Chorus sing an ode which has a profound relevance to both his behaviour and the suffering it has caused Medea. The first strophic pair begins with a reflection on the power of Aphrodite (627-31): 'Desires that come in excess bring neither a good name nor excellence to men. If Kypris comes in moderation, no other goddess is so gracious.' Since the last scene ended with Medea berating Jason for his submission to erotic desire, the Chorus' general remarks have a specific reference to Jason's new marriage. And when the Chorus invoke Aphrodite and pray she may never afflict them with arrows that are 'anointed with passion' (635), we inevitably think of Jason as afflicted in this way. The Chorus continues to praise 'moderation' (636) in the antistrophe, once again using words that have an implicit relevance to Jason (638-41): 'May terrible Kypris never cast quarrelsome anger and insatiable conflicts upon me, striking my heart with desire for another's bed!' As in the first *stasimon* (431), the second strophe begins with a direct address. The Chorus invoke their native land and home, saying they would rather die than become 'cityless' (646), and their reference to Medea is justified by autopsy (654-5): I have seen it, and do not report a tale I heard from

others.' Though their final remark is gnomic and general, there is no doubt whom they have in mind (659-52): 'May he die unloved, the man who cannot honour his friends by unlocking an honest mind! He will never be a friend of mine.'

Fourth scene (third *epeisodion*) 663-823

Aegeus, king of Athens, enters on his way from Delphi to Troezen. Ever since Aristotle criticised the Aegeus scene for alleged illogicality, it has often been condemned as an example of poor plot construction, the impression being that Aegeus' entry here is somehow improbable or artificial. But as one scholar points out, 'such casualness *is* readily acceptable to an audience provided that the scene is dramatically significant and provided that it is seen to be part of a structural pattern.' Both conditions are clearly fulfilled here: Medea has stressed her need for a place of refuge before she can proceed properly with her revenge and a potential 'rescuer' now appears. The Chorus has just lamented Medea's lack of friends, yet Aegeus' first words make clear that he and Medea are established *philoï* (663-4). The question 'Where will Medea go?' may now have an answer.

The opening passage of extended stichomythia (single line dialogue) falls into two parts. Aegeus first responds to Medea's questions, then asks in turn about her welfare. The structure of the dialogue expresses their mutual respect and concern for one another, in contrast to Jason's selfish neglect of his family in the previous scene. Aegeus reports that he has been to Delphi to enquire of the oracle how he might have children. Medea's response is significant: 'In the name of the gods, are you still childless so late in life?' As in the previous scene with Jason (CL. 558-67), it is stressed how important children are to a man's identity, status and posterity. When Medea explains how she has been treated, Aegeus calls Jason 'evil' (699) and condemns him for allowing his family to go into exile (707).

Once again Medea supplicates a king to achieve her purpose, and having attained an extra day in Corinth, she now gains a place of refuge in Athens. There is a terrible appropriateness in her use of supplication to secure Jason's punishment, for he has abused the ritual himself by not honouring the obligations which he incurred from his successful supplication of Medea in Colchis. Aegeus grants Medea her request, but imposes one condition: she must make her own way to Athens. So instead of asking 'Will Medea find a refuge?', the question for the audience now becomes 'How will she get there?', and the following scenes raise this question

repeatedly, in preparation for Medea's miraculous departure. Medea has her own request: Aegeus is to swear to protect her, and by stressing the importance of Aegeus' oath and his readiness to honour it, the scene underlines both the oath-breaking of Jason and the fact that Medea is planning the kind of revenge which could bring the Corinthians to Athens demanding her surrender.

Once Aegeus has left for Troezen, Medea delivers a devastating speech which crucially alters the direction of the play. Invoking Zeus and Justice, she tells the Chorus of her plans for revenge: she will deceive Jason and use their children to bring about the death of Creon's daughter (776-89). But the most important part of her speech, and the turning point of the play, is Medea's shocking announcement that she will kill her own children. Not only does this fundamentally change the audience's attitude to Medea, it also builds suspense towards the play's horrendous climax, provoking us to wonder whether anyone can stop Medea and whether she herself can go through with such an act. It is thus one of the scene's major ironies that although Aegeus is promised children by Medea, his agreement apparently seals the death of her own sons.

Fourth choral song (third *Stasimon*) 824—65

As the Nurse goes off to summon Jason from the royal palace, the Chorus sings of the city of Athens and Medea's possible future there. The first two stanzas hail Athens as a place of beauty, peace, and wisdom, while the second pair urges Medea not to kill her children. There is thus a great difference in both tone and content between the song's two parts, but they are linked together significantly by the opening lines of the second strophe, which ask how a child-killer like Medea could ever find refuge in such a city. The song must have had a remarkable impact upon an Athenian audience, for it begins by describing Athens and the Athenians in terms reminiscent of divine hymns. The Athenians are 'children of the blessed gods' (825); they are 'forever stepping gracefully through the brilliant air' (829-30) and their land is 'sacred and unravaged' (825-6). The previous choral song rejected excessive passion as leading to evil acts, but in Athens, the Chorus say, Aphrodite 'has sent Desires to sit at Wisdom's side, joint workers in every kind of excellence' (844-5). The Athenians, in other words, blend passion and intellectual cleverness in perfect measure.

However, while it is certainly striking that a Corinthian Chorus should praise Athens in such terms, their idealized vision soon emerges as a foil for more disturbing reflections. The second strophe begins by addressing Medea directly (846-60): 'How can this city of sacred rivers or this country that gives safeescort to friends accept you, the killer of your children, the unholy one, to live among them?' The purpose of the Chorus' extensive praise of Athens is now clear: they mean to avert Medea's infanticide by persuading her that such a city would never take her in. Yet the audience knows that Athens is already bound by Aegeus' oath to accept Medea and that Aegeus' agreement will nearly destroy his own son Theseus, Athens' great esthero. While this may be seen as critical of Medea's cunning rather than Aegeus' generosity, the Chorus' question does at least complicate the vision of Athens as a perfect and peaceful community. The Chorus plead repeatedly with Medea not to dare such a crime, even supplicating her and envisaging a supplication by her terrified children as well. However, unlike Medea's acts of supplication, those of the Chorus and her children are in vain.

Fifth scene (fourth *epeisodion*) 866-975

Jason re-enters from the royal palace, accompanied by the Nurse. The scene abounds in significant effects of parallelism and contrast with Medea and Jason's previous encounter. In their first meeting we saw the authentic Medea, raging at Jason's betrayal. Here, however, following the crucial Aegeus episode and with her revenge plan underway, Medea disguises her true feelings and becomes the very model of submissive femininity preferred by Jason. Since Medea has already made clear the true nature of her plans, we are prepared for the multiple ironies of their meeting, as Jason is led to believe that Medea has given up her anger and so becomes an unwitting accomplice in his own ruin.

Medea begins by begging Jason's forgiveness and endorses his arguments in favour of his new marriage. She calls the children (with the Paidagogos) from the house; their presence is appropriate to the scene of 'reconciliation' being staged by Medea, but it also echoes the opening scene of the play (cf 46-110): the prologue's forebodings about the children's safety are about to be given concrete expression. When she is reminded of Jason's treachery, Medea laments 'some hidden sorrow' which may befall their sons, but neither Jason nor the children can understand the threatening ambiguity of her remarks. Suddenly, Medea breaks down in tears and her emotions create suspense: will she be able to go through with the murder? Jason, by

contrast, remains unbearably patronising; ironically, his address to, and sudden interest in, his sons comes just as he is about to lose them (914-21). Yet the final irony of the scene is perhaps the harshest: Medea prepares to destroy Jason's new wife using his own children. As the children go off with the poisoned wedding gifts, Medea instructs them to beg Creon's daughter for a reprieve from exile: once again Medea uses supplication to further her revenge (971).

Fifth choral song (*Courthstasitnon*) 976-100)

As Jason returns to the royal palace, accompanied by the children and the Paidagogos, the Chorus envisages the deaths awaiting both Creon's daughter and the children. Whereas the children are described simply and powerfully as 'already walking towards a bloody death', the destruction of Creon's daughter is pictured at greater length, foreshadowing the messenger's gory details in the following scene. The song is much shorter than the first three stasima and lacks their passages of general reflection, creating greater pace and a more intense focus on the imminent deaths. In the first strophic pair the Chorus imagine Creon's daughter transformed by the wedding gifts into a bride of Hades (980-5). The perversion of marriageritual marks the impending ruin of both Jason and Creon's households. The second strophe begins by addressing Jason directly. Significantly, the Chorus now express some sympathy for him (995): 'Unhappy man, how little you know of your fate! 'Yet despite their sympathy, the Chorus make clear that they consider Jason jointly responsible for the death of his sons (c£ 992-3), for he has abandoned Medea 'lawlessly' (1000-1).

Sixth scene (fifth *epei.sodion*) 1002-260

The Paidagogos returns from the palace with the children, who thus reappear immediately after a choral song about their murder. The Paidagogos happily reports that Creon's daughter has accepted the gifts, yet he cannot understand Medea's miserable reaction to the news. As she sends him into the house 'to attend to the children's daily needs' (1019-20), the audience can appreciate the poignancy of her command. Medea is left alone on stage with her children. Her aeries of confrontations now culminate in a struggle with herself, and in a long and harrowing monologue she faces her maternal grief at the intended murder. Twice she declares that she cannot kill the children, but each time fear of her enemies' laughter reasserts itself and compels her to take revenge.

Medea sends the children into the house. At each of their earlier exits there was some doubt as to whether they would be seen again, but here our fears for their lives are most acute. Euripides deliberately draws out the suspense by placing a long passage of choralanapaests and an extended messenger speech between the children's departure and Medea's exit after them into the house. Medea is keen to relish the horrific details of her revenge: 'But do not burry, my friend: tell your story!' The Messenger, by contrast, is shocked at her triumphant reaction (cf. 1129-31). Nearly all of Euripides' surviving tragedies contain at least one messenger speech (the sole exception is *Trojan Women*). Here the Messenger is a slave who once worked in Medea's household, but now belongs to Jason's new oikos within the royal palace (cf. 1144-5). The subject of his speech, the death of Creon's daughter, has already been well prepared for, but here we get a lavish eye-witness description of the event itself.

The Messenger begins by describing how happy he and the other slaves were at the sight of the children in the palace, since they took this as evidence of Medea and Jason's reconciliation. By contrast, Jason's new wife is disgusted by their arrival and veils her face. Though the Messenger quotes a short cajoling speech by Jason, the narrative make clear that it is the gifts which Creon's daughter actually finds persuasive. She cannot resist their beauty and puts them on as soon as Jason and the children leave. In a significant moment of plot prolepsis, the Messenger describes the young woman admiring herself in a mirror, 'smiling at the *lifeless* reflection of her body' (1162). The scene effectively conveys both her vanity and her deluded happiness.

The Messenger's account of her death is exceptionally gruesome. The poisoned robe and crown devour the woman's flesh and set *her* head on fire. Only a parent, the Messenger says, could have recognised her corpse, preparing us for Creon's sudden arrival. Touching his daughter's corpse, he too is infected by the poison, and his mournful wish, 'Alas, may I die with you, dear child!' (1210), is immediately realised, as the flesh is torn from his bones. Creon's agony foreshadows Jason's impending loss of his own children. Indeed, as the Messenger returns to the palace, the Chorus remark that 'Heaven seems this day to be justly fastening many disasters upon Jason' (1231-2). So once again, despite their condemnation of Medea's impending infanticide, the Chorus hold Jason responsible for what has happened. Before her final exit into the house, Medea delivers a short and urgent speech which reasserts her determination to kill her children. Because Medea has been on stage

since the start of the first episode, dominating the other characters and preparing her revenge, her eventual exit has a powerful dramatic impact, which is made all the stronger by her brutal purpose within.

Sixth choral song (fifth *Btosimon*.) 1251-92

As Medea goes into the house, the Chorus appeals for the murder to be prevented. They sing in dochmiacs, an excited metre that expresses their emotional turmoil. The pattern of aeolochoriambicmetres found in the first four stasima is thus broken, marking the Chorus' shocked response to the imminent murder of the children. They begin by calling on Earth and Helios to intervene on the children's behalf Helios. Medea's grandfather, is asked to save the descendants of his 'golden race' (1255). However, since Helios will actually help Medea escape, the Chorus' prayer points forward to the troubling aspects of his collaboration. In the antistrophe the Chorus turn to Medea, lamenting her wasted efforts to bear and rear her children. They warn her that the shedding of kindred blood causes pollution and divine punishment. Onceagain the Chorus' conventional piety prepares for the play's shocking finale, where Medea appears as an agent of divine punishment herself (cf Chapter 4).

As the infanticide approaches, a scream is heard from inside the house (1270a), and the play 'achieves its most powerful climax of violence by having the child's cry break into what begins and ends as a regular choral ode'. We then hear the offstage iambic dialogue of the two children as they try to escape death: 'Oh no! What can I do? How can I escape my mother's hands?' /'I don't know, dearest brother! We're destroyed!' (1271- 2). The Chorus acknowledges that they should go into the house to intervene. By challenging the convention that keeps the tragic chorus on stage, the Chorus' reaction marks the peculiar horror of the murder, but also their own powerlessness to stop it. These feelings are intensified when the children respond directly to the Chorus, creating an exceptional and poignant dialogue between the stage and offstage area: 'Yes, in heaven's name, protect us! We need you!' / 'How close we now are to the sword's snare!' (1277-8). Significantly, the iambics of the antistrophe are spoken not by the children, but by the Chorus (1284-5, 1288-9): 'The silence of those responding voices ... is a dramatically powerful indication of what has taken place inside the house.' Rather than intervene directly, the Chorus recall the story of Ino, who killed her own children, but was punished by a death at sea. The

mythical parallel thus suggests that Medea too may die for her horrendous act, an expectation which is powerfully undone in the final scene.

Seventh and Final Scene (exodos) 1293-419

Jason enters hurriedly from the direction of the palace and immediately asks the Chorus if Medea is still inside the house. If she is to escape punishment, Jason says, 'She must either hide herself beneath the earth or soar on wings into the heights of the sky' (1296-7). His words are a conventional expression of the impossibility of escape, but here they prepare for the miraculous and superhuman nature of Medea's final exit. Jason has come to save his sons from the vengeance of the royal family; the allusion to a more familiar (and less shocking) version of the myth underlines the terrible climax of the play: it never occurs to Jason that Medea may kill the children herself. When the Chorus warns him that he faces much greater misfortune, his first reaction is typically to think of himself: 'What is it? Does she mean to kill me as well?' (1308).

The Chorus reveals the truth: 'Open the doors and you will see your children's bloody murder' (1313). Jason orders the servant inside the house to release the bolts. The attention of the audience is thus fixed on the centre of the *skene* and they are led to expect that the doors will open to reveal Medea and the corpses on the *ekkyklema* (or 'rolling-out platform'). But in a spectacular and powerful moment of theatrical misdirection, Euripides has Medea appear with the bodies above the *skene*, carried in a flying chariot that rises from behind the house. Thus one dramatic convention (the *ekkyklema-scene*) is disrupted and replaced surprisingly by another, the *deus ex machina* (or 'god from the machine'). Medea's opening words express her new status: elevated in more than a merely physical sense, she speaks to Jason with superhuman authority, ordering him to leave the doors alone.

Jason's reply is furious and hateful: he calls Medea a traitor to her family and country, something she had herself regretted earlier, and he deplores the murder of her brother Apsyrtus, even though he was happy enough to profit from it at the time. To the very last Jason refuses to accept his *part* in the disaster. Instead he merely reproduces the same stereotypes that have already been challenged in their earlier meetings, attacking Medea as a sex-obsessed woman and dangerous foreigner. Nor can he accept the part played by the gods in his ruin: although Helios has supplied Medea with the chariot for her escape, Jason presumes that the god could not bear to

look upon her pollution. Seeing his dead sons, he laments 'I shall never be able to speak to my children alive, the ones I begot and nurtured, but have lost them' (1349-50), yet his final word *apolesa* ('I have lost them') can also mean 'I have destroyed them', creating an ambiguity which the audience can appreciate, despite Jason's unwillingness to admit his own share of responsibility.

Refusing the opportunity to respond to Jason at length, Medea claims divine approval for her revenge. In bitter stichomythia (a form of dialogue where each speaker delivers a single line) she and Jason blame each other for the death of the children. When Jason asks for the bodies so that he can bury them, Medea denies him even this ritual consolation, and her speech marks her new god-like status, as she establishes a Corinthian cult to atone for the murder of her children and predicts Jason's shameful death. The metre changes to anapaests for the closing lines of the play: both the metre and the pain-filled cries of Jason recall the opening scene, where Medea sang in anapaests from inside the house. Here, however, the roles are reversed and it is Jason who calls on the gods to witness his ill-treatment. Though he finally shows affection for his children and begs to be allowed to touch them, Medea remains aloof, pitiless, and exultant in her revenge. As she disappears in her chariot with the bodies of her children, bound first for the shrine of Hera Akraia and then for Athens, the Chorus leave the *orchestra* with a final reflection on the gods' power to bring about the unexpected.

At the level of plot *Medea* could hardly be called a complex play and yet its power to move and shock audiences is indisputable. Our discussion of the play's structure and stagecraft has tried to show how Euripides achieves these powerful effects, especially through his use of dramatic irony, emotional suspense, and disturbing violence. If we look back at the development of the action, we see an intense focus on Medea, her sense of dishonour, and her reaction to it. She stands at the centre of a series of confrontations (with the Chorus, Creon, Aegeus, and Jason), each of which she dominates by a combination of rhetorical brilliance, emotional manipulation, and skilled deception. Medea can play the pathetic or apologetic woman if it will further her plans, but beneath her various personae lies a coherent, credible, and effective character, a woman with a strong sense of honour and justice whose suffering and humiliation drive her to revenge. However, Medea's decision to react as she does is complicated and enriched by her status as a woman, a foreigner, and a not quite mortal avenger. Therefore the aim of the following three chapters is

to investigate these aspects of her role in greater detail. Finally, since *Medea* has had such an exceptionally productive and dynamic reception, Chapter 5 considers some of the reinterpretations and adaptations which have been produced. In response to Euripides' work, and argues that, while they clearly illustrate specific contemporary concerns. These later works can also throw new light back onto Euripides' original play.

2.6.1 Check your progress:

I) Fill in the blanks:

- 1) ----- is the protagonist of the play.
- 2) The play is set in -----.
- 3) Medea's husband's name is -----.
- 4) Aegeus is a king of -----.
- 5) Medea persuades ----- by appealing to his love as a parent.

II) Answer the following questions with one word/phrase/sentence each.

- 1) What is the King of Corinth's daughter called?
- 2) Where was Aegeus returning from, when Medea begs for help?
- 3) How many children did Medea have?
- 4) Why did Jason betray Medea?

2.7 Plot Construction of *Medea*

Medea is set in the ancient Greek city-state of Corinth. Jason, the heroic son of King Aeson of Iolcus, has left his wife, Medea, and married the princess of Corinth. As the play begins, the Nurse, Medea's slave, gives a monologue summarizing events that took place before the play began. Jason had been given the task of capturing the Golden Fleece by the king, Pelias, who took the throne of Iolcus away from Jason's father. The Golden Fleece, a ram's gold skin, is defended by a dragon in Colchis, a region on the Black Sea. With a group of men called the Argonauts, Jason sailed to Colchis in the *Argo* and enlisted the help of Medea, the king's daughter, to carry out the task. Medea, who has magical powers, fell passionately in love with Jason. She not only helped him, betraying her own family, but married him. She then conspired to murder Pelias through trickery, which forced the couple into exile in Corinth.

They have two sons, but Jason wants more wealth and so has left Medea for his new bride, the daughter of King Creon of Corinth.

Medea is mad with rage at being dishonored and abandoned. The Nurse hears her crying to the gods from within her house and worries about what Medea will do in her dangerous state of mind. The Chorus—a group of Corinthian women who are Medea's friends and serve as the voice of Greek society in the play—arrives onstage, and the Nurse fetches Medea to speak to the women. Medea, however, will not be consoled. A divorced woman has no respect, she tells them; she has no city, no protection, and no relatives to help her.

King Creon arrives to order Medea and the children into exile, because he fears Medea will harm his daughter, given her experience in "evil ways." After Medea begs to remain for one day, the king grants her wish—foolishly, for Medea begins plotting the murder of his daughter. Jason appears to say that Medea deserves her exile for slandering the royal house. When Medea reminds him of all the crimes she committed to help him and of their children, Jason belittles her help. He claims he did more for her than she for him and says he's marrying the princess to give his children financial security. Medea refuses his offer of help, saying, "Gifts from a worthless man are without value."

When Aegeus, the king of Athens, comes to ask Medea for some advice, Medea asks him to take her in, and he agrees. After he exits Medea reveals to the Chorus her plan to send the children to the princess with a poisoned robe and tiara, then kill the children. She feels she has no other choice with "no father, no home, no refuge." Soon a messenger from Creon's house comes to say the princess and king are both dead; in trying to lift his dead daughter, the king became entangled in the poisoned robe and died. Medea next enters the house to kill the children, and the audience hears their cries for help.

Jason arrives to the news that the boys are dead. As Medea rises above the house in a winged chariot, the bodies of the children inside, she taunts Jason: she has finally moved his heart. She flies off to "Hera's sacred lands/in Acraia" to bury her children and then go to Athens. The Chorus comments, "What we don't expect/some god finds a way/to make it happen."

2.8 Characters in *Medea*

A) *Medea*:

In developing *Medea*'s character, Euripides plays the received tradition of contemporary situations and prejudices. Her fierce, mantic nature, to Pindar a sign of her prophetic powers, is now a symptom of a defective character type: the aloof, intractable, uncontrollable, uncompromising, stubborn authades, who, when crossed, is given to inordinate rage and resentment and resists all attempts on the part of friends at mollification or amelioration. The Greek word is fairly new and belongs to the emerging discourse of medicine, rhetoric, and ethics, and, although rare in Euripides, is used four times to describe *Medea*. Up until Jason's betrayal and her unjust abasement, she had managed to conceal her true nature behind a facade of restrained solicitousness, obliging her husband and his friends when necessary and like a true lady, showing just the right amount of reserve and dignity to make others, like the Corinthian women who have extended their friendship to her, think that she is a perfect wife—modest, chaste, and temperate. But as soon as her anger is unleashed by Jason's betrayal, she starts to behave differently.

Instead of passively enduring her fate, or in shame committing suicide like some wilting *Madame Butterfly*, she becomes totally resistant to moderation, indifferent to the propriety of her actions, incapable of bowing to the will of her betters, much less of her equals. The Nurse explains early on to the audience; and later to the Tutor, "She came into the world fierce and stubborn" (94–95/93–94); and still later to the Chorus, "She'll growl and snarl when I approach, like a lioness shielding her cubs. She'll snort like a bull. I doubt I'll lure her out" (190–94/184–89). For it is not just the violence and intensity of *Medea*'s wrath that is at issue in the play, but its utter relentlessness. Inside the house, she reveals to all her familiars that she has the reach and temper of a thwarted tyrant or of one like an Ajax or a Prometheus, who, though used to high honors, has been suddenly and unendurably shamed; except, unlike them, she has at hand the means to avenge herself upon her tormentors. Outside, before the Chorus and her other interlocutors, like a true sophist, she can play whatever role is necessary to obtain her ends, including, when it serves her purpose, that of a reserved and dignified noblewoman.

Of *Medea*'s great intellectual acumen and professional skill, Euripides' audience had no doubt. Her powers of prophecy and sorcery were essential to her mythic

persona. But just as Euripides has disconnected Medea's passionate nature from her noble art and turned it from a virtue into a vice, so he makes his audience view her "profession," her *sophia*, in nontraditional ways. By moving her into a situation in which her political power and prestige as Jason's wife are at risk, he exposes the dark, destructive side of her talent. Like other sophists (professors, wise men) of Euripides' day, we see her arguing any side of any case that will at any given point best serve her interests. If she needs the Chorus's complicity, she obtains their good will in specious appeals for sympathy and solidarity. When her arguments fail to convince Creon that he should give her a reprieve from instant banishment, she begs abjectly for pity. Confronted by the one who has wronged her, she mounts a strong prosecution. Presented with a chance for asylum, she engages in the question and answer of cross-examination, a technique from the courts that provides the backbone of Socrates' famous method of philosophical interrogation. If upon stepping through the palace doors, she appears by turns calm and dignified, abject, confident, or contrite; she is only doing what other heroes before her had done—what loyal Greeks always still did—when confronted with an enemy. She schemes, she tricks, and she deceives. Only, in this play, the enemy is her husband and his friends, and the arguments she uses are taken from the latest instruction manuals for speechmaking. Thus, those watching her proficient duplicity must confront not only the power of the new rhetoric but also a familiar truth, that when allegiances change as they so frequently did in city politics—duplicity is a two-edged sword. Everything depends on who the true enemy or friend is.

Just as her transparent sophistry strips her of her inherited grandeur, so it strips her interlocutors of theirs. Thus, as she accuses or feigns submission or gloats, and Jason offers disingenuous excuses or condescending approbation or a last, pathetic retort, he is demoted from a great hero and daring explorer to an exiled and humbled former first citizen scheming to better his lot. By the end of the play he has made such a complete mess of things and is so bested by his wife that her prediction that he will end his life shamefully, one of the lowest of the low, a childless wretch accidentally done to death by a fragment of his old ship is utterly believable. Nor is Jason the only character who succumbs to Medea's up-to-date tactics and cunning, although he alone exhibits no obvious, compensating virtue. By matching arguments or answering her far-from-innocent questions, both Creon and Aegeus diminish their kingly stature. Creon is less a king because, though he has taken accurate measure of his enemy, he

nevertheless succumbs to her pleading and out of misplaced pity fails to make the right decision. The kings in traditional epics made mistakes, but it was the gods who befuddled their wits, not clever women and their own yielding natures. In a different situation, Creon's mildness and mercy might even be deemed princely virtues; but when his kingdom is at stake, succumbing to this side of his nature is folly; it is what Aristotle would call missing the mark most tragically.

As already indicated above, Aegeus's character is more of a puzzle, partly, I think, because, in his encounter with Medea, the techniques of forensic oratory are not being employed, and it is from the argumentative techniques of this kind of rhetoric which were being systematized in the courts that Euripides derived his technique of revealing character through dialogue. Furthermore, true to the politeness of this simpler question-and-answer dialogue, the poet chooses to make neither character say anything by way of praise or blame to the other, nor does he use a third party a servant, a messenger, a chorus to introduce Aegeus as he introduces Medea in the prologue. Only Medea, the prevaricator who in the audience would take anything she says without evident rancor for Jason at face value?—has any opportunity to characterize him, and she doesn't. So Aegeus seems just, generous, and a fool; not grand but tragicomic. Much has been made in recent times of Medea's exotic nature as a barbarian witch. The only character in the play who denigrates Medea for being a barbarian is Jason, and he, like any aristocratic student of the sophists, will use whatever convenient ploy against her he can find to justify his own actions. But nowhere else in the play does her ignorance of Greek manners or speech stigmatize her socially in her dealings with Creon, Aegeus, or the Chorus, nor in the servants' comments although her status as an outsider of a different kind is often at issue: as a woman who does not belong by blood to her husband's family or as the wife of a political exile who is not a citizen of the city in which he finds himself. These categories were quite distinct in the Greek mind, and in the play they are regularly signified by different words.

But of Medea's proficient barbarian witchcraft, so central to the dramatic action, moderns have made too little, or, rather, they have tended to misjudge its import. To the Athenians of Euripides' day, witchcraft was not the fantastic, pagan, sci-fi art portrayed in today's movies or on TV; it was regarded as an integral part of the latest scientific research and regularly used by proficient healers and salvific priests, whose knowledge of the demonic world allowed them to harness its forces, either to cure or

destroy. Even in its most rational or materialist forms, ancient Greek science never completely separated the divine nature from the world it investigated.

To this seldom-witnessed distaff side of the new schools of the learned, Euripides' Medea, priestess of Hecate and sharer in the goddess' smost secret treasury of transforming drugs and charms, surely belongs. She is, to be more specific, a professional healer (and harmer) trained in the art of gathering, preparing, and applying drugs. Because this art depended upon knowledge of certain divine rites and charms, some of which were revealed only to women, women held a secure place in this branch of knowledge. They were thought to be particularly capable in the nocturnal collection of roots, leaves, flowers, and bark and in turning their finds into efficacious salves and potions, which they must have supplied to physicians like Hippocrates (a contemporary of Socrates and Euripides) or to less reputable healers, and which they themselves must have prescribed, particularly in their duties as midwives.

Like the sophists remembered in our ancient sources, holy wise women must have wielded sufficient power through their arts to have been labeled dangerous, *deinai*, an adjective that can describe anything alarming but in the fifth century came to be attached to those ingenious few who were possessed of intimidating new intellectual and persuasive powers. It cannot be accidental that this adjective is often predicated of Medea in the rising action of the play, where she is presented both as the awe-inspiring, semidivine ancestress of female pharmacists a being that is define in the old sense of the term and also as her own glib, modern incarnation. She has, as it were, a split personality, and it is this unresolved tension between the exalted, awful being that can do what her modern counterparts claimed to be able to do control nature and a more mundane, more desperate, more human reality that makes her endlessly fascinating. She is both a steward of sacred magic and a purveyor of marvels, an emblem of the times. There are many clues throughout the play that Euripides means his audience to see Medea and her wisdom in this way.

In her speech, Medea's aim is to blunt Creon's fear that she will inflict some irremediable harm upon his daughter, but rather than try to deny the truth of the inflammatory and now public fact that she is, as he alleges, "distressed at being deprived of [her] man's bed" (286) and has been "threatening . . . to take action (*draseinti*) against [all three parties to Jason's new marriage contract], the grantor, the groom, and the bride" (287–89), she astutely prefers to answer the less pressing

charge that she is “by nature (pephukas) wise/skilled (sophe[^]) and versed (idris, an unusual, poetic word) in many evils (kako[^]npollo[^]n)” (285). Even in these few lines, the directness, imagistic force, and colloquial smoothness of Michael Collier’s translation are self-evident. Instead of impeding his verses with Euripides’ awkward legal formalities quoted above, he encapsulates in one or two image-laden words the gist of Creon’s accusations: Medea “sting[s] with loss” (305); she makes “the darkest threats . . . against his house” (307–8); her “nature, clever and vindictive, thrives on evil” (304–5). Since the last of these three charges is the one Medea answers, but is the first to be uttered by Creon, in order to preserve continuity, the phrase “a woman like you,” which echoes the idea of Medea’s nature, is added to Creon’s last sentence (311) as a convenient thread for Medea to pick up at the beginning of her rebuttal, when she exclaims “A woman like me!” (313). The transition is seamless, but the original line of argument is lost. The issue is no longer the frightening effectiveness of Medea’s talent for and skill in the art (sophia) of black magic, but a more modern issue, the denigration of a clever woman. Yet it was Medea’s science, not just her intellectual agility, that concerned Creon, and it is this objective reality, in the guise of the new learning and its practitioners, that Medea addresses in her rebuttal. Here, with true sophistry, she turns herself into a victim of the prejudice widely incurred (in Athens) by the sophoi.

Instead of calling attention to her proven and therefore dangerous skill in witchcraft and its possible application to the case at hand, Medea shrewdly speaks of the sophoi in general, claiming, with a wonderfully personalized and, under the circumstances, apt rhetorical ploy (I wouldn’t want my children to be wise), that experts and scientists like her are misunderstood. Since the majority of citizens don’t know what to make of them and cannot use their advice, they are in effect useless to the city (and therefore not dangerous); at the same time they arouse envy in those who think that they too know something worth attending to or paying for. Either way, out of envy or misunderstanding, their skill is (unjustly) condemned as dangerous and deemed a potential source of trouble to the well-being of the city.

Although the Greek is not entirely clear here and the passage has in fact proved a stumbling block to exegetes, it is obvious from this rendition that Medea’s arguments have nothing to do with the distinction between men and women that resonates so forcefully with us moderns and upon which Michael Collier’s translation depends; rather, they aim first at the conflict between newfangled science

and received wisdom; then at disparities between those who are both gifted and educated and the stupid and ignorant—or, as students of Classical rhetoric know, between the upper and lower classes; and, finally, at the sometimes vicious rivalries among those competing for political prominence.

B) Jason:

Jason was refused his kingdom by Pelias (Iolcus) unless he could steal the Golden Fleece. Colchis with 50 heroes, promised the fleece if he could perform several tasks. Hera asked Aphrodite to make Medea fall in love with Jason. She helped him complete the tasks using magic. Hero of the Golden Fleece. Leader of the Argonauts, Jason met Medea during his quest for the Golden Fleece. Although he has received credit for retrieving the treasure, Medea is the one who killed the monster guarding the Fleece. She also saved Jason's life during the escape. Jason married her, and fathered two children by her; however, due to her overly ardent actions on Jason's behalf, Jason and his family were exiled from his native kingdom of Iolcus. Here in Corinth, Jason has gone behind Medea's back and taken another bride. He is depicted as an opportunistic and unscrupulous man, full of self-deception and repugnant smugness. He condescends to his wife, although she is in every way superior to him.

Careless—that Medea will biggest way to be upset, doesn't think of the effects his leaving will have on his children, doesn't think about asking Glauce to let the boys stay hurt him is to kill his children & line.

Heroic—completed the tasks to get the Fleece, great kleos, famous Scheming the marriage Glauce order to get money & status Masculine - hero, multiple women wanting him, tries to give Medea money & contacts for exile.

Thoughtful – doesn't consider Clytaemnestra's vengeance, doesn't think through consequences. When Jason delivers his defence to Medea, it is important that he is given fair hearing so as not to render him a two-dimensional villain. His argument does have some credibility. Mindful of their low status as exiles, he asserts that by being married to him, Medea found acceptance in a land far superior to her own. He claims his impending royal marriage has nothing to do with lust but is a shrewd move to ensure stability and prosperity: All I want is security. It is worth taking a closer look at this line of reasoning. As immigrants, Medea and Jason are vulnerable enough but the added label

‘exiles’ carries heavier connotations – it suggests a background of trouble. Finding acceptance in a land deemed the very cradle of fame is one achievement. To marry into its royal family is the ultimate. Medea sees things differently: Getting old, your heroic deeds are hardly remembered now and you’re stuck with a poor foreigner for a wife.

C) Creon:

Creon-father of Glauce. King of Corinth. New father-in-law to Jason. Not to be confused with Creon of Sophocles' Theban plays. Creon exiles Medea, fearing that the dangerous witch will seek vengeance against his family. Medea takes advantage of Creon's underestimation of her: she begs for one day to make preparations, and the king grants it. This day is enough for Medea to destroy Creon and his daughter. Exiles Medea but is convinced to let her stay for another day fears for her intelligence. Killed through the poison that kills Glauce. Thing to him is his family, he Diplomatic – a fair king, gives Medea the opportunity to make provision for exile admits that it's his weakness.

Emotional - lets Medea manipulate his emotions, dies because he embraces Glauce in his grief Tragic - a good person in a bad situation, dies through no fault of his own. Creon is the king of the land, whose daughter is set to marry Jason. He deals the blow that sets the course for Medea's murderous revenge. By banishing her, she transforms from Medea, the heartbroken to Medea, the avenger. By giving her one more day, a seemingly harmless request that elicits from Creon the play's most resoundingly ironic line one day will surely bring no harm on us, the play's tragic events begin in earnest.

D) Aegeus

Aegeus is the king of Athens and, apparently, an old friend of Medea's. He is childless and eagerly desires the children Medea promises to help him and his wife to have. He serves little purpose in the play other than to provide Medea with a place of refuge in Athens, though his desire for children serves as a powerful contrast to Medea's ultimate choice to kill her own children.

E) The Chorus

The Chorus is composed of a group of Corinthian women who have assembled outside of Jason's house because of the loud wailing and lamentation they have overheard

coming from it. In many cases the Chorus can be taken as standing in for the audience of the play—reacting as the audience would (and in doing so subtly guiding the audience in its own reactions). The chief difference, of course, is that the Chorus participates in the action and dialogue.

F) The Messenger

The messenger is one of Jason's men and so formerly of Medea's household. He is, therefore, somewhat sympathetic to her wishes and needs. His main function is to relate the gruesome events that took place at the palace in vivid detail after Medea's plot to kill the Princess and Creon is successful.

G) The Children

The children, the two sons of Medea and Jason, each speak only once during the play. They are undifferentiated and, in some ways, more like set pieces than active characters. They, or, rather, their deaths are a means for Medea to express her rage at Jason and for the play to depict the all-consuming rage and barbarity of Medea, who is willing to kill her own children to revenge herself upon her betraying husband.

H) The Princess

As the Princess never speaks or physically appears in the play, she is less a character than a significant figure. She is Creon's daughter and Jason's new bride. We learn any subtleties of her character through the Messenger's report. She seems to behave as one would expect a young, privileged, and beautiful wife to behave. She dies when she puts on the poisoned dress and crown Medea gives her as gifts.

I) The Nurse

The nurse is our first introduction to the world of the play and delivers a kind of prologue. She sums up the back-story, whilst regretting the present. She sets the tone for the tragedy to come, with her portentous foreboding: She hates to have her kids near her... I am frightened she is planning something in her mind. A foreigner like Medea, she has an affinity for her dear mistress. She also represents the slave-class: but he is my master so I cannot curse him. She provides the voice of reason: we should be moderate in all things but, like the Chorus, does nothing to stop Medea's murderous actions.

2.9 Themes in *Medea*

A) Revenge

The seductive appeal of revenge is part of the play's enduring popularity. Medea is willing to sacrifice everything to make her revenge perfect. She murders her own children, paradoxically, to protect them from the counter-revenge of her enemies; she also kills them to hurt Jason, although in slaying them she is dooming herself to a life of remorse and grief. But part of Medea's appeal is its power as a revenge fantasy; just like Medea, all have at one time or another been beset by enemies whose power is institutionally protected and unfair. And like Medea, we have fantasized about the satisfaction of a perfect revenge. Like the Chorus, we watch Medea with a mixture of horror and excitement.

B) Greatness and pride

The Greeks were fascinated by the thin line between greatness and hubris. Throughout their literature, there is a sense that the same traits that make a man or woman great can lead to their destruction. Euripides plays with the idea of greatness here, often to surprising effects. Medea has some of the makings of a great hero, but Euripides distorts and dislocates these traits, twisting some of the conventions of his art. Her greatness of intellect and self-absorption are beyond doubt, but the reduced field for these talents makes her into a monster.

Pride, closely connected to greatness, is likewise distorted. While many tragedies give us a kind of clean satisfaction in the tragic, any satisfaction gained from watching Medea takes perverse form. Medea's pride drives her to unnecessarily brutal action. There is a tremendous sense of waste. She fully exacts her revenge, and then takes the brutality a step further, beyond the bounds of myth, by slaying her own children (Euripides' addition to the story). Hers is the damaged and distorted pride of a woman, condescended to for her sex and her barbarian origin, who is nonetheless superior to everyone around her. After all she has suffered, in some ways Medea is most infuriated when she is ridiculed by fools.

C) The position of women

Euripides was fascinated by women and the contradictions of the Greek sex-gender system; his treatment of gender is the most sophisticated one to be found in the works of any ancient Greek writer. Medea's opening speech to the Chorus is

Classical Greek literature's most eloquent statement about the injustices that befall women. He also recognizes that the position of women, and their subordination to men, is inextricable from the very core of social order in Greece. Greek society functions thanks to injustice. Athens, a city that prided itself as a place more free than the neighboring dictatorships, was nonetheless a city that depended on slave labor and the oppression of women. (The typical apology offered by admirers of Athens is that all ancient societies were sexist and dependent on slave labor; this generality is untrue. Many societies were more generous in their treatment of women than the Greeks were; and many societies functioned, even in the ancient world, without slave labor.) Euripides was aware of these hypocrisies, and he often pointed out the ways that Greek society attempted to efface or excuse the injustices it perpetrated.

At the same time, Medea is not exactly a feminist role model. Euripides shows the difficulties that befall women, but he does not give us tinny virgin heroines. He gives us real women, who have suffered and become twisted by their suffering. What we see is not a story of female liberation, but a war between the sexes in which all emerge scarred.

D) Exile

Modern audiences have difficulty conceiving of how horrible exile was for the ancient Greeks. A person's city-state was home and protector; to wander, without friends or shelter, was considered a fate as horrible as death. Medea, for the sake of her husband, has made herself an exile. She is far from home, without family or friends to protect her. In her overzealous advocacy of her husband's interest, she has also made their family exiles in Corinth. Because of her actions in Iolcus, Jason cannot return home. Their position is vulnerable. Jason, hero of the Golden Fleece (although Euripides emphasizes that Medea was the true agent behind the success of the quest) is now a wanderer. His marriage is shrewd and calculating: he takes a bride of Corinth's royal family. He is faithless, but he has a point when he argues to Medea that something needed to be done to provide their family with security.

Euripides links the themes of exile and the position of women. When emphasizing the circumstances women must bear after marriage (leaving home, living among strangers), Medea is reminding us of the conditions of exile. Her position, then, is doubly grave, as she is an exile in the ordinary sense and also an

exile in the sense that all women are exiles. She is also a foreigner, and so to the Greeks she will always be "barbarian."

E) Manipulation

Manipulation is an important theme. Medea, Jason, and Creon all try their hand at manipulation. Jason used Medea in the past; he now manipulates the royal family of Corinth to secure his own ends. Creon has made a profitable match between his daughter and Jason, hoping to benefit from Jason's fame as the hero of the Golden Fleece. But Medea is the master of manipulation. Medea plays perfectly on the weaknesses and needs of both her enemies and her friends. Medea plays to Creon's pity, and to the old king's costly underestimation of the sorceress. With Aegeus, she uses her skills as a bargaining chip and takes advantage of the king's soft-heartedness to win a binding oath from him. Against Jason, she uses his own shallowness, his unmerited pride, and his desire for dominance. She plays the fawning and submissive woman, to her husband's delight and gratification. Jason buys the act, demonstrating his lack of astuteness and his willingness to be duped by his own fantasies.

F) Child Killing and Society

If the psychoanalytical approach runs the risk of anachronism, the Greek and Roman worlds had another manifestation of child killing which the myth of Medea could reflect – infant exposure. There is still much scholarly debate about this ancient practice, whereby unwanted infants were abandoned, thus sparing the parents the blood guilt of directly killing the child. It is difficult to assess the frequency of this practice, and the likelihood of girls rather than boys being exposed. It is also true that many individuals in the ancient world suffered from fertility, so that an exposed child might well be found and adopted by another family.

Nevertheless, the idea of exposing a baby is found in several myths, which may indicate a societal anxiety about this issue. The Trojan War could have been averted if the infant Paris (Alexandros) had been killed, but his mother chose to abandon him instead, and he survived, returning to Troy and eventually destroying the city; Oedipus was exposed by his father to prevent the fulfilment of an oracle, but survived and did as prophesied kill his father and marry his mother; on a happier note, Ion was exposed by his mother after she was raped by Apollo, and is only reunited with her when he is an adult. Although this story pattern has a direct point of reference in the ancient practice of exposure, we should also note the folktale pattern,

most commonly known in the western world as the story of 'Babes in the Wood'. The pattern can be linked to a psychological reading, as the child's fear of abandonment. We should note, however, that in socio-historical times, the decision as to whether a child would be accepted or rejected lay with the father, not the mother, so that the role of Medea is more difficult to parallel.

G) Ethnicity

Fear of outsiders is one aspect of Medea's story which can be studied with a number of the approaches already mentioned. In a structuralist analysis, Medea is the foreigner who comes into the Greek world and disrupts the division of Greeks and non-Greeks. The figure of the witch throughout history has also been centred around a discourse of alienation. Fear of the unknown can lead to the demonization of certain elements of society, and witches have traditionally been linked with places or ethnicities different from the dominant culture. Witches were traditionally associated in the ancient world with specific locations, such as Thessaly and Asia, areas on the edge of the known world. In later societies, witchcraft could be located in liminal spaces, such as the blasted heath in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, or some where entirely imaginary. This spatial identification can be seen as a physical delineation of a psychological crisis – that which cannot be easily accommodated in the psyche is physically removed to a distant place.

