

*Centre for Distance & Online Education*

**UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU  
JAMMU**



**SELF LEARNING MATERIAL  
B.A SEMESTER — II  
SESSION — 2025 ONWARDS**

**SUBJECT: ENGLISH LITERATURE**

**UNIT: I-V**

**COURSE NO.: EL-201**

**LESSON NO: 1-14**

**CREDIT: 06**

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COURSE CO-ORDINATOR**

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## ENGLISH LITERATURE

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## **WELCOME MESSAGE**

We welcome the Distance Learners of BA Semester II English Literature. Semester II English Literature Course has five units. Unit I is on Introduction to literary terms, Unit II is on History of English Literature : Elizabethan Literature, Unit III is on Prose, Unit IV is on Poetry and Unit V is on Romantic Comedy. The Study Material provided to you is quite comprehensive, still you are advised to consult the books in the library and go through the prescribed texts and other reference books for preparing Internal Assessment Assignments and also for the semester end examination. We want you to make the optimum use of library facility. Do watch Shakespeare's plays made into movies to have a better grasp of Shakespeare's dramatic techniques and the nuances of his characters which make them unique in world literature.

Wish you good luck and success!

***Prof. Anupama Vohra***

***Detailed Syllabus of English Literature under NON-CBCS at UG level for the Examination to be held in the Academic Session 2025-2026, 2026-2027 and 2027-2028.***

***Semester II***

**Course Code : EL -201**

**Title: English Literature**

**Credit: 6**

**Maximum Marks: 100**

**Semester End Examination: 80**

**Internal Assessment : 20**

**Duration of examination: 03 Hrs.**

**UNIT-I**

**INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY TERMS**

Romantic Comedy, Shakespearean Sonnet, Aside, Climax, Anti-climax, Catharsis, Pun, Chorus, Comic relief, Peripeteia, Aphorism, Baroque, Ciceronean Prose Style, Anaphora, Monologue.

**UNIT-II**

**HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE: ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE**

- Characteristics of Elizabethan Literature
- Trends in Elizabethan Poetry
- Trends in Elizabethan Prose
- Development of Drama till Shakespeare
- Characteristics of Romantic Comedy

**UNIT-III**

**PROSE**

Bacon : “Of Studies”

**UNIT-IV**

**POETRY**

Spenser : *Prothalamion*

Shakespeare : “Sonnet XV”

## **UNIT-V**

### **ROMANTIC COMEDY**

William      Shakespeare      :  
*As You Like it.*

***Detailed Syllabus of English Literature under NON-CBCS at UG level for the Examination to be held in the Academic Session 2025-2026, 2026-2027 and 2027-2028.***

***Semester II***

**Course Code : EL -201**

**Title: English Literature**

**MODE OF EXAMINATION**

**External End Semester University Examination:**

**This paper will be divided into three sections A, B & C.**

**SECTION-A**

**MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

Section A will have 12 MCQs covering all the Units.

Students will write the correct answers of any 8 in the answer sheets. (8×1=8)

**SECTION-B**

**SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS**

Section B will have short answer questions from Unit I to Unit V. Four out of five questions will have to be attempted by the students. (4×4=16 Marks)

**SECTION-C**

**LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS**

Section C will have four long answer type questions from Unit II to Unit V with internal choice from the same unit. Candidates will be required to attempt all in about 250-300 words each. (14×4=56 Marks)

**INTERNAL ASSESSMENT TEST**

(Total Marks : 20)

Two Written Assignments of 10 marks each shall be given.

**SUGGESTED READING :**

Boris Ford. *The Age Of Shakspeare* U.S.A. Penguin Books Pvt. Ltd. 1993.

*H. D. Charlton Shakespearean Comedy*. Routledge Kegan and Paul, 1966.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## SEMESTER II

Page No.

<b>Unit-I</b>	<b>Introduction to Literary Terms</b>
Lesson-1	Romantic Comedy, Shakespearean Sonnet, Aside, Climax, Anti-Climax, Catharsis <b>Lesson Writer : Dr. Geetanjali Rajput</b>
Lesson-2	Introduction to Literary Terms  Pun, Chorus, Comic relief, Peripeteia, Aphorism, Baroque, Ciceronean Prose Style, Anaphora, Monologue <b>Lesson Writer : Dr. Geetanjali Rajput</b>
<b>Unit-II</b>	<b>History of English Literature : Elizabethan Literature</b>
Lesson-3	Characteristics of Elizabethan Literature <b>Lesson Writer : Dr. Chetna Gupta</b>
Lesson-4	Trends in Elizabethan Poetry and Prose <b>Lesson Writer : Dr. Chetna Gupta</b>
Lesson-5	Development of Drama till Shakespeare and Characteristics of Romantic Comedy <b>Lesson Writer : Dr. Chetna Gupta</b>
<b>Unit-III</b>	<b>Prose</b>
Lesson-6	Bacon: "Of Studies" General Introduction of the Writer and his Work <b>Lesson Writer : Dr. Jasleen Kaur</b>
Lesson-7	Bacon : "Of Studies" Detailed Study of the Essay <b>Lesson Writer : Dr. Jasleen Kaur</b>

**Unit–IV      Poetry**

Lesson–8      Spenser : *Prothalamion*  
**Lesson Writer : Dr. Geetanjali Rajput**

Lesson–9      Spenser : *Prothalamion*  
**Lesson Writer : Dr. Geetanjali Rajput**

Lesson–10      Shakespeare : “Sonnet XV”  
**Lesson Writer : Ms. Nusrat Chowdhary**

**Unit–V      Romantic Comedy**

Lesson–11      William Shakespeare : *As You Like It*  
General Introduction of the Dramatist and his Play  
**Lesson Writer : Dr. Shubhra Jamwal**

Lesson–12      William Shakespeare : *As You Like It*  
Summary of the Play  
**Lesson Writer : Dr. Shubhra Jamwal**

Lesson–13      William Shakespeare : *As You Like it*  
Act Wise and Scene Wise Summary  
**Lesson Writer : Dr. Shubhra Jamwal**

Lesson–14      William Shakespeare : *As You Like It*  
Reference to Context/ Long Answer Questions/Short Answer Questions  
**Lesson Writer : Dr. Shubhra Jamwal**



**Course Code : EL-201 (B.A. Sem II)**

**UNIT-I**

**Course Title : English Literature**

**LESSON NO.1**

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## **INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY TERMS**

### **STRUCTURE:**

- 1.0** Objectives And Outcomes
- 1.1** Introduction
- 1.2** Literary Terms
  - 1.2.1** Romantic Comedy
  - 1.2.2** Shakespearean Sonnet
  - 1.2.3** Aside
  - 1.2.4** Climax
  - 1.2.5** Anti-Climax
  - 1.2.6** Catharsis
- 1.3** Let Us Sum Up
- 1.4** Self-Check Exercise
- 1.5** Answer Key
- 1.6** Suggested Reading

### **1.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

The main objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- (a) to acquaint the learner with the basic literary terms most commonly used in literature.
- (b) to help the learner in explaining the various literary terms/texts prescribed in a better way.

After completing this lesson, the learners will be able to:

1. define key literary terms commonly used in literary analysis.
2. apply literary terminology accurately when discussing and interpreting literary texts.

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION:**

This lesson introduces the learner to various literary terms most commonly used in literature. These literary terms will help the learner in analyzing the literary texts in an effective manner.

### **1.2 LITERARY TERMS:**

#### **1.2.1 ROMANTIC COMEDY**

A comedy is a literary work that is designed to please and delight its audience, and that typically ends with the resolution of all major conflicts and the construction of a harmonious new state of affairs. In contrast to tragedies, which involve the death or exile of figures, comedies often find new social places for even their anomalous or aggressive characters. Comedies also tend to include elements of exaggeration, farce, and social satire. Romantic Comedy was developed by Elizabethan dramatists on the model of contemporary prose romances such as Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* (1590), the source of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1599). Such comedy represents a love affair that involves a beautiful and engaging heroine (sometimes disguised as a man); the course of this love does not run smooth, yet overcomes all difficulties to end in a happy union. Many of the boy-meets-girl plots of later writers are instances of romantic comedy, as are romance novels and many motion pictures, from *The Philadelphia Story* to *Sleepless in Seattle*. In *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye points out that some of Shakespeare's romantic comedies manifest a movement from the normal world of conflict and trouble into "the green world"—the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, or the fairy-haunted wood of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—in which the problems and injustices of the ordinary world are dissolved, enemies reconciled, and true lovers united. Frye regards that phenomenon (together with other aspects of these comedies, such as their frequent conclusion in the social ritual of a wedding, a feast, or a dance) as evidence that comic plots derive from primitive myths and rituals that celebrated the victory of spring over winter. (See archetypal criticism.) Linda Bamber's *Comic Women, Tragic Men: A Study of Gender and Genre in Shakespeare* (1982) undertakes to account for the fact that in Shakespeare's romantic comedies, the women are often superior to the men, while in his tragedies he "creates such nightmare female figures as Goneril, Regan, Lady Macbeth, and Volumnia.

### **1.2.2 Shakespearean Sonnet**

A Shakespearean sonnet is a variation on the Italian sonnet tradition. The form evolved in England during and around the time of the Elizabethan era. These sonnets are sometimes referred to as Elizabethan sonnets or English sonnets.

Although Shakespeare's sonnets have prominently endured for centuries, he was hardly alone in his embrace of this poetic style. Many prominent English

poets of the day, from John Donne to John Milton, also wrote sonnets.

Shakespearean sonnets feature the following elements:

1. They are fourteen lines long.
2. The fourteen lines are divided into four subgroups.
3. The first three subgroups have four lines each, which makes them “quatrains,” with the second and fourth lines of each group containing rhyming words
4. The sonnet then concludes with a two-line subgroup, and these two lines rhyme with each other.
5. There are typically ten syllables per line, which are phrased in iambic pentameter.

Shakespeare was not the first English poet of sonnets. In fact, English poets were writing sonnets for nearly a century before Shakespeare. The Italian sonnet form was introduced to English culture by Sir Thomas Wyatt sometime in the early sixteenth century. His contemporary, Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, was also an author of sonnets and a translator of existing Italian hallmarks of the genre. The Italian sonnets were termed Petrarchan sonnets, named for Francesco Petrarch, a lyrical poet of fourteenth-century Italy. Although Petrarch did not invent the Italian sonnet, he is considered the perfecter of the form. The commonly credited originator of the sonnet is Giacomo da Lentini, who composed poetry in the literary Sicilian dialect in the thirteenth century.

Shakespeare’s relationship to the English sonnet is analogous to Petrarch’s relationship to the Italian sonnet. Much like Petrarch, Shakespeare did not originate the poetic form that bears his name. However, his evident mastery of the form prompted literary historians to name the entire subgenre after him.

Sonnets already contained fourteen lines before Shakespeare adapted the form. However, the Shakespearean form is easily characterized by its structure, meter, and rhyme scheme. A rhyme scheme is the rhyming sequence or arrangement of sounds at the end of each line of poetry. It is typically represented by using letters to demonstrate which lines rhyme with which.

For example:

*Roses are red—A*  
*Violets are blue—B*  
*Sugar is sweet—C*  
*And so are you—B*

A Shakespearean sonnet employs the following rhyme scheme across its fourteen lines—which, again, are broken up into three quatrains plus a two-line coda:

ABAB CDCD EFEF GG

### 1.2.3 ASIDE

Normally, playwrights use dialogues to express their characters, but often it becomes difficult for them to express the thinking of their characters. Hence, they use a typical dramatic device, aside, that solves this problem. It is a short comment or speech that a character delivers directly to the audience or to himself, while other actors on the stage cannot listen. Only the audience can realize that an actor has expressed speech for them. In essence, through aside, a character comments on what happens in the play. Simply, we can define aside as a short commentary that reveals private opinions and reactions of the character. However, it refers to the major conflict in a play though it may not involve his personal conflict.

### 1.2.4 CLIMAX

Climax, a Greek term meaning “ladder”, is that particular point in a narrative at which the conflict or tension hits the highest point. Climax is a structural part of a plot and is at times referred to as a crisis. It is a decisive moment or a turning point in a storyline at which the rising action turns around into a falling action. Thus, a climax is the point at which a conflict or crisis reaches its peak that calls for a resolution or denouement (conclusion). In a five-act play, the climax is close to the conclusion of act three. Later in the 19th century, the five-act plays were replaced by three-act plays and the climax was placed close to the conclusion or at the end of the play.

#### Examples of Climax in Literature

Let us analyze a few climax examples in literature:

#### Example 1

In William Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*, the story reaches its climax in Act 3. In the first scene of the act, Romeo challenges Tybalt to a duel after he (Tybalt) killed Mercutio:

*"And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now!  
Now, Tybalt, take the 'villain' back again*

*That late thou gavest me; for Mercutio's soul*

*Is but a little way above our heads,"*

*As soon as he killed Tybalt, Romeo says:  
"O! I am Fortune's Fool!"*

He realizes that he has killed his wife's cousin. This juncture in the play is a climax as the audience wonders how Romeo would get out of this terrible situation. Similarly, it qualifies as a climax because after this act all the prior conflicts start to be resolved and mysteries unfold themselves and thus the story moves toward its logical conclusion during the coming scenes.

### **Example 2**

In Joseph Conrad's novel, *The Heart of Darkness*, the narrative reaches its climax when Marlowe starts his journey in his steam boat, in the direction of the inner station and his final discovery upon reaching the station and meeting Kurtz. He was shocked to discover that Kurtz had abandoned all norms and morals of his civilization after giving in to the savage customs of the wild Congo. Following this point in the novel, the mystery surrounding Kurtz is unfolded and the questions in the mind of Marlowe find their answers automatically when he sees the real situation.

### **Climax as a Stylistic Device**

As a stylistic device, the term climax refers to a literary device in which words, phrases and clauses are arranged in an order to increase their importance within the sentence. The following are examples of climax as a stylistic device :

### **Example 1**

William Shakespeare achieves climax in the passage below, taken from his sonnet "The Passionate Pilgrim":

*"Beauty is but a vain and doubtful good;  
A shining gloss that vadeth suddenly;  
  
A flower that dies when first it gins to bud;  
A brittle glass that's broken presently:  
  
A doubtful good, a gloss, a glass, a flower, Lost,  
vaded, broken, dead within an hour."*

The phrase "dead within an hour" is placed at the very end as it marks the climax



of the fate of beauty which he introduces as "a vain and doubtful good".

### **Example 2**

"I Have a Dream", a memorable address of Martin Luther King:

"This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the unalienable Rights of Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

The aforementioned line qualifies as the climax of Martin Luther's speech which criticizes and rejects racial discrimination suffered by black Americans at the hands of white Americans.

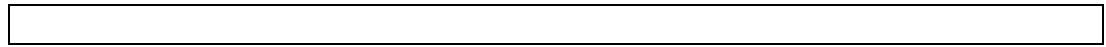
### **Function of Climax**

A climax, when used as a plot device, helps readers to understand the significance of the rising action earlier to the point in the plot where the conflict reaches its peak. The climax of the story makes readers mentally prepared for the resolution of the conflict. Hence, climax is important to the plot structure of a story. Moreover, climax is used as a stylistic device or a figure of speech to render balance and brevity to speech or writing. Being properly employed, it qualifies itself as a powerful tool that can instantly capture the undivided attention of listeners and readers alike. Hence, its importance cannot be underestimated.

### **Activity**

#### **Fill in the Blanks**

1. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a literary work that is designed to please and delight its audience.
2. A Shakespearean sonnet is divided into three \_\_\_\_\_ and a final two-line \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The typical rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. A Shakespearean sonnet usually contains \_\_\_\_\_ lines written in \_\_\_\_\_ pentameter.
5. An \_\_\_\_\_ is a short comment or speech delivered to the audience that other characters cannot hear.
6. The \_\_\_\_\_ is the turning point or moment of greatest tension in a narrative.



### **1.3.5. ANTI-CLIMAX**

Anti-climax is a rhetorical device which can be defined as a disappointing situation or a sudden transition in discourse from an important idea to a ludicrous or trivial one. It is when at a specific point, expectations are raised, everything is built-up and then suddenly something boring or disappointing happens; this is an anti-climax. Besides that, the order of statements gradually descends in anti-climax.

#### **Types of Anti-Climax**

There are two types of anti-climax. The first is used in narrations such as the anti-climax about the overall plot of the story. However, the second one is a figure of speech which could occur anywhere in the story.

### Examples of Anti-Climax from Literature

In literature, there are lots of examples of anti-climax, whether narrative or as a figure of speech. Let us consider a few of them:

#### Example 1

*"Here thou, great Anna, whom three realms obey,  
Dost sometimes counsel take, and sometimes tea...."*

*(The Rape of the Lock by Alexander Pope)*

In the extract, it is used as a figure of speech. Pope is drawing the attention of the readers to the falseness. Anna is Queen of England, who holds meetings and indulges also in afternoon tea customs. Ludicrous effect is created by using the anti-climax.

#### Example 2

*"Come away: for Life and Thought  
Here no longer dwell;*

*But in a city glorious-*

*A great and distant city-have bought A  
mansion incorruptible.*

*Would they could have stayed with us...!"*

*(The Deserted House by Alfred Lord Tennyson)*

Here the last line of the poem presents anti-climax, as the poet is describing issues associated with life on earth. Here, heaven is referred as "city glorious". He asks whether people could come and live in heaven, which is a change in discourse from an important note to trivial.

#### Example 3

##### OTHELLO

*"Well, hurry up and confess. Be quick about it.  
I'll wait over here.*

*I don't want to kill you before you've readied your soul.*

*No, I don't want to send your soul to hell when I kill you....”*

## **DESDEMONA**

**“Send me away, my lord, but don't kill me....”**

## **OTHELLO**

**“It's too late....”**

*(Othello by William Shakespeare)*

This is one of the narrative anti-climax examples from Shakespeare's works. Here, a sudden transformation can be seen, when Othello stabs Desdemona. It is creating a disappointing and thrilling effect in the end.

### **Example 4**

#### **DON PEDRO :**

*“Why, then are you no maiden.-Leonato,  
I am sorry you must hear. Upon mine honor,  
Myself, my brother, and this grievèd count Did  
see her, hear her, at that hour last night Talk  
with a ruffian at her chamber window Who  
hath indeed, most like a liberal villain,  
Confessed the vile encounters they have had  
A thousand times in secret.”*

*(Much Ado About Nothing by William Shakespeare)*

This is a best example of anti-climax, when hero is publically denounced and humiliated at her wedding occasion. Her chastity is challenged by her fiancé Claudio. Here climax turns into anti-climax.

### **Example 5**

Faustus :

“Nay! Let me have one book more,

and then I have done, wherein I might see all plants, herbs, and trees that grow upon the earth.

Meph :

“Here they be.

Faustus:

O thou art deceived...”

(*Dr. Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe)

This is an example of anti-climax as a figure of speech, which has taken place in the final line of this excerpt. Marlowe uses it as a warning to the audience not to follow the ways of Faustus, because it could bring shallow reward and superficial happiness only.

### **1.2.6 CATHARSIS**

A Catharsis is an emotional discharge through which one can achieve a state of moral or spiritual renewal or achieve a state of liberation from anxiety and stress. Catharsis is a greek word and it means cleansing. In literature, it is used for the cleansing of emotions of the characters. It can also be any other radical change that leads to emotional rejuvenation of a person.

Originally, the term was used as a metaphor in *Poetics* by Aristotle to explain the impact of tragedy on the audiences. He believed that catharsis was the ultimate end of a tragic artistic work and it marked its quality. He further said in *Poetics*:

"Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; . . . through pity [eleos] and fear [phobos] effecting the proper purgation [catharsis] of these emotions" (c. 350 BCE, Book 6.2).

### **Examples of Catharsis**

#### **Example 1**

*Macbeth* by William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare wrote two of the famous examples of catharsis. One of these is his tragic drama *Macbeth*. This play presents a great example of catharsis. The audience and readers of *Macbeth* usually pity the tragic central figure of the play because he was blinded by his destructive preoccupation with ambition.

In Act 1 he is made the Thane of Cawdor by King Duncan, which makes him a prodigy, well-regarded for his valor and talent. However, the era of his doom starts when he, like most people, gets carried away by ambition and the supernatural world as well. Subsequently, he loses his wife, his veracity and eventually his life. The temptation of ambition robs him of the essence of his existence as a human being and leaves behind nothing but discontent and a worthless life. In Act V, Macbeth gathers this idea in his soliloquy. He says while speaking of his life:

*"...a poor player*

*That struts and frets his hour upon the stage And  
then is heard no more. It is a tale*

*Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing"*

## **Example 2**

*Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare

**"Here's to my love! [Drinks] O true apothecary! Thy drugs are quick.  
Thus with a kiss I die. [Falls]"**

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo commits suicide by drinking the poison that he erroneously thinks Juliet had tasted too. The audience usually finds themselves crying at this particular moment for several reasons. Primarily, because losing a loved one is a feeling that all of us share. Watching or reading such a scene triggers the memories of someone we have lost (either by death or by mere separation) and because we are able to relate to it, we suddenly release the emotions that we have been repressing.

## **Function of Catharsis: Dramatic uses**

In dramatic art the term catharsis explains the impact of tragedy, comedy or any other form of art on the audience and in some cases even on the performers themselves. Aristotle did not elaborate on the meaning of "catharsis" and the way he used it in defining tragedy in the *Poetics*.

According to G.F. Else, the conventional and the most prevalent explanation of catharsis as "purgation" or "cleansing" does not have a basis in the *Poetics*. It has rather

stemmed from other non-Aristotelian and Aristotelian contexts. Such confusion regarding



the origin of the term has led to assorted interpretations of its meaning.

An authoritative version of the *Poetics* by D.W. Lucas thoroughly covered, in an Appendix dedicated to "Pity, Fear, and Katharsis", the different shades of meaning and aspects inherent in the interpretation of the word (Aristotle: *Poetics*, Oxford, 1968, pp. 276-79). Lucas identifies that there is a chance that catharsis may have some aspect of meanings like "purgation", "intellectual clarification" and "purification".

However, the kind of discussion he conducts on these terms is not as precise as other leading scholars would want it to be. He does not consider any interpretations other than his own and rather takes a different approach. His approach is centered on "the Greek doctrine of Humours", which was not received too well.

The most common interpretations of the term are purgation and purification, and are still widely used. The most recent interpretation of the term catharsis is "intellectual clarification".

### **1.3 LET US SUM UP**

The detailed explanations of the literary terms like Comedy, Tragedy, Aside, Climax, Anti-Climax and Catharsis given in this lesson will help the learner in analyzing the literary texts properly.

### **1.4 SELF-CHECK EXERCISE**

- Q.1. Define Comedy.
- Q.2. -----is kind of drama that presents a serious subject matter about human suffering and corresponding terrible events in a dignified manner.
- Q.3. What is Aside ?
- Q.4. Define Climax.
- Q.5. What is the impact of Climax on the minds of the readers?
- Q.6. Explain Anti-climax.
- Q.7. How many types of Anti-climax is there ?

- Q.8. What is Catharsis ?
- Q.9. What is the function of Catharsis ?
- Q.10. In *Romeo and Juliet*, who commits suicide by drinking poison ?
- Q.11. How does Aristotle define Tragedy ?

## **1.5 ANSWER KEY**

### **Activity**

Comedy, Quatrains- couplet, ABAB CDCD EFEF GG, Fourteen- iambic, Aside, Climax

### **Self Check Exercise**

- Ans. 1. A comedy is a literary work that is designed to please and delight its audience, and that typically ends with the resolution of all major conflicts and the construction of a harmonious new state of affairs.
- Ans. 2. Tragedy
- Ans. 3. It is a short comment or speech that a character delivers directly to the audience or to himself, while other actors on the stage cannot listen.
- Ans. 4. A climax is the point at which a conflict or crisis reaches its peak that calls for a resolution or denouement (conclusion).
- Ans. 5. The climax of the story makes readers mentally prepared for the resolution of the conflict.
- Ans. 6. It is when at a specific point, expectations are raised, everything is built-up and then suddenly something boring or disappointing happens
- Ans. 7. There are two types of anti-climax. The first is used in narrations such as the anti-climax about the overall plot of the story. However, the second one is a figure of speech which could occur anywhere in the story.
- Ans. 8. A Catharsis is an emotional discharge through which one can achieve a state of moral or spiritual renewal or achieve a state of liberation from

anxiety and stress.

Ans. 9. In dramatic art the term catharsis explains the impact of tragedy, comedy or any other form of art on the audience and in some cases even on the performers themselves.

Ans. 10. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo commits suicide by drinking the poison that

he erroneously thinks Juliet had tasted too.

Ans. 11. Aristotle defines Tragedy in his famous work *Poetics* as:

"Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete (composed of an introduction, a middle part and an ending), and possesses magnitude; in language made pleasurable, each of its species separated in different parts; performed by actors, not through narration; effecting through pity and fear the purification of such emotions."

From the above definition, we can understand the objective of the Greek tragedies i.e. "...purification of such emotions" also called "catharsis". Catharsis is a release of emotional tension, as after an overwhelming experience, that restores or refreshes the spirit.

## 1.6 SUGGESTED READING

M. H. Abrams and G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 10th ed., Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012.

J. A. Cuddon and M. A. R. Habib, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. 5th ed., Penguin Books, 2015.

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**Course Code : EL-201 (B.A. Sem II)**

**UNIT-I**

**Course Title: English Literature**

**LESSON NO.2**

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**INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY TERMS**

**STRUCTURE:**

- 2.0** Objectives And Outcomes
- 2.1** Introduction
- 2.2** Literary Terms
  - 2.2.1** Pun
  - 2.2.2** Chorus
  - 2.2.3** Comic Relief
  - 2.2.4** Peripeteia
  - 2.2.5** Aphorism
  - 2.2.6** Baroque
  - 2.2.7** Ciceronean Prose Style
  - 2.2.8** Anaphora
  - 2.2.9** Monologue
- 2.3** Let Us Sum Up
- 2.4** Self-Check Exercise
- 2.5** Examination Oriented Questions
- 2.6** Answer Key
- 2.7** Suggested Reading

**2.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

The main objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- (a) to acquaint the learner with the basic literary terms most commonly used in literature.
- (b) to help the learner in explaining the various literary terms prescribed in a

better way.

After completing this lesson, learners will be able to identify, define and explain the function of key literary terms such as pun, chorus, comic relief, peripeteia, aphorism and anaphora in literary texts.

## **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This lesson introduces the learner to various literary terms most commonly used in literature. These literary terms will help the learner in analyzing the literary texts in an effective manner.

## **2.2 LITERARY TERMS:**

### **2.2.1 PUN**

The pun, also called paronomasia, is a form of word play that suggests two or more meanings, by exploiting multiple meanings of words, or of similar-sounding words, for an intended humorous or rhetorical effect. These ambiguities can arise from the intentional use of homophonic, homographic, metonymic, or figurative language. A pun differs from a malapropism in that a malapropism is an incorrect variation on a correct expression, while a pun involves expressions with multiple correct interpretations. Puns may be regarded as in-jokes or idiomatic constructions, as their usage and meaning are specific to a particular language and its culture.

### **2.2.2 CHORUS**

A group of singers who stand alongside or off stage from the principal performers in a dramatic or musical performance. It is the song or refrain that this group of singers sings. In ancient Greece, the chorus was originally a group of male singers and dancers (choreuti) who participated in religious festivals and dramatic performances by singing, commenting on the deeds of the characters and interpreting the significance of the events within the play. This group contrasts with the actors (Greek hypocrites). Shakespeare alters the traditional chorus by replacing the singers with a single figure-often allegorical in nature. For instance, "Time" comes on stage in *The Winter's Tale* to explain the passing years. Likewise, "Rumor" appears in *Henry IV*, Part Two to summarize the gossip about Prince Hal.

### **2.2.3 COMIC RELIEF**

If a play is too serious and you just have tragedy upon tragedy then the audience will begin to laugh at the tragedy. It is not a result that playwrights aim for. So, to keep them from laughing at the tragedy they slip little bits of comedy into the play so that the audience can have their laugh, relieve the nervous tension, and get back to the grim stuff. Shakespeare understood this and inserted clowns into his more serious plays to provide the comic relief.

#### **2.2.4 PERIPETEIA**

Peripeteia is a sudden change in a story which results in a negative reversal of circumstances. Peripeteia is also known as the turning point, the place in which the tragic protagonist's fortune changes from good to bad. This literary device is meant to surprise the audience, but is also meant to follow as a result of a character's previous actions or mistakes.

##### ***For example:***

A very wealthy man has been making money for decades by taking big risks in the stock market. Suddenly, the stock market crashes and he is launched into poverty.

In this example, peripeteia is a drastic change in circumstance, as a once wealthy man becomes poor. The quick reversal of fortune is surprising, but also makes sense as the man has been making risky investments all his life.

#### **Examples of Peripeteia**

##### **Example 1**

A once kind, patient, and friendly factory worker becomes fed-up with her job, her boss, and her co-workers after twenty years of the same thing. She transforms into a mean, bitter, and quiet person.

In this example, peripeteia is a big change in character. This character reversal is shocking and dramatic, but it makes sense, as the woman's work has slowly been reducing her self-esteem for years.

##### **Example 2**

A conman has been getting away with huge cons for his entire life, but the police have slowly been getting closer to catching him. At last, he is caught just miles away from his getaway boat.

In this last example, peripeteia occurs as a change in circumstances. The high-flying conman is finally caught. This is shocking as he has remained on the run for his entire life, but it is expected as well since justice must be served.



## **The Importance of using Peripeteia**

According to Aristotle, peripeteia is the single most important and powerful element of plot in a tragedy. Peripeteia is meant to cause fear and pity in the audience upon witnessing the tragic twist of fate which abruptly ruins the life of the protagonist. Peripeteia provides a point of shock and dismay in a complex plot, often ironically weaving previous actions with their present effects. Peripeteia provides the tragic plot with surprise and emotional complexity.

### **Examples of Peripeteia in Literature**

Peripeteia provides literature with a shocking and abrupt point in the plot which changes the entire course of the story.

#### **Example 1**

For a classic example of peripeteia, consider Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*:

Oedipus was raised by different parents, for his parents feared the prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother. As an adult, Oedipus is told by an oracle that the plague on his people will end when the murderer of Laius is caught and exiled. Oedipus visits a prophet Tiresias who tells him he is the murderer. Believing he is innocent, Oedipus is angered. His wife, trying to calm him down, tells him of Laius's murder. Oedipus, upon hearing the story, suspects he may have been the murderer. A messenger arrives to tell Oedipus that his father Polybus has died. Oedipus rejoices that he has not murdered his father, but still fears he may marry his mother. The messenger, hoping to ease his fears, tells him Polybus and his wife were not his real parents. Rather than easing his fears, the messenger reveals the dark truth to Oedipus: he has fulfilled the prophecy.

In this example, the peripeteia occurs when Oedipus learns of his parents' true identity from the messenger. He realizes he has murdered his father and married his mother, according to the prophecy. Abruptly, his good fortune is ruined and he stabs his eyes out in dismay.

### **2.2.5 APHORISM**

It is a statement of truth or opinion expressed in a concise and witty manner. The

term is often applied to philosophical, moral and literary principles.

To qualify as an aphorism, it is necessary for a statement to contain a truth revealed in a terse manner. Aphoristic statements are quoted in writings as well as in our daily speech. The fact that they contain a truth gives them a universal acceptance. Scores of philosophers, politicians, writers, artists and sportsman and other individuals are remembered for their famous aphoristic statements.

Aphorisms often come with a pinch of humour, which makes them more appealing to the masses. Proverbs, maxims, adages and clichés are different forms of aphoristic statements that gain prevalence from generation to generation and frequently appear in our day-to-day speech.

### **Examples of Aphorism in Literature**

Many pieces of literature are appreciated for the aphorisms they contain which are often cited by scholars as well as laymen. Below are some examples of aphorisms in literature:

#### **Example 1**

Sir Francis Bacon excels in aphoristic style of writing. Possibly, his sayings are the most quoted of all. Read the following examples:

**"Studies serve for delight, for ornament and for ability." "(Of Studies)"**

**"To use too many circumstances, ere one come to the matter, is wearisome, to use none at all, is Blunt." "(Of Discourse)"**

**"Praise is the reflection of the virtue. But it is the reflection glass or body which giveth the reflection." "(Of Praise)"**

#### **Example 2**

Shakespeare does not fall behind any writer in the use of aphorisms in his plays. The use of abundant aphorisms testifies to his keen insight and judgment. Below are some examples:

**"Having nothing, nothing can he lose." (Henry VI)**

**"Life is a tale told by an idiot - full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."**

*(Macbeth)*

**"Lord, what fools these mortals be!"***(A Midsummer Night's Dream)*

### **Example 3**

An example of aphorism can be seen in "To kill a Mocking Bird" by Nelle Harper Lee. Atticus Finch tells her daughter:

**"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view - until you climb into his skin and walk around in it."**

The above statement holds the truth, as we cannot claim to judge a person unless we understand the way he views the world and its affairs.

### **Example 4**

Nafisa Haji provides us an example of aphorism in her novel *"The Writing on My Forehead"*. Big Namina, a wise character, says:

**"If? There is no if. There is only what is. What was? What will be."**

We can perceive the truth in the above statement because it gives a message to always live in a moment. It tells us that it is useless to have regrets about the past and we should move on with our lives for a better present and future.

### **Example 5**

Alexander Pope was a great aphorist of 18th century. Following are some memorable quotes from his works:

**"'Tis education forms the common mind; just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined."** *(Golden Treasury of the Familiar)*

**"To err is human, to forgive divine."** *(An Essay on Criticism)*

**"What Reason weaves, by Passion is undone."** *(Essay on Man and Other Poems)*

**"Act well your part; there all the honour lies."** *(An Essay on Man)*

### **Function of Aphorism**

As already mentioned in the above discussion, making use of aphorisms allows a writer to teach a philosophical or moral truth. The revealed truths prove relevant to human experiences of real life. Therefore, the readers relate the piece of literature to real life and become more fascinated and vigilant in their reading.

Moreover, as truths are universal, revealing general truths in literature, adds to their universal commendation. Motivational speeches quote aphorisms from such sources to inspire motivation among individuals.

### **2.3.6. BAROQUE**

The Baroque is often thought of as a period of artistic style that used exaggerated motion and clear, easily interpreted detail to produce drama, tension, exuberance, and grandeur in sculpture, painting, architecture, literature, dance, theatre, and music. The style began around 1600 in Rome, Italy, and spread to most of Europe.

The popularity and success of the Baroque style was encouraged by the Catholic Church, which had decided at the time of the Council of Trent, in response to the Protestant Reformation, that the arts should communicate religious themes in direct and emotional involvement. The aristocracy also saw the dramatic style of Baroque architecture and art as a means of impressing visitors and expressing triumph, power and control. Baroque palaces are built around an entrance of courts, grand staircases and reception rooms of sequentially increasing opulence. However, "baroque" has resonance and application that extend beyond a simple reduction to either style or period.

### **2.3.7. CICERONEAN PROSE STYLE**

Ciceronean style is particularly dominant during the Tudor era in the mid to late 16th Century. The form and sound of prose (euphonics) are often more important than content.

Ciceronean style emphasizes on:

1. Balance-Parallelism
2. Antithesis-opposition used for emphasis

*e.g* Marriage has many pains, but celibacy has few pleasures (Pope)

3. Usually requires parallelism.

4. Alliteration

5. Anadiplosis,

*e.g* Pleasure might cause her read, Reading

might cause her know;

Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain.

### ACTIVITY

#### True/False

1. A pun involves wordplay based on multiple meanings or similar-sounding words.
2. Peripeteia is a sudden reversal in fortune, not a gradual character change.
3. Aphorisms are short statements, not long essays.
4. "To err is human, to forgive divine" is a well-known aphorism.
5. Baroque is known for being exaggerated and dramatic, not simple.

### 2.3.8 ANAPHORA

Anaphora is a literary and rhetorical device in which a word or group of words is repeated at the beginning of two or more successive clauses or sentences. This technique adds emphasis and unity to the clauses. For example, look at the function of the words "if only" in the following sentence: "If only I hadn't gone to the market that day, if only I hadn't dropped my bag, if only we hadn't met."

#### Common Examples of Anaphora

Many orators and politicians use anaphora in their speeches to reinforce certain ideas and to make them stand out to the audience. One of the most famous examples of anaphora in a speech is from Martin Luther King Jr.'s address at the 1963 March on Washington. In fact, the anaphora is so famous that it has retroactively become the name of the speech: I have a dream. After a gospel singer called out "Tell them about

the dream, Martin!", Martin Luther King Jr. departed from his typed-up speech and began to extemporize, repeating the phrase "I have a dream" many times over.

**Other famous anaphora examples in speeches include:**

We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender. – Winston Churchill

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right,...– Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address

To raise a happy, healthy, and hopeful child, it takes a family; it takes teachers; it takes clergy; it takes business people; it takes community leaders; it takes those who protect our health and safety. It takes all of us. –Hillary Clinton, 1996 DNC

Anaphora also is prevalent in other forms of media, like songs, television shows and movies:

WALTER WHITE : I am not in danger, Skyler. I am the danger. A guy opens his door and gets shot and you think that of me? No. I am the one who knocks! (Breaking Bad)

HOMER SIMPSON : I want to shake off the dust of this one-horse town. I want to explore the world. I want to watch TV in a different time zone. I want to visit strange, exotic malls. I'm sick of eating hoagies! I want a grinder, a sub, a foot-long hero! I want to live, Marge! Won't you let me live? Won't you, please? (The Simpsons)

SEAN : So if I asked you about art, you'd probably give me the skinny on every art book ever written.... If I ask you about women, you'd probably give me a syllabus about your personal favorites.... And I'd ask you about war, you'd probably throw Shakespeare at me, right, "once more unto the breach dear friends.".... I'd ask you about love, you'd probably quote me a sonnet. (Good Will Hunting)

### **Significance of Anaphora in Literature**

Anaphora is one of the oldest literary devices, and dates back to religious texts such as the Psalms of the Bible. Anaphora is most commonly found in poetry, though it can be found in prose as well. Since anaphora uses redundancy to dramatic effect, editors of academic writing and journalism would not approve of it. Thus, anaphora works against these more formal styles of writing and is used to create rhythm and emphasis in a poetic fashion.

### **Examples of Anaphora in Literature**

#### **Example 1**

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity,

it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope,  
it was the winter of despair...

### **2.3.9 MONOLOGUE**

Monologue, in literature and drama, is an extended speech by one person. The term has several closely related meanings. A dramatic monologue is any speech of some duration addressed by a character to a second person. A soliloquy is a type of monologue in which a character directly addresses an audience or speaks his thoughts aloud while alone or while the other actors keep silent. In fictional literature, an interior monologue is a type of monologue that exhibits the thoughts, feelings, and associations passing through a character's mind.

Monologue comes from Greek word *monos* means alone and *logos* means speech. It is a literary device, which is the speech or verbal presentation that a single character presents in order to express his/her collection of thoughts and ideas aloud. Often this character addresses directly to audience or another character. Monologues are found in the dramatic medium like films, plays and also in non-dramatic medium such as poetry.

#### **Types of Monologue**

There are two types of Monologues:

##### **1. Interior Monologue**

In interior monologue, a character externalizes his thoughts, so that audience could witness the experiences, which might otherwise be remained internal. Often found in plays, movies and novels, this technique is also called as stream of consciousness. It has further two categories, direct and indirect. In direct interior monologue, an author does not show his presence and directly reveals his character, while in an indirect interior monologue, an author appears as a commentator, guide, presenter and selector.

##### **2. Dramatic Monologue**

In this type of monologue, a character speaks to the silent listener. This type has theatrical qualities. Hence, it is known as dramatic monologue, and is frequently used in poetry.



### **Difference between A Monologue and A Soliloquy**

Monologue and soliloquy are similar as both are speeches presented by a single person. But a major difference between them is that, in monologue, a speaker reveals his thoughts to the audience or any other character, whereas in a soliloquy, the speaker expresses his thoughts to himself/herself, and it does not involve any other characters.

#### **Example 1**

**“And indeed there will be time**

**To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and, 'Do I dare?'**

**Time to turn back and descend the stair,**

**With a bald spot in the middle of my hair...**

**In a minute there is time**

**For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.”**

*(“The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T.S Eliot)*

This entire poem is written in the form of a dramatic monologue in which the poet is trying to explore the causes of pain and suffering of insecure young man, who is confused about attending the party whether he should or not. Eliot reveals his thoughts to an audience how Prufrock feels that in case he goes to the party, it might disturb the entire universe.

#### **Example 2**

**“Even had you skill**

**In speech-(which I have not)-to make your will**

**Quite clear to such an one, and say, 'Just this**

**Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,**

**Or there exceed the mark' - and if she let**

**Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set**

**Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,**

**-E'en then would be some stooping..."**

(*"My Last Duchess"* by Robert Browning)

This poem also presents an example of a dramatic monologue, as it has a theatrical quality in which the poet expresses his viewpoint through the speech of his character. The single speaker is addressing to servant of a count.

### **Example 3**

**"But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?**

**It is the east and Juliet is the sun!**

**Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,**

**Who is already sick and pale with grief...**

**O that I were a glove upon that hand, That**

**I might touch that cheek!**

(*Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare)

This is a famous balcony scene when Romeo hides in the garden of Capulet, and waits for the glimpse of his beloved Juliet, who comes out on the balcony, and then Romeo uses monologue by sharing his thoughts with the audience.

### **Example 4**

In her novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf has presented her characters by using the technique of stream of consciousness or interior monologue. The consciousness of characters move backward and forward. Author has molded and shaped their personalities at critical moments by interior monologue. Her particular deployment of this technique consists of authorial interjections to provide guidance to the readers and give shape to the narrative.

### **Function of Monologue**

The purpose of writing in monologues is to convey an idea or viewpoint through words. However, sometimes, we notice a tricky part of writer's expression as the opinion of speaker and writer do not match because he tries to convince the audience, and may not tell the exact reality. It allows the readers to move from one character to another and have an insight into their imaginations. A monologue serves as a basic source through which writers express their emotions and thoughts.

### **2.3 LET US SUM UP**

The detailed explanations of the literary terms like Pun, Chorus, Comic Relief, Peripeteia, Aphorism, Baroque, Ciceronean Prose Style, Anaphora and Monologue given in this lesson will help the learner in analyzing the literary texts properly.

### **2.4 SELF-CHECK EXERCISE**

- Q.1 Define Pun.
- Q.2 Define Chorus.
- Q.3 What is Comic Relief ?
- Q.4 What did Shakespeare do to provide comic relief to his readers ?
- Q.5 What is Peripeteia ?
- Q.6 Explain Aphorism.
- Q.7 What are the functions of Aphorism ?
- Q.8 What is Baroque ?
- Q.9 What is Ciceronian Prose style ?
- Q.10 What is Anaphora ?
- Q.11 What is a Monologue ?
- Q.12 How many types of Monologues are there ?
- Q.13 What is the function of a Monologue ?

## **2.5 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

Q.1 Explain the following terms:

- (a) Aside
- (b) Climax
- (c) Catharsis

Q.2 Define Aristotle's concept of Catharsis.

Q.3 What is the function of Comic Relief ?

Q.4 What is Pun ?

Q.5 What is a Monologue ? How many types of Monologues are there ?

Q.6 What is a Ciceronean Prose Style ?

Q.7 Define Tragedy. How many types of tragedy are there ? Explain with examples.

Q.8 Explain briefly:

- (a) Comedy
- (b) Anti-climax
- (c) Peripeteia
- (d) Baroque

## **2.6 ANSWER KEY**

### **Activity**

True, False, False, True, False

### **Self-Check Exercise**

Ans.1 The pun, also called paronomasia, is a form of word play that suggests two or more meanings, by exploiting multiple meanings of words, or of

similar-sounding words, for an intended humorous or rhetorical effect.

Ans.2 A group of singers who stand alongside or off stage from the principal performers in a dramatic or musical performance. It is the song or refrain that this group of singers sing.

Ans.3 If a play is too serious and you just have tragedy upon tragedy then the audience will begin to laugh at the tragedy. So to keep them from laughing at the tragedy they slip little bits of comedy into the play so that the audience can have their laugh, relieve the nervous tension, and get back to the grim stuff. This is called comic relief.

Ans.4 Shakespeare understood this and inserted clowns into his more serious plays to provide the comic relief.

Ans.5 Peripeteia is a sudden change in a story which results in a negative reversal of circumstances. Peripeteia is also known as the turning point, the place in which the tragic protagonist's fortune changes from good to bad.

Ans.6 It is a statement of truth or opinion expressed in a concise and witty manner. The term is often applied to philosophical, moral and literary principles.

Ans.7 Making use of aphorisms allows a writer to teach a philosophical or moral truth. The revealed truths prove relevant to human experiences of real life. Therefore, the readers relate the piece of literature to real life and become more fascinated and vigilant in their reading.

Ans.8 The Baroque is often thought of as a period of artistic style that used exaggerated motion and clear, easily interpreted detail to produce drama, tension, exuberance, and grandeur in sculpture, painting, architecture, literature, dance, theatre, and music.

Ans.9 Ciceronean prose style is particularly dominant during the Tudor era in the mid to late 16th Century. The form and sound of prose (euphonics) are often more important than content.

Ans.10 Anaphora is a literary and rhetorical device in which a word or group of words is repeated at the beginning of two or more successive clauses or sentences. This technique adds emphasis and unity to the clauses.

Ans.11 Monologue comes from Greek word *monos* means alone and *logos* means speech. It is a literary device, which is the speech or verbal presentation that a single character presents in order to express his/her collection of thoughts and ideas aloud. Often this character addresses directly to audience or another character. Monologues are found in the dramatic medium like films, plays and also in non-dramatic medium such as poetry.

Ans.12 **Types of Monologue**

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**2. Dramatic Monologue**

In this type of monologue, a character speaks to the silent listener. This type has theatrical qualities. Hence, it is known as dramatic monologue, and is frequently used in poetry.

Ans.13 **Function of Monologue**

The purpose of writing in monologues is to convey an idea or viewpoint through words. However, sometimes, we notice a tricky part of writer's expression as the

opinion of speaker and writer do not match because he tries to convince the audience, and may not tell the exact reality. It allows the readers to move from one character to another and have an insight into their imaginations. A monologue serves as a basic source through which writers express their emotions and thoughts.

## **2.7 SUGGESTED READING**

M. H. Abrams and G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 10th ed., Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012.

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**Course Code : EL-201 (B.A. Sem II)**

**UNIT-II**

**Course Title: English Literature**

**LESSON NO. 3**

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**HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE:  
ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE**

**STRUCTURE:**

- 3.0** Objectives And Outcomes
- 3.1** Introduction
- 3.2** Elizabethan Age
- 3.3** Characteristics of Elizabethan Age
- 3.4** Influence Of Renaissance On Elizabethan Age
- 3.5** Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6** Answer Key
- 3.7** Suggested Reading

**3.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

The objectives of this lesson are :-

- a) to acquaint the learner with history and development of Elizabethan literature
- b) to familiarize the learner with the influence of Renaissance
- c) to acquaint the learner with Elizabethan literature
- d) to give an idea about trends in poetry, prose drama, comedy
- e) to acquaint the learner with Elizabethan Age

- f) to acquaint the learner with University wits
- g) to provide questions helping in self-assessment
- h) to prepare the learner for examination.

After completing this lesson, the learners will be able to:

- a) explain the key characteristics of the Elizabethan Age.
- b) analyze the influence of the Renaissance and the Reformation on the literary and intellectual development of the Elizabethan period.

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION:**

The reign of Queen Elizabeth I with important dramatists such as Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Nash, Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare had stronger political relationships with the continent which increased England's exposure to the Renaissance. Humanism as in the study and imitation of Latin classics and the affirmation of the secular as well as other worldly concerns of people became the most important force in English Literary and intellectual life. This era is considered as the most fruitful eras in literary history. Elizabethan age with growing political powers and wealth helped to keep serious social and religious problem at bay. In the Age of Elizabeth (1550-1620) all doubt seems to vanish from English history. After the reigns of Edward and Mary, with defeat and humiliation abroad and persecutions and rebellion at home, the accession of a popular sovereign was like sunrise after a long night. It is important to know the national life for any literary student, since any great development of the national life is invariably associated with a development

of the national literature. So it serves our purpose to know that Elizabeth steadily loved England and England's greatness and that she inspired all her people with unbounded patriotism. Under her administration, the English national life progressed by gigantic leaps and English literature reached the very highest point of its development. Historically, we note in this age the tremendous influence of Renaissance, Reformation and the exploration of the New World. It was marked by a strong national spirit, by patriotism, by religious tolerance, by social context, by intellectual progress and by unbounded enthusiasm.

Such an age of thought, feeling and vigorous action, finds its best expression in the drama; and the wonderful development of the drama, culminating in Shakespeare, is the most significant characteristic of the Elizabethan period. Though the age produced some excellent prose works, it is essentially an age of poetry; and the poetry is remarkable for its variety, its freshness, its youthful and romantic feeling. Both the poetry and the drama were permeated by Italian influence, which was dominant in English literature from Chaucer to the Restoration. The literature of this age is often called the literature of the Renaissance.

### **3.2 ELIZABETHAN AGE**

#### **The Elizabethan and Jacobean Ages or The Age of Shakespeare.**

The age of Shakespeare, known as the golden age of literature, extends from the accession of Elizabeth in 1558 to the death of James I in 1625. It was an era of peace, of economic prosperity, of stability, of liberty and of great explorations. It was an age of both contemplation and action; an era which was illustrious for the unprecedented development of art, literature and drama.