Kolchis is at the edge of the world in early myth; Mimnermus (fr. 11a) says that the city of Aietes is on the border of the Ocean, the great river which was believed to encircle the world, and thus marked its outer limits. This area of the world was known to the Greeks in the archaic period via trade links, and was a fertile site for the exchange of material, cultures and stories. It was, however, not a well-known geographical area, and fear of the unknown was a powerful force. Transferring this motif to the people of Kolchis, Diodorus Siculus gives a version of the story whereby Aietes puts to death all foreigners, and Medea as priestess of Artemis is charged with this task, but tries to save strangers, a similar motif to that found in Euripides' play *Iphigeneia in Tauris* where Iphigeneia is also the priestess of Artemis. This story type gives matching reasons for ethnic hostility: the Greeks are afraid because the foreigners will kill them, but the 'foreigners' perceive the Greeks as dangerous.

In the Greek world, the discourse of ethnicity was central to the creation of identity. While individuals were fiercely loyal to their citystate, there was also a clear distinction of them and us, Greeks and non-Greeks. Euripides' play not only emphasises issues about men versus women, but also emphasises and distorts the issue of boundaries *per se*. Jason tells Medea that she is lucky to be living in the Greek world, demonstrating the Greek belief in their cultural superiority, but Medea pours scorn on his 'Greek' behaviour as fundamental lyimmoral. When the play was first produced in 431 BC it was only twenty years since Athens had enacted a law restricting citizenship.

It is interesting to note that this issue of ethnic identity, which could have such specific Greek and Athenian implications, is also one of the strongest themes in modern treatments of the myth.

H) Mortality and Divinity

To this point, we have been exploring the character of Medea as a mortal woman, an interpretation which she herself promotes as she tries to ally herself to the chorus of Korinthian women, and to dispel Kreon's fears. However, Medea's mortality is open to question in this play. We have seen that in previous versions of the myth, Medea's divine genealogy figured prominently. As granddaughter of Helios she belongs to a family with many magical powers. Her father employed powers more than mortal in attempting to stop Jason stealing the Golden Fleece, and Medea's aid to Jason was also magical.

Euripides' version adds an extra layer of complexity to the myth as the play explores the boundaries between mortal and immortal. The liminality of Medea's character will be a strong focus in later versions of the myth, and Euripides' play is where this development first appears explicitly. One of the striking features of Medea's male/female persona in the play is that she displays the traits of both genders *to an extreme*. The excesses of her character can be seen as a mark of divinity, as gods are presented in Greek religion as taking mortal characteristics to extremes. Furthermore, the ability of one character to be both masculine and feminine could be read in the ancient world as something unnatural, to the extent that it could be taken as indicative of divinity. In modern societies, we are increasingly open to the idea that gender boundaries are to some extent artificial creations of society. In fifth-century Athens, the gender boundaries were supposed to be natural,

and thus anyone who could break them as confidently as Medea would be seen as unnatural and verging on the divine.

Medea's divine powers in this play are largely hidden at the start by Medea herself. It is only as the play progresses that we see more of her family background, as she has the means to poison a dress and thus kill the princess, and finally she is rescued by her grandfather, the sun god, Helios. It is noteworthy that the only successfully supportive family relationship depicted in the play is that between Medea and her grandfather, and the final scene of the play forces the audience to contemplate whether Medea was ever the helpless mortal she has claimed to be. Her high intelligence, her ability to combine male and female traits, her willingness to sacrifice personal attachments in order to achieve revenge could all be understood by an ancient audience as indications that Medea was not mortal. One of the great contributions made by Euripides to the evolution of the myth was to provide such a powerful example of how mortality and divinity need not be directly opposed to each other, as binary opposites in a structuralist model, but could be seen as the extremes of a continuum.

A further aspect of this mortal/divine interaction is the problem of justice which is raised at the end of the play. Medea claims that Jason has no leg to stand on when he calls for vengeance, because he has broken his oath of marriage (v. 1391). This was not an ordinary contract of marriage which could be dissolved, as in Athenian practice. It was a formal oath of loyalty which Jason swore to Medea when he took her from Kolchis, and was therefore overseen by Zeus himself in his role as Zeus Horkios (Zeus of Oaths). Medea presents herself as the agent of Zeus' revenge on Jason, a Fury acting as a divine figure, rather than a mortal woman seeking personal revenge. Medea tells Jason that she will be a 'curse' on his household (v. 608), and the chorus say that there is a 'fury' in the house (v. 1260). Jason, understandably, does not share this view of Medea's divine authorisation, and cries out at the end of the play that there will be vengeance for the murder of the children, that Medea in turn will be punished for her actions.

Here we see one of the most problematic and worrying aspects of Medea's mythology. Even though she commits many acts of violence which would have been condemned throughout the Greek world, she is never punished directly. She escapes from Kolchis after betraying her family and killing her brother; she escapes from

Iolkos after tricking the daughters of Pelias into killing their father; she escapes from Korinth after the murder of the children; and she will escape from

Athens after attempting to murder Theseus. This is an element of the story which the Roman poet Ovid explored with particular subtlety, as we will see in the next chapter, but it is the final scenes of Euripides' play which gives this problem its most powerful expression. Medea appears in the chariot of the sun god, placed high on the *mechane*, the stage crane which was used to bring gods on stage in fifth-century tragedy. This spatial alignment makes it clear that Medea is no longer mortal, and raises the question of whether she ever truly was. The audience is left to contemplate two unpalatable conclusions as Medea escapes unpunished after committing the most terrible of crimes.

Either Medea is divine, and the gods can come among us and exact revenge for our crimes with savage force; or Medea is mortal, and sometimes mortal crimes go unpunished. It has sometimes been said that the message or force of Euripides' play comes in its warning that mortal women are powerful, and can react badly when slighted. However, it is doubtful whether the original audience would have viewed Medea as a simple mortal figure, interpreting her story as one of simple human equations. Certainly the story could be understood as containing hidden warnings about male/female interactions, but the more interesting focus is the interaction between gods and mortals.

This play actively explores the contradictions inherent in the mythology of Medea and provides no simple answers. Euripides' character may be mortal, immortal or something in between, depending on which section of the play we are considering, just as she appears by turns essentially female or male in her behaviour. It could be seen as Euripides' greatest achievement, to take a complex figure from Greek myth and to encapsulate all of those complicated and often contradictory qualities within one dramatic character. In the final section of this chapter we will look in more detail at the process of *mythopoesis*, the constant reinvention of myth which Euripides employed, and the problems of presenting Medea's story to an Athenian audience. To close this discussion of her characterisation in the play we shall look at the issue of consistency, and ask whether Euripides has managed to pin down the essence of the myth of Medea.

2.9.1 Symbols and Motifs in the play

A) Witchcraft

The strongest image of Medea in the ancient world was undoubtedly that of the witch, the sorceress using herbs, incantations and innate magical powers to achieve her aims. The earliest sources, literary and artistic, show her as a dangerous magical figure. Her powers are not trivial – she can control natural forces, and even reverse the order of life and death by rejuvenating the old. In this section we will explore the various ways in which Medea can be related to the idea of magic in the ancient world. As a practitioner, she has access to a number of different traditions and techniques of magic, but she can also be presented as a victim of magic, particularly in the area of love magic, an example of the problematic status which characterizes much of her mythology.

The figure of the witch can be traced to different folktale elements, but the term ‘witch’ is problematic. There is no single Greek word meaning ‘witch’, and the term has acquired a wide range of associations in English which would not necessarily be applicable in the Greek context. This part of the discussion, therefore, will first examine the Greek context of magic and witchcraft, then proceed to a wider discussion of the term ‘witch’ and its associations in mythological tradition.

B) The Door

The door to Medea's house remains closed for the entirety of the play and all of the events and speeches are delivered outside of the house. The door represents more than one metaphorical "barrier" in the play, perhaps most significantly the insurmountable divide that has developed between Medea and Jason, but it may also be seen to represent the divide between the foreigner (Medea) and the Greeks (everyone else), between Creon's rulership and true justice, or between truth and true-seeming rhetoric. When Jason commands his men to remove the bolts and open the door they never get a chance to do so: Medea appears above the stage in a flying chariot, carrying her dead children—the barriers will not, will never, be breached.

C) The Poisoned Crown

A crown is a metonym (a kind of metaphor) for rulership. Medea chooses to exact her revenge on Creon and the Princess with a poisoned crown, a crown that represents Creon and Jason's having polluted the royal line with unjust rulership.

Creon has earned his death and the loss of his authority by punishing the innocent Medea, who he himself has wronged by encouraging Medea's husband to abandon her and marry Creon's own daughter. Jason has earned his grief by violating his marriage oaths and abandoning his wife and children for the promise of future ruling power.

D) Chimeras

Chimeras are mythical creatures, like griffins and centaurs that are composed of different animal parts joined together in one body. These parts are sometimes depicted as being in conflict with each other, meaning the animal would be at war with itself. The figure is significant for Medea because she herself is, figuratively, a kind of chimera. She is part human, part divine; part Greek, part barbarian; part mother, part murderer. It is fitting then that chimeras should bear the chariot that will take her to safety in Athens.

E) Medea and the Gods

From the earliest period Medea is associated with a number of gods. She is the granddaughter of Helios, the sun god, and is linked to Hera and Aphrodite in Korinth (Plutarch, *De Herod. malig.* 871b). The link to Aphrodite is part of the story of her relationship with Jason, but the link to Hera goes far deeper. Hera's sphere of influence, including marriage and childbirth, covers many of the same areas as does Medea's. We noted above that some have argued that Medea herself was originally part of Hera's manifestations. Medea is also linked to early concepts of divinity expressed as the figures of Demeter/Hekate as mother or earth goddess, and the role of Hekate as moon goddess further links Medea to Artemis. In some variants Aietes receives an oracle which tells him that he will be killed by a foreigner, and he appoints Medea as priestess of Artemis with the task of killing foreigners, a motif we will return to in the next chapter.

There is no single pattern for Medea's place in the divine sphere, and artistic sources in the classical period do not stress her associations with the Olympian gods. The main narratives make Medea a powerful force in her own right. Indeed, Kovacs (1993) has shown how there is a striking lack of divine participation in Euripides' play, and Medea herself claims to be acting as an agent of Zeus' justice. As a figure who is never punished for acts which would normally be seen as criminal and/or sacrilegious, Medea seems to exist outside the boundaries of classical Greek religion.

Exercises:

2.9.2 Long answer type questions:

- 1) What warning does Creon give Medea?
- 2) Is *Medea* merely a study of injustice, betrayal and revenge?
- 3) Explain Medea as a tragic heroine.
- 4) In what ways are Medea and Jason presented as stereotypical male and female characters?
- 5) In what ways does Medea emerge as a champion of the plight of women, through either positive or negative example?
- 6) How does the Nurse in *Medea* introduce the theme of revenge in the prologos, or opening scene?
- 7) What is the symbolic meaning of the "house's suffering" as mentioned by the Chorus leader in the parados of *Medea*?
- 8) How does Medea explain and justify her plan to use her children to exact revenge?
- 9) Discuss Medea's internal conflict during her monologue in Episode 5 of *Medea*.
- 10) In the Exodos how is the theme of feminine power expressed through Medea's actions and words?

2.9.3 Short Notes

- 1) Jason as a tragic hero
- 2) Character sketch of Medea
- 3) Role of Chorus in the play *Medea*

2.10 References for further study:

- Euripides, *Medea*, Geoffrey Steadman, 2015.
- Gregory Justina (Edited by), *A Companion to Greek Tragedy*, Blackwell Publishing, 2005.
- David Grene & Richmond Lattimore (Edited by), *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, The University of Chicago Press CHICAGO & LONDON, 2013.

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Unit-3

General Topic : Elizabethan Drama Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1589/90)

Contents:

3.1 Objectives

3.2 Section I: General Topic

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- b) Origin and Development of Drama
- c) Check your progress
- d) Pre Elizabethan Drama (Pre Shakespearean Drama)
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3.3 Section II: Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* – Summary and Analysis

- a) Introduction
- b) List of Characters
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3.4 Section III: Themes and Characters' Analysis

- a) Themes in the Play
- b) Characters' Analysis

3.5 Answers to Check Your Progress

3.6 Exercise

3.7 References and Further Reading

3.1 Objectives:

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- a) understand the origin and development of drama specifically The Elizabethan drama.
- b) know the significance of Christopher Marlow in the development of British literature
- c) appreciate *The Jew of Malta* as a tragic play
- d) assess the plot and its development
- e) comprehend the features of play in general and tragedy in specific with reference to *The Jew of Malta*

3.2 Section I: General Topic

a) Introduction:-

Drama is one of the major forms of literature. It is enacted on the stage in the form of dialogues. The main functions of drama are to entertain and to teach. In this unit, students will get acquainted with golden age of the English drama, The Elizabethan drama which is popularized by the notable contributions of William Shakespeare, his predecessors, his contemporaries and his successors. In this age, drama was evolved from shorter religious plays of middle age- Mysteries and Miracles, Moralities, Interludes and finally into full length plays which are divided into Acts and Scenes. Thus this unit gives survey of origin and development of English drama.

Presentation of Subject Matter:-

Elizabethan age is considered as the golden period of English drama. Historically the age starts with the accession of Queen Elizabeth to the English throne in 1558 and continues till the death of the queen in 1603. But according to some critics, the Elizabethan age can be extended till the death of James I in 1625. This age is also called the age of Shakespeare (1564- 1616) because the age is much dominated by the spectacular performances of William Shakespeare's plays. His works reflect the political, social and literary aspects of the age.

The Elizabethan drama can be divided into three phases- Pre Elizabethan Drama, The Elizabethan Drama and The Post Elizabethan Drama. The first phase deals with the contributions of Shakespeare's predecessors who really made the preparation of the great dramatic phase, the second one is related to the glorious achievements of Shakespeare and the final phase deals with Shakespeare's successors, who are profoundly influenced by the works of Shakespeare.

b) Origin and Development of Drama

Drama had its origin in religion. In medieval period, the drama was originated from the attempts of clergy to teach the ignorant and illiterate masses the tenets of Christian faith by dramatising the services of the church at the time of Christmas and Easters. The plays, performed were in Latin languages and clergymen were the actors. These scriptural plays became more popular after the starting of the Corpus-Christie festival. These early shorter religious plays were based on the birth of Jesus Christ to his crucifixion and ascension. These scriptural plays, enacted in a cycle of plays were called as 'Miracles' or 'Mysteries'. The plays, which were dealing with the life of Jesus Christ were called 'Mysteries' and those dealing with the lives of saints were called 'Miracles'.

Later on these religious plays were replaced by the morality plays. The morality plays were a sort of allegories of human life, showing man's conflict between 'Good' and 'Evil'. The characters in moralities were personified with Virtues and Vices. The good example of morality was 'Everyman' in which allegorical characters are employed to examine the question of Christian salvation.

By the close of 15th century, with the advent of Renaissance, the revolutionary changes occurred in the history of England. It marked the end of dark Middle age and the beginning of the modern world. In the early dawn of Renaissance, the religious plays- Mysteries and Miracles declined but the Moralities were survived. They reflected the spirit of reformed religion and humanism. John Skelton's 'Magnificence' was an early morality play that attacked on the prodigality of Henry VIII. The reformers used moralities to propagate their own views. David Lyndsay's, 'Satire of Three Estate' attacks on the Clergy, the Nobles and the Citizens. Bishop Bale's 'King John' combines history with morality.

The Secular moralities were later on developed into interludes. Moralities were didactic and allegorical where Interludes were light entertainments full of guilty and

humour. John Heywood, the master of Interlude made this form very popular. His most popular interlude, 'The Four Ps' presents four Ps, a Pedlar, Pardoner, a Palmer and Potycary, who dispute among themselves to tell the biggest lie.

In the mid of 16th century, under the influence of classics, the English drama was evolved into full-length plays, dividing into different acts and scenes. The first English comedy, 'Ralph Roister Doister', written by Nicholas Udall was performed in 1553. It had five acts and was modelled on the Latin comedy, 'Plautus and Terence'. Then some farcical comedies were written. The play, 'Needle', written by Gammer Curtan was the most entertaining one. These comedies were considered as the precursors of the later full-fledged English comedy. The real development came into English drama in the form of tragedy, when it was a joint effort of lawyers-Sackville and Norton produced the first tragedy Gorboduc or Ferrex and Porrex. They were influenced by the Roman tragedian, Seneca.

Since the Puritan dominated the corporation of London, the dramatic performances were strictly prohibited in Muncipal Campus. Therefore the performances were shifted outside the city and thus the first concrete theatre was built in 1576 on the banks of river Thames by James Burbage called 'The Theatre'. Later on in 1598, the famous 'The Globe Theatre' was established and other theatres like the Rose, the Fortune, the Swan, and the Blackfriar came into existence. Thus the establishment of theatres promoted more and more for the professional writers to write plays for the growing spectators.

c) Check Your Progress:-

I) Say whether following statements are true or false:-

- a) Drama was originated in Elizabethan age.
- b) Miracle plays were based on the lives of saints
- c) Morality plays were didective and allegorical.
- d) The first theatre, established on the banks of Thames was The Globe Theatre.
- e) The Four Ps was the famous interlude.

II) Match the column A with column B:-

A	B
i) Corpus Christie	a) James Barbage
ii) Ralph Roister Doister	b) the first comedy
iii) Henry VIII	c) Christian festival
iv) The Theatre	d) the father of Queen Elizabeth
v) Gorboduc	e) the first tragedy

d) Pre Elizabethan Drama (Pre Shakespearean Drama):

By the close of the transitional period, appeared a group of highly gifted writers who turned drama from childish experiment into a serious art. Almost all members of this group were University graduates, who studied in the Oxford and Cambridge. Hence they are called as 'University Wits'. John Lyly, George Peele, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Nash, Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlow were the university scholars who were the real founders of great Elizabethan drama. They were predecessors as well as contemporaries of Shakespeare. Their efforts to write dramas really proved great inspiration and guiding force for William Shakespeare who took drama on the glorious stage.

John Lyly, the first university scholar, belonged more to the prose than drama. He used prose as the medium for drama. His plays, in euphuistic prose, were written for the entertainment of the court. He had refined the courtly plays mostly comedies written on classical subjects. Lyly made his name with *Eupheus* and later on produced the best plays like *Campaspe*, *Endymion*, *Lores Metamorphosis*. His plays were highly artistic with the charm of fancy, wit and satire. They prepared the way for romantic comedy of Shakespeare.

George Peele was another university scholar whose plays showed great variety of subjects. He was not so dramatic as Lyly, but created his identity as the writer of melodious verse. His play 'the arraignment of Paris' is classical, while 'The Old Wives Tale' is romantic one.

Robert Greene was another university wit, who wrote for popular stage. His plays 'Friar Bacon' and 'Friar Bungay' and 'James iv' were fine representation of

Elizabethan life. in these plays he had superbly sketched charming pictures of pure, self sacrificing women that anticipated the romantic heroines of Shakespeare.

Thomas Lodge and Thomas Nash were mediocre as dramatists. They wrote poems, pamphlets and prose fiction. They contributed very little to the development of Elizabethan Drama. Lodge wrote 'A Defence of Plays', in which he had defended the drama from the attack of Gasson in his 'School of Abuse'. Beside his meagre contribution to English drama, Lodge wrote the novel 'Rosalynd' which Shakespeare refashioned in 'As You like It'. Thomas Nash wrote a picaresque novel, 'The Unfortunate Traveller' or 'The Life Of Jack Wilson', that had enough development in English fiction.

Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlow contributed to the development to the English drama by supplying thrilling action, demanded by the public. Kyd's masterpiece, 'The Spanish Tragedy' is the revenge tragedy, written under the influence of Seneca (a roman tragedian). The play earned wide reputation and really marked distinct era in the development of English tragedy. It had its sensational plot with its ghost intrigue, violence and bloodshed. Shakespeare followed the sensationalism of Kyd in his tragedy- Hamlet.

Christopher Marlow was the youngest but the greatest of all university wits. He was blamed of atheism and immorality. He was killed in the drunken brawl at the age of twenty nine. In his short dramatic literary career, he wrote six marvellous plays which, reflect zeal passion and fervour. His major works are the four plays- 'The Massacre At Parls', 'Dedo', 'The queen of Casthuge' and the non dramatic poem, 'Hero and Leander'. The first play, 'Tamburlaine', deals with man's lust for power. It brought Marlow wide popularity but his real achievement as dramatist was proved through his second play 'Dr Faustus'. It is a story of a dissatisfied man who for the sake of knowledge and power sells his own doom. Thus the tragedy of Faustus is caused by the weakness of his own character. Again the play The Jew Of Malta is a story of man's greed for wealth as well as revenge for enemy and 'Edward II' is Marlow's historical play which made a way to 'Richard II', 'King John' and other historical plays of Shakespeare. Marlow's heroes are not common men but giants whose tragic dooms caused by their burning passion. In Dr Faustus, it is an uncontrolled thirst for knowledge and power, in Tamburlaine it is again thirst for power and in The Jew of Malta, it is greed of riches and hatredness for enemies.

Marlow's tragedy is very much significant as far as his contribution of blank verse and over reaching protagonists and element of inner conflict to English tragedy is concerned. He is rightly considered as a morning star of The Great Elizabethan Drama. He has profoundly influenced Shakespeare. So the great critic, Swinburne aptly says, "Before him, there was neither genuine blank verse nor genuine tragedy in our language. After his arrival, the way was prepared and the paths were made straight for Shakespeare".

e) Check Your Progress:-

A) Match the column A with column B:-

A	B
i) Dr Faustus	a) Thomas Kyd
ii) Seneca	b) John Lyly
iii) Unfortunate Traveller	c) Thomas Nash
iv) Spanish Tragedy	d) Christopher Marlow
v) Euphues	e) a Roman Tragedian

B) Complete the following sentences by filling the blanks with appropriate words:-

- i) A group of writers, who laid the foundation of Elizabethan Drama were _____.
- ii) _____ is called as Morning Star of Elizabethan age.
- iii) Christopher Marlow wrote his tragedies in his mighty line_____.
- iv) Thomas Lodge's novel, Rosalynd was refashioned by Shakespeare for his play_____.
- v) Kyd's Spanish Tragedy is based on _____ tragedy.

f) The Elizabethan Drama- Shakespeare's Contribution

The Elizabethan age is considered as the golden period for English drama. It is called as the rich flowering stage of Renaissance. England under the rule of Queen Elizabeth met with prosperity in all spheres. Being lover of art and literature, she

always encouraged the poets, playwrights to produce the great literary works. Hence her reign was rightly considered as the nest for singing birds.

William Shakespeare, the world's greatest poet and playwright belongs to the great age of Queen Elizabeth. He is considered the national poet of England and also as Bard of Avon. Sometimes the age is considered as the age of Shakespeare as it was dominated by his plays. He wrote for the public stage, fulfilling the tastes and interests of the audience of the times. In the words of Ben Johnson "He was not of an age but of all ages, not of one country but of all countries. He is world's immortal poet. He wrote for the Elizabethan stage and audience, but he is read and enjoyed today not only by the English people but by the English speaking people throughout the world". He had the ability to lift the narrow world of the story to a higher, wider and a vaster world. He has dealt with powerful passions, with joys and sorrows common to all humanity. So his plays have a universal appeal that has made him the world's greatest playwright.

Shakespeare's dramatic career roughly covers a period of twenty years from 1591 to 1611. During this period, he wrote 37 plays, 154 Sonnets and two long narrative poems- 'Venus and Adonis' and 'The Rape of Lucrece'. He has written comedies, tragedies, historical plays and dramatic romances.

Shakespearean Tragedy :-

Shakespeare's earlier tragedies were influenced by Thomas Kyds and Christopher Marlow. His early tragedy, 'Titus Andronicus' was imitation of Kyds 'Spanish Tragedy'. His historical plays Henry IV, King John, Richard II, Richard III have tragic elements, developed under the influence of Marlow. But his real tragic art is shown in 'Romeo and Juliet'. In fact it is the first tragedy of Shakespeare.

The personal gloomy life led Shakespeare to produce the four great tragedies- Othello, Hamlet, King Lear and Macbeth. They are the dark tragedies that present the tragic vision of Shakespeare and his views to human predicament. These great tragedies are tales of sufferings, resulting in death. These tragedies are the tragedies of characters. His heroes are royal, dignitary persons, whose downfall is caused by a fatal weakness in their own characters. In Hamlet, it is an excessive refinement of sensuality; in 'Othello', it is excessive simplicity of mind, in 'King Lear', it is excessive egoism and uncontrolled temper, in 'Macbeth', it is inordinate ambition and in 'Antony and Cleopatra', it is unbridled passion of love. Sometimes the fate or

destiny plays a vital role in this tragic flaw of hero or heroine. On account of this weakness, he or she suffers terribly and ultimately meets to his doom. This downfall or ruin of high stately person creates cathartic effects, arousing pity and fear in the minds of audiences.

Shakespearean tragedy is the story of a single star. The entire story is revolved around the central figure. Hero's suffering from beginning to the end darkens the story. This leads upto the death of the hero. In the words of critic, Bradley, "It is a tale of suffering and calamity, conducting to death".

Shakespearean tragedy presents the struggle between Good and Evil. According to the great literary critic, Edward Dowden, "Tragedy as conceived by Shakespeare is concerned with the ruin or restoration of the soul and of the life of the man. In other words, its subject is the struggle of Good and Evil in the world". The theme of Shakespearean tragedy is struggle between Good and Evil in the world. In this struggle the good suffers terribly and is perished alongwith the evil. The Hero, inspite of his virtuous qualities dies alongwith his opponent. So there is no poetic justice in Shakespearean tragedy. In true sense of justice, the virtue is not rewarded. In it we find that alongwith Vice, the Virtue is also punished. The good characters are terribly suffered and meet with their tragic death, without any faults on their part. Hence in Shakespearean tragedy, only partial justice is made. In Hamlet and King Lear, the Good is destroyed alongwith the Evil. In Othello, vicious Iago is punished but alongwith innocent Desdemona is also victimized. The ruin of Macbeth is caused by evil in him.

Conflict is soul of the drama. The dramatic action is developed with the developments of conflict. This conflict may be external or internal. The external conflict may be between two persons, two groups, two ideas. It plays significant role in Shakespearean tragedy. It causes to develop the internal conflict. The Internal conflict refers to the dilemma in mind of hero. The hero is torn between two opposite forces. He is constantly pulled from both ends. On account of this internal conflict, the hero suffers the agony of hell. Hamlet entangles in dilemmatic questions 'To Be or not to Be'. Othello is torn between love and jealousy, Macbeth is tormented between ambition and loyalty. King Lear suffers great agony on account of ungratefulness and treachery of his daughters.

Superstitious audiences of the Elizabethan age believed in supernatural creatures. Shakespeare wrote his tragedies, supplying supernatural and melodramatic elements that were demanded by the audiences. Considering the tastes and interests of the audience of the time, Shakespeare introduced ghosts, witches, wizards, magic and other supernatural creatures. The themes of all four great tragedies are sensational. Macbeth has its witches, ghosts and apparitions, its murder in darkened castle, thrilling sight of Lady Macbeth, walking in her sleep. In Hamlet, there is a ghost and grave-diggers. The supernatural elements contribute for the developments of the action of his tragedies.

Shakespearean Comedy :-

Shakespeare started his dramatic career with farcical comedies. In his early stage of immaturity, he wrote 'Love's Labour's Lost', 'The Comedy of Errors', 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona' and 'The Taming of Shrew'. In these early comedies, Shakespeare was deeply inspired by University Wits. In his comedy, 'Love's Labour's Lost', he is inspired by witty dialogues of John Lyly. It is full of jest and light hearted merriment. His another play 'The Comedy of Errors' is a free adaptation of Plautine comedy. 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona' is based on Spanish romance. In 'The Taming of Shrew', he turns from mechanical farce to a serious comedy, dependent on character. 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is the best of Shakespeare's early comedies. In this popular comedy, he introduced the fantastic world of fairies, kings, queens. The characters like Puck, Bottom are Shakespeare's comic creations.

Shakespeare's comic spirit is splendidly manifested in his matured romantic comedies- 'Much Ado About Nothing', 'Twelfth Night', 'The Merchant Of Venice', 'As You Like It', 'The Merry Wives of Windsor'. 'Much Ado About Nothing' is a brilliant comedy charged with vivacity and sparkling wit. 'As You Like It' and 'Twelfth Night' are the funniest comedies of Shakespeare. Shakespeare produced the first great romantic comedy, 'The Merchant of Venice'.

Other comedies of Shakespeare- 'Measure for Measure', 'All is Well That Ends Well' and 'Troilus and Cressida' are considered as dark comedies or problem comedies. In these problem plays, Shakespeare recorded the details of human nature and put forward the contemporary social problems, faced by the protagonists.

Shakespearean comedy is a romantic comedy which didn't follow the rules of dramatic creation, prescribed by the classical masters but it was written according to the dictates of fancy by providing an escape from the sordid realities of life and by avoiding three dramatic unities. In Shakespearean comedy, there is free mingling of comic and tragic elements and romance and realism. According to the great critic Raleigh, it is "rainbow world of love in idleness". In the words of another scholar, Charlton, "The Shakespearean comedy is not satiric, it is poetic. It is not conservative; it is creative. The way of it is that of imagination rather than that of pure reason. It is an artist's vision, not a critic's exposition".

The action of Shakespearean comedy takes place in a strange fantasy land. Shakespeare has created fantastic settings like the Forest of Arden, the mysterious island of Illyria and enchanted woods. These lands of romance and enchantment are born out of Shakespeare's great vision. The fantastic comedy, 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' presents the marvellous fairy world. Shakespeare has set his comedies in almost paradise like locations, enriched by natural beauties.

Shakespearean comedy is woven around the theme of love. The atmosphere of love between hero and heroine is surcharged entirely in his comedies from the beginning to the end. In Shakespearean world of romance, the lovers are entangled in love making business. True love according to Shakespeare is not Time's fool. It, being firm and constant, does not alter with the alternation of time. The love at first sight is applicable to Shakespeare's lovers. The youthful passions have no business with reason. They are strongly fascinated to each other. The path of lovers do not run smooth but it has number of obstacles and hindrances. In course of time, they are separated by misunderstandings, hostility and opposition of parents, friends, and family- members. Finally, after much of struggle, risks and adventures, they are reunited. Hence Shakespearean comedies have happy endings with the ringing of wedding bells.

The Fate or Destiny plays significant role in the Shakespearean comedy. Unlike the tragedies, the fate in his comedies is not harsh, malevolent and unfavourable but it is very compassionate and mirthful. The complications, problems, occurred in the lives of character are resolved by the favour of fate. The critic, Raleigh aptly says, "Fate in the realm of comedy, appears in the milder and more caparious character of fortune, whose wheel turns again and again and vindicates the merry heart".

Shakespearean comedy invokes supernatural and fantastical world. The supernatural and magical creatures like fairies, ghosts, witches, wizards and magicians play mischievous roles. The fairies- Puck and Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* play mischievously with feelings of other characters.

Shakespearean comedy laughs with people not laughs at people. In order to amuse his audiences, Shakespeare has deliberately created fools and jesters. The Elites and Groundlings both were drawn to the theatres by Shakespearean fools and clowns. Shakespeare has used fools in seventeen of his comedies. There are two types of fools- wise fools and rustic fools, used in Shakespearean comedies. The wise fools are courtly Jesters, who provide fun by their intellectual jokes and the Rustic fools are stupid or absurd jesters, who create jokes or fun by wrong use of words. Shakespeare shows great artistic skill in providing dramatic relief by introducing amusing characters. He has made them integral to action by attaching them to other characters.

Feminine characters of Shakespearean comedies are kindly, light hearted and humorous. The heroines are gifted with heavenly beauty and charm. Helena, Portia, Rosalind, Viola, Isabella are divinely good and virtuous. An array of glittering heroines, bright, beautiful, witty enlivens the world of the comedy of Shakespeare. In the words of Ruskin, "Shakespeare has only heroines and no heroes". The world of Shakespearean comedy is a world made safe for women. Rosalind, Portia, Viola, though they are rich in witty and eloquent discourse are frank and simple in thought.

Historical plays of Shakespeare:

Shakespeare also wrote the historical plays, portraying the lives of popular English Kings from King John to Henry VIII. These historical plays of Shakespeare are marked with patriotic note. In other words of S.T Coleridge, "One great object his historical plays was to make his countrymen more patriotic, to make English proud of being Englishmen". Shakespeare has written series of ten historical plays ranging from King John to Henry VIII covering 350 years English history from 1200 to 1550. Each of these plays conveys a moral lesson. The historical plays of Shakespeare prepared a way for his comedy and tragedy.

Shakespeare's Dramatic Romances:

In the last phase of his dramatic career, Shakespeare wrote dramatic romances- 'Pericles', 'Cymbeline', 'Winter's Tale' and 'Tempest'. These plays are neither

tragedies nor comedies. After his tragic period, Shakespeare sought a sound peace of mind. The Dramatic Romances show Shakespeare's mood of reconciliation between the powers of repentance and forgiveness and those of error and guilt.

Post Elizabethan Drama:

The Elizabethan drama can be extended to include Jacobean and Caroline dramatists. After Shakespeare, the playwrights, who wrote in the reign of Charles I, are generally called Jacobean or Caroline. According to some critics, the Elizabethan drama can be stretched out to Puritan age till the close of theatres in 1642. Among the leading playwrights, some were contemporaries and successors of Shakespeare. These writers include Ben Johnson, Thomas Dekker, Thomas Middleton and John Webster, Thomas Heywood, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Ford and Shirley.

Ben Johnson:

Ben Jonson is the greatest of the group of writers who wrote for public theatres outside Shakespeare. He is considered the second most important dramatist after Shakespeare. Christopher Marlow was Shakespeare's greatest rival in his earlier career and so Ben Jonson was in his later career. Ben Johnson is the first English neo-classic, who strongly protested against the romantic exuberance of Elizabethan drama. He successfully tried to infuse the classical spirit of realism in comedy. He has depicted the realistic picture of contemporary London society. His comedies expose the follies and absurdities, fads and fashions of English society. In his comedies, he tried to revive the realistic and satirical comedy of classical literature.

Ben Jonson is a voluminous writer and has written comedies, historical comedies and court masques. The best known comedies of Ben Johnson are 'Everyman in his Humour', 'Epicoene' or 'The Silent Woman', 'The Alchemist' and 'Bartholomew Fair'. The 'Everyman in his Humour', is first play which marks the beginning of new "Comedy of Humours". In the prologue of this play, Johnson attacked the romantic conventions of contemporary theatre and expounded his own theory of drama. The comedy, which Ben Jonson created is known as Comedy of Humours. This new comedy is classical in technique, observing three dramatic writers. In this new comedy, Johnson followed latin classical masters- Platus and Terence. The purpose of this comedy is to satirize the vices of contemporary society.

Everyman in his Humour is key to all the comic plays of Jonson. It is considered the epoch making play, staged in 1598. But Ben Johnson failed to create this comedy

in accordance with medieval conception of the four humours- hot, dry, cold and moist. In the comedy of humour, each character represents some humour. The actions of the characters are governed by some over mastering passions. The purpose of this comedy is to satirize the follies and foibles, vices and absurdities of the contemporary society. So Jonsian comedy is realistic, satirical and classical.

Other comic masterpieces of Jonson are 'Epicoene' or 'The Silent Woman' and the 'Alchemist'. Epicoene or The Silent Woman is the most delightful of Johnson's comedies, acted in 1599. It attacks on the absurd character and fashions of the day.

Other matured comedy of Jonson is The Alchemist, which is written in blank verse. It is highly entertaining, dramatic play that satirizes on human greed. It delineates men are much avaricious and women are vain and libertine. The play is masterpiece of plot-construction.

His later comedies- Volpone is merciless satire of greed and lust. It is the story of a trickster who delights and plots and intrigues. The theme of greed in the play is embodied by Volpone, Mosca. Bartholomew fair is the most entertaining play that satirizes the puritans.

Ben Jonson also wrote The Masques for the court of James I. The best of these are The Satyr, The Masque of Beauty, The Masque of Queen, Cupid etc. In these Masques, Jonson has skilfully mingled allegory, mythology, and fairy tales.

Ben Jonson has also written two tragedies- Sejanus and Catiline. Having inspired by Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, Jonson tried to write these tragedies but didn't prosper. They are only result of his elaborate reading and research and are remained only in the fair of documentation. They were pedantic and dull. So as a tragedian, Johnson was totally a failure.

A group of writers, who were profoundly influenced by Ben Jonson are known as 'Tribe of Ben'.

Thomas Middleton:

Thomas Middleton stands with John Fletcher, Ben Jonson among the most successful and prolific of the playwrights during Jacobean period. He is equally successful in comedy and tragedy. His satirical comedies- "A Trick to Catch The Old One", A Chastemaid In Cheapside are intensively realistic. The same power of reality is shown in his tragedies Women beware Women and 'The Changeling' are

Middleton's masterpiece-tragedies. 'Women Beware Women' takes place in Italy and deals with the life of the famous Italian courtesan. 'Changeling' is a powerful play that deals with beautiful but fickle minded girl. His play 'Witch' is remembered more for its resemblance with Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'.

Thomas Dekker:

Thomas Dekker wrote realistic comedies, based on London life. His most famous play, 'The Shoemaker's Holiday' is remarkable for its central figure- Simon Eyre, the shoemaker, who becomes the Mayor of London. His another play, 'The Honest Whore' deals with the prostitute, who wants to lead an honest life

Thomas Heywood:

Thomas Heywood is the most prolific playwright of the age. He introduced a new type of play- 'The Domestic Play' which deals with middle-class society and its disloyalty with one another. He wrote in abundance more than two hundred plays. Only famous of these is 'A Woman Killed With Kindness' which is a realistic tragedy of domestic life. This is a tragic story of a good wife who succumbs to temptation in a moment of weakness. The husband punishes her with his kindness. Revelation of her husband's noble nature, she feels spiritual agony and ultimately dies in her repentance. The repentant sinner is forgiven just before her death.

Tourneur and John Webster:

These two are always mentioned together, produced highly sensational melodramas, dealing with the life of Renaissance Italy. Tourneur's two plays- 'The Revenger's Tragedy' and 'The Atheist's Tragedy' are gloomy melodramas, set in Italy. They are revenge tragedies modelled on Senecan Tragedy.

John Webster is the greatest post Elizabethan playwright as far as his tragedies are concerned. His famous plays- 'The White Devil' and 'The Duchess of Malfi' are powerful sensational melodramas which display the tragic power which is next only to Shakespeare's.

Beaumont and Fletcher:

Beaumont and Fletcher were popular pair, who collaborately produced fifty- two plays. Their plays were noted for their poetic fancy, graceful languages and high technical skill. The important joint works of the duo are 'The Knight of the Burning Pestle', 'Philaster', 'The Maid's Tragedy', 'A King and No King'. Fletcher had

collaboration with Shakespeare in the plays- Henry VII and 'The Two Noble Kinsmen'. He single-handedly wrote the most popular drama, 'The Faithful Shepherdess', a pastoral drama with a great poetic beauty.

Massinger, Ford and Shirley:

These three dramatists are the later Shakespeare's successors, whose works, mark the end of the Elizabethan drama. Their works were lacking in originality and innovative subjects. They simply tried to imitate the tradition of previous writers. Only Philip Massinger is known for his comedy, 'A New Way to Pay Old Debts'. He was deeply influenced by Ben Johnson. The drama was totally degraded with Ford's play, 'Tis Pity She's A Whore', which dealt with theme of incestuous love. Shirley was the last and least decadent, who was writing after the closing of theatres by Puritan Parliament in 1642. His realistic comedies, dealing with fashionable upper class formed the link between The Elizabethan and The Restoration Drama. Thus the glory of Elizabethan drama was declined with the closing of theatres in 1642 by Puritan Parliament. In this way the golden age of English drama came to an end.

g) Check your progress:

I) Fill in the following blanks by choosing the best alternatives given below:-

- 1) William Shakespeare wrote ____ plays
 - a) 36
 - b) 37
 - c) 38
 - d) 154
- 2) Ben Johnson wrote new comedy, called ____
 - a) Comedy of manner
 - b) Comedy of humours
 - c) Sentimental Comedy
 - d) tragi- comedy
- 3) The playwrights, who wrote in the reign of Charles-I are called as _____ writers.
 - a) Jacobean
 - b) Elizabethan
 - c) Restoration
 - d) University Wits
- 4) Webster's ' Dutches of Malfi' is ____ play.
 - a) Sensational melodrama
 - b) Tragedy
 - c) Comedy
 - d) Farce

5) A group of dramatists who were influenced by Ben Johnson are called _____.

- a) Metaphysics b) Sons of Ben c) disciples d) brothers of Ben

II) Match the column A with column B

A	B
1) William Shakespeare	a) Shoemaker's Holiday
2) Ben Johnson	b) Duchess of Malfi
3) John Webster	c) Latin Classical Masters
4) Thomas Dekkar	d) Everyman in his Humour
5) Plautus and Terence	e) Antony and Cleopatra

h) Terms To Remember:-

- 1) **Corpus Christie** – a Christian religious festival celebrated as the body of Christ by Roman Catholics on (Thursday after Trinity Sunday)
- 2) **Renaissance** – the rebirth or revival of interest in the art and culture of ancient Greece and Rome.
- 3) **University Wits** – a group of University graduates/scholars who laid foundations of the Elizabethan drama.
- 4) **Seneca** – a Roman tragedian whose revenge tragedy was followed as model
- 5) **Allegory** – is the figure of speech in which abstract ideas are described in terms of characters, figure and events with an objective to teach some kind of moral lessons.
- 6) **Platus and Terence** – Roman classical comedians /Roman classical masters who prescribed the dramatic rules of composition of comedy.
- 7) **Three Dramatic Unities** – three unities presented in Aristotle's Poetic unity of Action, Place and time
- 8) **Blank verse** – blank verse is unrhyming verse in iambic pentameter lines. Marlow, Shakespeare wrote their tragedies in blank verse.

- 9) **Masques** – it is dramatic entertainment in which characters wear masks on their faces.
- 10) **Catharsis** – to arouse the feelings of pity and fear in the minds of audience.
- 11) **Humanism** – is a democratic and ethical life stance that tells human have rights and responsibilities to shape their own lives.

i) Answers to check your progress:

Check your progress I-

- A) a) False
 b) True
 c) True
 d) False
 e) True
- B) I – c, II- e, III- d, IV- a, V- b

Check your progress II-

- A) i- d, ii- e, iii- c, iv –a , v- b.
- B)
- 1) University Wits
 2) Christopher Marlow
 3) The Blank Verse
 4) As You Like It
 5) Senecan

Check Your Progress III-

- A) i- b, ii- b, iii- a, iv- a, v- b
- B) I ----- e , II-----d , III-----b, IV-----a, V-----c.

3.3 Section II: Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* – Summary and Analysis

a) Introduction:

Christopher Marlowe is one of the significant playwrights of Elizabethan period who is famous for his tragedies and whose works have influenced the number of writers so far including his contemporaries like William Shakespeare. Baptized in 26th February, 1564, he was born at Canterbury, Kent, England to John Marlowe, a shoemaker, and Catherine. In 1578, he was admitted to King's School at Canterbury, where he completed his primary education. Then he was shifted to the then Benet College and now Corpus College at Cambridge from where he matriculated in 1581. He received a scholarship there during his graduation which he completed in 1584 in arts. In 1587, he completed his post-graduation, but the university refused to award him the degree of Master of Arts as there was a rumour that he intended to study at English College in Rheims in order to become a Roman Catholic priest. It is also said that he was deeply influenced by his tutor Francis Kett, who shaped his atheistical attitude towards religion.

After completing his education, Marlowe worked as a secret agent for Sir Francis Walsingham – though there are no evidences of it except a report of the Privy Council, which helped Marlowe to get his Masters degree – and travelled abroad in this capacity. Afterwards he joined Lord Admiral's Company of Players and settled in London, where while working as an actor he got an opportunity to start his career as a dramatist. So far, he has written six plays which include *Dido, Queen of Carthage*, *Tamburlaine the Great*, *The Jew of Malta*, *Edward the Second*, *The Massacre at Paris*, *Doctor Faustus*, narrative poems such as *Hero and Leander* and *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*, and translated Ovid's *Amores* and Lucan's *Pharsalia*. He died on 1593, at the age of twenty nine and as some scholars believe, he was assassinated on the political grounds.

b) List of Characters:

Barabas:

- protagonist of the play and Jewish merchant
- only cares for his daughter and his huge estate
- vows revenge when government seizes his fortune

- plots causing deaths including his own daughter
- honestly accepts his crimes but seems to be hungry for power than revenge

Abigail:

- 14 years old beautiful daughter of Barabas
- Sincere and dutiful towards her father
- Becomes nun to retrieve her father's wealth from the house
- Realizes her father's trick in killing Lodowick and Mathias
- Decides to be nun after death of Mathias
- Killed by the slave of Barabas

Ithamore:

- Slave of Barabas
- Hates Christians
- Barabas promises to make him heir after his daughter's conversion
- Involved in all murders that Barabas plan
- Obsessed with money and power
- Betrays his master for the sake of Ballamira

Ferneze:

- The governor of Malta
- Confiscate the wealth of Jew merchants to fight with Turks
- Bribes Calymath so that he can turn the situation to his advantages
- Grieves deeply for the death of his son
- Finally brings Barabas to his destruction

Calymath:

- Son of Ottoman Emperor and Turkish leader
- Takes Barabas' help to seize the island
- Gives Barabas the governorship of the island

- Involves in the politics of Malta

Don Mathias:

- Friend of Lodowick
- Loves Abigail
- Becomes victim of the plot

Don Lodowick:

- Ferneze's son
- Loves Abigail
- Barabas promises to marry his daughter with Lodowick
- Victim of Barabas' plot

Friar Jacomo:

- Dominican friar who converts Abigail
- Lusting for nuns and money
- Involves in the plot of killing Bernardine
- Killed by Barabas

Friar Bernardine:

- Friar and friend of Jacomo
- Fight with Jacomo to gain money of Barabas
- Strangled by Ithamore with his own belt

Bellamira:

- A prostitute
- Tricks Ithamore to bribe Barabas
- Barabas uses poisoned flower to murder her

c) Summary:

The play *Jew of Malta* opens with a prologue narrated by Machevill, who presents a tragedy of Jew, who has followed the teachings of Machiavelli to become

the wealthiest man. He also throws light on the central theme of the play that is the lust for power and the cravings of a Jew to control that power. In the beginning of the first act, the protagonist of the play Barabas is introduced, who is in the heaps of gold. He desires his house to be filled with infinite riches like a wealthy Moor, who receives heaps of pearls at free and sells it with the high cost. He is waiting for his ships to return with spices and silks from the east. After some time, the news comes to him that his ships have been arrived safely in the docks of Malta. The merchant informs him to pay the custom, the amount of which surpasses the wealth of many local merchants. The second merchant enters and tells him that another ship from Alexandria has arrived with rich oriental treasure. Meanwhile, three Jews approach him informing that they have to visit senate-house as the Turkish navy is threatening Malta for the unpaid tribute of last ten years to Ottoman Empire. Governor Ferneze requests for time from the Turkish leader Calymath, which he accepts and promises to send the messenger within a month. Then, Ferneze orders that all Jews in Malta must give half of their estate in order to pay the tribute, but he excludes the Christians from it. Therefore, Barabas rebels and says that most of the Jews in Malta are poor and cannot pay it. However, Ferneze instructs them to increase the portion of contribution from rich Jews so that the tribute can be paid. Barabas protests against the injustice, but Ferneze and his knights declare him sinner, confiscate all his wealth and turn his house into a nunnery.

Abigail, Barabas' daughter, enters to find her father in grief and tries to comfort him for the little loss. However, Barabas tells her that it was his provision for her and old age. He further informs her that he has hidden a treasure of ten thousand Portuguese, pearls, costly jewels and many precious stones in his house which is now turned into a nunnery. She involves in the plan of Barabas and decides to go to the nunnery in order to find a hidden treasure in a marked board which she will pass to her father early morning next day. In the third scene of the first act, Mathias ponders over the sudden transformation of a fourteen years old rich Jew Abigail into a nun. At this time, Lodowick suggests him to meet Abigail to find out the truth with the intention to see her there. It is clear that both love her, but her genuine feelings are for Mathias.

The first scene of the second act opens with Barabas carrying light in the darkness around house and lamenting over the situation that turned against him. He wishes his daughter to reach the treasure; meanwhile he perceives the image faintly

and considers it as a ghost, but soon realizes that it is his own daughter carrying the bags of gold and jewels. She throws the bags from window, which he collects happily thinking the scene to be very beautiful as he gains his daughter and wealth altogether. However, Abigail returns to the house as the nuns will wake up in the midnight.

The vice-admiral of Spain Martin del Bosco arrives with his ship called the Flying Dragon, which is full of Greek, Turkish, and Moorish slaves that he intends to sell in Malta. However, Ferneze expresses his inability to purchase the slaves as he must have to pay tribute to the Turkish emperor. Martin del Bosco advises Ferneze to discontinue with the confederation between Malta and Turk and also assures that the Spanish King will help Malta to get rid off of the Turks. According to him, if he breaks the league, he will get all tributary he is going to pay, which seems to be a better deal. Ferneze now decides to buy the slaves and fight with Turks which will be an act of pride for all.

Barabas has recovered much of his wealth from the nunnery and purchased a new house in Malta. He also vows to take revenge of Ferneze and his son Lodowick; and for it, he determines to use deceptive ways of being innocent and gentle. Lodowick enters and requests Barabas to permit him to meet Abigail, which Barabas ultimately gives; and in the aside reveals his intention that he will kill Lodowick and set fire to his house converted in nunnery where friar and nuns are engaged in immoral sexual activities. In the company of Lodowick, he scrutinizes two slaves and finally purchases Ithamore, who is much cheaper than the other. Meanwhile Mathias enters with his mother Katherine in the market, where he secretly talks with Barabas who in turn invites him to meet Abigail. Barabas asks Ithamore to become very cruel, cunning and cold towards Christians to which he reveals his crimes proving himself anti-Christian. Barabas assures him handsome amount in exchange of his loyalty. After reaching home with the slave, Barabas instructs Abigail to behave with Lodowick as if she really loves him and when the couple enters in the house, he remains outside so that he can assure Mathias that Lodowick is forcing his daughter while he prefers Mathias as her lover. The enraged Mathias becomes ready to blow Lodowick, but Barabas manages the situation promising that he will reject Lodowick. As Mathias exits, Lodowick finds him there and is informed by Barabas that Mathias also loves Abigail and intends to kill him so that he can win her. Thus, in the end of act second, Barabas plans a combat between Mathias and Lodowick.

The third act opens with Bellamira, a courtesan, who complains of having no customers since Malta is planning for the Turkish forces. Meanwhile her only customer Pilia-Borza enters with a bag of silver, which he steals from Barabas's house. At this time, Ithamore enters and tells that their plan of rivalry between Lodowick and Matthias is successful. In the next scene, Mathias and Lodowick enter and fight, while Barabas provoke them to kill one another. Ferneze and Katherine find the dead bodies of their sons and initially intend to commit suicide but then resolve to find and take revenge over the responsible person. Ithamore tells Abigail how Barabas plotted the two men's death that leads her now to really convert into a nun as she perceives no love in the earth after the death of Mathias. Friar Jacomo converts her and the two then sets for the nunnery. While going, she leaves a letter to her father urging to repent on his sins. Barabas is annoyed by this betrayal of his daughter, declares Ithamore as his heir and plans to kill all nuns along with his daughter. Ithamore mixes a poisonous powder in a pot of rice causing the death of all sisters in nunnery.

The messenger of Calymath called Callapine arrives in Malta in order to collect tribute, but Ferneze refuses to pay. Callapine leaves with the warning that Calymath will destroy Malta for breaking the league; after which Ferneze motivates his soldiers to get ready for the war. Friars Jacomo and Bernardine find that all nuns are dying. Meanwhile Abigail enters and confesses to Friar Bernardine that her father planned the combat between Mathias and Lodowick. Friar Jacomo declares the death of all nuns and the two go to bury them. Though Friar Bernardine promised Abigail that he will never reveal her confession, now he decides to confront Barabas.

The fourth act opens with Barabas and Ithamore who are happy for succeeding in killing all the nuns and especially Abigail. At this juncture, Friars Jacomo and Bernardine arrive and after some casual exchange reveals that Abigail has confessed the hand of her father in the death of Lodowick and Mathias. Barabas immediately sets a plan expressing his intentions to convert in Christianity and offers his wealth to the monastery whichever he joins. The two friars begin to fight as each expects Barabas to join his monastery. Barabas asks Friar Jacomo to meet him at one o'clock at night which causes them to involve in fight. Barabas at this point intervenes and asks Friar Bernardine to go home with Ithamore. Then Barabas plans murder of Bernardine and goes to his house along with Ithamore, where he strangles Bernardine to death. He sets another plan of accusing Friar Jacomo for the murder; hence, he

supports the body of Bernardine to stand on the way which Friar Jacomo finds on his way and knocks down. Barabas takes this opportunity and accuses Friar Jacomo of murder leading him to be scaffold as per the law nature.

Pilia-Borza tells Bellamira that he handed over a letter to Ithamore, who delivers a monolog describing Jacomo's quiet conduct over his sentence of death. He then goes to the house of Bellamira, who extends her warm welcome that leads him to decide stealing of some money from Barabas so that he can present himself. He sees the opportunity to move with Bellamira and Pilia-Borza and involves in the plan of writing a letter to Barabas demanding three hundred crowns to keep the secret of all his sins. Barabas immediately gives them money which motivates them further another letter asking for five hundred crown to which Pilia-Borza adds hundred more crowns for himself.

Barabas is annoyed with the first letter of Ithamore which is coupled with the feelings of revenge when Pilia-Borza carries another letter expecting five hundred crowns. He invites Pilia-Borza with the intention of giving him poison at the time of dinner, but he refuses until the money is given to him. Therefore, Barabas decides to visit Ithamore under disguise so that he can give punishment for his betrayal. In the house of Bellamira, the drunken Ithamore discloses all the crimes he and Barabas committed, which Bellamira and Pilia-Borza feel an opportunity to blackmail Ithamore. Barabas appears in disguise of French musician with a poisonous flower which he offers the three of them and plays the lute for two crowns which Pilia-Borza gives him. Ithamore asks the musician whether he knows Barabas and tells number of false things about him. When the musician exits, the three blackmailers decide to send third letter to Barabas demanding this time thousand crowns.

The act fifth opens with Ferneze who worries of upcoming Turkish attack as the Spanish support is yet to arrive. In the same time, Bellamira tells him about the plots of Barabas leading to the death of his son as well as subsequent deaths in the nunnery. She presents Ithamore as an evidence of the crime who confesses the sins of both. Barabas is arrested immediately who tries to manipulate the situation by pointing the fact that Bellamira is a courtesan and her companion Pilia-Borza is a thief, but his attempts become in vain. Lady Katharine is informed of the news that the person responsible for the death of her son is arrested, who then enters to discuss with Ferneze, meantime the officers return with the news that all four – Barabas, Ithamore, Bellamira and Pilia-Borza – are died. Martin del Bosco mpoints out it as

an unusual but Ferneze dismisses the case thinking it as a justice of heaven and instructs his officers to throw the body of Barabas over the city walls. Ithamore, Bellamira and Pilia-Borza are died because of the poisonous flower offered by Barabas in disguise of French musician which the smell afterwards, but Barabas has taken a sleepy drink and deceives Ferneze to be dead. When Calymath arrives to the Malta, Barabas voluntarily helps to him take the control of Malta; therefore Calymath declares Barabas as the new governor of Malta. After Calymath exits, Barabas delivers a monologue revealing a danger to his life being a Jew. Hence, he decides to free Ferneze and tells him the plan that he will help Ferneze to regain Malta from Turks in exchange of huge wealth.

Barabas invites Calymath for a feast which he has arranged for the Turks before they leave. Calymath initially refuses but then accepts the invitation when he hears that the banquet has been organized in a monastery outside Malta. Ferneze instructs his knights to do not come forward until he hears a musket discharged. He then visits Barabas with the huge wealth he has promised but Barabas refuses to collect it at monastery. He also tells Ferneze the plan to kill Calymath, while the Turks arrive and Ferneze hides himself. Barabas invites Calymath inside where while ascending the steps Ferneze cuts the rope of cauldron in which Barabas is accidentally trapped. He cries for help, finally confesses all his crimes and dies, while Ferneze arrests Calymath.

d) Plot Analysis:

In the prologue to the play, Marlowe presents the character of Machevil, who is dead but his soul remains immortal in the form of the political schemes which are mastered by the Jew merchant called Barabas. Machevil is the mouthpiece of Machiavelli, the Italian Renaissance scholar, who has written the political treatise entitled *The Prince*. He tells that after the death, he inhabits the body of Duke of Guise in France and then with the death of Duke, his soul travels to this land of Malta which suggests that the soul is now going to inhabit the body of Barabas leading him to employ all the political strategies to grab the power. He sets background to the play unfolding the cravings of Barabas for the bags full with riches of the world.

Though Barabas' lust for money and subsequently for the power is revealed in the play, he is not Machiavellian in the real sense as Marlowe characterizes Jew with

certain traits of cunningness, duplicitous nature, and unscrupulousness which allow Barabas to act with selfishness and vengeance. On the other hand governor Ferneze is in real sense a Machiavellian political schemer whose deceitful ways of seeking a help of Jew merchants in the difficult situations of Malta are revealed when his officers confiscate the property of Barabas. He logically connects the religious beliefs of sin with the sufferings of Jew seems very hypocritical in the play. Even the friars and other Christians interpret religious verse in their own way so that they can take advantage of Barabas' property.

Thus, the first act succeeds in presenting the real motive of all characters in the play which is accumulating the wealth. In the beginning, Barabas is shown in the midst of his wealth counting gold coins, then Ferneze's treachery is revealed who did not pay tribute to Ottoman Empire for the last ten years and who decided to take contribution from the Jews of Malta, and finally Barabas' plan to regain wealth from his house which is turned into a nunnery.

The second act continues to expose the greed of Ferneze for money who is ready to fight with Turks with the help of Spanish King which is more beneficial as he is going to keep the tribute collected from the Jews of Malta and which can be a fair way since it is an act of saving Malta from the invasion of Ottoman Empire. He accepts the offer of Martin del Bosco which reveals the hypocrisy in his nature as he views honour rooted in fighting with Turks, but he is not ready to fight on his own; instead he expects the support of Spain, and indirectly of Christians.

Ferneze's son Lodowick is very much similar to his father, who appreciates the beauty of Abigail but is more interested in her fortune which he may receive after marrying her. He refers her as diamond revealing his preoccupation with the wealth of Barabas. The power of love and wealth seems to work more in case of Lodowick than the religion; on the other hand, Mathias places love above religion or wealth despite his mother's anti-Judaic feelings. Barabas manipulates the two young men and sets them against one another, which is his act of seeking revenge for the injustice done by Christian rulers in Malta. It is clear that, though everything is seized including his house, he has enough wealth to live a comfortable life, which is proved when he purchases new mansion, his vows of revenge and further acts in this direction are the clues of his malicious nature. The same taste for evil deeds is expressed by his slave Ithamore who unfolds his crimes against Christians. In the end of second act, a development in the character of Abigail is seen who is trapped in the

conflict as she finds her father is leading her lover in unnecessary struggle only to satisfy his desires. She finds it difficult to express her love for Lodowick and breaks into tears which again Barabas turns to his advantage declaring that it is love of maiden to her father before her marriage.

The third act depicts alterations in the plot where Bellamira once again highlight the power of money as she prepares to rob money if she fails to receive sufficient persons in Malta. In the subsequent scene, the tension of rivalry between Mathias and Lodowick raised earlier is resolved with their death. Marlowe ironically throws light on the religion here when Friar Jacomo rushes to Friar Maria when all nuns are dying revealing the lascivious relationship between two; and when Friar Bernardine feels sorrow for the dying virgin Abigail. Even Abigail's conversion for the second time was not motivated by her religious feelings but she is converted only because of her grief over the death of her lover after which she seems to find no opportunities of love on the earth. During these all events, Barabas remain unsympathetic and cruel who even poisons his own daughter, whom he loves more, only for the sake of his revenge. In fact, his act of poisoning Abigail is motivated by his fear that his name in the plot of killing the two young men will be disclosed.

The fourth act highlights the consequences of Abigail's decision of converting herself to a nun. After her confession, Friars Jacomo and Bernardine meet Barabas in order to preach him and ask to repent for his crimes. Barabas thinks that the friars will expose him and therefore he plans the murder of them. It is at this stage, the fear of Barabas is revealed who intends to hide all his sins; but he would have known that there is no point in killing the friars as they, according to the religious values, will not expose one's confession in public. Probably Barabas has thought that the friars are religiously corrupt as they revealed the confession of Abigail – which they should not disclose anyone – to him. Barabas plots to set the friars against one another and therefore he pretends to convert himself and offers his wealth to the monastery to which he enters. The huge amount he is going to donate spoils the spiritual values of the friars who stand against each other.

Ithamore plays crucial role in the plots of Barabas and works to the final desired outcomes. He is wicked character in the play as even before Bellamira convinces him to blackmail his master; he has resolved to steal the gold so that he can use it for his advances. He is easily tricked by Ballamira and Pilia-Borza because of his lust for sex rather than love for Bellamira, when he finds an opportunity to enjoy both the

wealth of his master as well as the love of courtesan, he decides to betray his master and involves in the conspiracy leading to extract money from Barabas. Bellamira and Pilia-Borza are also cunning personalities who resolve to betray Ithamore after making enough fortune through blackmailing as they are going to bring forth the crimes of Ithamore and Barabas to Ferneze.

Surely Barabas is going to take revenge of the betrayal of his slave as he has not excused his own daughter, whom he loves very much. He gives the amount to the blackmailers twice only because their demands do not make much difference to Barabas and giving money time to time to them provides him time to set the plan to take revenge. He decides to meet Ithamore in disguise of French musician and gives the three conspirators a poisonous flower with the intention to kill them.

The fifth act brings forth the consequences of blackmailing and betrayal. Bellamira and Pilia-Borza betray Ithamore by revealing the plots of Barabas to Ferneze and further presenting Ithamore as a witness to all the crimes. However, when Barabas calls for law to justify his crimes, it seems that he is seeking again time so that he can get himself out of the situation. Though Ferneze dismisses his case, he succeeds in his plan of killing the three conspirators and escaping himself from the death sentence. He voluntarily helps Calymath to conquer Malta who makes him the governor of Malta, but the power to rule comes with the threat to the existence as he feels that he will be hated. Hence, he plans to make best out of the situation and offers Malta once again to Ferneze in exchange of huge wealth. However the poetic justice is seen in the end of the play where Barabas himself is killed finally confessing all his crimes.

e) Check Your Progress:

1. speaks prologue in the play.
a) Machevill b) Machiavelli c) Ferneze d) Barabas
2. Barabas wishes his house to be filled with infinite riches like a wealthy
a) Governor b) Moor c) Turks d) Friar
3. Ferneze orders that all Jews in Malta must give of their estate in order to pay the tribute.
a) one third b) whole c) half d) one fourth

4. throws the bags of gold and jewels from the house turned in nunnery.
a) Lodowick b) Mithias c) Ithamore d) Abigail
5. Martin del Bosco arrives with his ship called the
a) Flying Dragon b) Flying Eagle
c) Zeus d) Dragon
- 6) Abigail loves
a) Mathias b) Lodowick c) Ithamore d) del Bosco
- 7) The name of Calymath's messenger is
a) del Bosco b) Callapine c) Jacomo d) Bernardine
- 8) Abigail confesses Barabas' plot of killing Mathias and Lodowick to
a) Friar Jacomo b) Ferneze c) Friar Bernardine d) nun
- 9) The conspirators send third letter to Barabas demanding crowns.
a) one thousand b) three hundred c) one hundred d) five hundred
- 10) declares Barabas as the new governor of Malta.
a) Ferneze d) del Basco c) Callapine d) Calymath

3.4 Section III: Themes and Characters' Analysis

a) Themes in the Play:

i) Religious Hypocrisy:

The play foregrounds religious hypocrisy where the characters in the play use religious ideologies for their own benefits and try to justify their sometimes inhuman activities in terms of religious justice. Governor Ferneze and Friars Jacomo and Bernardine, who are the agents of religious practices – as one looks after the well being of the society and other two are inclined to the practices of salvation – are frauds and hypocrites and only aim at finding a best place for them. Governor Ferneze unjustly tries to rob the Jews in the name of tribute to save Malta from the invasion of Turks and then justifies his act under the pleasant guise of religion. Friar

Jacomo and Friar Bernardine are also morally corrupt who forgets religious values and act in their own way. Being friars, they should not disclose the confessions of others but they revealed the confession of Abigail to Barabas which is unfair. Furthermore when they see an opportunity to earn huge wealth of Barabas after his declaration of conversion in order to repent his sins, each of them tries to grab it for their own sake finally leading themselves to be the victims of Barabas' plot. As friars, they should not be attracted towards the wealth; but their immorality is expressed when they stand against each other.

The decline of these religious values puts Barabas under the circumstances where it is very much difficult to understand his motives. Only his acts of killing the persons in order to take revenge make him villain, otherwise his stance to hide his wealth from the morally corrupt people can be seen as a human tendency to protect himself which he himself reveals in the begging when he says that he has made his fortune to protect his daughter and old age. He does not put himself in the moral bindings of the religious values, but exploits the freedom of being a Jew or non-Christian in a Christian community.

ii) Machiavellian Strategy:

Machiavellian political strategy is a recurring theme in the play which highlights the political ways of making the best from the available circumstances. The prologue itself marks the strategies employed where even the religious values and ideologies are also exploited by the individuals. Barabas plans to save his wealth from the governor which highlights that the ruler as well as citizens cunningly tries to secure it. It is also noticed when the Turkish fleet threatens of attack, if the Ferneze does not give the tribute of the last ten years. In order to pay the dues, Ferneze takes the time of a month so that he can raise the money and then makes the strategy targeting Jews of the Malta. Barabas tries to seek excuse by bringing forth the fact that most of the Jews in Malta are very poor which is again countered by Ferneze, who instructs the Jew merchants to increase the portion of share. When Barabas opposes Ferneze, he orders his officers to seize the property of Barabas including his house so that other Jews would not dare to go against his rule. Even later, when del Basco advises him to take the help of Spanish King in protecting Malta from Turkish invasion, he is interested more in the amount collected by the Jews than protection of Malta.

Barabas politically moves in order to take revenge of unjust treatment given to him, every time succeeding in the plots and looking for his safety. He manipulates Lodowick, Mathias, Abigail and even Ferneze in the later stage to keep him safe and hide his crimes. He waits for the correct moments and when finds the situations favourable to him traps the victim. Only Abigail has realized that she is victim of one of the moves of her father who serves as a link for further murders and deceptions.

Vengeance:

Vengeance is another dominating theme in the play and every move of the protagonist of the play seems to revolve around it. Barabas is possessed to take revenge over the persons so did a personal harm to him by snatching the most valuable thing from him that is his wealth. He plans to kill Lodowick only because Lodowick's father governor Ferneze seized his wealth, but the murder of Mathias seems to be directed by his hatredness towards the Christians in Malta. When he finds that his own daughter has betrayed him by converting herself to the Christian after knowing her father's plot, he again felt the betrayal by his dearest one and decides to kill her along with all nuns, who lodged in his house. His vengeance against the persons loyal to him makes him treacherous pointing his trait of inclined towards the evil deeds. He thinks of vengeance when Ithamore was most loyal to him and even he decides to betray Calymath who has been loyal to him and kept his promises.

b) Characters' Analysis:

Barabas:

Barabas is the protagonist of the play and a Jew merchant in a Christian society of Malta, where he never feels at a home and is alienated. The initial introduction to him in Act I gives the impression that he gives prime importance only to the wealth, but the developments in his character at the later stage indicate that he is inclined to the evil deeds only because of vengeance. Though Barabas' lust for money and subsequently for the power is revealed in the play, he is not Machiavellian in the real sense as Marlowe characterizes Jew with certain traits of cunningness, duplicitous nature, and unscrupulousness which allow Barabas to act with selfishness and vengeance. He tries in vain to protect his wealth by pointing the fact that the most Jews in Malta are poor and then opposing unjust acts of the governor Ferneze only to find that his all wealth including house has been seized by the officers. Therefore he

vows to take the revenge and plans the murder of governor's son Lodowick and his friend Mathias, who is in love with his daughter Abigail. He promises to marry his daughter to both and succeeds in setting the two young men against each other finally leading them to death. When he finds his daughter has converted to the Christianity, he takes it as his betrayal and poisons her along with the whole nunnery. His plots of murder of friars are his in fact moves to save himself as he fears that the friars will reveal his plan to the governor. He then kills his slave Ithamore who has betrayed him, and the courtesan and a pimp who blackmail him by giving a poisonous flower.

Abigail:

Abigail is the daughter of Barabas and only character in the play who exhibits genuine love, loyalty, and selflessness. In addition to it, she is not influenced by money or power of her father and follows some moral codes which make her dutiful daughter who cares for her father. Her dedication to Barabas is proved when she vows to remain loyal and converts to Christianity in order to retrieve the wealth of her father from the house turned into a nunnery. However, when she finds that her lover Mathias has become victim of her father's plot, she decides to really convert herself to the Christianity. Her religious beliefs are somewhat doubtful for her because she has converted only because there is no hope of true love for her in the world after the death of Mathias. It is here, she goes against the wishes of her father which annoyed him. She then becomes a victim of Barabas' plot who poisons her along with all nuns. However, before death she confesses the crimes of her father.

Ferneze:

Ferneze is the governor of Malta and Barabas' great enemy. He is Christian and law-abiding person, who strategically thinks of Christians in Malta and orders the Jews to pay the tribute. He is morally bankrupt who has not paid the tribute to the Ottoman Empire; and when he finds that he can take the help of Spanish King to protect himself and can keep the huge portion of tribute for himself, he decides to break the league. He time to time refers to the ideology in Christianity to justify his crimes which show his religious corruption.

3.5 Answers to Check Your Progress:

1. a) Machevill

2. b) Moor
3. c) Half
4. d) Abigail
5. a) Flying Dragon
6. a) Mathias
7. b) Callapine
8. c) Friar Bernardine
9. a) One thousand
10. d) Calymath

3.6 Exercise:

a) Answer the following questions in about 350 to 400 words

1. Discuss the major themes in the play
2. Gold emerges as a symbol of power and success. Elucidate.
3. Comment on the theme of deception and vengeance.
4. Write a note on the religious hypocrisy reflected in the play.

b) Write short notes in about 100 to 150 words.

- 1) Sketch the character of Ithamore
- 2) Discuss in brief the lust for power and money
- 3) Comment on Barabas' Machiavellian strategies

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Unit-4

General Topic : Realism in Drama

Hedda Gabler

Henrik Ibsen's

Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
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- 4.10 Answers to Check Your Progress
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- 4.12 Further Readings

4.0 Objectives:

After completing the study of this unit, you will

- know about realism in drama
- know about the life and works of Henrik Ibsen
- know about the plot summary of the *Hedda Gabler*
- learn the major and minor characters in *Hedda Gabler*
- learn the themes and other aspects in *Hedda Gabler*
- be able to answer the questions on General Topic and the play *Hedda Gabler*

4.1 Introduction:

This unit discusses the general topic ‘Realism in Drama’ as well as Henrik Ibsen’s play *Hedda Gabler*. It also presents the detailed summary of his famous play *Hedda Gabler*, the analysis of the Major and Minor characters in the play and the critical commentary on the issues handled in the play.

4.2 Realism in Drama

The mainstream European theatre from 1859 to 1900 was full of melodramas, spectacle plays (disasters, etc.), comic operas, and vaudevilles. Realistic drama emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century as a revolt against the over-the-top melodramas full of spectacle popular in the early to mid-19th century. Drama was to involve the direct observation of human behavior. The movement was towards using contemporary settings and time periods. Drama began to deal with everyday life and problems as subjects. It began to speak about real people in everyday situations, dealing with common problems. It started taking an unflinching look at the way things really were in the world. Realist playwrights tried to illuminate humankind’s struggles and concerns in a straightforward way.

Realistic drama focused on human behavior – what people do and why in the context of their particular situations. It provided a kind of representation of what the audience experienced in their respective lives.

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) is considered to be the father of modern realistic drama. His plays attacked society’s values and dealt with unconventional subjects within the form of the well-made play.

Ibsen perfected the well-made play formula; and by using a familiar formula made his plays, with a very shocking subject matter, acceptable. He discarded soliloquies, asides, etc. Exposition in the plays was motivated, there were causally related scenes, inner psychological motivation was emphasized, the environment had an influence on characters’ personalities, and all the things characters did and all of things the characters used revealed their socio-economic milieu. He became a model for later realistic writers.

Among the subjects addressed by Ibsen in his plays are: *euthanasia*, *the role of women*, *war and business*, and *syphilis*.

Some of Ibsen's realistic plays are as follows:

1. *Ghosts* (1881) deals with the concept of the sins of the father transferring to the son, resulting in syphilis.
2. *Pillars of Society* (1877) deals with war and business.
3. *Hedda Gabler* (1890) portrays a powerful woman who takes her life at the end of the play to get away from her boredom with society.
4. In *A Doll's House* (1879), Nora leaves her husband Torvald and her children at the end of the play; often considered "the slam heard around the world," Nora's action must have been very shocking to the Victorian audience.

This type of theatre – grounded in the stark reality of everyday-ness – showed the true constitution of individuals when confronted with challenges and difficulties in life.

Realistic drama presented everyday conversation in a succinct, direct way. It featured plainness of speech, which seemed mundane at times, but was actually very revealing of character, especially when coupled with action (and the dramatic subtext of the play). An example of this in the play *A Doll's House* occurs when Nora says matter-of-factly to her husband as she prepares to leave her family:

You have never loved me. You have only thought it pleasant to be in love with me.

This is unassuming, direct, believable dialogue that hits with full force within the context of this play and the drama playing out between a husband and wife in the simple setting of their home.

The sets of realist plays evoked the typical workplaces, towns, and homes of people. These plays were a reflection of the society and culture in which people lived. The everyday settings contributed to the power of the plays.

Besides Ibsen, other writers of realist drama are:

1. George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950):
 - *Arms and the Man* (1894) – about love and war and honour
 - *Mrs. Warren's Profession* – prostitution

- *Major Barbara* (1905) – a munitions manufacturer gives more to the world (jobs, etc.) while the Salvation Army only prolongs of the status quo.
- *Pygmalion* (1913) – shows how transforming of a flower girl into a society woman, and exposes the phoniness of society.

2. Anton Chekhov (1860-1904)

- *The Seagull* (1898)
- *Three Sisters* (1900) – Three sisters who want to move to Moscow but never do.
- *The Cherry Orchard* (1902)

Some of the characteristic features of Realist drama are as follows:

- Characters are believable, everyday types.
- Costumes are authentic.
- Stages setting and props are often indoors and believable.
- The ‘box set’ is normally used for realistic drama on stage, consisting of three walls and an invisible ‘fourth wall’ facing the audience.
- Setting are often ordinary, dialogue is not heightened for effect, but that of everyday speech.
- Realist drama is typically psychologically driven, where the plot is secondary and primary focus is placed on the interior lives of characters, their motives, the reactions of others, etc.
- Realistic plays often see the protagonist rise up against the odds to assert him/herself against an injustice of some kind (for example, Nora in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*)

4.3 Henrik Ibsen: Life and Works:

Henrik Johan Ibsen (1828-1906) was the leading Norwegian dramatist during the nineteenth century. His father was a merchant. When his father’s business failed, the family suffered financial setbacks. Ibsen had to start working as an apprentice to an apothecary at the age of fifteen. As he was very uncommunicative, he spent his time reading contemporary poetry and theology. Very early in his life, he began to

write poetry. In 1850, he started learning Latin and studied Cicero. Under this influence, he wrote a historical drama in verse titled *Catiline*. He also wrote *The Warrior's Barrow* and the *Burial Mound*.

Ibsen was appointed theatre poet and stage manager of the Bergen Theatre. With this began his dramatic career. Soon he married Susannah Thoresen. His new play, *The Vikings at Helgeland*, was performed at the Christiania Theatre. In his play, *The Pretenders*, Ibsen glorified the Norse heroes of the past. The Government awarded him a scholarship to travel abroad in order to bring him in contact with the cultural trends in the rest of Europe.

He travelled to Italy along with his wife and only child, Sigurd. Free from the stultifying atmosphere of Norway, he wrote with an inspired pen. His *Brand*, one of the greatest plays in Norway's literary history, won nationwide fame for its author. His *Peer Gynt* is full of symbolic allusions and rich lyrical poetry.

He lived most of the rest of his life in Italy and in Germany. Starting in 1869, he began to write prose plays, giving up the verse form. In *The Pillars of Society* (1877), *A Doll's House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881), *An Enemy of the People* (1882) and *The Wild Duck* (1884), he examined the moral faults of modern society. In many ways, *Hedda Gabler*, a later play completed in 1890, belongs to this group. It presents a detailed picture of society, sketching class differences between the aristocratic and bourgeois worlds.

Like all of Ibsen's plays, *Hedda Gabler* was originally written in Norwegian and is full of untranslatable wordplay.

4.4 Plot Summary of the Play *Hedda Gabler*:

The setting of the entire play is Tesman's living room and a smaller room to its side. Jürgen Tesman and Hedda Tesman (Hedda Gabler), the couple, are the central characters. At the beginning of the play, we come to know that both have just returned from their six-month honeymoon. It is very difficult to please the aristocratic Hedda. In the course of the action of the play, it has been hinted that Hedda is pregnant.

At the beginning of Act I, Tesman finds that Julle, his Aunt, has arrived for a visit. Tesman owes a lot to Aunt Julle as she has raised him and still continues to provide him the financial support. Hedda, however, treats Aunt Julle in a very rude

manner. Tesman expects her to be kinder to his Aunt, but she clearly has real interest neither in Aunt Julle nor in him. Soon, Mrs. Elvsted announces that Ejlert Lövborg, Tesman's old academic rival, is back in town. Lövborg had been an alcoholic and a failure, but now he has reformed. Hedda persuades Tesman to go away, and she succeeds in convincing Mrs. Elvsted to reveal the reality. She learns that Mrs. Elvsted is worried about Ejlert who, she thinks, will start drinking again and also that she has come to monitor him without her husband's permission. As soon as Mrs. Elvsted leaves, Judge Brack arrives. Judge Brack has brought gossip from town. He declares that Ejlert is a successful scholar and is likely to take the position at the university. Tesman is eager to acquire the same position. He exits, and Tesman tells Hedda that there is a need to minimize their expenses.

In Act II, Brack comes back later that day. He finds Hedda playing with her pistols, out of boredom. There is a very private conversation between them for some time. Both agree to form a close, personal bond between them. Hedda reveals to Brack that she had not enjoyed her honeymoon and that she has no special interest in the house Tesman intends to buy for her. Soon, Tesman arrives and learns about the stag party that Brack is throwing later that night. Ejlert Lövborg arrives and talks in earnest with Hedda. Tesman and Brack drink in the other room. Then, Mrs. Elvsted arrives. Hedda plays Ejlert and Mrs. Elvsted against each other. She makes Ejlert think the other was worried he would begin drinking again. At this hint, he begins to drink and decides to join Tesman and Brack as they leave for the party. Mrs. Elvsted is very upset, but Ejlert promises to return after some time to take her home.

At the beginning of Act III, we find that Mrs. Elvsted is sitting up before dawn, still waiting for Ejlert to return. Hedda is asleep on the couch. Soon, she awakes and sends Mrs. Elvsted in to sleep on her bed. Tesman arrives and tells his wife that he has got the possession of Ejlert's fabulous manuscript. Ejlert has dropped it while walking home drunk. Tesman plans to return it to him but he cannot go immediately as he comes to know that his Aunt Rina is dying. Brack arrives and tells Hedda that Tesman left before Ejlert got into real trouble, that indeed he has been arrested. Brack leaves, and Ejlert arrives. He tells a shocked Mrs. Elvsted that he has destroyed his manuscript. She is crushed and leaves immediately. Then, Ejlert confesses to Hedda that he has, in fact, lost the manuscript and that he wants to kill himself. Hedda does not tell him that she has the manuscript. She simply gives him

one of her pistols and tells him to have a beautiful death. He leaves, and she burns the manuscript, referring to it as the child of Ejlert and Mrs. Elvsted.

Act IV begins with the living room in darkness. Aunt Julle arrives. Everyone is wearing black as a sign of mourning. We soon learn that it is Aunt Rina whose death they mourn. Aunt Julle announces that she must find another invalid to take care of now. She leaves. Mrs. Elvsted arrives, reporting to have heard that Ejlert is in the hospital. Brack arrives and confirms this but reports to the company that Ejlert is, in fact, already dead, having wounded himself in the chest. Tesman and Mrs. Elvsted immediately sit down to try to reconstruct his manuscript in honor of his death, based on notes Mrs. Elvsted has kept. In private, Brack tells Hedda that it was actually an ugly death, that the pistol went off accidentally, and that scandal might ensue for Hedda. Hedda leaves the room and, after playing the piano for some moments, shoots herself.

4.5 Major and Minor Characters:

Hedda Gabler -

Hedda is the daughter of the famous General Gabler. She is aristocratic and hard to please. As a child she was used to luxury and high-class living. At the beginning of the play, we come to know that she has just returned from her six-month honeymoon with Jürgen Tesman. Her husband is a scholar with good prospects but not as much money as Hedda is accustomed to. Her name after marriage is Hedda Tesman. Hedda is an intelligent, unpredictable, and somewhat dishonest young woman. She is not afraid to manipulate her husband and friends.

Hedda and Tesman lack a perfect relationship. Hedda looks down upon her husband Tesman. Even before she enters, we see that Berte, the servant, is afraid that it is very difficult to please. And indeed, as soon as Hedda enters, she complains that Berte has opened the window. Hedda belongs to the upper class and is impossible to please. The incident involving Aunt Julle's hat provides another example of Hedda's obstinate implacable personality. Aunt Julle had decided to wear the hat especially for Hedda, but Hedda does not like it at all.

Hedda is arrogant and treats Berte, Julle and her husband badly. Hedda's disregard for Tesman's feelings is seen when she refuses to look at his beloved slippers. There is no explicit reference to Hedda's pregnancy, but Tesman's reference

to the fact that Hedda has been gaining weight indicates that she is now pregnant. Hedda's refusal to admit that she has been gaining weight hints at her problematic relationship with being pregnant and also with Tesman, the assumed father of the child. Tesman remains unaware of the pregnancy. Their relationship suffers from a lack of openness and communication.

Hedda does not tell Ejlert that she has his manuscript. She simply gives him one of her pistols and tells him to have a beautiful death. She further burns the manuscript, referring to it as the child of Ejlert and Mrs. Elvsted. She shoots herself towards the end of the play.

Jürgen Tesman -

Jürgen Tesman is an amiable and intelligent young scholar. At the beginning of the play, we come to know that he and his wife Hedda have just returned from their six-month honeymoon. He tries very hard to please his young wife, but fails to do so because she, being the daughter of the famous General Gabler, is used to luxury and high-class living. He has no as much money as Hedda is accustomed to.

Hedda ill-treats her husband. Hedda's disregard for Tesman's feelings is seen when she refuses to look at his beloved slippers. There is no explicit reference to Hedda's pregnancy, but Tesman's reference to the fact that Hedda has been gaining weight indicates that she is pregnant. Hedda's refusal to admit that she has been gaining weight hints at her problematic relationship with being pregnant and also with Tesman, the assumed father of the child. Tesman remains unaware of the pregnancy. Their relationship suffers from a lack of openness and communication.

Tesman often does not realize that his wife is manipulating him. In fact, he often seems foolish for his age, and when he annoys Hedda, the audience has reason to sympathize with her. Tesman is hoping for a professorship in history, and at the beginning of the play it seems that his one great rival, Ejlert Lövborg, a notorious alcoholic, no longer stands in Tesman's way.

At the beginning of Act I, Tesman finds that Julle, his Aunt, has arrived for a visit. Tesman owes a lot to Aunt Julle as she has raised him and still continues to provide him the financial support. Hedda, however, treats Aunt Julle in a very rude manner. Tesman expects her to be kinder to his Aunt, but she clearly has real interest neither in Aunt Julle nor in him.

Juliane Tesman -

Juliane Tesman, or Aunt Julle, is the aunt of Jürgen Tesman. After the death of Tesman's parents, Tesman owes a lot to Aunt Julle as she has raised him and still continues to provide him the financial support. Hedda, however, treats Aunt Julle in a very rude manner. Tesman expects her to be kinder to his Aunt, but she clearly has real interest neither in Aunt Julle nor in him. Aunt Julle is well-meaning, and she is constantly hinting that Tesman and Hedda should have a baby. Aunt Julle tries to get along with Hedda, but the difference in their class backgrounds is painfully apparent. Aunt Julle lives with the ailing Aunt Rina, another aunt of Tesman's. Act IV begins with the living room in darkness. Aunt Julle arrives. Everyone is wearing black as a sign of mourning. We soon learn that it is Aunt Rina whose death they mourn. Aunt Julle announces that she must find another invalid to take care of now.

Judge Brack -

Brack is a judge of relatively inferior rank. He is a friend of both Tesman and Hedda, and he visits their house regularly. Judge Brack brings gossip from town. He declares that Ejlert is a successful scholar and is likely to take the position at the university. Tesman is eager to acquire the same position. Brack has connections around the city, and he is the first to give Tesman information about problems in the possibility of his professorship. He seems to enjoy meddling in other people's affairs. He is a worldly and cynical man.

Ejlert Lövborg –

A genius, Ejlert Lövborg is Tesman's biggest rival in the academic world. After a series of scandals related to drinking, he was once a public outcast. However, he now has reformed and has returned to the city. He has published a book to rave reviews. Hedda learns that Mrs. Elvsted is worried about Ejlert. Mrs. Elvsted wishes to prevent him from giving himself to drinking again, but she has come to look after him without her husband's permission. Judge Brack declares that Ejlert is a successful scholar and is likely to take the position at the university. Ejlert also has another manuscript that is even more promising. Mrs. Elvsted helped him with both manuscripts. He once shared a close relationship with Hedda. Hedda plays Ejlert and Mrs. Elvsted against each other. She makes Ejlert think the other was worried he would begin drinking again. At this hint, he begins to drink. Tesman gets the possession of Ejlert's fabulous manuscript. Ejlert has dropped it while walking home

drunk. Tesman plans to return it to him but he hands it over to Hedda. Ejlert tells a shocked Mrs. Elvsted that he has destroyed his manuscript. She is crushed to hear that. Then, Ejlert confesses to Hedda that he has, in fact, lost the manuscript and that he wants to kill himself. Hedda does not tell him that she has the manuscript. She simply gives him one of her pistols and tells him to have a beautiful death. She burns his manuscript, referring to it as the child of Ejlert and Mrs. Elvsted.

Mrs. Elvsted –

Mrs. Elvsted is a meek woman, but she has passionate attachment for Ejlert Lövborg. She and her husband hired Ejlert as a tutor to their children. She acts as Ejlert's personal secretary and aids him in his research and writing. Ejlert leaves her estate to return to the city. Lövborg had been an alcoholic and a failure, but now he has reformed. Mrs. Elvsted follows him to the city without her husband's permission. She goes to Tesman for help, fearing Ejlert will revert to his alcoholism. Mrs. Elvsted went to school with Hedda and remembers being tormented by her. Hedda once again torments her by burning Ejlert's valuable manuscript, referring to it as the child of Ejlert and Mrs. Elvsted.

4.6 Critical Analysis of *Hedda Gabler*:

Hedda Gabler is Henrik Ibsen's well-structured play. The play opens with the main problems that face the characters in the play. We come to know that Tesman's rival, Ejlert Lövborg, is back in town and is once again a threat to Tesman's professorship in History. Tesman's marriage to Hedda was based on the assumption that he would quickly earn a post at the university, but Ejlert's reappearance and success may stand in Tesman's way.

Hedda and Tesman do not have a perfect relationship. Hedda is the daughter of the famous General Gabler. She is aristocratic and hard to please. As a child she was used to luxury and high-class living. Even before she enters, we see that Berte, the servant, is afraid Hedda cannot be pleased. And indeed, when Hedda enters, she immediately complains that Berte has opened the window. The incident involving Aunt Julle's hat provides another example of Hedda's obstinate implacable personality. Aunt Julle had decided to wear the hat especially for Hedda, but Hedda criticizes it. Tesman warns Hedda to be nicer to Aunt Julle, which shows that he recognizes Hedda's rudeness.

Hedda is spoiled and treats her husband just as badly as she does Berte and Julle. Hedda's disregard for Tesman's feelings is proved by her refusal to look at his beloved slippers. Hedda has been gaining weight. It indicates that she is now pregnant. Hedda refuses to admit that she has begun to gain weight. This shows her problematic relationship with being pregnant and also with Tesman, the assumed father of the child. The relationship between Tesman and Hedda suffers from a lack of openness and awareness. Although they never come directly into conflict, the tension between them is the basis for much of the tragedy in *Hedda Gabler*.