#### **The Historical Background :**

The literary decline that followed Chaucer's death was due in considerable measure to political causes. The dispute in regard to the throne, which culminated in the War of Roses, dissipated the energy and resources of the country and finally destroyed in large measure the noble families on whose patronage art and literature depended. The accession of Henry VII in 1485 brought about a period of quiet and recovery. Henry VII, an able king, established a strong monarchy, restored social and political order, curtailed the powers and privileges of barons and patronized the new rich class. The country resumed its power among European nations, and began through them to feel the stimulus of the movement called the Renaissance. Even before the accession of Henry VII, we can discern signs of its coming. Caxton's press, which was established in 1476 in London, was the earliest forerunner of Renaissance in England. Rickett remarks: "The Renaissance had come with Caxton". It began in London with the publication of English masterpieces, awakening in the minds of the people a sense of their national life.

King Henry VIII, who acceded to the throne of England in 1509, began an era of significant and purposeful changes. He ruled in the spirit of modern statecraft. He encouraged trade and manufacturers, and increased the wealth of the country. He hastened the decline of feudalism by allowing men of low birth to high positions. Thus, the court became the field for the display of individual ambition. Men of talent and learning found honourable place in his court. During his reign England contributed her part to the spread of the new civilization and new learning. Education was popularized, Cardinal's College and Christ Church College at Oxford were founded. Cardinal Wolsey, one of his illustrious ministers was a vivid illustration of the effect of renaissance in

England. Thomas Ore (1478-1535) was the most attractive figure in his court. He was one of the earliest harbingers of Renaissance in England.

The reign of Henry VIII also expedited the Reformation which had began in England nearly two centuries before Wycliffe. The spirit of emancipation of conscience from priestly control was strengthened by the example of German and Swiss reformers. In 1534, Henry VIII enforced political separation from Rome on the occasion of the annulment of his first marriage. It provided an opportunity for radical theological reforms. Hugh Latimer, the most powerful preacher of the day, was a powerful spokesman of the spirit of Reformation. His writings represent a development of popular English prose, straightforward, racy and single. The Reformation and various religious and political controversies gave rise to the writing of pamphlets, serious and satirical, in both prose and verse. This is the earliest manifestation of what we should call journalism. The translation of the Bible by William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale is a significant development in English prose.

During Henry's reign (1509-47), the court emerged as a great patron of learning, art and literature. Commenting on his reign W. J. Long writes: "His age is marked by a steady increase in the national power at home and abroad, by the entrance of Reformation by a side door, and by a final separation of England from all ecclesiastical bondage in Parliament's famous Act of Supremacy. In previous reign, chivalry and the old feudal system had practically been banished, now monasticism, the third medieval institution with its mixed good and evil, received its death blow in the wholesale suppression of monasteries and the removal of abbots from the House of Lords." The atmosphere of peace and calm which began to prevail after long turmoil and chaos paved the way for extraordinary development of literary activity.

**Edward VI ruled from 1547 to 1553 :** The reign of Queen Mary from 1553 to 1558 was marred by religious conflicts. She restored Roman Catholicism in England. Creative activity was arrested during her time but it was replenished with much greater vigour in the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603).

The period which we have discussed so far is the prologue of the great efflorescence of the golden age of Shakespeare, which is also called the age of Elizabeth and that of James I.

The English Renaissance covers a pretty long span of time, which is divided for the sake of convenience into the following three periods:

- (i) The beginning of Renaissance (1516-1558);
- (ii) The Flowering of Renaissance (1558-1603). It is actually called the Age of Elizabeth.
- (iii) The Decline of Renaissance (1603-1625). It is also termed the Jacobean Age.

In spite of the ignorance and superstition, violence and brutality, easy morals and lax values, the age of Shakespeare was "an age in which men lived intensely, thought intensely and wrote intensely.

At such a time, when passions were strong and speculation was rife, and a great public existed eager to respond to the appeal of genius, everything conspired to bring out of each man the best there was in him, and whatever might be the individual quality of his work, the fullness and many sidedness of the life about him were certain to be reflected in it.

The poetry of Elizabethan era mirrors the spirit of the age. It reflects the spirit of conquest and self-glorification, humanism and vigorous imagination, emotional depth and passionate intensity. Sublimity was considered to be the essential quality of poetry. Spenser, Shakespeare and Marlowe had the immense power to exalt and sublimate the lovers of poetry.

The poetry of this period is remarkable for the spirit of independence. The poets refused to follow set rules of poetic composition. Consequently, new poetic devices and new linguistic modes developed.

All varieties of poetic forms - lyric, elegy, epilogue, ode, sonnet etc. were successfully attempted. The feeling of stability, peace and contentment enabled poets to compose songs and lyrics full of buoyancy and zest for life. Everybody, down from the flowery courtier to the man in the street, wrote lyrics. Translations from other languages inspired the people to write. The Elizabethans loved music and lyrics are closely related. It was an age of romance which also contributed to the development of lyricism.

Form and expression were joined together and the lyrics became an expression of the soul. Love is the main theme of Elizabethan songs and lyrics. It is fanciful love, love that laughs and entreats and sighs. Pastoral element- many-time rapture, shepherds' feasts, shepherds' loves and joys of countryside-characterizes most of the songs and lyrics of this period.

The Age of Elizabeth was also conspicuous for the remarkable development of prose, which was variously written with great stylistic and linguistic excellence.

The period marks the real beginning of drama. It is the golden age of English drama. The renewed study of classical drama shaped English drama in its formative years. Seneca influenced the development of English tragedy, and Plautus and Terence directed the formation of comedy. The classical drama gave English drama its five acts, its set scenes and many other features. Regular English tragedy, comedy and historical play were successfully written during this period.

### **ACTIVITY**

#### **Fill in the blanks:**

1. The reign of Queen \_\_\_\_\_ I is considered one of the most fruitful eras in English literary history.
2. The Age of Elizabeth is also known as the Age of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The two major European movements that greatly influenced the Elizabethan Age were the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is considered the greatest dramatist of the Elizabethan Age.
5. The Elizabethan era is marked by a strong spirit of nationalism and unbounded \_\_\_\_\_.

### **3.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF ELIZABETHAN AGE**

The age of Shakespeare, known as the golden age of literature, extends from the accession of Elizabeth in 1558 to the death of James I in 1625. It was an era of peace, of economic prosperity, of stability, of liberty and of great explorations. It was an age of both contemplation and action; an era which was conducive to unprecedented efflorescence of various genres of literature, especially drama. Let us now consider the

characteristics of the age, which made England, in the words of John Milton, "a noble and puissant nation, rousing herself, like a strong man after sleep, and shaking her invincible locks."

**1. Political Peace and Stability :** Elizabeth, a wise and sagacious Queen, followed the policy of balance and moderation both inside and outside the country. A working compromise was reached with Scotland, the rebellious Northern barons were kept in check. So, she could successfully establish peace in traditionally disturbed border areas.

**2. Social Contentment :** It was an age of great social contentment. The rapid rise of industrial towns gave employment to thousands, who were previously idle and is



contented. Increasing trade and commerce enriched England, and, for the first time, systematic care was taken of the poor and the needy. The wealthy were taxed to support the poor or to give them employment. Social contentment and the improvement in living greatly contributed to the development of literary activity.

**3. Religious Tolerance :** The Queen, who followed a wise policy of moderation and compromise, effected religious tolerance and peace. Upon her accession she found the whole nation divided against itself. The North was largely Catholic, and the South was strongly Protestant. Scotland followed the Reformation intensely, and Ireland zealously pursued its old religious traditions. The energy of the people was dissipated in futile religious and sectarian conflicts. Elizabeth favoured both religious parties and the Catholics and the Protestants acted together as followers of the Queen. People were granted full religious freedom. It was Elizabeth who made the Anglican church a reality. Anglicanism is a kind of compromise between Catholicism and Protestantism. Both the Protestants and the Catholics accepted the church. The defeat of Spanish Armada established the Reformation as a fact in England. All Englishmen were influenced by the Queen's policy of religious tolerance and were united in a magnificent national enthusiasm. The mind of man, now completely free from religious fears and persecutions, turned with a great creative impulse to other forms of activity. It is the golden age of literature, an age in which Renaissance, temporarily arrested by the religious quarrels of the previous era, could come to full flowering.

**4. The Queen's Popularity and the Upsurge of Patriotism :** Queen Elizabeth, a lady of sterling qualities, loved England ardently and she made her court one of the most brilliant courts in Europe. The splendor of her court dazzled the eyes of the people, and, combined with her policies, did much to increase her popularity and prestige. Worship of the Virgin Queen became the order of the day. She was Spenser's Gloriana, Raleigh's Cynthia, and Shakespeare's "fair vestal throned by the West". Pinto remarks that people "rightly saw in her the incarnate spirit of the nation and the age". Even the foreigners saw in her "a keen calculating intellect that baffled the ablest statesmen in Europe".

An unprecedented upsurge of patriotism was seen everywhere. Legouis writes: "It sprang from England's growing consciousness of her strength, her pride of prosperity, the spirit of adventure which animated her sons, and caused them always to aspire to

the first place, and her faith in her own destiny." Long writes that Queen Elizabeth "with all her vanity and inconsistency, steadily loved England and England's greatness, and that she inspired all her people with the unbounded patriotism which exults in Shakespeare, and with the personal devotion which finds a voice in the Faery Queen. Under her administration the English national life progressed by gigantic leaps rather than by slow historical process, and English literature reached the very highest point of development".

**5. Expansion :** In English history, this is the most remarkable epoch for the expansion of both mental and geographical horizons. It is an age of great thought and great action, an age which appeals to the eye, the imagination and the intellect. New knowledge was pouring in from all directions. The great voyagers Hawkins, Frobisher, Raleigh and Drake brought home both material and intellectual treasures from the East and the West. Pinto remarks that by the end of the sixteenth century "The national was conscious of the fact that it was playing a memorable and heroic part in the great adventure of exploring the wonders of the New World, discovered in the east and the West". The spirit of adventure and exploration fired the imagination of writers. The spirit of action and adventure paved the way for the unusual development of dramatic literature, for drama progresses in an era of action and not of a speculation.

Commenting on expansion in Shakespearean England, S.A. Brooke writes: "All over Europe, and especially in Italy, now closely linked to England, The Renaissance had produced a wild spirit of exhausting all the possibilities of human life. Every form, every game of life was tried, every fancy of goodness or wickedness followed for the fancy's sake. Men said to themselves, "Attempt, Attempt". The act accompanied the thought. England at last shared in this passion, but in English life it was directed. There was a great liberty to men to live and do as they pleased, provided the Queen was worshipped and there was no conspiracy against the State. That much direction did not apply to purely literary production. Its attempting were unlimited, Anything, everything was tried, especially in the drama".

**6. Foreign Travels and Fashions :** Italy, the home of Renaissance, fascinated the Elizabethans. All liked to visit Italy and stay there for some time. People were fond not only of Italian books and literature, but also of Italian morals and manners. The Elizabethan literature was immensely influenced by contemporary literary activities. Legouis points out: "The literature of England was enriched by an immense looting of

Italian treasures, and the spoils carried back to the island were there exhibited not only as marvelous works of art, but also as objects of reprobation".

**7. Backwardness of the Age :** It was an age of great diversity and contradictions. It was an age of light and darkness, the age of reason and unreason, the age of wisdom and the age of foolishness, the age of hope and of despair. The barbarity and backwardness, the ignorance and superstition of the Middle Ages still persisted. Disorder, violence, bloodshed and tavern brawls still prevailed. The examples of Dogberry and Verges in *About Nothing* prove that the police was inefficient. It was unsafe to go out after nightfall as the streets were dark and deserted. Highway robberies, as mentioned in Henry IV, Part I, were very common. The barbarity of the age is seen in such brutal sports as bear baiting, cock fighting and bull fighting, to which numerous references are found in the plays of Shakespeare. Despite the advance of science and learning people still believed in superstitions, ghosts, witches, fairies, charms and omens of all sorts. Supernaturalism is a cardinal feature of Shakespearean drama.

**Conclusion :** In spite of the ignorance and superstition, violence and brutality, "the age of Elizabeth was a period rarely equaled for exuberance, courage and accomplishment - an age pervaded by expansiveness of mind and spirit, hope and action. The Elizabethans felt that the world was an oyster and they held the knife to open it". It was an age in which "men lived intensely, thought intensively and wrote intensely."

### **3.4 INFLUENCE OF RENAISSANCE ON ELIZABETHAN AGE**

The Renaissance reached England late. The age of Shakespeare or Elizabeth is the period when the new movement reached its climax and contributed to the extraordinary development of literature. By the time, this impulse was at its height with Spenser and Shakespeare, it had died out in Italy; and in France it was already a waning fire. England had a great advantage since the influence of Italy and France coupled with the revival of Greek learning and new patriotic fervor entered the soil of England. Italian sculpture and painting imparted sensuousness, rich colour effects and love of beauty to English literature. The Pre-Raphaelite movement in Victorian period took its origin from Renaissance paintings in Italy. There was a craze for Italian manners and fashions during

Shakespearean period : "Every breeze was dusty with the pollen of Greece, Rome and Italy".

### **Influence of Renaissance :**

The influence of Renaissance on English literature is immense. Hudson remarks: "In the development of literature this revival of learning worked in two ways: it did much to emancipate thought from the bondage of medieval theology by restoring the generous spirit and ideals of pagan antiquity; and it presented writers with literary masterpieces which they might take as models for their own efforts."

**1. Influence of Humanism :** Renaissance had a profound impact on the ideals of life. It liberated human thinking from the irrational and inhuman restrictions of medieval times. The ascetic ideal of the Middle Ages was replaced by humanism and the ideal of the enjoyment of life. Man had again grown conscious of the glory and wonder of the creation and the beauty of human life and human body. The Hellenic view of life, known as humanism, remarkably influenced literature. The Greek attitude towards life was gay and full of meaning. Through the works of Greek writers Englishmen learnt that life was to be enjoyed, every single piece of life had a significance and value of its own, and that all was meant for human individual who was regarded as the crown of creation, and, therefore, he was regarded as the most significant unit of life on earth. The cramping influences of medievalism with its religious piety and asceticism became dead letters. A new sense of life, of glory dawned and the Elizabethans lived in an era when :

***"Bliss was in that dawn to be alive, To  
be young was very heaven!"***

Hudson remarks : "An appetite for literature was thus fostered, and an immense impetus given to the sense of beauty and everything that made for the enrichment of life".

The conception of man as "the crown of creation" is the key factor in all Renaissance literature. Marlowe, Shakespeare, Spenser and all other dramatists, poets and writers of this period were great humanists because their writings are suffused with the glorification of man and human life. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* exclaims: "What a piece of work is man! During this era it was said:

*"Glory to the man in the highest  
For man is the crown of things."*

This attitude towards human life was not only more gay, it was one of greater honour and greater responsibility. This is the emotional complex which predominates the plays of Shakespeare and the poetry of Spenser. "Character is destiny" essentially partakes this very belief. Shakespeare writes:

*"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings."*

Humanism gave birth to individualism and worldliness. The ancient Hellenic view was centred on this present world rather than on some future one. It was an individualistic view, which is expressed in ancient Greek literature. The result of this individualism was that the Renaissance men cared not at all for authority. They were free in making their own decisions and this freedom found expression in the plays of Marlowe. The writers directed their gaze inwards and became deeply interested in the problems of human personality. During the Elizabethan period, under the influence of humanism, the stress was laid on the qualities which distinguish human beings from one another, and give an individuality and uniqueness to human personality. Shakespeare, the greatest student of human nature, minutely depicts the individual qualities of his characters and vividly reveals their psychic states. All round development of human personality was stressed during this period. The Renaissance men had the insatiable hunger for all the experiences that this world has to offer. The plays of Marlowe, the poetry of Spenser and the prose of Bacon are the best expressions of individualism in the Shakespearean Age. Boas writes: "For a distinguishing note of Renaissance age, intoxicated by the magnificent possibilities opened to it on every side, was an uncontrollable aspiration after the ideal, a scorn of earthly conditions, a soaring passion that sought to scale the infinitudes of power, beauty, thought and love. It is this spirit - ever one, and the same - that breathes in Sir Thomas More's vision of a perfect society; in Spenser's pattern of the highest, holiest manhood; in Bacon's clarion call to the conquest of all knowledge, and in the heroic deeds and speeches of Sidney, Gilbert and Grenville. But nowhere does it find more characteristic vent in Marlowe's Tamburlaine."

One of the most important works during the Renaissance was Machiavelli's *Prince*,

which immensely influenced the thought and literature of this period and strengthened the expression of individualism. He taught an opportunistic, utilitarian philosophy of worldly success, and ruthless self-aggrandizement. His influence is reflected in Bacon's *Essays*.

Renaissance is attacked as "lacking in spirituality", as being grossly sensual and human". To Hulme Renaissance represents one great vicious mental trend: the trend of ignoring the original sin and arrogating to the human spirit more than its due, of grabbing impiously for man those things that essentially belong to God. He thinks that the whole point of Renaissance was its joy in the loving forms, as if the formal and external side did not exist for it. This opinion is hardly tenable because Renaissance represented a changed conception of morality. Lyly wrote *Euphues*, not merely as an exercise in a new kind of prose, but with the serious purpose of inculcating righteousness of living based on self-control. Sidney wrote his *Arcadia* in the form of fiction in order to expound an ideal of moral excellence. Spenser wrote his *Fairie Queene* with a view to fashioning "a gentleman or noble person in virtuous or noble disposition." In the works of Shakespeare also we find the same moral profundity. Thus, the charge of want to moral profundity and spirituality in Renaissance is futile. A new standard of moral edification was insisted upon during this period. This tradition of moral edification "was imbued with the idea of public service.... Poets were the voices of those sanities and wisdoms they considered as necessary for public service. They wrote from their capacities, they address themselves to the active capacities of their audience. An implicit moral purpose - profit countenancing delight-circumscribed what they wrote".

**2. Influence of the Sprit of Discovery and Adventure on Renaissance Literature :** The influence of the spirit of discovery and adventure runs through the literature of Elizabethan Age and even after it. The poets and dramatists were influenced by it. The spirit of adventure is in essence, romantic. During Elizabethan England, action and imagination went hand in hand. The dramatists and poets held up the mirror to the voyagers. The cult of the sea is the oldest note in literature. In Elizabethan period ocean became the highway of national progress and adventure, and by virtue of shipping Englishmen became competitors for the dominion of the earth. Frobisher, Raleigh, Drake and Hawkins discovered and conquered new lands, and expanded the geographical space of England. The stories of the voyagers, who in the new commercial activity of the country, penetrated into remote lands, and saw the strange monsters and

savages which, the poets now added to fairies, dwarfs and giants of the Romances. We may trace everywhere in Elizabethan literature, the impression made by the wonders told by the sailors and captains, who explored and fought from the North Pole to the Southern seas. The voyagers themselves wrote down the account of their adventures, and two of these accounts proved very popular -that of Hakluyt's *Voyages* and *Discoveries* and Purchas' *Pilgrimage*. The voyagers, in the word, of Mair, are the makers of "our modern English prose and some of its noblest passages". They were not scholars and had little knowledge of literary artifices. Hence, they are the pioneers in the field of writing plain, unadorned English prose, and the plain and direct telling of a stirring story.

New lands had been discovered, new territories opened up, new wonders had been exposed, which were, perhaps the first fruits of greater wonders to come. Spenser makes the voyagers his warrant for his excursion into fairyland:

*"Whoever heard of the Indian !*

*Or who in the venterous vessel measured The  
amazons huge river now found true? Or  
fruitfullest Virginia who did ever view?*

*Yet all these were, when no man did them know  
Yet have from wisest ages hidden been*

*And later times things more unknown shall show."*

The spirit of adventure, caught from the voyagers, got its fullest and finest expression in Elizabethan drama. Walter Raleigh writes: "Without the voyagers Marlowe is inconceivable". His imagination in each one of his plays is preoccupied with the lust of adventure, and the wealth and power adventure brings. Tamburlaine, eastern conqueror though he is, is at heart an Englishman of the school of Hawkins and Drake. Dr. Faustus assigns to his serviceable spirits tasks that might have been studied from the writings of Hakluyt :

*"I'll have them fly to India for gold Ransack  
the ocean for orient pearl*

*And search all concerns of the new round world  
For pleasant fruits and princely delicacies.”*



In Shakespeare's *Tempest* and *Pericles* is the terror of storm and shipwreck with all its dramatic poignancy.

The spirit of adventure provided figures of speech, metaphors and symbols to dramatists. *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *The Twelfth Night* and *The Tempest* testify to his accessibility to its spirit. Milton is full of allusions to it. Satan's journey through chaos in the *Paradise Lost* in the occasion for a whole series of metaphors drawn from seafaring. In *Samson Agonistes* Dalila comes in

*“Like a stately ship.....*

*With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,  
Sails filled, and streamers waning*

*Courted by all the winds that hold them play.”*

Samson speaks of himself as one

*“Like a foolish pilot, have shipwrecked My  
vessel trusted to me from above, Gloriously  
rigged.”*

The influence of the voyagers and of discoveries persisted long after the first bloom of Renaissance had flowered and withered. Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Coleridge's *The Ancient Mariner* and many other works show the influence of the Purchas' *Pilgrimage*.

**3. Influence of the revival of Classical Learning :** The classical revival of learning influenced the content, style and technique of literature. Plato's influence is remarkable. The Platonic doctrine that poets are divinely inspired was well known even to the common man. Mair says: "In one or the other form the rediscovery of Plato proved to be the most valuable part of the renaissance gift from Greece". The doctrines of Symposium influenced Spenser's *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. They influenced almost all the courtly writers of the period. Plato's *Republic* encouraged new ways of thinking and inspired More's *Utopia* and Bacon's *New Atlantis*.

Mair remarks : "The reading of the ancients awakened new eight in the melody and beauty of language; men became intoxicated with words." The study of logic was replaced by the Study of rhetoric, and it coloured all literature. The rhetoricians encouraged

embellishments and decoration of language for language's sake. The literary affectation called euphuism was directly based on the precepts of the handbooks on rhetoric. Its author John Lyly only elaborated and made more precise tricks of phrase and writing which had been used as Exercises in the schools of his youth. The prose of his school with its fantastic delight in exuberance of figure and sound, owed its inspiration to Cicero and in the decorations with which it was embellished to the later writers of his kind.

The long declamatory speeches and the sententiousness of early drama were directly modeled on Seneca. Latinism and the use of sonorous and high sounding words were common. There was wholesale importation of foreign words, both French and Latin, and scholars like Cheke, Ascham and Wilson were compelled to raise a warning finger against the danger of such excessive use of what was then called "Inkborn terms". They stood for clarity, ease, simplicity and the use of common English words, but their efforts could not succeed.

The sonnet and the blank verse are the two important metres which were used with artistic adroitness and excellence in Elizabethan literature. Various poetic genres, writes Legouis, "In which the ancients and the moderns had won distinction- pastorals, epics, comedies, tragedies, lyrics of every kind, every kind of prose romances, criticism, history and philosophy" were skillfully and successfully attempted. The writers of this period aimed at producing a literature that will surpass the literatures of ancient Greece and Rome.

**4. The Renaissance Spirit of Rational and Scientific Quest :** The Renaissance also fostered the spirit of questioning, of rational and scientific quest for truth. Reason had been put forth as the best guiding factor in human life. Reason wedded to liberty a sense of responsibility flouted authority if it obstructed the free development of human personality. This marks the beginning of a scientific outlook. The realization of the characteristics of Nature and the power of god were sought for through reason. "Make an appeal to the reason of man" became the ideal of many writers. Bacon is the high priest of this attitude. He developed the inductive method of research. The spirit of rational inquiry is at the very root of his major works. Ben Jonson also represents the rational and free approach. The theme of the *Paradise Lost* is the fall of man due to his refusal to obey reason.

**5. Renaissance and Reformation :** Hudson writes: "While the Renaissance aroused the intellect and the aesthetic faculties, the Reformation awakened the spiritual nature; the same printing press which diffused the knowledge of the classics put the English Bible into the hands of the people; and the spread of an interest in religion was inevitably accompanied by a deepening of moral earnestness". Reformation is briefly explained as the religious movement arising out of the revolt of Martin Luther against Pope's supremacy; and the consequent establishment by him of a new and reformed church founded upon scriptural authority. The consequences produced by the conjunction of the Renaissance and the Reformation resulted in the growth of a new spirit of nationalism, repudiation of Pan-European Papal authority, the growth and development of national languages, and, ultimately, the growth and development of Puritanism.

Puritanism developed from new ethical forces, released by Reformation. But the theology of Puritans was mainly derived from the philosophy of John Calvin (1509–64), known as Calvinism. Puritanism implies a strictly ethical life in conformity with the teachings of the Bible. An individual can attain salvation only due to his efforts. Thus, individualism was introduced in religion, which parallels the humanistic individualism which originated in Pagan philosophy and the popularity of the Hellenic view of life. The great English writers of this period- Ben Jonson, Milton, Bunyan etc - are the true children of both Renaissance and Reformation.

It must be mentioned here that the combined product of humanism and Puritanism is called "Christian humanism". In Christian humanism, the worldliness of Christianity has been modified by the individualistic emphasis on humanism. At the same time, the purely secular character of humanism has been replaced by a metaphysical definition of human experience. Spenser and Milton represent Christian humanism.

Reformation encouraged the writing of theological prose, which influenced the development of English prose. We have already considered the works of Wycliff, who is "the morning star of Reformation", and William Tyndale's Translation of the *New Testament*. It was due to Reformation that the Bible became common property, and its language glided into all theological writing and gave it a literary tone. *The Authorized Version of the Bible* (1611) left imperishable mark on the evolution of English language and literature. S.A. Brooke points out: "Theological Reform stirred men to another kind

of literary work. A great number of polemical ballads, pamphlets, and plays issued every year from obscure presses and filled the land. Poets like George Gascoigne and still more Barnaby Rudge, represent in their work the hatred the young men had of the old religious system. It was a spirit which did not do much for literature, but it quickened the habit of composition, and made it easier".

### **3.5 LET US SUM UP**

The Age of Shakespeare, in which Renaissance finds its highest and most spontaneous expression, marks the real beginning of a very high order of literature. The enrichment of English language due to various factors which have already been discussed, facilitated the development of literature. S.A. Brooke writes: "Nor must one omit to say, that owing to this employment of life on so vast a number of subjects, and to the voyages, and to the new literatures searched into, and to the heart of theological strife, a multitude of new words streamed into the language, and enriched the vocabulary of imagination. Shakespeare used 15,000 words."

The literature of this period is romantic. Edward Albert remarks: "The romantic quest is for the remote, the wonderful, and the beautiful. All these desires were abundantly fed during the Elizabethan age, which is our first and greatest romantic epoch. On the other hand, there was the revolt against the past, whose grasp was too feeble to hold in restraint the lusty youth of the Elizabethan Age; on the other, there was a daring and resolute spirit of adventure in literary as well as in other regions; and, most important of all, there was an unmistakable buoyancy and freshness in the strong wind of the spirit. It was the ardent youth of English literature, and the achievement was worthy of it."

### 3.6 ANSWER KEY

Elizabeth, Shakespeare, Renaissance and Reformation, William Shakespeare, Patriotism

### 3.7 SUGGESTED READING

A. W. Ward & A. R. Waller. *The Cambridge History of English Literature*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1907–1927. Reprinted ed., 15 vols., Cambridge Univ. Press, 1961–63.

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**Course Code : EL-201 (B.A. Sem II)**

**UNIT-II**

**Course Title: English Literature**

**LESSON NO.4**

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**TRENDS IN ELIZABETHAN POETRY**

**STRUCTURE:**

**4.0** Objectives And Outcomes

**4.1** Introduction

**4.2** Trends In Elizabethan Poetry

**4.3** Spenser's Contribution To English Poetry

**4.4** Trends In Elizabethan Prose

**4.5** Let Us Sum Up

**4.6** Answer Key

**4.7** Suggested Reading

**4.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

The objectives aim to evaluate the key trends and characteristics of Elizabethan poetry, including its spirit of independence, varied poetic forms, and major themes such as love, patriotism, philosophy, and satire. The study also seeks to understand the transition from Elizabethan to Jacobean poetry and the cultural influences shaping this evolution.

After completing this lesson, the learners will be able to:

- a) analyze the different poetic forms popular in the Elizabethan age (e.g., lyric, elegy, ode, sonnet).

- b) recognize the spirit of independence and innovation in Elizabethan verse.
- c) explain the transition from the vibrant tone of Elizabethan poetry to the more introspective mood of Jacobean poetry.

## **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Elizabethan era marked a golden age in English poetry, characterized by a strong spirit of independence. Influenced by Renaissance humanism and national pride, poets like Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare experimented with new forms and themes. This period laid the foundation for later poetic developments in the Jacobean age.

## **4.2 TRENDS IN ELIZABETHAN POETRY**

### **General Characteristics**

The poetry of the Age of Shakespeare may be divided into two phases for the sake of convenience:

#### **1. Elizabethan poetry (1568-1603).**

The poetry of the Elizabethan era represents the spirit of the age and is suffused with the spirit of conquest and self-glorification, humanism and vigorous imagination, emotional depth and aerial graces.

**i) High conception of Poetry:** Poetry was considered as a dignified and elevated form of literary expression. Sidney says: "Of all science is our poet the Monarch". Poetry was not meant only for enjoyment. Its function was considered to provide profitable enjoyment. Spenser proclaimed that heroes and famous poets are born together. He showed that civilization and poetry go side by side. In particular he insists that "poetry is a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to be gotten by labour and learning, but adorned with both; and poured into the wit by a certain enthusiasm and celestial inspiration". Sublimity was deemed to be the essential quality of a poet. Spenser,

Marlowe and Shakespeare had the immense power to exalt and sublimate the readers of poetry.

**ii) The Spirit of Independence :** The poetry of this period is remarkable for the spirit of independence. The poets refused to follow set rules of poetic composition. They did not observe set rules of grammar and prosody. Consequently, new poetic devices and new linguistic modes of expression developed. Flexibility and pliability in prosody resulted in good artistic results. Phonetic value of words in lyrics was recognized. New stanza forms were introduced.

**iii) Varied Poetical forms :** All varieties of poetic forms - lyric, elegy, eclogue, ode, sonnet, madrigal etc. were successfully attempted.

**iv) Main Divisions of Poetry :** The following main divisions of poetry existed during the Elizabethan period:

**a) Love Poetry :** The love poetry is characterized by romance, imagination and youthful vigour. Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, Spenser's *Amoretti*, Daniel's *Delia*, Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* are some memorable love poems of this period.

**b) Patriotic Poems :** The ardent note of patriotism is the distinctive characteristic of Elizabethan poetry. Warner's *Abbie's England*, Daniel's *Civil wars of York and Lancaster*, Drayton's *The Barons War* and *the Ballad of Agincourt* are some remarkable patriotic poems.

**c) Philosophical Poetry :** The fire and strength of people, becoming inwards resulted in a graver and more thoughtful national life. The tragedies of Shakespeare represent this aspect of national life. Brooke's poems on *Human Learning*, *On Wars* *On Monarchy* and *On Religion* have philosophical leanings.

**d) Satirical Poems :** It came into existence after the decline of imaginative vigour towards the end of Elizabeth's reign. Donne's *Satires* and Drummond's *Sonnets* are some fine examples of this type of poetry.

**v) Originality :** The poetical production was not equal to the dramatic literature but it was of great and original beauty. The passion for poetry was absorbing, and the



outcome of it was equal to expectation. The early Italian and classical influences were completely absorbed and the poetry of this period depicts the typical British character and temperament. Edward Albert writes: "The native English genius, having absorbed the lessons of foreign writers, adds of them the youth and ardour of its own spirit. The result is a fullness, freshness and grandeur of style unequalled in any other period of our literature. There are the lyrics and allegories of Spenser; the poems, dramas and lyrics of Shakespeare; and the innumerable miscellanies, poems and plays of other writers. The style is as varied as the poems, but the universal note is the romantic one of power and wonder".

## **2. Jacobean Poetry (1603-1625).**

James I ruled over England during this period and, hence it is known as Jacobean period. There is something arbitrary in a separation of poetry of the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. The division must be understood to be convenient rather than anything else, a device to assist the chronology of history. Shakespeare, Daniel, Drayton, Chapman and many others wrote as much in the one reign as in the other. But there was a poetic evolution which divides the first two decades of the seventeenth century from the closing years of the sixteenth.

Elizabeth's reign had the glory of youth and growth of national expansion and patriotic faith. The whole of literature was lit up with the victory of Armada. Even the bitterest satires and gloomiest pages had a spontaneity and dash. The poet derived from life, from the things he saw, and from the current ideas, a pleasure perpetually renewed. He was intoxicated with the novelty of his metres and the freshness of his vocabulary. Pessimism existed only for him superficially or momentarily.

In the reign of James I a change was obvious. Life's gaiety was lost. Sadness began to prevail. Human nature turned towards perverseness. Society was vitiated. A harsh cynical realism succeeded. Poetry had grown self-conscious. The earlier ardour and easy enjoyment of colours and words were on the wane. Poets became more moral or religious. While literature acquired more substance, it became less capable of facile, light hearted joy. Poetry had crept under the shadow of the approaching civil conflicts, of the strengthened and menacing Puritanism.

## **I. SIR PHILIP SIDNEY (1554-1586).**

Born in 1554, Sidney belonged to one of the most distinguished families in England. He studied in Oxford, and spent some time abroad, in Paris, Vienna, and Italy. He then returned to Elizabeth's court where he represented the more elevated political conceptions of the time. He was sent to Germany on a political mission in 1577. He also took keen interest in the development of English power on the sea. In 1583 he accompanied the English army which was sent to help the Dutch Protestants against Spain; and in 1586 he fell in a skirmish at Zutphen.

Sidney was very dear to Queen Elizabeth. She called him one of the jewels of her crown, and at the age of twenty he was "one of the ripest statesmen of the Age". Literature was his favourite avocation.

As a man of letters Sidney is remembered for *Arcadia* (1590), a prose romance, *Apology for Poetry* (1580), a collection of literary and critical principles and *Astrophel and Stella* (1593), a collection of sonnets. Here we are concerned with his contribution to poetry.

***Astrophel and Stella* :** It is a memorable collection of Sidney's sonnets. They reveal Sidney's love for Penelope Devereux, sister of the Earl of Essex, a love brought to disaster by the intervention of the Queen, with whom he had quarreled. Sidney himself is Astrophel and Penelope is Stella. These sonnets are the first direct expression of personal feelings and experience in English poetry. He analyses the sequence of his feelings with a vividness and minuteness which assure us of their truth. All that he tells us is the result of experience dearly bought:

***“Desire, desire ! I have too dearly brought With  
price of mangled mind thy worthless ware Too long,  
too long asleep thou has me brought, Who should  
my mind to higher things prepare.”***

There is in his sonnets much of the conventional material of the Italian sonneteers. Sidney's sonnets have over fantastic imagery. His lines often drag nervelessly, but there are rare flashes of beauty, fine notes of passion, unforgettable phrases:

***“Fool ! said my Muse, look in thy heart, and write.”***

Mark the melody in the following line:

*“Ring out your bells, let mourning sheweth spread,  
For love is dead.”*

The following lines are noticeable for intimacy and familiarity:

*“My true-love hath my heart, and I have his  
By just exchange one to the other given:*

*I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss,  
There never was a better bargain driven.”*

Commenting on his greatness as a poet, Rickett remarks: "Less brilliant than Marlowe, less witty than Lyly, inferior to Spenser in glamour, and excelled by many a contemporary song writer in deftness of fancy, he has produced a body of work which for its versatile excellence places him in the foremost rank of his time".

## **II. Edmund Spenser (1552-1599)**

Edmund Spenser, the greatest non-dramatic poet of this period, was born in 1552 in London. He was educated at Merchant Tailor's school and at Cambridge, where he ardently read the classics and Italian literature. Here, he also came under the influence of Protestant Spirit. He took his Master's degree in 1576. In 1578, he was in London, in attendance on the Earl of Leicester. Here, he formed intimate friendship with Sir Philip Sidney. His first work, *The Shepherd's Calendar*, appeared in 1579 and in 1580 he went to Ireland as Secretary to the new Lord Deputy, Lord Grey de Wilton. Spenser befriended Sir Walter Raleigh who visited Ireland. The remainder of his life, save brief visits to London, was spent in Ireland. He was disappointed, as all his efforts to secure a place in the royal court were frustrated. He found his only relief in the writing of his magnum opus *Faerie Queene*. The close of his life was sorrowful. In October 1598, Tyrome's rebellion drove him out of Ireland and he reached London where he dwelt in an inn in King's Street, Westminster. He died on 16th January, 1599, and his mortal remains were buried close by his Master Chaucer in Westminster Abbey. The poets of that age thronged to his funeral. According to Camden, they cast "their elegies and the pens that had written them into his tomb".

**Spenser's works :** Edmund Spenser is a typical representative of his age. His

poetry combines the best of both the Renaissance and Reformation. He is rightly called "the poet's poet" because all great poets - Milton, Donne, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, the Pre-Raphaelites and many others have been indebted to him. Rickett remarks: "Spenser is at once the child of the Renaissance and the Reformation. On one side, we may regard him with Milton as "the sage and serious Spenser", on the other, he is the humanist, alive to the finger-tips with the sensuous beauty of the southern romance". All his poetic works reflect the aforesaid qualities which make him a Titan in non-dramatic poetry. His main poetic works are given below :

(1) *The Shepherd's Calendar (1579)*. It is modeled on this artificial pastoral popularized by the Renaissance and inspired by Theocritus and Virgil's *Bucolica*. It is a series of pastoral eclogues for every month of the year. He took the same liberties with the pastoral form as did Virgil himself. He made it a vehicle for satire and allegory, for communicating social and political conditions, and for referring to his friends. In it, Spenser also refers to his unfortunate love for certain Rosalind.

*The Shepherd's Calendar* for the first time brings to English poetry the richness, the warm pictorial quality, and sense of amplitude. The poet shows remarkable skill in dealing with various old time metres in a fresh and masterly way. Spenser freely borrowed words from the old poets of his country and from provincial vocabularies. The style is deliberately archaic because it is in keeping with the rustic characters. Spenser successfully adopted the dialect and alliteration of the Midlands and the North. Moody and Lovett remark about its diction: "But most remarkable among their literary qualities is the diction, which he elaborated from himself with the design of giving a suggestion of antiquity and rusticity to his writing. The curious predilection for obsolete and coined words is but one manifestation of the experimentation in diction by the Age." It is carried so far in *The Faerie Queene* that Ben Jonson could say of Spenser that he 'write no language'.

(2) *Miscellaneous Poems*. In 1591, Spenser collected his smaller poems, most of which seem to be an early work and published them. Among them, Mother Hubbard's Tale 'is a remarkable satire, somewhat in the manner of Chaucer, on society, on the veils of a beggar soldiery, of the Church, of the court, and of misgovernment'. In it, Spenser seems to be a morose judge of society, viewing it pessimistically. Other poems

worth mentioning are “The Ruins of Time”, “The Tears of the Muses”, “The Fate of the Butterfly” etc. This collection was entitled complaints.

In 1595, appeared his most autobiographical poem, *Collin Clout's Come Home Again*. Collin Clout (Spenser) is a shepherd, who is visited by another shepherd of the ocean (Sir Walter Raleigh), who is charmed by his music and carries him to the court of Cynthia (Queen Elizabeth). During his stay in the court, Collin feels great delight but the discovery of intrigues, jealousies, courtly love and debauchery hidden beneath the seeming decorum and the malignity masked by courtesy, anger and disgust him. He returns to his humble and simple pastoral life.

In 1595, Spenser published his *Amoretti*, a collection of eighty eight Petrarchan sonnets, which describe the progress of his love for Elizabeth Boyle, whom he married in 1594. In them, the poet records his feelings in a clear and straightforward manner without recouring to allegory. Spenser's sonnets stand between those of Sidney and Shakespeare. He is the forerunner of the English sonnet. His sonnets are divided into three quatrains with the rhyming scheme a b a b, b c b c, c d c d, and a rhyming couplet. They tell the story of pure love. They show better than anything else that quality in Spenser, which Coleridge called 'maidenliness', or his love for the virginal in woman.

Frankness and candidness characterize these sonnets. In many of them the poet extols his mistress' beauty with a great sensual wealth of detail and colour. He does not conceal the ardour of his desires. In these sonnets 'that curious undertone of melancholy that sounds through most renaissance poetry is blended here delicately with frank and sensitive delight in the beauty and splendor of things'.

***Epithalamion (1595)*** exhibits happily the sensuous sweetness and the rapture of love. It is by common consent the noblest wedding hymn in English language. It is a magnificent ode, written in honour of his marriage with Elizabeth Boyle.

***Prothalamion (1596)*** is another marriage hymn. It is also an ode. *Astrophel* (1596) is an Arcadian elegy on the death of Sir Philip Sidney. This very year he wrote his prose treatise, *The View of Ireland*.

***Four Hymns (1596)***, written in honour of love and beauty, shows Spenser's wonderful power of melodious verse. Plato's influence is clearly felt on the Hymns.

Platonic influence is found in the identification of beauty with God. Spenser saw earthly beauty, and especially the beauty of woman, which inspires love, as the token and reflection of divine beauty, virtue rendered visible. These hymns show a strong sense of colour and minute details in the word painting of the bodily charms of maidens. Spenser presents love as the civilizer of mankind.

Edward Albert writes : "Spenser's shorter poems illustrate his lyrical ability, which is moderate in quality. His style is too diffuse and ornate to be intensely passionate; but especially in the codes, he can build up sonorous and commanding measures which by their weight and splendor delight both mind and ear. To a lesser extent, as in Mother Hubbard's Tale, the shorter poems afford him scope for his satirical bent, which can be sharp and censorious". The following lines from the *Epithalamion* illustrate the graces of Spenser's style:

*"With trembling steps, and humble reverence,  
She cometh in, before the Almighty's view; Of  
her, ye Virgins, learn obedience*

*When so ye come into those holy places, To  
humble your proud faces."*

### ACTIVITY I

#### True/False :

1. The Elizabethan era in poetry was known for its strict adherence to classical poetic rules and forms.
2. Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* is considered the first English sonnet sequence to express personal feelings.
3. Elizabethan poetry was marked by themes such as love, loyalty, philosophy, and satire.
4. Jacobean poetry was characterized by a continuation of the optimistic and youthful tone of Elizabethan poetry.
5. *The Shepherd's Calendar* is a collection of sonnets written by Spenser about his love for Elizabeth Boyle.
6. *Epithalamion* is a wedding hymn written by Spenser celebrating his marriage.

(3) *The Faerie Queene*. It is the finest and most important of Spenser's works. In the words of S.A Brooke: "It was the first great ideal poem that England had produced; it places him side by side with Milton, but on a throne built of wholly different material. It has never ceased to make poets, and it will live, as he said in his dedication to the Queen "with the eternity of her fame".

**Date of composition :** *The Faerie Queene* appeared in instalments. The first three books were published in 1589-90, and the second three books appeared in 1596. Two cantos and two odd stanzas of Book VII appeared posthumously in 1609.

**The original plan and the Plot :** Like Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, *The Faerie Queene* is a fragment. Spenser projected twelve books, out of which six appeared in his lifetime and the portions of the seventh after his death. Spenser's purpose, as indicated in a letter to Raleigh which introduces the poem, is as follows: "to portray Arthur, before he was king, the image of a brave knight, perfected in the twelve private

Moral Virtues, as Aristotle had devised; which is the purpose of the first twelve books: which if I find to be well accepted, I may be perhaps encouraged to frame the other part of Politic Virtues, after that he came to be king". Each of the virtues appears as a knight, fighting his opposing vice, and the poem tells the story of the conflicts. Spenser completed only six books, celebrating Holiness, Temperance, Chastity, Friendship, Justice and Courtesy. The fragment of the seventh book deals with constancy. The first three books are by far the best. Prince Arthur is the central character in *Faerie Queene*. He appears at critical moments in the poem. He marries Gloriana, the Queen of the Fairyland in the end. The appearance of Arthur at a critical moment in each of these stories was specially devised as a link between one part and another of the gigantic design. Albert remarks: "The plot is exceedingly elaborate and leisurely; it is crammed with incident and digression, and by the fifth book it is palpably weakening. It is therefore no misfortune (as far as plot is concerned) that only half of the story is finished".

### **The *Faerie Queen* as an Allegory:**

It is one of the most remarkable allegories in the Renaissance poetry. The allegory is clear in the first two books. Afterwards, it is troubled with digressions, sub-allegories, genealogies, with anything that Spenser's fancy led him to introduce. Stories are dropped and never taken up again, and the whole tale is so bungled that it loses its narrative interest. But it retains the interest as an exquisite allegory. *The Faerie Queene*, writes Hudson, "is not simply a romance; it is a didactic romance, the poet throughout using his stories as vehicles of the lessons he wished to convey. He carries out his purpose by turning romance into allegory". Its story has three allegorical strands:

1. The usual characters of the Arthurian and classical romance, such as Arthur, Merlin, Saracens etc. represent cardinal virtues of Aristotle's philosophy. The twelve knights represent twelve virtues. The adventures of each knight are arranged to express symbolically the experiences, conflicts, and temptations of each such virtue in the turmoil of the world, and its ultimate triumph, with the aid of Arthur, the incarnation of its Divine Power, over all its enemies. The symbolical representations are given below:

Book I	The Legend of the Knight of red cross	Holiness
Book II	The Legend of Sir Guyon	Temperance



Book III	The Legend of Britomartis	Chastity
Book IV	The Legend of Cambel and Triamond	Friendship
Book V	The Legend of Artegall	Justice
Book VI	The legend of Sir Calidore	Courtesy

Spenser's meaning or intention is not clear. In Homer or Virgil, the first strong lines reveal the subject; in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the introduction gives us the theme; but Spenser's great poem with the exception of a single line in the Prologue, 'Fierce was and faithful loves shall moralize my song' - gives hardly a hint of what is coming. However, the *Faerie Queene* is an ethical allegory in which 'the noble powers of the human soul struggling towards union with God, and warring against all the forms of the veil, and these powers become real personages, whose lives and battles Spenser tells in verse so musical and so gliding, so delicately wrought, so rich in imaginative ornament, and so inspired with the finer life of beauty', that he has been called 'the poet's poet'. But he is the poet of all men who love poetry.'

2. Besides the ethical allegory, *The Faerie Queene* is also religious allegory. The figures of the narrative are not merely personifications of moral and mental qualities, but they also stand for institutions or persons representing or embodying the qualities in question. The story of the Red Cross Knight in the first book, who goes out to rescue the parents of Lady Una from the owner of a great dragon who for years has kept them confined in a brazen castle. As religious allegory, it represents the work of True Religion in rescuing Humanity from the power of great dragon, Satan, while his friends and enemies who the knight meets are the forces which aid and the forces which oppose. But, Spenser identifies true religion with Protestantism, and the enemies of True Religion are the enemies of England-the Papacy, Rome's political allies, especially Spain and Mary of Scots. So, the two lines of allegory run together, and the poem becomes at once the medium of the poet's moral teaching and his reading of contemporary events and movements.

3. Lastly, there is the strongly Elizabethan political historical element. In the first three books, the Shadowy Faery Queen sometimes represents the glory of God and sometimes Elizabeth. Britomartis is also Elizabeth. The Red Cross Knight is Sidney, the

ideal Englishman. Arthur, who always appears to rescue the oppressed, is Leicester. Una is sometimes religion and sometimes the Protestant Church. Duessa represents Mary Queen of Scots or Catholicism. In the last book, Mercilla is Elizabeth; Bourbon is Henry IV of France. Timias is Raleigh, and Blandmour and Paridell are earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland.

The excess of symbols and want of human touch, languidity of narration and abstract characters make the allegory confused, inconsistent and obscure.

**Sensuousness and Picturesqueness :** Spenser does not excel either as an allegorist or as a writer of romance, but he is incomparable as a showman of pageants. He skillfully and picturesquely describes scenes and sights of nature, scenes of bloody fights, characters both human and superhuman, buildings, caves, months of the year and the rivers of England. His consummate descriptive power is seen at its best in the *Faerie Queene*-a picture-gallery, rarely to be matched in the entire range of Elizabethan literature.

Spenser is a matchless painter in words. His word-pictures are colourful, concrete, vivid and beautiful. Court hope rightly remarks that "as we read *The Faerie Queene* a dreamlike succession of pageants and dissolving views of forests, Lakes, knights and ladies, caves and palaces, rises before our mind's eyes in a concrete image". He is a great colourist. When Spenser purports to draw a person or a scene from nature, he is inspired by the Painter's method. As we read *The Faerie Queene*, a beautiful panorama of fleeting images and pictures rises before our eyes. Ireland provided him with picture of 'the little mountain path of trodden grass', where Lady Una meets Abessa. The vivid pictures of the sea are all inspired by intimate personal observation of the stormy Irish sea.

Hence, his pictures are vivid and accurate. Mark the vividity, the accuracy and the sensuous beauty in the following word picture:

*"And forth they pass, with pleasure forward led,  
Joying to hear the birds' sweet harmony,*

*Which, therein shrouded from the tempest dred,  
Seemed in their son to scor the cruel sky.*

*Much can they praise the tree so straight and high,*

*The saying Pine, the Cedar proud and tall;  
The vine prop Elme; the Poplar never dry; The  
builder Oak, sole king of forests all;*

*The Aspine good for Staves; the Cypress funeral.”*

Spenser has painted a wonderful gallery of pictures of men and women representing a cross section of English life. An old man is described in his hoary glory:

*“An aged sire in long black weeds clad His  
feet all bare, his head all hoary grey.”*

Spenser was unendingly enthralled by the human body, especially the woman's body, which has been voluptuously and colourfully picturised in description after description. How life like, solid and detailed, majestic and decorative, colourful and sensuous are the following pictures :

*“Her neck and breast, were ever open bare: That  
ay thereof her babes might suck their fill.”*

Queen Lucifera is

*“A maiden Queen, that shone as Titans say  
In Glistening gold, and peerless precious stone.”*

Spenser's pictures of the knights, of the scenes of fighting, knightly encounters and bloodshed “are equally concrete, detailed, impressive and colourful. According to Rickett, this poem 'reveals a sober, chaste, and sensitive spirit; one keenly alive to sensuous beauty, but, kept from grossness and coarseness of some of his brilliant contemporaries by a mind of singular refinement; and beauty is for him the super most value in life. Small wonder that Keats was fired by his verse, for certainly his famous phrase, 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever' is entirely Spenserian in sentiment.”