Hedda is smarter than Mrs. Elvsted. She succeeds in manipulating her. She also succeeds in forcing her to reveal her secrets. Hedda suspects that there is an affair between Mrs. Elvsted and Lövborg. However, it is difficult to understand why Hedda is so interested in this affair. She may have romantic attachment to Lövborg. Mrs. Elvsted goes from one man to another according to her need. She becomes one man's governess, and later becomes his wife. Now she has become attached to the tutor whom her first husband hired. Ejlert has published a scholarly book. We wonder if Ejlert, much smarter than Mrs. Elvsted, has any sense of involvement for her.

When Tesman learns that he may not receive the position at the university, we come to know his personal weakness. At the very beginning of the play, Tesman comes off as a lovesick but otherwise dignified man. Now we begin to see him as a coward. Ibsen carefully reveals the flaws of all of his characters. The play is not a tragedy of a protagonist as such, but it is a general tragedy.

The relationship between Hedda and Brack is not necessarily sexual, but it has the flavor of adultery. Hedda's high level of comfort with Brack shows her willingness to complain to him about her marriage. When she talks to Tesman or Mrs. Elvsted, she seems to be manipulating them or merely whining. But she reveals her grievances to Brack quite frankly.

Hedda's feelings toward Tesman are very cold. Tesman has to spend a lot to please Hedda, but the house basically means nothing to Hedda. Tesman and his aunt seem unable to comprehend her dissatisfaction.

Hedda is sure that she is not pregnant, and she has no taste for things that "make a claim on her freedom." This shows the tragic nature of her quest for freedom from the burdens of being a wife and a mother. In many ways, Brack is one of her best

friends, but, at the same time, she seems to resent the extent to which he tries to control her.

We learn that the woman who Mrs. Elvsted was worried about, the woman from Ejlert's past who threatened him with pistols, was Hedda. Hedda clearly keeps Ejlert in a fairly high regard, yet she does not refrain from causing him to drink after years of abstinence. She seems to enjoy semi-adulterous relationships with men not because she admires the men but because she wants to control them. A key method in controlling Brack and Ejlert, apparently, is to make them think that she wants to keep them in her confidence without letting Tesman know. When Tesman nears the couch where she and Ejlert are talking, she quickly changes the subject.

At the beginning of Act 3, it is clear that something has gone wrong. The women have been up all night. Berte offers to fix the fire, but the selfless Mrs. Elvsted urges her to let it die down and save firewood. However, when Hedda awakes she demands that the fire be brought back to life. Here, one wonders if the climax of the play has been reached, offstage, at Brack's stag party.

The matter of Ejlert's manuscript is a curious one. Although Tesman is quite anxious to return it, his reasons for picking it up seem feeble. His admission of fleeting jealousy confirms the rivalry that was already apparent. This scene also evinces Tesman's bookishness, as he characterizes as the highlight of the party the moments when he was being read to by Ejlert and nervously refers to the rest of the evening as an "orgy."

When Hedda murmurs to herself about Ejlert's vine leaves, it is clear that she is disappointed and surprised. When she kept telling Mrs. Elvsted that Ejlert would return with vine leaves in his hair, she was reassuring not only Mrs. Elvsted but also herself. This is one of the few moments of weakness she shows throughout the play. The speed with which she comes to her senses and changes her tone is evidence of her vigilance in maintaining a calm, controlled exterior, even when she is feeling confused on the inside.

Hedda asks Brack why he is so forthcoming with information, as if she does not see friendship alone as grounds for confidences. Also, her earlier comment about not wanting to be controlled makes more sense once she describes Brack as being someone who wants to be the "only cock in the yard": although she makes light of it, she is clearly threatened by Brack.

Hedda is able to deceive those around her. She has no regard of their thoughts and feelings. At one moment she seeks to comfort Ejlert. By seeming to understand his desire to kill himself, she at least seems to sympathize with him. Yet she does not seek to prevent his death by returning the manuscript. Instead, she burns it, thinking only of venting her own frustrations at the relationship between Ejlert and Mrs. Elvsted. Her willingness to give him one of her father's pistols shows that she thinks of Ejlert more as an object than as a person; she wants him to die beautifully.

Aunt Julle's final appearance in the play is intensely ironic. At the beginning of the play, when Aunt Julle first visited, the room was bright with morning—but Hedda immediately said that it was too bright and closed the window. Now, largely because of Hedda's actions—her cold treatment of others, her encouragement of Ejlert in his suicide, her burning of the manuscript--the room has been "darkened" in a symbolic sense, while also becoming literally dark with the fall of evening and the donning of the black clothes of mourning. Aunt Julle's cheerful suggestions that Hedda might be pregnant seem wildly naive in light of all that has transpired.

When Tesman approves of Hedda's decision not to give the manuscript back to Ejlert, it becomes increasingly clear that he half hopes the manuscript will never be returned. All the same, his conscious intentions seem to be good, until he learns that Hedda has burned the manuscript. At this news, he avoids the question of whether this was right or wrong, instead focusing on how much Hedda must love him. The fact that this joy repulses Hedda only shows how wildly inaccurate his assumptions were. It remains unclear what she was about to tell him, but given Aunt Julle's hints at pregnancy, it is easy to think that she was with child. More likely perhaps, she was going to tell Tesman about Ejlert's imminent death.

Hedda's interest in how Ejlert died proves that she cares more for the beauty of his death than for his well-being. This is contrasted by the behavior of Mrs. Elvsted, who is deeply sad.

Tesman's desire to dedicate his life to reconstructing Ejlert's manuscript shows the fickleness and smallness of his character. A few moments earlier, he had been elated that Hedda would destroy the manuscript, but now he is horrified that Ejlert is dead, and he is eager to restore the manuscript. It seems that he always tries to act appropriately, whatever the situation, regardless of over-arching principle. Also, it is

possible that he is eager to work with Mrs. Elvsted. Earlier, in Act 1, Hedda hints that Mrs. Elvsted may have been involved with Tesman at some earlier date. At any rate, when Tesman plans for he and Mrs. Elvsted to meet daily at his Aunt's to work, one cannot help but imagine an affair, given that Mrs. Elvsted also met her current husband by coming to work for him. Hedda hints at this possibility when she says she is sure Mrs. Elvsted will inspire Tesman.

Hedda is first disgusted when she is repulsed by Tesman's joy. She is disgusted once again when she learns of the ugliness of Ejlert's death. She commits suicide in the belief that there is no escape from a disappointing life. At the end of Act 1, Hedda goes to play with her pistols out of boredom. Once again, she has turned to her pistols to alleviate her world-weariness and sense of tedium.

It is fitting that the title of the play is Hedda's maiden name, *Hedda Gabler*. The play is to a large extent about the formerly aristocratic Hedda's inability to adjust to the bourgeois life into which she has married. Her tragedy lies not only in her own suicide but in her desire that Ejlert should have a "beautiful" suicide. She is amused by how much Tesman worries about making a living.

This aristocratic privileging of "aesthetic" matters causes Hedda to feel very unsympathetic to Tesman. She doesn't allow him to use the word "we" to describe the two of them. It also allows her to feel little guilt when "cheating on" him, if only on an emotional level, with Ejlert and Judge Brack. Her values, based on an aesthetic standard rather than the moral standard to which her husband conforms, are beyond Tesman's control or even his understanding. As a result, he cannot predict her actions. At the same time, however, Hedda's apparent pregnancy draws attention to the tragic nature of her quest. She continually denies the inevitable.

The rest of the male characters are more or less in love with Hedda, perhaps because of her almost decadent sense of beauty. Brack wants to establish a private relationship with her, parallel to her relationship with Tesman, and Ejlert dearly hopes that she shares his "passion for life." She finds both of these ideas silly, openly rejecting Ejlert's notion and teasing Brack by saying that he wants to be "the cock of the walk." Even Mrs. Elvsted feels intimidated by Hedda. Because of this popularity, she is the most powerful character. She toys with others because she can find no solace or entertainment in life. Indeed, Hedda's power is so far-reaching that her own

self-destruction leads almost inevitably to the destruction of the other characters' lives.

4.7 Summary

In this unit, we have read about the General Topic “Realism in Drama” and about the life and works of Henrik Ibsen, the plot and characters used by him in his play *Hedda Gabler*, etc. We have also critically analyzed the play.

All these points, no doubt, would be fruitful to you. They will enhance your understanding of the play. Read the original text and refer to the critical books on Ibsen and his plays.

4.8 Check Your Progress:

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. To which school of literature Ibsen made his contribution?
2. Mention the Latin author under whose influence Ibsen wrote his first play?
3. What kind of work Ibsen did at the age of fifteen?
4. Mention the name of Ibsen's wife.
5. Mention the year in which Ibsen completed *Hedda Gabler*.
6. Who is Tesman's old academic rival?
7. Who has brought gossip from town?
8. Who refers to the manuscript as the child of Ejlert and Mrs. Elvsted?
9. Whose death is mourned by everyone by wearing black?
10. What does Hedda do at the end of the play?
11. What was Gabler, Hedda's father?
12. In which subject Tesman hopes for a professorship?
13. Who lives with the ailing Aunt Rina?
14. Who is a notorious alcoholic?
15. Who acts as Ejlert's personal secretary?
16. Mention the terms used by Hedda to describe Brack.

4.9 Terms to Remember:

- **apothecary** : pharmacist
- **stultifying** : boring
- **allusions** : indirect references to earlier pieces of literature
- **aristocratic** : upper-class
- **bourgeois** : affluent middle class
- **rival** : competitor
- **gossip** : rumor
- **stag party** : for men only, and often involving activities that would not be felt appropriate when women are present
- **fabulous** : extraordinary
- **mourning** : sorrow over the loss of somebody
- **invalid** : somebody with persistent disease
- **prospects** : future
- **unpredictable** : erratic, impulsive
- **implacable** : merciless, pitiless
- **amiable** : good-natured
- **notorious** : infamous
- **abstinence** : moderation
- **evinces** : reveals
- **orgy** : party

4.10 Answer to Check Your Progress:

1. Realism
2. Cicero
3. An apprentice to an apothecary

4. Susannah Thoresen
5. 1890
6. Ejlert Lövborg
7. Judge Brack
8. Hedda
9. Aunt Rina's
10. She shoots herself.
11. General
12. History
13. Juliane Tesman, or Aunt Julle
14. Ejlert Lövborg
15. Mrs. Elvsted
16. "only cock in the yard"

4.11 Exercises:

A) Answer the following:

1. Bring out the outline of the play *Hedda Gabler*.
2. Comment on the significance of the title *Hedda Gabler* by Ibsen.
3. Sketch the character of the protagonist, Hedda Gabler, in *Hedda Gabler*.
4. 'The play is not a tragedy of a protagonist as such, but it is a general tragedy.' Discuss.
5. *Hedda Gabler* is an example of realist drama. Explain.

B) Write short notes.

1. Jürgen Tesman
2. The Title of the Play
3. Realism in Drama
4. The relationship between Hedda and Brack

5. The symbols used in the play *Hedda Gabler*

4.12 Further readings:

1. Haugen, Einer Ingvald. *Ibsen's Drama: Author to Audience*. University of Minnesota Press, 1979.
2. Krutch, Joseph Wood. *Modernism in Modern Drama: A Definition and an Estimate*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1953.
3. Marker, Frederick J. Marker, Lise-Zone. *Ibsen's Lively Art: A Performance Study of the Major Plays*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.
4. Meyer, Michael Levenson. "Introduction." *The Wild Duck and Hedda Gabler*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1997.
5. Paris, Bernard. *Imagined Human Beings: A Psychological Approach to Character and Conflict in Literature*. New York: New York University Press, 1997.

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Unit-1

General Topic : Rejection of Realism in Drama

Six Characters in Search of an Author

Luigi Pirandello's

Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
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- 1.8 Summary
- 1.9 Check Your Progress
- 1.10 Terms to Remember
- 1.11 Answers to Check Your Progress
- 1.12 Exercises
- 1.13 Further Readings

1.0 Objectives:

After completing the study of this unit, you will

- know about rejection of realism in drama
- know about the life and works of Luigi Pirandello
- know about the plot summary of the *Six Characters in Search of an Author*
- learn the major and minor characters in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*
- learn the themes and other aspects in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*
- be able to answer the questions on General Topic and the play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*

1.1 Introduction:

This unit discusses the general topic ‘Rejection of Realism in Drama’ as well as Luigi Pirandello’s play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. It also presents the detailed summary of his famous play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, the analysis of the Major and Minor characters in the play and the critical commentary on the issues handled in the play.

1.2 Rejection of Realism in Drama

Pirandello's influence on modern theatre resulted from his experimentation with the concept of realism that dominated drama from the time of Ibsen and Strindberg. He questioned all thought of norms by bringing the very idea of reality under philosophical scrutiny. His questioning helped playwrights to open themselves up with new approaches to theatre in the early part of the 20th century. Pirandello was one of the first and the best experimentalist. *Henry IV* is one of Pirandello's most significant works, and it had a profound impact on the development of twentieth-century theatre. Pirandello brought modernist themes and methods into the theatre, including a rejection of linear, realistic storytelling, a deconstruction of concepts of identity and perception, and exploration of the isolation inherent in the human experience. This style would be the foundation for avant-garde playwrights and later for the Theatre of the Absurd playwrights in the middle of the twentieth century.

1.3 Luigi Pirandello: Life and Works:

A brilliant playwright who practiced what is regarded as a precursor of Absurdism, Luigi Pirandello was born in Girgenti (now Agrigento), Sicily in 1867 to a wealthy family of sulfur miners. During the 1880s, he attended the University of Rome and then the University of Bonn, earning his doctorate in Roman philology in 1891. In 1894 he married Antonietta Portulano, the daughter of a sulfur merchant, in what appears to have been a business deal between their respective families. From 1904 onward, Portulano suffered severe bouts of hysteria and other mental illness that weighed heavily on their household, Pirandello ultimately institutionalizing her in 1919 upon the capture of both their sons in a World War I military campaign.

Pirandello began writing while at university and returned to Rome in the late 1890s to pursue a career as an author. After a flood ruined his family sulfur mines, Pirandello began to support himself by teaching rhetoric and then Italian Literature at various local colleges. During this time, he translated Goethe's *Roman Elegies*, wrote his *Elegie Renae*, two books of poetry, and a volume of short stories entitled *Amore Senz' Amore* (1894). Pirandello's first novel, *L'esclusa*, appeared in 1901; *Il Fu Matta Pascal*, his first major success, followed in 1904. Though Pirandello had begun writing plays in the 1880s, he initially considered drama an impoverished medium in comparison with the novel. He would only come to the theatre in 1915, ferociously producing sixteen plays in six years. Pirandello became so prominent on the Italian dramatic scene that he would later win Mussolini's support to lead an ultimately failed campaign to establish a National Art Theatre in Rome. Much to the dismay of his present readers, Pirandello was an ardent fascist who joined the party in 1923. Though he harbored a somewhat idiosyncratic and not entirely uncritical relationship to the government, Pirandello remains remembered for his blunt declarations of allegiance to the party and his extravagant displays of support, most famously, "I am a Fascist because I am an Italian." The most oft-cited example of the latter is the donation of his personal gold, including his 1934 Nobel Prize medal, for the Italian campaign into Ethiopia.

Eric Bentley, perhaps Pirandello's most canonical critic in Anglo-American dramatic studies, divides the playwright's career into three major phases: the early period of Sicilian folk comedies, Pirandello's philosophical works, and that of the mythic plays written under fascist rule. It is for the works of the second period, those

often considered progenitors of the absurdist theater, that Pirandello is remembered today. Apart from the famous *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921), notable examples include *Right You Are If You Think You Are* (1917), a tale of a mysterious woman who could be either one of two different people, and *Henry IV* (1922), the story of a madman who believes he is a German Emperor from the eleventh-century. To accommodate his madness, his sister keeps him in a medieval castle surrounded by actors playing the role of his courtiers.

Performing to great controversy in Rome, *Six Characters in Search of an Author* recounts the fate of a family of characters left unrealized by their author. Desperate to come to life, the characters interrupt the rehearsal of another Pirandello play and demand that the director and cast stage their story. Pirandello retrospectively grouped this surreal tale in a trilogy of "the theatre in the theatre," along with *Each His Own Way* (1924) and *Tonight We Improvise* (1930). Taking the theatre itself as its setting and subject, this trilogy drew upon the relations between all the major players of the dramatic spectacle—directors, actors, characters, spectators, and critics—to present every possible conflict. As such a deeply self-referential or meta-theatrical work, *Six Characters* is also a key exercise in what Pirandello termed *il teatro dello specchio* or the mirror theatre, a play that turns a mirror onto the theatre itself. As critic Anne Paolucci notes, the result then is not a reflection but a shattering, Pirandello generating his works through the fracturing of the dramatic spectacle itself.

1.4 Plot Summary of the Play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*:

Act I

The audience faces a stage as it usually is in the daytime: empty, half dark, and with curtain raised. The company enters from the back and readies for a rehearsal of Pirandello's the Prompter awaits the Manager with the book in arm. The Manager enters and calls for the second act. All except three actors move to the wings. The Manager points to the principle exit and instructs the Property Man on set design. The Leading Man asks if he must absolutely wear a cook's cap. The Manager jumps up in rage; the book demands a cap. The Leading Man should understand that he is not on the ordinary stage. He represents the shell of the eggs he is beating. The actors erupt in laughter. The Manager calls for silence and continues his explanation. Here

the Leading Man stands for reason and his wife is instinct. The parts will be mixed up, because the man who acts his own part becomes the puppet of himself.

The Door-Keeper enters from the stage door and approaches the Manager. Simultaneously the Six Characters enter from the rear. Even when the light disappears, they remain almost suspended in their dream lightness but this does not detract from the essential reality of their forms and expressions. The Door-Keeper timidly announces their arrival. With embarrassment, the Father explains to the angry Manager that they are in search of an author. The Step-Daughter vivaciously declares that they bring them their new piece.

When the Manager replies that he has no time for mad people, Father rejoins mellifluously that he knows life is full of infinite absurdities. Which are not needed to present properly unless they are true. To reverse this process is madness (having no sense and consistency) and the Manager defends his art. If today's playwrights give them stupid comedies and puppet characters, they remain proud of having given life to immortal works. Father interrupts furiously and says that the Manager is exactly right. The Manager and Actors explode in laughter. Father remarks that they know the Characters carry a drama with them. Their incredulity shocks him. The Step-Daughter coquettishly insists that they are interesting as characters. Father explains that their author no longer wished to put them into a work. The Manager asks if the characters want to live for eternity. Father replies that they only want a moment in them. The Manager asks for the book; Father responds that the drama is in them and that their inner passion drives them forward.

The Step-Daughter declares her inner passion for Father and pretends to embrace him. Father rebukes her and the Step-Daughter then brazenly performs. She invites them to stage their drama, luring them with the moment when God will take the little Child and imbecile Boy from their Mother. What takes place between her and Father is that she cannot remain in society, and she cannot bear to witness her Mother's anguish for her icy Son. He despises them all. Rushing desperately to the Manager, the Mother faints. The Father and Actors proffer assistance. To Mother's dismay, Father raises her veil, insisting that she let everyone see her. She implores the Manager to stop the Father's loathsome plan.

The Manager wonders how the Mother can be a widow if Father is alive. The Actors relieve them from their bewilderment. Step-Daughter explains the Mother's lover.

Father insists that the lover is not absent because he is dead but because Mother's drama is not about the love of two men. Her drama lies in her four children. The Mother protests that she does not want any of them. Father forces her to go away with that other man. Step-Daughter protests saying Mother is lying on account of the Son. She wants him to believe that Father forces her to abandon him. Father admits to forcing her away. The Son sardonically warns the Actors that they are about to hear of Father's Demon of Experiment. Step-Daughter asks if such is the case with his remorse. Father replies he has used more than words to quiet his remorse. Step-Daughter concurs. Father appeals to the bewildered Manager to let him speak. The Manager expresses that the whole trouble lies in words.

Mother protests that Father he drives her away. Father replies that he marries her for her humility and simplicity. Her mental deafness is phenomenal. By seeing the Leading Man flirt with Step-Daughter, The Leading Lady asks the Manager if they plan to rehearse. The Manager wants to hear them out. Father says that he once had a clerk who befriended Mother. They were kindred souls but incapable of even thinking evil. Step-Daughter accuses Father of thinking it. He saw the mute appeal in their eyes, their silent conversations about keeping him quiet. He sends the clerk away. Mother cries that Father takes her Son. He protests that he only wants him to grow healthy and strong in the country. He has confounded aspirations toward a certain moral sanity. Step-Daughter imagines the moral sanity from a client of Madame Pace. Father expels Mother not out of boredom but pity. He tenderly watches the new family that grows up about her. Step-Daughter recalls how he used to watch her after school. Father protests her slanderous insinuations. With Mother's departure and the Son's increasing distance from him, the house becomes empty. He was drawn to the family that had emerged through his will. The thought of Step-Daughter filled the emptiness around him.

The Manager criticizes the tale as being a bit discursive and the Son dismisses it as literature. It will not act. Father agrees and the aforementioned only leads up to the drama. As soon as the clerk died, the family fell into poverty and returned to the Father's town. Father could find no traces of them. He was impelled into their drama by his miserable flesh. The flesh of a man is not old enough to do without women and not young enough to seek them without shame. In any case, he is a better man for revealing with the light of intelligence the human bestiality within them all. Step-Daughter cannot close her eyes. She dispassionately sees that of the man who has

blinded himself without love. Father's intellectual complications and crocodile tears make her sick. The Manager urges them onto the point. Father cautions that a fact is like an empty sack.

Father insists that he could not have known Step-Daughter worked for Madame Pace. Step-Daughter sadly recalls how Mother would have to mend the frocks she tore. Father adds that the day he met Step-Daughter at Pace's, Mother arrived just then. Father elaborates the tragedy in their drama. Man believes his many-sided conscience to be unitary. He tragically perceives that this is not true when suspended. It is unjust for his entire existence to be judged and summed up in that deed. Step-Daughter surprised him in a place where she should not have known him, where he could not have existed for her. She attaches a reality to him he could have never assumed.

Father then gestures to the position of the Son. The Son protests that they leave him alone. Step-Daughter asks if the Manager has noted how she fixes him with her look of scorn. He must see the scenes where the Son cast them out of his house in his tyranny. The Son implores the Manager to understand his position. He is an unrealized character and asks to be left out of the production. Father argues that the Son's cruel aloofness is a situation in itself. To Step-Daughter's annoyance, Mother starts weeping. Father continues, saying that the Son is really the hinge of the action. The Boy is so humiliated. The Manager is sure he will cut him out. Father replies that the Boy and the Child disappear soon. When Mother re-enters their house, she will superimpose the outside family on the original. Because this family is foreign to the household, the Child dies, the Boy meets tragedy, and Step-Daughter flees. The remaining trio find themselves strange to one another. They live the revenge of the Demon of Experiment. They lack humility. The Manager takes interest. Still unconvinced by the Characters, he asks if they are amateur actors and offers to give them the address of an author. Father insists that he serve as their author. The Manager gives the Actors a twenty-minute break and retires with the Characters to his office.

Act II

The Step-Daughter comes out from the Manager's office with the Child and Boy. She dismisses the group's nonsense. Lovingly she takes the Child's face into her hands and pretends to reply to its question. Though she cannot see the others, the

garden and fountain are right here. She figures that it is better to imagine them though, because it is only painted cardboard. For the Child, however, there is no joke. It will have to play by a real fountain. Angrily Step-Daughter forces Boy's hands out of his pockets and discovers a revolver. She calls him an idiot. If she had been in his place, she would have killed Father and Son.

Father and Manager come and beckon Step-Daughter back into the office. Son and Mother appear there. The Son grumbles over how the others want to put their tale on stage. Father complains that he has been seen in the place he should have never been, but the Son too has to reveal how his parents do not match the idea of parents. Once this disparity is revealed, the family is only linked together at one point. It should shame the parents.

Everyone returns to the stage and the Manager orders the set prepared for rehearsal. Step-Daughter insists on various items, but the Manager assures her that they are only experimenting. He gives the Prompter an outline of the situation and asks him to take everything down in shorthand. He assures the Leading Lady that they will not have to improvise. First they will watch the Characters act. Confused, Father wonders why the Characters themselves should not go before the public. The Manager says that actors act, and characters are in the book where there is one. He casts the parts, first making the Second Lady Lead the Mother. He would rather not call her by Mother's real name, Amelia, but relents for now. Confused, Father muses that his own words have begun to ring false.

The Manager names the Juvenile Lead the Son and the Leading Lady the Step-Daughter. To the Lady's offence, the latter bursts out laughing. She cannot at all see herself in her. Father asks what is to become of the Characters' temperament or their souls. The Manager insists that their souls take shape here in the actors. Make-up will fix the difference in features. Father argues that even with his wonderful art, the actor will not absorb the character into himself. The effect will be how the actor senses him. The Manager sighs that Father thinks like the critics. He asks Step-Daughter if the set is all right and she replies that she does not recognize it. The Manager calls for the performance between Step-Daughter and Madame Pace and suddenly notices that Pace is missing.

Father asks the Actresses to hang their hats and mantles on the set's clothes pegs. By putting them on show, they will lure Madame Pace with the very articles of her

trade. Pace appears from the rear. The Leading Lady denounces this vulgar trick. Father wonders why the actors are so anxious to destroy the magic of the stage itself. Pace along with Step-Daughter comes before Father. When the actors see that the two speak unwisely. They urge them to speak more loudly. Step- Daughter replies that they cannot discuss such matters loudly. If she once spoke loudly, it was shameful to Father. The Manager protests that the audience will not hear them and they must pretend that they are in a backroom. The Step-Daughter disagrees and the Father waits behind the door and might overhear. Father moves into position, and the Manager stops him.

Pace comes forward and says that he does not want to take advantage of her. The actors erupt in laughter. The Manager finds the comic relief of her accent in such a crude situation. Step-Daughter takes such language as a joke. Suddenly Mother denounces Pace. The Actors restrain her. Step-Daughter and Father insist that Mother be removed. The Manager leads Mother to her chair. Now Pace, however, furiously refuses to proceed with Mother. Step-Daughter imperiously orders her away.

The Father becomes more natural as the reality of the action affects him. Father cautiously greets the young prostitute and takes her hat and offers her a new one. The Mother shows various expressions of sorrow, indignation, anxiety, and horror. Conquering her nausea, Step- Daughter protests that she cannot wear one as she is in mourning. The Manager interrupts and asks the Prompter to cut the last bit and calls the Leading Man and Lady to play. Step-Daughter protests that the Lady is not wearing black. The Manager invites the Characters to watch and learn. He orders them to stand aside so he can see the action. He makes a few interjections and adds gestures and lines. Step-Daughter bursts into laughter. Father begs their pardon.

The Manager complains that he could not rehearse with the author. He instructs the Father to continue. When Step-Daughter speaks of her grief, he understands it better. The Manager refuses to cause a riot in the theater. They can only provide truth to a certain point. The Step-Daughter, however, will not stand a little romantic. She knows that the Manager has conspired with Father to produce his cerebral drama. She insists on having her part. The Manager thinks that one character cannot be too prominent on the stage. The characters must fit into a neat little framework. They act what isactable. They must take the others into consideration and hint at their unrevealed interior lives. The Step-Daughter probably wants each character to give a monologue or lecture.

The Manager notes that the Step-Daughter exaggerates her indignation as well. She replies that they all mean Father to her. The Father is responsible for her first fault. The Manager urges her to let him act out his responsibility. Mother erupts into tears. Mother cries that she cannot bear her removal. She feels every minute of her torture. Her mute children cling to her to keep her torment. They do not exist for themselves any longer. Step-Daughter has run away. It is a kind suffering to Mother. Father remarks that the Manager cannot spare him his eternal moment. Father concurs and adds that it will culminate in Mother's cry. Step-Daughter remembers her cry. Mother rushes forward and pulls her away.

Act III

This act opens with the shifted scenery: a drop, a few trees, and the portion of a fountain basin. The Step-Daughter came to the Father's house in spite of her wishes. The Mother implores the Manager to understand. She then tells the exasperated Manager that the entire action cannot take place in the garden. The Son is always shut up in his room and the Boy is always indoors. The Leading Lady remarks that it makes the illusion easier.

Father bristles at the cruel word illusion. The Characters have no life outside the illusion. The Actors' game of art is their sole reality. Pausing, Father approaches the Manager and adds that this does not apply to the Characters alone. The Father asks if the Manager can tell him who he really is. The Manager responds that he is himself. Father notes that he is right to laugh at his joke but asks his question. A character can always pose this question to a man that he might be nobody. If a man sees himself as he once was and thinks of all those illusions that mean nothing to him now is his present reality. And it would not be mere illusion tomorrow. Astonished and befuddled by this specious argument, the Manager asks where Father's thoughts take us. Nowhere, Father replies. He only means to show how man should not count overmuch on his reality. The character is more real as his reality is fixed. Man's Illusions of reality represented in this fatuous comedy of life.

The Manager commands Father to stop his philosophizing. Looking him over from head to foot, he concludes that Father's tale of the author is nonsense. Father himself is trying to imitate the manner of an author. Father replies that he does not know this author. Man never reasons so much as when he suffers. Father is crying aloud the reason of his sufferings. The Manager asks if anyone has ever heard of a

character who speechifies as Father does. Father replies that he has not because the author always hides the labor of the character's creation. When the character is alive, they follow the author in action, words, and situation.

Father orders the Manager to imagine their misfortune again. They did everything they could to persuade their author. Step-Daughter recalls how she tempted him most of all from the shadows about his writing table. Step-Daughter wishes that everyone would go away and leave her alone with the author in the shadows. She makes a sudden movement as if in her vision of herself illuminating those shadows. Father wonders if her insistence is to blame for their abandonment. Step-Daughter opines that the author does so out of disgust for the ordinary theater. The Son concurs. Father tells the Manager not to pay attention to them as he is correct to be editing their excesses. The Manager commends that Father is excessive himself. Father retorts that man must give reason and value to his own life. He cannot represent all as mere fact as Step-Daughter wants.

The Manager moans that they will never finish. Drama is not philosophy but action. They must combine the facts in a close-knit action. Step-Daughter wants the Child in the garden. Instead of hiding in the house, the Boy will wander the garden. He asks Step-Daughter if the Child could surprise him, so he could have a few lines. Step-Daughter replies that he will only speak if the Son is sent away. The Son moves away with delight; Mother instinctively raises her arms to stop him. Father insists that he must do his scene with her. Step-Daughter remains calm. He remains bound to the chain. She calls Mother into place.

Frantically the Son refuses to act. Step-Daughter leads Child to the fountain. The Second Lady Lead and Juvenile Lead approach and study the movements of Mother and Son. The Son objects that there was no scene between him and Mother. Unable to bear her anguish, Mother went to his room to speak with him, and Son left it. The Son notices the actors that follow him and Mother and protests. It is impossible to live before a mirror that not only freezes us with the image of ourselves, but throws out likeness back at us with a horrible grimace. The Manager sends the actors back. Mother begs the Manager to revise the scene a little, to find a chance for her to tell her Son what she feels. Father orders Son in a rage to do this favor for his Mother. Threateningly Son takes hold of Father and Mother tries to separate them. Almost crying from rage, Son insists that he stands for the will of the author. Father forced them here. He has told things that never happened at all.

The Manager asks what really happened. The Son replies that he silently went into the garden. Mother sobs and looks toward the fountain. Apprehensively the Manager asks about the Child. Father murmurs that Mother was following her. Son ran over to her, jumping to drag her out when he saw the Boy standing stock still like a madman, watching his drowned sister in the fountain. Step-Daughter bends over the fountain to hide the Child and sobs. A shot rings out behind the trees where the Boy is hidden. Mother cries in terror and runs with several Actors toward the trees. Some cry that the Boy is dead.

1.5 Major and Minor Characters:

The Father

The Father is a fattish man in his fifties with thin, reddish hair, a thick moustache, and piercing, blue oval eyes. He is alternatively mellifluous and violent. Along with the Step-Daughter, he is the Character who most fervently insists on the staging of the Characters' drama. In some sense, he figures as the drama's progenitor, having produced the situation of the step- household, a situation that culminates in an inadvertent sexual encounter with his Step-Daughter. Though the Father ostensibly seeks remorse, Pirandello intimates a number of times that a deal has perhaps been struck between the Father and Manager, the play's two authorial figures. Thus the Son and Step- Daughter warn against reading the play according to his word alone. As the Manager laments, the Father is the play's philosopher, continually stepping out of his role to sermonize about ideas of the inner workings of the Characters' drama and the relations between the Characters and Actors. His excessive tendency for preaching would mark him as a roughly drawn character and as a double for the author. In particular, the Father insists on the reality of the Characters, a reality he poses over and against that of the company. Unlike nobody Actors, the Characters are real somebodies because their reality remains fixed and independent of the vagaries of time. This reality has little to do with neither the plausibility nor the codes of theactable. Thus, both he and the Step-Daughter relate the sense of estrangement in seeing their reality rendered by the Actors.

The Step-Daughter

Dashing, impudent, and beautiful, the Step-Daughter also seeks the realization of the Characters' drama. Her reality as a Character is a fixed, grimacing mask of vengeance. She seeks stage-life to revenge herself on the Father and she appears in

two principle forms that define a certain fantasy of woman. As noted above, she and the Father are the major players in their drama's traumatic scene: the inadvertent sexual encounter that precipitates the encounter between the original and surrogate families in the back of Madame Pace's shop. Exploited despite her mourning for her father, the Step-Daughter appears here as victim. At the same time, on-stage she appears seductive, exhibitionistic, and dangerously cruel.

As she tells the Manager, the Father's perversity is responsible for hers. Her perversity emerges in particular with her obsession with the spectacle of the Characters' drama. Whereas the Father offers their play as a more cerebral drama, tracing its players' motivations, its overarching structures, and its narrative trajectories, she will conjure its scenes in speech, calling for its trappings forth on the stage. Many of these props concern the visual: the mirror, the window, and the screen. The Step-Daughter also functions as object of this spectacle. Though dressed, like the other members of her immediate family, in mourning for their own father, she wears her clothes with great elegance. For example, she brashly erupts into a cabaret-style performance of "Prenez garde à Tchou-Tchin-Tchou": her display would lure the company into their drama's realization. More explicitly the Step-Daughter reveals her obsession with her self-image in her memory of the author. As she tells the company, she strove most to seduce him from the shadows about his writing table. In her vision of this seduction, she progressively exiles the other Characters from the room, ultimately leaving her alone to illuminate the darkness. With the Characters' drama, the Step-Daughter would become a star. For her, the drama's stage-life would realize her self-image above all.

The Mother

Dressed in modest black and a thick widow's veil, the Mother appears crushed by an intolerable weight of shame and abasement. Her face is wax-like, and her eyes always downcast. She bears the anguish of the Characters' drama, serving as its horrified spectator. She is the consummate figure of grief, mourning the Characters' inexorable fate. As Pirandello notes in his preface to the play, the Mother would incarnate nature without mind in her suffering—she suffers the torture of what has befallen the family without cognizing it as the Father does. In this respect, she is not even a woman, she first and foremost a mother in anguish. Caught, like the other Characters, in the unchanging and inexorable reality of both her drama and role. She laments that she suffers her torture at every moment; her lot as mourner is fixed for

eternity. The two mute children, accessories of sorts, underline her function as an image of grief. Particularly agonizing to her is the aloofness of her estranged Son, whom she will approach to no avail throughout the play.

The Son

A tall, severe man of twenty-two, the Son appears contemptuous, supercilious, and humiliated by his fellow Characters. Having been grown up in the country, he is estranged from his family and, in his aloofness, will cause the elimination of the stepchildren within the Characters' drama. Ironically then will he ultimately appear as witness to the two younger children's demise. His role as a character lies in his ashamed refusal to participate in the household and the Characters' spectacle, a spectacle to which he nevertheless remains bound. More specifically, he appears to be structurally tied within the Character's drama to the Step-Daughter, whose look of scorn and exhibitionism fixes him in his guilt, shame, and reserve. In his aversion to spectacle, he in particular attacks the Actors who would imitate them. For him, the Actor-as-mirror, in its necessary inability to reflect the Character as he sees himself, freezes the Character's self-image and renders it grotesque. The Son also protests to the Manager that he remains an unrealized character, perhaps one that even stands for the will of the author in objecting to their drama's staging. As the Father counters, however, his unrealized nature is his own situation in both the Characters' drama and its attempted rehearsal on-stage; his aloofness within the drama makes him the drama's very hinge. The Son's position as an unrealized character appears most clearly in the scene he would refuse to play with his Mother in Act III, a scene that is actually a non-scene. The Mother enters his bedroom, and the Son, in his aversion to scenes, flees to the garden to witness his step-siblings' deaths.

The Manager

He is slow-witted and of fiery temper and largely a comic figure who agrees to play the role of the Characters' author and realizing their drama. Throughout the play, he remains committed to the vulgar notions of reality that the Characters, particularly his double the Father, would trouble and bound to the conventions of the stagecraft.

The Boy

Timid and wretched, the fourteen-year-old Boy has been driven mute in his humiliation at having to enter the new household on the Father's charity. As a result, he suffers the Step-Daughter's contempt. He and the Child are accessory figures of

sorts to the Mother, functioning to keep her torture actual. Neither exists for themselves. He also wears the black of mourning.

The Child

A four-year-old girl dressed in white who also does not speak. The Step-Daughter dotes on the Child out of remorse and pity, particularly in light of what she perceives as the Mother's neglect. Her role is that of the fallen innocent, the Characters' drama demanding the elimination of the stepchildren and return to the original household.

Madame Pace

The Step-Daughter's exploitative Madame. Pace is a fat, older woman with puffy oxygenated hair. She is rouged and powdered and wears black silk with a comical elegance. A pair of scissors hangs from a silver chain at her waist. Conjured out of nowhere in Act II, Pace is an apparition, her birth an exercise in what the Father describes as the magic of the stage. In translation, she speaks comically broken English.

Leading Lady

A stereotypical star of the stage, the Leading Lady bristles at the Characters' experiment. Petty and egotistical, she will not support their laughter, protests their vulgar stage tricks, and continually insists that she will deliver a performance superior to theirs. She plays the role of the Step-Daughter.

Leading Man

Another haughty actor, the Leading Man plays the role of the Father. At the beginning of the play, he protests the absurdity of the Pirandello play. He also flirts with the Step-Daughter.

Second Lady

The Second Lady plays the role of the Mother.

Juvenile Lead

In the company's production, the Juvenile Lead plays the role of the Son.

Prompter

The Prompter is an ever-present member of the Crew who holds the book in the first rehearsal and attempts to record the Characters' drama in shorthand.

1.6 Critical Analysis of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*:

In Act I, the play deals with the elaboration of the Characters' life, truth, and reality and then breaks into the frantic and confused development of their situation. The Characters have come bearing a drama that they will first recount to the Manager and Actors. The tempestuous Manager is a vulgar realist who clings to the conventions of the theater. The Manager insists that the Actors act and the Characters remain in their book. According to Father, it is significant that the Manager should look beyond the book. The Characters do not only exist in the book, they also exist in the author's fantasy, and the spectator's. Father explains that the Character lives forever in the work of art. Only two Characters are particularly bent on the realization of their drama: the philosophizing Father and the impudent Step-Daughter. Pirandello breaks with the well-made play and its general dependence on linear narration. Seductive and exhibitionistic, the Step-Daughter then erupts into a cabaret-style song and. The daughter is characterized by a love for both the spectacle of her drama and herself as that spectacle's object. Against the Father and the Step-Daughter, the Mother figures as a witness or spectator internal to the Characters' drama. She bears and manifests the anguish in the family drama, releasing it in her terrible cry. Pirandello describes authorship through metaphors of divine and even Immaculate Conception, speaking of miracles and divine births, such identifications are covered over within the play. There, the Father decidedly appears as the author's double. Personal histories and inner conflicts are narrated rather than played out in action as usually conceived. The Father also appears as author within the Characters' drama itself. Note how he speaks of the second household in terms of creation. The family comes into being through his will. His fantasies of the daughter fill the emptiness left by the expulsion of the Mother. It is in expelling his wife and creating the surrogate family that the Father appears most subject to the Demon of Experiment, a demon that evokes the author's own inspirational *daemon*. The Father will then reunite with this surrogate family through the traumatic scene around which the Characters' drama crystallizes. As we will see, this narrative of rejection will strangely mirror that between the author and Characters. As with the Father, the

rejected characters return to the author most explicitly in his sexual encounter with the Step-Daughter. A certain fantasy of woman is apparent here, the Step-Daughter appearing as the Father's seducer on one side and Father's victim on another.

Finally, the Characters have appeared among the living Actors. The agreement of the Manager concludes the recount of the Characters' tale. The group's retirement to his office breaks the frame, leaving the audience with the actors who had come to serve as the Characters' audience. Their chatter, in which they jeer at the Manager's authorial pretentious, complain that this breaking of theatrical convention will reduce them to the level of the improvisers, and would add an additional sense of reality to the scene. The breaking of the frame and staging of a scene within the on-stage audience would ratify what we saw as real. The real-time pause, delimiting both the interruption of the action and the intermission, similarly attempts to fold stage reality into that of the audience's proper.

Act II opens with the two dialogues, one between the Step- Daughter and the Child and another between the Son and Mother. It would appear that some deal struck behind the scenes between the play's two authorial figures: the Manager and Father. The Characters' protests over and against these authorial intentions will return throughout the act. The Step-Daughter rushes out with the mute children. She introduces the Child to the stage, once again underlining the reality of the drama. There is disorienting double entendre in her laments. The horrid comedy refers to both the spectacle and the Characters' story. It is a story that remains fixed and eternal in its reality. The eternal aspect of its reality especially emerges when the Step-Daughter forces the Boy to reveal his revolver, the instrument of his suicide. In the second dialogue, the Son protests the Father's attempt to stage their drama to a mother. He bursts at Father's authorial arrogance. Moreover, the Son relates his humiliation in the family's exhibition. The Son will have to reveal the disjuncture between his mother and father and his fantasy of them. The most striking disconnection between the spectacle and the drama appears between the Actors and Characters. *Six Characters* refuses the notion that the Actor can assimilate the Character. Characters become bodies and souls independent of the Actors. Character's interpretation by the Actor becomes a process of the former's estrangement. The Step-Daughter cannot recognize herself. The Mother might have a new name. The Father is accused of playing the critic. The Manager's job is correct. The Father's attention to the workings of the dramatic spectacle commits him to

criticism. The Characters belong to the book and the Actors to the stage and there should be no antagonism between them.

Though Pirandello describes Pace's birth as a duplication of her birth in his fantasy, the Father characterizes it rather as an exercise in the very magic of the stage. Pace's birth evokes the mythic origins of theater—that of rite, ritual, and ceremony. Pace is almost a comic Fate. The Characters would not play their parts as live them before their audience. This reality is not that of life but that of the Characters' drama. The drama demands the betrayal of convention. Pirandello shows this contrast between the Actors and Manager concerned with the conventional success of the spectacle and the Characters. This contrast underpins the comic effect of the stereotypically egoistic Leading Lady.

The play cannot be reduced to the opposition between drama the Characters. The Characters have come to life to live out their story. In spite of the Mother, the Characters' spectacle is not watched properly. Instead, its spectators break the frame. The Manager orders the Characters to stand aside, to stop interposing their spectacle with the one he is staging. Though it is not a parody, it is only the Father's frustrated protest and the Step-Daughter's anxious laughter.

The Manager resumes his rehearsal with the Characters, proceeding to the traumatic nucleus of their drama. This climax, however, falls flat. As we have noted throughout, *Six Characters* concerns itself with what remains conventionally inadmissible to playing space, what the play figures as the truth or reality of the Characters' drama, a reality that belongs to the realm of aesthetic forms. What appears as this inadmissible reality is obscene speech. As the Manager protests, such obscenity would cause a riot in the theater. The Step-Daughter furiously protests that such censorship is clearly in collusion with the Father. The conventions of the stage would conspire to repress the Father's perversity. Their tragedy becomes a sentimental or cerebral affair. Even the Father insists that he suffers his punishment; the humiliating "eternal moment" that determines him as a character.

The Mother bears the grief of the family's tragedy, releasing its anguish in her final, culminating wail. Like the other Characters, she remains bound to their drama's eternal moment. She lives every minute of her torture. The mute children function to keep it actual for her and they do not exist for themselves. The children are dead; the Step-Daughter is lost; the Mother's drama is always already done. Thus, her pathetic

protests that the Manager forbid the drama's rehearsal are in vain. The Manager breaks the pathos moving to the footlights to appraise the spectacle and the Father quickly follows. The curtain drop is a familiar transitional device. Its deployment here, however, thoroughly denaturalizes it. The accidental drop of the curtain is the second major interruption in the play. The drop of the curtain plays off *Six Characters*'s multiple frames of reference. It is the drop that would occur in earnest in the staging of the Characters' drama, the "accident" that occurs within the rehearsal, and the mark that abruptly ends Act II. The natural spectacle is spoiled. The elements of the spectacle are entirely subject to the carefully calculated accidents of the Demon of Experiment.