**Style and Versification:** Spenser's contribution to poetic style, diction and versification is memorable. Renwick points out: "He treated the English language as if it belonged to him and he to it.". He coined new words, imported many from France and Italy, and saved many obsolete words from oblivion. Spenser evolved a true poetic style which the succeeding generations of English poets used. He is truly the poet maker,

who inspired others to achieve greatness in the field. Renwick says that "Shakespeare himself might not have achieved so much, if Spenser had not lived and labored". J.R Lowell writes about his contribution: "But no man contributed so much to the transformation of style and language as Spenser; for not only did he deliberately endeavour at reform, but by the charm of his diction, the novel harmonies of his verse, his ideal method of treatment and the splendour of his fancy, he made the new manner popular and fruitful". His rich and voluptuous style was followed by almost all his successors. *The Faerie Queene* stands unrivalled in English "for beauty long and richly wrought, for subtle and sustain melody, for graphic word pictures and for depth and magical colour of atmosphere". Milton, Keats and Tennyson follow in his footsteps, and his influence is still powerful.

Spenser is peerless in adroitly developing the vowel-music and fine poetic cadences. The graphical power and the melodic beauty of his poetry is unsurpassable.

The introduction of Spenserian stanza, which has been admired by countless critics and imitated by all poets since its introduction, is his most remarkable contribution. This is a nine line stanza, running a b a b b c b c c, the last line being what is called an Alexandrine, or line of six iambic feet, instead of five. The genesis of this stanza is uncertain, but it is probable that Spenser evolved it by simply adding the Alexandrine to Chaucer's eight line stave ( a b a b b c b c) of *The Monk's Tale*. Albert writes: "The complicated rhymes of the stanza suit the interwoven harmonies of the style, and the long line at the end acts either as a dignified conclusion or as a longer and stronger link with the succeeding stanza. The alliteration, vowel-music, and cadence are cunningly fashioned, adroitly developed and sumptuously appropriate".

Spenser is great because of the extra-ordinary smoothness and melody of his verse and the richness of his language-a Golden Diction which he drew from every source-new words, old words, obsolete words.

### ***The Faerie Queene as a Romantic Epic.***

Spenser's genius, says Rickett, "is epic, not lyric; he is a story teller, not a singer. He has something of Homer's ancient simplicity, though not the poignancy. His masterpiece, *The Faerie Queene*, is not a medieval romance but a romantic epic. It combines the prominent features of both a romance and an epic. It is not an epic in

the classical style, like those of Homer and Virgil. Spenser was influenced by Aristo's *Orlanda Furioso*, which like *The Faerie Queene* shares the characteristics of both the romance and the epic.

Its hero, Prince Arthur, was a celebrated figure in folklore and legend, and has the force of reality for sixteenth century England. His exploits and adventures are heroic. He is an ideal person who always appears to rescue the oppressed. Spenser's imagination in *The Faerie Queene* is expansive and he filled up the measure of his narrative with everything that caught his fancy—historical events and personages under allegorical masks, beautiful ladies, chivalrous knights, giants, monsters, dragons, sirens, enchanters and countless adventures.

The treatment of the subject is in the grand style suitable for an epic. The language is dignified and sublime. Moody and Lovett writes: "Spenser had the great gift of the poet, the power to create the illusion of a different world, a world of magic where the imagination and senses are satisfied. With all his morality, Spenser shared in the rich sensuous life which the Renaissance had thrown open to men... Altogether, Spenser has the resources of the whole world of sensation at command, and he never fails to heighten them with the illusion of his art. Of the colour, the savour, the music of life, his poem is full—only the colour is brighter, the taste sweeter, the music grander than any which mortal senses know". The similes are primal and direct. A wounded hero falls:

*".....as an aged tree,*

*High growing on the top of rocky clift."*

The judicious use of the supernatural is in the characteristic of epic style. Its aim is didactic, i.e., to fashion a man in moral and virtuous discipline. It does not have unity of action, but it certainly has a unity of design and atmosphere.

*The Faerie Queene* has many features of a medieval features. Although Prince Arthur casually appears in each book, he fails to provide the unity of action essential for an epic. Each of the books has its own hero and deals with his individual exploits and adventures. It has no unity of action, worthy of an epic. The scene is laid in a romantic fairyland. Rickett remarks: "Sensitive to every phase of imagination and beauty,

there is always a dreamy atmosphere about his verse".

*The Faerie Queene* is a romantic epic, the very first of its kind in English poetry.

S.A Brooke points out that it has a number of elements which have been commingled together in it for the first time. To quote him: "in its ideal whole, the poem represents the new love of chivalry, of classical learning, the delight in mystic theories of love and religion, in allegorical schemes, in splendid spectacles and pageants, in wild adventure; the love of England, the hatred of Spain, the strange worship of the Queen, even Spenser's own new love. It takes up and uses the popular legends of fairies, dwarfs, and giants, all the recovered romance and machinery of the Italian epics, and mingles them up with the wild scenery of Ireland, with the savages and wonders of the New World. Almost the whole spirit of Renaissance under Elizabeth, except its coarser and baser elements, is in its pages. Of anything impure, or ugly, or violent, there is no trace".

### **Spenser, the Child of Renaissance and Reformation.**

Rickett writes : "Spenser is at once the child of the Renaissance and the Reformation". On one side, we may regard him with Milton as "the sage and serious Spenser", on the other, he is the Humanist, alive to the finger-tips with the sensuous beauty of Southern Romance". Hudson also remarks that his poetry "is steeped in the humanism of the classics and Italian literature, and it everywhere testifies to the strenuous idealism and moral earnestness of Protestantism". The following characteristics of Renaissance are found in Spenser's poetry :

#### **1. Spirit of Adventure and love for active life.**

#### **2. Sensuousness and love of beauty**

**3. Influence of Classical Learning:** Spenser, a true child of Renaissance, is thoroughly imbued with the classical spirit and his acquaintance with the classical writers is perfect. He was influenced by Plato, Aristotle, Virgil, Ariosto and Tasso. It was Plato, who taught Spenser to view the beauty of the physical world as a symbol of divine beauty. According to this philosophy, "All that is fair is by nature Good".

What Spenser borrows from the ancients suffers a sea change in his hands. From Homer he borrows the description of the voyage to the Bower of Bliss, but Spenser adds a new interpretation to this voyage of which Homer had no idea in the Odyssey. There is much that Spenser borrows from Virgil. In his poetry there are Virgilian



phrases. Tasso's Armida suggests to Spenser the description of Acrasia and her bower. He modeled the *Faerie Queene* on Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, from which it differs radically in its strong moral element.

Spenser embodies the Greek philosophical thought in *The Faerie Queene* and the Four Hymns. He draws from Aristotle the plan of *The Faerie Queene*. The underlying idea of *The Faerie Queene* to 'Fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline' is derived from Aristotle.

Classical mythology was admired and was put to literary use in Renaissance. Spenser is thoroughly conversant with the classical mythology and profusely uses classical stories, myths and symbols in *The Faerie Queene*.

**4. Humanism :** Spenser is a typical Renaissance humanist. He aims at presenting an idealized picture of man and human life. He writes as the idealist, describing men not as they are but as he thinks they should be. He has no humour, and his mission is not to amuse but to reform. As a humanist, Spenser aims at inculcating moral virtues. His ardent zeal for moral earnestness is expressed in the opening lines of Canto V of the first book of *The Faerie Queene*.

**“The noble heart that harbours virtuous thought  
And is with child of glorious great intent  
Can never rest, until it forth have brought,  
The eternal brood of glory excellent.”**

**5. Imagination:** As the true representative of Renaissance, Spenser is endowed with expansive imagination, which enables him to create a world of dreams, fancies and illusions. Rickett writes about his imagination: "His is a rich ornate imagination; yet it rarely becomes turbid and oppressive. It lacks Marlowe's thrill, it certainly lacks his violence. It is a thing of prismatic colouring, refracting the white light of common day in delicate rainbow hues."

In Spenser's poetry the Renaissance element has been well fused with the Reformation element. The following characteristics of Reformation are present in his poetry:

**1. Christian Morality :** He represents both Renaissance humanism and Christian Humanism. He represents true Christian virtues - faith, hope and charity in his *The Faerie Queene* and the other twelve Virtues that he seeks to embody in King Arthur also have the true Christian colouring.

**2. Protestantism :** Spenser was a devout Protestant. The first book of *The Faerie Queene* allegorizes the struggle between the Protestant Church and the Roman Catholic Church. Queen Elizabeth, represented as Lady Una, is the embodiment of truth, simplicity, innocence and humility. She stands for the Protestant Church of England. Her rival, Mary Queen of Scots, is the symbol of falsehood and stands for the Catholic Church. Spenser exposes various manifestations of evil and corruption of the Roman Catholic Church through her deceitful character. In this conflict the Protestant Church comes out victorious, and the Catholic Church is defeated.

The Renaissance and the Reformation elements are delicately balanced in his poetry and it is difficult to say which of the two predominates.

## ACTIVITY II

### Fill in the blanks:

1. The first three books of *The Faerie Queene* were published in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Spenser planned a total of \_\_\_\_\_ books for *The Faerie Queene*, but only completed six in his lifetime.
3. The twelve books of *The Faerie Queene* were intended to represent the twelve private moral virtues as devised by \_\_\_\_\_.
4. In the religious allegory of *The Faerie Queene*, the Red Cross Knight represents \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Queen Elizabeth is symbolized in the poem by the character \_\_\_\_\_.
6. The character Duessa in *The Faerie Queene* represents \_\_\_\_\_ and Catholicism.

#### **4.3. SPENSER'S CONTRIBUTION TO ENGLISH POETRY OR SPENSER AS THE POETS' POET OR SPENSER'S INFLUENCE ON ENGLISH POETRY.**

Spenser's contribution to the development of English poetry is so great that almost all real poets right from Renaissance to our own day have been immensely influenced by him. No other poet has inspired and guided so many poets as Spenser. So, Charles Lamb called him "the poet's poet". Spenser is the fountainhead of all those poetic excellences and beauties which have fascinated all subsequent poets, who have expressed their indebtedness to him and called him their master and guide.

Milton, Browne, the two Fletchers and Moore were his professed disciples. Cowley tells us that he became a poet while reading *The Faerie Queene* when a boy. Shakespeare, whose language was enriched by Spenser's brilliant example, paid him a glowing tribute in the *Passionate Pilgrim*:

*“Spenser to me, whose deep conceit, is such,  
As passing all conceit, needs no defence, Thou  
lov'st hear the sweet melodious sound*

*That Phoebus' lute, the queen of music makes.”*

Dryden freely acknowledged that Spenser had been his master in English, and adds that "no man was ever born with a greater genius or more knowledge to support it." Pope says: "There is something in Spenser that pleases one as strongly in one's old age as it did in one's youth". Thompson referred to him as "my master Spenser". Collins, Gray and Akenside show his influence. Wordsworth praises Spenser as the embodiment of nobility, purity and sweetness:

*"The gentle Bard*

*Chosen by the Muse for their Page of State,*

*Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven*

*With the moon's beauty and moon's soft pace*

*I called him brother, Englishman, and friend."*

Byron, Shelley and Keats are his worthy disciples. The pre-Raphaelites were inspired by Spenser's word-painting and picturesque descriptions. His influence continues uninterrupted even to this day. Spenser rightly deserves the envious titles as the "poets' poet" and "the second father of English poetry".

"Spenser is the poets' poet" not only for the reasons mentioned above, but for the reason that he is a poet for poets and scholars. He was a great scholar of ancient classical literature of Greece and Rome, as well as of the literature of his own age. Plato, Aristotle, Ariosto, Virgil, Homer and classical mythology immensely influenced him. His poetry is suffused with classical influences. One who really wants to enjoy Spenser's poetry will have to acquaint oneself with the classical mythology and classical literature, pastoral tradition of Greece and Rome, the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, and the cross currents of the age of the Renaissance and Reformation. But, it is the narrow sense in which he has been regarded as the "Poets' Poet". Indeed, Spenser is the poet of all men who love poetry and are endowed with a poetical temperament.

"Spenser is the poets' poet" and the "second father of English poetry" because it was he, and not Chaucer, who gave to the poets not only of his own age but of all ages, a high and noble conception of their calling. He had a very high sense of the vocation of the poet and believed the poet to be the chosen agent of God. Like Plato, Horace and Ovid, he believed that the poet was a creator like God and so shared some of his

immortality. Spenser emphatically wrote:

*“For deeds done die however never alone And  
thoughts men done as themselves decay;*

*But wise words taught in numbers for to runne,  
Recorded by the Muse lives for aye,*

*Ne with storming showers be washed away No  
bitter breathing winds with harmful blast. Nor  
age, nor envy shall them ever waste.”*

All great poets right from the Renaissance to this day have followed Spenser's conception of poetry with undeviating fidelity. He gave to England and her poets, "pride and confidence, the fervor of conviction and faith" . He was the poet who inspired others to become poets and to devote to their vocation the best that was in them.

Spenser set out to endow England with poetry, great in kind, in style, in thought and to sow to the world that "Modern England was capable of poetry as great as that of any other age and that she had her share of poetic power, of art and learning." Before him, Chaucer had written poetry of a high order but in spite of his memorable contribution to English poetry, it could not stand at par with the poetry of great European writers. Spenser thoroughly studied the classical literature and imitated excellencies in his own inimitable way, and in the end surpassed the classical poets. It was a difficult task. He did not abandon the native tradition of romance and the poetic art of Chaucer. He had to begin with the foundations, make language an style and verse anew, to reconcile the native speech and the native taste with the style and forms of classical and foreign art, to control the violent spirit of the new age and direct it into the channels of art. Spenser successfully performed the task of reorienting English poetry and of placing it on a level with European poetry. Spenser has been called the "poets poet" for rendering his memorable service to English poetry, for making English poetry stand at par with European poetry. The publication of his very first work, *The Shepherd's Calendar* in 1579 made Spenser the "poets' poet". "It marks," writes W.J. Long, "the appearance of the first national poet in two centres; second, it shows again the variety and melody of English verse, which had been largely a tradition since Chaucer; third, it was our first pastoral, the beginning of a long series of English pastoral compositions modeled on Spenser, and as such exerted a strong influence on subsequent literature; and fourth, it

marks the real beginning of the outburst of great Elizabethan poetry".

The following characteristics of Spenser's poetry have also inspired and directed subsequent English poets:

1. Rare sense of sensuousness and beauty
2. A splendid imagination, W.J. Long remarks : "His first quality is imagination, not observation, and he is the first of our poets to create a world of dreams, fancies and illusions".
3. Lofty moral purity and seriousness, and a delicate idealism.
4. Style, versification and perfect melody. Long remarks: "Like Chaucer, he is an almost perfect workman, but in reading Chaucer we think chiefly of his natural characters of expression. The exquisite Spenserian stanza and the rich melody of Spenser's verse have made him the model of all our modern poets".

Indeed, it is Spenser's lofty idealism and a high sense of moral purity, his love of beauty, and his exquisite melody which have caused him to be known as the "poets' poet". Nearly all subsequent poets in England acknowledge their indebtedness to him. Dowden calls him "the Raphael of poets".

### **Spenser's Limitations**

Macaulay, first of all, pointed out that Spenser is difficult to read. The modern reader "loses himself in the confused allegory of *The Faerie Queene*, skips all but the marked passages, and softly closes the book in gentle wariness. Even the best of his longer poems, while of exquisite workmanship and delightfully melodious, generally fail to hold the reader's attention. The movement is languid, there is little dramatic interest, and only a suggestion of humour. The very melody of his verses sometimes grows monotonous, like a Strauss Waltz too long continued. We shall best appreciate Spenser by reading at first only a few well chosen selections from *The Faerie Queene* and *The Shepherd's Calendar*, and a few minor poems which exemplify his wonderful melody." (W.J. Long).

The use of obsolete words, like eyne (eyes) and shend (shame) and his tendency to coin others, like mercify, to suit his own purposes, also make his poetry difficult to read.



## **2. The Erotic Poetry.**

The poetry of the Age of Shakespeare was influenced by Italian voluptuousness and sensuality. A whole body of erotic poetry grew up during this age. A franker and more unrestrained abandonment to sensuous feeling marks such poems as Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, which was completed by Chapman. In these long poems the tide of Italianate eroticism reaches its height.

### **1. Christopher Marlowe (1564-1594) and George Chapman (1559-1634).**

The *Hero and Leander* was left incomplete due to Marlowe's untimely death. It was completed by George Chapman. Marlowe took the story from Musaeus, a fifteenth century grammarian; but he transformed it and made it entirely his own by the power of his unique imagination. It is remarkable for felicity of diction and versification. Epigrammatic lines as "whoever loved that loved not at first sight" and "it is not in our power to love and hate" are scattered all over the poem. The poets show great skill in effectively using words and images. The profuse use of imagery, the richness of decoration and purple patches cloy the readers. The Voluptuous details of female loveliness make the poet "a demoralized Spenser". The narration is smooth and flawless. Praising it, Swinburne writes that the poem "stands out alone among all the wide and wild poetic wealth of its teeming and turbulent age...". Boas comments: "The Renaissance spirit is there in its very quintessence, it leaps and glows in every line. Its frank paganism, its intoxication of delight in the loneliness of earthly things, the bodies of men and women, its ardour of desire, the desire that wakens at first sight and that presses forward impetuously to possession-all these find there matchless utterance".

Besides completing *Hero and Leander*, Chapman also translated *Iliad* (1611) and *Odyssey* (1613), and composed some sonnets. In him the fullness and splendor of Elizabethan poetry, which had reached their height in Spenser tend to elaboration, conceit and obscurity.

**2. William Shakespeare (1564-1616).** Shakespeare, the greatest dramatist, also composed sonnets, which will be discussed later, and two narrative poems-*Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). *Venus and Adonis* is dedicated to the Earl of Southampton. It is based on a Greek legend and shows the influence of

Ovid. The story is well known. Venus falls in love with a handsome youth, Adonis, who cares, only for hunting and rejects her. He is killed by a wild boar and is transformed into a stone. Shakespeare's poem retains no traces of mythology and a powerful instinct impels him towards reality. His goddess, Venus, is a woman skilled at love making. She is ravaged by passion. In *Adonis*, we find a young sports loving man, annoyed and fretted by the enticements of a beautiful amorous courtesan whose sensuality is unbounded.

These realistic passions are expressed through equally realistic pictures and episodes. It is remarkable for Venus' lascivious gestures. Shakespeare gives evidence in its stanzas of astonishing linguistic wealth and skill. Rickett writes: "Burdened as the poem is with the excessive hearts of youth and over luxuriant fancy, there are insignia of sweet and melodious poetry about it".

*The Rape of Lucrece* is a contrast to the previous poem. Having painted the attempts of an amorous woman, Shakespeare proceeded to represent the rape of a chaste wife, Lucrece, by a wretched debauchee, Tarquin. It is noticeable for "its finer restraint and more exalted imagery, none could deny the excursion into literature of a fresh and original force".

#### **4.4 TRENDS IN ELIZABETHAN PROSE:**

The Elizabethan age has well been called a "young" age. It was full of boundless vigour, re-awakened intellectual earnestness, and unfettered, soaring imagination. The best fruits of the age are enshrined in poetry in which all these elements can be befittingly contained. In poetry there are restrictions of versification which exerted some check on the youthful imagination and vigour of the Elizabethans. Consequently, Elizabethan poetry is very great. But prose does not admit of any restrictions. Too much of liberty has taken away much of its merit.

During the fifteenth century, Latin was the medium of expression, and almost all the important prose works were written in that language. It was in the sixteenth century, particularly in its later half, that the English language came to its own. With the arrival of cheap mass printing, English prose became the popular medium for works aiming

both at amusement and instruction. The books which date from this period cover many departments of learning. We have the chronicles of such writers as Stowe and Holinshed recapturing the history of England, though mixed with legends and myths. Writers like Harrison and Stubbs took upon themselves the task of describing the England not of the past but of their own age. Many writers most of them anonymous, wrote accounts of their voyages which had carried them to many hitherto unknown lands in and across the Western Seas. Then, there are so many "novelists" who translated Italian stories and wrote stories of their own after the Italian models. There are also quite a few writers who wrote on religion. And last of all, there is a host of pamphleteers who dealt with issues of contemporary interest.

Though the prose used by these numerous writers is not exactly similar, yet we come across a basic characteristic common to the works of all: that is, the nearness of their prose to poetry. "The age," says G.H. Mair, "was intoxicated with language. It went mad of a mere delight in words. Its writers were using a new tongue, for English was enriched beyond all recognition with borrowings from the ancient authors, and like all artists who become possessed of a new medium, they used it to excess. The early Elizabethans' use of the new prose was very like the use some educated Indians make of English. It was rich, gaudy and overflowing, though, in the main, correct." A.C. Ward observes in *Illustrated History of English Literature*, Vol I: "Our modern view of prose is strictly and perhaps too narrowly practical and utilitarian or..... functional. Prose, we hold, has a job to do and should do it without fuss, nonsense, or aesthetic capers. It should say what it has to say in the shortest and most time saving manner, and there finish." But we find Elizabethan prose far from this commonly accepted principle. It is colourful, blazing, rhythmic, indirect, prolix, and convoluted. Rarely does an Elizabethan prose writer call a spade a spade.

The prose works of the Elizabethan age fall into two categories:

- (i) Fiction
- (ii) Non-fiction

Let us consider them one by one.

## FICTION

The fiction of the age of Elizabeth is generally 'romantic' in nature in the sense that it is of the kind of romance. Many forms of fiction were practiced in the age. Some important forms and their practitioners are as follows:

The romances of Lyly, Greene and Lodge

The pastoral romance of Sir Philip Sidney

The picaresque novel of Nashe

The realistic novel of Delony.

### **John Lyly (1554-1606):**

Lyly in his romance displays all the peculiarities of Elizabethan prose which we have mentioned above. At the age of twenty four he came out with his *Euphues* or *The Anatomy of Wit* (1578) which took England by storm. This work which may only very roughly be termed as the 'first English prose novel' was an agglomeration of a thousand elements many of them alien to the nature of the novel proper. The plot for the work is the simplest imaginable. *Euphues* is a man of learning and culture belonging to Athens (which evidently stands for Oxford). He goes to Naples (which stands for London) to lead a life of pleasure. There he becomes intimate friend with a young man Philautus who introduces him to his fiancée, Lucilla. Euphues attracts Lucilla's love, and the two friends exchange taunting letters. But Lucilla plays him false and elopes with a stranger. Euphues, heart broken, returns to Athens, and he and Philautus became friends again. The plot is simple but very long. Essays on such topics as love and the education of children, with many rhetorical letters and lengthy dialogues, are grafted on to the thin stem of the story. In 1580, Lyly came out with a sequel. *Euphues and His England*, in which is narrated the arrival of Philautus and Euphues in England, and Philautus' unsuccessful courtship of Camilla, a maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth. This volume pays a glowing tribute to the English nobility, particularly the courtiers. "Lyly was," to quote Tucker Brooke, "most careful to depict them, not as they were, but as they would have liked to have themselves regarded." To quote the same critic, "in the last fifteen pages a portrait of Queen Elizabeth (is) probably the most elaborately flattering that much flattered sovereign ever received".

What is remarkable about Lyly's work is not its matter but its terribly manneristic prose style which has come to be dubbed as "Euphuism". It came to be parodied and derided by a long chain of writers from Shakespeare to Scott, though it also excited imitation in a very large number of writers now justly forgotten. The cool Drayton declared that Lyly taught his countrymen to speak and write "all like mere lunatics". Nevertheless, if Lyly was a lunatic there was method in his madness. He did employ a well thought out plan which has the following characteristics:

- (i) The first is the principle of a symmetry and equipoise obtained generally by the employment of alliteration, balance and antithesis. See, for instance, such an expression as "hot liver of a heedless lover", or the description of Euphues as "a young gallant of more wit than wealth, yet of more wealth than wisdom".
- (ii) Secondly, there are numerous references to the classical authorities, even for every well known facts.
- (iii) Thirdly, there is the mass of allusions to natural history, generally of the fabulous kind.

All these devices are used for the purpose of decoration. But our complaint is that the style is over-decorated, to the point of being monotonous and insipid, even though it affects poetic beauties. To quote Compton-Rickett, Lyly's style "suffers from the serious defect of ignoring the distinction between prose and verse. It is the prose of an age that found its most effective medium in verse".

### **Robert Greene (1560-92):**

Greene was a patent imitator of Lyly, and later that of Sidney, after he came to know of his *Arcadia*. Though in his actual life he was a debauchee of the worst kind, yet in his works he was quite didactic. His several "novels" include *Pandosto* (1588) which very obviously furnished the plot for Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale*. His other important works are *Menophon* (1591), *Mamilia* (1583), and *The Card of Fancy*, which was published within a decade of *Euphues* and, as A.C Ward says : "reproduces its mannerisms of style, its elaborately artificial and voluble conversations, its classical embellishments, its images and comparisons from natural history (for Greene, like Lyly,

drew upon Pliny), its frequent and lengthy soliloquies." The frequency of letters may have furnished Richard with a model of the epistolary novel. In his *Life and Death of Ned Brown*, a notorious pick-pocket, Greene provides hints for the low-life scenes, we meet within the novels of Smollett and Defoe.

### **Thomas Lodge (1558-1625).**

He was another writer of Euphuistic novels the best of which is *Roslynde*, *Euphues Golden Legacie* (1590). In his tricks of style Lodge imitates Lyly, but his matter is derived from Greek pastoral romance. The work is significant because it furnished Shakespeare with the plot of *As You Like It*. Further, it includes, like Greene's *Menophon*, some very charming lyrics.

### **Sri Philip Sidney (1554-86).**

Like Lyly, Sidney also prompted a number of imitators. His *Arcadia* (1590) is the first pastoral romance in England prose, just as Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calendar* is the first verse pastoral romance. All the happenings of the story are envisaged in an imaginary land of idyllic beauty with shepherds, shepherdesses, running brooks, and lush scenery. It tells the story of Basilius, king of Arcadia, who settles in a village with his wife and two daughters named Pamela and Philoclea. Two princes from abroad come to Arcadia and start courting the two girls. One disguises himself as a shepherd and the other as an Amazon. Complications start when both Basilius and his wife fall in love with the "Amazon", the former taking him to be a real Amazon and the latter, after discovering his real identity. Everything is finally unraveled by Euarchus, king of Macedonia and father of one of the princes. Everything ends happily. This was the first version of the *Arcadia*, known as the Old Arcadia. In the revised version Sidney included many complications and also added much symbolism and didacticism which rendered it almost of the nature of *The Faerie Queene*. In the *Arcadia*, observes Daiches, "Ideal love, ideal friendship, and the ideal ruler are, directly and indirectly, discussed, suggested, and embodied".

The style of the *Arcadia* is as artificial and attitudinized as that of Euphuus. It is, to quote Daiches again, "highly 'conceited' full of elaborate analogies, balanced parenthetical aside, pathetic fallacies, symmetrically answering clauses and other devices of an immature prose entering suddenly into the world of conscious literary artifice. One

of Sidney's constant devices is to take a word and, somewhat like Shakespeare, toss it about till its meaning is sucked dry. As an example of pathetic fallacy consider his reference to the cool wine which seems "to laugh for joy" as it nears a lady's lips. Similarly the water drops that slip down the bodies of dainty ladies seem to weep for sorrow. The name that a beautiful lady utters is perfumed by the scent of her breath. When the princesses put on their clothes, the clothes are described as "glad". And so forth.

### **Thomas Nashe (1567-1601);**

Nashe had a taste for buffoonery, satire, reckless savagism, and effrontery. He is best known for his vigorous pamphlets. He also wrote the first English picaresque novel *The Unfortunate Traveller*, or *The Life of Jack Wilton* (1594), which is a tale of the adventures of a page named Wilton in the reign of Henry VIII. It was perhaps suggested by Spanish Lozarillo de Thormes. It has also been called the first English historical novel as it introduces as characters such known figures of yore as Erasmus, Sir Thomas More, and the Earl of Surrey. But Nashe jumbles up all the historical details with reckless abandon and irresponsibility without minding gross inaccuracies and anachronisms. The adventures of Jack Wilton take him through half of Europe which (particularly Italy) is described with all its sordidness, crime, culture, and beauty. The novel has no form. It is made up of, to quote Compton-Rickett, "a series of episodes lightly strung together". It is hopelessly incoherent at times. In his prose style Nashe follows neither Lyly nor Greene nor Sidney. His sentences are short and striking, but sometimes he is carried away by a flood of words. "Nashe" says, A.C Ward, "was drunk with words, even besotted by them". Anyway, his strength was acknowledged by his contemporaries, and he had many imitators.

### **Thomas Deloney (1543-1600):**

Deloney, a silk-weaver by profession, exhibited an even weaker sense of form and structure than Nashe. His three tales *Jack of Newbury*, *The Gentle Craft* and *Thomas of Reading* (all 1590) show him as a story teller of the bourgeois craftsman. In the second named he glorifies the craft of shoemakers. Deloney's style is quite homely, and he was read and appreciated by a vast number of people, particularly craftsmen, whom

he had tried to flatter. In spite of his gifts of description he does not manage to give pattern, unity of action, or even unity of tone or mood to his stories.

## **NON-FICTION**

### **Richard Hooker (1554-1600):**

Hooker's masterly work of the *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, is the greatest of the non-fictional prose works of the Elizabethan age. It began appearing volume by volume in 1594 and continued till the author's death. It was the first book in England which used English for a serious philosophic discussion. Hooker was a protestant who combined the piety of a saint with the simplicity of a child. His purpose in writing the book was to defend the Church of England and to support certain principles of Church government. Hardin Craig in *A History of English Literature* edited by himself maintains:

"As originally written the eight books were already on a very high level of theological and legal argument. The first book is Hooker's famous general treatise on law. The second argues that divine law or scripture is not the only law that ought to serve for our direction in things ecclesiastical. The effect of the third is to make the Church an independent and self-directing social institution within the State. The fourth claims for the Church the right to adjust its position, free, on the one side, of Rome and, on the other, of Geneva. The fifth book..... deals with the established practices of the Church of England. The fragmentary sixth is largely on penitence... The seventh treats the power and position of bishops, and the eighth is a most significant treatise on the relation of the Church to the secular government. Hooker admits the right of the secular Government to establish and control the Church, but declares that the powers of the Crown are derived from the consent of the governed as expressed in a parliament of the people."

Hooker modeled his style on Cicero. Though his diction is simple yet the syntax is highly Latinized, but not without much harmony and studied flow. The style is as much removed from vulgarity as from pedantry. Ruskin was later to seize upon this style and use it in his earlier works, particularly, *Modern Painters*.



### **Bacon (1561-1626):**

Exactly opposite to Hooker's Ciceronian style was Bacon's English prose style which has been called style coupe or anti Ciceronian style. Much of what Bacon wrote appeared in the age of James I. However, the first edition of his *Essays* appeared in 1597, that is, within the age of Elizabeth. Bacon borrowed the term and the conception of the essay from the French writer Montaigne whose *Essais* first appeared in 1580. In spite of the fact that Bacon took them lightly, his essays make pretty heavy reading. They are full of memorable aphorisms which have passed into everyday speech. The scope of his essays is vast, and they embrace all kinds of issues, but , mostly, those of practical life. By writing his essays Bacon became "the father of the English Essay". Even though his essays differ from the kind which was later established in England, he is a worthy predecessor of the line of essayists ranging from his own times up to ours.

### **The Historical or Literary Importance of Bacon's Essays or The Characteristics of Bacon's Essays.**

Neither Nash nor the character writers are the forerunners of essay writing. Bacon is the first great English writer who, in the words of Hugh Walker, is the first English essayist, as he remains for sheer mass and weight of genius, the greatest." His *Essays* have won him a place apart, and are a source of his fame with the world at large. They introduce a new form of composition into English literature, which was destined to have a varied and fruitful development. They are also in a sense, a record of Bacon's outlook on the world throughout the years of his active life. The slim volume of the essays, published in 1597, grew to thirty-eight in the edition of 1612, and to fifty-eight in the final edition of 1625, and many of the essays were amplified as time went on.

(i) **Bacon and Montaigne :** Bacon borrowed the general conception of essay from Montaigne's *Essais*, published in 1580, but he has little in common with them, except that both books consist of notes on human life and human nature by men of the world. In the dedication to Prince Henry, Bacon expounding his conception of essay, writes that they are "certain brief notes, set down rather significantly than curiously, which I have called Essays. The word is late, but the thing is ancient. For Seneca's epistles to Lucilius, if one marks them well, are but Essays, that is, dispersed meditations, though conveyed in the form of Epistles." Bacon's Essays are much more concentrated

and concise than Montaigne's *Essais*. The charm of Montaigne is that of shrewd but inconsequent comments on men and things set out at leisure by a humane and open eyed observer. Bacon's *Essays* represent rather the reflections of a politic player of the game of life summed up in short, pregnant sayings that strike the imagination and cling to the memory. The effect of the one is diffused humanity, of the other an insight into human nature, pointed with consummate mastery of single words and phrases.

**(ii) Impersonal and Objective :** As an essayist Bacon is not friendly, confidential, intimate and familiar with the reader. If we try to find in them the history of Bacon's inner life, we are disappointed. His essays "are for the most part detached and impersonal, and there is nothing in them to mark the tragedy of his life." But to say that the essays of Bacon do not bear the stamp of the personality of their author is a gross error. He did not consider life lightly and he was too serious a man to view the problems of life in a chatty, gossipy manner. He dealt with life with its varied problems seriously and tried hard to provide solutions. It was in this mood that these essays were conceived and written. Bacon, never for a moment, stoops down to treat life romantically and playfully. He, according to Hugh Walker, "is too stately, and his thought is so profound to permit us to speak of the essays as the confidential chat of a great philosopher; but in them he comes as near that as his nature would permit. Bacon's attitude to life, the conditions of his time and the frame of his mind compelled him to conceal rather than reveal his personality in his essays. The age of Elizabeth was one of the most treacherous ages of British history. Bacon could not commit anything to writing that could be considered his won view on religion, politics or morality. He was a politician surrounded on all sides with rivals and enemies who could make capital out of his personal utterances. He did not want to be exploited on that account. Bacon had to keep himself to himself. The conditions of his life and his time always kept his pen in check. He never spoke out, and whenever he spoke, he spoke like a philosopher or a statesman. Bacon writes as "a statesman and politician, as Attorney General or Lord Chancellor with the robes of his office on."

Bacon, therefore took the form from Montaigne, but filled it with material drawn from his own mind. Montaigne emerges in his essays as "the spectator of life and its shrewd critic" and Bacon comes out as "the ambitious English lawyer and statesman, with one eye fixed upon the pole-star of philosophic truth, and the other watching the political weather-cock."

**(iii) Neatness and Ordered Compactness :** Bacon found the essay as a suitable form to receive many thoughts of his mind. He was extraordinarily discursive in his interests. He took all knowledge to be his province. He surpassed all his contemporaries in the capacity to utter pregnant thoughts on almost any theme. He was short of time and thrifty of his thoughts and his literary material. He wanted to preserve the treasures of his mind for the benefit of posterity in aphoristic utterances. To Bacon, who was thrifty both of time and of literary material, the essay was a Godsend. So, there is neatness and ordered compactness which distinguish his essays which are occasional and discursive, containing detached thoughts, written down as they occur. They are not set compositions but rather jottings of collections of thoughts that have shaped themselves, as if, spontaneously in the epigrammatic phase. This occasional nature of Bacon's essays set the fashion of essay writing in English Literature.

**(iv) Variety of Subjects:** The astonishing range of topics of Bacon's essays is his great attraction. He passes from religion and empire to gardens and buildings. In Montaigne and Lamb, the subject is un-important, but in Bacon the subject always is important. He may be unsystematic in his treatment of it, but he never wanders beyond his bounds.

**(v) Language and style :** Rickett writes *Bacon*, " is the pioneer of clear, sententious English that suggests rather than expounds, and blends dignity with familiarity, in that pleased and attractive manner which is the secret of the power of all our great essayists." He was the first English essayist who employed a style that is conspicuous for lucidity, clarity, economy, precision , directness, masculinity and mathematical plainness. He carefully avoided any fineness or affectation of phrases. His images and figures of speech are simple and clearly illustrate the ideas that he wishes to convey.

#### 4.5 LET US SUM UP

The Elizabethan age was a vibrant period of intellectual and literary growth, marked by imaginative freedom in prose. Unlike poetry, prose faced no formal constraints and often featured an ornate, poetic style. Fiction was largely romantic, with writers like Lyly, Greene, and Sidney exploring euphuism, pastoral romance, and picaresque forms. In non-fiction, Richard Hooker used a complex, Latin-influenced style to defend the Church, while Francis Bacon pioneered the English

essay with clear, concise, and aphoristic prose. Elizabethan prose reflects the era's linguistic experimentation and the emergence of English as a serious literary language.

#### **4.6 ANSWER KEY**

##### **Activity I**

False, True, True, False, False, True

##### **Activity II**

1590, Twelve, Aristotle, Holiness, Gloriana, Falsehood

#### **4.7 SUGGESTED READING**

A.C. Ward, *Illustrated History of English Literature*. 3 vols., illustrations collected by Elizabeth Williams, Longmans, Green & Co., 1953–55.

G.H. Mair, *The Elizabethan Age*. Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1904.

Compton-Rickett, *History of English Literature History of English Literature*. Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1956.

**Course Code : EL-201 (B.A. Sem II)**

**UNIT-II**

**Course Title: English Literature**

**LESSON NO.5**

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**DEVELOPMENT OF DRAMA TILL SHAKESPEARE**

**STRUCTURE:**

- 5.0** Objectives And Outcomes
- 5.1** Introduction
- 5.2** Development Of Drama Till Shakespeare
- 5.3** Characteristics Of Romantic Comedy.
- 5.4** Summary
- 5.5** Let Us Sum Up
- 5.6** Glossary
- 5.7** Self-Assessment Questions
- 5.8** Examination Oriented Questions
- 5.9** Lesson End Exercise
- 5.10** Self-Check Exercise
- 5.11** Answer Key
- 5.12** Model Test Paper
- 5.13** Suggested Reading

**5.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

The objective of this lesson is to provide the learners with a clear understanding of the historical development of English drama up to the time of Shakespeare. It focuses on the transformation

from religious to secular forms of drama. Additionally, it introduces the concept of Romantic Comedy, particularly as seen in Shakespeare's works.

By the end of this unit, learners will be able to:

- a) trace the development of English drama from its religious origins to the Elizabethan period.
- b) describe the key features of Miracle, Morality, Interlude, and Masque plays.
- c) recognize the contributions of Shakespeare and the University Wits to English drama.

## **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Elizabethan Age, marked by national stability, humanistic spirit, and intellectual freedom, provided fertile ground for artistic expression. Drama, which had its roots in religious rituals and church performances, gradually evolved into a secular and popular form of entertainment.

Through various stages—Miracle and Morality plays, Interludes, and Masques—drama came into its own, culminating in the rise of the professional stage and the works of playwrights like Marlowe and Shakespeare.

## **5.2 DEVELOPMENT OF DRAMA TILL SHAKESPEARE.**

The English drama, like the Greek, had its beginning in religion. To begin with, the church had this drama completely under control; performances were given inside the church buildings themselves; the priests were the actors; and Latin was the language employed. Its purpose was directly didactic or instrumental. It was the work of priests who used it as a means of conveying the truths of their religion to the illiterate masses. It included simple movement, consuming and appropriate gestures. By 1200, liturgical drama grew in length and complexity.

There are actually four stages in the development of drama upto the earliest regular drama :

**(A) Miracle or Mystery Plays :** These were frequently acted in the twelfth century England. The mysteries were based on the subjects taken from the Bible; and the Miracles were about the lives of the saints. As the mystery or miracle plays increased in popularity, the church became too limited to accommodate the crowds that were attracted by these plays. The space surrounding it was used next, but the excited spectators accidentally despoiled graves while crowding around to watch. It became necessary to remove the stage from the interior of the building to the porch. Later it was taken from the church premises altogether to the village green or the city street. Laymen began to take part in the performances, and soon they superseded the priests entirely. They began to write these plays and the language (Latin) was gradually replaced by the English. The drama came out of the church. It was not now under the control of the church. It was staged in the pageants or platforms. The audience moved from one platform to the other to see the whole play and sometimes the platforms were brought to the audience. The religious drama in England reached its height in the 14th Century, from which time onwards at the festival of Corpus Christi, in early summer, miracle plays were represented in nearly all larger English towns in great connected sequence or cycles. Guilds undertook the drama, which had become so popular that it could not be squelched. Pageant wagons moved the tableau through the town, dramatizing biblical text. Four of these cycles have come down to us complete.

- (i) The Chester cycle of 25 plays
- (ii) The Coventry cycle of 42 plays
- (iii) The Wakefield cycle of 31 plays
- (iv) The Newyork cycle of 48 plays

**(B) Morality plays :** The next stage in the history of English drama is the morality plays. They were dramatized sermons. While the Biblical tradition and the morality tradition share a common didactic moral purpose, they were different in their style of presentation. The characters of the morality plays, instead of being taken from the Bible or from the legends of the saints, were personified abstractions. The plot of the morality play was fictional and not based on a historical event. All kinds of mental and moral

qualities appeared on the stage as characters in the play -Patience, Perseverance, Free will, The Five Senses, The Seven Deadly Sins, Good and Bad Angels etc. Among such personifications there was generally a place for the Devil who had held a prominent position in the miracle plays. A later introduction of much importance was the so-called vice, who was a humorous personification of evil taken on the comic side. This was the recognized fun-maker of the piece. This character often scored tremendous popular success by jumping on the devil's back, sticking thorns into him, beating him with a stick and making him roar with pain. He is specially interesting as the direct fore runner of the clown of the Elizabethan stage.

**(C) The Interlude :** The 'interlude' was a late product of the dramatic development of the Morality play. The interlude was a short dramatic piece of a satiric rather than of a religious or ethical nature, and in tone and purpose, far less serious than the morality proper.

The interest in classical studies, a direct result of the Revival of learning, stimulated dramatic activity in the direction of plays nearer to life and more regular in form. The audience also wanted more and more to see the treatment of actual human life and affairs in the drama. These demands were met by the 'interlude'. The name 'interlude' means a play interposed between two other things. In interlude, the element of diversion of fun is emphasized, as contrasted with the seriousness of the Miracle and Moral plays. John Heywood was the originator of this species of drama, and his characters are real men and women, and not purely allegorical abstractions.

**(D) Pageants and Masques :** Other forms of enjoyment in vogue, in England, about the same time, were the pageants and Masques-plays full of scenic representation and the splendor of costume. All these forms of acting contributed in their individual manner to the growth of the English Drama. Pageants and Masques was a modified form of the Miracle and Moral plays which died out at the end of the reign of Elizabeth. The form consisting of processions of various kinds, existed for nearly a century later and was then incorporated with the regular drama. Pageants and Masques were popular forms of entertainment in the time of Elizabeth, the former being of a purely spectacular character, while the latter may be said to have occupied an intermediate position between pageant and play.



Thus, the Drama migrated from the church to the market place. It passed into the hands of the common people. It divested itself of the religious garb and put on a new vesture woven of the passions and interests of active human life. The masses wanted to be amused, so, comedy developed before tragedy. In a comedy, there was a scope for introducing realistic subject matter. So, we find the medieval English stage producing such supreme comedies as *Ralph Roister Doister* by Nicholas Udall, or *Gammer Gurton's Needle* by John Still.

The models on which the new drama was based were Plautus and Seneca. Plautus gave us the earliest comedy while Seneca gave us the earliest tragedy. The classical plays were too academic. The dramatists broke free from these trammels (restrictions or impediments to freedom of action) and popular, romantic Elizabethan drama arose. But the influence of Plautus and Seneca was a vital force in the birth of the English drama. Under Italian guidance, the English authors took Seneca as their model and began to write plays. The first product of this school of English playwrights was tragedy, entitled *Gorboduc* and its authors were Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton. It was written in 1561, for the representation before members of the Inner Temple at their Christmas festivities. The first English Tragedy was the first English play to use blank verse which had been introduced into English poetry only a few years before.

The quarter century or so which followed the production of *Gorboduc* was a period of vast experimentation in the English drama. There was a conflict between those who insisted on the classical tradition and those who wanted to cater to the strong national taste of English public. In the end the national taste won and the romantic form of drama was established. It was a great achievement of Shakespeare's predecessors. The galaxy of the names of playwrights which decorated the Elizabethan dramatic stage gave expression to spirit of the age in various types of plays. They were some young intellectuals of the Elizabethan age who were associated with Oxford or Cambridge. They made a glorious contribution to the Dramatic art of the Elizabethan Age. The age was dominated by these playwrights known as "University wits". The chief university wits were-George Peele, Robert Greene, Thomas Nash, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe.

Lyly's dramatic work consists of eight comedies of which the best are *Campaspe*, *Endymion* and *Gallanthea*. Their interest depends not on plot or characterization but

on language, wit, ingenuity and grace of the dialogue. He helped to give comedy an intellectual tone. He was undeniably Shakespeare's first master.

Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great*, *Dr. Faustus*, and *The Jew of Malta* fix the type of tragedy and chronic play for his immediate successors. He used blank verse in those plays with great success. He revealed himself as the greatest discoverer, the most daring and inspired pioneer, in all our poetic literature, as the writer of genuine tragedy and genuine blank verse as one who prepared the path and made straight the way for the advent of Shakespeare. With Marlowe began which Shakespeare so magnificently completed, the creation of drama absolutely ideal in its comprehensiveness; a drama that combined all the elements of the classical, the medieval, the tragic, the romantic and the farcical. *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth* are the world's masterpieces. Shakespeare's *Richard III* and *Richard II* are clearly based on the model of chronicle play provided in Marlowe's *Edward II*. Even Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* owes something to Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*.

Shakespeare's plays follow the example set by his predecessors, the university wits. He is a romantic dramatist as distinguished from the classical dramatists of ancient Greece or Rome. The fundamental quality of most of Shakespeare's plays was that they had good plots and entertaining stories. In the words of an eminent critic : "Shakespeare in all his plays has a story to tell. He has to make that story credible on the stage and his characters are created for that purpose. They cannot choose but do what the story requires and to that extent they are determined by the plot." He may have wonderful ability to manage his story, it is in the characters and the diction, the poetry and the wit and humour of the speeches, that this genius shows itself supreme.

### **5.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF ROMANTIC COMEDY.**

A comedy is usually, rather, crudely defined as a play with a happy ending, which aims at entertainment of its readers or audiences by providing laughter, more laughter and nothing but laughter. It is also corrective and reformative though its corrective aims and methods differ accordingly as it is Romantic or classical, these being the two broad categories into which comedy is divided.

**Classical comedy :** It follows the rules of the dramatic composition as laid down

by the ancient Greek and Roman masters. Its models are the classical Greek dramatists

like Plautus, Terence and Aristophanes. The most important of these rules are:

- (i) Observation of three unities; namely the unity of time, the unit of place and the unity of action. The ancient classical plays observed the three unities scrupulously.
- (ii) Strict separation of the tragic and comic or serious or light elements.
- (iii) It deals with the every day, familiar life of ordinary people. It is based on Realism.
- (iv) Its aim is corrective and satire. Human follies, weaknesses or social vices are exposed and ridiculed.
- (v) It laughs at people and not with them.

The most noted exponent of the classical comedy in English was younger contemporary of Shakespeare, Ben Johnson. His comedy mirrors the life of the times. He depicts and satirizes a number of follies of his age.

**Romantic Comedy :** The Shakespearean comedy is a romantic comedy. It grew out of national tastes and traditions. The dramatist pays scant attention or does not care for the rules of the literary creation, but writes according to the dictates of his fancy. The three unities - the unity of time, place and action, are carelessly thrown to the wind. There is a free mingling of the comic and the tragic, the serious and the comic, for Shakespeare instinctively realized that life is a mingled yarn of joys and sorrows and it would be unnatural to separate them.

There is mingling of romance and realism or confrontation of romance and realism which is identified as the salient feature of Shakespearean comedy. The characterization is realistic. His characters are ordinary beings and incidents are possible in common everyday life. There is a confrontation of the Romantics main plot with a realistic subplot. In *As You Like It*, there is a realistic Jacques to remind us of the ingratitude of man which is more painful than the winter wind or the frozen sky.

The clowns or fools have significant roles to act in the play. The fools' function is not only to imitate laughter in the play. In addition, they reveal fundamental truths often overlooked by others. They give wise comments at times.

The aims of the Romantic comedy is not corrective or satire, but innocent good natured laughter. Follies are no doubt exposed and ridiculed but the laughter is gentle and sympathetic. There is no moral indignation, or the zeal of a reformer. The dramatist sympathizes even when he laughs.

A very attractive features of Romantic comedy is its art of humour. If comedy has a purpose, it is to arouse laughter at the foibles and follies of man with a cordial and corrective aim. Shakespeare's attitude towards his fellow beings is acceptive and genial not rejective and cynical. Though, Shakespeare throws the three classical unities to the wind and does not observe the classical rules of the dramatic composition but that does not mean that his comedies are not organic wholes, or they lack form or unity. As a matter of fact, they have much deeper unity, which is emotional and thematic.

The Romantic comedy explores the possibility of a better world order in which life would be much happier and also, much nobler. It does not merely expose and ridicule human folly, hypocrisy and vanity, rather it presents an artist's vision of a better world order. That is why, the characters in it are not ludicrous specimens of humanity, mean and low, as in a classical comedy, but beautiful, glorious and noble such as we would all like to be or well all should be. Its appeal is to the spirit and emotions and not to the critical faculty.

To conclude, A Romantic Comedy is a marvelous kind of play which appeals greatly to our emotions, our imagination and our fancy and which at the same time, appeals to our risible faculty (faculty or laughter). The romantic element in this kind of play transports us to a new world, which is more pleasing than the actual world in which we live, and comic elements make us laugh and forget our cares, worries and anxieties.

## **5.4 SUMMARY**

### **Elizabethan Age (1516-1625)**

The Age of Shakespeare, known as the golden age of literature, extends from the accession of Elizabeth in 1558 to the death of James I in 1625. It was an era of peace, of economic prosperity, of stability, of liberty and of great explorations. It was an age of both contemplation and action; an era which was illustrious for the unprecedented development of art, literature and drama.

The literary decline that followed Chaucer's death was due in considerable measure to political causes. The dispute in regard to the throne, which culminated in the War of Roses, dissipated the energy and resources of the country and finally destroyed in large measure the noble families on whose patronage art and literature depended. The accession of Henry VII in 1485 brought about a period of quiet and recovery. Henry VII, an able king, established a strong monarchy, restored social and political order curtailed the powers and privileges of barons and patronized the new rich class. The country resumed its power among European nations, and began through them to feel the stimulus of the movement called the Renaissance. Even before the accession of Henry VII, we can discern signs of its coming. Caxton's press, which was established in 1476 in London, was the earliest forerunner of Renaissance in England. Rickett remarks: "The Renaissance had come with Caxton". It began in London with the publication of English masterpieces, awakening in the minds of the people a sense of their national life.

King Henry VIII, who acceded to the throne of England in 1509, began an era of significant and purposeful changes. He ruled in the spirit of modern statecraft. He encouraged trade and manufacturers, and increased the wealth of the country. He hastened the decline of feudalism by allowing men of low birth to high positions. Thus the court became the field for the display of individual ambition. Men of talent and learning found honourable place in his court. During his reign England contributed her part to the spread of the new civilization and new learning. Education was popularized, Cardinal's College and Christ Church College at Oxford were founded. Cardinal Wolsey, one of his illustrious ministers was a vivid illustration of the effect of renaissance in England. Thomas Ore (1478-1535) was the most attractive figure in his court. He was one of the earliest harbingers of Renaissance in England.

The reign of Henry VIII also expedited the Reformation which had begun in England nearly two centuries before with Wycliffe. The spirit of emancipation of conscience from priestly control was strengthened by the example of German and Swiss reformers. In 1534, Henry VIII enforced political separation from Rome on the occasion of the annulment of his first marriage. It provided an opportunity for radical theological reforms. Hugh Latimer, the most powerful preacher of the day, was a powerful spokesman of the spirit of Reformation. His writings, represent a development of popular English prose, straightforward, racy and single. The Reformation and various religious and

political controversies gave rise to the writing of pamphlets, serious and satirical, in both prose and verse. This is the earliest manifestation of what we should call journalism. The translation of the Bible by William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale is a significant development in English prose.

During Henry's reign (1509-47), the court emerged as a great patron of learning, art and literature. Commenting on his reign W. J. Long writes: "His age is marked by a steady increase in the national power at home and abroad, by the entrance of Reformation by a side door', and by a final separation of England from all ecclesiastical bondage in Parliament's famous Act of Supremacy. In previous reign, chivalry and the old feudal system had practically been banished, now monasticism, the third medieval institution with its mixed good and evil, received its death blow in the wholesale suppression of monasteries and the removal of abbots from the House of Lords." The atmosphere of peace and calm which began to prevail after long turmoil and chaos paved the way for extraordinary development of literary activity.

Edward VI ruled from 1547 to 1553. The reign of Queen Mary from 1553 to 1558 was marred by religious conflicts. She restored Roman Catholicism in England. Creative activity was arrested during her time, but it was replenished with much greater vigour in the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603).

The period which we have discussed so far is the prologue of the great efflorescence of the golden age of Shakespeare, which is also called the age of Elizabeth and that of James I.

The English Renaissance covers a pretty long span of time, which is divided for the sake of convenience into the following three periods:

- (i) The beginning of Renaissance (1516-1558);
- (ii) The Flowering of Renaissance (1558-1603). It is actually called the Age of Elizabeth ;
- (iii) The Decline of Renaissance (1603-1625). It is also termed the Jacobean Age.

In spite of the ignorance and superstition, violence and brutality, easy morals and lax values, the age of Shakespeare was "an age in which men lived intensely, thought

intensely and wrote intensely".

At such a time, when passions were strong and speculation was rife, and a great public existed eager to respond to the appeal of genius, everything conspired to bring out of each man the best there was in him, and whatever might be the individual quality of his work, the fullness and many-sidedness of the life about him were certain to be reflected in it."

The poetry of Elizabethan era mirrors the spirit of the Age. It reflects the spirit of consequent and self-glorification, humanism and vigorous imagination, emotional depth and passionate intensity. Sublimity was considered to be the essential quality of poetry. Spenser, Shakespeare and Marlowe had the immense power to exalt and sublimate the lovers of poetry.

The poetry of this period is remarkable for the spirit of independence. The poets refused to follow set rules of poetic composition. Consequently, new poetic devices and new linguistic modes developed.

All varieties of poetic forms - lyric, elegy, eclogue, ode, sonnet etc were successfully attempted.

The feeling of stability, space and contentment enabled poets to compose songs and lyrics full of buoyancy and zest for life. Everybody, down from the flowery courtier to the man in the street, wrote lyrics. Translations from other languages inspired the people to write. The Elizabethans loved music. Music and lyric are closely related. It was an age of romance which also contributed to the development of lyricism.

Form and expression were joined together and the lyrics became an expression of the soul. Love is the main theme of Elizabethan songs and lyrics. It is fanciful love, love that laughs and entreats and sighs. Pastoral element - many time rapture, shepherds' feasts, shepherds' loves and joys of countryside - characterizes most of the songs and lyrics of this period.

The age of Elizabeth was also conspicuous for the remarkable development of prose, which was variously written with great stylistic and linguistic excellence.

The period marks the real beginning of drama. It is the golden age of English drama. The renewed study of classical drama shaped English drama in its formative



years. Seneca influenced the development of English tragedy, and Plautus and Terence directed the formation of comedy. The classical drama gave English drama its five acts, its set senses and many other features. Regular English tragedy, comedy and historical play were successfully written during this period.

## 5.5 LET US SUM UP

This lesson explored the evolution of English drama from its religious origins to the dynamic theatre of the Elizabethan age. The dramatic forms such as Miracle and Morality plays, Interludes, and Masques were examined for their contributions to structure and content. The lesson also outlined the features of Romantic Comedy, highlighting its blend of realism and fantasy, emotional richness, and its contrast with the more structured Classical comedy.

## 5.6 GLOSSARY:

**Atmosphere** : Mood and Ambiance.

**Conceit** : Concept or image

**Masque** : Masque was developed in Renaissance Italy and flourished in England during the reigns of Elizabeth, James I and Charles I. It was an elaborate form of court entertainment combining poetic drama, music, song, dance, splendid costuming.

**Elizabethan Age** : Denotes the period of Queen Elizabeth's reign, 1558-1603. It was a time of great development in English commerce, maritime power and nationalist feeling. It is also a great age of English literature. The age of Sidney, Marlowe, Spenser, Shakespeare, Raleigh, Bacon, Ben Johnson and many others.

**Jacobean Age** : The reign of James I, 1603-1625 which followed the Elizabethan Age. This was the period in prose writings of Bacon, Donne's *Sermons*, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and King James's Translation of Bible.

Renaissance is the name applied to the period of European history following the middle ages, it is commonly said to have begun in Italy in the late fourteenth century and continued in Western Europe through 15th and 16th centuries.

Tragic Comedy was a type of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama which mingled both subject matter and the forms of traditional tragedy and comedy. Its important

characters include both people of high degree and people of low degree. `Tragi-Comedy : As its names implies, it is half tragedy and half comedy. Both the comic and the tragic elements are mingled harmoniously in it. Among such plays are Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, *Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. It is a complete tragedy up to a certain point, and a complete comedy thereafter. The complication sets forth a tragic theme, the Denouement turns it into comedy. The general atmosphere is one of fantasy, which suggests the alternative name for a play of this type.

**Heroic Drama:** The Heroic Drama, often but not always, written in rhymed couplets and always dealing in a high rhetorical manner with the conflict between love and honour or love and duty, is a characteristic phenomenon of 1660s and 1670s. Both foreign and native influences contributed to the rise of the heroic tragedy. Dryden writes: "..... an heroic play ought to be an imitation of a heroic poem, and consequently that Love and Valour ought to be the subject of it. The Heroic Play imitated the epic and included a warrior-hero". The action involves the fate of an empire. It is conspicuous for elevated style. A noble hero and heroine are typically represented in a situation in which their passionate love conflicts with the demands of honour and patriotic duty. Dryden's *All For Love* is the finest example of the heroic drama or heroic tragedy.

**Morality Plays :** In the Mystery and Miracle plays, serious and comic elements are interwoven. Now they part. The Morality presents the serious and the Interlude the lighter side of things. The morality was didactic and dealt in abstractions and allegory. The characters embodied certain qualities and types - Sin, Repentance, Perseverance, Seven Deadly Sins, Good and Bad Angels, Everyman etc. Devil was a prominent character in these plays. Vice was introduced as the humorous incarnation of evil and recognized as the fun maker. He is the direct forerunner of the Shakespearean clown. In moralities we come across, for the first time, the tragic should struggle, the secret progression of character and the delineation of conflicting passions, which became the marked features of Shakespearean tragedy. These plays are also remarkable for unity of form which distinguished them from the chaotic heterogeneity of the mystery cycles. Everyman is considered as the best Morality play.

**Interlude :** The interlude flourished about the middle of the sixteenth century. "It has several distinguishing points; it was a short play that introduced real characters, usually of humble rank, such as citizens and friars; there was an absence of allegorical figures, there was much broad farcical humour; and there were set scenes, a new feature in the English drama."

**Poetic Justice :** An ideal distribution of rewards and punishments such as is common in poetry and works of fiction. It is in flagrant contradiction of the facts of life. It is not found in Shakespearean tragedy which is true to life.

**Wit :** The meaning of the word 'wit' has undergone change. In the Renaissance,

it meant 'intelligence' or 'wisdom'. During the seventeenth century, it was used for 'fancy' implying such nimbleness of thought and such originality in figures as was found, in the Metaphysical poetry of Donne and others. At present 'wit' is used for intellectually amusing utterance calculated to delight and surprise.

**Jacobean Poetry :** James I ruled over England during this period and, hence, it is known as Jacobean period. There is something arbitrary in a separation of poetry of the reigns of Elizabeth and James I. The division must be understood to be convenient rather than anything else, a device to assist the chronology of history. Shakespeare, Daniel, Drayton, Chapman and many others wrote as much in the one reign as in the other. But there was a poetic evolution which divides the first two decades of the seventeenth century from the closing years of the sixteenth. Elizabeth's reign had the glory of youth and growth of national expansion and patriotic faith. The whole of literature was lit up with the Victory of Armada. Even the bitterest satires and gloomiest pages had a spontaneity and dash which are near to joy. The poet derived from life, from the things he saw, and from the current ideas, a pleasure perpetually renewed. He was intoxicated with the novelty of his metres and the freshness of his vocabulary. Pessimism existed only for him superficially or momentarily. In the reign of James I, a change was obvious. Life's gaiety was lost. Sadness began to prevail. Human nature turned towards perverseness. Society was vitiated. A harsh cynical realism succeeded. Poetry had grown self conscious. The earlier ardour and easy enjoyment of colours and words were on the wane. Poets became more moral or a religious, while literature acquired more substance, it became less capable of facile, light hearted joy. Poetry had crept under the shadow of the approaching civil conflicts, of the strengthened and menacing Puritanism.

**Elizabethan Romanticism :** The term 'Romantic Revival' is applied to the splendid outburst of literature in the age of Wordsworth. The word 'revival' indicates a return to literature of those romantic qualities which had characterized the literature of the Elizabethan Age. The romanticism of Elizabethan Age was the expression of that imaginative life which had been stimulated by the Renaissance. The unrestrained freedom and exuberance of the Elizabethans was subjected to scrutiny and criticism in Augustan Age, 'The new spirit involved the substitution of the critical for the imaginative spirit.' It brought intellect into play rather than poetic imagination. The leading writers of the

age eschewed extravagance and emotionalism. The Augustans laid stress on the cultivation of simplicity, clarity, propriety, decorum, moderation, perfect finish, good sense and reason. Elizabethan picturesqueness, suggestiveness and sensuousness, liberation and sensibility had no place. The Elizabethans had also been inspired by the study of Greek and Roman classics, but their inspiration came from the substance of classics; they did not care for the form and were prone to extravagance. Ben Jonson had sounded a note of caution and tried to check extravagance. When the imaginative exhilaration of Elizabethan Age were off, and was succeeded by the critical and analytical spirit, people began to look towards the methods of the ancient writers. Thus, both the Elizabethan and Augustan writers were inspired by the classical ideal - the former by the substance and the latter by the methods of the ancient literature of Greece and Rome. The merits of the literature of the eighteenth century are intellectual force and clarity and are found in its prose, while its deficiencies lie in its lack of imagination and in its treatment of superficial things of life rather than its deeper issues, and these deficiencies are manifested in the verse of the age. Since the spirit of Romantic poetry was akin to that of the Elizabethan age, the Elizabethan literary forms and subjects were revived again- the sonnet, the lyric, the pastoral, the blank verse drama, the Spenserian stanza, the ballad. The same fullness of imagination, richness of language, vastness of conception, lyricism and picturesqueness, suggestive and sensuousness, which permeated the great Elizabethan works, are found again in the literature, especially poetry, is the age of Wordsworth.

**Shakespeare's Tragic Hero :** Shakespearean tragedy is prominently the story of one person, the 'hero' or the protagonist. In the love tragedies - *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*- the heroine is as much the centre of attraction as the hero. The rest of the tragedies deal only with the rise and fall of the hero. The story also depicts the troubled part of the hero's life, which precedes and leads up to his death. It is, indeed, a tale of suffering and calamity conducting to death. Shakespearean tragedy is concerned always with persons of high degree, often with kings or princes, or with leaders in the state like Coriolanus, Brutus and Antony. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the dramatist deals with members of great houses, whose quarrels are of public interest. Shakespeare's tragic protagonists are not only great men, they also suffer greatly, their calamity and suffering are exceptional. The hero does not merely suffer under his

exceptional suffering but actually dies as a result of them. The suffering and calamity are, as a rule, unexpected and contrasted with the previous happiness of the hero. The sufferings and calamities of an ordinary man are not worthy of note, as they affect his own life. The story of the prince like Hamlet, or the King Lear, or the generals like Macbeth and Othello has a greatness and dignity of its own. His fate affects the welfare of a whole nation or empire. When he falls from the height of earthly greatness to the dust, his fall produces a sense of contrast of powerlessness of man, and of the omnipotence, perhaps the caprice of fortune or fate, which no tale of private life can possibly rival. Shakespeare's tragic hero is endowed with noble qualities of head and heart. He is built on a grand scale, and desire, passion or will attain in them a terrible force. Bradley remarks, "In almost all, we observe a marked one-sidedness-a predisposition in some particular direction, a total incapacity in certain circumstances, irresistible the force which draws in their direction, a fatal tendency to identify the whole being with one interest, object, passion or habit of mind. This is for Shakespeare, the fundamental tragic trait." Macbeth has "vaulting ambition", Hamlet's noble inaction, Othello's credulity and rashness in action, and Lear's the folly and incapacity to judge human character, owing to this 'fatal flaw', the hero falls from a state of prosperity and greatness into adversity and unhappiness and ultimately dies.

### **5.7 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

Write a short note on:

- (i) University Wits.
- (ii) Romantic Comedy.
- (iii) Prose of the Elizabethan Age.
- (iv) Renaissance and its influence.
- (v) Poetry of the Elizabethan Age .

### **5.8 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

1. Discuss characteristics of Elizabethan Age.
2. Give a brief account of evolution of English poetry during age of Shakespeare.
3. Give the development of drama during Elizabethan Age.

4. Briefly discuss the Elizabethan Prose.
5. Discuss in detail the characteristics of Renaissance.

### **5.9 LESSON END QUESTIONS**

1. Name the University wits and discuss their contribution towards development of Elizabethan Drama.
2. Discuss the main trends of Elizabethan literature with special reference to poetry of this period.
3. Discuss leading characteristics of Elizabethan prose.
4. Write a brief essay on Shakespearean comedy?
5. Define Renaissance. Discuss its influence on literature.

### 5.10 SELF- CHECK EXERCISE

1. The first real English Tragedy was written by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton in....  
(a) 1559 (b) 1560  
(c) 1561 (d) 1562
2. The establishment of romantic drama was the achievement of Shakespeare's immediate predecessors common known as .....  
(a) University wits (b) University professors  
(c) University researchers (d) University scholars
3. In comedy, ..... was Shakespeare's first master.  
(a) Robert Greene (b) John Lyly  
(c) Christopher Marlowe (d) Thomas Kyd
4. John Lyly gave comedy ..... toner  
(a) An ethical (b) An intellectual  
(c) A moral (d) A religious
5. In a romantic comedy, romantic elements are fused with.....elements  
(a) Tragic (b) Comic  
(c) Emotional (d) Spiritual
6. The Elizabethan drama of Shakespeare and his immediate predecessors departed from the principles of the.....  
(a) Classical comedy (b) Romantic comedy  
(c) Modern comedy (d) Greek tragedy



7. The non observance of the three unities of Time, Place and Action constitutes one of the ..... Elements of the play.
- (a) Tragic (b) Romantic  
(c) Comic (d) None of the above
8. Of the..... plays, Shakespeare has left, no two are alike.
- (a) 36 (b) 37  
(c) 35 (d) 38
- 9..... called Shakespeare ' the soul of the age'.
- (a) John Dryden (b) Matthew Arnold  
(c) Ben Jonson (d) Walter Raleigh
10. Shakespeare's characters are strongly humanized. They are .....
- (a) Gods and devils (b) Shadows or images of fancy  
(c) Heroes of romance (d) Real human beings
11. Aim of Shakespearean comedy is not.....
- (a) Corrective (b) Satiric  
(c) Reformatory (d) All the above
12. Romantic comedy appeals to our .....
- (a) Mental faculty (b) Critical faculty  
(c) Thinking faculty (d) visible faculty
13. The history of English drama dates from the .....
- (a) 9th century (b) 10th century  
(c) 11th Century (d) 8th century
14. The material for mystery plays was drawn from the.....
- (a) Historical books (b) Children literature

- (c) Bible (d) Problem plays
15. Miracles consisted of the stories of.....in whose honour they were acted.
- (a) Criminals (b) Rogues  
(c) Atheists (d) Saints
16. The vernacular tongue took the place of.....in performance of mystery or miracle play.
- (a) Latin (b) Greek  
(c) Roman (d) Italian
17. The religious drama in England reached its height in the \_\_\_\_\_ Century
- (a) 13th (b) 14th  
(c) 15th (d) 16th
18. Trading guilds were.....
- (a) Merchants (b) Businessmen  
(c) Craftsmen (d) Dramatic companies
19. The characters in the morality plays were personified abstractions for example.....
- (a) Legends of saints (b) Stories of angels  
(c) Tales of the messengers of God (d) Patience and Perseverance.
20. The interlude was a late product of the dramatic development of the.....
- (a) Mystery play (b) Miracle play  
(c) Morality play (d) None of the above
21. The interlude was a dramatic piece of a .....
- (a) Moral nature (b) Satiric nature  
(c) Ethical nature (d) Humorous nature

22. The first real English comedy *Roister Doister* was written in ..... by Nicholas Udall.
- (a) 1550 (b) 1560  
(c) 1540 (d) 1570
23. Shakespeare's world of comedy is.....
- (a) Romantic (b) Poetic  
(c) Idealistic (d) All of the above
24. A Shakespearean comedy is multi action, but all these actions and episodes are closely.
- (a) Kept apart (b) Separated  
(c) Related (d) packed
25. Shakespeare's plots are.....
- (a) Dynamic (b) Creative  
(c) Multi-dimensional (d) All the above
26. In each of his comedies, Shakespeare has introduced the Fool or some rustic clownish character to entertain the readers and audiences with his.....
- (a) Antics (b) Foolery  
(c) Fun making (d) All the above.
27. Bodies of work produced during the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603) is called.....
- (a) Elizabethan prose (b) Elizabethan poetry  
(c) Elizabethan Drama (d) Elizabethan literature
28. *Gorboduc* by Sackville and Norton was a .....
- (a) Romantic play (b) History play

- (c) Religious play (d) Problem play
29. The English sonnet was popularized by .....
- (a) John Fletcher (b) Robert Greene
- (c) Thomas Dekker (d) William Shakespeare
30. The best poetry of the Elizabethan age went into the.....
- (a) Short Story (b) Drama
- (c) Prose (d) Pamphlets
- 31 ..... reached the highest stage of its development during the Elizabethan Age.
- (a) Drama (b) Prose
- (c) Poetry (d) Short story
32. The Chief figure of the Elizabethan Age among the non-dramatic poets is .....
- (a) Christopher Marlowe (b) Ben Jonson
- (c) Shakespeare (d) Spenser
33. The Elizabethan Drama was the fusion of various elements.....
- (a) Courtly (b) Popular
- (c) Academic (d) All the above
34. The Elizabethan drama had enough of .....
- (a) Action, thrill and sensation
- (b) Low language and supernaturalism
- (c) Music, spectacle, coarse & indecent jokes
- (d) All the above.
35. Next to drama, the..... is the chief glory of the Elizabethan era.

- (a) Lyric (b) Epic
- (c) Ballad (d) Ode
36. Foreign influences especially of ..... did much to stimulate the growth of Elizabethan lyric.
- (a) France and Germany (b) France and Belgium
- (c) France and Italy (d) France and Spain
37. The sonnet was brought to England by
- (a) Henry Howard (b) Earl of Surrey
- (c) Sir Thomas Wyatt (d) Harold Childe
38. Sidney, ..... and Shakespeare are the greatest sonnet writers of the Elizabethan era.
- (a) Spenser (b) Samuel Daniel
- (c) Michael Drayton (d) William Smith
39. The two main centres of influence around which Elizabethan prose fiction revolved were the .....
- (a) Court and the courtiers (b) Court and the Dukes
- (c) Court and the lords (d) Court and the people
40. In the growing body of Elizabethan fiction the following trends are noticeable.
- (a) Romancers providing entertainment
- (b) Realistic tales dealing with common citizens
- (c) Rogue literature dealing with seamy side of life
- (d) All the above.
41. ----- may be called the first great conscious stylist in the history of English Prose.
- (a) Lyly (b) Greene

- (c) Sidney (d) Thomas Lodge
42. The first blank verse tragedies appeared in the .....
- (a) 1550 s (b) 1560 s
- (c) 1570 s (d) 1580 s
43. Elizabethan literature and writers continued to be largely influenced by the literature of .....
- (a) Italy (b) Spain
- (c) France (d) Greece
44. The word Renaissance literally means rebirth and it began in Italy in the .... century.
- (a) 13th (b) 14th
- (c) 15th (d) 16th
45. Elizabethan literature was mainly dominated by the spirit of .....
- (a) Adventure (b) The Times
- (c) Exploration (d) Romance
46. The word sonnet is of ..... origin
- (a) Greek (b) Italian
- (c) English (d) French
47. Shakespearean Comedy is .....
- (a) Anti romantic (b) Romantic
- (c) Classical (d) Tragic

### 5.11 ANSWER KEY

1.	c	14.	c	27.	D	40.	d
2.	a	15.	d	28.	B	41.	a
3.	b	16.	a	29.	D	42.	b
4.	b	17.	b	30.	B	43.	a
5.	b	18.	d	31.	A	44.	b
6.	a	19.	d	32.	D	45.	d
7.	a	20.	c	33.	D	46.	b
8.	a	21.	b	34.	D	47.	b
9.	c	22.	a	35.	A		
10.	d	23.	d	36.	C		
11.	d	24.	c	37.	C		
12.	d	25.	d	38.	A		
13.	c	26.	d	39.	D		

### 5.12 MODEL TEST PAPER

#### Q.1 What do you understand by the term Renaissance?

**Ans.** The term Renaissance means rebirth (Re: again, naissance: birth). It was a revival of ancient classical mythology, literature and culture as well as a reawakening of the human mind, after a long sleep of the dark Middle Ages to the wonder, the glory and the beauty of the human body and the world of nature.

**Q.2. Give an introduction to the age of Elizabeth.**

**Ans.** In the age of Elizabeth (1550-1620), all doubt seems to vanish from English history. After the reigns of Edward and Mary, with defeat and humiliation abroad and persecutions and rebellion at home, the accession of a popular sovereign was like sunrise after a long night. It is important to know the national life for any literary student, since any great development of the national life is invariably associated with a development of the national literature. So, it serves our purpose to show that Elizabeth steadily loved England and England's greatness and that she inspired all her people with unbounded patriotism. Under her administration, the English national life progressed by gigantic leaps and English literature reached the very highest point of its development. Historically, we note in this age the tremendous influence of Renaissance, Reformation and the exploration of the New World. It was marked by a strong national spirit, by patriotism, by religious tolerance, by social context, by intellectual progress and by unbounded enthusiasm.

Such an age, of thought, feeling and vigorous action, finds its best expression in the drama; and the wonderful development of the drama, culminating in Shakespeare, is the most significant characteristic of the Elizabethan period. Though the age produced some excellent prose works, it is essentially an age of poetry; and the poetry is remarkable for its variety, its freshness, its youthful and romantic feeling. Both the poetry and the drama were permeated by Italian influence, which was dominant in English literature from Chaucer to the Restoration. The literature of this age is often called the literature of the Renaissance.

**Q.3. What was the influence of Renaissance in English Language?**

**Ans.** The new passion for classical learning, inculcated by Renaissance became quite a danger to the English language. In all branches of literature Greek and Latin usage began to force themselves upon English. But after a brief and vexed period English language emerged against much tempered and polished than before.



**Q.4. What are the socio-political condition of the Elizabethan Age?**

**Ans.** The Elizabethan Age was marked by a strong national spirit, by patriotism, by religious tolerance, by social content, by intellectual progress and by unbounded enthusiasm.

**Q.5. Explain the various trends of Elizabethan literature.**

**Ans.** The age of Elizabeth was a time of intellectual liberty, of growing intelligence and comfort among all classes, of unbounded patriotism, and of peace at home and abroad. Such an age of great thought and great action, appealing to the eyes as well as to the imagination and intellect produced immortal literature. At the beginning of the age, English literary forms were still to a large extent in the making; at the end of the period there was a rich and varied store of most of the chief literary species. The trends of Elizabethan literature can be traced in the outline of this development.

**Q.6. What are the causes of the decline of drama in after Shakespearean England?**

**Ans.** Drama in after Shakespearean England began to decline and lost the wide Catholicity of appeal which distinguished Shakespearean drama. W.J.Long remarks : "It was inevitable that the drama should decline after Shakespeare, for the simple reason that there was no dramatist great enough to fill his place. The early dramatists in England wrote to please their audiences. Everything changed with Shakespeare's successors. Quickly though insensibly, the temper of the nation suffered eclipse. The high hopes and the ardency of the reign of Elizabeth saddened into a profound pessimism and gloom into that of James. Its causes are broad enough. To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive." While Beaumont and Fletcher were writing, the theatre was gradually but surely losing its hold on the lower and middle classes. Shakespeare had spoken for all classes and all classes had been among his audiences. Beaumont and Fletcher wrote their plays for courtiers, and with their wit and gallantry, their talks of intrigue and their insidious indecency, fully expressed the gentlemanly view of life, not the national view. The playwrights,

who were confined to a narrow class, lost the wide national appeal. Sentiment in the plays of decadent dramatists, particularly in those of Beaumont and Fletcher took the place of action and character-portrayal. Eloquent and moving speeches and fine figures are no longer subservient to the presentation of character in action. The after Shakespearean drama is decadent from the viewpoint of technique. Beaumont, Fletcher and others used those variations and likeness with which Shakespeare in his later plays diversified the blank verse without restraint measure. With Massinger and Fard romantic drama died a natural death and the Puritans 'closing of the theatres in 1642 gave it a coup de grace. In England, it has had no second birth.

**Q.7. Write a note on some eminent Elizabethan Sonneteers.**

**Ans.** Thomas Weston was the earliest Elizabethan to make a reputation as a sonneteer. His work is historically of great value as marking the progress and scope of foreign influences. In early life, Watson translated all Petrarch's sonnets into Latin, but only two specimens of his rendering survive. The publication of Sidney's sonnet sequence, entitled *Astrophel and Stella*, in 1591, marks the real beginning of Elizabethan sonnet. His sonnets clearly show the influence of Watson, Petrarch and Ronsard. These sonnets are remarkable for their sincerity. Mair writes : "They are the first direct expression in English literature of an intimate and personal experience, struck off in the white heat of passion." However, Sidney as a sonneteer is an artist rather than an autobiographer. The early collection of Spenser's sonnets, known as a theatre for Wordings was influenced by Bellay, Marot and Sidney. Only a few of his early sonnets embody original ideas or betray complete freedom in handling old conceits. Spenser broke new ground in sonnet writing with the publication of *Amoretti*, a collection of 88 sonnets. Shakespeare's sonnets "are the most precious pearls of Elizabethan lyricism, some of them unsurpassed by a lyricism." The majority of the sonnets were written probably in 1594, when Shakespeare had gained the patronage of the early of Southampton. The form he chose was not the Italian form. He preferred the Spenserian pattern, consisting of three decasyllabic quatrains, each rhyming alternately,

and rhyming couplet to conclude. Constable's sonnets are remarkable for melody, beauty and Spenser's sensuous charm. Daniel was endowed with a lyric quality of a brilliant order. He was influenced by foreign poets, especially by Tasso. Daniel's collection of sonnets, known as *Delia*, is based on the conventional theme of love and has stock devices of contemporary sonnet writing. Dryton is a distinguished sonneteer. His sonnet sequence *Idea* symbolizes the Platonic idea of beauty, which was notably familiar to Du Bellay in France and to Spenser in England. Drayton's "Soul-Shrined Saint", his "divine Idea", his 'fair Idea' is Pontoux's "Celeste Idea". He wrote fifty two sonnets. The other sonnet writers were translators and poor imitators of Petrarch and Ronsard. Lodge's Phillis, Fletcher's Tears of Fancy, Percy's Celia, Lynch's Dillia and Smith's Chloris are poor in stuff and purely imitative in character. The age of Shakespeare was the golden age of sonnet. It contains an inexhaustible treasure of sonnets which poets of all succeeding ages used with great skill.

**Q.8. Write a note on humour in Shakespearean Comedy.**

**Ans.** Humour is the soul of Shakespearean comedy. It arouses thoughtful laughter. It is full of sympathetic, kindly and human laughter. Shakespeare's comic characters Falstaff and his fellow men illustrate this spirit of joy and joviality. He can laugh at human follies, faults and failings, but such laughter is by no means heartless, callous or cynical. Shakespeare's comic muse is good-natured and magnanimous. His wit lacks malice and his mockery has no bite. Brilliant wit mingles with kindly mirth and genial humour. Wit comes from the head, humour from the heart, Shakespeare's wit while it ranges from word play to wisdom, is not only astounding, it is also healthy and joyous, it may dazzle but it may not blind, it may sharpen but it never wounds. Shakespeare's humour is many-sided. He can employ different kinds of humour with equal ease and equal command. He can arouse laughter from the mumbling of a drunkard and the intelligent repartees of the leading women. The alert wit and bright good sense of Rosalind arouse exquisite

pleasure. His all pervasive spirit of mirth gains much from the presence of the Fool. Bottom and his companions, Feste, Sir Andrew, Sir Tohy, Touchstone, Dogberry, Verges and Falstaff are memorable fools in Shakespearean comedy, who not only create humour and laughter, but they also interlink the main and the subplots, and provide a running commentary on character and action. Nicoll writes that this "quality of humour is seen. Nowhere more plainly than in the character of Falstaff....The delineation of Falstaff reveals well the peculiar sympathy which is inherent in this mood of humour. Falstaff is a bragger, herpahs a coward, certainly a disreputable old sinner, yet there is hardly anyone who does not feel for him and synpathise with him. If we regard him in the cold light of reason we are bound to shun and to condemn him, but no audience ever could regard Falstaff in the cold light of reason because of this intangible sympathy which Shakespeare has transferred into his pages. The humour of the man is so broad, he, like the characters of purely romantic comedies, can laugh not only at others, but at himself. His intellect is so acute, his sense of fun so highly developed, that we cannot but take him to our hearts. It is the fact that Shakespeare has presented Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* without this humour which makes the majority of readers feel that the latter is an immeasurably, weaker and less interesting play."

**Q.9. Fill in the blanks :**

1. The age of \_\_\_\_\_ is characterized by movement of Renaissance.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ was the first English Tragedy.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ was the home of Renaissance.
4. The first period of Shakespeare's dramatic activity is the period of \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Renaissance poets aimed at the study of \_\_\_\_\_.

**Ans. 1.** Elizabeth I

2. *Gorboduc*
3. Italy
4. Limitation and Apprenticeship
5. Roman and Greek writers.

### **5.13 SUGGESTED READING:**

A.C Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth*. 4th ed., intro. by Robert Shaughnessy, Palgrave Macmillan (Red Globe Press), 2007.

Alex Preminger and Princeton(Macmillan) *Poetry and Poetics: An Anthology*. Macmillan, 1993.

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**Course Code : EL-201 (B.A. Sem II)**

**UNIT-III**

**Course Title: English Literature**

**LESSON NO. 6**

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**BACON : “OF STUDIES”**

**STRUCTURE:**

- 6.0** Objectives And Outcomes
- 6.1** Introduction
- 6.2** Age and Author
- 6.3** About The Age
- 6.4** About The Author
- 6.5** Let Us Sum Up
- 6.6** Self-Assessment Questions
- 6.7** Answer Key
- 6.8** Suggested Reading

**6.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

In this unit, our aim is to give you some practice in reading and explaining prose. You will be required to answer questions set on the text provided for study by :

- a) giving you a thought-provoking essay written by Francis Bacon,
- b) giving you a glossary of difficult words and phrases from the essay,
- c) discussing various literary devices used by Bacon in his prose writings,
- d) giving you questions to be answered.

In the section on Age and Author, we will give you ample information about prose writing and development of English prose in successive centuries. The prose writing in sixteenth century will be dealt with in detail. The special trends and practices adopted by the men of letters and creative writers in the sixteenth century will be explained in

simple language.

A detailed summary would be given to bring forth hidden meanings in the text. This will also emphasise the reason for the universal appeal of Bacon's essays. To make you understand the text in a better way, short and objective type questions are being given at appropriate places in this unit.

After reading and understanding various sections of this unit the learners will be able to :

- a) explain the text in its totality,
- b) develop the ability to read between the lines and understand the real motive of the author in writing this essay.
- c) appreciate and evaluate the given text.

## **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

Poetry was considered more respectable than prose. Gradually prose also developed and acquired an equal status with poetry. The first name in the history of English prose is that of Alfred (848-901), who belonged to the Anglo-Saxon period. The oldest historical record in English and the best monument of early English prose is the Anglo-Saxon 'Chronicle'. Next followed the Anglo-Norman period. A major work of this period is 'Ancren Riwe' (Rule of the Anchoresses). It is regarded as the most beautiful piece of old English prose ever written. English was not a major language in the world at that time. Major works in the twelfth and thirteenth century consist of works of small value and slight quality. This period is of transition from French and Latin. English prose was considered as a medium for translation.

The modern English prose, according to George Saintsbury began from 1350. This period witnessed the great turning point which was partly due to the concentration of English patriotic sentiments aroused by the military conquests of Edward III. New English prose made a real start almost for the first time. Four writers of prose are noteworthy in this period - Chaucer the poet, Wyclif the controversialist, Trevisa the Chronicler, and the shadowy personage long known as Sir John Mandeville. All these were basically translators in a less or greater degree, and also were the founders of English prose writing. Malory and Berners top the list of writers of English prose in the fifteenth century. It was a period of experiments where conscious efforts were made to develop a prose style following the path of Chaucer and Wyclif. Prose was written in



several different branches of literature, history, law, politics, theology, philosophy, sermons, and letters etc. But it mostly depended on translations.

Europe witnessed the Renaissance in the field of creative writings in the fifteenth century. People developed interest in classical writings of ancient Greece and Rome. The influence of the new learning was not at first beneficial, on the whole writers were overladen with their new acquisitions and did not know what to do with them. Classical allusions became abundant. And, there was a danger for English to lose its separate identity, its spelling, diction, syntax, versification and style in the process of being overburdened with classicism, but the translations kept up English prose on the path of development.

This time period also witnessed the invention of printing from movable fonts. It, in fact, proved to be a social and literary revolution. After the first book printed by William Caxton in 1477, the printing enlarged the bounds and influence of literature.

The Reformation led to a further increase in the number of writers and readers and to a certain facility in composition. The reformation produced models of magnificent prose in English scriptures and in such works as Foxe's *Ace Monuments*. The three famous voyages of Columbus Sebastian Cabot and Vasco de Gama, all between 1490 to 1500 turned the thoughts of men to larger views of the physical universe and brought into English life and letters the spirit of adventure that breathes through many of the best works of the spacious times of great Elizabeth.

In the development of literature, the revival of learning worked in two ways : it did much to emancipate thought from the bondage of medieval theology by restoring the generous spirit and ideals of pagan antiquity; and it presented writers with masterpieces of literature which they might take as models for their efforts. For these two reasons, the Renaissance is taken as a chief source in the making of modern European literatures. England now began to share in these liberalising movements. Before the century was out, the new learning was firmly established at Oxford and Cambridge.

The Reformation which occurred in the middle of the sixteenth century was the work of a preacher, Hugh Latimer (1485-1555), whose energy and good sense produced some of the most pungent English prose of the period. Then there is the religious literature of the time. William Tyndale's *New Testament* (1525), *Complete English*

*Bible* of Miles Coverdale (1535) and Cromwell's *Great Bible* (1535) show the steady growth of popular interest in the scriptures. These works exerted considerable influence on the development of a standard English prose.

Poetry dominated the whole of the Renaissance. Prose, simple, restrained and clear, fit not to impassion but to instruct, not to father the imagination but to satisfy the reason, is very much exceptional in this age.

## **6.2 AGE AND AUTHOR**

In this section, we will try to familiarize you with the sixteenth century literary scenario of England. We will discuss the main trends and literary currents of the age to which Francis Bacon belonged. We will discuss and make you aware about the author i.e. Bacon. We will look into the main events of the life of Francis Bacon and his rise as a literary genius. We will also acquaint you with the major qualities of Bacon and his important works. We will also discuss the temperament, philosophy and style of Bacon to make you understand Bacon in a better way.

At the end of this section, we will provide you with questions. These objective type and short answer type questions have been designed to check your progress and understanding by yourself. Your self-assessment will develop a confidence in you and you will be able to pursue the further study with confidence and understanding.

## **6.3 ABOUT THE AGE**

The intellectual trends and opinions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are more directly shown in the prose of the period than in its poetry. Pamphleteering of all kinds, polemical religious argument, political educational and literary theorizing, flourished now as never before, with the result that the literary historian had to deal with a mass of miscellaneous prose most of which could hardly be called strictly "literature", yet which in addition to providing an occasional work of real literary merit, provided an interesting view of the state of English prose style and the various ways in which English prose was being exercised and developed. Besides this large quantity of miscellaneous prose writings, there were devotional works, sermons, translations of many different kinds, histories, biographies, accounts of ceremony events and prose fiction.

We are talking here only about the writings in prose in the sixteenth and early

seventeenth centuries. Two factors are seen at work in most of these varied prose writings. First, the breakthrough of colloquial speech, with its vigour and raciness, into the written word, and second, the attempt to mould a consciously artistic English prose style. These two factors are, surprisingly enough, often found in conjunction with colloquial vigor and overelaborate parallels or antithesis alternating in the same work.

No permanent resolution was achieved in the sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries in spite of the occasional prose triumphs of the age, though an impersonal devotional prose developed, descending from the devotional prose of Rolle and Hilton in the fourteenth century and a Biblical prose was wrought by the English translators of the *Bible* from Tyndale to the translators of the Authorized Version of 1611. It remains true that nearly all prose writers of the Elizabethan and immediately subsequent period wrote a highly idiosyncratic prose ; there was, except for prayer and Biblical translations no common tradition of prose style of which individual writers could play their own variations, as eighteenth century writers had from Addison on; every prose writer had first to solve the problem of creating his own style.

We can see colloquial prose disciplining itself into effective writings, while wholly informal and unliterary, they have style - the style of fluent, educated speech, only slightly less discursive than actual speech would be. The prose on the whole is naive, unsuited for any heavier burden than that of exchange of family news.

The Elizabethan settlement, completed with the establishment of thirty-nine articles in 1571, produced the church of England, Catholic in profession but national in character, repudiating the authority of the Pope, but episcopal in organization, a national Catholic Church stripped of the abuses of Rome but resisting the demands of Puritans for extreme simplicity and severity in worship, for the abolition of episcopacy and for granting spiritual authority to individuals who claimed it on the grounds of grace vouchsafed to them and of preaching ability.

The settlement provided a wide roof under which different shades of opinion could shelter together as later divisions of 'high' and 'low' church were to testify; but it left out both Roman Catholics and the more extreme Puritans. The Puritans to whom preaching the word was a sacred obligation would have had a greater effect on English preaching if they had not eventually been forbidden to preach by the repressive legislation introduced

in support of the establishment of Archbishop. Fortunately, the Church of England produced early in its history a succession of learned and able ecclesiastics who brought preaching in England in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to a new level of literary art. The Puritan preachers who re-emerged under the Commonwealth and later strongly influenced the style of non-conformist preaching are important in the history of the spoken sermons, but the great Anglican preachers are of more concern to the literary historians.

If religious and other controversies helped to stimulate the development of a polemical prose style, a more profound shaping of English prose was going on at the same time by means of the discipline of translation. Thomas North, Sir Thomas Hoby, Sir John Cheke, William Painter, Geoffrey Fenton, George Pettie, William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale were some of those prose writers and translators who strove hard to give Elizabeth prose an identity of its own. History and biography were also fields in which Elizabethan prose exercised itself. It was the best narrative prose with a flow and control which leaves its permanent mark in the literary annals. The balanced sentences, alliteration and other stylistic devices make the prose artful.

#### **6.4 ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Francis Bacon was born on January 22, 1561 in London. His family was very powerful and very close to Queen Elizabeth. His father Sir Nicholas Bacon was Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. His mother was the daughter of Sir Anthony Cooke and Sister-in-law of Sir William Cecil, the Lord of Burghley.

He was a protected child. His early childhood was spent at his father's country palace. He was devoted to studies in a grave manner even at the tender age of ten. He was sent to Trinity College, Cambridge with his elder brother at the age of thirteen. He came back after three years and was then admitted to Gray's Inn on June 27, 1576. But only after a few months not liking the legal profession, he went along with the English Ambassador to France and thus began his career in diplomacy. After his father's death, he came back to England and again joined Gray's Inn. In 1584, he entered the Parliament as representative of Malcombe Regis. He was again elected for Parliament in 1586 and 1589, he advocated for a middle course between popular privilege and royal prerogative, moderation in secular reform with toleration in religion. This policy he

supported in two pamphlets published in 1585 and 1589. In both of them he pleaded for greater elasticity in matters of doctrine and of discipline.

In 1591, Bacon attached himself to the Earl of Essex, who was very close to Queen Elizabeth. In 1593, Bacon entered the Parliament from Middlesex. He severely criticised the Government's policy of demand for a triple subsidy to help meet the expenses of the Spanish War. The Queen was annoyed and did not appoint him Attorney General in 1594. The Earl of Essex always tried to favour and make recommendations for Bacon, but the Queen paid no heed to them. Somehow, he was made Learned Counsel. Bacon played a major role in securing Essex's conviction, when he was being tried for treason. As a result of his conviction, Essex was executed. Bacon incurred much ill feeling for this. In 1604, he published an Apology for this action. The first edition of his *Essays* was published in 1597. It had ten essays. Its popularity was great, almost from the very day of issue.

In 1603, King James I ascended to the English throne. Bacon tried to win the new King's favour by every wit he could employ, he was ultimately successful and managed to get Knighthood in July, 1603. In 1604, he was confirmed as Learned Counsel and in 1607 became Solicitor General. In 1605, Bacon published his *Advancement of Learning* and dedicated it to the King. This great philosophical work was later expanded and translated in Latin. In 1606, Bacon got married to Alice Branham, daughter of a London alderman. In 1607 and 1612, new editions of his *Essays* were published with several additions. *Cogitata et Visa*, *In felicem memorium Elizabethae* and *De sapientia veterum* and *Wisdom of the Ancients* were published between 1607 and 1609. In 1613 he was made Attorney General. In the Parliament of 1614, he sat for Cambridge University.

From 1612 onwards his counsels did not attract the King's attention and he was in the process of being marginalised. But, Bacon soon made up for his decending position and became Lord Keeper in March 1617. In January 1618, he was promoted to Lord Chancellor and in July 1618, he was made Baron Verulam. A further honour was conferred upon him in January 1621, when he was created Viscount St. Albans.

The Parliament met after seven years and his enemies seized the opportunity to

bring charges of bribery and corruption against Bacon. He was found guilty and after

considerable discussions the House of Lords passed sentence against him on May 3, 1621. The sentence was, however, not fully carried out, but he was barred to sit in the Parliament. The remaining five years of his life were spent in work far more valuable to the world than anything he had accomplished in his high office. From the literary and philosophical point of view, this last period was, indeed, the most precious. Smitten by his disgrace he turned with much eagerness to intellectual pursuits that had been interrupted by his official duties. His retirement from politics enabled him, indeed, to make his literary reputation more firm and enduring. He devoted himself with amazing energy to literature and science. During this period he produced histories, *De Augments*, *New Atlantis* and the final edition of *Essays*, which contained fifty eight essays.

In March 1626, while travelling near highgate in London, he performed an experiment, which was an anticipation of the modern process of refrigeration, but it caused his death. He decided to discover whether snow would delay the process of putrefaction, he stopped his carriage, purchased a hen, and with his own hands stuffed it with snow. As a result he caught a chill and fever. He was taken to the house of the Earl of Arundel, where he died on April 9, 1626. He was buried in St. Michael's Church at St. Albans. Bacon was intellectually great but morally weak. Pope called him as "the wisest, brightest, but the meanest of mankind." His marvellous versatility renders it difficult to present a critical estimate which embraces all the varied aspects of his personality as lawyer, politician, scientist, philosopher, historian, and essayist. He took all knowledge for his province.

The works of Francis Bacon :

- *The Advancement of Learning* (1605)
- *History of Henry VII* (1622)
- *Essays* (1597, 1612 and 1625)
- *The New Atlantis* (1622 and 1626)
- *Magna Instauratio* (in six volumes)
- *Novum Organum* (in four volumes)

## ACTIVITY

### Fill in the blanks:

1. Francis Bacon was born in the year \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The first edition of Bacon's *Essays* was published in \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The Renaissance in Europe rekindled interest in classical writings from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The discovery of \_\_\_\_\_ in the 15th century was a literary revolution.
5. Bacon's famous philosophical work, *The Advancement of Learning*, was published in \_\_\_\_\_.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ was the first printer in England, who published the first book in 1477.

## 6.5 LET US SUM UP

Bacon's writing reflects the development of English prose during the Renaissance, characterized by clarity, brevity, and intellectual depth. His essays combine philosophical insight with literary elegance, marking a significant shift toward modern prose style. Blending practical wisdom with refined expression, Bacon's work represents a turning point in English prose and has secured his enduring place in literary history.

## 6.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

You have studied about the development of prose writing in Elizabethan age and about the life and works of Francis Bacon. We have also discussed the literary writings during the age under discussion. You have also learnt about trends and practices adopted by writers of this period. Now to make your understanding more clear, here is a revision of the things which you have read and understood. Answer the questions given in these exercises to check your progress.

### Exercise-1

Each question in this exercise has three alternatives, read the question and choose the right answer from these three alternatives.

1. Alfred belonged to :
  - (a) Anglo-Saxon period
  - (b) Victorian period
  - (c) Elizabethan period



2. *Ancren Riwe* is a representative work of :

- (a) Anglo-Saxon period
- (b) Ancient prose
- (c) Anglo-Norman period

3. Sir John Mandeville was basically a

- (a) prose writer
- (b) essayist
- (c) translator

4. Fifteenth Century was a period of :

- (a) great prose writings
- (b) experiments

- (c) translations from Latin
- 5. People developed interest in classical writings of ancient Greece and Rome during
  - (a) Renaissance
  - (b) Elizabethan age
  - (c) Classical age
- 6. Devotional prose was written in
  - (a) Fourteenth century
  - (b) Fifteenth century
  - (c) Sixteenth century
- 7. The Puritan preachers re-emerged under :
  - (a) Elizabethan period
  - (b) Church of England
  - (c) Common Wealth
- 8. Francis Bacon was admitted to Gray's Inn in
  - (a) 1576
  - (b) 1586
  - (c) 1589
- 9. Francis Bacon represented Cambridge University in the Parliament in:
  - (a) 1612
  - (b) 1603
  - (c) 1614
- 10. The first edition of Bacon's *Essays* was published in :

(a) 1603

(b) 1596

(c) 1597

### **Exercise-2**

Now try to answer the following questions in two to three sentences each.

1. What do you know about the early English prose?

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2. Describe Renaissance.

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3. What effect did the Reformation have on the literary circles?