In Act III, the conflict arises between the Characters' drama and theatrical convention. These conventions demand the combination of action. The Step-Daughter describes as decidedly discrete spaces of the house and garden. We have here the references to childhood: the Manager jeers that companies staged multiple scene changes when audiences were at the level of children. The Father claims that the Actors participate in a game or play of art.

The Leading Lady's use of the word "illusion" precipitates the most extended dialogue on the Characters' reality. For the Characters, art is their sole reality. Convinced of his self-identity, the Manager readily responds that he is himself. The Characters' reality is real while the Actors' is not; while the Character is somebody, man is nobody. Man is nobody because he is subject to time. His reality is fleeting; always ready to reveal itself as illusion, whereas the Characters' reality remains fixed for eternity. Time enables an opposition between reality and illusion for man. Man comes to identify realities as illusion, whereas the Character exists in the timeless reality of art.

For critic Diane Thompson, this reality echoes the Italian tradition in which the mask designates the character's eternal quality in opposition to the transient naked face of the actors. The mask would give the impression of figures fixed forever in its own fundamental emotion. That is, Remorse for the Father, Revenge for the Stepdaughter, Scorn for the Son, Sorrow for the Mother. With this specious argument about the actor's naked face, the Father would unhinge the actors' reality and unmask it as a series of illusion in the "fatuous comedy of life. The stage as a space of illusion serves as familiar metaphor for human reality.

With the Father's speech, the Manager finally comes to appreciate the strange resemblance between the Father and the figure of the author. He accuses the Father of imitating this author's manner. Thus he has interrupted the rehearsal of the author's play. His speeches make him a bad character, one who continually steps out of this role and lectures, thus creating the effect of the author's presence. The Father is a roughly drawn character one whose labor of creation the author was not able to conceal, one who has avoided the author's control. Paradoxically, the creation of such an "autonomous" character only seems to confirm the fantasy of the masterful author. The Father also defends his speeches that make him human. Humanity is located in the Character.

Here the spectator finds the play's only conjuration of the author's figure. The author sits at his writing table as the Characters haunt him from the shadows, hovering in the twilight between life and unreality. The Step-Daughter especially appears to him in all her seductive charm. The Step-Daughter's consumed with her own image lost. In her memories, she progressively casts the Characters from the author's side, making a sudden movement. In entering the reality of the stage, the Step-Daughter would become self-identical. The Step-Daughter's narcissism appears explicitly in the act previous, where she furiously insists on the primacy of her part. As the Manager complains, the Step-Daughter would break the "neat little framework" of an organized cast, a cast with its primary and secondary figures that stays closely within the limits of theactable.

In contrast to the Step-Daughter, the Son makes an attempt to escape the Characters' spectacle. The Father ends up alone with the Father and Mother in the household. The Father insists that he play his scene with his Mother and the Son protests that he has none. The Son would withdraw from all family dramas. Pathetically the Mother begs for revisions, a new dialogue that would allow her the conversation with her Son that their drama forbids her. Though the Father supports her in this endeavor, the Son insists that no such dialogue could happen in their story.

The Son also offers the play's most explicit articulation of the trope of the mirror. He protests that one cannot live before a mirror. The Son charts two effects of the mirror between Actor and Character. In the second and more straightforward complaint, the image of the subject imitated in the other renders that likeness grotesque. In the first, vaguely reminiscent of the Medusa, the fascinating image of the Actor would freeze the Character it reflects. The animation of the Character in

the place of the Actor is the Characters' defacement. This meditation on the effect of the mirror reads in tension with the Father's comments on the Character's life and reality. According to the Father, both inhere precisely in its image. Unlike transitory man, the mask is real and alive insofar as it cannot change. The Character's drama and role are fixed for all time and perhaps the difference inheres in the process of alienation. The frozen image is fatal when reflected in the Actor.

The Manager complains the play. He resumes his charge that the Father is overly philosophical. He would probably prefer allowing the Characters to elaborate their respective plights. For the Manager, drama lies not in philosophizing but action. He attempts to combine the action of the stepchildren in the garden and the non-confrontation between the Son and the Mother simultaneously. He joins simultaneity in time with simultaneity in space. A simultaneity marked by the Son's easy passage from the house to the garden. Both scenes would culminate in the drama's tragic end. Thus the family's two accessory figures the silent innocents who almost symbolize the troupe's misery. Their deaths are senseless, apparently unmotivated. The elimination of the stepfamily that drives this drama renders tragically. Death is the children's primary purpose. Ironically the Son discovers them by breaking his aloofness to save the Child.

Although there are aspirations to tragedy, the final action goes off with a whimper. Pirandello writes the sterile experiment of the Characters and Actors. The play concludes with the firing of a pistol that indicates the Boy's suicide behind the make-shift trees. The Mother cries in anguish for her son. Some actors declare the Boy dead. The Actors' cries reiterate the central thematic conflict in the play. The dull-witted Manager echoes the Father comically. He renounces the sterile experiment. He returns us to the business of the stage, untouched by the real drama before him: his reaction to the ostensibly tragic denouement is to bemoan the loss of rehearsal time. Moreover, he remains a vulgar realist at heart. His exclamation "never in my life has such a thing happened to me" refers not only to the loss of rehearsal time but to the implausibility of the spectacle that has just unfolded as well. Thus the end of the play is clearly ironic.

1.7 Themes of the Play:

The Theater of the Theater

As noted in the Context, Pirandello retrospectively grouped *Six Characters* in a trilogy of the "theater of the theater." These works generate their drama out of the theater's elements—in this case, through the conflict between actors, manager and characters, and the missing author. For Pirandello, the theater is itself theatrical—that is, it is itself implicated in the forms and dynamics of the stage. Beginning with a supposed daytime rehearsal, *Six Characters* puts the theater and its processes themselves on stage. Put otherwise, the play is an allegory for the theater. Thus it presents characters dubbed the Second Leading Lady and Property Man and it hinges on multiple frames of (self)-reference, staging the staging of a play within the play. Akin to a hall of mirrors, this device, the *mise-en- abîme*, is common to plays that would reflect on the properties of their own medium. Self-referentiality attains heights here. The play's act divisions, for example, mirror those of the Characters' drama, a number of scenes show the Actors playing the doubles of the audience, and onward. Crucial to this project is a dismantling of the conventions of the "well-made" play that would render the play's workings visible to the spectator. *Six Characters* often appears improvisational, sketch-like, what the Manager calls a "glorious failure." Note the aborted rehearsal, rejected and incompletely drawn characters, hastily assembled sets, and onward. To anticipate the Father's confession, one could describe Pirandello as perhaps subject to the "Demon of Experiment."

The Character's Reality

Throughout the play, the Father insists on the reality of the Characters, a reality that, as the stage notes indicates, inheres in their forms and expressions. The Father offers his most explicit meditation on the Character's reality in Act II. Here he bristles at the Actors' use of the word illusion as it relies on its vulgar opposition to reality. He approaches the Manager in a sort of face-off to challenge this opposition, one that underpins his identity. Convinced of his self-identity, the Manager readily responds that he is himself. The Father believes otherwise. While the Character's reality is real, the Actors' is not; while the Character is somebody, man is nobody. Man is nobody because he is subject to time: his reality is fleeting, always ready to reveal itself as illusion, whereas the Character's reality remains fixed for eternity. Put otherwise, time enables an opposition between reality and illusion for man. Over

time, man comes to identify realities as illusion, whereas the Character exists in the timeless reality of art.

The Eternal Moment

The Father and Step-Daughter sell the Manager on their drama with the scene around which it crystallizes: the inadvertent sexual encounter between them in the back room of Madame Pace's shop. In Act I, the spectator receives it in exposition, the Father offering an existentialist interpretation of its nature. For him, its tragedy inheres in man's belief in his unitary being. He only perceives this once caught in an act, so to speak, that determines him entirely. Judged by another, he appears to himself in alienated form, suspended in a reality that he should have known. The Step-Daughter should not have seen the Father in Pace's room and he should not have become real to her. The Father's suspension as pervert simultaneously fixes him as a Character. Similarly, the other Characters remain bound to this "eternal moment." This scene, for example, impels the Step-Daughter to vengeance and condemn the Mother an eternal grief. The Mother figures as witness to this obscene exchange, releasing its anguish in her final, culminating wail. Eternally posed before this scene, the Mother can only live "every minute of her torture."

The Author-Function

In the rehearsal of another of Pirandello's plays within this one, the figure of Pirandello immediately appears as the maddening native playwright who "plays the fool" with everyone. Such fantasies of authorship are intrinsic to the literary work. The author is not only that which the characters search for; but as Pirandello laments in his preface to the play, the spectator as well. "What does the author intend?" wonders the audience. Though absent, the author haunts the stage. He will not assume body like the characters but become a function or mask that circulates among the players. Though in the preface Pirandello describes authorship through metaphors of divine and even the Immaculate Conception, speaking of "miracles," and "divine births," such identifications are covered over within the play. There the Father decidedly appears as the author's double.

The Act Divisions

Above we noted the multiple frames of reference at work in the play. As the Father's speech on the fatuous comedy of human existence suggests, these frames would implicate the spectator's reality as well. This gesture of implication becomes

especially clear in Pirandello's act divisions. The conclusion of Act I, for example, would have the so-called reality of the spectacle invade that of the audience just as the Characters have appeared among the living Actors. Here the Manager agrees the experiment, and the Characters retire to his office. Thus they break the frame, leaving the audience with the actors who had come to serve as the Characters' audience. Their chatter, in which they jeer at the Manager's authorial pretentious, complain that this breaking of theatrical convention will reduce them to the level of the improvisers, and would add an additional sense of reality to the scene. The breaking of the frame and staging of a scene within the audience would ratify what we saw as real. The real-time pause—delimiting both the interruption of the action and the intermission—similarly attempts to fold stage reality into that of the audience's.

Symbols

In the play's preface, Pirandello confesses an aversion to the use of symbol in the theater. If we take the term loosely, we can identify a number of symbolic structures and objects in the play. First, the play itself is symbolic of or an allegory for the theater itself. Second, some of *Six Characters'* readers have suggested the symbolic properties of the Characters themselves. Critic Diane Thompson believes that the play echoes the Italian tradition in which the mask designates the character's eternal quality in opposition to the transient naked face of the actors. The mask would give the impression of figures fixed forever in its own fundamental emotion. That is Remorse for the Father, Revenge for the Stepdaughter, Scorn for the Son, and Sorrow for the Mother.

We might also look toward certain objects in the play as bearing symbolic properties. For example, the mirror, screen, and window that the Step-Daughter calls for in the staging of the Pace scene indicate her obsession with spectacle and more specifically her self-image. The vein she recalls in her sexual encounter with the Father incarnates the disgusting excessiveness of the scene, excess that the Manager would keep off-stage at all costs. Pirandello also makes use of a numbers regarding the relation between reason and sentiment. The Manager points to the Leading Man's egg- shells that symbolize psychology of empty reason without its counterpart.

1.8 Summary

In this unit, we have read about the General Topic “Rejection of Realism in Drama” and about the life and works of Luigi Pirandello, the plot and characters used

by him in his play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, etc. We have also critically analyzed the play.

All these points, no doubt, would be fruitful to you. They will enhance your understanding of the play. Read the original text and refer to the critical books on Luigi Pirandello and his plays.

1.9 Check Your Progress:

Answer in one word/phrase/sentence.

1. What did Pirandello's influence in modern theatre result from?
2. How did Luigi Pirandello practice his drama?
3. What did Pirandello bring in modernist themes and methods into the theatre?
4. When did Pirandello complete his doctorate in Roman philology?
5. What did Pirandello translate?
6. Mention the name of Pirandello's wife.
7. Mention the year in which Ibsen completed *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.
8. Which Pirandello's first novel was appeared?
9. Who was Pirandello's canonical critic in Anglo-American dramatic studies?
10. What was Portulano severely suffered from?

1.10 Terms to Remember:

- **detract** : diminish
- **mellifluously** : happily
- **coquettishly** : in a flirtatious manner
- **rebuke** : an expression of criticism
- **imbecile** : a person of normal intelligence
- **loathsome** : disgusting
- **insinuation** : an indirect implication

- **discursive** : argument rather than intuition
- **bestiality** : brutal quality of a beast
- **nausea** : sickness
- **bristle** : rise up as in fear
- **fatuous** : insane
- **horrid** : hideous

1.11 Answer to Check Your Progress:

1. His experimentation with the concept of realism
2. As a precursor of Absurdism
3. A rejection of linear
4. 1891
5. Goethe's *Roman Elegies*
6. Antonietta Portulano
7. 1921
8. *L'esclusa*
9. Eric Bentley
10. Hysteria and other mental illness

1.12 Exercises:

A) Answer the following:

1. Bring out the outline of the play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.
2. Comment on the significance of the title *Six Characters in Search of an Author* by Luigi Pirandello.
3. Sketch the character of the protagonist, The Father, in *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.
4. Discuss the themes of the play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*.
5. *Six Characters in Search of an Author* is an example rejection of realism in drama. Explain.

B) Write short notes.

1. The Manager
2. The Title of the Play
3. Rejection of Realism in Drama
4. The relationship between The Son and The Step- Daughter
5. The symbols used in the play *Six Characters in Search of an Author*

1.13 Further readings:

1. Antonin Artaud. *The Theatre and its Double*. London: Colder and Boyers, 1970.
2. Bassanese, F. A. *Understanding Luigi Pirandello*. University of South Carolina Press, 1997.
3. Brustein, Robert. *The Theatre of Revolt*. New York: NYU, 1991.
4. Harold Bloom. *Luigi Pirandello* (Bloom's major dramatist). Philadelphia. Chelsea House Publisher. 2003.
5. Pirandello Luigi, Bentley Eric. *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Signet Classics, 1998.
6. Travis Bogard and W. T. Oliver. ed. *Modern Drama*. London: OUP, 1965.



Unit-2

General Topic : The Epic Theatre

The Caucasian Chalk Circle

Bertolt Brecht's

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2.12 Further Readings

2.0 The objectives of the unit

The objectives of the present unit are as follows

1. To understand the basic principles and techniques of Epic Theatre
2. To understand the impact of epic theatre on 20th century drama
3. To know about the life and writings of Bertolt Brecht
4. To understand the story and the moral of *Caucasian Chalk Circle*
5. To understand the principles of Marxism
6. To study the various aspects of the play

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Epic theatre

The term Epic Theatre is generally used to describe the style and techniques popularized in Germany after First World War by directors like Max Reinhardt, Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht. This style prospered in the left-wing theatres of Germany during 1920's and early 30's. The rise of Hitler's Nazi party stopped its development after 1933. Brecht and other epic theatre practitioners were forced to leave Germany. The style of epic theatre spread to America and Britain. It returned to Central and Eastern European theatre after the end of Second World War

Originally, the term epic theatre was coined by Erwin Piscator in mid 1920s. He was a popular director in Germany. He wanted to encourage the writers to deal with contemporary problems of society and present them in their plays with help of documents, interaction with audience and other relevant strategies and techniques. Piscator wanted to stimulate the audience to give objective response to the action that they were watching on the stage.

Definition – Epic Theatre is a form of didactic drama presenting a series of loosely connected scenes that avoid illusion and often interrupt the story line to address the audience directly with analysis, argument or documentation. The famous practitioners of epic theatre include Erwin Piscator, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold and Bertolt Brecht. Brecht is known as the pioneer of epic theatre. Bertolt Brecht was strongly opposite to Aristotle's theory. According to Brecht epic theatre is

aimed to engage the audience intellectually instead in order to make them think critically about what was being presented before them by using alienation effect. He developed the theory of epic theater in his writings and put his theories to practice. Most of the notions and techniques of epic theatre are not new. They had been used separately by many playwrights. Brecht organized them into a single term and developed the theory of epic theatre. He employs the principles and techniques of epic theatre in most of his plays. Brecht and his fellow artists were greatly influenced by teachings of Marxism. the horrors of first world war, suffering of the middle class during the postwar recessions of 1920's and the Great Depression of 1930's, inspired Brecht to devise a set of staging and acting techniques to teach their audience to criticize the injustices and inequalities of modern life.

Epic theatre is opposed to what Brecht called the Aristotelian theatre. Brecht emphasized it by labeling it as non-Aristotelian theatre. Conventional or Aristotelian theatre emphasizes emotions at the cost of logic. It places the spectators in a passive role. The spectator empathizes with characters in the play, is exposed to experiences and emotions felt by them, and his own experience is a kind of purgation of these emotions. Brecht referred to such kind of theatre as “culinary theatre,” written for easy consumption.

Epic theatre is different from naturalistic and realistic theatre, developed by Ibsen and Stanislavsky during 1870 to 1920. Realistic theatre tries to create illusion of reality. Epic theatre is anti-illusionistic. Brecht disliked the spectacle, manipulative plots and emotion of melodrama in realistic plays. Brecht considered this type of theatre as escapist. Brecht wanted that the theatre should be an agent of social change. He was of the opinion that epic theatre can bring about the social change. Epic theatre emphasizes Reason over emotions. According to Brecht, Epic theatre is essentially political in nature. It should deal with current social, political and historical issues.

The primary aim of epic theatre is to achieve *Verfremdungseffekt*. (distance between the audience and the performers) It can be achieved by preventing the identification of the audience with the plot and characters of the play. It helps them to see the play from a critical point of view. The audience should always remain aware that they are watching a play and not reality. According to Brecht, a play is merely reporting of events, not the representation of reality. Brecht called it ‘*Verfremdungseffekt*’ which is shortened as ‘V’ effect. There is no exact equivalent

of Verfremdungseffekt in English. But it is roughly translated as estrangement effect or the alienation effect meaning the alienation effect does not suit completely. The simple understanding is that the audience should aware that they are watching the drama not reality. Brecht did not invent Verfremdungseffekt but he popularized it as the primary technique of epic theatre. The two most important techniques to achieve Verfremdungseffekt are the notion of the atricalism and the concept of the distancing

Theatricalism means the audience should be always aware that they are in a theatre watching a play. Brecht wrote that if the audience believed that they were watching real life, they would uncritically accept society's values. Some simple methods to achieve Verfremdungseffekt include keeping stage sets simple, showing exposed lighting instruments, breaking the action into open-ended episodes, use of songs to comment on action of the play, projecting labels or photographs during scenes, or using a narrator or actors to directly address the audience. The use of a narrator in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is a good example of Verfremdungseffekt at work. All these techniques help the audience to maintain the emotional objectivity necessary to learn the truth about their society.

Brecht also wanted the actors to aim at alienation effect in their acting style. He advised actors to strike a balance between being their character onstage and showing the audience that the character is being performed. Acting in epic theatre requires actors to play characters without convincing either the audience or themselves that they have become the characters. Brecht called this style of acting as 'Gestus'. In epic theatre Actors frequently address the audience directly out of character and play multiple roles. Through their acting, they give the suggestion of the roads not taken. In each moment of a character's decision-making are all the means to the didactic end of teaching us to criticize the society we see onstage in Epic Theatre

One more technique to achieve verfremdungseffekt is Historicisation. It is employed in order to draw connections from a historical event to a similar current event. *Mother Courage and Her Children* and *The Good Person of Szechwan* by Brecht are good examples of the technique of Historicisation. These plays comment on a current social or political issues using historical contexts.

Thus, epic theatre has a critical and intellectual purpose. It places the spectator at a critical distance from the action and the world that it represents. The spectator can better inquire into it, judge it, and possibly change it.

Check your progress-1

Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence

1. Who popularized epic theatre in Germany?
2. What stopped the development of epic theatre in Germany after 1933?
3. When did the style of epic theatre return to Central and Eastern European theatre?
4. Who coined the term epic theatre?
5. Name some famous practitioners of epic theatre.
6. Who is known as the pioneer of epic theatre?
7. According to Brecht, which theatre emphasizes emotions at the cost of logic?
8. Who developed naturalistic and realistic theatre during 1870s to 1920s?
9. How does Conventional or Aristotelian theatre place the spectators in a passive role?
10. What is the primary aim of epic theatre?
11. How does epic theatre prevent the identification of the audience with the plot and characters of the play?
12. What is the English equivalent of Verfremdungseffekt?
13. What are the simple methods to achieve verfremdungseffekt?
14. What is the atricalism according to Brecht?
15. How do techniques to achieve verfremdungseffekt help the audience?
16. What is Gestus according to Brecht?
17. Name two plays by Brecht in which the technique of Historicisation is used.

2.3 *Life and works of Bertolt Brecht*

Eugen Berthold Friedrich Brecht was born on February tenth 1898 in Augsburg. He was the son of Catholic father, Berthold Friedrich Brecht and Sophie née Brezing, a Protestant. He was brought up as a protestant. In 1922 he married Marianne Zoff, but they divorced in 1927. In 1930 he married Helene Weigel, who was an actress. She became his longtime collaborator in the theatre. He established the theatre

company Berliner Ensemble with her in East Berlin after the end of Second World War.

Brecht published his first poems in 1914 under the pseudonym Berthold Eugen. His early successful plays were influenced by Marxist and socialist thoughts. At school in Augsburg he met Caspar Neher, with whom he formed a lifelong creative partnership. Neher designed many of the sets for Brecht's plays and helped to develop the distinctive visual style of epic theatre. Brecht is known as the pioneer of Epic Theatre. Although he did not invent epic theatre, He developed the theory of epic theater in his writings and put his theories to practice. Most of the techniques of epic theatre are not new. They had been used separately by many playwrights. Brecht organized them into a single term and developed the theory of epic theatre.

He applied the theory of epic theatre in most of his plays. His Notable plays include *The Threepenny Opera*, *Life of Galileo*, *Mother Courage and Her Children*, *The Good Person of Szechwan*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Man Equals Man*. His plays are political in nature and their themes are influenced by Marxist thoughts.

During Hitler's rule in Germany and Second World War, Brecht lived in exile in many European countries and America. After the end of World War II he returned to East Berlin, where he established Berliner Ensemble with his wife Helene Weigel. Although Brecht was not a member of communist party, his aesthetic theory and theatrical practice were greatly influenced by Marxist ideology. In 1954 he received Stalin Peace Prize.

Brecht wrote very few plays in his final years. He dedicated himself to directing plays and developing the talents of the next generation of directors and playwrights. But he could not continue his work for very long. He died on 14 August 1956 at the age of 58. He is remembered as one of the greatest playwrights and directors of 20th century. He transformed the theatre in forum for political ideas.

2.4 Introduction to *the Caucasian Chalk Circle*

The Caucasian Chalk Circle was written by Brecht in 1944 in German language. It was translated into English by Eric Bentley. The play was first premiered in 1948 in Carleton College, America. It was first presented in German language by Brecht's own theatre company Berliner Ensemble in 1954 at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm in Berlin. The play is among the most regularly performed

plays of Brecht. It is based on Brecht's German short story *Der Augsburger Kreidekreis*. The story and the play are based on original 14th-century Chinese play 'The Chalk Circle' by Li Xingdao. Brecht has transformed an ancient Chinese parable into a modern story with a different moral lesson. In his play, Brecht has employed most of the techniques of epic theatre to convey the moral to the audience.

The setting of the play is Georgia in the Caucasus, but in the play it is described as Grusinia. Most of the characters have Georgian names. However, much of the action takes place in a city named Nuka. The city is located in modern Azerbaijan.

The play includes a number of songs written by Brecht. The songs form an integral part of the play and are important for the progress of the plot. One of the main characters of the play is called the singer. Paul Dessau prepared the music for the play in 1944. The show is generally played with original music and songs performed in its first production. Many composers have created distinctive scores for The Caucasian Chalk Circle. One score performed regularly is by American composer Mark Nichols. His score is based on traditional Georgian folk melodies.

Check your progress-2

Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence

1. What is the full name of Brecht?
2. When was Brecht born?
3. Which theatre company did Brecht establish after Second World War?
4. Who helped Brecht to develop the distinctive visual style of epic theatre?
5. Name any three Notable plays of Brecht.
6. When did Brecht return to East Berlin?
7. When did Brecht receive Stalin Peace Prize?
8. When did Brecht write The Caucasian Chalk Circle?
9. Who translated The Caucasian Chalk Circle into English?
10. *When was The Caucasian Chalk Circle first premiered?*
11. *When was The Caucasian Chalk Circle first presented in German language?*
12. Who wrote the original Chinese play The Chalk Circle?

2.5 Detailed summary of the play

Brecht in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* uses the device of a play within a play. The prologue or the frame play is set in the Soviet Union at the end of the Second World War. The time is the summer of 1945. In a war-ravaged Caucasian village, Workers from two farming communes sit in a circle. The dairy farmers are sitting on the right and the fruit farmers are on the left. The Collective Goat Farm Rosa Luxemburg was forced to vacate their green valley when Hitler's armies approached. Now they want their land back. The Collective Fruit Farm is called Galinsk. They want the valley assigned to them. A delegation from the State Reconstruction Commission has arrived to resolve their dispute. Both the parties present their case to the delegation. One of the members of the Fruit Farm presents their plans for an enormous project to irrigate the land and grow more fruit and plant vineyards. She shows her blueprints to the delegation. Everyone present there marvel at the ambitious plans of the fruit farmers. Even the Rosa Luxemburg farmers agree that the valley should go to the fruit farmers because they will put the land to better use. The delegation and the members of both farms decide to celebrate this victory of reason with a performance from the well-known singer Arkadi Tscheidse. The singer arrives and tells that he will perform a modernized version of an old Chinese legend called The Chalk Circle.

The play-within-a-play begins as the singer begins to tell the story of a wealthy governor, Georgi Abashwili, who rules a city in Grusinia. Abashwili's wife, Natella is beautiful and vain. His infant son Michael is very much pampered. Though his country is at war, the Governor allows himself and his family many luxuries. A pair of permanently on-call doctors attends to Michael. The Governor also plans for a large expansion of his Palace. The governor and his wife ignore the citizens on the way to Easter Mass. They enter the church, leaving the poor peasants behind.

The heroine of the play, Grusha Vashnadze is a maid to the governor's wife. Grusha, while carrying a goose for the Easter, meets a soldier, Simon Shashava. He reveals that he has watched her bathe in the river. She is enraged and leaves at once.

Arsen Kazbeki, who is known as the fat prince is the villain of the story. On Easter Sunday, he stages a coup and overthrows the Grand Duke and all his Governors. Georgi Abashwili is taken prisoner and quickly beheaded. His servants

prepare the palace for a siege while his wife is preparing to leave the palace for safety.

Simon meets Grusha and proposes her. He gives her a silver cross on a chain as a token of their engagement. Grusha accepts it and promises to wait for him till the end of the war. Simon runs off to fulfill his duty to the Governor's wife, who has been foolishly packing her clothing and jewelry. She does not care for the death of her husband. She is taken away from the flaming city of Nuhka. But in her haste to pack the valuables, she forgets to take her son Michael. Grusha picks him up. Her fellow servants tell her to abandon the child because the Fat Prince's Ironshirts will certainly be looking for him. But Grusha carries him away from the palace toward safety.

Grusha bonds with Michael as she makes her way into the mountains. Grusha has very little money. She has to beg at the cottages she comes across for milk and shelter. At the home of a peasant woman, Grusha feels she can carry the child no farther. She abandons him on their doorstep.

After going a short distance, Grusha runs into two Ironshirts and their Corporal. They ask her if she has seen a missing baby from a good family, who is dressed in fine linens. Grusha, realizing that the men intend to harm Michael, returns to the home of the peasant woman. She requests the peasant woman to remove the baby's fine linen and claim that he is her own child. When the Ironshirts arrive to ask Grusha why she ran away, the Corporal sees the child wrapped in fine linen. He asks the peasant woman. She panics and confesses that the child is not hers. The Corporal tries to lift the child from his crib, but Grusha hits the Corporal over the head with a log. She takes Michael and runs. When she arrives at a glacier which leads to the mountain villages, she notices that the bridge which allows passage over a deep ravine is in bad condition. The merchants gathered at the bridge warn Grusha that bridge is dangerous. But she hears the soldiers approaching, and runs across the bridge. The Ironshirts arrive, but they cannot cross the bridge.

Grusha takes Michael further into the mountains. She travels for seven days through the cold mountains on the way to her brother's house. As she goes, she looks forward to the warm welcome she will receive from her brother and his wife. She imagines the delicious food that she and Michael will be served. When she arrives she is desperate and weak. But her brother Lavrenti and his wife Aniko question

what Grusha is doing alone with a child. Though Aniko is unconvinced of Grusha's presence in the house, Lavrenti permits her and Michael to stay.

After six months, when the snow begins to melt, Lavrenti tells Grusha that it is time for her and Michael to leave. He has arranged for Grusha to marry the son of a peasant woman. Grusha protests, because she is already betrothed to Simon. But Lavrenti tells her that this man will be her husband only on paper. He is sick, and very near death, and when he dies she will inherit his land and home. Grusha agrees to go along with her brother's plan.

When she reaches the home of her new husband-to-be, her new mother-in-law hurries the ceremony. She has hired a local monk to ensure that the marriage is made official as soon as possible. She believes that her son is taking his last breaths. As more and more neighbors arrive to observe the strange scene, they begin to gossip about the political unrest in Grusinia. They reveal that the Grand Duke has returned to power and all the soldiers will soon be coming back from war. Grusha realizes that Simon will soon be back. But she has wed herself to another man. Just then, Grusha's new husband, Jussup, sits up from his deathbed. He has also heard the news that the war is over. He is alive and alert. He is happy that he will not have to join the war as soldier. He was pretending to be sick because he did not want to be recruited for war.

As time passes, Grusha has to deal with her new husband's distaste for her and for Michael, as well as his increasingly harsh demands. He tries to make her a 'real wife' by consummating the marriage, but she refuses. He taunts her, and tells her that her beloved will never come for her. As time passes, Michael grows up, and Simon fades from Grusha's memory

Almost two years pass, and one day Simon finds Grusha while she is washing clothes in the river. Grusha is overjoyed. But she tells Simon that she can never return to Nuka, as she has hit an Ironshirt. They have a sweet exchange before Simon jokingly asks if she has found another man. Grusha tells him with great difficulty that she has unwillingly married, and then Simon spots Michael. The following scene between the two is narrated by the Singer, who reveals the thoughts of each of the two characters. Simon sees a child's hat in the grass and asks if Grusha has a child. She says that she does, but insists it is not hers. He tells Grusha to throw the cross he gave her into the river. Nearby, some children shout that Ironshirts have seized

Michael, suspecting that he is the son of the late Governor of Nuka. The soldiers ask Grusha if she is his mother. She says that she is, and Simon leaves. Grusha follows the soldiers back to the city, knowing she will have to face trial. The Governor's Wife wants the child back and Grusha must go to court back in Nukha. The Singer ends the act with questions about Grusha's future, and informs that there is another story we must know: the story of Azdak.

The singer Arkadi begins to tell the story of Azdak, the judge who will preside over Grusha's case. Years ago, Azdak had given shelter to an old man he believed to be a beggar. Later Azdak realized that the old man was actually the recently-deposed Grand Duke. He was filled with shame for having sheltered such a corrupt political figure. Azdak thought himself a traitor and turned himself in to the authorities in Nuka. When he reached there, he found that, in the coup, all the judges had been hanged.

The Fat Prince was looking to secure the Ironshirts' support in making his nephew a new judge. Azdak suggested they hold a mock trial to test him. The Fat Prince agreed. Azdak played the accused in the trial – the Grand Duke. He made several very successful remarks against the Princes' corruption. The Ironshirts were amused and impressed by his remarks. They thought Azdak a just man and appointed him the new judge in Nuka. Since then, Azdak has made a name for himself as an unconventional judge who hears two or more cases at once. He uses a large law book as a pillow to sit on. He delivers unlikely but nevertheless just verdicts. He judges in favor of the poor, the oppressed and good-hearted bandits. He becomes known throughout the land as the poor man's magistrate.

But soon the Grand Duke returns to power, the Fat Prince is beheaded, and Azdak is about to be hanged by the Grand Duke's Ironshirts when a pardon arrives appointing Azdak of Nuka as a judge in gratitude for saving the life of the Grand Duke.

When Natella returns to Nuka to reclaim her husband's estates, she approaches Azdak to take on the case. He willingly obliges her.

In Nuka, Grusha reunites with her servant friends. One of the palace cooks tells Grusha that she is lucky because Azdak is hearing her case. She explains that Azdak is not a real judge and he stands up for the poor people. Simon meets Grusha and offers to help her. He offers to swear in court that he is the father of Grusha's child.

Grusha also sees the Corporal she assaulted back at the foot of the mountains, but he does not recognize her.

Natella comes to court, accompanied by her lawyers. She speaks openly of her hatred for the common people. Azdak finally takes his seat as the judge. After hearing Natella's testimony and accepting a bribe from her lawyers, asks Grusha to explain why the child should be given to her. Grusha replies that the child is hers. She brought him up, clothed him, fed him, and taught him how to be friendly and hardworking. Natella's lawyers then bring up the matter of Michael's status as the Governor's heir. They argue that it's in Michael's best interest to inherit the Governor's wealth. It is revealed that Natella only wants the child because all the estates of the Governor are tied to his heir.

Grusha, Simon and the cook try to argue Grusha's case, but Azdak holds them all in contempt and fines them. Grusha accuses Azdak of being a hypocrite and a sycophant. She calls him a bribetaker. Azdak adjourns the case for fifteen minutes. He takes Grusha aside and asks why she wouldn't want her son to grow up in the lap of luxury. Grusha does not answer, but Arkadi sings what she is thinking: if Michael grows up wealthy, he will grow up to be cruel. Azdak announces that he has planned a test which will determine the child's true mother. Michael is brought into the courtroom. Azdak draws a chalk circle on the ground. He places Michael in the middle of the circle. He then instructs Grusha and Natella to each grab one of Michael's hands and pull. Whoever can pull the child from the circle is his true mother. If they both pull, they will tear the child in half and get half each. When Azdak instructs the women to pull, Natella easily pulls Michael onto her side. Grusha does not pull at all. Grusha requests Azdak to allow her to keep the child just a little while longer. Azdak orders the women to take the test again. Again, Natella pulls Michael roughly from the circle, but Grusha cries that she cannot harm the child. Thus, Azdak declares Grusha to be Michael's true mother. He advises her to take the child and leave the city. He also declares that the Governor's estates will go to the city, and will be converted into a playground for children. Natella faints, and is carried away by her lawyers. As his final act, Azdak divorces Grusha from Jussup, allowing her and Simon the freedom to be together.

Azdak then removes his judge's robes and invites all to join him outside for dance. As Michael, Simon, and Grusha dance, Azdak stands alone, lost in thought.

Arkadi sings his story's lesson, which reflects the lesson of the peasant farmers in the prologue: "That what there is shall go to those who are good for it."

Check your progress-3

Answer the following questions in one word/phrase/sentence

1. Where is the prologue to *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* set?
2. What is the bone of contention between the fruit farmers and dairy farmers?
3. What is the plan of the fruit farmers regarding the fertile valley?
4. In the prologue to *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, who gets the possession of the valley?
5. Who is invited by the fruit farmers to celebrate their victory?
6. Which story does Arkadi Tscheidse narrate?
7. Who is the Governor of Nukha?
8. Who is Georgi Abashwili's wife?
9. Who is known as the fat prince?
10. Who proposes Grusha on Easter Sunday?
11. What does Simon Shashava give to Grusha as a token of his love?
12. Why does Natella forget to take her son with her?
13. Why do servants tell Grusha to abandon Michael?
14. Where does Grusha abandon Michael on the way?
15. Why does Grusha return after abandoning Michael?
16. Why does Grusha hit the Corporal over the head with a log?
17. Why does Grusha cross the dangerous bridge over a deep ravine?
18. Who is Grusha's brother?
19. Who is Lavrenti's wife?
20. Who arranges Grusha's marriage with the son of a peasant woman?
21. Who is Grusha's husband?

22. Why does Grusha agree to marry Jussup?
23. What does Simon say when he comes to know that Grusha has a child?
24. Who presides over Grusha and Natella's case?
25. Whom did Azdak give shelter?
26. Why did Azdak surrender himself to authorities in Nuka?
27. Why is Azdak known as the poor man's magistrate?
28. Why does the Grand Duke pardon Azdak and appoint him a judge?
29. How does Simon offer to help Grusha in the court?
30. Who is Michael's real mother?
31. Who gets the custody of Michael?
32. What does Azdak decide about the Governor's estates?
33. What does Azdak do to help Grusha and Simon get married?

2.6 Characterization in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*

I. Grusha Vashnadze

Grusha is the protagonist of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. She is a servant girl in the palace of the Governor. She is the symbol of goodness, righteousness and justice. Grusha stands for Brecht's desire for a just and equal society built on the success and triumph of the lower classes. She is loving, kind and compassionate. When Governor's wife Natella leaves behind her son Michael, Grusha picks him up. Even though her friends tell her to abandon the child because the Fat Prince's Iron shirts will be looking for him, Grusha does not listen and carries Michael away from the palace toward safety.

She is also courageous. She faces the iron shirts and their corporal bravely. She even hits the corporal with a wooden log to save Michael's life. When the soldiers are following her, she runs across a damaged bridge over a deep ravine and risks her life to save Michael. She travels for seven days through the frigid mountains on the way to her brother's house. She realizes that she is the only one who can properly care for the abandoned child. Grusha is deeply concerned that Michael should grow

up to be a good person. She wants to keep him away from the corruptive forces of wealth and power. She wants him to be just, good, and hardworking. When the Fat Prince's government is overthrown, Natella sends soldiers to take Michael away from Grusha. Grusha faces trial in the court. She refuses to cause any bodily harm to Michael during the test of the chalk circle. She is eventually proclaimed by Azdak the child's true mother.

II. Azdak

Azdak is the judge who presides over Grusha and Natella's case for Michael's custody. Years ago, Azdak was a village scrivener. He had given shelter to an old man he believed to be a beggar. Later Azdak discovered that the old man was the recently-deposed Grand Duke. He was filled with shame for having sheltered such a corrupt man. Azdak thought himself a traitor and turned himself in to the authorities in Nuka. When he reached there, he found that, in the coup, all the judges had been hanged.

The Fat Prince was looking to secure the Irons hirts' support in making his nephew a new judge. Azdak suggested they hold a mock trial to test him. The Fat Prince agreed. Azdak played the accused in the trial – the Grand Duke. He made several very successful remarks against the Princes' corruption. The Iron shirts were amused and impressed by his remarks. They thought Azdak a just man and appointed him the new judge in Nuka. Since then, Azdak has made a name for himself as an unconventional judge, who hears two or more cases at once. He uses a large law book as a pillow to sit on. He delivers unlikely but nevertheless just verdicts. He judges in favor of the poor, the oppressed and good-hearted bandits. He becomes known throughout the land as the poor man's magistrate.

But soon the Grand Duke returns to power, the Fat Prince is beheaded, and Azdak is about to be hanged by the Grand Duke's Iron shirts when a pardon arrives appointing Azdak of Nuka as a judge in gratitude for saving the life of the Grand Duke.

When Natella returns to Nuka to reclaim her husband's estates, she approaches Azdak to take on the case. He willingly obliges her and even accepts bribes from her lawyers. But he is a judge who stands up for society's poor and oppressed. He recognizes the depth of Grusha's commitment to Michael and her desire to keep him from corruption. He devises the test of chalk circle. He rules in favor of Grusha after

she passes the test. The play concludes with the triumph of the lower classes. He is dedicated to justice. His character in the play is directly linked to the themes of corruption and justice vs. injustice.

III. Arkadi

Arkadi is a renowned singer. He has been invited to entertain the members of the dairy farm and the fruit farm as they gather together to celebrate the triumph of reason in their dispute over which group should be assigned control over a fertile valley. Arkadi narrates the story of The Caucasian Chalk Circle for the farmers. His narration creates the play-within-a-play framework of The Caucasian Chalk Circle. Arkadi's story of the Chalk Circle is an extended parable which celebrates the decision the farmers have wisely taken. The moral of his story is that things should be given to those who will take the best care of them. The fruit farmers would take good care of the valley, and would cause it to flourish even further. In the story told by Arkadi, Grusha, the peasant-girl who is the protagonist of the Chalk Circle, would be the best mother to Michael. She adopted Michael after he was abandoned by his real mother. Arkadi frequently conveys the inner thoughts of the characters he sings about. His songs create a direct link between the inner lives of the characters and his audience. His role in the play is very significant.

IV. Simon Shashava

Simon Shashava is a foot soldier in the palace of governor Georgie Abashwili. Simon is in love with the servant-girl and protagonist, Grusha. He proposes marriage to Grusha early in the play. But after the Fat Prince's coup, Simon is separated from her because he is called away to war. Grusha promises Simon that she will wait for him. But after she adopts Michael as her own, she finds herself helpless and needing to secure a husband and a home for herself and her child. Years later, When Simon returns from war, he finds that Grusha has married and has a young son. Simon assumes that the son is Grusha's own. Simon is angry, but later he supports Grusha when she is brought to trial in court. In the end, Simon and Grusha are happily reunited, and the judge Azdak divorces Grusha from her husband so that she is free to marry Simon.

V. Natella

Natella is wife of Georgi Abashwili. She is vain and uncaring. Natella's main concern is her dressing and finery. During the coup When Georgi is captured and

killed, Natella's servants tell her to flee the palace with her infant son, Michael. Natella packs too much for the trip. She fills several trunks with finest garments and jewelry. When her servants tell her that she can't take everything with her, she begins fussing over which of her things she should take along. She orders a servant-girl who is holding the child to set him down and fetch Natella a pair of saffron shoes from inside the palace. When Natella sees the red sky overhead, signaling fire from the peasants' riots, she is scared. She is swept away from the palace, leaving her child behind. Later in the play, after the old regime has been restored to power, Natella orders her soldiers to track down her child and bring him back to her. Grusha, who saved Michael's life and adopted him, follows him back to Nuka. In the court at Nuka, Grusha and Natella stand trial against one another. During the course of the trial, it is revealed that Natella only wants her son back because he stands to inherit his father's estates. The judge Azdak orders that the two women place Michael in the center of a chalk circle and tug on one arm each to try pulling Michael out of the circle. The woman who can pull out the child will be proclaimed his true mother. Natella pulls on her child while Grusha refuses to cause the boy any harm. Grusha is declared Michael's true mother. Natella faints when Azdak declares that all of Michael's inheritance will be dissolved, and will instead go to the city. Thus, Natella represents corruption, injustice, and the vanity of the wealthy and powerful.

VI. Michael abashwelli

Michael abashwelli is the son of Natella and Georgi Abashwili. The son of the Governor is at the center of the play's action. The role of Michael is a non-speaking one. In the production of the play onstage, Michael is often portrayed by a puppet or a doll. Michael is a very much pampered child. He is attended constantly by a staff of doctors. His mother, Natella, abandons him when she flees the capital. A servant-girl Grusha, takes Michael into her care. She is unwilling to leave him for the Fat Prince's Ironshirts to find and kill him. Michael is a burden to Grusha in the beginning. But she soon decides to adopt him and raise him herself. She risks her own life to protect him from the soldiers. She even marries a sick man to find shelter for Michael. She looks after him and teaches him the right values of kindness and hard work. Brecht implies that Michael can either be raised right or easily corrupted by wealth, greed, and power. Michael thus represents the potential of the future of society, and his character represents themes of motherhood, justice vs. injustice, and corruption.

2.7 Major themes in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*

I. Corruption

The *Caucasian Chalk Circle* was written by Brecht when he was in exile during World War II. He had already witnessed the horrors of World War I as a young man in Berlin. The play is a discourse against political, social, and economic corruption. It depicts the harsh realities of economic and social inequality. The play is influenced by Brecht's Marxist political inclinations. Brecht depicts the selfishness and carelessness of the rich and the goodness and diligence of the poor. Brecht in the play reasons that wealth and power lead to political and moral corruption. The corruption generally takes the form of evil deeds and war. It leads to perpetuation of the suffering of lower classes.

The first example of moral corruption in the play is the introduction of the Abashwili family. The Abashwilis are concerned only with their life of luxury. Their power and wealth has corrupted them. They ignore the plight of the poor. They only think about their own happiness. The Governor, Georgi Abashwili, and his wife Natella employ two doctors to look after their baby Michael. Although the baby is healthy, Natella is constantly worried that he will fall ill. The Governor is planning to add a new wing in his palace. Even though war is raging through his country. Poor peasants approach him on the street to beg for lower taxes, but he ignores them and goes on with his celebrations of Easter.