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4. Comment on the revival of learning.

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5. What type of writings were produced in early sixteenth century in England?

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6. What do you know about the style of English prose of the sixteenth century?

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7. What was Elizabethan settlement?

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8. What do you know about the early life of Francis Bacon?

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9. What did Bacon write after James the first became the King of England?

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10. When did Bacon excel as a writer?

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## 6.7 ANSWER KEY

### Activity

1561, 1597, Greece-Rome, Printing, 1605, William Caxton

## 6.8 SUGGESTED READING

Francis Bacon, *Essays*. Edited by Brian Vickers, 2nd ed., Penguin Classics, 2000. Rickett, Arthur Compton. *A History of English Literature*

Edward Albert, *History of English Literature History of English Literature*. 5th ed., Oxford University Press India, 2017.

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**Course Code : EL-201 (B.A. Sem II)**

**UNIT-III**

**Course Title: English Literature**

**LESSON NO. 7**

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**BACON : “OF STUDIES”**

**STRUCTURE:**

- 7.0** Objectives And Outcomes
- 7.1** Introduction
- 7.2** About The Author
- 7.3** Reading The Text
- 7.4** Summary
- 7.5** Some Model Explanations
- 7.6** Let Us Sum Up
- 7.7** Examination Oriented Questions
- 7.8** Answer Key
- 7.9** Suggested Reading

**7.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

This unit aims at generating interest in you regarding the essays of Francis Bacon. The highly personal essays of today maybe more readable, but are not inspired by the high purpose which motivated Bacon and his contemporaries. An effort has been made

to realize this objective by presenting a discussion on one of the essays entitled “Of Studies” written by Bacon.

After completing this lesson, the learners will be able to:

1. learn the historical and intellectual background of Francis Bacon’s essays within the context of the English Renaissance.
2. analyze the key themes and ideas presented in “Of Studies”, such as the purposes of reading, the utility of studies in life, and the balance between theoretical knowledge and practical application.
3. gain insight on Bacon’s prose style, including his use of aphorisms, logic, and analogies.

## **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

While the age of Shakespeare found its chief imaginative outlet in drama, it cannot be said that it was not active in the field of prose. England now felt the stimulus of the Renaissance on the intellectuals as well as on the artists and the result was the production of a great many prose works dealing with various subjects in which thoughtful people were then interested. Most of these belong to the special history of such subjects rather than to the general history of literature. But a few writers claim a place in our record, and among them Bacon, the principal prose master of his time holds an important place.

Francis Bacon is the first English essayist. His essays are filled with stupendous learning and thought. They have to be read slowly and thoughtfully, not because the style is obscure but because they are extremely condensed, and the thought is profound. The essay 'Of Studies' is one of the best essays where he deals with

## **7.2 ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

The second son of a famous lawyer and statesman, Francis Bacon was born on 22 January 1561. As a boy his wit and precocity attracted the attention of the queen, who used to call him her 'young lord keeper' - his father then being the keeper of the Great Seal of England. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and in preparation for a Career of statesmanship was sent to Paris in suite of the English ambassador. After his father's death in 1579, he chose law as his profession and was called to the Bar in 1589. By this time he had also made his mark as an orator in the House of Commons. After the accession of James I he rose rapidly in favour and fortune. He was knighted

in 1603; became Attorney General in 1631, Privy Counciller in 1616; Lord Keeper in 1617; Lord Chancellor and Baron Verulam in 1618; Viscount St. Albans in 1621. He wrote voluminously on many subjects and his greatest work-*Advancement of Learning*



and *Novum Organum* in which he sets forth, and illustrates the inductive or Baconian method of studying nature - place him in the front rank of the world's epoch-makers. His principal contribution to general literature is his little collection of "Essays" or Counsels, Civil and Moral" first published in 1597, and in much enlarged editions in 1612 and 1625.

### 7.3 READING THE TEXT

Now read the essay and try to comprehend it:

#### "Of Studies" (Text)

*Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight, is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment, and disposition of business. For expert men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best, from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules, is the humor of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning, by study; and studies themselves, do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty men contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books, else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy things. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit: and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know, that he doth not. Histories make men wise; poets witty; the mathematics subtle; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend. Abeunt studia in mores. Nay, there*

*is no stond or impediment in the wit, but may be wrought out by fit studies; like  
as diseases of the body, may have appropriate*

*exercises. Bowling is good for the stone and reins; shooting for the lungs and breast; gentle walking for the stomach; riding for the head; and the like. So if a man's wit be wandering, let him study the mathematics; for in demonstrations, if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again. If his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the Schoolmen; for they are cumini sectores. If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call up one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyers' cases. So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.*

## **7.4 SUMMARY**

The essay “Of Studies” is one of the most popular essays of Lord Bacon. Francis Bacon’s classic essay “Of Studies” explains how and why study—knowledge—is important. In this essay, he discusses some of the benefits of studying and offers some sound ideas on the subject. Bacon is regarded as the “Father of the English Essay”. Bacon envisioned the essay as an opportunity to offer advice. The title of his essay collection: “Essays or Counsels: Civil and Moral,” suggests that didactic intent.

In “Of Studies,” Bacon explains the practical value of knowledge. Bacon considers how studies might be put to use. He is more interested in their practical utility than in their theoretical promise, a proclivity that is perhaps more English than French. In “Of Studies,” Bacon’s writing is direct and pointed. It avoids Montaigne’s essays’ meandering, find-your-own-way free form. Bacon gets right to the point in his first sentence: “Studies serve for delight, ornament, and ability.” He then goes on to explain how studies can help in these three ways. And he doesn’t mince words when describing the use of “studies” for a Renaissance gentleman. One of the essay’s main draws is Bacon’s skillful use of parallel sentence structure, which is evident in the opening sentence and throughout “Of Studies.” This stylistic technique adds clarity and order to the writing, as in “crafty men condemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them,” which demonstrates confidence and elegance in addition to clarity and emphasis through its straightforward assertiveness.

Studies are a source of pleasure. They have ornamental value and also improve one’s ability. A man who lives a life of aloofness and retirement is best suited to enjoy the pleasures of study. Study has a ornamental value in that it enables a man

to become a good talker. A student who devotes too much time to his studies becomes temporarily sluggish. Whoever tries to make a show of his knowledge by reading excessively for conversational purposes is wasting his time. It reveals a man's eccentricity if his judgement is entirely based on rules he has learned from books.

Studies allow you to easily develop your skills and abilities. Studies provide guidance on their own, but this is abstract without practical experience. The studies are disliked by cunning men, but they are admired by simple men. Men who are fundamentally wise use studies to advance in life. One should not read books solely to contradict others. Everything written in a book should not be followed in real life. One should think about what he reads and how he applies it.

Some books should only be read in sections. Some of them can be read quickly and hurriedly. Only a few books are worth paying attention to and studying in depth. In the case of some books, a man may hire someone else to read them for him and then tell him what they contain as well as give him excerpts. However, this method should only be used with the simplest of books. A simple summary or synopsis of a good book is insufficient for any man. Reading helps a man develop his entire personality. A man's wit is developed through conversation. The reader is affected differently by different types of books. History makes a man a wise man. Poetry develops a man's imagination, while mathematics develops his subtlety, Natural science enables a man to look deep into the things, Logic and art of public speaking develop a person's communicative skills.

Effective and useful reading fosters the development of a variety of skills. If a man's mind wonders too much, he should be made to study Mathematics to develop concentration; if a man is unable to make distinctions between things, he should study Middle Ages literature. Studies are a treatment for mental illness. Mathematics is good for wondering wits in the same way that bowling is good for kidneys, shooting is good for lungs, walking is good for digestion, and riding is good for the head. Every mental defect in a man can be cured through studies.

### **Critical Analysis**

This essay discusses various types of books and their effects on the reader. Bacon divides the uses of studies into three categories: the use of studies for delight, the use of studies for ornament, and the use of studies for ability. Bacon

also provides some excellent advice on why and how to read. He claims that different studies have different effects on the human mind. Various kinds of studies can help to correct a variety of mental flaws. The importance of experience in supplementing and perfecting studies is duly emphasised in the essay. Bacon would not be satisfied with more bookish knowledge. The wisdom gained through experience is just as important as the wisdom gained through reading books.

But ideas aren't the only thing that matters in this essay. Bacon demonstrates his talent for expressing his ideas with the least amount of words possible. The essay is a masterwork of concision and brevity. His sentences have a proverbial feel to them. Bacon's essays abound in very appropriate and original similes. We have one such simile here when Bacon says that "distilled books are, like common distilled waters, flashy things". It is, without a doubt, one of the best English prose essays ever written. It provides us with a number of sound maxims and sentences that we can quote when the situation calls for it. Some of the sentences do, in fact, stick in our heads without any conscious effort on our part. Bacon's essay is one of his most well-known works.

#### ACTIVITY

##### Fill in the Blanks:

1. Bacon was educated at \_\_\_\_\_ College, Cambridge, and later studied law after his father's death in \_\_\_\_\_ (year).
2. Bacon's famous works include *Advancement of Learning* and \_\_\_\_\_, which present his method of \_\_\_\_\_ reasoning.
3. According to Bacon, studies serve for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
4. In the essay *Of Studies*, Bacon says, "Reading maketh a \_\_\_\_\_ man; conference a \_\_\_\_\_ man; and writing an \_\_\_\_\_ man."
5. Bacon advises not to read to contradict or confute, nor to believe and take for granted, but to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
6. According to Bacon, some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and a few to be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Bacon's writing style is known for its \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, making his essays rich in maxims and wise sayings.

## 7.5 SOME MODEL EXPLANATIONS

- (a) *Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight, is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment, and disposition of business. For expert men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best, from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules, is the humor of a scholar.*

**Explanation.** In these lines Bacon refers to the triple functions of studies and explains how the study of books are useful to us. The study of books is useful in three aspects. First, it gives us pleasure. In his hour of leisure, when man is alone and has no company, the book acts as his mate and gives him a pleasant company. Secondly, the book has a decorative value. From book the man gets enough of materials like illustrations, quotations etc. with which he decorates himself. With these materials he embellishes his conversations with others. Thus study has a decorative value. Thirdly, study of books increases one's practical ability. Study of books enables the man to develop an ability to make correct judgements in his daily affairs and teaches him to manage them well. Studies enable him to tackle his practical affairs- be that individual or a particular matter or affairs of life. It improves his judgement and efficiency in planning and executing the practical matters. This makes him a more successful man in the world. Learned person means those men who have gained knowledge from wide reading. Moreover, planning of an overall perfect strategy, the formulation and shaping of policies and above all, the designing of a systematic arrangement of the individual fragmented matters into a compact and comprehensive whole, can only be expected from a wide- read and well-read man. Thus, in short study is a pleasure in the leisure hours of seclusion, a potential source of entertainment in privacy. Study decorates the mind with enough quotations and illustrations to

make nice and attractive conversations with others, that have social values. Studies enable the man to judge everything with ability and handle his own affairs with ease and success. Young men are fitter to invent than to judge; fitter for execution than for counsel and fitter for new projects than for settled business.

- (b) *They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning, by study; and studies themselves, do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty men contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation.*

**Explanation.** In these lines Francis Bacon reminds us that excess of everything is bad. This maxim is applicable in case of studies too. One needs not to spend too much time in reading because that would simply be marked as a sign of laziness. Only a temperamentally lazy man devotes too much time to study. Study is a source of delight no doubt, but for that one should spend only a reasonable time to study. Otherwise instead of feeling delighted we will simply induce laziness and make us unfit for any practical work. From studies we get the required materials to make our conversations impressive and charming to others. But if we depend too much on studies to make our language florid or ornamental, that will simply become a pedantry-an offensive show of learning. Instead of being attractive, such a conversation will become a vain display of learning. Blind faith on the rules learned from the book and its unquestioned follow up reveals the eccentricity of a scholar who remains unconcerned with the realities of practical life. Such knowledge is useless and the utilitarian Bacon did not welcome it either. Hence he advised us to spend only a reasonable length of time for studies and also not to allow the mere bookish knowledge overwhelm us.



## 7.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have thrown light on Bacon, a great literary figure and his contribution to the field of English prose.

## 7.7 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

(a) Answer the following questions in two-three lines in 40-50 words.

i) What are the main benefits of study in the essay “Of Studies” by Francis Bacon?

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ii) What does Bacon mean “Studies serve for delight” in his essay “Of Studies”?

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iii) What does Bacon mean “Studies serve for ability” in his essay “Of Studies”?

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iv) What is the chief use of studies for ability according to Francis Bacon in his essay “Of Studies”?

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## 7.8 ANSWER KEY:

Trinity-1579, Novum Organum- inductive, delight-ornament-ability, full- ready-exact, Weigh-consider, chewed-digested, brevity-conciseness

## 7.9 SUGGESTED READING

Bush, Douglas. *English Literature in the Earlier Seventeenth Century*, 1600-1660. 2nd ed. rev. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

C.H. Lockitt., editor. *The Art of the Essayist*. Longmans, Green and Co., 1950.

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**Course Code : EL-201 (B.A. Sem II)**

**UNIT-IV**

**Course Title: English Literature**

**LESSON NO. 8**

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**SPENSER : *PROTHALAMION***

**STRUCTURE:**

- 8.0** Objectives And Outcomes
- 8.1** Introduction
- 8.2** Life And Works Of Edmund Spenser
- 8.3** Summary Of *Prothalamion*
- 8.4** Let Us Sum Up
- 8.5** Self-Check Exercise
- 8.6** Answer Key
- 8.7** Suggested Reading

**8.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

The main objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- (a) to acquaint the learner with Spenser as a poet
- (b) to help the learner in critically analyzing *Prothalamion* as a poem.

By the end of this lesson, the learners will be able to:

1. describe the life and major works of Edmund Spenser, highlighting his contribution to English poetry.
2. explain the significance of *Prothalamion* as a nuptial poem and its historical context.
3. analyze the key themes, imagery, and stylistic elements used in *Prothalamion*.

## **8.1 INTRODUCTION:**

This lesson introduces the learner to the life and works of Edmund Spenser as a poet and gives a detailed analysis of the poem *Prothalamion*.

## **8.2 LIFE AND WORKS OF EDMUND SPENSER**

Edmund Spenser was an English poet best known for *The Faerie Queene*, an epic poem and fantastical allegory celebrating the Tudor dynasty and Elizabeth I. He is

recognised as one of the premier craftsmen of Modern English verse in its infancy, and one of the greatest poets in the English language.

### **Life**

Edmund Spenser was born in East Smithfield, London around the year 1552 though there is some ambiguity as to the exact date of his birth. As a young boy, he was educated in London at the Merchant Taylors' School and matriculated as a sizar at Pembroke College, Cambridge. While at Cambridge, he became a friend of Gabriel Harvey, and later consulted him, despite their differing views on poetry.

In July 1580, Spenser went to Ireland, in the service of the newly appointed Lord Deputy, Arthur Grey, 14th Baron Grey de Wilton. Then he served with the English forces during the Second Desmond Rebellion. After the defeat of the native Irish he took lands in County Cork that had been confiscated in the Munster Plantation during the Elizabethan conquest of Ireland. Among his acquaintances in the area was Walter Raleigh, a fellow colonist.

Through his poetry Spenser hoped to secure a place at court, which he visited in Raleigh's company to deliver his most famous work, *The Faerie Queene*. However, he boldly antagonised the queen's principal secretary, Lord Burghley, and all he received in recognition of his work was a pension in 1591. When it was proposed that he receive payment of 100 pounds for his epic poem, Burghley remarked, "What, all this for a song!"

In 1596, Spenser wrote a prose pamphlet titled, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*. This piece remained in manuscript until its publication and print in the mid-seventeenth century. It is probable that it was kept out of print during the author's lifetime because of its inflammatory content. The pamphlet argued that Ireland would never be totally 'pacified' by the English until its indigenous language and customs had been destroyed, if necessary by violence.

Spenser recommended scorched earth tactics, such as he had seen used in the Desmond Rebellions, to create famine. Although, it has been highly regarded as a polemical piece of prose and valued as a historical source on 16th century Ireland, the view is seen today as genocidal in intent. Spenser did express some praise for the

Gaelic poetic tradition, but also used much tendentious and bogus analysis to demonstrate that the Irish were descended from barbarian Scythian stock.

Two of Ireland's historians of the early modern period, Ciaran Brady and Nicholas Canny, have differed in their view of Spenser's *View of the State of Ireland*. Brady's essential proposition is that Spenser wished the English government to undertake the extermination of most of the Irish population. He writes that Spenser preferred to write in dialogue form so that the crudity of his proposals would be masked. Canny undermines Brady's conclusion that Spenser opted for "a holocaust" or a "blood-bath", because despite Brady's claims Spenser did not choose the sword as his preferred instrument of policy. Canny argues that Spenser instead chose not the extermination of the Irish race but rather a policy of 'social reform pursued by drastic means'. Canny's ultimate assertion was that Brady was over-reacting and that Spenser did not propose a policy to exterminate the Irish race.

However, within one page he moves on to argue that no 'English writer of the early modern period ever proposed such a drastic programme in social engineering for England, and it was even more dramatic than Brady allows for because all elements of the Irish population including the Old English of the towns, whom Brady seems to think were exempt were subject to some element of this scheme of dispersal, reintegration and re-education'. Here, Canny argues that this policy was more 'dramatic than Brady allows', in that Brady's description was one of 'bloodshed', 'extermination' and 'holocaust' only of the native Irish but Canny's was one of dispersal, reintegration and re-education of both the native Irish and the settler English. Even though Canny writes that 'substantial loss of life, including loss of civilian life, was considered by Spenser', he considers that that falls short of Brady's conclusion.

Later on, during the Nine Years War in 1598, Spenser was driven from his home by the native Irish forces of Aodh Ó Néill. His castle at Kilcolman, near Doneraile in North Cork was burned, and it is thought one of his infant children died in the blaze - though local legend has it that his wife also died. He possessed a second holding to the south, at Rennie, on a rock overlooking the river Blackwater in North Cork. The ruins of it are still visible today. A short distance away grew a tree, locally known as "Spenser's Oak", until it was destroyed in a lightning strike in the 1960s. Local legend

has it that he penned some or all of *The Faerie Queene* under this tree.

In the year after being driven from his home, Spenser travelled to London, where he died in distressed circumstances (according to legend), aged forty-six. It was arranged for his coffin to be carried by other poets, upon which they threw many pens and pieces of poetry into his grave with many tears.

### ***The Faerie Queene***

Spenser's masterpiece is an extensive poem *The Faerie Queene*. The first three books of *The Faerie Queene* were published in 1590, and a second set of three books were published in 1596. This extended epic poem deals with the adventures of knights, dragons, ladies in distress, etc. yet it is also an extended allegory about the moral life and what makes for a life of virtue. Spenser originally indicated that he intended the poem to be twelve books long, hence there is some argument about whether the version we have is in any real sense complete.

### **Structure of the Spenserian Stanza and Sonnet**

Spenser used a distinctive verse form, called the Spenserian stanza, in several works, including *The Faerie Queene*. The stanza's main meter is iambic pentameter with a final line in iambic hexameter (having six feet or stresses, known as an Alexandrine), and the rhyme scheme is ababbcbcc.

The Spenserian Sonnet is based on a fusion of elements of both the Petrarchan sonnet and the Shakespearean sonnet. It is similar to the Shakespearean sonnet in the sense that its set up is based more on the three quatrains and a couplet, a system set up by Shakespeare; however it is more like the Petrarchan tradition in the fact that the conclusion follows from the argument or issue set up in the earlier quatrains.

There is also a great use of the parody of the idealisation or praise of the mistress, a literary device used by many poets. It is a way to look at a woman through the appraisal of her features in comparison to other things. In this description, the mistress's body is described part by part, i.e., much more of a scientific way of seeing one. As William Johnson states in his article "Gender Fashioning and Dynamics

of Mutuality in Spenser's *Amoretti*," the poet-love in the scenes of Spenser's sonnets



in *Amoretti*, is able to see his lover in an objectified manner by moving her to another, or more clearly, an item. The purpose of Spenser doing this is to bring the woman from the "transcendental ideal" to a woman in everyday life. "Through his use of metonymy and metaphor, by describing the lady not as a whole being but as bodily parts, by alluding to centuries of topoi which remove her in time as well as space, the poet transforms the woman into a text, the living 'other' into an inanimate object".

The opposite of this also occurs in *The Faerie Queene*. The counter-blason, or the opposition of appraisal, is used to describe Duessa. She is not objectified, but instead all of her flaws are highlighted. In this context it should be noted that in *Amoretti* Spenser actually names his loved one as "Elizabeth" and that he puns humorously and often on her surname "Boyle".

### **Edmund Spenser's Works:**

#### **Iambicum Trimetrum**

1569: Jan van der Noodt's *Atheatre for Worldlings*

1579: The *Shepherd's Calender*, published under the pseudonym "Immerito"

1590: The *Faerie Queene*, Books 1-3

1591: *Complaints Containing sundrie small Poemes of the Worlds Vanitie*

1592: *Axiochus*, a translation of a pseudo-Platonic dialogue from the original Ancient Greek *Daphnida*. An Elegy upon the death of the noble and virtuous Douglas Howard, Daughter and heire of Henry Lord Howard, Viscount Byndon, and wife of Arthure Gorges Esquier

1595: *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*, *Astrophel*. A Pastorall Elegie upon the death of the most Noble and valorous Knight, Sir Philip Sidney. Colin Clouts Come home againe

1596: *Fowre Hymnes* dedicated from the court at Greenwich; published with the second edition of *Daphnida*

*Prothalamion*

*The Faerie Queene, Books 4-6*

### **Posthumous**

1609: Two Cantos of Mutabilitie published together with a reprint of *The Faerie Queene*

1611: First folio edition of Spenser's collected works

1633: *A Vewe of the Present State of Irelande* a prose treatise on the reformation of Ireland, first published in James Ware's *Ancient Irish Chronicles*

### **ACTIVITY**

#### **True/False**

1. *The Faerie Queene* was written to celebrate the Tudor dynasty and Queen Elizabeth I.
2. Edmund Spenser was born in Dublin, Ireland.
3. Spenser used the pseudonym "Immerito" when publishing *The Shepheardes Calender*.
4. The rhyme scheme of the Spenserian stanza is ababbcbcc.
5. Spenser's castle at Kilcolman was burned during the Nine Years War.
6. Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland* was published during his lifetime.

### **Edmund Spenser Poems**

#### **My Love Is Like To Ice**

My love is like to ice, and I to fire: How comes it then that this her cold so great  
Is not dissolved through my so hot desire, But harder grows the more I her entreat?  
Ice And Fire

*Of this worlds theatre in which we stay, My love like the spectator sits  
Beholding me that all the pageants play, Disguysingdiversly my troubled wits.  
Easter*

*Most glorious Lord of Lyfe! that, on this day, Didst make Thy triumph over  
death and sin; And, having harrowd hell, didst bring away Captivity thence captive,  
us to win: Amoretti Lxxv: One Day I Wrote Her Name*

*One day I wrote her name upon the strand, But came the waves and washed it  
away: Again I wrote it with a second hand, But came the tide, and made my pains  
his prey. Poem 1*

*Ye learned sisters which haue oftentimes beene to me ayding, others to adorne:  
Whom ye thought worthy of your gracefullrymes, That euen the greatest did not  
greatly scorne Amoretti Lxvii: Like As A Huntsman*

*Like as a huntsman after weary chase, Seeing the game from him escap'd away,  
Sits down to rest him in some shady place, With panting hounds beguiled*

*of their prey: Poem 24*

*Song made in lieu of many ornaments, With which my loue should duly  
haue benedict, Which cutting off through hasty accidents, Ye would not stay your  
dew time to expect, A Ditty*

*In praise of Eliza, Queen of the Shepherds See where she sits upon the  
grassiegreene, (O seemely sight!) Epithalamion*

*Ye learned sisters, which have oftentimes Beene to me ayding, others to  
adorne, Whom ye thought worthy of your gracefullrymes, That even the greatest  
did not greatly scorne Amoretti Iii: The Sovereign Beauty*

*The sovereign beauty which I do admire, Witness the world how worthy to be  
praised: The light whereof hath kindled heavenly fire In my frail spirit, by her from  
baseness raised; Amoretti Lxxix: Men Call You Fair*

*Men call you fair, and you do credit it, For that your self ye daily such do see:  
But the true fair, that is the gentle wit, And vertuous mind, is much more prais'd of  
me. A Hymn In Honour Of Beauty*

*Ah whither, Love, wilt thou now carry me? What wontless fury dost thou now  
inspire Into my feeble breast, too full of thee? Whilst seeking to as lake thy raging  
fire, Sonnet 75*

*One day I wrote her name upon the strand, But came the waves and washed it  
away: Agayne I wrote it with a second hand, But came the tyde, and made my  
paynes his pray.*

### **8.3 SUMMARY OF PROTHALAMION**

Prothalamion, the commonly used name of *Prothalamion*; or, *A Spousall Verse in Honour of the Double Marriage of Ladie Elizabeth and Ladie Katherine Somerset*, is a poem by Edmund Spenser (1552-1599), one of the important poets of the Tudor Period in England. Published in 1596, it is a nuptial song that he composed that year on the occasion of the twin marriage of the daughters of the Earl of Worcester; Elizabeth Somerset and Katherine Somerset.

*Prothalamion* is written in the conventional form of a marriage song. The poem begins with a description of the River Thames, where Spenser finds two beautiful maidens. The poet proceeds to praise them and wishing them all the blessings for their marriages. The poem begins with a fine description of the day on which he is writing the poem. "Calm was the day and through the trembling air/The sweet breathing Zephyrus did softly play." The poet is standing near the Thames River and finds a group of nymphs with baskets collecting flowers for the new brides. The poet tells us that they are happily making the bridal crowns for Elizabeth and Katherine. He goes on his poem describing two swans at the Thames, relating it to the myth of Jove and Leda. According to the myth, Jove falls in love with Leda and comes to court her in the guise of a beautiful swan. The poet feels that the Thames has done justice to his nuptial song by "flowing softly" according to his request: "Sweet Thames run softly till I end my song." The poem is often grouped with Spenser's poem about his own marriage, the *Epithalamion*.

#### **8.4 LET US SUM UP**

*Prothalamion*, a spousal verse by Edmund Spenser is one of the loveliest wedding odes. The verse is essentially the wedlock of twin sisters; Lady Catherine and Lady Elizabeth with Henry Gilford and William Peter. Conversely, on comparison with *Epithalamion*, the verse is considered less realistic and unappealing. Spenser incorporates classical imagery strongly with a beautiful atmosphere in the poem. The emphasis of renaissance on *Prothalamion* brings a tinge of mythological figures like Venus, Cynthia and Titan.

#### **8.5 SELF-CHECK EXERCISE**

- Q.1 When was Edmund Spenser born ?
- Q.2 What is the most famous work of Edmund Spenser ?
- Q.3 ----- is based on a fusion of elements of both the Petrarchan sonnet and the Shakespearean sonnet.
- Q.4 Who wrote *Prothalamion*?

## 8.6 ANSWER KEY

### Activity

True, False, True, True, True, False

### Self-Check Exercise

Ans.1 Edmund Spenser was born in East Smithfield, London around the year 1552.

Ans.2 *The Faerie Queene*

Ans.3 The Spenserian Sonnet

Ans.4 Edmund Spenser

## 8.7 SUGGESTED READING

Edmund Spenser. *The Faerie Queene*, Books I-III and IV-VI. Edited by A. C. Hamilton, Longman-Annotated English Poets, 2001.)

Kevin J. H. Dettmar. *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*. Edited by Kevin J. H. Dettmar, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

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**Course Code : EL-201 (B.A. Sem II)**

**UNIT-IV**

**Course Title: English Literature**

**LESSON NO.9**

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**EDMUND SPENSER: *PROTHALAMION***

**STRUCTURE:**

- 9.0** Objectives And Outcomes
- 9.1** Introduction
- 9.2** Summary Of Spenser's *Prothalamion*
- 9.3** Critical Appreciation Of *Prothalamion*
- 9.4** Themes In *Prothalamion*
- 9.5** Examination Oriented Questions
- 9.6** Glossary
- 9.7** Let Us Sum Up
- 9.8** Self-Check Exercise
- 9.9** Answer Key
- 9.10** Suggested Reading

**9.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES :**

The main objectives of this lesson are as follows:

- (a) to acquaint the learner with Spenser as a poet.
- (b) to help the learner in explaining *Prothalamion*.

By the end of this lesson, the learners will be able to:

- a) learn a comprehensive summary of *Prothalamion* stanza by stanza.
- b) identify and evaluate the mythological, political, and pastoral themes in the poem.
- c) analyze the literary devices, structure, and imagery used by Spenser in the poem.



## **9.1 INTRODUCTION:**

This lesson introduces the learner to the life and works of Edmund Spenser as a poet and gives a detailed analysis of *Prothalamion*.

## **9.2 DETAILED SUMMARY OF SPENSER'S *PROTHALAMION***

### ***Stanza 1:***

The poet walks along the banks of River Thames to forget the worries of his personal life. He was completely frustrated with the Job at the court and all he wanted is some mental peace. The cool breeze covered the heat of the sun by reflecting a shade of tender warmth. There are flowers everywhere and the birds chirp happily. The poet as a refrain requests the river to flow softly until he ends his song.

### ***Stanza 2:***

The poet happens to see a group of nymphs along the banks of the river. Here, the poet makes use of first Mythological figure, the nymphs which are supernatural maidens known for their purity. Every nymph looked stunning and had loose strands of hair falling to the shoulders. Nymphs together prepared bouquets of flowers with primroses, white lilies, red roses, tulips, violets and daisies.

### ***Stanza 3:***

As the second mystic entity, Spenser introduces the swans. Swans that swam across the river looked holy and whiter than Jupiter who disguised as a swan to win his love, Leda. But, yes, what Spenser says next is that these swans are shinier than Leda herself. The River Thames requests its waters not to dirty the sacred wings of the swan.

### ***Stanza 4:***

The nymphs were all dumbstruck watching the swans swim across the river. Swans are usually assigned to drawing the chariot of Venus, the goddess of love. The white lilies are matched to the purity or virginity of the nymphs.

*Stanza 5:*

As the next step, the nymphs prepare poises and a basket of flowers which look

like bridal chamber adorned with flowers. The nymphs on excitement of the upcoming wedding throw the flowers over the River Thames and birds. The nymphs also prepare a wedding song. With all the fragrance of flowers, Thames exactly looked like the Peneus, the river of ancient fame flowing along the Tempe and the Thessalian valley.

***Stanza 6:***

The song of the nymph mesmerizes with an enchanting musical effect. Here, Spenser wishes the couple live forever with swans' contented heart and eternal bliss as these birds are the wonder of heaven. He also prays to Cupid and Venus to bless the couple with love and care lest they be safe from deceit and dislike. With endless affluence and happiness, their kids must be a sign of dignity and a threat to immoral people.

***Stanza 7:***

The river Lee, with headquarters at Kent, flows with happiness on such an occasion. As the birds flew above the swans, the sight looked like moon (Cynthia) shining above the stars.

***Stanza 8:***

Once the wedding starts at London, the poet begins to recollect his encounters at the mansion and the building where the wedding occurs.

***Stanza 9:***

The Earl of Essex lived in the mighty castle which actually was the venue of the wedding. He was so chivalrous that he served as a danger to foreign countries. His brave attack on Spain shot him to fame and entire Spain shook at his very name. Queen Elizabeth was so proud of him and he deserves to be celebrated with a poem.

***Stanza 10:***

The Earl of Sussex walked towards the river and he looked fresh with his lovely golden hair. He was accompanied by two young men who were brave, handsome and glorious. They resembled the Twins of Jupiter namely, Castor and Pollux. The men held the hands of the brides and their wedlock begun thereby.

With all the necessary ingredients for a successful verse, *Prothalamion* is embroidered with long lasting style and simplicity.

### 9.3 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF *PROTHALAMION*

*Prothalamion* is Spenser's second wedding song; the poem is modelled on his own marriage song called *Epithalamion*. In this poem, he celebrates the occasion of the marriage of the daughters of Earl of Worcester. In this poem the poet attempts to win a patronage and the favour of the Queen.

*Prothalamion* (1596) was written at a time in his life of disappointment and trouble when Spenser was only a rare visitor to London. Here he is a passive observer than the bridegroom turned poet and hence though as beautiful metrically as his own marriage ode *Epithalamion*, it naturally does not voice the same ecstasy of passion. We find reference in the poem to the poet's own discontent to the history of Temple as to the achievements of Essex.

According to C. S. Lewis, "interesting as they are in themselves, they do not seem to contribute much to total effect." The poem has two themes-the obvious one of celebrating the ladies going to their betrothal and the personal theme which serves for introduction and passing reference once again towards the end. The tone of the two is in great contrast. The first one is gay, full of colour, beauty and hope of fulfillment; the second sad and tragic. The poet is conscious of the contrast and makes an attempt to suppress the sad not in a gay poem. At one point, the poem verges on the elegiac, but the poet deliberately steers himself to the opposite shore on consideration of decorum.

It is a cleverly contrived poem. So far as the poet is concerned, the more important theme is the personal one, the statement of neglected merit, the loss of the great patron and the acquiring of a new one in Essex. But this is hidden and artfully introduced. The most powerful lines are those devoted to Essex, to whom Spenser devotes about 23 lines. These lines are direct address. The poem is skillfully directed to take in this matter. The train of thought and the plan of poem are so conducted that the passage on Essex is integral and not superimposed. The bridegrooms play a minor role and are colourless and have only a reflected glory which they take from Essex.

The verse is an adaptation of the Italian canzone of 18 lines with varying rhyme scheme. The last two lines serve as a burden/refrain to the whole poem. The last line is repeated with variation. And the penultimate line slightly varied to suit the meaning. Poem is lyrical throughout and the repetition adds to the lyrical effect. The organization

of stanza makes for great variety in the cadence with the mixing of 10 syllabic and 6 syllabic lines. There are fourteen of the former and four of the latter in each stanza. The successful handling of the very complicated arrangement shows the poet's mastery over a new metre.

In Spenser's poetry, we get a characteristic blending of mythology and realism. Spenser added a new dignity to English verse by handling it in an exalted manner with a unique style, thought and art.

### ACTIVITY

#### Fill in the Blanks:

1. *Prothalamion* is Spenser's second \_\_\_\_\_ song, written to celebrate the marriage of the daughters of the Earl of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The poet walks along the banks of the River \_\_\_\_\_ to soothe his mind and escape his courtly frustrations.
3. The first mythological figures introduced in the poem are \_\_\_\_\_, who are symbolic of beauty and purity.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ in the poem are described as whiter than Jupiter when he disguised himself as a swan to seduce \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Spenser's poetry is known for mixing \_\_\_\_\_ and realism.

### 9.4 THEMES IN *PROTHALAMION*

*Prothalamion* by Edmund Spenser is a long verse "written as a wedding song for the daughters of a duke." Rather than write with a divergence of thought, Spenser uses a continuous thought. Also, rather than have the narrator as the wedding director or a guest as is traditional, the poet himself is the narrator. But, in typical Renaissance style, he addresses the Muses and alludes to Titan, Jove, and Venus. "The stanzas of the poem were based on the model of the Italian canzone."

There is a sense of completeness conveyed as the verse begins before dawn and progresses through the wedding and into the wedding night with the couple consummating their marriage with images of the sun, night, which the poet calls upon to watch over him and his bride. Furthering this sense of completeness is the motif of pairing as mortal

man is paired with the supernatural : "And let fair Venus, that is Queen of Love With her Heart-quelling Son upon you smile." Christian symbols are included with pagan imagery, and Nature is paired with the supernatural :

*"Them [the swans] heavenly born, or to be that same Pair  
Which through the Sky draw Venus' silver Teem:"*

In Spenser's verse, there are several themes : The Pastoral and the Sea, Rivers and Streams. Several lines are devoted to the beauty of nature, among them :

*"Along the Shoar of silver streaming Thames,  
Whose rushy Bank, the which his River hems,  
Was painted all with variable Flowers,*

*Marriage and Companionship:*

*Receiv'd those two fair Brides, their Love's delight,  
Which at th' appointed Tide,*

*Each one did make his Bride,”*

Mythology and Christian Folklore: "Nor Jove himself when he a Swan would be?"

The Political : For example, Spenser alludes to his fall from the graces of the Earl of Leicester and corruption in the court:

*“In Princes Courts, and Expectations vain  
Of idle Hopes, which still do fly away,”*

Certainly, Spenser's mellifluous verse, its balance and lyricism, as well as his splendid ability to summon resplendent images of gods, natural beauty and grace, astronomical being, and prevailing love throughout the lines makes *Prothalamion* not just a beautiful wedding poem, but also a celebration of the resplendent images of joy.

## 9.5 EXAMINATION-ORIENTED QUESTIONS

- Q.1. Comment on the life and works of Edmund Spenser.
- Q.2. Write a detailed summary of the poem, *Prothalamion*.
- Q.3. Give the critical appreciation of the poem, *Prothalamion*.
- Q.4. Discuss the various themes used by Edmund Spenser in his poem, *Prothalamion*.
- Q.5. Comment on the title of the poem, *Prothalamion*.
- Q.6. Discuss the various images used in the poem, *Prothalamion*.

## 9.6 GLOSSARY

Dovble marriage- double marriage

Delay- temper or reduce the intensity of

Glisten- shining

Sullein- sullen, moody



Of idle hopes...afflict my brayne- even after he had established himself in Ireland, Spenser never ceased hoping for betterment of his prospects in the Elizabethan court.

Shoare- shore

Rutty- rooty, filled with roots of water plants

Variable- various

Meads- meadows

Gemmes- gems (the flowers)

Paramours- lovers

Against the Brydale day, which is not long- anticipating the approaching wedding day.

Flood- the river (Thames)

Entrayled curiously- finely entwined

Flasket- basket

Cropt full feateously- cut finely, plucked delicately

Dazie- daisy

Vermeil- scarlet

Posies- bouquets

Swannes of goodly hewe- swans of pleasant appearance, representing the brides. Flocks of swans were commonly seen on the Thames in Spenser's time.

Lee- either anyriver or streamrunning into the Thames or specificallythe river Lea, which enters the Thames between Poplar and Canning Town.

Pindus- the mountainous western boundary of the Thessalian plain in Greece.

Jove himself...whiter did appeare- the myth of the rape of Leda by Jove as a swan, recounted in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Spenser seems to be suggesting that

the beauty of the two brides is similar to that of Leda whom Jove found irresistible and therefore, raped her but, yet exceeds that of Jove and Leda, in this and the following lines.

Foule to them- dirty compared to them

Bad his billowes- bade or ordered his waves (billows)

Spare- desist, stop from

Eftsoones- in due course, duly

Flowers their fill- had their fill of flowers

Brood- the pair of swans of noble lineage

Chrystal-crystal, here used to indicate sparkling water

Them seem'd- it seemed to them

Deeme- judged them to be

Payre- pair

Draw venussiluerTeeme- Venus' chariot is conventionally represented as drawn through the skies by a pair of swans

Breede- race, origin

Somers-heat- Spenser puns here on the surname Somerset

Weede- water plant

Aray- arrange

Honour- the best (flowers of the field)

Strew- scatter over

Peneus waters- the river Peneus flows through the Tempe valley in Thessaly, between Mount Ossa and Mount Olympus. The implication is that the Peneus is a river that is laden with flowers

Hower- hour

Louescouplement- conjugal sexual union

Heart-quelling sonne- Cupid or Eros

Virtue- power, capacity

Assoile- assail, attack or destroy - here, all that is faulty in friendship

Accord- make in accordance with each other, harmonious

Bord- table

Pleasures chast- legitimate (chaste) sexual pleasures within marriage

Ioyes redound- double the Joys

To her redoubled- echoed her refrain

Vndersong- undersong or refrain

Adowne-down

As he would speake- as if he (the river) could speak

Foule- fowl, birds

Gan- began

Twaine- two

Shend- shame, embarrass

Enranged- organized themselves

Whylome wont- used to, in the past

Byde: reside

Great Lord- the Earl of Leicester

Want- absence, lack

Noble Peer - the Earl of Essex

Cheualric- chivalry

Forraine- foreign

Eliheualric- chivalry

Forraine- foreign

Elisaes- Queen Elizabeth

Alarmes- news, information about martial action

Braue muse- a poet (like Spenser)

Issuing- coming forth, out

Hesper- Hesperus, the morning star

Open vewing- spot where the river can be viewed openly

Great traine- with a large procession behind

Two gentle Knights- the bridegrooms, Henry Guildford and William Petre

The twins of love- (the twins of Jove) Castor and Pollux, the Gemini

Bauldricke of the Heavens- the Zodiac, here represented as a bell studded with stars

Beseeming well the bower of Anie Queene- well suited to be in the court of any queen

## 9.7 LET US SUM UP

*Prothalamion* is Spenser's second wedding song; the poem is modelled on his own marriage song called *Epithalamion*. In this poem, he celebrates the occasion of the marriage of the daughters of Earl of Worcester. In this poem, the poet attempts to win a patronage and the favour of the Queen. Certainly, Spenser's mellifluous verse, its balance and lyricism, as well as his splendid ability to summon resplendent images of gods, natural beauty and grace, astronomical being, and prevailing love throughout the lines makes *Prothalamion* not just a beautiful wedding poem, but also a celebration of the resplendent images of joy.

## 9.8 SELF-CHECK EXERCISE

- Q.1. What request does the poet make to the river ?
- Q.2. Who are nymphs ?
- Q.3. Who requests its waters not to dirty the sacred wings of the swan ?
- Q.4. What do the nymphs do ?

## 9.9 ANSWER KEY

### Activity

Wedding-Worcester, Thames, nymphs, swans-Leda, mythology

### Self-check Exercise

- Ans.1. The poet as a refrain requests the river to flow softly until he ends his song.
- Ans. 2. The Mythological figure, the nymphs are supernatural maidens known for their purity.
- Ans. 3. The River Thames requests its waters not to dirty the sacred wings of the swan.
- Ans. 4. The nymphs prepare poises and a basket of flowers which look like bridal chamber adorned with flowers. The nymphs on excitement of the upcoming wedding throw the flowers over the River Thames and birds. The nymphs also prepare a wedding song. With all the fragrance of flowers, Thames exactly looked like the Peneus, the river of ancient fame flowing along the Tempe and the Thessalian valley.

## 9.10 SUGGESTED READING

Edmund Spenser, and Simon Brett. Prothalamion and Epithalamion : *The Wedding Songs of Edmund Spenser*. Canada : Barbarian Press, 1998.

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**Course Code : EL-201 (B.A. Sem II)**

**UNIT-IV**

**Course Title: English Literature**

**LESSON NO. 10**

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**“WHEN I CONSIDER EVERY THING THAT GROWS”**

**STRUCTURE:**

- 10.0** Objectives And Outcomes
- 10.1** Introduction To Shakespearean Sonnets
- 10.2** About The Sonnet
- 10.3** Introducing The Sonnet
- 10.4** Text Of The Sonnet
- 10.5** Summary Of The Sonnet
- 10.6** Paraphrase Of The Sonnet
- 10.7** Critical Appreciation Of The Sonnet
- 10.8** Themes
- 10.9** Imagery
- 10.10** Let Us Sum Up
- 10.11** Glossary
- 10.12** Self -Assessment Questions.
- 10.13** Examination Oriented Questions.
- 10.14** Answer Key
- 10.15** Suggested Reading

## 10.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The objectives of this lesson are:

- (a) To acquaint you with Shakespearean sonnets.
- (b) To critically analyse the sonnet.
- (c) To explain the structure of Shakespearean sonnet.
- (d) To expose the thematic concerns of the sonnet.

After going through the lesson, the learners will be able to:

- (a) gain insight into the structure and rhyme scheme of a Shakespearean sonnet.
- (b) explain the central themes of Sonnet 15.
- (c) learn the use of metaphor and imagery in the sonnet.

## 10.1 INTRODUCTION TO SHAKESPEAREAN SONNETS

It is generally held that Sir Thomas Wyatt and his literary disciple and colleague, Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey were the harbingers of the sonnet into English language. Unlike in the Italian form of the sonnet, in the Shakespearean form, different ideas or thoughts are expressed in three quatrains. The first quatrain may be called the argument which is an explanation of what is going to happen in the following verses. The second quatrain may be called the theme or the central idea which may be expressed directly or indirectly. And the third or the last quatrain may be called the reason or logic that supports the whole argument. These three quatrains are followed by a couplet which links the argument and the theme, and hence, presents a conclusion. The rhyme-scheme of Shakespearean sonnets is: a b a b, c d c d, e f e f, g g and it is written in iambic pentameter.

William Shakespeare's sonnets are stories about a handsome boy, or rival poet, and the mysterious and aloof "dark" lady. Both love each other. The sonnets fall into three clear groupings: Sonnets 1 to 126 are addressed to, or concern, a young man; Sonnets 127-152 are addressed to, or concern, a dark lady (dark in the sense of her hair, her facial features, and her character), and Sonnets 153-154 are fairly free adaptations of two classical Greek poems. The two groups taken together constitute,

"Shakespeare's early expression of his perceptions of friendship, of love and lust, of honour, of growth through experience, of sin and expiation, of mutability, platitude, and the knowledge of good and evil". In many ways, Shakespeare's use of the sonnet form is richer and more complex than this relatively simple division into parts might imply. Not only is his sequence largely occupied with subverting the traditional themes of love



sonnets-the traditional love poems in praise of beauty and worth, for instance, are written to a man, while the love poems to a woman are almost all as bitter and negative as Sonnet 147-he also combines formal patterns with daring and innovation.

## 10.2 ABOUT THE SONNET

Sonnet 15 is one of the "procreation" sonnets of those that are addressed to the fair lord. In it, the speaker contemplates that with time, the object of his poetry will age and lose his beauty. The solution in the final couplet is that the poet will immortalize the youth and beauty he experiences now in the fair lord in his poetry, and thus "engraft you new." The term "engraft" refers to the process of a horticulturist grafting a new slip of wood onto an old root in order to create a new tree.

Sonnet 15 leads into Sonnet 16, also of the "procreation" set. Though, Sonnet 15 suggests that immortality can be reached through the poet's "engrafting," Sonnet 16 returns again to the theme of procreation. The final couplet of Sonnet 15 describes how the whole world is "in war with Time for love of you," and Sonnet 16 opens with a plea that the fair lord also defend himself against Time. The speaker calls his rhyme "barren," drawing attention to the fact that although it is one way to immortalize the youth, it does not do as much good as procreation.

## 10.3 INTRODUCING THE SONNET

Shakespeare's sonnets are very different from Shakespeare's plays, but they do contain dramatic elements and an overall sense of story. Each of the poems deals with a highly personal theme, and each can be taken on its own or in relation to the poems around it. The sonnets have the feel of autobiographical poems, but we don't know whether they deal with real events or not, because no one knows enough about Shakespeare's life to say whether or not they deal with real events and feelings, so we tend to refer to the voice of the sonnets as "the speaker"-as though he were a dramatic creation like *Hamlet* or *King Lear*.

When I consider that every living thing holds its state of perfection for only a brief moment; that this huge stage, the world, presents only sham performances, which the stars secretly influence; when I realise that men grow like plants, encouraged and inhibited by the same weather, show off when flushed with youthful sap, then declining

when fullgrown, wearing away until their youth has been forgotten; then the consideration of this short, unpredictable life makes me see you as rich in youth as in the face of the plans of Time and Decay to change your day of youth to dingy night. And, at war with Time because of my love for you, as he's taking from you I'm renewing you in poetry.

The speaker in Sonnet 15 wants the young man to procreate, but it seems like the speaker is losing hope that that will happen, so he has decided to immortalize him through verse. There is a sense of urgency in this sonnet, Time looms over everything. The speaker wants the young man to realize that time is fleeting; humans only exist for a short period of time, and if you don't use your time wisely (i.e. procreating) then all traces of you will vanish.

#### 10.4 TEXT OF THE SONNET

*When I consider every thing that grows Holds  
in perfection but a little moment, That this  
huge stage presenteth nought but shows Whereon the  
stars in secret influence comment; When I perceive  
that men as plants increase, Cheered and cheque'd  
even by the self-same sky, Vaunt in their youthful sap,  
at height decrease, And wear their brave state  
out of memory; Then the conceit of this  
inconstant stay Sets you most rich in youth before  
my sight, Where wasteful Time debateth with  
Decay, To change your day of youth to sullied  
night; And all in war with Time for love of  
you, As he takes from you, I engraft you new.*

#### 10.5 SUMMARY OF THE SONNET

In Sonnet 15's first eight lines, the poet surveys how objects mutate - decay - over time: “. . . every thing that grows / Holds in perfection but a little moment. When I think about how every living thing is only perfectly beautiful for a short time.” In other words, life is transitory and ever-changing. Even the youth's beauty will fade over time, but because the poet knows that this metamorphosis is inevitable, he gains an even stronger

appreciation of the young man's beautiful appearance in the present time - at least in the present time within the sonnet. Ironically, then, the youth's beauty is both transitory and permanent - transitory because all things in nature mutate and decay over time, and permanent because the inevitable aging process, which the poet is wholly aware of as inevitable, intensifies the young man's present beauty. Generally, the more momentary an object lasts, the more vibrant and intense is its short life span. We are each like performances on the stage of the world, governed by the workings of the universe; When I notice how people grow just as plants do. Boastful as youths, then shrinking and dying as they age. Then when I happen to look upon you, you are at your most beautiful, But time will eventually make you grow old. But to challenge time, as you grow older I immortalize your youth in my poetry.

Sonnet 15 also introduces another major theme that will be more greatly developed in later sonnets: the power of the poet's verse to memorialize forever the young man's beauty. "I engraft you new," the poet says at the end of the sonnet, by which the poet means that, however steady is the charge of decay, his verses about the young man will keep the youth's beauty always fresh, always new; the sonnets immortalize this beauty. Ironically, the poet's sonnets serve the same purpose as a son whom the poet wants the young man to father: They perpetuate the youth's beauty just as a son would. In fact, the sonnets are even more immortal than a son. The sonnets continue to be read even today, whereas the young man's progeny may have completely died out.