Natella is obsessed with the wealth and fine dresses, shoes, and other accessories that she has amassed. When a prince stages a coup against the governor, Georgi is captured and killed. Natella's servants tell her to flee the palace with her infant son, Michael. Natella packs too much for the trip. She fills several trunks with finest garments and jewelry. When her servants tell her that she can't take everything with her, she begins fussing over which of her things she should take along. She orders a servant-girl who is holding the child to set him down and fetch Natella a pair of saffron shoes from inside the palace. When Natella sees the red sky overhead, signaling fire from the peasants' riots, she is scared. She is swept away from the palace, leaving her child behind.

After the war is over and the old regime has been restored to power, Natella orders her soldiers to track down her child and bring him back to her. Grusha, who saved Michael's life and adopted him, follows him back to Nuka. In the court at

Nuka, Grusha and Natella stand trial against one another. During the course of the trial, it is revealed that Natella only wants her son back because he stands to inherit his father's estates. The judge devises the test of chalk circle. Natella pulls on her child while Grusha refuses to cause the boy any harm. Grusha is declared Michael's true mother. Natella faints when Azdak declares that all of Michael's inheritance will be dissolved, and will instead go to the city. Natella represents corruption, injustice, and the vanity of the wealthy and powerful. Only Grusha seems to be aware of the tendency of wealth and power to corrupt.

Political corruption is also widespread in Grusinia. Brecht intentionally protects his audience from knowing who is the most corrupt party. The Abashwilis work for a regime led by the Grand Duke. The Abashwilis and the grand duke are deeply hated, yet the peasants riot in the street when they are overthrown. The Grand Duke is replaced by the Fat Prince. Grusha learns that the Grand Duke has returned, and has brought mercenaries from the Persian Army to help him fight against the Fat Prince. But all this information is delivered in a second-hand and gossipy manner. Brecht does this deliberately to show that ultimately it doesn't matter who is in charge, since corruption will ruin every regime that takes power. Brecht uses the theme of corruption in this play to comment on the times he was living in. during his time the world was war-torn. In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Brecht argues through the play's climax that corruption must be overturned and eradicated completely if the suffering of the world is to end forever. Brecht uses this play to propagate his political message that advocates for dismantling capitalism in favor of a more egalitarian social and economic system. The play is full of allusions to revolution and depictions of the upper class's cruel treatment of the poor.

II. Justice vs. Injustice

The theme of justice and injustice is central to the action of the play. The prologue to the play and arguments of the fruit farmers and dairy farmers regarding the traditional notions of ownership complicate the idea of justice. The fertile valley under dispute is awarded to the fruit farmers because they can better take care of it and make it more prosperous. Similarly the story that Arkadi tells is concerned with the idea of justice and ownership.

Arkadi's story begins with description of a wealthy governor of a city. It introduces a major theme the injustice of the gap between the rich and the poor. On

Easter Sunday, the Governor and his family attend church, where they meet commoners and beggars who request the governor to lower taxes and end the war. The governor, protected by his soldiers, approaches the church with his wife and infant son Michael. The crowd of peasants struggles to catch a glimpse of the child. The wealthy Governor and his family push through a crowd of their poor and downtrodden subjects. The Abashwilis are concerned only with their life of luxury.

Their power and wealth has corrupted them. They ignore the plight of the poor. They only think about their own happiness. They are obsessed with their wealth. Natella is so much preoccupied with her fine clothes and jewelry that she forgets to take her son with her. Brecht emphasizes that the gap between rich and the poor is the root cause of injustice.

Even when fat prince revolts against existing regime, justice is not restored in the city. Political corruption remains widespread in the country. But soon the Grand Duke returns to power, the Fat Prince is beheaded, and Azdak is about to be hanged by the Grand Duke's Ironshirts when a pardon arrives, appointing Azdak of Nuka as a judge in gratitude for saving the life of the Grand Duke.

Azdak's political views seem to most closely resemble Brecht's own: Azdak believes in taking from the rich and giving to the poor. He also believes in honoring justice even if it means challenging the law. Azdak has made a name for himself as an unconventional judge who hears two or more cases at once. He uses a large law book as a pillow to sit on. He delivers unlikely but nevertheless just verdicts. He judges in favor of the poor, the oppressed and good-hearted bandits. He becomes known throughout the land as the poor man's magistrate. For Azdak Justice means correcting the inequality by ruling in favor of the downtrodden and poor, and attempting to level the playing field.

At the end of the play, Azdak judges in favour of Grusha and allows her the custody of Michael. Azdak also declares that all of Michael's inheritance will be dissolved, and will instead go to the city. After delivering this unconventional judgement, he invites all present in court to dance. While they dance around him, he stands alone, lost in thought. Similarly, Azdak stands alone in the world of the play, a singular figure whose dedication to justice is difficult to understand. Azdak's character reveals Brecht's desire for a society in which justice and equality reign.

III. Chaos and chance

Chaos and chance play an important role in the world of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* from beginning to the end. Throughout the play, Brecht seems to suggest that chaos can be both destructive and generative. Chaos and chance can also be the forces of renewal and redemption.

The lives of the peasants in the prologue have turned upside down in the chaos of World War II. They were forced to vacate a fertile valley to escape the approach of Hitler's armies. They are physically and emotionally displaced. However, after the war is over, they desire justice and reform. The fruit farmers and dairy farmers want the possession of the fertile valley. The situation seems dangerous and favorable for an outbreak of violence. But in the end the Government delegation sides with the fruit farmers, and the valley is awarded to them. The dairy farmers see the truth in the fruit farmers' argument. Thus the chaos in the beginning of the scene gives way to harmony and celebration. They invite a singer named Arkadi, who narrates the story of a servant girl named Grusha. This story forms the main action of the play.

The main action of the play is also governed by chaos in the beginning. The fat prince has revolted and the governor is captured and killed. Chaos prevails in the palace. It is only a matter of chance that when Natella is preparing to flee from the palace that she forgets to take her son Michael. Grusha, a servant girl finds Michael and saves his life. She takes him to the mountains, where she raises him to be a good person. Thus, the chaos of rebellion has made Grusha Michael's mother and Grusha realizes that Michael can be raised in a proper manner only if he remains away from the palace. Finally, in the court, Grusha's claim over Michael is recognized and his future is secured with Grusha. The story which started amidst chaos ends with assurance of a good future for Michael.

Chaos of war forms the background for the main action of the play. All the characters, Grusha, Simon and Michael are severely affected by the chaos of war. They are separated and suffer for years. But in the last scene of the play, all are united. Grusha is awarded Michael's custody; she is divorced from her husband and is free to marry Simon. Chaos and chance are harbingers of change in the play. Chaos and chance force stagnant circumstances forward. For Grusha, Michael, Simon, and the farmers in the prologue, circumstances improve from the beginning to the end of the play. Brecht argues that chaos can be useful. Chaos and chance

force the characters within the play to take action to change the circumstances of their lives. Thus, chaos and chance prove to be regenerative in the play.

IV. Motherhood as leadership

The story of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is the story of adoption of Michael Abashwili by Grusha, a feudal servant girl. Michael, the pampered son of the Governor of Nuka, was left behind by his mother Natella when a coup by the fat prince against the governor, violently removed the Abashwilis from power. Although Grusha is initially uncertain of whether she should rescue the child, her conscience compels her to take the child into her own care. Throughout the play, Grusha struggles with the burdens and joys of motherhood. But she takes the responsibilities of bringing a child up the “right” way. Although Grusha is not the child’s mother by blood, she ultimately earns the status of his rightful mother when she wins custody. In ending the play with Grusha retaining custody of the child, Brecht sets up the concept of motherhood as a metaphor. Only those who are good and just, and who are aware of the corrupting influence of power and wealth, are fit to be good mothers. For Brecht, “mothers” are a metaphor for those responsible enough not only to care for others selflessly, but to lead society as a whole.

Brecht used this play to advance his political message that advocated for dismantling capitalism in favor of a more egalitarian society. *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* is full of allusions to revolution and depictions of the upper class’s cruel treatment of the poor. Brecht uses the two very different mothers to model the behaviors of an unfit mother (i.e., an irresponsible member of society) and a fit mother (i.e., a “comrade,” an exemplar of egalitarianism). Natella is so distracted by her need to bring her finest possessions, that she leaves her child behind. Grusha takes the child into her care. As time passes, power is restored to the grand duke, and Natella tracks down and seizes her son back from Grusha. Grusha is brought to trial, and as Natella argues to regain custody of her son, she uses over-the-top language to describe her sorrow and pain. Her story of sorrow is revealed to be false. It comes to light that her true motive in reclaiming her child is to secure her wealth. Michael stands to inherit his father’s estate. Thus, Natella was an unfit mother when she lost her child, and, years later, she remains unfit to love or care for her child. In the end, custody is awarded to Grusha. Michael is stripped of his inheritance. Michael’s loss of his inheritance does not matter to Grusha, but it causes Natella to faint. Thus,

Brecht shows that Natella's narcissism, vanity, and obsession with wealth lead to her downfall.

2.8 Symbolism in the play

A Symbol is an object, character, or figure which is a sign or token of something else. It may represent an abstract idea or a concept. For example, water is a symbol of purity; a flag is a symbol of the country it represents. Literary symbols take their meaning from the work to which they belong. Writers often use symbols to mean more than what they can say. In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Brecht also uses complex literary symbols to convey his meaning. Let us study these symbols in detail.

I. Saffron Boots

When Governor Georgi Abashwili is overthrown by the Fat Prince, his wife Natella is advised to leave the city to save her and her son's life. Her servants tell her that they don't have much time. But Natella is preoccupied with ensuring her prized possessions come along with her. She is trying to take everything that she loves. She is particularly obsessed with a pair of saffron-colored boots, which she has forgotten to pack in her trunks. Natella orders the servant-girl holding her son, Michael, to put the child down and go inside to bring the boots. When the servant-girl goes in the palace, Natella notices that the sky has turned red with fire from the nearing riots. She is struck by fear. She allows herself to be taken away from the palace on horseback. But she leaves her child behind.

The saffron boots in the play are a symbol of wealth and decadence. They also symbolize Natella's vanity, narcissism, and corruption. She is actually disconnected from what matters and is obsessed with her wealth and privilege. As a result of her obsession, she abandons her own child over a pair of shoes. Later on in the play, during the trial, Azdak asks Grusha, why she does not want to surrender her son to Natella so that he can grow up in the lap of luxury. Grusha, silently, thinks that if Michael "had golden shoes to wear he'd be cruel as a bear." Thus, the saffron boots stand as a symbol of corruption and narcissism, and Grusha fears that her child could forget all that she has taught him. In this play the saffron boots serve as a physical symbol of corruption.

II. The Red Sky

After Governor Georgi Abashwili is overthrown by the Fat Prince, the peasants revolt against the new regime. The sky over the town of Nuka turns red with fire. Later in the play, when Grusha returns to Nuka to await her trial, the sky is red again. This time the grand duke has returned to power and the fat prince is overthrown. The sky has remained red with fire all these years. The red sky in the play is a symbol of social unrest, chaos and the common people's desire for an end to corruption. In the epic theatre, theatrical devices such as projections are commonly used to communicate the themes and motifs of the play. The red sky is one of these devices, which signifies the play's themes of chaos, corruption and political unrest.

III. The Statute book

Azdak has made a name for himself as an unconventional judge, who hears two or more cases at once. He delivers unlikely but nevertheless just verdicts. He judges in favor of the poor, the oppressed and good-hearted bandits. He becomes known throughout the land as the poor man's magistrate and a Robin Hood figure, who champions justice for those deserving of it. He is not swayed by those corrupt individuals who attempt to bribe him to rule in their favor. In each case he hears, he sits in his judge's chair on an uncommon cushion, a Statute Book, full of laws and legal precedents. Azdak's practice of sitting on the Statute Book while judging a case symbolizes his eccentric nature, his uncommon methods, and his desire to upset precedent in order to do what is right and just. Thus Azdak's act of sitting on statute signifies that justice is more important than laws. Laws may change over time, but justice must be delivered at any cost.

IV. The chalk circle

The chalk circle is the most important symbol in the play. It is a symbol of truth. Azdak devises the test of the chalk circle to find out who is the real mother of Michael. Within the circle, all will be revealed. His methods of justice are not by the Book of laws. By putting Michael in the circle and observing the reaction of both the women, he can see which woman is best for caring for the child.

The circle levels the playing field, removing the advantage of money or rank or history that Natella has got. There are no distractions to the problem or its solution. Azdak lets justice reveal itself.

Likewise, the play opens with another circle of justice, when the members of the two communes sit together to decide who should get the valley. The Expert from the Government Reconstruction Commission is like Azdak, who announces the outcome but does not push; he observes. Within this friendly circle where the communes have equal social status, they can impartially decide the best use of the valley, and it is peacefully and mutually decided for the fruit growers.

The circle symbol is reinforced by the Wheel of Fortune referred to by the Singer in Scene 2. He sings about the downfall of the Governor, who was so secure in his power and assumed he would always have it. "But long is not forever. / Oh Wheel of Fortune! Hope of the people!" This wheel of change is always turning and conveys the Marxist message of the play. The Wheel celebrates the historical dialectic where the center of power is always shifting from one class to another. It is the hope of the people because ultimately, this turning circle of fortune produces justice.

2.9 Answers to check your progress

Check your progress-1

1. Max Reinhardt, Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht
2. The rise of Hitler's Nazi party stopped the development of epic theatre in Germany after 1933.
3. after the end of Second World War
4. Erwin Piscator
5. Erwin Piscator, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold and Bertolt Brecht.
6. Bertolt Brecht
7. Conventional or Aristotelian theatre
8. Ibsen and Stanislavsky
9. The spectator empathizes with characters in the play, is exposed to experiences and emotions felt by them, and his own experience is a kind of purgation of these emotions
10. The primary aim of epic theatre is to achieve *Verfremdungseffekt*.
11. Epic theatre helps the audience to see the play from a critical point of view.

12. Estrangement effect or the alienation effect
13. Methods to achieve Verfremdungseffekt include keeping stage sets simple, showing exposed lighting instruments, breaking the action into open-ended episodes, projecting labels or photographs during scenes, or using a narrator or actors to directly address the audience.
14. The audience should be always aware that they are in a theatre watching a play.
15. They help the audience to maintain the emotional objectivity necessary to learn the truth about their society.
16. The style of acting in epic theatre to achieve verfremdungseffekt is called gestus.
17. Mother Courage and Her Children and the Good Person of Szechwan by Brecht.

Check your progress-2

1. Eugen Berthold Friedrich Brecht
2. February tenth 1898
3. Berliner Ensemble
4. Caspar Neher
5. The Three penny Opera, Life of Galileo, Mother Courage and Her Children, the Good Person of Szechwan, The Caucasian Chalk Circle and Man Equals Man
6. after the end of World War II
7. in 1954.
8. in 1944.
9. *Eric Bentley*
10. *in 1948.*
11. in 1954.
12. Li Xingdao

Check your progress-3

1. in Grusiniain the Soviet Union

2. Possession of the fertile valley which earlier belonged to the dairy farmers.
3. They plan to irrigate the land and grow more fruit and plant vineyards
4. the fruit farmers
5. The well-known singer Arkadi Tscheidse
6. A new version of an old Chinese legend called The Chalk Circle
7. Giorgi Abashwili
8. Natella
9. Arsen Kazbeki
10. Simon Shashava
11. A silver cross on a chain
12. Because she is too busy in packing her jewelry, shoes and clothes
13. Because the Fat Prince's Ironshirts will certainly be looking for him
14. on the doorsteps of a poor peasant woman.
15. Because she meets ironshirts and their corporal who are looking for Michael and Grusha thinks that they will harm him.
16. Because he has recognized Michael and is trying to take him away.
17. Because the soldiers are following her to take Michael away from her.
18. Lavrenti
19. Aniko
20. Grusha's brother Lavrenti
21. Jussup
22. Because her brother tells her that Jussup will be only her husband on paper and Jussup is sick and about to die.
23. He tells Grusha to throw the cross he gave her into the river
24. Azdak
25. recently-deposed Grand Duke

26. Azdak thought himself a traitor for having sheltered the recently-deposed Grand Duke.
27. Azdak delivers just verdicts and judges in favor of the poor and the oppressed.
28. Because Azdak had saved the life of the Grand Duke.
29. Simon offers to swear in court that he is the father of Grusha's child.
30. Natella
31. Grusha.
32. He decides that the Governor's estates will go to the city, and will be converted into a playground for children.
33. Azdak divorces Grusha from Jussup.

2.10 Unit summary

In this unit we have traced the history and development of epic theatre. The term Epic Theatre is generally used to describe the style and techniques popularized in Germany after First World War. Brecht is known as the pioneer of epic theatre. He developed the theory of epic theater in his writings and put his theories to practice in his plays. Brecht devised a set of staging and acting techniques to teach their audience to criticize the injustices and inequalities of modern society. Brecht labeled epic theatre as non-Aristotelian theatre. Epic theatre emphasizes Reason over emotions. It attempts to prevent the identification of the audience and the actors with the plot and characters of the play. The aim of epic theatre is to achieve *Verfremdungseffekt*. Some simple methods to achieve *Verfremdungseffekt* include keeping stage sets simple, showing exposed lighting instruments, breaking the action into open-ended episodes, use of songs to comment on action of the play, projecting labels or photographs during scenes, or using a narrator or actors to directly address the audience. According to Brecht, Epic theatre is essentially political in nature. He wanted that the theatre should be an agent of social change.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle is one of the best examples of Epic Theatre in practice. Brecht has used most of the techniques of epic theatre to convey his moral to the audience. In this play, Brecht has used the technique of play within a play. The prologue to the play forms the outer frame to the main action of the play. The moral

of the both, the prologue and the story narrated by Arkadi is similar: “That what there is shall go to those who are good for it.”

2.11 Exercises

1. Write short notes on the following
 - a. Significance of the prologue in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*
 - b. Role of class struggle in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*
 - c. Natella’s materialism
 - d. Impact of Marxist ideology on *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*
 - e. Origin of the story of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*
 - f. Significance of the title ‘*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*’
 - g. Techniques of Epic Theatre used in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*
 - h. Farmer’s dispute in the prologue
 - i. Role of Arkadi in the play
 - j. Significance of chorus in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*
 - k. Verfremdungseffekt
 - l. Moral of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*
2. Answer the following questions in about 500 words each.
 - a. Discuss in detail Brecht’s concept of epic theatre
 - b. *How is the Caucasian Chalk Circle different from the original Chinese story of the chalk circle?*
 - c. How does Marxism influence *The Caucasian Chalk circle*?
 - d. What is the message of the play? What role do Grusha and Azdak play in conveying this message?
 - e. Discuss Brecht’s attitude toward war in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

2.12 Further reading

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Unit-3

General Topic : The Theatre of Absurd *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? (1961-62)*

Edward Albee

Contents :

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The Theatre of Absurd
 - 3.2.1 Check your progress
- 3.3 Life and works of Edward Albee
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- 3.5 Plot of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*
- 3.6 Act wise summary of Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*
 - 3.6.1 Check your progress
- 3.7 Characterization in the play
- 3.8 Critical Aspects of the play
- 3.9 Terms to remember
- 3.10 Answers to check your progress
- 3.11 Exercises
- 3.12 References for further study.

3.0 Objectives :

After studying this unit you will be able to--

- understand The Theatre of Absurd
- explain what Absurd Drama is and its rise in the 20th Century literature.
- State Edward Albee's contribution to the field of Drama.
- identify and state the theme or the idea behind *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*
- 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.

3.1 Introduction :

Dear Students, in the last two units, we briefly discussed the Rejection of Realism in Drama and text *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921) by Luigi Pirandello. We also discussed The Epic Theatre and text *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1948) by Bertolt Brecht.

In this unit, we are going to discuss, briefly the general topic The Theatre of Absurd as a literary movement and text *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by Edward Albee. You should read this unit carefully. You have to study the American Playwright Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* as the representative play of the Theatre of Absurd. The discussions of the general topic will prove helpful to you to understand this play and its background and significance in the development of Drama.

3.2 The Theatre of Absurd

The Theatre of the Absurd is a post-World War II designation for particular plays of absurdist fiction written by a number of primarily European playwrights in the late 1950s. It is also a term for the style of theatre the plays represent. The Absurd plays focus on ideas of existentialism and express what happens when human existence lacks meaning or purpose and communication breaks down. The structure of the absurd plays is typically a round shape, with the finishing point the same as the starting point. Logical construction and argument give way to irrational and illogical

speech and to the ultimate conclusion silence.

The term Absurd is coined by the critic Martin Esslin in his 1960 essay "*The Theatre of the Absurd*", which focuses on the playwrights Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, and Eugène Ionesco. Esslin says that their plays have a common denominator the "absurd", a word that Esslin defines with a quotation from Ionesco: "absurd is that which has not purpose, or goal, or objective." The French philosopher Albert Camus, in his 1942 essay "*Myth of Sisyphus*", describes the human situation as meaningless and absurd. The Absurd in these plays takes the form of man's reaction to a world apparently without meaning or man as a puppet controlled or menaced by invisible outside forces. This style of writing was first popularized by the Eugène Ionesco play *The Bald Soprano* (1950).

Ionesco defined Absurd as : 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 'unless'. Dictionary defines 'Absurd' as out of harmony with reason or propriety, incongruous, unreasonable, illogical.' Absurd play is having lack of logical sense and lack of harmonious agreement in action, even to, characters and theme. In lay persons language that there is no consistency in the read life of human being so as it should be in the play.

All these meanings applied to the Absurd Drama may be disputable. But it certainly is out of harmony with the human condition. Let us discuss the origin of the idea of The Theatre of Absurd as it occurred in the field of drama.

Origin of Absurd :

The critic Martin Esslin, in the first edition of *The Theatre of the Absurd* quotes the French philosopher Albert Camus' essay "*Myth of Sisyphus*", he uses the word "absurdity" to describe the human situation:

"In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. ... This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity."

Martin Esslin presents the four defining playwrights of the movement as Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Eugène Ionesco, and Jean Genet, and in subsequent editions he added a fifth playwright, Harold Pinter. Other writers associated with this

group by Esslin and other critics include Tom Stoppard, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Fernando Arrabal, Edward Albee, Boris Vian, and Jean Tardieu.

Andre Malraux in his book *La Tentation de l'occident* (The Temptations of the West) (1923) used the term absurdity saying at the centre of European man, dominating the great moments of his life, there lies an essential absurdity.' In the same book, the character of a European young man A.D. agrees with his friend from China that Western Man is a creature of the Absurd. Jean Paul Sartre's novel *Nausea*, 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 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 destructive force (c) a sense of being lost in an alien world and (d) a sense of isolation from other beings.

The protagonist in Camus's novel *The Outsider*, is one of the examples 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 Albert 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 Theatre of Absurd was involved in presenting absurdity itself rather than explaining it or talking about it.

The Theatre of Absurd Drama 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.

In his book *The Theatre of Revolt* (1965,) Robart Bronstein 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 him, 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 in an old man.

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

Dramatists;

In this unit, we are going to study the American Playwright Edward Albee's play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* as one of the representative plays of the Theatre of the Absurd. However, before you study it, it is necessary for us to be familiar with the works of the dramatists well known as the Absurd Playwrights.

As we have already discussed about the Absurd Theatre as the pan-European phenomenon; 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 recorded his experience in his work *The Confession*. His experiences had 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. Adamov first play, *La Parodie* (1945) focuses on the theme of loneliness and lack of communication. In his next play, *Professor Taranne* (1951) he uses the semblance of reality, but the play is a presentation of a dream.

In his play *Le Ping Pong*, Adamov underlines the futility of action to find meaning. There are two characters in the play *Le Ping Pong*. Victor, who is a medical student and Arthur who is 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 condition continues in this play. The play focuses on the men engaged in purposeless action, the meaningless activity leading to senility and death.

Ionesco, one of the playwrights of The Theatre of Absurd, does not say that communication by language is impossible, but insists that it is very difficult to make oneself understood. Ionesco 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 clichéd language used in an English primer 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'ce* (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 went to Paris in 1928, where he met James Joyce. Beckett wrote his first play *Eleutheria*, which 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 Cloy, his servant. There are other two characters, Negg and Nell, the legless parents of Hamm. The game is whether Cloy 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 Cloy functions as his Senses and the intellect.

Jean Genet is another well known name among the Parisian Group of the Absurd Dramatists. His plays express 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. He began as a poet, writing poetry in prison. He wrote poetic prose and later 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. His 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.

In England, the major contributor to this The Theatre of Absurd was Harold Pinter. 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, with 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-fulfillment, the milieu being that of a sophisticated middle-class society. Pinter is different from the Absurdists in France in his handling of language and themes.

Edward 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 *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is a prescribed text for you in this paper, you are going to read more about Albee and his plays in this unit.

The critic Martin Esslin focuses on 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. 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. Hinchliffe has recorded three objections to Absurdity in his contribution to *The Critical Idiom-Series*, on *The Absurd*.

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

3. Hinchliff 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.

3.2.1 Check Your Progress I :

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?

3.3 Introduction : Life and works of Edward Albee

Edward Franklin Albee (1928 - 2016) :

Edward Albee was an American playwright well known for his plays — *The Zoo Story* (1958), *The Sand Box* (1959), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1962) *A Delicate Balance* (1966) and *Three Tall Women* (1994). He is known for being very critical of the modern conditions in the American Society. Three of his plays won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and two of his other works won the Tony Award for Best Play. His early works reflect a mastery and Americanization of the Theatre of the Absurd that found its peak in works by European playwrights such as Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, and Jean Genet.

Edward Albee was born in 1928. He was placed for adoption two weeks later and taken to Larchmont, New York, where he grew up. Albee is an adoptive child of Reed Albee and Frances Albee. He was supposed to be born somewhere in Virginia, in America. 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. Albee began writing poetry in his childhood.

Albee attended the Rye Country Day School, then the Lawrenceville School in New Jersey, from which he was expelled. He then was sent to Valley Forge Military Academy in Wayne, Pennsylvania, where he was dismissed in less than a year. 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 figures like W. H. Auden and Thornton Wilder, who advised him on writing.

In his early plays, Albee's work had various representations of the LGBTQIA community often challenging the image of a heterosexual marriage. Despite challenging society's views about the gay community, he did not view himself as an LGBT advocate. Albee's work typically criticized the American dream. 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. Albee's most iconic play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, opened on Broadway at the Billy Rose Theatre on October 13, 1962, and closed on May 16, 1964, after five previews and 664 performances. The controversial play won the Tony Award for Best Play in 1963.

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. His later plays received as a remarkable comeback and watched by appreciative audiences and critics the world over.

3.4 AN INTRODUCTION : *WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF ?*

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf ? is Edward Albee's first three-act play. It was produced on Broadway by Richard Barr and Clinton Wilder. It was directed by Alan Schneider and opened at the Billy Rose Theatre, on October 13, 1962, with Uta Hagen in the role of Martha. It received dynamic reviews, in resounding phrases like "shattering drama", "brilliantly original work of art", "excoriating' theatrical experience"; "articulately and terrifyingly among the quick," and "a crucial event in the birth of contemporary American theatre." The play deservedly coveted every award of the season barring the Pulitzer for lack of unanimity among the judges. This reaction in itself was proof of the effectiveness of Albee's thesis in the play, and the fact that Pulitzer withheld its award for the year indicates clearly that Albee's play, *Who's Afraid* "towered over the common run of contemporary plays" as pointed out by Taubman in the Times. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf ?* established Albee as a playwright of remarkable theatrical power.

3.5 The Plot of The Play

The play begins in George and Martha's house on the College campus at 2 a.m. George and Martha return from one of her father's cocktail parties welcoming new faculty members. Both are quite drunk and Martha is in a surly mood. As usual, George has let her down (at the party) because he just sat around talking instead of being a sparkling centre of attention. When George desires to go to bed, she tells they

are expecting guests, a young couple her father has suggested they be particularly nice to. They are quarrelling and shouting obscenities when the guests Nick and Honey arrive.

The young couple are at a loss as to how to react in the super-charged atmosphere of their hosts but try to joke about hosts' rudeness. As Martha and Honey go to the bathroom, George warns his wife not to talk about a certain, unmentioned subject. George criticises Nick as a Biologist who wants to control human heredity and as an opportunist who by all means plans to move up in the academic rung. He depicts himself as a flop in his career for he is just a member of his History department and not its Head as desired by his wife Martha and her father, the President of the College.

When Martha and Honey return, Martha begins insulting George mercilessly and at the same time flirting with young and athletic Nick. George is furious with Martha because she has mentioned their son to Honey by flouting their secret agreement on that score. Everyone keeps drinking, and joins in the sport of mocking George, who responds to most sallies with jokes or obscure threats. He adds the information that their son is expected home the next day for his twenty-first birthday. Martha gets irritated and tells her guests that she married George because she thought he might rise up in his career by his push and drive and succeed her father as the next College President, but instead George turned to be a "great....big....fat flop !". Before George can retaliate, Honey rushes to the bathroom to vomit.

Martha goes out to make coffee for the girl. Nick is angered but attracted by the show his hosts are putting on. Embarrassed by his wife's sickness and marked silliness, he admits he married her because she made him believe that she was pregnant by him. Later he found that it was only a hysterical pregnancy. As such Nick and Honey have no children. He also confides with George that he married Honey for her money. George also shares confidences with Nick, telling him of a high-school friend of his who accidentally shot his mother and then later killed his father in a freak automobile accident. Nick then admits his ambition to gain power. George suggests that Nick can gain power in the college by screwing' the influential faculty-wives. Nick offers to start with Martha, the daughter of the College President. George wishes him god-speed.

With Honey recovering considerably, Martha returns to her verbal abuse of her husband George. She tells stories about George as an inept father, of his attempt to publish a novel stalled by her father. The plot of the novel is the same as the story George told about his friend to Nick. George becomes infuriated and rushes to strangle Martha. But Nick overpowers him and stops him.

George soon recovers his composure and announces that the game "Humiliate the Host" is over. He then suggests that they play the game "Hump the Hostess" next. As there was no response for that, he suggests that they play the game "Get the Guests:-". He then narrates the plot of his next novel. This is nothing but the story of Nick and Honey's marriage in all its details. Honey is furious because Nick has revealed their secret (to strangers), and they rush out of the room quarrelling. Martha and George decide that it is time for total war between them. When Nick returns, Martha sets about seducing him right in the presence of George who pretends utter indifference. After hurling a challenge at George, Martha proceeds after Nick to her bedroom to have sexual intercourse with him and thus humiliate George. George notices Honey uttering in a state of nightmarish hysteria that she does not want children for fear of birth pang. He now understands that Honey has been aborting her pregnancies. This suggests him, in a flash, a plan for his revenge on Martha.

In bed with Martha, Nick proves impotent. She taunts him, ordering him about like a houseboy, telling him that only her husband George has ever satisfied her both sexually and emotionally. George arrives from the College greenhouse carrying snapdragons³. At first he playfully flings the flowers at her and asks her to tell them about their son. As she recollects her maternal episodes, George quietly recites a Latin requiem⁴. He then solemnly announces that their son had died in a car-accident on his way home. Martha is enraged, insisting that George cannot unilaterally kill their son. Nick suddenly realizes that their son is imaginary.

George points out to the young couple, Nick and Honey that it is high time they leave for their home. Accordingly, the young couple leave. George tries to comfort his wife Martha in her profound grief saying that it is better for both to face the reality without any fear (of illusion). But Martha tells him now that she is really afraid of "Virginia Woolf" (a life without illusions).

3.6 Act wise Summary

Act I - Fun and Games

At two o'clock in the morning, George and Martha return from a faculty party at Martha's father's house. Martha seems drunk and George teases her about being loud and old. As George suggests a nightcap, however, Martha reveals that they are expecting company: the new man in the math department and his wife are coming over. Though George does not remember, Martha insists that George met them; she describes them as the good-looking blonde man and his mousy wife without any hips. George is not pleased that they are receiving company, but Martha's father requested that the two of them entertain this new couple, so Martha agreed. As George is moping, Martha reminds him of a joke that apparently occurred earlier in the evening. She sings, "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?" instead of "Who's afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?" George insists that he did not find the joke particularly amusing. Martha gets annoyed at George, but as they tease each other, she also asks him to kiss her, which he refuses. Martha asks for another drink.

The doorbell rings and neither George nor Martha wants to answer the door. Finally, George agrees to do it, but he warns Martha not to "start in on the bit about the kid." It is unclear, here, what he means, but Martha, understanding, does not agree to do what he asks. George insults Martha one more time, to which she replies, "SCREW YOU," just as George opens the door to reveal Nick and Honey. As the two come in, Nick tells Honey that they should not have come, which George insincerely denies. Nick comments on a modern art painting, and George makes fun of his efforts to understand it. George then pours the first of many drinks for Nick and Honey. George implies that Martha is an alcoholic. She, then, starts everyone singing "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and announces that her father had thrown a wonderful party. George begins to insult her father and declare that it is difficult to be married to the daughter of his boss. Martha, having heard enough, tells Honey that she wants to show her the house. George warns Martha again not to bring up the child.

When the women leave, George begins to grill Nick about why he came to the University. But, George does not really want to know about Nick. Instead, he is enjoying giving Nick a hard time, teasing him and interrupting him. Nick expresses that he would like to go home because George and Martha's meanness to each other

bothers him. George tells Nick that he is not going anywhere and tells him to get used to being personal with other faculty members. George asks about Nick's field, believing it to be math. But, Nick corrects him and tells George that he is a biologist, one concerned with chromosomes. George, who is in the history department, tells Nick that he thinks that the work being done on genes is terrible. He doesn't think that anyone should be able to genetically engineer other people. Nick protests that he is not exactly doing that, but George does not want to listen. In the middle of this, George also lets slip that Martha would like him to be the head of the history department, not merely a member of the history faculty. George says that he did run the history department during the war, but that the job was taken away from him when everyone returned.

George comments that Honey is slim-hipped and asks if they have any children. Nick says they do not. When Nick asks George the same question, George does not answer. George begins to call for Martha, but only Honey returns. Martha, she reports, is changing her dress. Honey also reveals that Martha told her that George and Martha have a son. George is very upset with Martha. And, when Nick and Honey talk about leaving, George tells them that they cannot. The fun has just begun.

Martha returns in a sexier dress. The conversation turns to praising Nick, who is something of a young genius and an athlete. Martha insults George for being stuck, unsuccessfully, in the history department; she praises Nick's body, among other things. Martha tells a story about when she and George were learning to box (at her father's request), and she accidentally knocked him flat on his back. As she tells the story, George comes up behind her head with a gun, which no one knows is fake until it goes off, shooting out a parasol rather than a bullet. Honey gets very scared. Everyone gets another drink.

George begins insulting the field of genetic biology again, but Martha defends it. George says he does not want to give up quirky things in life for a perfect race of humans. Honey, now very drunk, asks when George and Martha's son is coming home. The couple acts strangely, and does not answer. They fight with each other, partly about the color of their son's eyes. George says that Martha's father's eyes are red because he is a little mouse. Martha claims that George hates her father because of George's own insecurities. George leaves the room, and Martha tells the story about how they met and were married.

Martha's mother died young, she says, and Martha was raised by her father. She enjoyed being important at the University and decided, after a wild youth, that she wanted to marry someone at the college and continue the family tradition there. She met George and fell for him when he was new, even though he was much younger than she. But, she continues, he let her down because he was not good enough to take over running the University. As Martha talks about what a "flop" he is, George breaks a bottle against a wall. Then, to cover up her insults, he sings "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?" at the top of his lungs. Nick and Honey join in the singing. When they all finish, Honey announces that she is about to vomit and runs to the bathroom.

Commentary

From the very beginning, George and Martha are a surprising and disturbing couple. They explode all fantasies about the bliss of marital life. Not only are they cruel to each other, but they cannot even be civil around their company. Through their horrifying behavior, Edward Albee seems to indicate that love can quickly transform into hatred. In addition, since George and Martha connect to each other best when trading insults, he also reveals that a marriage can fall into being a series of games that the couple plays with each other.

This play also toys with the idea of privacy in marriage. In this theme, the audience is crucial. After all, not only is Albee opening up George and Martha's marriage to Nick and Honey, but he is revealing their mode of interaction to an entire audience of theater-goers. After a long stretch of time where families were pictured as perfect and happy (think about the 1950s television shows *Leave it to Beaver*, *Lassie*, and *I Love Lucy*), George and Martha were especially shocking. In the simple fact that George and Martha share the name of America's founding and most famous couple, George and Martha Washington, Albee also implicitly extends his portrayal of this one faulty marriage to all of America. The illusions and tensions under which they hide and snipe at each other are paradigmatic of a larger phenomenon in the nation itself.

Part of the reason that George and Martha relate to each other by trading insults is that they are afraid to communicate in a sincere way. It is easier to be mean and hide their true feelings. Therefore, as they drink heavily, the alcohol becomes a symbol of their desire to mask their true emotions from each other and themselves. At the same time, George does not want to be so phony. He attacks Nick's profession

and genetic engineering because he is afraid of artificially changing the way that people are supposed to turn out.

Of course, one could read his distaste for genetic engineering as a result of his own career path. In the 1950s and early 1960s, many social scientists argued that the professional competitiveness that men felt was very destructive. Albee seems to be picking up on this idea. George clearly feels like a bit of a failure, having lost the position of head of the history department. George felt people pushing him to be a success but did not want to involve himself in such a rat race. Therefore, the genetic engineering scares George because it seems like the ultimate form of personal competition. He hates the way that people only want to succeed now, and genetic engineering just seems to be the next step.

The meaning of the title, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, becomes clearer as the play progresses, but so far we know that it comes from a joke at a cocktail party. The song usually goes, "Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?" Virginia Woolf was an English writer during the first half of the twentieth century. She wrote in the style of stream-of-consciousness, which tried to mimic the thought patterns of her characters. One might be afraid of Virginia Woolf because she tries to understand the intricacies of the human mind and heart. She is so honest that she might frighten characters like George and Martha, who hide behind their insults. At the same time, her writing is also very complex and intellectual. Therefore, one might be afraid of not understanding her. In the competitive world of a University, no one would want to admit to being afraid to read something by her. The title, then, could also refer to the competition that George feels at his job, and the need that all people within that academic environment have to puff up their own intelligence.

Much of this first section simply sets up the climax of the play. All of the discussion of George and Martha's child, then, is foreshadowing for the revelation at the end of the play.

Martha's desperation can be seen as a feminist statement by Edward Albee. As she tells her own history, the audience realizes that she never considered taking over the University herself. Instead, she felt that she had to marry someone to do it for her. Therefore, her only power comes from her father. She seems to try to gain power through sexuality, though. As Martha puts on a sexy dress, flirts with Nick, and reveals secrets from her sexual past, she is attempting to gain some authority. She

insists, through this behavior, that she made her own decision and that she can control men. But, her attempts to show this power are somewhat sad because she is ultimately disappointed with her life. She does not have much power, because her fate is so tied up in the men around her.

As Martha and George fight about their son's eye color, they hint at the fact that the audience learns later--they made him up. The significance of this fight beyond their usual bickering is that they are trying to claim ownership for this fantasy. Whereas a real child might bring parents together, the dream of one that they created is tearing them apart. They each want to be closer to this dream, to make it more theirs. Instead of joining together through their pain, they fight each other.

In the meantime, Honey and Nick are not completely innocent. Nick, with his many degrees and boxing prowess, is an image of youthful pride. Nick can be seen as a younger version of George. Although George no longer has Nick's ambition or youthful energy, George began his time at the University with similar hopes (as Nick mentioned earlier in the act). As Nick and Honey watch this disenchanted, cynical, seemingly hopeless couple fight each other, they seem to recognize the potential for the same in their own lives. This realization might be symbolized by Honey's need to vomit.

3.6.1 Check your progress II

1. Answer the following question in a word, a phrase or a sentence each :

- a) How many Pulitzer prizes did Edward Albee receive for his play ?
- b) What was the age of Edward Albee when he wrote his first play *The Zoo Story* ?
- c) Which literary figures advised Edward Albee on writing ?
- d) When did George and Martha return from a faculty party ?
- e) Where did the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* set ?
- f) Who are the guests in the play ?
- g) Name the department in which George used to work ?
- h) Who is the wife of Nick in the play ?
- i) What is the title of the first act of the play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

j) Who is the husband of Martha in the play ?

2. Say whether the following statements are True or False :

- a) Edward Albee is the French Playwright .
- b) Edward Albee is one of the prominent playwright of the Theatre of Absurd .
- c) Edward Albee is an adoptive child of Reed Albee and Frances Albee.
- d) Martha sings “ Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Woolf ? ” in the play.
- e) Nick comments on modern art painting.
- f) Honey and Nick are the hosts in the play.

Act II - Walpurgisnacht

Nick returns to the stage, where George is sitting. Honey has been sick but is feeling better, and Martha is offstage, making coffee. George comments that he and Martha were needling each other. Nick appears to have been uncomfortable with it. His self-righteousness makes George angry, and the two nearly get into a fight. But, George asks whether Honey gets sick a lot. Nick, somewhat out-of-the-blue, says that he married her because she was pregnant. But, then, it turned out to be a false alarm. Serving Nick bourbon reminds George of a story from his prep school days. He and some friends from school went to a bar. One of the boys with them, a boy who had accidentally shot his mother, ordered "bergin and water," which all of the gangsters in the bar thought was hysterical. All of their drinks were free that night. Nick asks what happened to that boy. George tells him that the next summer the boy was driving and swerved to miss a porcupine. In doing so, he crashed the car, killing his father. When the boy woke up in the hospital and learned what he did, he went crazy. He was sent to an asylum and never spoke again.

The men discuss Honey's pregnancy, Martha's lack of pregnancies, and that Nick is getting a little "testy." George tells Nick that their son is a "bean bag." Nick doesn't understand. Martha returns to insult George but leaves again. George says that he is trying to clean up the mess of his life. Nick tries to distance himself from George's life and future. Nick says that there was more to his marriage than just the pregnancy. George guesses that she also had money, which Nick confirms reluctantly. Nick and Honey knew each other as small children. Her father had

money from being a preacher--a professional man of the Lord. George says that Martha has money because her father steals from the school and because her father's second wife was also very rich.

George tells Nick that he wants to know a lot about him because he sees him as a direct threat to his position. Nick is, as George puts it, an "inevitability." Young men like Nick--blond, athletic, good-looking--will take over, George predicts. They will be powerful, and they will sleep with all of the women on campus. Nick says that Martha is one of the most powerful women as the daughter of the president of the University. The conversation becomes heated. George laments the fact that after trying to create a noble civilization out of mankind, inevitably all of the structures will crumble in the hands of others.

Martha and Honey return. Honey says that she often throws up. Martha says that her son also often threw up because of George. George responds that the boy ran away because of Martha. Everyone gets more drinks. Martha asks whether George has told Nick his side of the story. Nick says no. George tells Martha that he has to find a new way to fight her. Honey decides that she wants to dance. They put on music, but only Martha and Nick dance. They dance together in a sexual manner. Honey and George watch them, George commenting about this being a very old ritual. To George's protests, Martha tells Honey and Nick about the novel that George tried to publish. It was about a boy who killed his parents and then told everyone that it was an accident. Martha's father would not let someone at his university publish such trash. George tried to convince him to let the publishing go through by telling him that it was a true story, about himself.

George gets so mad that he attacks Martha. Nick tries to defend her, and they all struggle on the floor as Honey watches, chanting "Violence, violence!" The scuffle ends, and George announces that it's time for a new game. He considers "Hump the Hostess" and ends up with "Get the Guests." George says that his second novel is about a young couple coming to a new university. In other words, he tells the story of Nick and Honey's life, insulting everything. He says that her father took advantage of women while preaching. He calls Honey a mouse. He talks about how she drinks too much and throws up. He even recounts how they got married: she got fat with pregnancy, but then deflated. It takes Honey a while to figure out that he is talking about her, but when she does she becomes very angry with Nick for revealing their secrets. She runs offstage to throw up.

Nick is very upset and leaves to help his wife. Martha sarcastically compliments George on how brutal that game had been. She says that he is going too far, but he responds that she constantly goes after him like that. He warns her that she has been going too far herself, and that he is really going to get at her soon. He feels numbed by their fantasy life and how she reveals their life to the world. Martha says that the problem is that their life has snapped. She used to try but she won't anymore. They agree that they will wage "total war" on each other.

Nick returns to say that Honey is all right and is lying on the tiles in the bathroom. George goes to get ice, and Martha starts trying to seduce Nick. He gives in. George walks in on them kissing and touching each other. He turns around, though, and re-enters singing "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?" He fixes drinks and sits in a chair where he cannot see Martha and Nick on the sofa. Martha and Nick start kissing again and hit chimes, making bells sound. George tells them to get back to their "necking." Martha becomes angry when she realizes that he feels in control of the situation. He tells Nick that he can have Martha. Nick and Martha go into the kitchen to continue. Honey arrives in the living room and asks what the bells were. She is still dreaming, though, and sleep-talks a little. She says that she does not want children and is afraid. George asks, cruelly, how she gets rid of them. Honey is upset and asks for her husband and a drink. Again she asks what the bells were. George, improvising this plan as he talks to her, tells her that someone arrived to tell him that his son had died. As the act ends, he is laughing and crying, looking forward to telling Martha about this development.

Commentary

This act is titled "Walpurgisnacht." This German word refers to the night before May Day (the first day of May) when witches are supposed to meet together and create havoc. Anything called a "Walpurgisnacht" is supposed to have a nightmarish quality. This term relates to the second act of Albee's play because the games among the guests escalate to a frightening level. In addition, since "Walpurgisnacht" is a pagan myth, Albee uses it to show the breakdown of modern civilization. Conservative, modern ideas, like church and family, are all collapsing in this act.

The theme of parents and children also emerges very strongly here. George recalls his young friend going crazy from the guilt of accidentally killing his parents. This story shows George's distress at the amount of power parents have over their

children and how much the lives of parents affect their children. This is an extreme example, but the pattern is echoed in Martha and Honey, whose fathers' wealth and prestige led, in great part, to their marriages. Nick and George seem to regret the amount of power these men have (or had) over them. But, as George's tone in the story indicates, he is resigned to the overwhelming nature of this power.

Nick's story about Honey also reveals how sexuality can create power for women. When Honey appeared pregnant, Nick married her. And, both George and Nick recognize that part of having power at the University is sleeping with the women that are a part of the community. Therefore, Martha is not alone in thinking that much of her power could come from seduction.

Much of this conversation becomes a triumph for George. He is afraid of Nick, after all, because he fears that Nick's field, genetic engineering, signals the future of the University (and the country). But, as George peels layers away from Nick's golden-boy veneer, he reveals a great number of faults and fears. Nick the unblemished, blonde, athletic, good-looking man whose very life is dedicated to eradicating the imperfections in human genes, is himself revealed as flawed. Similarly, the appearance of a perfect marriage between Nick and Honey is shattered by Nick's admission that they got married because she was pregnant. After he tells George that secret, George and Martha's relationship seems partially more healthy than Nick and Honey's. At least their tensions are out in the open.

The war between Martha and George is heating up. She insults him more and more personally, honing in on his work and its connection to his personal life. Plus, the fact that he could not publish his book without her father's approval reveals his reliance on her and her family for his life and livelihood.

George goes after the guests in a forced removal of their last shred of dignity. As he and Martha take each other down, he does not want to let them get away without some humiliation. This can be seen as a complex point by Albee. He seems to be pointing out that one of the major problems in his society is that people measure themselves against one another. All competition results from comparison. George seems to understand this problem and tries to rise above competition. But, as he is being humiliated, he becomes competitive about how desperate and low he is. His attack on Nick and Honey is ironic, then, because he is simply engaging in another kind of competition, similar to the one he disparages.

As the perfect image of Nick and Honey crumbles, the final idealization of marriage and family also collapses. Albee reveals that even this, the seemingly perfect marriage, has serious problems. Honey is afraid of having children, so they cannot have a family. And, it is unclear whether they love each other at all. Nick, the perfect model of a new faculty member, is rather easily seduced by Martha.

3.6.1 Check your progress III

1. Answer the following question in a word, a phrase or a sentence each :

- a) Why does Martha insult her husband ?
- b) According to Martha why does George hate her father ?
- c) Why did Nick marry with Honey ?
- d) Who is the young, athletic and good looking character in the play ?
- e) Who is the daughter of the President of the University in the play ?

2. Say whether the following statements are True or False :

- a) George insults the field of Genetic Biology.
- b) George and Martha fight each other partly about the colour of their son's hair.
- c) The word 'Walpurgisnacht' is derived from Latin word.
- d) Honey is afraid of having children.
- e) Martha seduces Nick.

Act III - The Exorcism

Martha enters, by herself. She talks in baby-talk to herself and plays with the ice in her glass. Nick comes in. Their conversation reveals that he failed to follow through in their romantic encounter because he could not maintain an erection. Martha says that it is frustrating to be ready for sex all the time and to have all of her men fail to follow through. She begins to talk about George and is nice, for once. She says that she loved him and that their relationship now is sad. She thinks that he has had his back broken by her and by the forces around them. The doorbell rings. It is George, with flowers--snapdragons. George and Martha begin calling Nick the houseboy. George begins telling stories about being in Majorca and watching the

moon go down and come back up again. These are lies, but Martha is enjoying this conversation. When Nick speaks, Martha and George team up against him.

George announces that they are going to play one more game: "bringing up baby." Everyone comes back onstage. Honey has been lying in the bathroom, peeling the label off of a bottle. She is very drunk and incoherent. George begins talking about their child. He and Martha recall in detail his birth and childhood. As Martha keeps talking, George begins to recite a prayer in Latin. He soon riles her up by talking about how the boy actually hated her. Finally, as the tension mounts, he announces that someone has come by to tell them that their son died in a car accident, when he swerved to miss a porcupine. Martha becomes livid, telling him that he does not get to decide these things. Finally, Nick catches on that their son is an invention. George tells Martha that he killed the son because she mentioned him to someone else, which was against their rules.

Finally, Nick and Honey can go home. When they do, George and Martha have some tense, mundane conversation. George tells her that it will be better this way. He sings "Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?" one last time, and Martha responds, "I am."

Commentary

The climax of the play reveals the extent to which invention is featured in the story. Their son is made up, as is, perhaps, the story from George's childhood about his friend who accidentally killed his parents. The idea behind the "Exorcism" (the title of the final act) is that the characters are getting rid of the illusions. To "exorcise" means to rid one's body of evil spirits. Therefore, in terms of the play, no more will George and Martha exist in a land of fantasy and make-believe. Still, Martha fears the amount of reality involved in this life. She is afraid of Virginia Woolf, who tried to expose reality and the sincerity of emotion.

This exorcism occurs in front of Honey and Nick, who are not sure what to make of it. Most of their masks have come down as well, but they remain somewhat naïve. After all, Honey comes out of the bathroom where she was tearing the label off of a bottle of alcohol. While the peeling of the label is symbolic of her desire to reveal the truth beyond the surface, she remains attached to alcohol, another symbol of removal and hidden emotions. Nick and Honey might not be ready to tear down their illusions yet. In part, perhaps subconsciously, or perhaps incidentally, George and Martha seem to be both warnings and guides to Nick and Honey. Though Nick

and Honey hold the potential of becoming another George and Martha, perhaps in seeing the example of George and Martha they might be able to avoid that fate.

George's prayer chant is a Latin requiem for the dead or dying. As he chants, he marks the passing of his and Martha's fictional son. At the same time, he also imposes a Catholic order on the night that had thus far been pagan and ritualistic. "Walpurgisnacht" is a term for a pagan event. "Exorcism," too, is often connected to pagan traditions rather than those of an established church. The evening of the play, therefore, has passed as a whirling, chaotic, pagan experience. George's prayer, then, exorcises not only the phoniness of his and Martha's child but also the chaos of the night.

3.6.1 Check your progress IV

1. Answer the following question in a word, a phrase or a sentence each :

- a) What is the title of third act of the *play Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*?
- b) What is the idea of exorcism in the play?
- c) Why does Martha afraid of Virginia Woolf?
- d) Whom does George pray for?

2. Say whether the following statements are True or False :

- a) George's prayer chant is a Greek requiem for the dead?
- b) George and Martha have a fictional son.
- c) The title of the third act is Fun and Game.
- d) Martha is disappointed in George's professional failures perhaps more than he is.
- e) Both couples in the play are deeply influenced by wife's father.
- f) None of the characters in the play is ready to have children.

3.7 Major / Minor Characters in the Play :

George :

Forty-six years old and an acknowledged failure. George is in the history department, though much to Martha's chagrin, he is not the head of the history department. As a teenage boy he may have accidentally shot his mother and

accidentally killed his father in a car crash. Or this may be just a fiction he has created. George's professional high-point came during the war when he was left in charge of the department while the other faculty members were serving in the military. Since then, he has written an autobiographical novel, the publication of which was forbidden by Martha's father. Always in the shadow of his father-in-law, whom he calls a great white mouse with red eyes, George plays along with Martha's games. When alone with her, he ignores her as much as possible. But when she launches into a game of Humiliate the Host, exposing his most painful secrets to Nick and Honey, George decides to strike back. Unable to control his wife, George usually retreats into his history books. He makes the biggest power play of his life here, "killing" the imaginary son he shares with Martha, thus punishing her for bringing their illusion into the harsh light of reality.

Martha :

The fifty-two-year-old wife of a college history professor. Martha defines herself through her "Daddy," the president of the college in the New England town of New Carthage. In her past, after her mother died when Martha was a child, she attended a convent school and young ladies' junior college, where she fell in love with a blue collar gardener and married him on a whim. Her shocked, upstanding father quickly annulled the marriage though it was consummated and brought her home, where she reveled in the power of playing hostess for her widowed father. She chose George, believing he had potential to become the head of the history department and eventually to replace her father as president of the university. George's failure to rise to this position is her biggest disappointment, and she refuses to let her husband see just how much of a disappointment he is to her. Now 52, Martha is a braying, heavy-drinking embarrassment, who seduces new faculty member Nick just to anger George and has no qualms about airing her dirty laundry in front of guests. Martha's decision to share the story of their imaginary son with the guests breaks the unspoken rules of the emotionally cruel games she plays with George and leads to chaos.

Nick :

Nick is thirty years old and blond, a young genius who received his Master's degree at twenty. He grew up in the Midwest with his wife Honey, whom he knew since childhood. Though he initially appears to love his wife, it becomes evident that

he married her for her money and because she was pregnant with what turned out to be a hysterical pregnancy. An ambitious new member of the college's biology department, Nick is the golden-haired boy who just might succeed where George failed taking every opportunity offered to him to get ahead, including sex with faculty wives. At first, he acts horrified by George and Martha's antics but soon becomes drawn in. He attempts to sleep with Martha and is proved impotent.

Honey :

Nick's twenty-six-year-old wife. She's frail and "slim-hipped." Honey is rich, left money by her late evangelist father. She drowns her sorrows in brandy, getting silly and childlike. She suffered a hysterical pregnancy, which led Nick to marry her. While drunk, she confesses to George her fear of the pain of childbirth and of getting pregnant which she is, unbeknownst to Nick, preventing secretly. Drunk and throwing up in the bathroom for most of the play, Honey is the most innocent of all the characters. Her immediate reactions to the chaos around her function as a sort of Greek chorus on George and Martha's marriage.

3.8 Critical Aspects of the Play :

The play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* has been deservedly praised for its brilliance, wit and dramatic intensity. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* deals with a seemingly inconsequential situation. In fact, we can say that the play presents no situation, but creates itself from line to line and from scene to scene. Edward Albee exhibits a remarkable skill in the manipulation of dialogue, character and scene, and observes strictly, the dramatic unities of time and place. The play presents a single setting and introduces four characters i.e. George, Martha, Nick and Honey. In the course of three hours these characters are presented on the stage in all possible combinations. Even though Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* would not be strictly classified as belonging to the movement known as "The Theater of the Absurd," there are, however, a great many elements of this play which are closely aligned with or which grew out of the dramas which are classified as being a part of "The Theater of the Absurd."

Failure, Vacuity, Sterility and Horror :

These four characters, especially Martha and George are intensively alive and strikingly human in spite of their vulgarity, coarseness, cruelty and violence. The

play grippingly depicts the desperation and anguish of a life of failure, vacuity, separateness, self-indictment, torture and violence. However, Martha and George are also emotionally dependent on each other, and are bound, not only by hatred, but also by the violence of their devastating wit. During a drinking orgy in the early hours of the morning, the characters tear each other's mask and also strip themselves naked, morally and spiritually. And what we see is the horror of vacuity, sterility and insecurity under the smooth facade of professional social existence.

The Structure of the Play :

The debate about history and science is well knit in the texture of the play and lends it substance. However, the play cannot be or should not be taken as a realistic representation of the campus life in an American university. The play is not conceived in realistic terms, and the characters are too acutely individual and unbelievably cruel to represent a particular social group. However, their heightened existence helps us gain a glimpse into certain aspects of human condition. And as such they also possess a certain universality of reference.

The Significance of the Games:

Much has been made of the games that people play in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*? It is said that they are "seriously playful imitation of the games that people play in the social life, to keep themselves alive" (Walter Allen) And clearly this was Albee's intention too, since he entitles the first act as Fun and Games. But for once the drama is more authentic and alive than its author's intentions. The play registers an almost morbid indulgence in self-mockery, regret, remorse, anguish and discomfort. Its action is a constant stripping of the masks, rather than the playing of the pleasant social games.

This play too, like Albee's earlier work weakens towards the end. i.e., after the murder of the imaginary child. The last act is called "Exorcism" which suggests that this loss marks a spiritual renaissance for George and Martha. This, is it has been often felt, even by appreciative critics, is somewhat of an anticlimax and unconvincing. The couple's childlessness is an insufficient and arbitrary explanation of their plight and situation. The willful murder of the imaginary child may be the only natural culmination of the couple's way of life and their spiritual vacuum. But, it is hard to believe that it is the starting point of a new, and a better way of life.

Illusion and Reality :

Edward Albee has said that the song, "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" means "Who is afraid to live without illusion?" At the end of the play, Martha says that she is. Indeed, the illusion of their son sustains George and Martha's tempestuous marriage. The theme of illusion and reality is one of the recurring themes in modern and contemporary drama. In *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Albee seems to be playing an interesting variation on this theme. But in the last analysis there is an ambiguity in Albee's attitude. What exactly is the incident of the willful murder of the imaginary child supposed to stand for? The son is illusory and so his murder is supposed to stand for the death of illusion. But what exactly is the illusion in the life of George and Martha? Is it the illusion of Success? But both are bitten by their sense of failure and mediocrity. Is it then the illusion of having given birth? But the child is only symbolic and is created by them in an open eyed playful manner. Then are we to suppose that it is the illusion of creativity that they live by? There too the answer has to be in the negative, as the couple's life seems to have become unbearable by their sense of its intellectual and spiritual barrenness. It is true that George has a nostalgia for the lost cause and accuses Nick of the barrenness of his ideal of success and scientific perfectibility which is bound to deprive the world of the glorious variety and unpredictability of history, but he has no illusions about his ability to improve the situation. Martha constantly humiliates George for being a social failure, and he himself is painfully conscious of his mediocrity, the impotence of his ideas and the futility of his aspirations.

Martha whose disgusting and rather pathetic pride in her father and an intense resentment at the social and professional failure of George reveals an emotional and spiritual dependency, seems to have no illusions about her ability to create meaning in her existence independently. Moreover, the drama does not present a life enveloped in the old solace of imaginary security and comforting illusions. Martha and George are rather rudderless, directionless voyagers on a sea of intense anguish and self-torture. This anguish is the natural consequence of their self-rejection and the awareness of futility of their lives. They live by their sheer energy of their violent wit but are unable to create effective meaning in their existence and relationship.

The Duel between the Sexes :

The play has been praised as the effective projection of the duel between the sexes since Strindberg's *The Father* and *The Dance of Death*. It also recaptures some strains of another contemporary play *Amadee* by Eugene Ionesco. In *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, Albee picks up two motifs from another Ionesco play, *The Chairs*. In *The Chairs*, the Old Woman nurses an illusion of having given birth to a son, who left them as the parents failed to come up to his expectations of kindness and goodness. Likewise, the Old Man is bitten by remorse since he believes that he left his mother to die in the ditch. These stories are mentioned but once by the couple, but they are woven into the general pattern of remorse, failure, guilt, vacuity and illusion. Albee uses the illusory child as the central symbol of the play, and the Old Man's story might have given him the idea for George's unpublished novel in which a young boy who has killed his parents is confined to the lunatic asylum, and which Martha cruelly suggests is an autobiographical piece — a fictional projection of George's deep seated sense of guilt. These echoes, however, are probably quite unconscious and Albee's use of these motifs is imaginative and quite his own.

A Play of Different Symbolic Levels :

On the level of the sordid revelation of lives on stage, the play is an absorbing drama of sex and violence. Audiences are repelled or shocked or full of admiration as they see themselves, or those they know, unsurprisingly portrayed. Empathy and insight, as spectator's requirements, are fully satisfied, but the play goes beyond this and reaches out to different symbolic levels. Herein lies the crux of the vitriolic, debates the play has generated, for the symbolism requires judgment and analysis and is therefore subject to personal preference. Most interpretations are plausible and demonstrable, but also can be easily rejected on the ground that too much is being read into the play. Many prefer to see the play as an insight into domestic butchery. Were this its chief achievement, it would have exhausted its potential quickly. The symbolic references are what make any play continuously intriguing. Through the poet's metaphor, they search beyond the immediate to the general condition of man. Ibsen's white horses are richly suggestive of human relations beyond specified boundaries. Albee has his mythical child and his fun of games.

Crusade on the Myth of American Happy Family :

Albee carries on his crusade on the myth of American happy family, and his portrayal of female dictatorship at home in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf ?* is the finest theatre he has offered so far. The childless family consists of husband and wife : George, an unsuccessful professor of history, 46, finds his attractive and boisterous wife. Martha, 52, too overbearing. Their barren life discovers mutual attraction only when they hurt and humiliate each other ruthlessly, and the late night party, the setting for this play, in which two guests—Nick and his silly wife Honey have been invited, is the occasion for mutual excoriation. The intensity of hatred, of savagely ironic scorn, of enjoyment at each other's humiliation is communicated through an extraordinary resilience and range of language. They consume prodigious quantity of liquor, and their "fun and games" begin to take the shape of cruel aggression. "Humiliate the Host", "Get the Guests", "Hump the Hostess", "Bringing up Baby" : in the course of which Martha, to humiliate George, makes a feeble attempt at seducing Nick. George takes revenge on Martha by killing their child (the fictitious child who never existed), a source of consolation for childless Martha. Martha at the end is frightened and submissive.

Love and Hate :

In his portrayal of George and Martha's marriage, Albee seems to make the not-uncommon literary assertion that love and hate are two parts of a single whole. From their vitriolic banter, it clearly appears that George and Martha hate each other. In fact, they say as much and even pledge to destroy each other. Nonetheless, there are moments of tenderness that contradict this hatred. George even tells Nick not to necessarily believe what he sees. Some of George and Martha's arguments are for show, others are for the challenge of arguing, while still others are indeed meant to hurt each other. However, Martha's declaration that George is really the only one who can satisfy her suggests that there are or have been positive aspects to their marriage. Clearly, as much as they fight, they also need each other, even if just to maintain the illusions that keep them going.

Exploration of the Myth of the American Dream :

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf ? may well be considered as an exploration of the myth of the American dream. The fantasy of the unborn son, cleverly built into the fabric of the action, is the very heart of the play, although the visible drama of

action centres on George and Martha flying the hide off each other. The play impresses us as an exquisite piece illustrating the significant place of illusion in modern American life. It is a work in which Albee attempts to touch the heart of American culture, the culture that manufactures fantasies and dreams as well as motor cars and Hollywood films. The personal failures of the characters represent the failure of a culture, and the unborn son is symbolic of the American dream of fulfillment and happiness. The metaphor certainly reaches beyond the immediate to the American scene in general, and Albee here more successfully communicates the ethos of artificiality and sterility which it had been his particular care to present in *The American Dream*. The technical dexterity of organising Incidents into close-knit fabric of emotion and action is superb, and here is some of the best urban nervous dialogue to be written in the American Theatre. No wonder that the play has proved an immensely popular one in England and the United States.

Albee is prodigiously shrewd and skillful. His dialogue is superbly virile and pliant; is also sound. It is not "realistic" dialogue but a highly literate and full-boiled distillation of common American speech. Still better, Albee knows how to keep his audience almost continuously interested (despite the play's inordinate length). He can also ring changes on his theme, so that the play rarely seems static. Albee is a master craftsman. Altogether, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is a full-blooded play of unique power and a memorable theatrical experience.

3.9 Terms to Remember :

Absurd - wildly unreasonable, illogical

Mousy – like a mouse

Explode – of a violent emotion or a situation

Bliss – perfect happiness, great joy

Paradigmatic – serving as a typical example of something

Intricacies – the quality of being intricate

Stream of consciousness - a person's thoughts and conscious reaction to events, perceived as a continuous flow

Mimic – imitate

disenchanted - disappointed by someone or something

cynical – concerned only with one's own interests and typically disregarding accepted standards in order to achieve them

Hysterical – affected by or deriving from wildly uncontrolled emotion

Swerved – change or cause to change direction abruptly

Porcupine – a large rodent with defensive spines or quills on the body and tail

Crumble – break or fall apart into small fragments

Deflated – having suddenly lost confidence

Humiliation – make someone feel ashamed and foolish by injuring dignity and pride

Disparages - regard or represent as being of little worth

Riles - to make someone annoyed or irritated

3.10 Answers to check your progress

Answers to check your progress I :

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) Camus’ *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 clichéd language used in an English primer.
 - h) The theme of Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* is just waiting.
 - i) Pinters Absurd drama has elements of mystery and menace.
2.
 - a) Albert Camus is considered to be the philosopher of the Absurd on account of this 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.

- b) The Theatre of Absurd is called the anti literature movement because it flouts all the conventions of literary forms. The Absurd Drama shows main engaged in meaningless activity. It does not make any rational statement. It has no logical division of a play into acts and 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 clichéd language in the English primar. His play The Lesson also show how communication is impossible. The plays The Chairs, The Future is in Eggs etc also illustrate the theme of incommunicability.

Answers to check your progress II :

- 1.
 - a) Three
 - b) Thirty
 - c) W. H. Auden and Thomton Wilder
 - d) at 2 a.m.
 - e) on the campus of a small New England University
 - f) Honey and Nick
 - g) History
 - h) Honey
 - i) Fun and Games
 - j) George
- 2.
 - a) False
 - b) True
 - c) True
 - d) False
 - e) True
 - f) False

Answers to check your progress III :

1.
 - a) For being stuck, unsuccessful in the history department.
 - b) Because of George's own insecurities
 - c) Because she was pregnant
 - d) Nick
 - e) Martha
2.
 - a) True
 - b) False
 - c) False
 - d) True
 - e) True

Answers to check your progress IV :

1.
 - a) The Exorcism
 - b) The characters are getting the rid of the illusions.
 - c) Virginia Woolf tries to expose reality and sincerity and emotion.
 - d) For the dead
2.
 - a) False
 - b) True
 - c) False
 - d) True
 - e) True
 - f) True

3.11 Exercises :

1) Answer the following questions :

- a) Explain the significance of the title *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf ?* by Edward Albee.
- b) Write an essay on the plot construction of the play *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf ?* by Edward Albee.
- c) Discuss the importance of the game in *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf ?* by Edward Albee.

- d) What are the major themes of the play *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf ?* by Edward Albee.
- e) Examine the symbolism in *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf ?* by Edward Albee.

2) Write short notes on the following.

- a) The Theatre of Absurd in England.
- b) Character sketch of George
- c) Character sketch of Martha
- d) The structure of the play *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf ?* by Edward Albee.
- e) Nick
- f) Honey

3.12 References for further study :

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Unit-4

General Topic: Modern Indian Drama

Text: Manjula Padmanabhan's *Lights Out* (1986)

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4.0 Objectives

The present unit will cover two topics from syllabus – the general topic ‘Modern Indian Drama’ and the prescribed play *Lights Out* by Manjula Padmanabhan, an Indian woman playwright writing in English.

After studying this unit, you will be able to understand:

1. The intricacies involved in the terms ‘modern’ and ‘Indian’ in Modern Indian drama
2. The development of Modern Indian Drama
3. Important features of Modern Indian Drama
4. Important Modern Indian Dramatists and Directors
5. Status of Indian Drama in English
6. Contribution of Indian Women playwrights
7. Manjula Padmanabhan’s oeuvre
8. The plot, setting and characters of the play *Lights Out* by Manjula Padmanabhan
9. Interpretations the play from the perspective of feminism, theatre of cruelty, subaltern studies, etc.

4.1 Introduction

Indian drama has a long and almost unbroken history of over two thousand years. These years are generally classified into three distinct phases:

1. The ancient or the so-called ‘classical’ period of Sanskrit theatre (200 BCE to 1000 CE) of play-wrights like Bhasa, Kalidasa, Shudraka, Vishakhadatta, Bhavabhuti and Harsha. This phase was in fact not composed solely of Sanskrit plays;
2. The medieval period or the traditional theatre (1000 CE to 1857 CE) in which regional literatures and folk and ritualistic theatres flourished;
3. The phase often called ‘modern Indian drama’ (1857 CE to the present) which developed from the colonial period. Some scholars are of the opinion that this phase begins with 1800 and some others think 1850 is the beginning.

You have already studied the first phase in some detail in the last semester. In this unit we are going to look at the third phase which extends roughly from the mid 18th century to the present. In the next section we shall study some of the major developments in Indian modern drama and in the second section we shall study the prescribed play *Lights Out* by Manjula Padmanabhan.

4.2 Modern Indian Drama:

4.2.1 ‘Indian’ in Modern Indian Drama:

Indian Drama is not a monolithic construct but comprises dramas in different Indian languages – Bengali theatre, Marathi theatre, Gujarati theatre, Tamil theatre, Hindi theatre and so on. And hence, it is a very vast field to cover in a single unit. Each of these theatres has its distinct characteristics, distinct trajectories, and so on. Yet, there is of course a common thread that connects all together. Indian Drama is marked by plurality and some scholars see this plurality as a cluster of numerous regional language theatres. However, there are others like G. P. Deshpande who are not happy with this perspective. In his book *Modern Indian Drama*, Deshpande says that we shouldn’t use the term “regional” literatures (or theatres) for these different modes as each mode is uniquely Indian. And so he says, “there is no regional theatre in India. There are several, equally valid and legitimate Indian theatres” (Deshpande, 1999, p. 95).

4.2.2 ‘Modern’ in Modern Indian Drama:

There are some major problems when we try to explain the word ‘modern’ in the context of Indian drama. To start with, there is the issue of ascertaining the beginning of the ‘modern’ period. For a few it is the advent of freedom from colonial

rule and for many others, it is arrival of the British that really brought modernity to India. Then there is the problem that modernity didn't reach different regions, languages and literatures at the same time. And the third is that 'modernity' took different forms in different literatures. We must also remember that defining the modern period has also been found extremely problematic in the case of Western literatures and so Indian case is not unique in that sense. However, given the plurality in Indian literature, culture and history, designating a modern period and describing the features of the period doesn't remain a simple task.

Ananda Lal says,

"Many people, even cognoscenti, use 'modern' very loosely to refer to post-Independence developments, often unaware that those very aspects that they associate with modernity had all appeared previously at different times during the course of the colonial period in India." (P. 31)

It would be more correct to say that modernism reached India with the colonial rule and brought about many sweeping changes from then on and this continued until 1947 or up to sometime later.

Another problem is that modernism didn't reach all Indian theatres at the same time. Ananda Lal points out that in some Indian theatres like Kashmiri, Dogri, Konkani, Rajasthani, etc, it reached as late as the mid-twentieth century. He further says, "Let us not forget the reality that in many traditional forms, modernism had much of an influence, so that premodern and postmodern Indian theatre anachronistically coexist today" (Lal, p. 32).

Yet another problem is pointed out by G. P. Deshpande when he says, "India's tryst with modernity takes different (necessarily comparable) forms in different languages." And so, modernity means different things in different Indian theatres.

Some scholars associate the third phase of Indian Drama, that is, the Modern Indian Drama with the writing of a few dramatists, especially a few dramatists writing in different Indian languages like Badal Sircar in Bengali, Mohan Rakesh in Hindi, Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi, and Girish Karnad in Kannada. Some other scholars prefer locating the beginnings in certain specific circumstances rather than in individual attempts. Nandi Bhatia (2009) opines that the influence of Western and European models on local theatrical traditions is responsible for the beginnings of the modern theatre in India. That is, Indian modern drama emerged under the influence

of two distinct sources - the rich heritage of Indian drama and the exposure to Western dramatic classics through English.

This was a complex time marked by many contradictions. Shakespeare and Sheridan were as popular as were Kalidasa and Shudrak. There were attempts to return to the Indian classics along with attempts to discover Western classics like Shakespeare. Proscenium arch was used along with folk forms which had never been performed in that kind of western theatrical space. Sanskrit drama was gaining popularity during this time mainly because of the European Orientalist scholars like Sir William Jones who extolled Sanskrit plays. So, on one hand Anglo-European theatrical models and on the other hand ancient Sanskrit plays and traditional theatre from the medieval period were exerting influence on this drama. To complicate the scene, anti-colonial feelings, nationalism, and attempts at finding roots and 'inventing traditions' all marked this theatre simultaneously. As Partha Chaterjee says, this was truly a period marked by many paradoxes. Diverse elements, such as Orientalism, anti-colonialism, classicism, European influences co-existed even if they were sometimes contradictory to each other.

The 'modern' Indian theatre developed through European contact. The local literati were either fascinated or felt the need to 'respond' to the Euro-American drama. Yet they kept on turning back to Sanskrit and traditional theatre. Sanskrit theatre was being admired because of nationalist goals as well as due to the Orientalist influence. Under these twin influences, the modern Indian theatre sought to project both modernity and Indianness in its style and subject matter. It sought to invent a pan-Indian nation-state that was on one hand modern yet uniquely Indian by returning to ancient Hindu traditions.

Another important factor is that 'modern' signified different things for different Indian theatres, and for different writers. For example, in Hindi theatre, modernity signified plays modelled after European drama in form and scenography (Dalmia 2005). For the Parsi theatre, modern signified finding new theatrical models through the use of traditional performances on European style proscenium stage and themes and stories drawn from international mixed hybrid sources like Persian *Arabian Nights*, Shakespeare, 19th century courtesan culture and so on (Kapur 2006).

4.2.3 A Brief Survey of Modern Indian Drama:

Solomon (2009) describes the developments in Modern Indian Drama in terms of three phases: The Orientalist phase (1827 to 1920), the Nationalist phase (1920-47) and the post-Independence nationalist phase (1947 onwards). These phases are not to be understood as water-tight compartments, however. The Orientalist phase, for example, starts with the beginning of Indology and continues to exert influence into the early decades of the 20th century.

Under the rule of the East India Company in Bengal, western drama started exerting its influence on the Indians and first attempts at drama started in Bengal. In 1795 a Russian violinist Herasim Stepanovich Lebedeff staged a Hindi and Bengali mixed-language version of a short play by Paul Jodrell. This was the first indigenous performance with native actors and even if it did not exert much influence, it is historically important. It is not surprising that the first 'modern' Indian play was written in English by Reverend Krishna Mohan Banerjea in 1831. It was called *The Persecuted, or Dramatic scenes Illustrative of the Present State of Hindoo Society in Calcutta*. The play was never performed nor had any impact on other writers. However, it was the first play by an Indian to criticise the actual conditions of the time and hence needs to be seen as 'modern' properly.

The British used to stage plays for themselves. Taking the example of the colonial officers, the local literati started staging European plays. In the 1830s, with the help of rich native families, first Bengali-language theatre emerged. It was different from the traditional Indian theatre. From the 1850s, we begin to see a number of Indian theatre enthusiasts staging their own plays, in their respective languages, in Calcutta, Bombay, and several parts of North and South India. These plays used the Western proscenium style and were distinctly Indian in character.

In 1853 Marathi playwright Vishnudas Bhave for the first time used the commercial strategy of selling tickets for the play thus making drama more democratic and modern. It was no longer confined to private family theatre houses and limited to invited audience and dependent on the patronage of the rich natives. The Parsi and Gujarati theatre soon followed his example and modernism was established commercially in Bombay. The Bengali theatre was not able to do this but it embraced modernism on the thematic level by producing plays on socially relevant issues. Polygamy custom is attacked in Bengali play *Kulin-kulasarbaswa* (1857) by

Tarakaratna. During this time Assamese drama too produced social realist plays attacking social evils like child marriage (Gunabhiram Barua's play *Ram Navami*, 1857).

Similar attempts followed in Hindi (Bharatendu Harishchandra's *Vaidika Hinsa Hinsa Na Bhavati*, 1873, an attack on violence sanctioned by faith), in Oriya (Jagmohan Lala's *Babaji*, 1877, an attack on religious deception) and in Gujarati (Ranchhodbhai Dave's *Lalita Dukhdarshak*, 1878, on the plight of women).

So, by the late 19th Century, a stream of urban drama emerged that was influenced by Anglo-European traditions. This urban theatre didn't eradicate the pre-existing traditional theatre. On the other hand, this new theatre maintained connections with the older traditional theatre and folk forms that gave it a hybrid identity - it was neither completely western nor indigenous. By the end of the century, this new proscenium Indian theatre had become a completely commercial venture independent of patronage of the rich natives. From the 1870s, both in Calcutta and Bombay, plays became highly spectacular by using monumental sets, ornate costumes and sensational stage effects. Unlike traditional folk and tribal theatre, this theatre was performed inside theatre, now called proscenium theatre. They were often a mixture of melodrama, humour, romance and social criticism. It was performed by professional groups, who often travelled to other towns and localities to perform. For a very long time (until the emergence of cinema) it was the only source of mass entertainment and when cinema emerged, this theatre set the paradigms for Indian cinema through its emphasis on music, spectacle and melodrama. Except in some states like Maharashtra and Assam, entertainment theatre was gradually supplanted by popular cinema by 1970's.

This theatricality remained popular with the audience for five more decades. However, in the mean time, it also brought about two types of developments – the musical plays and the plays concerned with social realism. A Marathi play like Deval's *Sharada* (1899), which attacks the custom of rich old men marrying young girls, is both a musical (*sangeet natak*) and a social realist play.

Anti-colonial spirit influenced both these types in its wake. Some plays were openly nationalist such as *Sirajudaulla*, *Emperor Sivaji* (both in Bengali). On the other hand, some were not so direct. Khadilkar's Marathi play *Keechak Wadh* (1907) even if about an episode from Mahabharata was actually a satire on Lord Curzon's

brutal rule and was banned by the British for a very long time. Dinabandhu Mitra's Bengali play *Nildarpan* (1872) was openly anti-British in its criticism of the atrocities committed by Indigo planters. From this play onwards, Bengali theatre started exhibiting more and more patriotic and nationalist tendencies. This outraged the colonial rulers and they passed the Dramatic Performances Act in 1876 to control the anti-colonial tendencies. This act survives even today (and is still used against writers) as does the trend of writing social and political plays.

From the latter part of the nineteenth century, drama increasingly became a vehicle for nationalist thought. Even before the rise of a full-fledged nationalist movement in India, we see political themes and seeds of nationalist thought in Hindi and Bengali drama. These emerged soon after the Mutiny in 1857 and the Indigo Revolt in Bengal in 1859-60. These plays attack colonialism, invoke a glorious India and yet place it all in colonial Victorianism. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the anti-colonial sentiment grew both in the Indian theatres and outside. During this period drama in Marathi, Hindi, and other Indian theatres used mythological and historical elements and were imbued with a spirit of revivalist Hinduism. The plays stressed the importance of moral duty (*dharma*) towards the nation, pushed for more anti-colonial action, and by touching class and caste issues (especially 'untouchability'), showed a strong social perspective. In Telugu and Tamil too, theatre was used as a means of propaganda by the nationalists from 1919 right up to 1945.

An important role was played by the poets of different Indian languages. An important dramatist of the time was Rabindranath Tagore, who contributed immensely to the genres of drama, poetry and fiction in Bengali. Tagore happy with contemporary popular drama, and so created his own drama and theatre borrowing elements from both the western and the Indian theatrical forms yet which was very distinct from both. His plays were a rich combination of poetry, symbolism, socio-political criticism and cosmic vision. *Chitrangada*, and *Post-office*, were performed in Europe and North America and *Muktadhara* and *Roktokoribi* draw attention to immoderate technological development. Poets in other Indian languages too contributed to the development of Drama. Some major examples are Bharatendu Harishchandra and Jaishankar Prasad in Hindi, Samsa and Kuvempu in Kannada, Subrahmanya Bharathiar in Tamil, and Sreekanthan Nair in Malayalam and so on.

An important development in the 1940s was the establishment of Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA), which was the cultural wing of the Indian Communist Party that had been founded in 1922. IPTA's Bengal and Bombay branches were especially successful in challenging the non-ideological commercial theatre of the time. IPTA dramatists wanted a classless society. This drama was anti-colonial and anti-fascist and strived to reach the masses. They looked at theatre as a means for social change. The regions where this movement was strongest were Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Maharashtra, Bengal, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Prominent examples are Bhishma Sahani in North and Toppil Bhasi in the South. Bhasi's Malayalam musical play *You Made Me a Communist* is said to have paved the way for the first ever elected Communist government in Kerala.

Theatre of social criticism critiquing social evils influenced mainly by Ibsen and Bernard Shaw was quite influential. Telugu play *Kanyashulkam* by Vireshalingam Pantulu is an attack on dowry-system. Kannada playwright Adya Rangachary (Sriranga) wrote plays on social evils like caste system, exploitation of women, religious hypocrisy.

We also find during this time amateur theatres striving to bring about social change but which were not connected to Communism. Prithvi Theatre founded by the movie star Prithviraj Kapoor in 1944 was one of these.

After 1947, the impact of IPTA began to wane. Amateur theatre continued to flourish in big cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Bangalore. Two major figures of this time are Utpal Dutt and Shambhu Mitra. Utpal Dutt, playwright, director, actor and producer made significant contributions to political theatre after the waning of IPTA through his memorable productions like *Teen Talwar* and *Surya Shikari*. Dutt adapted popular folk theatre *Jatra* to make it a vehicle to communicate contemporary political messages. Shambhu Mitra, a film and stage actor, director, playwright, ushered in a new theatre movement in Bengal with his group '*Bohurupee*' established in 1948 after leaving IPTA.

The need to have theatre that addressed the needs of the independent nation was strongly felt after Independence. To this end, a drama seminar was held in 1956. The participants agreed that post-Independence Indian drama should be a 'synthesis' of the Western elements and pre-Colonial indigenous elements and strike a middle path between imitation and revivalism. The establishment of National School of Drama

(NSD) in 1959 as a national theatre institute was the next step in the same direction. However, this period also saw a revival of the Sanskrit drama. With the Kalidasa Festival in Ujjain in 1959, vogue to authentically produce Sanskrit plays for the modern audience started and this continued into the seventies and eighties. Most of the prominent directors (K. N. Pannikar, Ratan Thiyyam, and others) and theatre groups from the country tried their hand at this. This revival in a way contributed to the development of the 'theatre of the roots' trend. This theatre sought inspiration in ritual and folk performances, local traditions.

The connection with the 'authentic' ancient India tradition was established as an important ingredient of the national theatre by both – the Sanskrit drama and the theatre of the roots. The roots movement thus emphasized an anti-modern outlook and made the western style realistic theatre seem inconsequential. It tried to define the complexity of the modern theatre through the folk by establishing the classical and the folk as timeless categories. K. N. Panicker experimented with traditional dance forms from Kerala. Habib Tanvir used Chhattisgarh tribal forms such as *nacha*, to create a new theatrical language and K. Shivarama Karanth who was responsible for the rejuvenation of 'Yakshagana', one of the performing folk arts of coastal Karnataka, used it in his drama.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Badal Sircar experimented not just with form but also with space through his 'Third Theatre' and 'Free Theatre' which rejected ticketing and sponsorship. In the 1980s, issues such as interculturalism of Indian theatre and the place of Indian theatre in world started getting critical attention.

4.2.4 Indian Drama in English:

Drama in Indian English started with Krishna Mohan Banerji's *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the present state of Hindu Society in Calcutta* (1831). However, the real development of Indian English Drama starts with Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Is This Called Civilization* (1871). The pre-independence period witnessed a number of celebrated playwrights such as Sri Aurobindo, Tyagaraja Paramasiva Kailasam, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, A.S.P. Ayyar, and Bharati Sarabhai writing in English. In the post-Independence period, considerable number of plays by Indian playwrights such as Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma, and Gurucharan Das were successfully staged in England and U.S.A. In addition, playwrights such as Lakhan Deb, Nissim Ezekiel, Pratap Sharma, Gieve Patel, Cyrus

Mistry, Mahesh Dattani, Manjula Padmanabham, Dina Mehta, Poile Sengupta, Uma Parmeswaran, have contributed to the development of Indian English Drama. Notwithstanding this number of playwrights writing in English and their success, Indian drama in English remains relegated to the background. Some reasons for this are:

1. English is seen as the language of the colonisers and so not 'Indian enough';
2. English is seen as the language of the elite and not of the masses;
3. English theatre in India doesn't receive enough patronage;
4. Indian English drama is not seen as commercially viable
5. Media ignores Indian English drama however takes better cognizance of European and American plays in English
6. Even if many organisations and institutes catering to different Indian theatres have been established from pre-Independence period to the present, there is almost none for Indian English drama and very few opportunities are available for the latter.
7. NSD in its attempt to promote a 'national theatre', favoured translations of plays from various Indian languages into Hindi. This had an adverse impact on Indian English plays.
8. From pre-Independence period Indian English drama faced problems related to audience and location and remained restricted mainly to cities.

Because of these reasons, Indian English drama got marginalised and as Bhatia says, dependent on translation of plays from Indian languages especially of Karnad, Tendulkar, Rakesh, and Sircar.

Given the sheer breadth of the topic, it is impossible to discuss all the developments in all modern Indian theatres.

4.2.5 Important features of Modern Indian Drama:

Now let's look at some of the features of the drama of the period like the themes, forms or techniques, language, music, etc., used by the drama of this period so that we can understand 'modernity' of these phase.

1. **Themes:** The themes become ‘modern’ as they move to actual situations of the time. They become social and political. The wide thematic range in modern theatre is described by Bhatia thus :

“the politics of the British Raj, conditions prevalent on tea and indigo plantations, workers’ rights, famines, the 1947 Partition, psychological fragmentation, familial problems and urban angst, concerns with women’s issues, dowry problems, and the rights of dalits, among other issues” (Bhatia xiii).

During the first half of the twentieth century, the themes were heavily influenced by social reform movements, anti-colonial movements, and by the two World Wars. In addition, Marxism, psychoanalysis, symbolism, surrealism were also exerting influence. After Independence, postcolonial issues, feminism, transgender issues, caste and class inequalities, urban anxieties, minority communities and their concerns started getting ascendance.

2. **Forms and Techniques:** The wide range of themes is handled using a number of different forms and techniques – mythological dramas, folk forms and rituals, historical revivals, transformed versions of Euro-American plays, notably of Shakespeare and Brecht, and through *avant garde* experimentation” (Bhatia xiii).
3. **Music:** Music became an important modernist device in Indian plays. In addition to Parsi theatre, to other important forms of musical theatre arose around 1880 - Marathi Sangeet Natak, and Bengali Gitabhinay. In Marathi theatre, people like Kirloskar experimented with music by mixing folk songs, devotional kirtans, Hindustani and Carnatic music and, moreover, used actors instead of chorus to sing them. Tagore too experimented with classical ragas and inserted Western music too. Another ground-breaking experiment was made successful In Hindi by Bhartendu Harishchandra in his *Andher Nagari* (1881), a musical political satire.
4. **Dance and folk forms:** As seen above, experimenting with folk and tribal art forms, classical dance forms, became an important part of Modern Indian drama. *Yakshagana*, *Jatra*, *nacha*, *dashavtari*, etc., were used in plays.
5. **Women on stage:** In the classical and medieval theatre men performed the roles of women. Theatre was considered an inappropriate place for women. If there

were women performers, they were mostly from the communities of courtesans and prostitutes. It was not until the modern phase that women took acting in the theatre. Secondly, this was the time when women started writing plays. Some of these noteworthy playwrights are - Mahashweta Devi (in Bengali), Padmanabhan, Shanta Gandhi and Dhiruben Patel (in Gujarati), Nalini Prava Deka (in Assamese), Sheila Bhatia (in Punjabi), Sai Paranjape and Shanta Gokhale, (in Marathi), C.S.Lakshmi and Mangai (in Tamil), Volga and Vinodini (in Telugu), Rasheed Jahan and Jameela Nishat (in Urdu), Manjula Padmanabhan, Dina Mehta, and Polie Sengupta (in English). This period also saw some very influential women directors like Prema Karanth and B. Jayashree in Kannada, Vijaya Mehta in Marathi, Tripti Mitra in Bengali, Pearl Padamsee in English, Amal Allana and Anuradha Kapur in Hindi.