## 10.6 PARAPHRASE OF THE SONNET

*"When I consider every thing that grows  
Holds in perfection but a little moment;*

*That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows*

*Whereon the stars in secret influence comment; (lines 1-4)"*

The speaker mulls over the idea that everything that grows on earth only holds its perfection (i.e. youth) for a short time; everything will eventually grow old and die. The "huge stage" is life, and life presents nothing but shows; each person's life is like a small show/production-it begins and eventually comes to an end. The stars are the ones that get to watch these plays, and in secret they comment on them; it's almost like they are the ones that judge you-did you like a good moral life?; did you make the most out of

your brief time on earth?

*“When I perceive that men as plants increase,  
Cheered and checked even by the selfsame sky,  
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,  
And wear their brave state out of memory; (5-8)”*

The second quatrain introduces an elaborate simile that compares the stages of plant growth to that of the human stages of life. Men like plants increase; men and plants are "cheered" (instill courage) and "checked" (to slow or bring to a stop) all by the same sky. "Vaunt" means to make a vain display of one's own worth. "Sap" is a pun, it means both to be foolish, and it is the fluid part of a plant. Once they reach their peak of brilliance (for plants their flower blooms) then it is a slow decent into death. They wear their brave (handsome, well-dressed) state in their memory, meaning that as they get older man likes to remember the good-old-days when they were at the peak of life.

*“Then the conceit of this inconstant stay  
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,  
Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay*

*To change you day of youth to sullied night, (9-12)”*

The simile in the second quatrain is carried on into the third quatrain. The speaker is telling the young man that he is wasting his youth. The young man is rich and beautiful but he wastes his time with frivolous things. Time may give him youth and beauty, but Decay will eventually win, and he will die. "Sullied" means soiled or blackened; so night means death. Also, at night flowers (even when they are fully blossomed) close up and protect themselves from the cold of night, and then re-blossom when the sun comes out.

*“And all in war with Time for love of you,  
As he takes from you, I ingraft you new. (13-14)”*

The speaker declares war on Time; he will immortalize the young man in verse since the young man has chosen not to create his immortality in the form of an heir. "Ingraft" (engraft), in this sonnet, means to give the young man a rebirth of sorts by writing down his legacy in verse form.

## ACTIVITY

### Fill in the blanks:

1. The speaker reflects on how everything that grows holds its \_\_\_\_\_ only for a short time.
2. The “huge stage” is a metaphor for \_\_\_\_\_, where people’s lives are like performances.
3. In the second quatrain, the speaker compares the life of a man to the growth of a \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The same \_\_\_\_\_ both inspires and limits the growth of men and plants.
5. The word “ingraft” means to \_\_\_\_\_ the young man by preserving his memory in verse.

## 10.7 CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF THE SONNET

When I think about the fact that every living thing is perfect only for a brief time,

that the whole world is one big stage on which the stars secretly control the action; when I see that men grow like plants, encouraged and then thwarted by the same sky, exulting in their youthful vigor and then declining just when they're at their height, vanishing until their glory is no longer even remembered; when I think about the whole world's instability, then I think of you, a youth enjoying so many of nature's rich gifts. In my mind, I see time and decay debating with each other about how to corrupt your sunny youth, how to convert it to old age and night. Out of love for you, I wage war against time: As he takes away your youth, I continually recreate you in these poems.

The young man is not the only one that gets immortalized by writing this sonnet; the speaker and the author (assuming that they are not the same person) are also immortalized, and isn't it the goal of every writer for their work to live on forever, giving their life meaning. I feel like when something is immortalized it makes death less scary; you will be remembered and cherished by everyone for the rest of time.

## 10.8 THEMES

The theme of immortality achieved through poetry is Horatian, in that it is not the poet who gains it, but rather the subject of the verse, in which the poet strives to immortalize his dear friend in verse, thereby saving him from the ravages of all-consuming Time. No line states more clearly this underlying theme in the sonnets than line 13: "And all in war with Time for love of you." For more information on the theme of time in Shakespeare's sonnets, The speaker declares war on Time; he will immortalize the young man in verse since the young man has chosen not to create his immortality in the form of an heir. "Ingraft" (engraft), in this sonnet, means to give the young man a rebirth of sorts by writing down his legacy in verse form.

The young man is not the only one that gets immortalized by writing this sonnet; the speaker and the author (assuming that they are not the same person) are also immortalized, and isn't it the goal of every writer for their work to live on forever, giving their life meaning. I feel like when something is immortalized it makes death less scary; you will be remembered and cherished by everyone for the rest of time. The opening thought rings changes on the perennial theme of mortality which so much engrosses the poet's attention. He perceives the hand of doom in the minutiae of nature's processes, and extends the observation to bring it to bear on the beloved youth. Such beauty and

perfection is in the young man that the whole world is warring against Time in an effort to prevent his gradual decline from youth into age and death. Yet the poet has an alternative also, that in his verse the youth will live and be immortalised and his beauty will remain eternally new.

## **10.9 IMAGERY**

In Sonnet 15, the speaker is considering the transitory, temporary nature of life. He recognizes that everything that lives ("grows") reaches a prime in his/her/its life and that peak moment lasts only for a brief time. The world is compared to a stage where the stars (astrologically) influence or direct the actions of the players (humans). Plants, like men, "increase" (grow), but when they reach their height, they begin to decrease and wear out. The speaker imagines the height of his companion's youth ("you" the addressee in the sonnet) in spite of the limited (inconstant) time on earth. Moving towards the end of a life, time and decay debate on how to change one's life from youth to old age and then to death.

## **10.10 LET US SUM UP**

This sonnet is addressed in the end that we "all" are at war with time itself. For the love of the sonnet's addressee ("you"), the speaker says that as time takes "your" youth, he will "engraft you anew." This is a common theme in some of Shakespeare's sonnets: that although life is fleeting, he can immortalize those he loves in the sonnet itself (engraft meaning to write). Sonnet 15 is part of the fair youth sequence, which was "divided into two parts, the first concerning a beautiful male youth and the second a woman." This sequence emphasizes "longing, jealousy, and a fear of separation, while anticipating both the desire and the anguish of the subsequent poems."

This sonnet is a "daring representation of homoerotic...passions," of "passionate, erotic love," suggesting that the relationship between the addressee and the Fair Youth is sexual. Others suggest the relationship is one of Platonic love.

At the beginning of the Fair Youth, sequence are the Procreation sonnets, sonnets 1-14. It is an "entire sonnet sequence...marked not only by a preoccupation with the category of memory, but also by a fascination with the sheer capaciousness and complexity of that category." Sonnet 15 is located at the latter end of this section. Sonnet 15



introduces the idea of the speaker "immortaliz[ing] his beloved in verse" (rather than by physical procreation, as in previous sonnets).

## **10.11 GLOSSARY**

Holds in perfection = remains at its state of perfection, encloses perfection within itself.

This huge stage = the world, the globe, the grand scheme of the universe.

Presenteth naught but shows = gives nothing but dramatic spectacles,

Whereon = upon which.

In secret influence comment = make hidden decisions which influence the things viewed.

Increase = grow, develop, increase in stature; multiply.

Cheered = encouraged, made happy.

Checked = stopped, obstructed.

The self-same sky = the same sky which regulates the life of plants.

Vaunt in their youthful sap = put on a boastful show (vaunt) when they are young.

At height decrease = decline after they have reached their full growth.

Their brave state = the proud moment of their glory.

Conceit = thought, consideration.

This inconstant stay = which is full of unpredictability, of short duration.

Your day of youth = your youthful days.

Sullied night = night is black and dingy.

He = Time.

## **10.12 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

Q.1. What is the form of this sonnet?

Q.2. To whom this sonnet has been addressed.

Q.3. List the images used in this sonnet.

Q.4. Themes in the sonnet.

**Answers:**

Ans.1 A sonnet has fourteen lines in iambic pentameter.

Ans.2 The sonnet has been addressed to "youth".

Ans.3 The transitory, temporary nature of human life.

Ans.4 The theme of immortality is used by poet in the sonnet.

**10.13 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS**

**Q. 1. Critically analyse the sonnet “*when I consider every thing that grows*”.**

**Ans:** The speaker mulls over the idea that everything that grows on earth only holds its perfection (i.e. youth) for a short time; everything will eventually grow old and die. The "huge stage" is life, and life presents nothing but shows; each person's life is like a small show/production. It begins and eventually comes to an end.

**Q. 2. Write a critical note on Shakespeare's imagery in the sonnet.**

**Ans:** In Sonnet 15, the speaker is considering the transitory, temporary nature of life. He recognizes that every thing that lives ("grows") reaches a prime in his/her/its life and that peak moment lasts only for a brief time. The world is compared to a stage where the stars (astrologically) influence or direct the actions of the players (humans). Plants, like men, "increase" (grow) but when they reach their height, they begin to decrease and wear out. The speaker imagines the height of his companion's youth.

**Q. 3. “When I think about how every living thing is only perfectly beautiful for a short time,”. Explain.**

**Ans :** Life is transitory and ever-changing. Even the youth's beauty will fade over time, but because the poet knows that this metamorphosis is inevitable, he

gains an even stronger appreciation of the young man's beautiful appearance in the present time - at least in the present time within the sonnet. Ironically, then, the youth's beauty is both transitory and permanent - transitory because all things in nature mutate and decay over time, and permanent because the inevitable aging process, which the poet is wholly aware of as inevitable, intensifies the young man's present beauty. Generally, the more momentary an object lasts, the more vibrant and intense is its short life span

**Q. 4. Discuss the thematic concerns of the sonnet.**

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**Q. 5. What is the "youth" as depicted by Shakespeare in the onset sonnet.**

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**Q. 6. What is a sonnet ? How does Shakespearean sonnet differ from Italian form of sonnet ?**

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## **10.14 ANSWER KEY**

### **Activity**

Perfection, life, plant, sky, immortalize

## **10.15 SUGGESTED READING**

Edward Dowden, ed. *Shakespeare Sonnets*. London: Adamant Media Co., 2005.

Ivor Brown. *Shakespeare*. London: Collins, 1955

John Kerrigan. *William Shakespeare: The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint*. Penguin Books, 1986.

**Course Code : EL-201 (B.A. Sem II)**

**UNIT-V**

**Course Title: English Literature**

**LESSON NO. 11**

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**ROMANTIC COMEDY**  
**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *AS YOU LIKE IT***

**STRUCTURE:**

- 11.0** Objectives And Outcomes
- 11.1** Introduction
  - 11.1.1** Life And Works Of Shakespeare
- 11.2** *As You Like It* : General Introduction
- 11.3** Settings Of The Play
- 11.4** Humour In The Play
- 11.5** Let Us Sum Up
- 11.6** Examination Oriented Questions
- 11.7** Answer Key
- 11.8** Suggested Reading

**11.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

The objectives of this lesson are:

- a) to acquaint you with Shakespearean plays.
- b) to critically analyse the play.
- c) to explain the structure of Shakespearean play.
- d) to expose the dramatic concerns of the play.

After going through the lesson, the learners will be able to:

- (a) learn the life and literary contributions of William Shakespeare.
- (b) gain insight into the main plot and subplots of *As You Like It*.
- (c) explain the major themes and characters in the play.
- (d) learn the role of disguise and mistaken identity.

## **11.1 INTRODUCTION**

*As You Like It* is a romantic comedy by William Shakespeare that explores timeless themes such as love, identity, and the contrast between court life and nature. Renowned for its clever wordplay, charming characters, and uplifting resolution, *As You Like It* remains one of Shakespeare's most beloved comedies.

### **11.1.1 LIFE AND WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE**

William Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564 in the village of Stratford-on-Avon in the country of Warwickshire. His father John Shakespeare was a trader in

agricultural products like corn, wheat etc. Not much is known about Shakespeare's education and it is widely believed that after attending the Grammar School at Stratford in the initial few years, his formal education had to be discontinued and then his real teachers were the men and women and the natural influences which surrounded him. At the age of fourteen his father lost the little property he had and fell into debt. The boy probably started working to support his family. In 1582, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a peasant family. About the year 1587, he shifted to London where he joined Burbage's company of actors. After working as an actor for some time, he started working with other writers. He soon broke away from this apprentice work and came out with his own plays which appeared in quick succession viz. *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the English chronicle plays like *Henry VI*, *Richard III*, *Richard II*, *King John* etc., *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*. Following these experimental works, he came out with some great and mature works like *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Julius Ceasar*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra* etc. About the year 1611, he left London and settled permanently at Stratford-on-Avon. *The Tempest* was his last play based upon an actual shipwreck. After a few years of quiet at Stratford-on-Avon Shakespeare died on the anniversary of his birth, April 23, 1616. Shakespeare's greatness as a playwright is universally acknowledged. Infact, his extreme diversity and multi-dimensional talent are uniquely responsible for his superiority and popularity over other dramatists of his day. Whether it might be history, comedy, tragedy, romances or fairy plays, Shakespeare had an ability to handle every area with a surprising skill and enthusiasm. He has created a multitude of living characters such as have never been created by any other writer. His characters are at once living and true to life. Shakespeare displayed a deep understanding of men and matters and a wide range of human emotions which makes his plays universal in nature. In Dr. Jonson's words : "Shakespeare was not of an age, but of all time."

## **11.2 AS YOU LIKE IT : GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

*As You Like It* is estimated to have been written at some time between 1598 and 1600. It is one of the finest comedies written by Shakespeare. A romantic comedy is a play in which the romantic elements are mingled with comic elements. While the romantic elements delight, thrill and enchant us, the comic elements make us laugh. Thus

a romantic comedy is a marvellous kind of play which appeals greatly to our emotions, our imagination and which at the same time also appeals to our faculty of laughter. The leading characters of the play are Rosalind, Orlando, Celia, Oliver and the two Dukes- Duke Senior and Duke Frederick. All these characters are integrated with the main plot which is the love story of Rosalind and Orlando. As the play opens, we are introduced to two brothers, Oliver and Orlando-the eldest and the youngest sons respectively of the late Sir Rowland de Boys. Hot words are being exchanged between these two brothers who feel a deep dislike for each other. Orlando dislikes Oliver because Oliver has shown a disregard for his father's will according to which Orlando was to receive a certain amount of money and was also to be properly brought up and educated by Oliver. But Oliver did nothing for his younger brother Orlando. Orlando is, therefore, justified in bearing a grudge against the injustice done to him by Oliver, on the other hand, Oliver dislikes Orlando for no particular reason. When Orlando protests against this treatment and demands his rights, Oliver gets infuriated and a violent quarrel takes place between the two brothers. Adam, an old servant of the family, intervenes in the quarrel and appeals to both the brothers not to create an unpleasant situation. But Oliver's hatred for his brother is so deep that he employs a professional wrestler namely Charles, who is incidentally Duke Frederick's court wrestler also, to fulfil his evil designs against Orlando. As Oliver wants to get rid of his brother, he tells Charles to break Orlando's ribs and if possible, to kill him in the wrestling match. All this drama happens on the stage before the eyes of the audience. But another event is indirectly conveyed to us. This event has already taken place before the play begins. It is regarding a dispute between two other brothers viz. Duke Frederick and Duke Senior. Duke Senior, the lawful King was dethroned from the Dukedom and was banished by his younger brother Frederick. Duke Senior, accompanied by some loyal lords took refuge in the forest of Arden. Rosalind, the daughter of the banished Duke naturally feels sad because of the banishment of her father while Celia, the daughter of Duke Frederick, tries to console her. Although Duke Senior has been banished, his daughter Rosalind has been retained by Duke Frederick to keep company with his daughter Celia who is deeply attached to Rosalind. The two ladies now see a wrestling match between Charles and Orlando. Everyone present there to see the match was of the opinion that Orlando will easily be defeated at the hands of Charles, the professional wrestler of greater strength. But everyone is quite surprised when after a few moments Orlando emerges a winner.



But when Duke Frederick comes to know that Orlando is the son of late Sir Rowland de Boys, he becomes furious and instead of rewarding Orlando for his bravery, the Duke leaves the venue of the wrestling match in a state of anger. Sir Rowland, during his life time had been very intimate with Duke Senior and therefore is a natural enemy of Duke Frederick. Rosalind and Celia are, however, filled with admiration for Orlando and in fact, Rosalind falls instantly in love with him and Orlando too, feeling greatly attracted by Rosalind, falls in love with her at first sight. In a private conversation, Rosalind discloses to Celia that she has fallen in love with Orlando. This conversation between the two sisters is incidentally overheard by Duke Frederick. He passes an order of banishment against Rosalind and charges her of being a traitor. After Duke Frederick has gone, Celia tells Rosalind that she would also now quit her father's court as an answer to her father's injustice to Rosalind and would stealthily go into exile with Rosalind. The two ladies persuade Touchstone, the court jester to join them in exile. Celia suggests that they should go to the forest of Arden and join Rosalind's father, the banished Duke. Rosalind accepts the suggestion. They also decide that they would disguise their identity. Celia would smear her face with some kind of paint while Rosalind would disguise herself as a man so as not to be recognized by anyone. Orlando, on the other hand, on returning home, learns from his loyal servant Adam that his brother Oliver has devised a plan to put an end to Orlando's life by setting on fire the lodging where Orlando sleeps. Adam, a great well-wisher of Orlando, urges him not to stay any longer in that house. As Orlando is penniless and there is no other place where he can go and live, Adam gives him an amount of five hundred crowns, which is Adam's whole life savings. Adam insists on accompanying Orlando and serving him loyally till the end of his life. Orlando and Adam then decide to quit the city and proceed to the forest of Arden where Rosalind and Celia have also gone. Duke Senior and his loyal lords are living in the forest of Arden in a state of perfect contentment, without having any ill-will against Duke Frederick or anyone else. They have all become used to the hardships of life. Among the lords attending upon Duke Senior is Jaques, a man of contemplative nature. The diverse experiences have made his attitude towards life somewhat cynical. And he freely offers critical comments on Duke Senior's behaviour. His presence is valuable in the play as he acts as a censoring authority to Duke Senior. Attired in their respective disguises, Rosalind and Celia now arrive in the forest of Arden, with Touchstone

as their accomplice. Celia has changed her name to Aliena and Rosalind, disguised as a man has adopted the name Ganymede. Rosalind pretends to be Celia's brother. Luckily, they find a rich shepherd in the forest of Arden willing to sell his flock of sheep and his cottage. Rosalind and Celia readily buy this cottage and settle down there. Both Rosalind and Celia have to face the hardships of the forest life to which they are not used to, but they do not allow any bitterness to enter their hearts. They still retain their sense of humour, vitality and natural gaiety. When Duke Frederick, comes to know that his daughter and Rosalind have fled from the palace, he becomes extremely angry. It is doubted by everyone that the two ladies might have gone with Orlando who is also missing. His brother Oliver is summoned and asked to reveal the whereabouts of Orlando. But Oliver says that he has no idea where his brother Orlando has gone, neither has he any feeling of love or concern for his brother. On hearing this, the Duke becomes even more furious and asks Oliver to produce Orlando before him within a year or he will be punished. The Duke also orders his officials to seize the entire property of Oliver and turn him out of palace. Now Oliver finds himself in great trouble. Here we come across another subplot of the play viz. the Silvius-Phoebe, one-sided love-affair. It so happens that Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone overhear a talk between an old shepherd Corin and a young Shepherd Silvius, when Silvius is telling Corin about his deep love for a Shepherdess by the name of Phoebe who, however, does not respond to Silvius' love. Now, as a way to bring Orlando closer to Duke Senior, as a part of dramatic strategy, Shakespeare introduces another incident in the play. Orlando and Adam have already arrived in the forest of Arden. But Adam being very old feels hungry and totally exhausted. Orlando then leaves Adam there and promises to bring for him something to eat. Duke Senior and his friends have just set down to dinner when Orlando enters there and draws his sword. He demands food for the starving Adam. Duke Senior reassures him that there was no need to threaten them with sword and he can bring the old man there to accompany them in their dinner. Orlando feels happy and moved at the kind-heartedness of these people, and brings Adam there. On learning that Orlando is the son of late Sir Rowland de Boys, Duke Senior feels very happy as Sir Rowland had been a great friend of his. Orlando now becomes a member of this group of Duke Senior. Having plenty of time at his disposal, Orlando keeps himself busy composing poems in praise of Rosalind. He carves the name of his beloved on trees

and attaches to the trees the poems which he has written for Rosalind. He has no knowledge at all that Rosalind and Celia are also present in the same forest. Celia happens to see Orlando one day and informs her cousin about it. Rosalind is immensely thrilled to know that the man whom she loves has also come to the forest of Arden, and is also full of love for her. Soon both of them come face to face, though Rosalind being disguised as a man and having the name Ganymede, is not recognized by Orlando. They soon develop a friendship for each other and it is decided that Orlando would come daily to Ganymede and speak of his love for Rosalind to him. In this section of the play, we are introduced to Rosalind's brilliant wit through her conversation with Orlando. She comes out as one of most witty and intelligent heroines of Shakespeare's plays.

In the meantime, other connected plots also keep moving along with the main plot of Rosalind-Orlando love affair. For example, we have Touchstone meeting Corin the old shepherd, Orlando the romantic lover, and Jaques the cynical philosopher. We have another interesting love story of Touchstone and the shepherd girl Audrey. Both decide to marry each other. In their love story, we have the delineation of two very interesting and temperamentally different characters in Touchstone and Audrey. Touchstone is a practical lover who treats marriage as a matter of convenience. Audrey, on the other hand, is a simple, unambitious, homely girl, without having much expectations from Touchstone. Another interesting development takes place in the play regarding Silvius and Phoebe. As mentioned earlier also, theirs is a one-sided love affair whereas Silvius loves Phoebe deeply, Phoebe shows utter disinterest and even disrespect to Silvius' feelings. But Phoebe develops a kind of attraction towards Rosalind who is disguised as a man, and she falls in love with him (Rosalind). This is another amusing situation which has resulted from Rosalind's masculine disguise. Silvius seeks Phoebe's love while Phoebe now seeks Rosalind's (Ganymede's) love. She goes to the extent of sending a letter to Ganymede through Silvius expressing her passion for him. She tells Silvius that the letter contains her disgust for Ganymede. But on learning the contents of the letter from Ganymede, Silvius feels hurt and Ganymede (or Rosalind) rebukes Silvius for having become too servile to Phoebe. Meanwhile, Orlando gets wounded in an attempt to save his eldest brother Oliver from the attack of a lioness. Orlando rescues Oliver from the clutches of a lioness despite the fact that Oliver had always tried to put an end

to Orlando's life. Oliver comes across Rosalind and Celia in the forest and informs them about Orlando's being wounded by a lioness, Ganymede (or Rosalind) faints on hearing this. It becomes evident to us that after having been severely dealt with by Duke Frederick, Oliver too has taken refuge in the forest of Arden. Oliver and Aliena have fallen in love with each other at first sight and would like to get married. As Oliver and Orlando have now become fully reconciled to each other, Oliver informs Orlando of his ardent love for Aliena. Orlando approves of this relationship and says that their marriage should take place the very following day. As both Rosalind and Celia are still disguised as Ganymede and Aliena, neither Oliver nor Orlando yet knows their true identity. Even Duke Senior does not yet know about the presence of his daughter Rosalind and his niece Celia in the forest of Arden, though he happened on one occasion to meet Ganymede/Rosalind for a few minutes. Orlando is feeling sad because though his brother Oliver is going to get married, his own love for Rosalind is far from being fulfilled. Ganymede assures Orlando that he knows magic and he can use this knowledge of magic to unite Orlando and Rosalind. Orlando tells Duke Senior what Ganymede had told her. So Duke Senior, Orlando and all others wait for Ganymede's magic. After a little while, both Ganymede and Aliena shed their disguises and appear before the gathering in their proper persons. The Duke is surprised as well as happy to see his daughter Rosalind and Celia. He readily agrees to the marriage of Rosalind and Orlando.

At this time, three other marriages, along with the marriage of Rosalind and Orlando will be solemnised - Touchstone and Audrey; Oliver and Celia; Phoebe also agrees to marry Silvius, because she discovers, to her surprise, that the young man Ganymede with whom she had fallen in love is really a woman viz. Rosalind. This is the climax of the play where almost all the major issues have been resolved. What remains to be seen is the end of enmity between Duke Senior and Duke Frederick. Now, it so happens that more and more worthy and efficient people had started coming to the forest of Arden in order to join Duke Senior. Duke Frederick cannot tolerate this and he heads towards the forest with a large force to attack Duke Senior and to put an end to his life. But by chance he meets a saint in the forest of Arden. Duke Frederick falls under the spell of this saint to such an extent that he decides to renounce the world and become a saint himself. Therefore, Duke Senior is restored to his Dukedom. So the play ends on a happy note for all the concerned characters.

## ACTIVITY

### True/False:

1. *As You Like It* is considered one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies.
2. The play combines elements of romance and comedy.
3. Orlando and Oliver are loving brothers who support each other.
4. Duke Senior, the rightful Duke, is banished by his younger brother, Duke Frederick.
5. Celia is Duke Frederick's daughter and is hostile toward Rosalind.
6. Rosalind falls in love with Orlando after seeing him wrestle Charles.

### 11.3 SETTINGS OF THE PLAY

*As You Like It* is a romantic comedy. It contains two elements of romance and comedy. It is a comedy because it presents a witty and humorous picture of life. The term 'romantic' carries a number of meanings. It means that the play has the theme of romance or love. It also means that the play has been set in a novel or new setting which is different from the usual worldly setting. It has an atmosphere different from the routine reality of the world. Shakespeare sets the play in a remote forest, far away from the court. Except for a few scenes, the whole play has the Forest of Arden as the setting. All the characters gather here and the whole action takes place here only. This pastoral setting provides not merely the essential background, but it also conditions the characters and influences the course of action in the play. In keeping with the open-ended nature of the play, the pastoral setting has also been dealt with in a free and frank manner. Many views on the pastoral countryside have been projected in the play. Rosalind, Orlando, Celia and Oliver have one view of the Forest in particular or the pastoral in general. For them it is a world far from the madding crowd. Here is a place which is free from the problems of the court. There are no villains or conspirators here. These characters can devote all their time to the game of love. Oliver goes around writing his beloved's name on each and every tree in the jungle. Rosalind passes her time watching other lovers like Silvius and Phoebe indulge in love-talk. Later, Rosalind disguised as Ganymede adds to the playful mood by starting another game of love with Phoebe. Seen from this perspective, the pastoral world appears to be a place where singing of songs, exchanging vows of love or of playing innocent tricks on love-partners seem to be the only industries. However, *As You Like It* presents another picture of the pastoral world represented by the Forest of Arden. Touchstone voices discontent the moment he steps into the forest when he asks if this is the place for which he has left behind the comforts of the court. The Forest has its own quota of problems. We discover that very soon when we find a haughty and disdainful Phoebe scorning Silvius' love. We also have the sight of a tired, fainting and starving Adam. Orlando gets so desperate for the food that he draws his sword to snatch food from wherever he can get it. We also learn of Orlando being attacked by a hungry lion. Orlando gets wounded and bleeds in this encounter. In this way, the pastoral world is not as free from tension as it is supposed to be. The Forest of Arden has another relevance in the play as it presents an earthy,

real, physical variety of love, represented by Touchstone and Audrey. This form of love contrasts with the highly glamorized and romanticized variety of love represented by Rosalind and Orlando, Celia and Oliver. Even Phoebe has the same notion of love for Ganymede and Silvius for Phoebe. Touchstone and Audrey stand for a more realistic and blunt shade of love where love is taken just as a way to bring together a man and a woman for the purpose of sexual union. It is this kind of animal - coupling which Touchstone seeks with Audrey. This shade of love is as significant as the other shades represented by other couples. The pastoral setting of the Forest of Arden significantly contributes to the complexity of the play by touching upon the animal in the bodies of the lovers and the beloveds. Last but not least, the pastoral setting provides a refuge or a shelter where one can achieve a perfect blending of the best of the court and the jungle. The banished Duke's feast is a very good example of this blending. Orlando intrudes upon this scene with a drawn sword but the Duke disarms him by his graceful demeanour. He asks Orlando to also bring there the exhausted Adam and refers to the old man in terms of great respect. The pastoral world of the forest is shown to be as good or bad as is the other world. It has cultured and respectable people as well as uncivilized and unruly people. It is this world of grace and simplicity to which the banished Duke has turned after his younger brother snatched authority from him. After he has had a change of heart Duke Frederick himself chooses to spend his days in this world towards the close of the play. A cynical thinker and philosopher like Jaques would like to spend his life in the forest alone. He cannot even think of moving away from this world of Nature. In this way the pastoral setting is an integral part of the theme of the play. It contributes its own variety of love. It provides opportunities of witty exchanges between courtly jesters like Touchstone and rustic characters like William. It also helps in establishing that people and places are essentially the same. A thing is "as you like it". People are good or bad irrespective of the place they are at. The Forest of Arden thus contributes to the justification of the title of the play itself.

#### **11.4 HUMOUR IN *AS YOU LIKE IT***

A Typical Comedy - *As You Like It* is a typical Shakespearean comedy. It has elements of love or romance as well as comedy or humour. Rather the two elements are very well blended together. It is through the predicament of lovers that comedy is created. It is through humorous situations that the cause of love is advanced. Humour

operates in different forms and varieties in the play.

**Humour in character :** There are a number of characters who have been presented as comical or humorous. Touchstone, the court jester, is not a comical character because we do not laugh at him. But there are other characters like Williams and Silvius who appear as ridiculous. William is a totally rustic character who feels most uncomfortable in the company of the witty Touchstone. In a similar manner Silvius presents a ridiculous picture as he seems to be but a plaything for Phoebe. She makes fun of his love and uses him to deliver her love-letter to Ganymede. She tells Silvius that it is actually a letter of censure and criticism and Silvius is so simple that he believes her. Sir Oliver Martext, a vicar, also presented as a figure who is made fun of. Touchstone first summons him to solemnize his marriage with Audrey but later on he dismisses him.

**Humour of Situation :** Another very important source of humour in the play is the humour of situation. Here some situations are humorous in themselves and we laugh effortlessly whether whatever is said is humorous or not. One such situation is Rosalind in male disguise as Ganymede. She asks Orlando to practise whatever he would like to say to Rosalind by talking to her as if Ganymede were Rosalind. Orlando takes part in this game. He does not know that he is not rehearsing but actually expressing his love to Rosalind. In a similar manner Ganymede makes Phoebe listen to Silvius' pleas for love. Ganymede would like Phoebe to imagine that it is not Silvius but Ganymede who is talking to her. In this way Silvius can express his own love for Phoebe.

**Witty Humour :** There is also plenty of witty humour in the play. Touchstone is the wittiest person in the play. He uses his professional wit to ridicule the customs of the court, the artificial language and manners of the courtiers. He also exposes Rosalind's and Celia's enthusiasm for the pastoral environment. His exchanges with Corin and William - both out and out rustic characters - also lead to lots of laughter. His remarks on different kinds of lies are also very amusing.

**Philosophic Humour :** To counterbalance the boisterous and exuberant humour, Shakespeare has introduced a more serious and philosophic variety of humour through Jaques. One example of such somber, and serious humour would suffice. When the Senior Duke sits down for a feast with his associates, companions and deer-meat is served to them, Jaques equates the Senior Duke (who is exiled) with Duke Frederick



(who has exiled his brother). Jaques reasons it thus: While Frederick has usurped the dukedom of his elder brother, the Senior Duke has usurped the natural habitat of the deer, the Forest of Arden. In a similar vein, Jaques' reference to the 'seven ages of man' also focuses on the oddity of man's behaviour in his life. This makes one laugh though not in a loud or back-slapping manner. *As You Like It* also has such philosophic humour to provide variety. Even Touchstone's humorous references to Audrey - "a poor virgin", "an illfavoured thing" are noteworthy for they reveal love to be a reality of life, even if it is without gloss or polish.

**A store-house of humour :** Like any other typical comedy by Shakespeare, *As You Like It* has plenty of humour not of one but of many different kinds. This rich variety of humour along with a rich variety of love makes *As You Like It* one of Shakespeare most memorable plays.

### 11.5 LET US SUM UP

*As You Like It* is a romantic comedy by Shakespeare that blends love, humour, and philosophy. The play contrasts court life with the simplicity of the Forest of Arden, where characters find love, reconciliation, and personal growth. Through disguises, witty dialogues, and multiple love stories, Shakespeare presents a light-hearted yet thoughtful exploration of human nature. The play ends on a happy note with multiple marriages and restored harmony.

### 11.6 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the theme of pastoral life in *As You Like It*. How does Shakespeare contrast the court and the Forest of Arden?
2. Analyze the character of Rosalind and her role in challenging gender norms in the play.
3. Examine the use of disguise and mistaken identity in *As You Like It*. How do these elements contribute to the play's comedic effect?
4. What is the significance of the "All the world's a stage" speech? How does it reflect the play's broader themes?
5. Discuss the role of love in *As You Like It*. How are different types of love portrayed?

### 11.7 ANSWER KEY

### Activity

False, True, False, True, False, True

### 11.8 SUGGESTED READING

William Shakespeare. *As You Like It*. Edited by Todd Borlik, Francis X. Connor, and Emma Smith, Oxford University Press, 19 Sept. 2024.

Marjorie Garber. *Shakespeare after all*. Pantheon Books. 2004.

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**Course Code : EL-201 (B.A. Sem II)**

**UNIT-V**

**Course Title : English Literature**

**LESSON NO. 12**

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**ROMANTIC COMEDY**  
**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *AS YOU LIKE IT***

**STRUCTURE:**

- 12.0 Objectives And Outcomes
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 *As You Like It* : A Critical Appreciation
- 12.3 Summary Of The Play
- 12.4 Themes Of The Play
- 12.5 A Romantic Comedy
- 12.6 Comic Elements In The Play
- 12.7 Social, Moral, And Spiritual Aspects Of The Play
- 12.8 The Pastoral Character Of The Play
- 12.9 A Musical Comedy
- 12.10 List Of Characters In The Play With Their Brief Particulars
- 12.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.12 Short Answer Type Questions
- 12.13 Answer Key
- 12.14 Suggested Reading

## **12.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

The objectives of this lesson are:

- a) to acquaint you with summary of the Plays.
- b) to critically analyse the themes of the play.

- c) to explain the social, moral and spiritual aspects of Shakespeare's play.
- d) to expose the dramatic concerns of the play.

After completing this lesson, the learners will be able to:

1. identify the key characters in *As You Like It* and their roles in the plot.
2. analyze character traits and transformations, especially in major figures like Rosalind, Orlando, Oliver, and Duke Frederick.
3. explain the symbolic and thematic relevance of the Forest of Arden as a space for reflection and change.

## 12.1 INTRODUCTION

This lesson introduces the major and minor characters in William Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It*. It provides an overview of their roles, personalities, and development throughout the play. Through these characters, the lesson brings out central themes such as love, loyalty, transformation, wit, and reconciliation, which are central to the play's overall meaning.

## 12.2 AS YOU LIKE IT : A CRITICAL APPRECIATION

*As You Like It* is indeed one of Shakespeare's finest and most entertaining comedies. The small stories connected with the main story of Rosalind and Orlando are very interesting, the portrayal of characters is vivid and convincing, the dialogue is brilliant and full of wit and humour. Most of all, Rosalind is one of the wittiest and the most beautiful heroines of Shakespeare's plays.

**The main plot and the sub-plots:** *As You Like It* has at its centre the main plot of Rosalind and Orlando love-affair. We have some other sub-plots like the dispute between Duke Senior and Duke Frederick which leads to the banishment of Duke Senior and usurpation of the Kingdom by Duke Frederick unlawfully; a dispute between two other brothers Oliver and Orlando, due to which Orlando has to leave the city and take shelter in the forest of Arden where Rosalind has also arrived with her cousin Celia; the Celia-Oliver love affair; the Silvius-Phoebe-Ganymede complication; and the Touchstone-Audrey love-affair. All these love affairs find fulfilment in the last scene and are closely related to the main plot.

## 12.3 SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

*As You Like It* has at its centre, the theme of love which constitutes the main plot of the play. It has, however, three sub-plots. Shakespeare is a romantic dramatist in the sense that he did not follow the rules set by his predecessors regarding the dramatic unities in a play. The unity of action demands that there should be a single plot in the whole play, but in most of his dramas Shakespeare includes one or more subplots.

**The Main Plot: Love of Rosalind and Orlando :** The main plot in the play is the love story of Rosalind and Orlando. At the time of the wrestling match, the two fall in love with each other at first sight. Destiny brings them together once again in the forest of Arden. Here Rosalind is disguised as a young man by the name of Ganymede and therefore Orlando cannot recognise her. As Orlando has not much to do in the forest of Arden, he writes verses in praise of the beauty and virtues of Rosalind and hangs these verses on the trees. Rosalind comes to know that the writer of these verses is

none other than Orlando and she feels immensely happy. Rosalind and Orlando meet and she as Ganymede suggests to Orlando that they should meet daily and Orlando should imagine that Ganymede is his beloved Rosalind. He should express his love for Rosalind to Ganymede and woo her. In this way he will be cured of his madness for Rosalind. Orlando acts upon the suggestion and in one of the finest scenes of the play woos Ganymede imagining that he is wooing Rosalind. Eventually, Rosalind sheds her disguise and Duke Senior readily agrees to their marriage.

**The Silvius–Phoebe–Ganymede sub-plot :** The first sub-plot of the play is the Silvius–Phoebe– Ganymede complication. Silvius, a shepherd is in love with a shepherdess Phoebe who doesn't respond to his love. Ignorant of the fact that Ganymede is actually a woman by the name of Rosalind, Phoebe falls in love with Ganymede. She also sends a love-letter to Ganymede. The letter is carried by Silvius. Silvius feels hurt when he comes to know the contents of the letter. Ganymede rebukes Silvius for his servility to Phoebe who does not care for him at all. Finally Phoebe agrees to marry Silvius when Rosalind sheds her disguise.

This sub-plot is closely linked with the main plot. It does not appear as a separate story without having any connection with the main plot of Rosalind-Orlando love-affair. Through Phoebe, Silvius and Corin, Shakespeare has given a faithful description of the pastoral life. Silvius is a love-sick man, Phoebe is a country girl and through the character of Corin, Shakespeare has paid a compliment to the honest labour of a servant.

**The Touchstone-Audrey sub-plot :** Another sub-plot is that of the Touchstone's affair with a goat-herd Audrey. Audrey is a simple-minded girl who wants to be only a housewife. She decides to marry Touchstone only because he is city-bred and is superior to the man she had promised to marry earlier. This man Williams is defeated by Touchstone in the battle of wits and therefore he leaves the thought of marrying Audrey. Touchstone, on the other hand wants to marry Audrey not because of any romantic feeling for her. He simply wants a girl who can look after his needs, without demanding anything from him, a woman whom he can fondle when he wants. Audrey has all these traits. So their love affair is far from being romantic. They come close to each other due to their practical reasons for getting married to each other. Finally, they

get married the same day Rosalind and Orlando get married to each other.

**The Celia–Oliver sub–plot :** The romantic love affair of Celia and Oliver constitutes the third sub-plot of the play. This sub-plot is slightly improbable due to the suddenness with which Oliver and Celia fall in love with each other at first sight. This sub-plot is an important part of the main plot as Celia is the cousin of the heroine Rosalind and Oliver is elder brother of Orlando. Oliver undergoes a change of heart after being saved by Orlando from the attack of a lioness. He now becomes a suitable man to come closer to Celia. But this sub-plot is dealt with, in short by the dramatist. Not much space is given to the description of Oliver-Celia love affair.

**Superfluous Characters :** The above discussion however shows that although the play contains more than one plots they are closely knit and the structure of the play is not loose. All the sub-plots are significant and are intrinsically related to the main plot. There are, however, some characters who seem to be superfluous to the main plot. For instance, Touchstone, the court jester falls in love with Audrey. This sub-plot offers a prosaic version of love. The play would have been complete even if this love story had been absent and Touchstone had remained only a humorist in the story. Secondly, Jaques also sometimes seems to have no significant role in the main plot of the play. He does nothing to forward the action of the play. He is merely a contemplative character, but he has a special place in the play as a full-fledged character. His observations and comments on various issues lend depth to the play. Although these two characters namely, Touchstone, the humourist and Jaques, the cynical philosopher have no substantial role in furthering the action of the main plot, yet on the whole, they are important characters in themselves. The play would lose its humour and intensity without these characters.

**Songs in the Play :** *As You Like It* contains a number of songs. These songs are closely related to the action of the play. For instance, the two songs sung by Amiens clearly reflect the condition of Duke Senior and his comrades in the forest.

On the whole, there is no loose thread in the play. All the characters are placed where they are required at different times. Shakespeare has also made use of another strategy of comparison and contrast to lend the play a wholeness. Duke Senior and Duke Frederick are antagonists to each other. Similarly, another pair of brothers i.e.



Oliver and his youngest brother Orlando, are also found in a similar situation. They nurture strong dislike and hatred for each other. Again, Oliver undergoes a change of heart in the forest of Arden and becomes reconciled to Orlando. Similarly, Duke Frederick also gets transformed in the forest of Arden when he meets a saintly man. Love at first sight is again another common feature of all the four pairs who fall in love with each other. Then there are a number of contrasts in the play. The most striking contrast is between Celia and Rosalind. Then there is a contrast between the romantic love of Orlando and Rosalind and the practical love of Touchstone and Audrey. The artificial life of court serves as a contrast to the country life with its simplicity and honest labour. All these factors make *As You Like It*, a well-knit play from the structural point of view. The presence of so many sub-plots does not disturb the unity and beauty of the main plot of the Rosalind-Orlando love affair. Shakespeare has added some other strategies which contribute to strengthening the structure of play on the whole. In short, *As You Like It* may comfortably be termed as a close-knit play with a taut structure. In Shakespearean drama are masterpieces of dramatic craft. Whereas the opening scene gives us an insight into the forthcoming events of the play, the closing scene sums up all the conflicts either in a tragic or in a happy way. Although an entire play of Shakespeare presents his highly creative genius as a playwright, yet his opening and closing scenes come out as unforgettable pieces. Besides the main plot of Rosalind-Orlando love affair, *As You Like It* has many sub-plots. Therefore, the demands on the closing scene become all the more exacting as it needs to resolve all the fragments into one single whole in a reasonable and credible way. Shakespeare has managed to achieve this effect in a masterly manner in *As You Like It*. Even before the last scene, the indications are given that the playwright is winding up the issues that were raised during the course of the play. In Act V, Scene II, Ganymede prepares Phoebe to marry Silvius in case Phoebe doesn't marry Ganymede. In this very scene she asks Orlando, Phoebe and Silvius to be present at the time of the wedding of Aliena and Oliver the next day. They all promise to be there and it is enough of an anticipation of the final resolution being close at hand. In Act V, Scene III, Touchstone is seen telling Audrey that they are going to get married the next day. Infact, the marriage of Touchstone and Audrey is withheld from being solemnised in Act III, Scene III only because Shakespeare wants this pair to be married along with the other three pairs in the closing scene in order to heighten the effect at the end of the play. When the closing scene opens, we see

Duke Senior talking to Orlando about the efficacy of Ganymede's magic. Orlando replies that he himself is not very sure about it. Sometimes he believes it and sometimes he doesn't. Ganymede then asks the Duke if he would agree to give his daughter Rosalind in marriage to Orlando if she happens to appear before them by magic. Duke Senior promises to do so. Ganymede then reminds Duke Senior, Phoebe, Silvius and Orlando once more of their promise. Rosalind and Celia depart together. Duke Senior tells Orlando that this young man Ganymede bears a stark resemblance with his daughter Rosalind. Orlando agrees and says that he too first suspected him to be Rosalind's, brother, and also enquired about it, but Ganymede told him that he was forest born and had learnt magic from his uncle.

His revelation made Orlando change his view. Now, Touchstone and Audrey join the band and Audrey is introduced to the Duke by Touchstone in his particular humorous way. Jaques, who has already developed a liking for Touchstone enters into a witty conversation with him. In this conversation, Touchstone makes a scathing attack on the behaviour of the courtiers but in a humorous and witty manner. Duke Senior is also impressed and compliments Touchstone by saying that he is a wise fool. Meanwhile, Rosalind and Celia get enough time to shed their disguise and assume their natural self once again. At this juncture, Hymen, the God of marriage enters with his train in a masque. And now Rosalind and Celia, accompanied by God Hymen, appear in their original selves. Ganymede's magic has produced Rosalind and Celia but Ganymede and Aliena are nowhere to be seen. Phoebe discovers, with mixed feelings of amazement and disappointment that Ganymede was actually a girl by the name of Rosalind in disguise. She, however, has no other option to accept Silvius' love whose love for Phoebe is atleast pure and sincere. It is a perfect scene where no threads are left loose. There is, however, one more issue that is still unresolved, i.e. the restoration of Duke Senior to his throne so as to re-instate law and order. This is accomplished by the sudden entry of Jaques de Boys, the son of Sir Rowland de Boys. He brings the news that Duke Frederick was heading towards the forest of Arden with an intention to put an end to Duke Senior's life, but he came across a hermit on the outskirts of the forest. The Duke was influenced by this hermit's views to such an extent that he got transformed, decided to renounce this world and to spend his remaining life in the forest of Arden. This means that Duke Senior, the rightful Duke, will be reinstalled & his companions will

also get back their lost glory. Jaques, the cynical philosopher seeks an assurance from Jaques de Boys whether Duke Frederick has chosen the religious life in all sincerity and Jaques de Boys confirms it by saying — He hath. Jaques, the melancholy philosopher, declares his decision to accompany Duke Frederick as he will get enough opportunity to share philosophical ideas with Duke Frederick. Now the celebrations are made for the four pairs of couples getting married and also for the rightful re-installation of Duke Senior. The closing scene is, therefore, the most satisfying and artistically excellent scene in the play. It meets all the demands of a well-conceived, logical and agreeable ending in the play *As You Like It*.

#### **12.4 THEMES OF THE PLAY**

Love is, in fact, the main theme of the play but there are several other themes which find expression in the play—the futility of injustice, cruelty and selfishness; the triumph of love, the theme of self-reform and forgiveness. Love manifests itself in the play in many ways but the most striking kind of love is the love-at-first-sight between the pairs of opposite sex.

#### **12.5 A ROMANTIC COMEDY**

There are a number of romantic elements in the play. The theme of love is at the center of the play which in itself is a romantic subject. Orlando's intense love for Rosalind, Celia's passionate love for Oliver give a romantic touch to the play. The setting of the most part of the story is the forest of Arden and the entire atmosphere of the forest life has something romantic about it. *As You Like It* is one of the finest romantic comedies that Shakespeare has written. A romantic comedy is a play where the romantic elements are combined with comic elements. While the romantic elements thrill us, the comic elements make us laugh. The romantic elements shift us to an ideal world in which things are more pleasing than the actual world in which we live. And the comic elements make us laugh and forget our worries and anxieties. *As You Like It* contains so many characters and situations which provoke laughter although, there are sad incidents at the base of the play. Whereas Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone arouse the reader's audience's laughter by their witty remarks; Jaques amuses us with his cynical, whimsical but wise comments.

**The Mixture of Comic Elements and Sad Happenings :** The plays before Shakespeare were purely tragic or purely comic. The mixture of these two elements, either tragic and comic was not considered healthy in the ancient plays. The very mixture of the comic situations and characters with sad and serene happenings is romantic. Shakespeare has made a daring attempt to write plays in a different mould. Therefore, the description of the play as—romantic is quite justified. We have, for instance, the sad elements in *As You Like It* as the banishment of Duke Senior, the violent quarrel between Oliver and Orlando, Oliver's plan to get Orlando killed, the banishment of Rosalind for no reason at all, and many other such events. But simultaneously, we have the presence of Touchstone, the court jester, Jacques's melancholy wit, the romantic love affairs of Rosalind-Orlando, Celia-Oliver, Touchstone-Audrey and Phoebe- Silvius; the beauty of life in the forest of Arden despite its hardships; and above all the happy ending of the play - all these factors amuse the readers.

**The Theme of Love - Highly Romantic :** The play has at its centre the theme of youthful love. All the four love pairs present the same example of love-at-first-sight. Rosalind falls in love with Orlando at first sight and he too falls in love with her instantly. Rosalind gives him a chain which she had been wearing round her neck. In the forest of Arden too, we find Orlando composing verses in praise of beauty and virtue of Rosalind, hanging these verses on the branches of the trees, carving the name of Rosalind on the trunks of the trees- all these show Orlando as a passionate romantic lover of the highest order. As for Rosalind she also responds to Orlando's love in the same romantic manner. She plays the game of love with Orlando in a fantastic manner. Being herself disguised as a male by the name of Ganymede, she prepares Orlando to make love to her as if she were his own Rosalind. And the mock-wooing scene in the play is highly romantic. The love of Celia and Oliver too is a romantic affair. They too fall in love at first sight. But their love is quite sudden. Phoebe's love for Ganymede also is very romantic. She falls immediately in love with Ganymede, struck by his handsome appearance. All these are the examples of romantic love in the youthful phase. However, we have another pair, Touchstone & Audrey who present a kind of love quite different from the romantic love. Theirs is a kind of practical love based on the factors of mutual convenience of both people. But on the whole, *As You Like It* is a striking example of the romantic theme of youthful love.

**The Romantic Setting: The Forest of Arden:** The major part of the story is being set in the rural surroundings of the forest of Arden. Far from the crowds of people in the city and the shrewd and diplomatic people there, the forest of Arden presents a congenial atmosphere for the feelings of love to flourish. As Duke Senior says, one may have to face rough weather and icy winds, but there is no place for hypocrisy here in the forest of Arden. And that is the reason why the passion of love gets enough scope to grow here. Orlando's passion for Rosalind, Rosalind's passion for Orlando, Phoebe's passion for Ganymede, Celia's passion—all these find a proper atmosphere to mature. The pastoral element also heightens the romantic quality of the play.

**Romantic Friendship :** The element of romance is found not only in the persons of opposite sex, but there is something very touching about the beauty of relationship between Celia and Rosalind; and between Adam and Orlando too. Celia's love for Rosalind is very special in nature. She cannot stand the separation with Rosalind. When Duke Frederick passes an order of banishment for Rosalind, Celia defends her cousin and tells her father that she and Rosalind have slept together, risen from bed together, studied together, played together, eaten together, and gone everywhere together and therefore, if Rosalind is a traitor, why is she spared. She is as much a traitor as Rosalind is. It is Celia who offers to go with Rosalind into exile. Such affection is really touching. Similarly, there is something romantic about the loyalty & devotion of Adam to Orlando. Adam suggests Orlando to quit the house of his brother Oliver at once as his life there was in danger because of Oliver's plan to put an end to Orlando's life. Again, Adam places his whole life's savings at Orlando's hands and also offers to accompany him anywhere. Such devotion is also very moving.

**The Three Dramatic Unities Not Observed :** The ancient classical plays recommended that an authentic play should observe the three unities - of time, place and action. The unity of time demands that the play should cover not more than twenty four hours; the unity of place demands that the entire action of the play should occur in the same town; the unity of action demands that the play should have a single plot. Shakespeare has violated all these conditions. *As You Like It* is a romantic play from this perspective also. *As You Like It*, therefore is lightly termed as a romantic comedy which appeals greatly to our emotions, imagination and our faculty of laughter.

## 12.6 COMIC ELEMENTS IN THE PLAY

Although the play begins on a note of sadness due to the banishment of the rightful Duke and also because of the treatment that Orlando receives at the hands of his brother Oliver, the play ends on a happy note. A happy ending is one of the essentials of a comedy. A comedy must have the events which produce laughter and laughter is produced by the means of wit and humour. Rosalind is perhaps Shakespeare's wittiest heroine. Some of her remarks are most amusing and brilliant. Celia too is a witty woman, always ready with her humorous remarks. Then, of course, we have Touchstone, who offers witty and laughable comments over various matters. Touchstone pokes fun at everything and everybody.

There is rich comedy in the scenes which are characterised by irony. For instance, Orlando's mock-wooing of Rosalind when we know that Ganymede whom Orlando thinks to be a young man is actually Rosalind herself in disguise. A similar irony is to be found in Phoebe's love with Ganymede. Another instance of amusement in the play is the Touchstone-Audrey love affair which is a parody of the romantic love affairs Rosalind and Orlando, Celia and Oliver. Indeed, *As You Like It* is rich in laughter and comic elements.

**One of the brightest comedies by Shakespeare :** A comedy is a form of drama which presents a major chunk of events in a pleasant, joyous and light-hearted manner. It may begin with some sad and serious happenings but in the end all the conflicts are resolved and we have happy ending. *As You Like It* is one of Shakespeare's most brilliant comedies and offers tremendous entertainment and amusement to the readers. The playwright has introduced the elements of wit and humour in characters and incidents to make it one of the most lovable of his comedies.

**The Healthy Wit of Rosalind and Celia :** Rosalind and Celia shine apart in *As You Like It* for their excellent wit and intelligent remarks. Their comments are intelligent as well as amusing. Wit generally consists of making amusing remarks which may be ironical, satirical, sarcastic or simply playful. Not only Rosalind and Celia but almost all the characters of *As You Like It* make a masterly use of this weapon of wit. Even the irony and satire do not appear pungent because they are covered in the mask of wit. As the play opens, we find Rosalind in a sad mood because of the unjust banishment

of her father by her uncle Duke Frederick, but soon she cheers up when assured by her cousin Celia. The conversation between the two cousins offers an insight into their wit. First of all they start talking about the topic of love. Celia is of the opinion that one should take love merely as a game. It should not be taken seriously and a girl should not fall in love so deeply as to earn her a bad name. Then they change the topic and start talking about lady fortune who is unfair in distributing her gifts—Rosalind agrees to this and says that lady fortune is blind and she is unfair especially towards women. Celia observes that if lady fortune gifts a woman with beauty, she takes away chastity from her, and if a woman is chaste, she is generally ugly. Rosalind disagrees and says that the gifts of lady fortune should be separated from the gifts of Nature. Beauty is a gift of Nature while chastity is a gift of lady fortune. Rosalind gives an example of her outstanding wit when she tells Orlando, at a later stage, that time passes at different speed with different people. We have then the memorable lines from Rosalind—Men are April when they woo, December when they wed. Maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives. These lines are an excellent example of Rosalind's wit and humour. Infact, Celia's mind is very sharp and she is always ready with intelligent remarks. The forest of Arden gives Rosalind and Celia a right atmosphere to display their wit and gaiety. When Rosalind wants to know the identity of the man who has written so many verses in praise of her, Celia wittily remarks that this gentleman wears round his neck a chain which Rosalind herself used to wear at one time. She then says that there may be mountains separating two lovers but that these mountains can be removed by an earthquake so that the lovers are able to meet each other. There are many more such examples. It is noteworthy that there is no malice or bitterness in Celia's remarks. These remarks rather reveal her good sense and humour. They are examples of healthy wit. Similarly, Rosalind's dialogues with Orlando when she is disguised as Ganymede are also finest examples of her wit and sense of humour. Her detailed description of how time passes at different speed with different people bear a testimony to her sharp mental faculties. She says that with a maiden, time passes very slowly between her betrothal and marriage. Contrary to this, time passes easily and comfortably with a priest and also with a rich man. Her description of a lover is also very amusing. A lover, she says, is supposed to be lean and thin, with sunken eyes, and a neglected beard. His sleeve buttons are untied, his shoe is untied and his stockings are ungartered. When Orlando says that he will die if he fails to win Rosalind, Rosalind

wittily remarks that – Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love.

**The Professional Wit of Touchstone:** We have in the play the professional wit of Touchstone who is a motley fool at Duke Frederick's court. Throughout the play are spread his ironical and satirical remarks which he unsparingly passes on everybody. Towards the end of the play we have his excellent comments on the behaviour of the courtiers when he tries to assure Duke Senior that he himself was at one time a courtier. In his second speech, he describes that – if is a very useful word and can be used to avoid a quarrel between two persons. Duke Senior also compliments Touchstone on his wisdom.

**The Cynical Wit of Jaques :** Jaques too is a witty character but in a very different sense. His wit is not a healthy wit as it is dominated by melancholy. Over the years, he has developed a sense of disgust with mankind in general. He regards Duke Senior as a usurper as he kills the deer in the forest, their natural abode. He remarks that in this respect Duke Senior is no better than his brother Duke Frederick. After listening to Amien's song in which he utters praise of the forest life, he comments that those who choose to live in forest are fools as they deprive themselves of the comforts of the court life. After having met Touchstone, he strongly feels that he too will like to wear motley clothes like him as it will give him an opportunity to satirise the vices and follies of the people around him. Jaques' speech about the seven stages of human life is also cynical. He again shows his cynicism by saying that Orlando's worst fault is that he has fallen in love. Another example of his cynicism is when he tells Orlando that he doesn't like the name Rosalind. Infact, in all his speeches he displays a sharp wit but all this also shows his bitterness and cynicism of mind. Therefore, although he is a witty fellow, yet he has a cynical wit and not a healthy wit. Jaques' decision to join Duke Frederick at the end of the play is the final proof of his cynicism.

**The Comic Situations :** Not only the characters display a sharp wit which is the source of comedy, but the comic situations also make the play replete with humour. Infact irony is at work in so many situations which arouse laughter and amuse the readers. For instance, everyone knows Ganymede as a young man, but actually Ganymede is Rosalind in disguise. It is most ironical that even Duke Senior



fails to recognise his daughter, Rosalind in the guise of Ganymede. When Orlando woos Ganymede, he does not know that he is wooing the very woman he loves. Equally amusing is Phoebe's falling in love with Ganymede. Therefore Rosalind's disguise as a young man is a constant source of amusement for us. All these factors contribute to make *As You Like It* a delightful comedy, a pleasure to watch and read.

### ACTIVITY I

#### Fill in the Blanks:

1. A happy ending is one of the essential features of a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Rosalind is considered Shakespeare's \_\_\_\_\_ heroine due to her clever remarks.
3. The character who constantly mocks people and situations with witty remarks is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The comic love affair between Touchstone and \_\_\_\_\_ is a parody of romantic love.
5. In the Forest of Arden, Rosalind disguises herself as \_\_\_\_\_.

## 12.7 SOCIAL, MORAL AND SPIRITUAL ASPECT OF THE PLAY

Shakespeare's plays are rich in observations and reflections on men and matters. *As You Like It* is at once romantic and philosophical. The play is rich in social, moral and spiritual import and pearls of wisdom lie scattered throughout. It is a comedy which is critical in nature. Both follies and vices are exposed. Criticism is unsparing. Both the court and even Arden, the place of spiritual refreshment, are criticized. Arden is the home of the shepherd Corin's master who is a man of churlish disposition and little rocks to find the way to heaven by doing deeds of hospitality. Touchstone is a character who criticizes both Arden and the court— "I have trod a measure; I have flattered a lady; I have been politic with my friend, smooth with mine enemy: I have undone three tailors; I have had four quarrels."

The story of *As You Like It* is all fun and joy but the various characters, under the guise of humour, convey their view and criticism of life and affairs. Touchstone is the

comic or playful critic of life. His penetrating remarks offer an insight into life. He satirizes and ridicules life, country life, romantic love and marriage etc. Jaques is another critic of life and his criticism is serious and melancholy. He finds faults everywhere and censures everything. Jaques laments injustice, callousness and misery in the world. The heroine of the play, Rosalind, is a critic of life in several ways. Her criticism appears in her excellent witty remarks: "Men are April when they woo, December when they wed; Maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives" Thus the play presents an unflattering picture of human life and world. It is certainly not a perfect world.

Brothers are sworn enemies, evil flourishes, and even the forest of Arden is not an Elysium or a perfectly happy place. What should be one's approach and strategy of survival in such a world? Certainly not Escapism but Acceptance. One has to fight it

out. Most of the characters return from Forest of Arden, purified, to resume their duty and life in city. In Shakespearean scheme of things acceptance of co-existence of good and evil seems to be the right choice. Duke's famous speech – "Sweet are the uses of Adversity" reveals a positive outlook which must be cultivated and maintained in all circumstances. Alongwith acceptance, the play also endorses the theme of reconciliation and forgiveness. Duke Frederick's change of heart, Oliver's transformation and reconciliation between the brothers, Phoebe's union with Silvius-all these are endorsements of this very theme. Thus, the play presents a playful criticism of life. This criticism is woven into the plot and implied in wit and humour. However, Shakespeare goes beyond this criticism and endorses acceptance, forgiveness and reconciliation. However, the play has no explicit didacticism, moral design or statement of themes. At the end of the play, the reader is a wiser person, without his even being aware of it, and that is the achievement of Shakespeare.

## **12.8 THE PASTORAL CHARACTER OF THE PLAY**

*As You Like It* has a pastoral setting. The major portion of the play takes place in the forest of Arden inhabited by sheep, shepherds, shepherdesses, goat-herds and the like. But the pastoral element is emphasised by the presence of three characters namely Corin, Silvius and Phoebe. It is through these three characters that the necessary atmosphere, manners and ways of pastoral life have been portrayed faithfully.

## **12.9 A MUSICAL COMEDY**

*As You Like It* contains a number of songs. These songs undoubtedly add to the entertainment value of the drama. Besides, the songs in *As You Like It* are closely related to the themes of the play and have been used to reinforce the main idea of the play. Two of the songs –Under the greenwood tree and – Blow, blow, thou winter wind are sung by Amiens, a lord attending upon Duke Senior. These two songs make a considerable contribution in highlighting the theme of injustice, cruelty, usurpation, the spirit of endurance, and sacrifice in man etc. The finest of all songs in the play is the one sung by the two Pages of Duke Senior: –It was a lover and his lass. Due to the prolific use of songs, *As You Like It* may be regarded as a musical comedy.



## **12.10 LIST OF CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY WITH THEIR BRIEF PARTICULARS**

**Senior Duke or the Banished Duke :** The Senior Duke is the banished Duke for he has been robbed of his dukedom by his younger brother Frederick who has assumed control as a duke. The Senior Duke has shifted to the Forest of Arden where he lives in exile with close associates and followers who have chosen to leave the court in sympathy with him. Rosalind is the Senior Duke's daughter. She has chosen to live in company with Frederick's daughter, Celia, who is Rosalind's cousin and a very close friend.

**Duke Frederick:** Duke Frederick is the Senior Duke's younger brother who has grabbed the authority from his elder brother. He is cruel-hearted and arrogant. He expels not merely the Senior Duke but also his daughter Rosalind. Even Frederick's own daughter Celia feels ashamed of the evil nature of her father.

Later Frederick meets a mysterious priest and undergoes a sudden change of heart. He renounces the court and takes his place in the Forest of Arden, enabling the Senior Duke to assume his legitimate authority.

**Oliver de Boys:** Sir Rowland de Boys' elder son and heir is Oliver de Boys, referred to in the play as Oliver. His father, the lord, is now dead but in his will he has left instructions regarding the management of his property in the interest of his sons. Oliver, being the eldest, has been instructed to look after his two younger brothers in keeping with the high traditions of the family. However, Oliver discriminates against Orlando. When Orlando seeks to enforce his rights as per the will, Oliver fights with his younger brother. Oliver cannot overpower Orlando and therefore he engages a professional wrestler Charles to engage Orlando in a duel and tear his body to pieces. However, he falls in love with Celia when he enters the Forest of Arden in pursuit of Orlando. From this moment onwards, he is a changed man who repents and seeks to make amends. Right at the outset the dialogue between Oliver and Orlando resulting in a quarrel reveals much about the nature of Oliver as well as Orlando. Oliver comes out as an unfavourable, negative character. He is envious of his younger brother Orlando. As Orlando confides in his loyal servant Adam, Oliver is treating Orlando shabbily. Their father, late Sir Rowland de Boys had

entrusted Oliver with the responsibility of looking after Orlando's upbringing and education and had also bequeathed a certain amount of money to Orlando. Oliver had refused to give any money to Orlando and at the same time been neglecting Orlando's education. As Oliver enters on the scene, there is a quarrel between the two brothers which reveals Oliver's jealous and wicked nature.

**His plot Against Orlando's Life :** Later, when Orlando and Adam leave after the violent quarrel, Oliver, in a monologue, confesses that he is jealous of Orlando. Orlando is well-cultured and well-informed despite being uneducated, and he is also loved by all. Oliver's dislike for Orlando goes to such an extent that he makes plans to put an end to Orlando's life. First he conspires against Orlando by appointing the court wrestler Charles to break Orlando's bones and if possible, to kill him on the spot. When this plan fails and Orlando beats Charles in the wrestling match, Oliver makes another plan to kill Orlando. He intends to set fire to the lodging where Orlando sleeps every night and thus burn Orlando to death. It is the vigilance and integrity of Adam, the loyal old servant that saves Orlando from Oliver's devilish scheme. Here we really form an opinion of Oliver as a villain. A man planning the murder of his youngest brother is no less than the devil himself in human shape. He, however, gets what he deserves. Duke Frederick banishes Oliver from his court and asks him to produce Orlando before him as early as possible. Duke is not ready to listen to any logic given by him in his defence. Oliver defends himself by saying that he does not know the whereabouts of his brother Orlando and that he has never had any affection for him. At this Duke Frederick becomes all the more infuriated and orders that all his property be forfeited.

**Oliver's Love for Aliena :** We next meet Oliver when having nowhere to go he too strays into the forest of Arden. Here he is saved by Orlando from the attack of a hungry lioness. This incident brings a drastic change in Oliver's personality. He reconciles with his brother Orlando and is also full of repentance for his past doings. Soon afterwards, Oliver falls in love with Aliena i.e., Celia at first sight. Celia too gets attracted towards him and both decide to get married. This is a significant development which confirms Oliver as a completely transformed man, worthy of Celia's love. Through this conversion and relation, Shakespeare also reinforces the theme of forgiveness in the play. In the opening scene, it is Oliver's conversation with Charles which gives us information of the series of happening which are not directly enacted on the stage.

We come to know through this conversation about the banishment of Duke Senior by his younger brother Duke Frederick. We further come to learn that Duke Senior has gone into exile with some of his loyal lords, and that the banished Duke's daughter Rosalind has not been banished along with her father to keep company with Celia, Duke Frederick's daughter. Oliver is important to the plot of the play as it is only due to his evil designs that Orlando is compelled to quit the city and go to the forest of Arden which gives the love-affair of Rosalind and Orlando a full chance to flourish. Thus, this coincidence brings the two lovers together. The main plot could not move forward if Orlando was not made to go to the forest of Arden. From this point of view, therefore, Oliver plays an essential role. Oliver also offers a parallel to Duke Frederick who too has treated his brother Duke Senior with the same callousness. Oliver offers a parallel to Duke Senior in another way also. Both Oliver and Duke Frederick subsequently undergo a transformation. Oliver is filled with remorse and repentance when he finds that his life has been saved by the same brother whom he had tried to kill. So, he sheds all his hatred for Orlando. Duke Frederick, who had come to the forest of Arden to put an end to Duke Senior's life, likewise undergoes a great change after he has met a saintly kind of man in the forest. This brings a revolution in Duke Frederick's life and he sheds all craving for power and self. Finally, Oliver serves as a means of introducing another sub-plot into the play. The Celia-Oliver love-affair reinforces the theme of love at first sight in the play. Oliver, therefore, occupies an important place in the scheme of the play. Through Oliver Shakespeare suggests the possibility of transformation of a villain into a noble person - the transformation that love and forgiveness can bring.

**Orlando de Boys :** Orlando is the younger son of Sir Rowland de Boys who is given an unfair treatment by his elder brother, Oliver. Orlando runs away from the conspiring atmosphere of the court when under Oliver's instigation, Charles, a professional wrestler, attempts to kill him. In the forest, he pursues his lady-love Rosalind and seeks to woo and win her as a beloved.

**Jaques de Boys:** Jaques de Boys is another son of the late lord Sir Rowland de Boys. He is younger to Oliver but elder to Orlando. Oliver treats him well but does not attend to Orlando's well-being. Jaques de Boys appears in the play only towards the close when he brings the happy news of the Duke Frederick's change of heart and of his leaving the court to pass his days in the Forest of Arden in repentance. Orlando is

a significant character in the play who enjoys the stature almost equal to Rosalind. He wins our sympathy and admiration at the beginning of the play. His account of his wretched condition due to the unjust treatment meted out to him by his eldest brother Oliver. We come to know through his speech that his father had left the responsibility of Orlando's education and proper upbringing to Oliver. The father had also left certain amount of money for Orlando, but Oliver has not fulfilled his duties towards Orlando.

Then, there is some quarrel between the two brothers. All through this, we find that Orlando is a noble minded and cultured person despite being uneducated. Later, Orlando wins more of our sympathy when Rosalind and Celia dissuade him from taking part in the wrestling match and he says that he has nobody to mourn his death, even if he gets killed in the wrestling match.

**His Sense of Self-Respect:** Duke Frederick's ill-treatment of Orlando, after learning that Orlando is the son of the late Sir Rowland de Boys, comes as a great shock to Orlando. Duke Frederick takes Sir Rowland as his enemy and he remarks that he wished Orlando to be some other man's son. At this Orlando answers that he is proud to be Sir Rowland's son and he would not like to change his paternity even to become Duke Frederick's adopted heir. This shows his sense of great self-respect.

**His Love For Rosalind:** His love for Rosalind is immensely pure, romantic and also passionate in nature. Having reached the forest of Arden, he gives a free play to his feelings for Rosalind. He writes verses in praise of Rosalind's beauty and virtues. He hangs these verses on the branches of the trees and carves the name of his beloved on the trunks of the trees. Here we are also introduced to Orlando's poetic talent. Although his education has been neglected by his brother Oliver, yet Orlando is seen as not entirely uneducated. His verses clearly show his wide knowledge of history and mythology.

**His response to Adam's Loyalty:** Adam informs Orlando about Oliver's plan to put an end to Orlando's life by putting on fire the room where he (Orlando) sleeps. He suggests to his master that he should no longer stay in that house. Orlando expresses his helplessness as he has no money with him and he has nowhere to go. At this, Adam puts his whole life's savings in Orlando's hands and also offers to accompany him wherever he decides to go. It is Adam again who suggests Orlando to take refuge in the forest of Arden. Orlando gratefully accepts Adam's offer and expresses his extreme



gratitude by saying that Adam's character ranks much higher than that of most people of these times when nobody is prepared to work hard for their masters. He further says that people in the modern times work hard only to gain promotion, and once getting promoted, they stop giving their services to those through whom they had gained promotion.

This shows that Orlando is not a thankless fellow. When the two reach the Forest of Arden, Orlando goes to the extent of attacking Duke Senior with sword to obtain food for starving Adam. In Orlando's own words he is a 'doe' who would like to feed 'fawn' (Adam) first.

**His Courage :** Orlando gives an evidence of his daring nature when he enters Duke Senior's camp to demand food for the starving Adam. Orlando is indebted to Adam and would not let him die at any cost. With his drawn sword, he bursts into the gathering and warns them against touching their food till the hungry old man is well fed. Orlando, quite contrary to his expectations, is welcomed by Duke Senior who asks him to bring the old man so that Adam can have his food. In this way Orlando reveals his fearless and courageous nature.

**His Forgiving Nature :** We become aware of the forgiving nature of Orlando when he saves his brother Oliver from the attack of a lioness. Twice Orlando thought of turning his back upon the sleeping Oliver but twice his innate kindness had overcome his desire for revenge. Oliver is the one who is responsible for the present condition of Orlando and he has also showed his utter meanness of character by plotting Orlando's death yet Orlando shows his magnanimity and nobility of spirit in saving the life of such a brother.

**Quick at Repartee :** Orlando's encounter with Jaques shows that Orlando is quick at repartee. When Jaques says that they should meet as little as they can in future, Orlando answers : "I do desire we may be better strangers." When Jaques says that Orlando should not mar the trees by writing love songs on their bark, Orlando says that Jaques should not mar his verses by reading them in a wrong manner. In this way, the battle of wits between both of them goes on. But, Orlando certainly lags behind Rosalind so far as the conversational skill is concerned. In his meetings with Rosalind in the forest of Arden, Rosalind definitely outsmarts him. To sum up, we can remark that with all

these qualities, Orlando can very conveniently be taken as the hero of the play, despite the fact that Rosalind outshines him in every respect. If Rosalind is the heroine of the play, he stands almost at par with her and proves himself to be a proper contestant for winning her love.

**Rosalind :** She is the daughter of the Senior Duke who is living in exile. Her uncle, Duke Frederick expels her also. Celia, Duke Frederick's daughter also accompanies her cousin Rosalind. Rosalind puts on a male disguise and carries the name of Ganymede. She herself falls in love with Orlando but engages with him in a witty exchange by asking him to rehearse what he would have said to Rosalind. Rosalind is dressed as Ganymede and she asks Orlando to talk to Ganymede as if Ganymede were Rosalind. Later, she practises a similar strategy with Phoebe who has foolishly fallen in love with Ganymede. Rosalind asks Phoebe to allow Silvius to plead to Phoebe on Ganymede's behalf. Afterwards she removes all confusion by appearing in her normal dress as Rosalind. This forces Phoebe to accept Silvius' love, bringing a happy ending to their affair. Rosalind enjoys the status of being one of the most brilliant and lovable heroines in the whole corpus of Shakespeare's plays. She possesses the qualities of head as well as heart and she is portrayed in a convincing manner by Shakespeare. She dominates the whole play and represents a vibrant and dynamic personality. Her zest for life and her brilliant wit are simply remarkable. She is the most vividly drawn character in the play. In spite of her sharp mental faculties, her beauty and virtue, she is a humble and noble soul. All these traits make her a lovable character.

**Her Dignity Even in the Mood of Sadness :** When we first meet Rosalind, she is in a sad mood due to the banishment of her father Duke Senior. But when her cousin Celia tries to cheer her up, she soon agrees to come out of her melancholic mood in order to share Celia's happiness. Then we find Rosalind entering into an amusing dialogue with Celia when they exchange witty jokes about lady fortune who is most unfair and partial in distributing her gifts to women. Rosalind's natural gaiety returns and she displays a capability to forget her worries and maintain a balanced and dignified posture even in the midst of her anxieties and tensions.

**Her Sympathetic Nature :** Later in the same scene, Rosalind meets Orlando and falls in love with him at first sight. Contrary to the expectations of Duke Frederick and

all other audience, Orlando wins the wrestling bout from the professional wrestler Charles. On learning that Orlando is the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys, his enemy, Duke Frederick gets annoyed and does not give any reward to Orlando. Rosalind, takes off a chain from her neck and gives it to Orlando as a token of her appreciation of his boldness, courage and manhood. This throws light on her basic sympathetic nature.

**Her Brilliant and Sparkling Wit :** Rosalind is one of the most witty and intelligent of Shakespeare's heroines. She is packed with knowledge and noble ideas and her sense of confidence is simply commendable. Her mental faculties reveal themselves at their best when she arrives in the forest of Arden. Seeing the verses written in her praise on the branches of the trees, she tells Celia she had never been so rhymed since the time of the Greek philosopher Pythagoras when she used to be an Irish rat. She presses upon Celia to reveal the name of the writer of verses to her as she can wait no longer. She expresses her impatience in the following witty manner : “One inch of delay more is a South Sea of discovery.” She then compares the mouth of Celia to the mouth of a corked bottle, and says that Celia should take off the cork from her mouth and should let the name of the author come out so that she may drink the tidings as one drinks the wine coming from a narrow-mouthed bottle. Rosalind displays her brilliant and sparkling wit in her encounter with Orlando. For instance, she tells Orlando that time passes at different speeds with different people. Time passes very slowly with a young maiden between her betrothal and marriage. On the other hand, time passes very comfortably with a priest who does not know latin and also with a rich man who is not suffering from gout. Time passes very quickly for a thief who is to be hanged. This description of time by Rosalind is not only amusing but convincing also. Her description of the appearance of a lover is equally amusing. A lover, she says, is supposed to have a lean cheek, sunken eyes, and a neglected beard. A lover's stockings are ungartered, his bonnet is unbanded, his sleeve is unbuttoned and his shoe is untied. In other words, she means to say that a lover is a true picture of desolation. All this while, Rosalind has the obvious advantage of being disguised as a man. In the scene of Orlando's mock-wooing of Rosalind, she further shows her ready wit. Two of the several witty remarks she makes in this scene are particularly noteworthy. She tells Orlando that the world is almost six thousand years old but in all this time, no man has ever died for the sake of love. She

gives the example of Troilus and Cressida. Her second memorable remark in this scene is: — “Men are April when they woo, December when they wed. Maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives”. And then she goes on to describe how she would behave in a whimsical manner as a wife so that her husband would feel entirely fed up with her. Indeed, Rosalind here mocks at the eccentric behaviour of women in a most amusing manner, and shows her talent for satire. In her encounter with Jaques too, she gives an example of her excellent wit. She tells Jaques that being a traveller, he has every reason to feel sad. He must have sold his own lands to see other men's land; and to have seen much and to have nothing, is to have rich eyes and poor hands.

**Her Toughness :** Rosalind's intervention in the Silvius-Phoebe love-affair shows not only her wit, but also the tough side of her nature. She feels so very upset by Phoebe's callous attitude towards Silvius that she intervenes and rebukes both Phoebe and Silvius. She tells Phoebe that she has no right to insult such a sincere lover like Silvius. She scolds Silvius for being too servile to Phoebe. Eventually, she brings about Silvius' union with Phoebe.

**Her Sharp Brain :** She gives an evidence of her sharp brain in her successful execution of the role of a man by the name of Ganymede. Even when Orlando doubts Ganymede to have some resemblance with Rosalind, she says she was forest-born and has learnt magic from her uncle. Her idea of bringing Rosalind face to face with Orlando is also an evidence of her creative mind.

**Her Womanliness :** She has not only intelligence and wit, but also feminine beauty and grace. Despite playing the role of a man, she can't forget even for a moment the woman in her. In every action her womanliness manifests itself. Her love for Celia is also unique in itself.

To sum up, Rosalind possesses all the endearing qualities of a great heroine. She displays outstanding qualities of head and heart and remains in the minds and hearts of readers as a witty and lovable female character.

## ACTIVITY II

### True/False

1. Orlando is the elder son of Sir Rowland de Boys.
2. Oliver treats Orlando unfairly and tries to kill him through a wrestler named Charles.
3. Jaques de Boys is the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys.
4. Orlando shows great courage by demanding food for Adam in Duke Senior's camp.

**Celia :** Celia is the daughter of Frederick, the reigning Duke. She considers Rosalind, her cousin, the Senior Duke's daughter, as inseparable from her. When Celia's

father expels Rosalind from his court, Celia also accompanies her against the wishes of her father. She, being frail and small, puts on a rustic dress and assumes the name of Aliena for the security purpose as they go to the Forest of Arden. Aliena, i.e., Celia in her 'mean disguise' teases Rosalind for her new found love for Orlando. Celia is the second leading female character in the play *As You Like It*. The most striking facet of Celia's character is her deep attachment to Rosalind. When Rosalind is in a melancholic mood on account of her father's banishment, it is Celia who cheers up Rosalind. She also gives an assurance to Rosalind that after the death of her father Duke Frederick, she (Celia), being the only heir to his empire, would restore to Rosalind what her father has taken from Rosalind's father by force. There is a perfect understanding between the two cousins. When Duke Frederick passes an order for the banishment of Rosalind, it is Celia who comes to Rosalind's defence. Celia reminds her father that she and Rosalind have slept together, risen at the same time, learned together, played together, eaten together and gone everywhere together. She categorically tells her father that she cannot live without Rosalind. It is again Celia who offers to go with Rosalind into exile and suggests that they should change their respective appearances. In making this suggestion Celia shows her practical wisdom.

**Her Sympathetic Nature :** Like her cousin Rosalind, Celia too has very sympathetic nature. This becomes evident when she dissuades Orlando from participating in the wrestling contest with Charles who is a man of immense physical strength. She reminds Orlando that Charles had already broken the ribs of three contestants in the wrestling match. She wishes him good luck, when she sees Orlando determined to take part in the match. She says the most sympathetic words to him by wishing that she would like to add her own strength to Orlando's in order to increase his fighting spirit. She also becomes highly upset when her father refuses to give Orlando any reward for his bravery.

**Her Merry Disposition :** Celia, like Rosalind, has a jovial nature. She is seen talking in a light-hearted and merry manner. She is always ready with amusing remarks. Her views about lady fortune who distributes her gifts among women unfairly are quite amusing. She says that if lady fortune bestows beauty upon a woman, she doesn't give her the gift of chastity and if lady fortune gives chastity to a woman, she withholds the gift of beauty from her. Later in the play, we get more evidence of Celia's witty

disposition. She is not at all sorry for leaving the palace and going to forest with Rosalind. And when, one day, she finds verses pinned to a tree praising Rosalind for her beauty and virtue, she gives even more free play to her wit and cheerfulness. It is quite noteworthy that she is not at all jealous of Rosalind. This trait of her character deserves highest praise. When Rosalind impatiently enquires from her the identity of her lover, she wittingly remarks that the writer of these verses wears round his neck the same chain that Rosalind used to wear at one time. She says that there may be mountains separating two lovers but these mountains can be removed by an earthquake so that the lovers may meet each other.

**Her Talent for Prompt and Ready Answers :** Celia has a talent for retorts. She is always ready with quick answers. When Rosalind says that she feels like weeping because Orlando has not come, Celia replies that men do not shed tears. When Rosalind says Orlando's kissing is holy, Celia replies that Orlando's kisses are even more religious than those of a nun. Celia makes perhaps the wittiest remark when she says that Orlando may not be a pickpocket or a horse-thief, but as a lover, he is certainly as empty as a cup covered with a lid.

**Her Romantic Temperament :** Celia has a romantic temperament like Rosalind. She not only enjoys her cousin's love for Orlando, but she herself falls in love with Oliver at first sight. Her falling in love is quite sudden and unexpected. Rosalind recalls Julius Ceaser's words: "I came, I saw, and overcame". By this time Oliver is also a changed man and his liaison with Celia is not intriguing.

**Her Importance in the Play :** Celia is very important to the structure of the play. Although it is Rosalind and Orlando's love-affair which occupies the central place in the play but Celia too provides the play a natural verve and vitality. Celia possesses all the good qualities of Rosalind though to a lesser degree. In all the scenes where she appears she heightens the interest and appeal of the play. She is always present with Rosalind, adds to the dramatic effect, is always brimming with suggestive ideas, and takes hold of the situation. Therefore, Celia is an important character in the play. She lends a wholeness to the play and attracts the readers and viewers by her good sense of humour, simple-mindedness and jovial nature.

**Duke Frederick :** In the very first scene of the play, we learn from the court

wrestler Charles that Duke Frederick has banished his brother Duke Senior who has gone into exile with a few of his loyal comrades who have voluntarily accompanied him. In other words, we learn that Duke Frederick is usurper who has illegally usurped his elder brother's dominions and become the ruler. Thus, at the very outset, we form a most unfavourable opinion about Duke Frederick.

**His Cruelty and Wickedness :** We meet Duke Frederick in person when he comes to witness the wrestling match between the court wrestler Charles and his challenger. Orlando, contrary to the expectations of Duke Frederick, Rosalind, Celia and all other audience, wins the match. When Duke Frederick comes to know that Orlando is the youngest son of late Sir Rowland de Boys, who he considers to be his enemy, Duke gets infuriated and refuses to present any reward to Orlando for his chivalry. This shows the basic callousness of his nature.

**Frederick's Irrational Banishment of Rosalind:** Our dislike for Duke Frederick deepens when he suddenly passes a sentence of banishment against Rosalind. Without any prior warning or notice, he tells Rosalind that if within the next ten days she does not remove herself from his court to a distance of atleast twenty miles, she would be put to death. When Rosalind asks the reason for this sudden decision of Duke Frederick, he replies that he does not trust her because she is the daughter of the man whom he regarded as a traitor. When Celia, Duke Frederick's daughter, pleads to her father to change his decision, he tells her that her merits and virtues, would be recognised by people only when Rosalind is not there. Celia can't think of winning the hearts of people as long as Rosalind remains at court. Duke Frederick may justly be regarded as the chief villain in the play. A lesser villain is, of course, Oliver who has treated his brother in almost the same manner in which Duke Frederick has treated his own brother.

**The Action taken by Frederick against Oliver:** In the meantime two significant developments take place. Rosalind and Celia are missing from the court and Orlando has also left the city because of the threat to his life from his elder brother Oliver. Now it is seriously doubted that Orlando has accompanied the ladies and has helped them in their escapade. The Duke, therefore, summons Orlando's brother Oliver and puts him to thorough interrogation. Duke doubts that Oliver has helped his brother to flee from the city, and Oliver knows about their whereabouts. But on learning that Oliver nurtured



hatred for his brother Orlando, he becomes even more angry. He orders his officials to push Oliver out of his court and to seize his entire property. This incident also shows Duke Frederick to be a wicked as well as a foolish man.

**The Transformation of His Character at the End:** Finally, towards the end of the play we learn that Duke Frederick who had actually come to the forest of Arden to put an end to Duke Senior's life, has come across a saintly kind of man and has fallen under his influence. Duke Frederick now decides to renounce the worldly life and spend the rest of his days in the forest as a hermit. This is certainly a welcome change. Through him Shakespeare reinforces the theme that goodness and kindness are much more powerful than evil and jealousy. Shakespeare also seems to convey the message that such transformations do take place in real life and there are examples in history to serve as an evidence of this fact.

**Jaques :** He is referred to as "the melancholy Jaques" because he is always harping on the dark aspects of life. The famous speech, "All the world is a stage and all the men and women merely players" sums up his philosophy of life. The Senior Duke refers to his libertine nature also. Jaques is so much given to contemplative nature that he chooses to stay on in the jungle to give company to Duke Frederick who shifts to the Forest from the court as a measure of repentance.

**Phoebe :** The play introduces her in the list of characters as "a shepherdess". She is a rustic woman of ordinary charm but she has a very high impression of herself. Therefore she scorns a sincere lover like Silvius and runs after Ganymede who is none other than Rosalind in disguise. It is only towards the close that she realizes her immaturity and turns to Silvius for love.

**Silvius :** He is a shepherd, simple, sincere, noble-hearted and devoted. He is in love with Phoebe, a rustic girl but she scorns his love and treats him as a mere toy. Ganymede, i.e., Rosalind in male attire chides him for his simplicity, nay foolishness. It is through Ganymede's intervention that Phoebe is ultimately brought round to appreciate Silvius' love, sincerity and dedication to her.

**Corin :** Corin is another character from the rustic world of the Forest of Arden. He is old and he has to work hard under a cruel and demanding master. He helps

Rosalind and Celia by helping them buy shelter and food in the jungle.

**William :** William is another countryfellow. He is in love with Audrey and therefore he is Touchstone's rival in winning Audrey's love. William is the butt of Touchstone's courtly wit who holds him to ridicule, causing much mirth and laughter.

**Audrey :** She is a country wench – presentable and young. She is no match to Rosalind or Celia in wit or charm. But her being a young woman is enough for a lover like Touchstone. Audrey, in a way, represents an earthy version of womanly beauty and charm.

**Adam :** He is an old family retainer who sides with Orlando and sympathizes with him when Oliver ill-treats his younger brother. Adam stands for the values of loyalty, devotion, faithfulness and commitment.

**Sir Oliver Martext :** He is a vicar in the countryside adjoining the Forest of Arden who solemnizes Touchstone's marriage with Audrey. But he has been given a comic treatment in the play.

**Hymen :** Hymen is the traditional God of marriage, love and procreation. In a masque or stage-show, the God appears in person to join the lover's hands.

**Amiens :** He is a lord attending on the banished Duke. He is a melodious singer.

**Charles :** He is a wrestler as well as a hired killer. Oliver employs him to kill his younger brother Orlando and tear his body to pieces.

**Le Beau :** Le Beau is also a courtier attending upon Frederick.

### 12.11 LET US SUM UP

*As You Like It* is a play enriched with complex character dynamics and dramatic transformations. The play features a wide range of characters, each contributing to its humour, romance, and philosophical depth. The Forest of Arden serves as a place of freedom and self-discovery, where misunderstandings are resolved, relationships are mended, and harmony is restored. Through wit, disguise, and dramatic change, the play highlights the importance of forgiveness, love, and companionship.

### 12.12 SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS (2–4 marks each)

1. Who is the Banished Duke and why is he living in the Forest of Arden?
2. How does Oliver's character transform during the play?
3. What disguise does Rosalind adopt and why?
4. Describe the relationship between Celia and Rosalind.
5. What role does Adam play in the life of Orlando?
6. Why does Duke Frederick banish Rosalind from the court?
7. What is Jaques known for in the play?
8. Who is Phoebe and how does she respond to Silvius' love?
9. What qualities make Orlando a sympathetic character?
10. What symbolic role does the Forest of Arden play in the story?

### 12.13 ANSWER KEY

**Activity I:** comedy, wittiest, Touchstone, Audrey, Ganymede

**Activity II:** False, True, False, True

### 12.14 SUGGESTED READING

Harold Bloom. *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. Riverhead Books, 1998.

Juliet Dusinberre, *As You Like It: Shakespeare in Performance*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

**Course Code : EL-201 (B.A. Sem II)**

**UNIT-V**

**Course Title: English Literature**

**LESSON NO. 13**

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**ROMANTIC COMEDY**  
**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE : *AS YOU LIKE IT***

**STRUCTURE:**

**13.0** Objectives And Outcomes

**13.1** Introduction

**13.2** As You Like It : An Act-Wise And Scene-Wise Summary

**13.3** Let Us Sum Up

**13.4** Examination Oriented Questions

**13.5** Answer Key

**13.6** Suggested Reading

**13.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

The objectives of this lesson are:

- a) to know about Shakespearean play.
- b) to analyze the play critically.
- c) to know the structure of Shakespearean play.

After going through the lesson, learners will be able to:

- a) analyze the detailed summary of *As You like It*.
- b) interpret the characters' motivations and conflicts.

- c) learn the elements of a Shakespearean romantic comedy.

### **13.1 INTRODUCTION**

This lesson introduces *As You Like It* as one of Shakespeare's most popular romantic comedies. Set between the court and the Forest of Arden, the play follows the adventures of Rosalind, Celia, Orlando, and others who, in fleeing tyranny, find love and transformation in the forest. With memorable characters like Touchstone and Jaques, the play explores the complexities of human nature through humour and romance.

### **13.2 AS YOU LIKE IT : AN ACT-WISE AND SCENE-WISE SUMMARY**

#### **Act I, Scene I**

The play opens with a dialogue between Orlando and Adam. Orlando is the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys and Adam is a loyal servant who has been serving the family for many years. Orlando is seen telling Adam that he has been ill-treated by his eldest brother Oliver. His father had left money for Orlando's education and also left to Oliver the responsibility to properly look after Orlando and to get him educated. Another son of Sir Rowland is studying at the university and is being properly looked after by Oliver. For some strange reason, he has a grudge against Orlando. Orlando tells Adam that he will protest against this discrimination. Then comes Oliver

and talks to Orlando in harsh words. Orlando tells Oliver that he owes all respect to Oliver as Oliver is elder to him but Oliver cannot exploit him only because of his being younger to him. Orlando further says that Oliver treats him as a slave and not as a brother. Oliver, in a fit of anger, slaps Orlando whereupon Orlando seizes Oliver by his neck. At this point, Adam intervenes and pleads patience. Orlando is determined not to free Oliver until he promises to give him the money allotted to him in the will. Orlando finally releases Oliver and moves out.

After the departure of Orlando and Adam, Oliver calls his servant Dennis and orders him to bring Charles, the Duke's wrestler. Oliver decides to teach Orlando a lesson and also to hold back the money of Orlando's share from the family property. He instructs Charles to break Orlando's bones and give him such severe blows as to kill him. Charles tells him that Frederick, the younger brother of the Senior Duke has usurped the throne. The Senior Duke has gone to exile in the forest of Arden with three or four faithful lords. Then, he assures Oliver that he will give a severe thrashing to Orlando in the wrestling bout which is to take place next day in the Duke's palace lawn. Charles goes out. Oliver now expresses his feelings for Orlando. He says that he hates Orlando because Orlando is loved by all. He has superior strength and although never schooled, is well informed and cultured.

## **Act I, Scene II**

The scene opens in the lawn near the palace of Duke Frederick. Rosalind, the daughter of the banished Duke, is feeling extremely sad while Celia, Duke Frederick's daughter, is trying to cheer her up. Celia is fairly aware of the injustice done to his uncle Duke Senior by her father. Therefore, she promises to Rosalind that she would restore the Dukedom to Rosalind after her father's death. Rosalind then sheds her sorrow and her spirit is roused again. They start talking about love and express their opinion about it. Celia then scolds Lady Fortune who is unjust and partial in showering her favours upon undeserving persons. Rosalind agrees that Lady Fortune is certainly a blind woman who is especially unfair towards women. Celia replies that Lady Fortune is so unjust that she bestows beauty upon those women who are unchaste and chastity upon those who are ugly. Touchstone, the court jester, enters and is welcomed by both Rosalind

and Celia. He informs them that he has come to take them to the Duke. Then they are joined by a courtier Le Beau who tells them that they have missed a good sport as Charles, the champion wrestler has disabled his three young opponents. It is now a young man with the name of Orlando to fight the court wrestler. Duke Frederick, accompanied by a few of his courtiers, now arrives. He is followed by Orlando, Charles and some attendants. Everybody thinks that Charles would easily defeat Orlando. Rosalind and Celia are also moved to pity when they come to know that Orlando, a handsome young man, is to risk his life by fighting the court wrestler who is undoubtedly a man of great strength. All of them - Duke Frederick, Rosalind and Celia, try to dissuade Orlando from fighting with Charles but Orlando is quite determined and says that he needs only their good wishes and blessings to win the match. In the contest, Charles is surprisingly thrown down by Orlando in a matter of minutes. Duke Frederick would like to congratulate Orlando on his success but when he learns to his dismay that Orlando is the son of Sir Rowland de Boys, his enemy, he loses his temper and does not even give Orlando any reward. Celia and Rosalind feel shocked at the behaviour of the Duke. Both Rosalind and Celia try to cheer up Orlando by cheerful words. Rosalind even offers her necklace but Orlando is too disappointed to speak anything. Le Beau asks Orlando to run away from the Duke's territory. He also tells him that among the two ladies, the taller one is the daughter of the banished Duke and the other one is the daughter of the present Duke. He also informs Orlando that Celia, Duke Frederick's daughter, is of a noble nature and she loves her cousin Rosalind immensely. Orlando leaves the place thinking heavenly about Rosalind.

### **Act I, Scene III**

The scene opens in a room in the palace of Duke Frederick. Rosalind and Celia are seen engaged in conversation. Rosalind expresses her love for Orlando and asks Celia to stand by her. The door is flung open. Duke Frederick enters. His eyes are full of anger. He orders Rosalind to leave the court. He says that she will be killed if she is found within twenty miles of the court. She is given a time of ten days. Rosalind wants to know her fault. She says that she has been loyal to the Duke all the time. Duke Frederick says that she is the daughter of the banished Duke and as such he cannot trust her. Celia insists on accompanying her. Duke Frederick calls Celia a fool and asks Rosalind to leave the court.

The Duke leaves the room. Celia decides to go along with Rosalind. They plan to go in search of the banished Duke in the forest of Arden. They decide that Rosalind should dress herself as a man and Celia should cover her face with colour and put on a poor and mean attire. The taller Rosalind takes up the name of Ganymede and Celia is to be called Aliena. The two persuade Touchstone the fool, to go with them for company. They take their jewels and gold and find the fittest time and safest way to leave the palace. In this way, the scene shifts from the court to the forest of Arden.

### **Act II, Scene I**

The scene now shifts to the forest of Arden where we meet Duke Senior and the loyal lords who had gone voluntarily into exile with him. Duke Senior is talking to his companions about their changed life in the forest. He says that here in the forest they are certainly exposed to the cold and icy winds of winter and, no doubt, they are facing hardships in the forest but these hardships are a blessing in disguise. "Sweet are the uses of adversity", says Duke Senior. He compares adversity to the toad which is ugly and rough but carries at its head a precious jewel. He further says that he and his comrades are leading a quiet life, away from the crowded public places, and that here in the forest they find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything. In other words, Duke Senior and his associates are leading a life of contentment in the forest in spite of the hardships there. Then Duke Senior suggests that they should get ready for the hunt and should kill a few deer for their meat. At this point, mention is made of a comrade, Jaques, who moralises on every issue. Jaques feels saddened by the fact that the Duke Senior and his companions are in the habit of killing the deer who live in the forest, their natural home. Jaques is of the opinion that Duke Senior is as much a usurper as his brother Duke Frederick is. Duke Frederick has usurped the authority of Duke Senior while Duke Senior has usurped the dominions of these deer who live in this forest.

### **Act II, Scene II**

This scene takes us back to Duke Frederick's court. Duke Frederick is shocked to find that his daughter and niece have fled from home and no man could see them leaving the palace. He thinks that some of his courtiers must have planned and supported



the girls' flight. One of the courtier tells him that the court jester Touchstone is also missing. This courtier also says that in his opinion the two princesses had fled in the company of Orlando who had won high praise from the two girls when he defeated Charles, the court wrestler. Duke Frederick thereupon orders his men to look for Orlando and tells that in case they cannot trace Orlando, they should bring Oliver to him so that he may question Oliver about the whereabouts of Orlando.

### **Act II, Scene III**

Having won the wrestling contest, Orlando returns to his brother's house where Adam, the loyal servant, informs him that his success in the wrestling match had made his brother Oliver more revengeful and that he has now decided to put an end to his life by setting fire to the house where Orlando is sleeping inside.

Adam had overheard Oliver telling his plan to someone. Orlando feels thoroughly distressed and asks Adam what he should do. Should he become a beggar or one robbed of his inheritance? He possesses no other talent to earn a respectable living. Adam offers Orlando his whole life's saving of five hundred crowns which he had saved when he was in the service of Sir Rowland. He also offers Orlando his services in addition to the cash. He suggests to Orlando that he should leave this place as soon as possible as it is full of risk for Orlando. Orlando is greatly impressed by the faithfulness of Adam and pays him glowing compliments on his generosity and spirit of service. Adam is so great that he does not want anything in return and so tells Orlando not to waste anytime but to flee from this place. Adam promises to serve Orlando till his last breath with sincerity and loyalty. Adam has lived in this house from the age of seventeen and he is now eighty. He says that he hates to live in a house where the eldest brother has become so revengeful to the youngest brother. And so Orlando and Adam depart from the city. Adam's devotion to Orlando is one of the finest emotions in the play.

### **Act II, Scene IV**

Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone have arrived in the forest of Arden. Rosalind is disguised as a man and has taken the name of Ganymede, and Celia has now assumed the name of Aliena. Having covered a long distance, all the three are feeling extremely tired. They lie under a tree on the outskirts of the forest of Arden. Just then, the two

shepherds, an old one by the name of Corin and the young one by the name of Silvius, appear on the scene. Unaware of the presence of Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone, they openly talk to each other. Silvius tells Corin that he is deeply in love with Phoebe, the shepherdess, but Phoebe does not respond to his love for her. Rosalind, who overhears their dialogue, feels a sympathy for Silvius. Silvius' passion for his beloved Phoebe reminds her of her own love for Orlando. She speaks of her love for Orlando but Touchstone makes fun of her. Touchstone recalls that he had once fallen in love with a girl Janesmile and did some absurd things like breaking his sword at Jane's house, kissing passionately the wooden bat with which she used to beat her clothes while washing them and also kissing the cow's ladder from which Janesmile's pretty hands had drawn milk. Actually by talking in this manner, Touchstone is making fun of the absurdities which people in love often commit.