Modernity, however, was not limited only to these elements; it influenced all the spheres of the Indian drama – where the plays were performed, theatre architecture, patronage, stage (proscenium), lighting, commercialisation of the theatre, and advent of the director. In each case, from themes to music to the role of director, there was constant referencing and response to the western drama.

4.2.6 Important Modern Indian Dramatists and Directors:

Given the huge canvas and complexities of the field, it is impossible to discuss all the important personalities who shaped Indian modern theatre. Only a few major contributors are discussed here.

1. **Dharamvir Bharati** (1926-1997) was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in Playwriting (Hindi) in 1988 for his only play *Andha Yug*, a verse play in Hindi written in 1953. Set in the last day of the Great Mahabharata war, can be seen as allegory of the aftermaths of the partition of India. The play is related to the "theatre of the roots" movement and is today recognised as a major play that ushered in a new era in Hindi and in Indian theatre.
2. **Mohan Rakesh** (1925-1972) Recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1968, Rakesh wrote three important plays, *Ashadh ka ek Din* (1958), *Lehron ke Rajhans* (1963) and *Aadhe-adhure* (1969). Each deals with man-woman relationship and the inability to communicate with each other. *Aadhe-adhure* (translated as *Halfway House*), also deals with the clash between the egos of man and woman, the tension, suffocation, and the disintegration of such a

relationship, and the disintegration of the whole family. The play is a ruthless portrayal of problems in modern life, and is considered an important landmark in Indian theatre.

3. **Badal Sircar (1925-2011):** Celebrated Bengali dramatist Sircar is known for his anti-establishment plays during the naxalite movement, his contribution to the street theatre and experimental Bengali theatre through his “Third Theatre”. He wrote more than fifty plays for his *Aanganmanch* (courtyard stage). His plays *Evam Indrajit*, *Basi Khabar*, and *Saari Raat* are well known and *Evam Indrajit* is considered a milestone in Indian theatre.
4. **Vijay Tendulkar (1928-2008):** Marathi playwright Vijay Tendulkar is considered a very influential dramatist who was awarded Padma Bhushan in 1984 and Sangeet Natak Academy fellowship in 1988. His plays are intense and dark exposing violence and gender inequalities in Indian society as in *Silence! The Court is On*. Most of his plays have been controversial like *Ghashiram Kotwal*, *Sakharam Binder*, and *Gidhade*. *Ghashiram Kotwal* which represented Indian theatre at the international gathering in Berlin in 1980 experiments with the form of the play making use of Marathi medieval dramatic forms like *tamasha*, *keertan*, and *dashavatar*.
5. **Girish Karnad (1938 –2019):** Karnad’s place in modern Kannada playwriting is similar to that of Badal Sircar in Bengali, Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi, and Mohan Rakesh in Hindi. Recipient of the 1998 Jnanpith Award, the highest literary honour conferred in India, Karnad is known for his use of mythology, folktales and history to engage with contemporary social issues. His most acclaimed plays *Tughlaq*, *Yayati*, *Hayavadan* and *Nagamandala* have been directed by some of the biggest directors of India including Ebrahim Alkazi, Vijaya Mehta, B V Karanth and Satyadev Dubey.
6. **B. V. Karanth (1929–2002):** Karanth’s contribution is not limited only to Kannada theatre but also extends to Hindi, Telugu, Tamil theatre. His plays like *Jokumara Swamy*, *Sankranti*, *Huchu Kudure* and *Oedipus*, changed the old formal style of the Kannada theatre through innovative use of music drawing on classical, traditional and folk forms. He also directed plays in English, Telugu, Malayalam, Tamil, Punjabi, Urdu, Sanskrit and Gujarati and one of the pioneers of Kannada and Hindi new wave cinema.

7. **Mahashweta Devi** (1926-2016): Bengali writer and socio-political activist Devi fought for the rights of the tribal people of West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Her writing depicts the brutal oppression of the tribal people and untouchables at the hands of the landlords, money-lenders, and government officials. Five of her plays are especially acclaimed—*Mother of 1084*, *Aajir*, *Urvashi and Johny*, *Bayen*, and *Water*. She was honoured with various literary awards such as the Sahitya Akademi Award (in Bengali), Jnanpith Award and Ramon Magsaysay Award.
8. **Mahesh Elkunchwar** (b. 1939) Elkunchwar and Vijay Tendulkar, are considered today the most influential and progressive playwrights not just in Marathi theatre, but also in Indian theatre. In 2014, he was awarded the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship. He has written more than 20 plays including *Yatanaghar Garbo*, *Vasanakand Magna Talyakathi*, *Party*, *Wada Chirebandi*, *Pratibimb*, *Yuganta*, *Sonata*, *Eka Natacha Mrityu*, *Raktapushp*, etc.
9. **Mahesh Dattani** (b. 1958): Dattani is the first playwright in English to be awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award Dattani's plays deal with sensitive issues like homosexuality, communalism, female infanticide, domestic abuse, child sexual abuse, condition of the eunuchs in Indian society, etc. He focuses on gender issues by questioning the traditional hegemonic stereotypical gender roles. He has written a number of plays such as *Where There's a Will* (1988), *Dance Like a Man* (1989), *Tara* (1990), *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1991), *Final Solutions* (1992-93), *Do The Needful* (1997), *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* (1998), *Seven Steps Around the Fire* (1998), *Thirty Days in September* (2001), *Uma and the Fairy Queen* (2001), *Where Did I Leave My Purdah* (2012), etc.

It is not possible to Discuss Modern Indian theatre without mentioning the contribution of a few theatre stalwarts and directors like Shambhu Mitra, Ebrahim Alkazi, Satyadev Dubey, and Vijaya Mehta. These people shaped the modern Indian theatre and left there lasting marks on it. **Shambhu Mitra (1915 –1997)**: Recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Fellowship for lifetime contribution in 1966, and the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1976, Mitra is considered a pioneer of the West Bengal theatre movement through his theatre group 'Bohurupee' which started the group-theatre movement in West Bengal. He is known as a great director, especially for his direction of Rabindranath Tagore's *Rakta Karabi*, *Bisarjan*, *Raja* and *Char Adhyay*. **Ebrahim Alkazi** was the first director of the National School of Drama. He

revolutionized the Hindi theatre by experimenting with scenographic design. He directed some of the plays that went on to become milestones in Indian drama like Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*, Mohan Rakesh's *Ashadh Ka Ek Din*, and Dharamvir Bharati's *Andha Yug*. He also directed many Shakespearean and Greek plays. Moreover, he trained people like Vijaya Mehta, Om Puri, Naseeruddin Shah, who themselves became theatre authorities in the later period. **Satyadev Dubey**, the recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1971 and Padma Bhushan in 2011, brought about exponential growth in Marathi theatre in the 60s and the 70s. He produced some of the major plays like Dharmavir Bharati's *Andha Yug*, Girish Karnad's *Yayati* and *Hayavadan*, Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit*, Mohan Rakesh's *Aadhe Adhure* and Vijay Tendulkar's *Shantata Court Chalu Ahe*. **Vijaya Mehta** through her theatre group Rangayan became one of leading figures in the experimental Marathi theatre. She introduced Bertold Brecht into Marathi theatre with adaptation of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (*Ajab Nyay Vartulacha*), and Ionesco with *Chairs*. She was awarded the Sangeet Natak Academy award in 1975.

4.2.7 Check your progress I

1. When was the commercial strategy of selling tickets for a play used first?
2. Which play criticised the British for the atrocities committed by Indigo planters?
3. When was Dramatic Performances Act passed to control the anti-colonial activities?
4. Which popular folk theatre form was adapted by Utpal Dutt to communicate contemporary political messages?
5. Which theatrical movement sought inspiration in ritual and folk performances, local traditions?
6. Who experiment not just with form but also with space through his 'Third Theatre' and 'Free Theatre'?
7. What was the first play in Indian English?
8. Match the playwrights in column A with the appropriate language/play/movement given in column B:

A		B	
1.	Vijay Tendulkar	a.	<i>Post-office</i>
2.	Dharamvir Bharati	b.	<i>Silence! The Court is On</i>
3.	Rabindranath Tagore	c.	‘Yakshagana’
4.	Karant	d.	<i>Andha Yug,</i>
5.	Habib Tanvir	e.	Bengali director
6.	Vijaya Mehta	f.	<i>Dance Like a Man</i>
7.	Mahesh Dattani	g.	Marathi director
8.	Tripti Mitra	h.	<i>nacha</i>

4.3 Prescribed Play: *Lights Out* by Manjula Padmanabhan

In this section we shall study an important modern Indian play – *Lights Out* – by Manjula Padmanabhan.

4.3.1 Manjula Padmanabhan: A Short Introduction

Manjula Padmanabhan (b. 1953) is a Delhi-based writer and artist. Manjula Padmanabhan wears many hats – she is a journalist, dramatist, comic strip artist, novelist, short stories writer and author and illustrator of books for children.

Before getting famous as a playwright, Padmanabhan was more known as a cartoonist. She had a daily cartoon strip in *The Pioneer*. She was also known as a journalist. She used to write columns in newspapers. She is especially known for her Indian cartoon character Suki. Her comic strips appeared weekly in *The Sunday Observer* (Bombay, 1982–86) and daily in *The Pioneer* (New Delhi, 1991–97). Manjula Padmanabhan has authored and illustrated many books for children - *A Visit to the City Market* (1986), *Mouse Attack* (2003), *Unprincess!* (2005), *I am different! Can you find me?* (2011), and *Three Virgins and Other Stories* (2013). She has also illustrated Tara Ali Baig’s *Indrani and the Enchanted Jungle* (1979) and Maithily Jagannathan’s *Droopy Dragon* (1984). She has written a collection of short stories *Kleptomania* and a series of monologues - *Hidden Fires*. *Escape* is a novel published in 2008. It is set in a dystopian, apocalyptic country where women have been

exterminated, and, only one little girl remains alive. The alarmingly declining sex-ratio in India is turned by Padmanabhan into a vision of the future. *Double Talk* (2005) is a Comic Strip.

4.3.2 Manjula Padmanabhan's Plays:

Lights Out (1984) focuses on the apathy of the urban middle class society in face of a gang rape committed in the neighbourhood. Instead of stopping the crime, they prefer having tea-table discussion about it sitting in their cosy homes. In 2017 Govind Nihalani adapted *Lights Out* into a Marathi movie named *Ti ani Itar*.

Padmanabhan won the Greek Onassis Award for her play *Harvest* (1997). It is a futuristic play where the people from developing nations 'harvest' the bodies of people from the poor nations for body organs. The play illustrates one more form of exploitation of the third world countries. *Harvest* was adapted by Govind Nihalani in 2001 into a movie called *Deham*.

Hidden Fires (2003) is a collection of five powerful, hard hitting monologues on issues of violence and intolerance. It was written during the time of the Gujarat riots in 2002 and was staged and directed by Arvind Gaur of Asmita Theatre in August 2004 in New Delhi.

Between *Lights Out* and *Harvest*, she wrote three more plays which, unpublished for a long time, have rarely been discussed and performed. These are *The Mating Game Show*, *The Sextet* and *The Artist's Model*. The play *The Artist's Model* (1995) deals with metaphysical questions relating to art and exploitation. *Sextet* (1996) consists of six short pieces about different aspects of sexuality. *Astro-Nuts*, a play for young adult audience was published in 2006. Another full length play is *Consequences*, which was started in 1997 but completed only in 2015. Padmanabhan has also written short pieces for the theatre, many of which were also not published. Recently (2020), she has brought out two volumes of her plays in a compendium with the publisher Hachette India. The volume *Blood and Laughter: Plays* puts together the full-length plays – *Lights Out*, *The Mating Game Show*, *The Artist's Model*, *Harvest*, *Astro-Nuts* and *Consequences*. The other volume – *Laughter and Blood: Performance Pieces* – brings together the smaller pieces like *The Sextet*, *The Rehearsal*, *The Wish*, *The Senses Taker*, *Hidden Fires*, *The Cook's Story*, *The Dhobi's Wife*, *Ladies' Night*, *The Rape Artist*, *The Blind Date*, and *The Organ Speaker*.

4.3.3 The Play *Lights Out*:

Now let's turn to a detailed analysis of the setting, plot and characters in the play *Lights Out*.

4.3.3.1 The Setting of the Play *Lights Out*:

The play has just three scenes and six characters – **Bhasker** and his wife **Leela**, their house help **Frieda**, Bhasker's friend **Mohan** who visits him in the second scene and Leela's friend **Naina** and Naina's husband **Surinder** who visit them in the third scene.

The setting of the play is as important as the plot and the characters in this play. The play is set in Bombay (now Mumbai), in upper-middle class locality. The events of the play happen in Bhasker and Leela's flat/apartment, which is on the sixth floor of a building. At the beginning of the play the setting is explained with great detail by the author:

“The curtain rises to reveal the drawing-dining area of sixth floor apartment in a building in Bombay. The decor is unremarkably upper-middleclass. The focal point of the space is a large window to the rear, its curtains drawn back. Through it, the audience can see the sky and just a suggestion of the rooftop of the neighbouring building, as yet unpainted. During the first scene, the sky wanes from dusk into night.” (Lights Out, p. 3)¹

We later find out in the play that this partially visible neighbouring building, or rather what happens in this building, is going to be the central force of the play. We as audience never get to see what happens there, yet we can hear sounds from there and these cast a very dark shadow on all that happens in Bhasker-Leela's house during the course of the play. The play, in its three scenes, covers the time span of a few hours from dusk to a couple of hours into the night.

In the drawing-dining area of the house, the sitting area (has a sofa and two armchairs) is separated from the dining area (the dining table is near the windows) by a room-divider-cum-bar. Stage-left are two doors – one leading to the kitchen and the other is the main entrance to the flat. Stage right is the door to the master bedroom.

Even if the setting remains the same throughout the three scenes, in the first and the second scenes, the drawing area is in focus and in the third scene; the dining area is in the foreground:

Scene One:

“Only the foreground is lit up, as Frieda dusts items on the room-divider-cum-bar. The sound of the front door being opened is heard.” (P. 3)

Scene Two:

“Leela, dressed for the evening, clutching a drink, sits on the sofa. She looks at her watch anxiously. Bhasker is fiddling with the music system on the room-divider-cum-bar.” (p. 12)

Scene Three:

“The scene reopens on a darkened diningroom. The dining table is in the foreground. All electric lights are off. Bhasker, Leela and Mohan are eating at the table on which a couple of candles are lit. There’s a candle in the kitchen. The curtains on the window have been drawn shut...” (P. 29)

4.3.3.2 The Plot of the play:

The play is based on a real incident that happened in Santa Cruz, Mumbai. It exposes how insensitive we have become towards the misery of others. It also brings the issue of violence against women in focus by suddenly thrusting it into the living room of an ordinary, middle-class family and into the lives of the urban educated and so-called decent people.

The play happens in the drawing room of an upper-middle class family’s flat. The couple Bhasker and Leela are discussing the possible cause of the periodic screams and cries coming from one of the neighbouring buildings of their colony. Leela is very much disturbed by the sounds and wants Bhasker to call the police to look into the matter. Bhasker gives various reasons for not calling in the police. Soon, there are visitors joining in. First, Bhasker’s friend Mohan and later another couple Naina and Surinder arrive. All discuss and argue on the plausible cause to the screams and calls for help. A few of these individuals want to take action and stop the perpetrators of the crime; others are more worried if it is really a crime and if it would be right to intervene. When they finally witness an act of sexual assault against a woman by a group of men, they discuss the right way to punish the culprits. Each person suggests a plan and before they are ready with any of the plans, the screams stop; the tormentors and the victim are gone.

Lights Out seems a discussion play. The characters discuss the crime and the victim with such apathy that they become as terrifying as the perpetrators of the crime. The play is scathing satire on the apathy and inhumanness of the so-called civilized urban people. The rape for them seems to be no more than a thought experiment – giving them a chance to employ deductive reasoning as well as a spectacle to watch, and for the more perverse of them to enjoy. Various reasons for not getting involved are thrown at your face –it being not right to interfere in a private matter; possibility of it being a religious matter or a case of exorcism; distinction between a decent lady and a prostitute, and so on. By the time they decide to take some action, it makes us feel it is far too little, far too late. The three scenes seem to be filled to the brim with unending discussions but no apparent actions against the rapists. The structure creates an atmosphere of frustration and anger in the minds of the readers which is exactly what the playwright intends to do. The audience/reader is made to realize the seriousness of the situation and the apathetic nature of society.

India is becoming increasingly unsafe for women. The play draws attention to the issue of violence against women, and particularly to the issue of group sexual assault against women. The play also tries to make the people realize the importance of standing up against this horrifying crime. The play deals with a burning contemporary issue and this issue needs to be handled sensitively. Padmanabhan succeeds in this by focusing completely on the reactions of the spectators of the crime instead of showing us the crime itself. That is, the spectators of the crime become the spectacle. This turns out into a very successful strategy. In spite of the absence of the rape from the stage, the rape becomes an intensely present action revealing simultaneously the violence, brutality of the action as well as exposing the unjust patriarchal system, class structure and apathy of the urban society towards violence against women.

Plot structure:

The play consists of three scenes. Now let's analyse these three scenes to find the plot structure and the techniques used to make it effective.

Scene 1:

The first part of the first scene tries to establish the background of the play and the characters' reactions to it through repetitive kind of dialogue between Leela and

Bhasker. Through this part Leela's distress and Bhasker's apathy are firmly established. The scene begins with Bhasker returning home from his office. The house help Frieda who has been dusting the living room, brings him tea. Bhasker from his entry is engrossed in the newspaper and is not even aware of Leela who looks extremely anxious is staring at him eager to know if he has called the police and informed. The scene slowly unfolds the unusual developments in the neighbourhood, the screams in the late evening, the crime and the way different people react to this crime. The scene slowly establishes that even if the thing is being repeated evening after evening, no one from this respectable locality has bothered to inform the police or to interfere and stop the crime. Bhasker and Leela are representatives of this mindset. Leela is too sick of hearing the screams. She has never dared to see what's been happening and just wants the screams to stop as it is making life miserable for her. Her reactions soon make her seem hysterical. Bhasker, like other men, has mutely been witnessing the crime or ignoring it. The way he enters and answers Leela's questions, makes it clear that he can carry out his daily activities as usual without the crime affecting him. From their discussion we understand that all women in the building are talking about it but no one does anything as "No one wants to do it alone" (P. 8). Leela is aggrieved that these 'dirty, ugly sounds' are 'inside my nice clean house'. Leela wants Bhasker to call the police and Bhasker makes one excuse after another. The first of course is – why are other neighbours doing anything. The second is that the Police may ask why he didn't call them earlier. The third is the Police may not come or may say the owners or the guards of the empty building should act and not the police. Leela complains that they have not been leading a normal life since the thing started; they can't even have guests for dinner as she is worried the guests will see the horrible things that go on here. This is when Bhasker informs her that he has asked his friend Mohan over. They discuss various ways to ignore the sounds- playing music, turning a deaf ear, practicing yoga and meditation. The scene ends with Leela getting up to tell Frieda what to cook for dinner. The scene begins and ends with mentions of/calls to Frieda. However, Frieda speaks nothing nor reveals any of her thoughts or emotions. This reminds us of the special note on her character given by the author at the beginning of the play – "She remains constantly in sight, performing her duties in a mute, undemanding way. The other characters pay no attention to her except to give her orders ...The audience should be allowed to wonder what she thinks" (P.2).

Scene 2:

Leela and Bhasker are waiting for Mohan to arrive for dinner. When Mohan arrives, Leela is tense that the violence will begin soon. She is surprised when she learns that Mohan has already heard about it from Bhasker and in fact come over to witness it. Leela can't understand why people may want to see such horrible things. From here on, Bhasker and Mohan start speculating and analyzing various theories about the crime and the act of witnessing the crime. Some of these are:

- It is uncommon to see crime performed so close yet comfortably far enough to see it clearly for yourself without getting involved;
- How it is incorrect to say that the onlooker is as much involved as the perpetrator if he/she does nothing to stop it;
- How it is unnatural not to look; How it is unnatural to not get 'involved' in seeing (but not in stopping the thing or helping the needy);
- What could be the purpose of the screams – for help/ general purpose/ for dramatic effect/ out of pleasure;
- Is it one person screaming or many; the same victim or different each night?
- Is the victim diseased? Hysterical? Healthy? Poor?
- The reason – domestic violence? Torture? Exhibitionism? Sacred religious ritual?
- Whoever from the three buildings during the crime keeps on his lights is targeted (window panes smashed, cars covered in filth, threatened, etc). Could the victim be smashing the panes? If yes, why? To get help quicker? If it is the assailants, then why?
- The victim each night is in tattered clothes – are they poor? Are the assailants poor too? If both are poor, does it concern us (the middle class)?
- Incorrectness of intervening in private /domestic lives of others unless there is a murder; incorrectness of stopping a religious ritual when the Constitution gives religious rights;
- The difference between being in pain and being a victim;

The discussion stops when the screams get audible enough. The scene ends with the three getting up to move to the dining table for dinner.

Scene 3:

The scene opens with screams waxing and waning in intensity reaching the characters and the audience while the three characters eat their dinner and continue dissecting the screams intellectually. The discussion becomes increasingly disgusting as the audience is left wondering how people can continue eating and talking while knowing someone is in great pain and calling you for help. Mohan and Bhasker now consider it their 'duty', 'a sociological concern' (p. 30) to witness the crime but agree to do it after having food. They discuss now if the children should be allowed to see the 'religious ritual'. They also debate the pros and cons of locking up children in their bedroom so that they don't see it. Door bell rings and Naina arrives. The screams have reduced for some time and Naina doesn't realize anything amiss for some time as they engage in small talk. We see Leela desperately trying to draw her attention elsewhere from the screams and drawn curtains and candles in the room with all the lights off. However, soon the screams become audible enough and Naina notes someone calling for help. Others try to convince her that it is a religious ceremony which is hard for her to believe. When she wants to have a look, they engage her in a discussion about it bringing bad luck to the non-believer if he/she sees it. However, inadvertently Leela blurts out why they carry out this ritual in light and want the neighbourhood to see it if it is not meant for the non-believers and now Naina insists on seeing it saying it must be stopped even if it is religious in nature. She pulls back the curtains and sees outside and is shocked. She tries to correct them that it is not a religious ritual but a woman is being raped and that they must help her or call police. However, she is not able to say the word 'rape' as Bhasker doesn't want Leela to get further disturbed by knowing this and also because Naina is not able to endure the shock of it all. In the mean time, Mohan and Bhasker have come to the window and seem to be glued to the pane, 'mildly exhilarated' (p. 36). In the absence of Naina and Leela, they continue their thought experiment and agree that the fact that the victim is a woman changes it to some extent – it still could be a religious ritual; could be exorcism. They keep on describing the beating, kicking, pounding inflicted on the woman while they keep on justifying that it is all religiously motivated. Even when they see her raped, their thought experiment doesn't end:

BHASKER: “Hmmm. Well, you know, illiterate people believe that when a demon possesses a woman, it is always via the – uh – *lower orifice* –

MOHAN: Yes, of course, and that’s why, earlier, they were dragging her around in that ungainly position, as if to coax the demon to come out – (P. 37)

Even after seeing the profuse bleeding, and the struggle, they keep on discussing in the same vein – how the victim gets the power of three men as it is really the devil who is struggling and not the woman. When Leela confronts them, by asking “It’s a rape, isn’t it?” they are affronted by the word and say it is of course not. They even demand proof for it saying that it is in fact exorcism. Naina challenges them bluntly describing the action of the rapists, and the fact that most rapes, especially gang rapes, are accompanied by extreme physical violence. They silence Naina by asking her to account for the fact that the rape is being performed in full view of decent people. When the ladies want to call the police, they rise an ‘extremely important consideration’ – that the woman could be a prostitute. Then the four argue different aspects of this new situation – arguing a decent woman would never submit to four men at a time which means she is a whore. They further argue that if she is a whore this can’t be a rape! Bhasker, ‘with a certain fiendish satisfaction’ argues that “if she were a decent woman, we people would go to her rescue! (*Pause.*) She is not, and so she’s being left to her fate!” (P. 41)

Naina feebly tries to argue that the woman is not just being raped but also brutalised. However, the two men argue that these things keep on happening everywhere in the city and so they should just ignore. They also argue that the lives of the victim and the culprits are way too different from that of decent people like them and so they need not interfere. Naina confronts them by asking “By losing their vulnerability to rape, whores lose their right to be women? Is that what you mean?” (P. 43) Bhasker, Mohan and Naina continue to equivocate about decency, indecency, men and women and rape until Leela starts screaming hysterically to call the police. They reluctantly promise her to but then door bell rings again and Surinder, Naina’s husband, arrives. He knows nothing and all tell him bits of information. When he finally sees for himself, he is so enraged that he says, “Let’s go and *wipe them out!*” (P. 45). The responses of others are varied – ‘I am in service’, ‘Won’t you get into trouble?’, ‘What, all of us?’, ‘Who are we to decide that they should die?’ When Naina tries to calm him down, he shouts at her – “You shut up! This is no time for women’s nonsense!” (p. 47)

Surinder argues that those rapists are in fact insulting the whole colony:

SURINDER: Listen. Listen. What do you think those turds are doing? Just screwing one woman, is it? And they have nowhere to go so they come and do it here, is it? After putting on the spotlights, so that all you nice people can watch? *(He pauses dramatically.)* They're screwing this whole bloody colony, dammit! They know that we're all standing here! Shitting in our pants, too scared to do anything but watch! They're making jackasses of us! ... (P. 47)

Convinced by Surinder that calling the police will be of no help, they discuss the best means to kill the culprits and the problems involved in each – knives (clean and quick but too direct), or petrol (it can blow them up too), acid in bulbs (the acid is not sufficient enough in stock), a combination of petrol and acid (the woman may get burned too), follow them in a car and run them over (may damage the car), gun (too noisy and no one can shoot and no one has one), electrocute them (too complicated), take photographs of them in action and arrange a public lynching, find where they live and set their huts on fire, They get so carried away by this planning that even Bhasker says –“Look what they're doing to us! Threatening us, breaking our windows, terrorizing our women...” (P.51-52). They get so carried away that they fail to notice that the screams have stopped and all have left from the empty building. They are all disappointed and Leela says “Oh! Then it must be over for tonight!” (p. 53)

Here the lights cut out quickly and the author gives a brief message regarding the actual incident that happened in Santa Cruz in 1982 on which the play is based. The message (either projected on slides on the curtain or read in an unemotional tone) tells us that even if the characters are fictional, the incident is a fact: “In real life, as in the play, a group of ordinary middle-class people chose to stand and watch while a woman was being brutalized in a neighbouring compound. In real life as in the play, the incident took place over a period of weeks. And in real life, as in the play, no-one went to the aid of the victims.” (P. 53)

The three scenes happening at the same location and with almost no time lapse in between end with the message about the actual incident on which the play is based either projected or rendered through off-stage voice over. According to German novelist Gustav Freytag's model, a plot consists of five parts:

- **Exposition:** The de-facto introduction that brings out the story's cast of characters and plants the seeds of conflict,
- **Rising Action:** In which a series of events (usually triggered by an inciting incident) escalates and sets the rest of the story in motion,
- **Climax:** The moment of peak tension in a story — in other words, what everything else builds up to,
- **Falling Action:** The bridge between the climax and the resolution in which subplots and mini-conflicts are resolved,
- **Denouement:** the wrapping up of the whole story.

It can be said that the first part of scene 1 in *Lights Out* is the exposition, the remaining of the scene, the second scene and a part of the third scene- until the word 'rape' is said is rising action. Surinder's anger and his act of arousing others 'to wipe out' the rapists could be considered the climax. The climax is quickly followed by falling action (the realisation that they are too late and the consequent disappointment). It is also possible to argue that the disappointment itself is the point of climax. The message at the end about the true incident could be considered the denouement in a way.

4.3.3.4 The Characters in the play

As we have seen earlier, there are just five characters in the play. They are not individualised to a great extent. To some extent, they appear 'types' – representing a particular kind of thinking or individuals that we often encounter around us. We hardly know anything about them apart from the way they react to the incident in the play: What government office does Bhasker work for? Is Surinder a businessman? What's Naina's and Leela's education? Does Frieda ever gossip with other maid servants? However, these are not lacunae as far as the intention of the play is concerned. We get to see a piece from their lives a late evening and even if it may not reveal much about their whole personalities, it is able to differentiate each from the other and make each convincing too.

Leela:

Leela is described many times by other characters as 'hypersensitive', 'very sensitive', and so on. From the beginning we see her extremely agitated – unable to eat, carry on with normal daily activities and unable to forget the screams throughout

the day. She constantly nags Bhasker and then others to call in the police. She even gets hysterical in the third act and only then others give in to her nagging. She is so 'sensitive' that she has avoided seeing the crime for herself. The sounds are enough to make her sick. It is mostly because of the fact that Leela has not seen the rape that the 'intellectual' objective discussion of the event to make sense of the screams and violence becomes possible. As soon as Naina sees it for herself and 'names' it, the plot moves on to the next logical step – the need to stop it.

Leela represents that whole class of women who consider themselves decent, reputable, homely and vulnerable and hence completely powerless to venture out and help anyone. Padmanabhan is highly critical of men who do nothing to save the victim, but she also doesn't spare her women characters. She shows that this hypersensitive woman is more disturbed Leela is more worried that these 'dirty, ugly sounds' are 'inside my nice clean house' than by the thought of the pain of the victim. She even says:

LEELA: "If only they didn't make such a racket, I wouldn't mind so much!"
(p.8)

She doesn't want to see what is happening even through the window and naturally panics when it is suggested that they all go there to kill the rapists. She doesn't want the thing to go on but doesn't want to get involved or venture anywhere nearby in any way. She is very clear about this:

LEELA: I want the police to come and clear them away. I don't want to go there *myself*! (Leena p. 16-17)

Padmanabhan doesn't comment on any character directly but she is critical of all and so is she of Leela, who can't come out of the middle class complacency and conceit.

Bhasker:

A typical Indian middleclass man with a firm belief in patriarchal values. In the first scene we see him constantly ignoring Leela's implorations to call the police. He is himself convinced and attempts to convince Leela that the thing happening in the neighbouring building is not their concern. Unlike Leela, he is able to ignore the incidence, work as usual throughout the day and can even argue that there is nothing abnormal about the incident. He maintains his aloofness insisting that they are safe, (especially, his wife Leela has nothing to be afraid about) and so need to pay

attention and moreover, act. In the third scene when Surinder wants to attack the rapists, he voices more problems absolutely concerned with his and his family's safety and status and finds every excuse not to get involved in the happenings throughout the play. He emerges as the most cautious man of all the three men in play. However, once Surinder voices the thought that the rapists are actually insulting the people in colony, his views change suddenly and we are surprised that it is he who says "Look what they're doing to us! Threatening us, breaking our windows, terrorizing our women..." (P. 51-52).

Bhasker shows he is much concerned about his 'hypersensitive' wife and wants to hide the naked truth from her about the incidence outside. However, he has no compunction when he attempts to normalize the act of violence against the woman, thereby presenting it as justified. His insensitivity and indifference to rape are exposed when he keeps on insisting the act being a domestic affair, a religious ceremony, exorcism, and so not requiring outside interference.

Mohan:

Mohan is Bhasker's friend and has comes to Bhasker's flat with the explicit purpose to see the act. If Bhasker emerges as the most self-concerned of the men, Mohan is the one taking most interest in the act of rape, even seems to be enjoying seeing the act. Through Mohan, Padmanabhan focuses on the strain of voyeurism. Mohan and Bhasker's discussion regarding being in pain, being a victim of violence, being a decent woman, rights of prostitutes as a woman, and so on, becomes disgusting revealing finally the problem of patriarchal insensitivity.

Naina:

The play gets some action only with the arrival of Naina. Sensitive yet not hysterical like Leela, she acts as a foil to Leela. She is the one who looks at the thing happening and calls it for what it really is – rape of a woman. However independent and forceful she may appear, she is treated as an inferior being by her husband. She wants to save the woman outside from the physical and sexual violence but can't save herself from the verbal abuse inflicted on her by her hypocritical husband.

Surinder:

Surinder is the last to join the small group and immediately emerges as the most overpowering, overly assertive man excessively concerned about his honour and duty

as a man. He is too concerned with safeguard his family and women from actual and hypothetical threats which he sees as challenges to his masculinity. With just one attempt he convinces Bhasker and Mohan that they need to not just interfere but ‘wipe out’ the rapists not for raping the woman but because they are insulting the whole colony. Surinder changes the course of discussion immediately on arriving. All start to find different ways to kill the men instead of/ in spite of the earlier talks and excuses for not getting involved.

Surinder seems different from all others for a time but soon we see Padmanabhan exposing one more type of toxic people through Surinder – those who are ready to kill the perpetrators of violence on women but who are not much different themselves as they too are violent towards women.

He shouts at Naina twice in the very short time he gets on the stage: “You shut up! This is no time for women’s nonsense!” (p. 47)

Surinder turns on Naina suddenly and says with malevolence – “Shut up- or I’ll kick your teeth in!” (P. 49)

Frieda:

The maid servant and cook in Leela’s house is constantly on the stage – working, cleaning, dusting, cooking, fetching tea and other things, yet she is completely mute – revealing nothing of her thoughts or emotions. The author at the beginning of the play gives a special note on her character– “She remains constantly in sight, performing her duties in a mute, undemanding way. The other characters pay no attention to her except to give her orders ...The audience should be allowed to wonder what she thinks” (P.2).

Through Frieda the author criticises the class divisions in Indian society. Frieda’s silence reveals the gender and class dimension of her subjugation. She has no control over what happens on stage, but is a mute witness to all happenings. Frieda’s character adds more layers to our understanding of violence and suppression. Frieda’s silence is contrasted with the victim woman’s screams.

4.3.4 Critical Readings of the play:

4.3.4.1 Feminist Readings:

The play has been seen as a scathing picture of the hypocritical patriarchal society and its attempts at normalizing female subjugation and exploitation.

There are four women in play who demonstrate different ways of and extents to which women are subjugated and violated. At one end of the extreme is the rape victim who screams and screams and is largely ignored. At the other end is Frieda who is completely silent throughout the play. She is quietly working is always in the background and completely ignored. Leela and Naina are middle-class educated women, yet fair no better, for they are not considered equals by the men in the play. They too are ignored to a large extent by the men. Leela represents women from well-to-do families who have been brought up in a certain way to become decent house wives. Their upbringing and nurturing is such that they are seen (and have convinced themselves) as completely helpless, dependent on men in their life for everything, and unable of any proactive deed. Her passivity, lack of initiative and nagging is glorified, on the other hand as 'hypersensitivity'. It is considered quite okay to be hysterical. Naina is more confident, vigorous and outspoken, yet she too is completely submissive to her husband, who verbally abuses her even in public.

Thus the strongly entrenched hierarchy in patriarchal society – with the higher caste rich and powerful man at the top and, less powerful men, lower caste and poor people, all the women and children on the lower rungs – is cleverly reflected in the play. Even amongst the men, there are power hierarchies. The most physical, hot headed Surinder easily is followed by the other two.

The play speaks of two kinds of violence, the physical and sexual violence which happens offstage and the intellectual and verbal violence unfolding on the stage through the voyeurism and attempts at making the violence against women seem natural, justified. The playwright criticises the indifference people show towards suffering of 'others'. The 'other' could sometimes be outsiders, the poor, the subalterns, the women, the children, the prostitutes, the transgender, and so on, but each time they are treated as different and almost 'non-human'.

4.3.4.2 Subaltern Studies:

As the focus of the play is on the way we treat ‘others’, it is natural that critical perspectives derived from gender studies, especially feminism, have been extensively employed in analysing the play. However, the play also leads fruitfully to other approaches like subaltern studies which have been largely ignored for the sake of feminist approaches by the most scholars. One such attempt is made by Lieder (2015) who uses Elaine Scarry’s *The Body in Pain* to show that the victim in *Lights Out* is a body in pain, more specifically, a gendered (female), classed (lower class), and raced (non-white) “other” in pain and more importantly asks, “Can the subaltern scream?”. Lieder (2015, p. 523) points out that

By classifying the woman as not just a whore, but a tattered (read lower-class) whore, Mohan and Bhasker identify her as so other that they cannot even begin to understand her behavior. Such a classification also allows them to justify their own behavior. By existing on a different socioeconomic plane, the screaming woman is not only beyond their understanding, but beyond their assistance.”

Using Gayatri Spivak and Butler’s work, Lieder contends,

The woman outside the window is functioning in both senses of the term [representation (in the sense of speaking for) and re-presentation (in the sense of showing again)]. She is a representation of a woman being raped, and her scream belongs not only to her, not only to all the women who have been raped on previous nights, but to the generalized woman-as-rape victim. Her very lack of visibility means she could be anyone, visualized in any way by the audience. At the same time, the screams are telling a story that has already happened, re-presenting an event that we cannot experience firsthand. (P. 533)

In many interviews, Manjula Padmanabhan has said that she writes about ‘ideas and characters rather than ideologies and symbols’. She has also answered bluntly that even if she finds feminism an interesting ideology, every ideology is delimiting to creativity and that she won’t classify her work as feminist theatre. However, most of the critical readings of her plays have been attempted from the perspective of feminism.

To some extent, it seems natural to apply feminist lenses to Padmanabhan’s plays as they deal, to a large extent, with workings of patriarchal society, exploitation of women, and (in *Harvest*) of third world people. However, there is also need to

look more critically at the plays and employ other perspectives too so that some other levels of meaning may also emerge.

Lights Out is a dense and layered play about class and gender inequalities in society. A majority of researchers and scholars analysing *Lights Out* have said that it deals with the insensitivity of men towards violence against women. However, this is far from the truth for not just the men but even all the women characters in the play are insensitive. They talk and talk and do nothing. The author herself has said in an interview,

“Whatever their intentions and words, their actions are what we remember: they do nothing. After all, it could be argued that the women are much more insensitive than the men, because they complain about the lack of action, but none of them – including Frieda -- picks up the phone and calls the police. Or the ambulance.”

4.3.4.3 Voyeurism, ‘The male gaze’ and *Lights Out*:

Padmanabhan’s play by keeping the sexual violence offstage, successfully avoids the trap of falling in the patriarchal trap of gratifying the voyeuristic tendencies. Instead, she makes the voyeur the object of our gaze, open for ridicule and contempt.

The ‘male gaze’ is a term used in feminist theory, especially feminist film theory, to refer to the act of depicting woman as an “object” for the pleasure of the heterosexual male viewer. The “male gaze” empowers men and objectifies women. The phrase was used by Laura Mulvey who noted that women are characterised by their “to-be-looked-at-ness” in cinema.

In the play *Lights Out*, Padmanabhan not just eschews the male gaze, but casts a female gaze at the male gaze. The ‘female gaze’ refers to the perspective a female filmmaker (screenwriter/director/producer) brings to a film that would be different from a male view of the subject.

4.3.4.4 The ‘bystander effect’ and *Lights Out*:

The play also shows ‘bystander effect’ in work. The term refers to the phenomenon in which more the number of people present, the less it is likely that people help a person in distress. When an emergency situation occurs, observers are more likely to take action if there are few or no other witnesses. Being part of a large

crowd makes it so no single person has to take responsibility for an action (or inaction).

4.3.4.5 Antonin Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty' and *Lights Out*:

French dramatist and theatre director Antonin Artaud believed that the theatre is a practice, which “wakes us up. Nerves and heart,” and shatters the false reality. This waking us up from false reality is cruel, and he calls such theatre, ‘Theatre of Cruelty’. Artaud was also in favour of using a unique language, halfway between thought and gesture for such theatre: “gestures, sounds, unusual scenery, and lighting combine to form a language, superior to words, that can be used to subvert thought and logic and to shock the spectator into seeing the baseness of his world.”. Artaud believed that language was an entirely insufficient means to express trauma. “Speech on the Theatre of Cruelty’s stage is reduced to inarticulate sounds, cries, and gibbering screams, no longer inviting a subject into being but seeking to preclude its very existence.”

Lights Out can be read a good example of what Artaud expected from the theatre. It shocks one out of an illusion; it wakes us up to our own behaviour and apathy. The play juxtaposes screams, silence, cries and inarticulate sounds of the victim and our very articulate yet inhuman ennui to shock us out of our false understanding of ourselves.

4.3.5 Check your Progress II

1. Who says the following in the play?
 - a. “You shut up! This is no time for women’s nonsense!”
 - b. “[I]f she were a decent woman, we people would go to her rescue! ... She is not, and so she’s being left to her fate!”
 - c. “It could be religious... an exorcism!”
 - d. “After all, they haven’t actually done us any harm —”
 - e. ‘Who are we to decide that they should die?’
 - f. “We just want them to go away somewhere else —”
 - g. What ritual?! That’s no ritual! That’s a — a—”
 - h. “It’s a rape, isn’t it?”

2. At what time of the day does the first scene begin?
3. What is the name of the play written by Padmanabhan for young adults?
4. What is the very first way suggested by Surinder to kill the culprits?
5. Who brings tea for Bhasker when he arrives home?
6. In which scene Mohan arrives for dinner at Bhasker's house?
7. Which scene ends with Bhasker, Leela and Mohan getting up to move to the dining table for dinner?
8. In which scene does Leela start screaming hysterically to call the police?
9. Who gets to say the last line of the play before the message (on screen/as voice over)? What are the words?
10. Where and when did the real incident on which the play is based happen?

4.4 Summary

This unit focused on two areas – the general topic in the syllabus ‘Modern Indian Drama’ and the prescribed play *Lights Out*. In the second section of the unit we delved into a survey of Modern Indian Drama after understanding the complex matters regarding how we look at ‘Modern’ and ‘Indian’. We also had a look at the Indian Drama in English. Important features of Modern Indian Drama and significant contributors to its development were discussed.

In the third section of the unit we undertook an in depth study of one modern play – *Lights Out*. To begin with, we looked at the author's opus, especially her plays. After discussing in detail the setting, plot structure and characters of the play, we embarked on critical reading of the play particularly using Feminist and Subaltern approaches. We also considered the play in the light of Voyeurism, ‘the male gaze’, the ‘bystander effect’ and Artaud's ‘Theatre of Cruelty’.

4.5 Answers to Check Your Progress

Answers to 4.2.7 Check your Progress I

1. In 1853 by Marathi playwright Vishnudas Bhave
2. Dinabandhu Mitra's Bengali play *Nildarpan* (1872)
3. In 1876

4. Jatra
5. The 'theatre of the roots' movement
6. Badal Sircar
7. Krishna Mohan Banerji's *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the present state of Hindu Society in Calcutta (1831)*.
8. 1-b, 2-d, 3-a, 4-c, 5-h, 6- g, 7- f, 8- e

Answers to 4.3.5 Check your Progress II

1. Who says the following in the play?
 - a. Surinder
 - b. Bhasker
 - c. Mohan
 - d. Bhasker
 - e. Mohan
 - f. Leela
 - g. Naina
 - h. Leela
2. Around dusk
3. *Astro-Nuts*.
4. Knives
5. Frieda
6. Scene 2
7. Scene 2
8. Scene 3
9. Leela - "Oh! Then it must be over for tonight!"
10. Santa Cruz, Bombay in 1982.

4.6 Exercises

Q1. Answer the following questions in about 600 words:

1. Write a detailed note on the contribution of Indian English playwrights to Indian drama.
2. Discuss the development of Modern Indian drama with reference to major dramatists in Indian languages.
3. Elaborate on the terms 'Modern' and 'Indian' in 'Modern Indian Drama'.
4. Comment on the major theme of the play *Lights Out*.
5. Discuss the play *Lights Out* in light of Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty.
6. Examine the victim in *Lights Out* as a gendered, classed, raced "other".
7. Write a detailed note on the plot structure of the play *Lights Out*.

Q2. Write short notes on the following topics (in about 200 words):

1. The three phases of Indian drama
2. Beginnings of Modern Indian Theatre
3. The 'theatre of the roots'
4. Vijay Tendulkar
5. Indian Women playwrights
6. Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) and theatre of social criticism
7. The character of Surinder in *Lights Out*
8. The male gaze
9. The significance of the title of the play *Lights Out*
10. Frieda

4.7 Books for Further Study

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ⁱ All references to the play are to 'Lights Out' in *Body Blows: Women, Violence and Survival. Three Plays*. Calcutta: Seagull. 2000.