Celia asks Touchstone to talk to Corin and find out if he can give food in exchange for gold. Corin expresses his helplessness as he is a servant to Silvius. He, however, informs them that his master plans to sell his cottage, sheep and pasture. Rosalind decides that they should purchase these and also promises to have Corin in their service. Corin accepts the proposal. Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone find shelter, food and identity as shepherds.

## **Act II, Scene V**

In this scene, we find Amiens, Jaques and few others talking among themselves. Amiens sings a song which greatly pleases Jaques who asks Amiens to continue singing. A picture of the merry and careful life of the Duke and his followers in the forest is portrayed herein. Amiens sings the famous lyric : "Under the green woodtree" praising the forest life. Jaques is interested only in melancholy. He hates pleasure. The song, no doubt, pleases Jaques but he is not going to offer his thanks as 'thanks' are meaningless and only formal. Amiens, however, ends the song inviting all, who are not ambitious to a happy and contented life in the open. Jaques parodies Amiens song alluding to the folly of the Duke in deserting his dukedom and coming to the forest. In this short scene, we find contrasting characters of Amiens and Jaques - one idealising the pastoral life and the other always criticizing it.

## **Act II, Scene VI**

Orlando and Adam, having departed from the city in the quest of security, arrive in the forest of Arden. The long journey has completely exhausted Adam who, as we have already noted, is an old man of eighty. Adam is on the verge of fainting and he tells Orlando that he can walk no further. Adam's predicament is all the more serious because he has had no food during the journey and is now feeling extremely hungry. Orlando tries to comfort Adam, and says that he would try to get some food from somewhere for Adam. He urges Adam to cheer up and asks him to wait patiently for a little while so that Orlando may go and bring Adam something to eat. He promises not to let Adam die of starvation.

## **Act II, Scene VII**

Duke senior and his companions sit down to have their meals. Everyone is present except Jaques. The Duke asks where Jaques could have gone. One of the lords informs that Jaques had been enjoying Amien's songs a little while ago. Duke senior feels surprised and says that if a serious man like Jaques developed a love for music, it is something most astonishing. Just then Jaques appears on the scene. He informs that he met a fool in the forest with whom he is greatly impressed. Jaques goes on to say that this fool by the name of Touchstone is full of knowledge and information and that he had been a courtier at one time. Touchstone had told Jaques that time keeps passing without pause and that, hour by hour, a man grows older and older, or riper and riper and in this way, a man's whole life is spent. Touchstone also expressed his opinion that if ladies are young and beautiful, they somehow become conscious of their youth and beauty. Jaques tells the Duke that he himself would like to play the same role of a professional fool which Touchstone had been playing because it will give him an unlimited freedom to talk and thus criticise anybody anywhere and nobody will feel offended. He says that as a jester he would condemn people for their extravagance. At this point Orlando bursts in holding his sword and warns them all against touching their food till he and his aged companion have first been fed. The Duke is not in any way scared by the drawn sword. He on the other hand, asks the intruder to show good manners and express his need with proper civility. Orlando is impressed with the Duke's humanitarian

approach. He says that he is almost on the verge of death for want of food. The Duke invites him to join them at the meal. Orlando tells them that he has an old loyal servant whom he has left in a sheltered place and who needs food to survive. He seeks their permission to go and bring Adam to the cave-site. The Duke asks him to go and bring the old man and assures him that nothing will be tasted till they return. Orlando leaves to find out Adam. In the meanwhile Jaques restarts his philosophic observations. He tells of the seven ages of man and says that human life is but a play on the stage of the world. These seven ages form the seven acts of the drama of life. At first man is an infant, crying in the hands of the nurse. Then he grows up to a school boy who with his books and bright morning face goes to the school slowly and unwillingly. Then there is the lover who recites love poems for his beloved. Next follows the stage of the soldier who takes all the oaths to save his country, then the magistrate who is full of wise proverbs and witty remarks. The sixth stage in the life of man is that of a lean and thin body, wearing spectacles. The final part in human existence is that of an old man who has lost his teeth, eye sight and his memory. Orlando now returns bringing Adam with him. Duke Senior invites both men and asks them to eat properly. Duke Senior also requests Amiens to sing a song for them. Amiens starts singing a song : “Blow, blow, Thou winter wind”. The song is full of practical wisdom and comments on some time-tested observations. While Amiens sings his song and while Adam is eating the food, Orlando tells the Duke that he is son of late Sir Rowland de Boys. Duke Senior is quite pleased to learn of Orlando's identity. Sir Rowland had been a very intimate friend and a loyal courtier of Duke Senior. Orlando is now heartily welcome to Duke Senior's banquet.

## ACTIVITY

### Fill in the Blanks:

1. Orlando is the \_\_\_\_\_ son of Sir Rowland de Boys.
2. Oliver hires Charles, a professional \_\_\_\_\_, to try to kill Orlando.
3. Rosalind is exiled from court by her uncle, Duke \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Celia takes the name \_\_\_\_\_ when she accompanies Rosalind into exile.
5. Touchstone is the court \_\_\_\_\_ who goes with Rosalind and Celia to the forest.

6. Silvius is in love with the shepherdess named \_\_\_\_\_

### **Act III, Scene I**

This scene brings us back to Duke Frederick's court. Oliver is brought by Frederick's officials and Frederick questions him about Orlando's whereabouts. Oliver says that he does not know at all where his brother Orlando has gone. He also discloses to the Duke that he never loved his brother Orlando all his life. But Duke Frederick is not prepared to listen to any such excuses. He feels that Oliver is trying to befool him. Duke Frederick then orders that the entire property and wealth of Oliver be seized and if Oliver fails to produce his brother Orlando before him within twelve months, his entire property will be forfeited.

### **Act III, Scene II**

In the forest of Arden, Orlando has nothing to do. Therefore, he spends his time writing verses in praise of Rosalind's beauty and virtue and hanging these poems on the trees. He also carves Rosalind's name on the barks of trees. After Orlando has gone away, Touchstone and Corin appear on the scene. They have now become quite friendly with each other. Corin and Touchstone exchange views on different matters. Corin asks Touchstone whether he likes the life of a shepherd, to which Touchstone replies that a shepherd's life has some good as well as bad features. Now Touchstone wants to know whether Corin has any philosophical ideas. Corin expresses some of his ideas which are too simplistic. Touchstone says that as Corin has never been to the court, his ideas and manners are absurd, to which Corin replies that what are known as good manners at the court are regarded as absurd manners in the countryside, just as the behaviour of a countryman is regarded as absurd by the people at court. Touchstone then makes a few more remarks, pointing out that Corin is an unintelligent fellow. Ultimately, Corin says that he is no match for Touchstone because Touchstone has the wit of a courtier. Rosalind appears with a sheet of paper which she found hanging on a tree. She reads the verse and finds that they have been written in praise of her beauty and virtue. Touchstone says these verses do not have any rhythm. He makes fun of Rosalind. Celia now appears on the scene. She too has found a sheet of paper hanging on a tree and shows it to Rosalind. The writer of these verses has showered praise on Rosalind who according to him possesses all the heavenly virtues like modesty, faithfulness, beauty and majesty. The writer also declares in these verses his decision that he will live and die as Rosalind's slave. Rosalind pretends not to know the composer of these verses. After having fun with Rosalind, Celia at last tells her that Orlando is the man who has written these verses and hung them on trees. Rosalind feels overjoyed to know that Orlando too has come to the forest of Arden, but at the same time she feels unhappy as she is dressed like a man and has to behave like a man. When the two cousins are talking in this way, Orlando and Jaques appear on the scene. The two girls hide themselves and overhear the conversation between the two men. Jaques advises Orlando that he should not ruin the beauty of the trees by writing love songs on their barks. Orlando replies that Jaques should not ruin the beauty of his verses by reading them in

the wrong spirit. Jaques remarks that Orlando's worst fault is that he is in love; Orlando replies that he would not exchange this fault with Jaques' best virtues. Finally they take leave of each other and Jaques goes away. Rosalind now goes to Orlando to have some fun with him. She tells Celia that she would be playing some tricks upon Orlando. She then asks Orlando what hour of the day it is. Orlando replies that there are no clocks in the forest and therefore he cannot tell the time. The talk continues in this witty style. Then Orlando tells that it is he who has written love poems and carved the name of his beloved on the trees. Ganymede tells him that he does not look like a lover. Orlando tells him that his love for Rosalind is greater than his rhymes reveal. Ganymede tells Orlando that the madness of love can be cured if he accepts his proposal. He proposes a game. Orlando is required to treat Ganymede as if he were Rosalind. Orlando says that he would not like to be cured. Ganymede asserts that he would cure Orlando if he would call him Rosalind and come everyday to his cottage and woo him as Rosalind. Orlando agrees. He says with all heart but Ganymede does not accept the expression good youth and wants to be addressed as Rosalind. They depart.

### **Act III, Scene III**

Touchstone has developed a friendship with a goat herd whose name is Audrey. Touchstone tells her that he would help her in looking after her goats. Audrey says that she is a chaste woman, though not beautiful. Touchstone likes the honesty and virtue of Audrey and wants to marry her. He is prepared to get married to her in the wood, not in the church. Touchstone now tells Audrey that the vicar of the next village, Sir Oliver Martext, would soon be coming to perform the rites of their marriage. He arrives in a few minutes but tells Touchstone that a guardian should give away the bride to Touchstone otherwise the marriage would not be considered valid. Jaques has been watching all this from behind and he offers to give away the woman in marriage to Touchstone. He, however, does not like that a cultured man like Touchstone should get married like a beggar in an indecent way. Touchstone, too would not like to take her from anyone as a gift. So, on Touchstone's advice he dismisses the priest. Jaques assures him that he would have Touchstone married in a proper manner by a proper priest.

### **Act III, Scene IV**

Rosalind and Celia are talking about Orlando. Rosalind is feeling sad and tells Celia that she feels like crying because Orlando has not come, as per his promise. Celia teases Rosalind by saying that Orlando was a hypocritical lover. She also informs Rosalind that Orlando is working as an attendant on Duke Senior in the forest. Rosalind then tells her cousin that she also happened to meet her father yesterday by chance and had even a dialogue with him. It has to be kept in mind that all this while Rosalind is in the disguise of a man Ganymede. Meanwhile enters Corin and proposes to take Rosalind (Ganymede) and Celia (Aliena) to witness a love scene between Silvius and Phoebe. Rosalind readily agrees because the sight of lovers is a source of satisfaction for those who are themselves in love.

### **Act III, Scene V**

The scene opens in another part of the forest. Silvius is seen kneeling before Phoebe. He says that his heart will break if Phoebe scorn his love. Phoebe, however, remains unmoved. Rosalind, Celia and Corin stand behind unseen and hear Phoebe's bitter remarks. Rosalind advances and chides Phoebe for her pride. She tells her that she was no beauty. Silvius, the shepherd, is a thousand times a proper man than she a woman. She asks Phoebe to kneel and thank heaven for a good man's love. Phoebe kneels to Rosalind who in male attire (Ganymede) looks very handsome. Rosalind asks Phoebe to love Silvius and accept his offer. She warns her not to fall in love with her (Ganymede) as she does not like her. Rosalind walks away followed by Celia and Corin. Phoebe loses her heart to Ganymede. Silvius tells her that the youth has bought the cottage and the belongings of an old carlot. Phoebe asks Silvius to deliver a letter to Ganymede. This, she says will be a taunting letter as the youth scorned her. She will answer scorn with scorn. Simple Silvius believes her. Phoebe and Silvius depart.

### **Act IV, Scene I**

Jaques and Rosalind meet in the forest by chance. Rosalind says that she had heard that Jaques is melancholy by nature. Jaques admits that he likes sadness more than merry-making. While they are talking to each other, Orlando arrives. Jaques now



leaves. Orlando apologizes to Rosalind for being late. Rosalind says that if a lover is late in coming to meet his beloved even by a fraction of a minute, he is not a true lover. Rosalind (Ganymede) then invites Orlando to make love to her as if she were the real Rosalind as it had been settled between them. Rosalind tells Orlando that she is in a gay mood and will readily accept Orlando's love. Orlando confides in Ganymede (Rosalind) that he loves Rosalind very deeply but he is not aware of her love for him. He says that if she does not respond to his love, he would die. Rosalind says that no man has ever died for cause of love. Both of them keep talking in this light-hearted manner. Then Orlando says that he has to go and attend upon Duke Senior at dinner time but he would return to Ganymede after two hours. She, however, tells him that if he is late in returning by one minute, he will be taken as a fake lover. When Orlando is gone, Rosalind tells Celia that she is passionately in love with Orlando and her love is as deep as the Bay of Portugal.

#### **Act IV, Scene II**

One of Duke Senior's lords has killed a deer. Jaques makes fun of this lord by saying that he deserves to be honoured like a Roman conqueror and that the dead deer's horns should now be planted upon the lord's head to serve as a garland of victory. Jaques then asks another lord to sing a song even if he cannot sing it in tune. The second lord thereupon sings a song, the subject of which is the killing of a deer.

#### **Act IV, Scene III**

Rosalind and Celia are waiting for Orlando's arrival but there is no sign of him. Meanwhile, Silvius arrives with a letter for Rosalind, sent by Phoebe. Whatever is written in the letter is not known to Silvius. He, however, guesses that the letter is full of scorn and anger for Ganymede. Rosalind asks Silvius if he would like to hear the letter. Silvius answers in positive and Rosalind reads aloud. It is a letter of love and expresses Phoebe's passionate love for Ganymede. Silvius is surprised to learn that Phoebe told a lie to him that the letter was a rebuke to Ganymede. Celia expresses her sympathy for Silvius. But Rosalind is of the opinion that Silvius deserves no sympathy because he loves a woman who has no regard for his feelings. She then sends her reply

to Phoebe's letter that if Phoebe wants Ganymede's love, she should respond to the love of Silvius. Orlando's eldest brother Oliver now appears unexpectedly on the scene. He says that he has been sent by Orlando who could not come to Ganymede as he had promised. Then he also hands over a blood-stained handkerchief to Rosalind. Both Rosalind and Celia feel puzzled and ask Oliver to narrate clearly what had happened. Oliver informs them that Orlando is his youngest brother. He further reveals that after leaving Rosalind and Celia, Orlando saw on the way a man lying asleep under an old oak tree. Orlando also saw a green and golden snake which had encircled itself around that sleeping man's neck. Hearing the noise of footsteps, the snake slipped away into a bush. Behind that bush a lioness was hiding and waiting for the sleeping man to wake up. On approaching the man who lay asleep under the tree, Orlando saw to his utter surprise that this man was no other than his own brother Oliver. So, he fought with the lioness and saved his brother's life. Orlando could have let the lioness kill Oliver who was responsible for Orlando's present predicament. But being generous and forgiving by nature, Orlando saved his brother's life from the attack of the lioness very enthusiastically. Then there was reconciliation between the brothers. Oliver was introduced to the Duke who welcomed him as the son of Sir Rowland. Oliver also confesses that he is that brother who was after the life of Orlando. He further tells that Orlando had received a wound on his arm while fighting with the lioness. Therefore, he couldn't come in time and has sent Oliver with this handkerchief stained in blood as an evidence of the fact that he had got wounded. On listening this story and on learning that Orlando has been wounded, Ganymede (or Rosalind) now faints. But soon she recovers her consciousness. Oliver tries to cheer up Rosalind. This scene is important for two reasons-bringing Oliver to the forest of Arden and his reconciliation with Orlando.

### **Act V, Scene I**

In an earlier scene, Jaques had advised Touchstone to postpone his marriage for two reasons - one that Touchstone belongs to a good family and he should not marry stealthily and secondly, he should wait till a better priest than Sir Oliver Martext could be found to perform the marriage ceremony. But Audrey is quite eager to get married to Touchstone. Touchstone however, assures her that they would get married soon. Another young man by the name of William appears on the scene and claims that Audrey had promised to

marry him. Touchstone then puts a number of questions to William. Touchstone asks William whether he (William) is a wise fellow. William replies that he certainly has a pretty wit. Then Touchstone repeats the saying : “The fool doth think he is wise, the wise man knows himself to be a fool”. William is beaten flat in the battle of wit and Touchstone asks him to depart. Audrey too asks William to leave them. William goes away.

## **Act V, Scene II**

Oliver informs his brother Orlando that he has fallen in love with Celia (or Aliene) and Celia too has fallen in love with him. Oliver does not know the true identity of either Celia or Rosalind. Both wish to marry each other and Oliver wants Orlando's support in this matter. Oliver also tells that he has now no wish to return to the city and he would transfer the entire property of their late father in the name of Orlando. After marriage, he says, he would settle in the forest of Arden and lead the life of a shepherd. Orlando readily gives his consent to Oliver's marriage to Aliena and says that the marriage should take place the very next day. He says that he will invite Duke Senior and his companions too on his brother's wedding. Oliver now leaves to inform Aliena about his brother Orlando's approval of their marriage. Rosalind comes to see Orlando who had been wounded by the attack of a lioness. She expresses great concern for him and he says that he has been wounded by the eyes of a lady i.e. Rosalind. It is to be kept in mind that even at this time Rosalind is disguised as a man. Orlando shares his feelings about Oliver-Aliena marriage with Rosalind (Ganymede). He says that although he is very happy that his brother is going to get married the next day, yet feels sad that his own love for Rosalind is far from being fulfilled. Rosalind thereupon consoles Orlando by saying that a learned musician has been teaching her magic since she was three years old. She will use her knowledge of magic to bring Rosalind to him. Orlando half believes and half disbelieves what Rosalind is saying. But Rosalind assures Orlando that she is damn serious and she means what she says. She asks Orlando to get ready to be married the following day along with his brother Oliver. Silvius and Phoebe now appear on the scene. Phoebe says that it was most ungentlemanly on Ganymede's part to have revealed the contents of her letter to Silvius. Rosalind tells Phoebe that Phoebe should value Silvius' faithful and sincere love towards her. Silvius says that his love for Phoebe is all passion, all adoration, all humility, and all purity. Phoebe says that her love for Ganymede is exactly

of the same kind; and Orlando intervenes to say that his love for Rosalind is also entirely of the same kind. Rosalind asks Phoebe, Silvius and Orlando to meet her next day at Oliver and Aliena's wedding. Rosalind promises that she will make all the lovers feel happy and would somehow fulfil their desire the next day. They disperse.

### **Act V, Scene III**

Touchstone assures Audrey that he would marry her on the following day. Audrey feels immensely happy and says that it is her inmost desire to become a housewife. Two of Duke Senior's boy-servants come and Touchstone asks them to sing a song. They start singing a song which is about a lover and his sweetheart who are going to get married in the season of spring. At the end of the song, Touchstone says that it was a foolish song and he has not liked it at all. He asks them to go and mend their voices.

### **Act V, Scene IV**

All the arrangements for the marriage of Oliver and Aliena have been made. Orlando has also informed Duke Senior that a young man, Ganymede, has promised to bring Rosalind and to have her married to him (Orlando). Rosalind (still disguised as Ganymede) now arrives with Silvius and Phoebe. Rosalind asks Duke Senior if he is ready to give away his daughter Rosalind to Orlando in marriage in case she is produced before him. Duke Senior gives his whole-hearted consent to this match. Ganymede then makes Phoebe repeat her promise that in case Phoebe refuses to marry Ganymede, she would have no objection in marrying Silvius. Ganymede urges all of them to fulfil their promises when the time comes. Ganymede (Rosalind) then leaves in the company of Aliena (Celia) for a little while. Duke Senior tells Orlando that the features and appearance of this shepherd boy, namely Ganymede seems to resemble those of his daughter Rosalind. Orlando says that he too had noticed it but had dismissed the idea when this boy told him that he was forest born, and was taught magic by his uncle who lives in this forest. Touchstone and Audrey now appear on the scene. Jaques introduces Touchstone to Duke Senior and says that this fool claims that he had been a courtier at one time. To prove the truth of his claims, Touchstone says that he has participated in the dances at the court, that he had known how to flatter a lady, that he had been dealing with friends in a diplomatic manner, that he had ruined three tailors by not paying

their bills and that he had four quarrels and was very close to fighting a duel during one such quarrel. In other words, he is in a way satirizing the conduct of the courtiers.

Touchstone then says that he is going to marry Audrey who is a poor and ugly girl, but she belongs to him and him only. She may be ugly, he says, but she is chaste. Duke Senior says that Touchstone is a quickwitted man who talks in a pithy style. Jaques now asks Touchstone how Touchstone had avoided the duel to which he has just referred. Touchstone now says that in his case, the quarrel between him and another courtier had assumed serious proportions till it reached the stage of what might be called the lie circumstantial. Fortunately, the quarrel had not gone beyond this stage of Lie Direct. Touchstone says that even when a quarrel has reached the last, namely, the Lie Direct, the actual fight may be avoided by the use of the word 'if'. On one occasion, says Touchstone, even seven magistrates had failed to put an end to a quarrel between two courtiers. But when one of the courtiers used the word if, the quarrel was immediately settled. One of the quarrelling men just said, "If you said so, then I also said so". At this the two quarrelling men had shaken hands and become sworn brothers. Thus, Touchstone says the word if is a peace-maker. Listening to all this, Duke Senior makes the following comments upon Touchstone: "He uses his folly like a stalking horse, and under the presentation of that, he shoots his wit". In other words, Duke Senior means to say that Touchstone uses the label of a fool for himself but he talks in a wise manner. Rosalind and Celia now come back in their own persons. They are no longer disguised as Ganymede and Aliena. They are escorted by Hymen, the God of Marriage. He tells Duke Senior that he has brought Duke's daughter from heaven and that Duke Senior should now unite her with her lover Orlando. Rosalind then addressing Duke Senior says that she gives herself to him because she belongs to him. Then she addresses Orlando and says that she gives herself to him because she belongs to him also. Both Duke Senior and Orlando feel amazed to see Rosalind. Phoebe now realizes that the young man who called himself Ganymede is actually a woman by the name of Rosalind. Hymen now speaks to Duke Senior and tells him that there are various couples who are to be united in wedlock. These couples are: Orlando and Rosalind; Oliver and Celia; Silvius and Phoebe; and Touchstone and Audrey. Hymen goes on to say that marriage is the supreme gift which Juno, the queen of Gods, bestows upon human

beings. A song is then sung in honour of the marriage and the god of marriages. Duke Senior is extremely happy because he has got his daughter Rosalind and also his niece Celia. He welcomes Celia to this place. Phoebe tells Silvius that she will be true to the words given to Rosalind and would marry him. At this point a young man by the name of Jaques de Boys appears on the scene. He tells the gathering that he is the second son of Sir Rowland de Boys and that he has brought some news. The news is that Duke Frederick was coming with a mighty force to kill Duke Senior who had been attracting more and more followers to the forest of Arden but Frederick met an old religious man at the outskirts of the forest. The words of this saintly old man had influenced Duke Frederick's mind to such an extent that he gave up all the thoughts to attack Duke Senior and decided to renounce the world. As a result, the dukedom is now to be restored to Duke Senior and the property of Duke Senior's followers will also be restored to them. Duke Senior cordially welcomes Sir Rowland's second son. He says that Jaques de Boys has really brought a great news. He has given his two brothers excellent wedding gifts. Oliver would get back his estate whereas Orlando as Duke's son-in-law would inherit Duke Senior's dominions. Duke Senior then informs all his followers that they would duly be rewarded for having kept company with him in the evil times. He asks them all to rejoice and celebrate the occasion with music and dance. Jaques, the philosopher, then offers his good wishes to all the four couples who are going to get married.

Finally, he announces his decision to leave them in order to go and join Frederick who has become a hermit because Jaques believes that one can get many ideas from persons who have renounced the worldly life. Duke Senior tries to stop Jaques from going away, but Jaques is firm in his decision. When Jaques has left, Duke Senior asks all others to resume their celebrations. Rosalind now appears on the stage alone to speak an epilogue. She calls upon all the members of the audience to express a good opinion about the theatrical performance which they have witnessed she says: "I charge you, O women, for the love you bear to men, to like as much of this play as please you."

### **13.3 LET US SUM UP**

*As You Like It* is a romantic comedy by William Shakespeare that highlights the contrast between the corrupt and political life of the court and the peaceful, natural world of the

Forest of Arden. Central characters like Rosalind, Orlando, Celia, Duke Senior, Touchstone, Jaques, and Oliver navigate themes such as love in many forms, forgiveness, identity, and disguise. The forest acts as a place of transformation where characters resolve their conflicts and grow personally.

### 13.4 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

#### Short Answer Questions:

1. Why does Orlando feel mistreated at the beginning of the play?
2. What plan do Rosalind and Celia make after Rosalind is banished?
3. Describe the significance of the Forest of Arden in the play.
4. How does the character of Jaques differ from other courtiers?
5. What role does disguise play in the plot of *As You Like It*?

#### Long Answer Questions:

1. Discuss the character of Rosalind and her role in driving the plot.
2. How is the theme of love portrayed in the play? Support your answer with examples.
3. Compare and contrast the court and the Forest of Arden as depicted in the play.
4. Examine the significance of wit and wordplay in *As You Like It*.
5. Discuss the role of reconciliation and forgiveness in the resolution of the play.

### 13.5 ANSWER KEY

Youngest, Wrestler, Frederick, Aliena, Jester, Phoebe

### 13.6 SUGGESTED READING

William Shakespeare. *As You Like It*. Edited by Todd Borlik, Francis X. Connor, and Emma Smith, Oxford University Press, 19 Sept. 2024.

Harold Bloom. *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. Riverhead Books, 1998.

**Course Code : EL-201 (B.A. Sem II)**

**UNIT-V**

**Course Title: English Literature**

**LESSON NO. 14**

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**ROMANTIC COMEDY**

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: *AS YOU LIKE IT***

**STRUCTURE:**

**14.0** Objectives And Outcomes

**14.1** Introduction

**14.2** Explanation With Reference To The Context

**14.3** Let Us Sum Up

**14.4** Examination Oriented Questions

**14.5** Short Answer Questions

**14.6** Answer Key

**14.7** Suggested Reading

**14.0 OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

The objectives of this lesson are:

- (a) to know about Shakespearean play.
- (b) to analyse the play critically.
- (c) to know the structure of Shakespearean play.

By the end of this lesson, learners will be able to:

- (a) analyze selected passages critically, exploring character motivations and literary techniques.
- (b) identify the structural features of a Shakespearean play, including rising action and climax.



## 14.1 INTRODUCTION

*As You Like It* is a pastoral romantic comedy written by William Shakespeare. The play explores themes such as love, jealousy, loyalty, and the contrast between court life and life in the forest. Through engaging characters such as Rosalind, Orlando, Celia, Jaques, and Touchstone, Shakespeare weaves a narrative rich in wit, satire, and philosophical insights. The Forest of Arden serves as a symbolic space for self-discovery, transformation, and harmony.

## 14.2 EXPLANATION WITH REFERENCE TO THE CONTEXT

*1. I am no villain. I am the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys: he was my father, and he is thrice a villain that says such a father begot villains. Were thou not my brother, I would not take this hand from thy throat till this other had pulled out thy tongue for saying so. Thou hast sailed on thyself.*

## **Act I, Scene (i)**

**Context:** The present lines have been extracted from the eminent playwright Shakespeare's famous romantic comedy *As You Like It* Act I, Scene (i). Oliver, the eldest son of Sir Rowland de Boys, slaps his younger brother Orlando. He also calls him a low-born fellow. Orlando loses his temper and speaks these words.

**Explanation :** Orlando says that he is not a low-born fellow. He is the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys. Sir Rowland was his father and he who says that Sir Rowland begot low-born sons, is three times a villain. Orlando further says that had Oliver not been his brother, he would have plucked out his tongue for talking to him in this manner. In calling Orlando a villain, Oliver has abused himself.

**Comment :** The lines reveal Orlando's character. He is very attached to and proud of his father. Though angry with his brother, Orlando still shows self-control.

*2. I hope I shall see an end of him; for my soul-yet I know not why hates nothing more than he. Yet he is gentle, never schooled and yet learned, full of noble device, of all sorts enchantingly beloved, and indeed so much in the heart of the world, and especially of my own people, who best know him, that I am altogether misprized. But it shall not be so long; this wrestler shall clear all.*

**Context :** These lines taken from *As You Like It* have been spoken by Oliver in Act I, Scene (i) He, here, discloses the fact that he nurtures hatred for his younger brother Orlando because the latter is talented, intelligent and loved by all. However, Oliver is happy to learn that his brother Orlando is ready to compete with Charles, the mighty wrestler. He hopes that Orlando will definitely be killed in this competition and in this way he will get rid of Orlando. Oliver speaks these words to himself.

**Explanation :** Oliver, talking to himself, feels relieved to think that Charles will put an end to Orlando's life. He does now know why his soul hates nothing more than it hates Orlando. Whatever he may feel about Orlando, he admits that he is a noble fellow. Although he has not received any formal education, yet he is intelligent and full of noble intentions. He is, thus, loved by one and all as if he has cast a spell on them. Even Oliver's own friends despise him and think him totally worthless when compared with Orlando. Oliver, however, feels relieved that Orlando's story will not last long as

Charles, the wrestler, will settle all problems.

**Comment :** (i) The lines reveal character of the two brothers-Orlando and Oliver. Oliver comes out as a jealous and mean person who can go to the extent of plotting his brother's murder. Orlando's virtues stand in contrast - gentle, learned and beloved of all.

(ii) The lines also hint at the future events - Charles' fatal wrestling with Orlando.

*3. You know my father has no child but I, nor none is like to have; and truly when he dies, thou shalt be his heir; for what he hath taken away from thy father perforce, I will render thee again in affection. By mine honour I will, and when I break that oath, let me turn monster.*

#### **Act I, Scene (ii)**

**Context :** These lines have been taken from Act I, Scene (ii) of Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*. The lines have been uttered by Celia to her cousin Rosalind. Rosalind is feeling sad because of the banishment of her father, Duke Senior by Celia's father Duke Frederick. Celia requests Rosalind to feel happy and assures her that she will return the whole empire to Rosalind when her father Duke Frederick is dead.

**Explanation :** Celia says that Rosalind knows very well that Duke Frederick has no other child but herself. Nor is there any chance of his having another child. Therefore, she promises that when her father dies, Rosalind will inherit all his property. What her father has taken away by force from her father, Celia will restore to Rosalind. Celia swears that she will do so and if she breaks her promise, God may change her into a monster.

**Comment :** The lines are significant as they bring out Celia's great love for her cousin Rosalind.

*4. She is too subtle for thee, and her smoothness,  
Her very silence, and her patience  
Speak to the people and they pity her  
Thou art a fool; she robs thee of thy name,  
And thou wilt show more bright and seem more virtuous*

*When she is gone. Then open not thy lips. Firm  
and irrevocable is my doom*

*Which I have passed upon her; she is banished*

### **Act I, Scene (iii)**

**Context :** These lines, taken from Act I, Scene (iii) of Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*, have been spoken by Duke Frederick to his daughter Celia. Duke Frederick suddenly decides to banish Rosalind from his kingdom. Celia protests against this decision. In these lines Duke Frederick tries to convince Celia that it is only for Celia's benefit that he has taken this decision of banishing Rosalind.

**Explanation :** Duke Frederick says that Rosalind is very cunning as compared with Celia. He says that she is using all shrewd methods to win the hearts of people. Her silence, and her feeling or resignation to her condition– all these move the hearts of people and they feel sympathetic towards her. Duke Frederick further says that Celia is a fool not to realise that Rosalind's presence at the court serves only to harm Celia's good name or reputation. Celia will appear to be more virtuous after Rosalind has left the kingdom. Duke Frederick, therefore, urges Celia to keep quiet, saying that the sentence he has passed against Rosalind is firm and final and Rosalind must go to exile in accordance with the order of banishment.

**Comment :** The above lines throw light on character of Rosalind and also reveal Duke Frederick's nature. Rosalind's qualities - subtleness, smoothness, patience win admiration for her. The Duke comes out as a shrewd, jealous and contriving villain.

### **ACTIVITY**

#### **Fill in the Blanks:**

1. Orlando claims he is not a \_\_\_\_\_, but the youngest son of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Orlando says that \_\_\_\_\_ is thrice a villain who says his father begot villains.
3. In his soliloquy, Oliver admits he hates Orlando without \_\_\_\_\_, even though Orlando is \_\_\_\_\_ and beloved.
4. Oliver hopes that \_\_\_\_\_, the wrestler, will kill Orlando in the match.

5. Celia says that if she breaks her promise, she should be turned into a \_\_\_\_\_.

5. *Are not these woods  
More free from peril than the envious court?  
Here feel we but the penalty of Adam,  
  
The seasons difference, as the icy fang  
  
And churlish chiding of the winter's wind;  
  
Which, when it bites and blows upon my body  
Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say This  
is no flattery: these are counsellors,  
  
That feelingly persuade me what I am.*

## Act II Scene (i)

**Context :** These lines, taken from Act II, Scene (i) of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* are part of a famous speech delivered by Duke Senior to the lords who have accompanied him to exile. It shows that he has taken the hardships of life in forest in his stride.

**Explanation :** The Duke asks his lords if they do not agree with his views that the Forest of Arden is more free from danger than the court with its jealousies and rivalries. Here they have to endure the punishment which was originally imposed on their first ancestor, Adam. Adam was the first man created by God. God allowed him to live a life of comfort and luxury in the Garden of Eden. But when Adam disobeyed God's command, God expelled Adam and also his female companion Eve to experience the discomforts and hardships caused by climatic changes on the earth. In the Garden of Eden, which was their home before damnation, they used to enjoy eternal spring. The Duke goes on to say that here in the forest they have to tolerate icy stings of the winter wind. When this icy wind blows upon the Duke's body, he begins to shrink with cold. Even then he keeps on smiling and points out that the wind and the cold are at least frank and free from the hypocrisy, because they remind him what he actually is. The elements of weather are not hiding their severity under any false show of warmth. Thus, the cold winds of winter do not follow the example of the courtiers who falsely flatter their Duke. On the contrary, these cold winds are like true and wise advisers who make him realise his actual physical limitations and his weaknesses.

**Comments :** (i) The lines are related to one of the themes of the play—the comparison between the natural blissful life of Arden and artificial, corrupt courtly life.

(ii) The piece also brings out Duke's temperament—his liking for the natural way of life.

6.     *Sweet are the uses of adversity,  
Which like the toad, ugly and venomous, Wears  
yet a precious jewel in his head;  
  
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,  
  
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks  
Sermon in stones, and good in everything.*

**Context :** These famous lines have been taken from Act II, Scene (i) of Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*. Duke Senior is talking about the uses and benefits of hardships to the loyal lords who have accompanied him to exile. He remarks that the hardships of the forest life have their positive aspects too. Far away from the maddening life of the city, this forest life has enabled them to see general good in everything.

**Explanation :** Duke Senior tells his comrades that adversity or misfortune has its bright side also. Therefore, the advantages of misfortune are to be welcomed by them. He compares misfortune to a toad which is ugly and poisonous but which at the same time carries in its head a precious jewel having medicinal properties. Like the sting of the toad, life's misfortunes also bring many benefits to human beings, besides being too painful. Living in the forest of Arden, far away from the crowds of people, Duke Senior and his comrades are able to hear the trees speaking to them in their own way and conveying some messages. Likewise, they can find in the flowing streams much wisdom one finds in books. The stones seem to give moral lessons, and every object of nature seems to convey the message that there is some good in everything. In short, Duke Senior here emphasises the beneficial impact of forest life and makes his lords see and appreciate the positive influences of nature here.

**Comments :** (i) In these lines, through Duke, Shakespeare has eulogized the natural life of Arden.

7.     *O good old man, how well in thee appears  
The constant service of the antique world,  
When service sweat for duty, not for need.  
Thou art not for the fashion of these times,  
Where none will sweat but for promotion,  
And having that do choke their service up  
Even with the having, it is not so with thee.  
But poor old man, thou prun'st a rotten tree,  
That cannot so much as a blossom yield,  
In lieu of all thy pains and husbandry.*

**Context :** These lines have been taken from Act II, Scene (i) of *As You Like It*

by William Shakespeare. The lines have been spoken by Orlando to his servant Adam. As Orlando's life is in danger because of the evil designs of his elder brother Oliver, the servant Adam puts his life-long savings at Orlando's disposal. He suggests that Orlando should leave Oliver's house as soon as possible and take refuge somewhere else. Adam also offers to accompany Orlando and serve him with all sincerity.

**Explanation :** Orlando is deeply moved by Adam's devotion and loyalty towards him and says that in him appears the ancient spirit of loyal service. In the ancient times, servants had this sense of commitment towards their masters and they did not also expect any rewards for it. In these days, nobody is prepared to work hard except to gain promotion in life. And once having gained promotion, servants stop to give the kind of service by which they had got promotion. Such is not the case with Adam. Orlando tells the poor old man that he is offering his services to a man who is totally bankrupt and who can make no return to Adam for all his loyalty. He compares himself to a rotten tree which won't give any fruit when being trimmed.

**Comments :** (i) Adam is a selfless and dedicated person. Shakespeare here pays tribute to these virtues.

(ii) The lines contain a commentary on changing times and changing hobbies of people.

(iii) Orlando's kindness is revealed in his concern for Adam's well-being.

8. *I remember when I was in love I broke my sword upon  
a stone, and bid him take that for coming anight to Jane Smile; and  
I remember the kissing of her battler, and the cow's dungs that her  
pretty chopt hands had milked; and I remember the wooing of a  
peascod instead of her. From whom I took two cods, and giving her  
them again, said with weeping tears, ?Wear these  
for my sake? We that are true lovers run into strange capers;  
but as all is mortal in nature, so is all nature in love mortal in folly.*

**Context :** These lines, taken from Act II, Scene (iv) of Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*, are a speech by Touchstone. Touchstone has accompanied Rosalind and Celia to the forest of Arden. In the forest, one day they all overhear a rustic lover Silvius



speaking about his love for the shepherdess Phoebe to an old man called Corin. Rosalind says that this young man's account of his love for Phoebe has reminded her of her own love for Orlando. Thereupon, Touchstone makes this speech.

**Explanation :** Touchstone says that after hearing the rustic fellow speak of his love, he too has been reminded of his own youthful love-affair. He recalls that he had been in love with a girl called Jane Smile. One day he visited his beloved at night but became furious on seeing a rival in that girl's house at the time of night. His rival, he says, was no other than his own sword which he had carried with him to her house. He became so angry that he broke the sword by striking it against a stone slab. Touchstone then goes on to describe another ridiculous act that he did under influence of love. He once kissed the wooden bat which his beloved had held in her hand while beating the clothes she was washing. He had also kissed a cow's udder which his beloved's pretty hands had touched while milking the cow. As both these things i.e. the wooden bat and the cow's udder had been touched by his beloved, he had experienced the same kind of pleasure that he would have experienced in kissing her hands. Then, Touchstone recalled another absurdity which he had committed as a lover. In the absence of his beloved, he had one day begun to make love to a plant, imagining that the plant represented his beloved. He took two pea-cods from the plant, requesting the plant to wear those pods for his sake. Touchstone concludes the speech by saying that people like him, who fall truly in love, indulge in fantastic pranks. He further visualises that just as everything in nature is bound to meet death, everyone who falls in love is likely to commit most unthinkable absurdities. In other words, what Touchstone means to say here is that just as death is a condition of life, folly is a condition of love. He who falls in love is sure to commit follies and absurdities under the effect of passionate love.

**Comments :** (i) The lines are aimed at bursting the bubble of romantic love. Touchstone mocks at the wild ways of crazy lovers.

(ii) Shakespeare has made a pregnant observation about nature of love.

9. *Well then, If ever I thank any man, I'll thank you;  
but they call compliment is like the encounter of  
two dog-apes, And when a man thanks me heartily,  
me thinks I have given him a penny and he*

*renders me the beggarly thanks.*

**Context :** These lines taken from Act II, Scene (v) of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* have been spoken by Jaques. He makes this speech in reply to Amiens agreeing to sing a song on Jaques's request.

**Explanation :** Jaques appreciates Amiens that he has agreed to his proposal to sing a song. He says that generally he never thanks anybody and will also not like to thank Amiens because this practice of thanking others and receiving thanks from others is really disliked by Jaques. Jaques says that in his view, an exchange of compliments between two men is like a chance meeting of two monkeys who just grin at each other. Jaques adds further that when a man thanks him enthusiastically, he gets the impression that he has given a penny in charity and the man has, in return, thanked him, just as a beggar thanks anyone who gives him alms. According to Jaques, thanks - giving is just a formality which is performed by someone who has received a favour.

10. *Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,  
And after one hour more, it will be eleven;  
And so from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe, And  
then from hour to hour, we rot, and rot, And  
thereby hangs a tale.*

**Context :** These lines have been taken from Act II, Scene (vii) of Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*. Jaques speaks these lines to Duke Senior. He is reporting the words of Touchstone whom he met in the forest of Arden.

**Explanation :** Jaques quotes the words of Touchstone that only one hour before it was nine o'clock and after one hour it will be 11 o'clock. And so concludes that human beings grow older hour by hour and then begin to rot and rot hour by hour. That is the story of human life on this planet.

**Comment :** The musings of Jaques, the melancholy philosopher, reveal his pessimistic view of human life and world.

11. *It is my only suit  
Provided that you weed out better  
judgements of all opinion*

*that grows rank in them*

*That I am wise. I must have liberty*

*Without, as large a charter as the wind*

*To blow on whom I please, for so fools have;*

*And they that are most galled with my folly.*

*They most must laugh*

**Context :** These lines extracted from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* Act II, Scene (vii) represent a speech by Jaques. Jaques has felt quite impressed by Touchstone's comments upon human life and human nature. Jaques reports to Duke Senior that he is delighted to have met a man by the name of Touchstone who is a court clown. Jaques says that motley is the best apparel for a man and that he himself would like to wear a motley suit so that he may enjoy the same freedom as Touchstone has.

**Explanation :** Jaques says that motley is the only kind of dress which he would like to wear. However, if he is to perform the function of a fool, his listeners must change their opinion about him. He has the image of a serious kind of man. This opinion of theirs has to be removed from their minds just as any wild and unwanted growth is pulled out from a corn-field. When Jaques has put on the apparel meant for a fool, he must be taken and treated as a fool only. He must have the unlimited freedom to clearly express himself, to criticise and make fun of people. Those persons who feel hurt by his words, should laugh and keep in mind that those remarks were not aimed at them.

**Comment :** Shakespeare's use of simile of 'wind' is very apt.

### 14.3 LET US SUM UP

The play presents a range of characters who represent emotions such as love, jealousy, loyalty, and wisdom. The examination of important lines and moments in the text reveals the play's deeper messages and reflects Shakespeare's eternal relevance.

### 14.4 EXAMINATION ORIENTED QUESTIONS

**Q.1** Bring out the comic elements in *As You Like It*.

**Ans. One of the brightest comedies by Shakespeare :** A comedy is a form of drama which presents a major chunk of events in a pleasant, joyous and light-

hearted manner. It may begin with some sad and serious happenings but in the end all the conflicts are resolved and we have happy ending. *As You Like It* is one of Shakespeare's most brilliant comedies and offers tremendous entertainment and amusement to the readers. The playwright has introduced the elements of wit and humour in characters and incidents to make it one of

the most lovable of his comedies.

**The Healthy Wit of Rosalind and Celia:** Rosalind and Celia shine apart in *As You Like It* for their excellent wit and intelligent remarks. Their comments are intelligent as well as amusing. Wit generally consists of making amusing remarks which may be ironical, satirical, sarcastic or simply playful. Not only Rosalind and Celia but almost all the characters of *As You Like It* make a masterly use of this weapon of wit. Even the irony and satire do not appear pungent because they are covered in the mask of wit. As the play opens, we find Rosalind in a sad mood because of the unjust banishment of her father by her uncle Duke Frederick, but soon she cheers up when assured by her cousin Celia. The conversation between the two cousins offers an insight into their wit. First of all they start talking about the topic of love. Celia is of the opinion that one should take love merely as a game. It should not be taken seriously and a girl should not fall in love so deeply as to earn her a bad name. Then they change the topic and start talking about Lady Fortune who is unfair in distributing her gifts. Rosalind agrees to this and says that Lady Fortune is blind and she is unfair especially towards women. Celia observes that if Lady Fortune gifts a woman with beauty, she takes away chastity from her, and if a woman is chaste, she is generally ugly. Rosalind disagrees and says that the gifts of Lady Fortune should be separated from the gifts of Nature. Beauty is a gift of Nature while chastity is a gift of Lady Fortune. Rosalind gives an example of her outstanding wit when she tells Orlando, at a later stage, that time passes at different speeds with different people. We have then the memorable lines from Rosalind, "Men are April when they woo, December when they wed. Maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives." These lines are an excellent example of Rosalind's wit and humour. Infact, Celia's mind is very sharp and she is always ready with intelligent remarks. The forest of Arden gives Rosalind and Celia a right atmosphere to display their wit and gaiety. When Rosalind wants to know the identity of the man who has written so many verses in praise of her, Celia wittily remarks that this gentleman wears round his neck a chain which Rosalind herself used to wear at one time. She then says that there may

be mountains separating two lovers but that these mountains can be removed by an earthquake so that the lovers are able to meet each other. There are many more such examples. It is noteworthy that there is no malice or bitterness in Celia's remarks. These remarks rather reveal her good sense and humour. They are examples of healthy wit. Similarly, Rosalind's dialogues with Orlando when she is disguised as Ganymede are also finest examples of her wit and sense of humour. Her detailed description of how time passes at different speed with different people bear a testimony to her sharp mental faculties. She says that with a maiden, time passes very slowly between her betrothal and marriage. Contrary to this, time passes easily and comfortably with a priest and also with a rich man. Her description of a lover is also very amusing. A lover, she says, is supposed to be lean and thin, with sunken eyes, and a neglected beard. His sleeve buttons are untied, his shoe is untied and his stockings are ungartered. When Orlando says that he will die if he fails to win Rosalind, Rosalind wittily remarks that Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love.

**The Professional Wit of Touchstone:** We have in the play the professional wit of Touchstone who is a motley fool at Duke Frederick's court. Throughout the play are spread his ironical and satirical remarks which he unsparingly passes on everybody. Towards the end of the play we have his excellent comments on the behaviour of the courtiers when he tries to assure Duke Senior that he himself was at one time a courtier. In his second speech, he describes that 'if' is a very useful word and can be used to avoid a quarrel between two persons. Duke Senior also compliments Touchstone on his wisdom.

**The Cynical Wit of Jaques :** Jaques too is a witty character but in a very different sense. His wit is not a healthy wit as it is dominated by melancholy. Over the years, he has developed a sense of disgust with mankind in general. He regards Duke Senior as a usurper as he kills the deer in the forest, their natural abode. He remarks that in this respect Duke Senior is no better than his brother Duke Frederick. After listening to Amien's song in which he utters praise of the forest life, he comments that those who choose to live in forest

are fools as they deprive themselves of the comforts of the court life. After having met Touchstone, he strongly feels that he too will like to wear motley clothes like him as it will give him an opportunity to satirise the vices and follies of the people around him. Jaques' speech about the seven stages of human life is also cynical. He again shows his cynicism by saying that Orlando's worst fault is that he has fallen in love. Another example of his cynicism is when he tells Orlando that he doesn't like the name Rosalind. Infact, in all his speeches he displays a sharp wit but all this also shows his bitterness and cynicism of mind. Therefore, although he is a witty fellow, yet he has a cynical wit and not a healthy wit. Jaques' decision to join Duke Frederick at the end of the play is the final proof of his cynicism.

**The Comic Situations :** Not only the characters display a sharp wit which is the source of comedy, but the comic situations also make the play replete with humour. Infact irony is at work in so many situations which arouse laughter and amuse the readers. For instance, everyone knows Ganymede as a young man, but actually Ganymede is Rosalind in disguise. It is most ironical that even Duke Senior fails to recognise his daughter, Rosalind in the guise of Ganymede. When Orlando woos Ganymede, he does not know that he is wooing the very woman he loves. Equally amusing is Phoebe's falling in love with Ganymede. Therefore, Rosalind's disguise as a young man is a constant source of amusement for us. All these factors contribute to make *As You Like It* a delightful comedy, a pleasure to watch and read.

## **Q.2 Analyze the structure of *As You Like It*.**

**Ans.** *As You Like It* has at its centre, the theme of love which constitutes the main plot of the play. It has, however, three sub-plots. Shakespeare is a romantic dramatist in the sense that he did not follow the rules set by his predecessors regarding the dramatic unities in a play. The unity of action demands that there should be a single plot in the whole play, but in most of his dramas Shakespeare includes one or more subplots.

**The Main Plot :** Love of Rosalind and Orlando: The main plot in the play is the love story of Rosalind and Orlando. At the time of the wrestling match,

the two fall in love with each other at first sight. Destiny brings them together once again in the forest of Arden. Here Rosalind is disguised as a young man by the name of Ganymede and therefore Orlando cannot recognise her. As Orlando has not much to do in the forest of Arden, he writes verses in praise of the beauty and virtues of Rosalind and hangs these verses on the trees. Rosalind comes to know that the writer of these verses is none other than Orlando and she feels immensely happy. Rosalind and Orlando meet and she as Ganymede suggests to Orlando that they should meet daily and Orlando should imagine that Ganymede is his beloved Rosalind. He should express his love for Rosalind to Ganymede and woo her. In this way he will be cured of his madness for Rosalind. Orlando acts upon the suggestion and in one of the finest scenes of the play woos Ganymede imagining that he is wooing Rosalind. Eventually, Rosalind sheds her disguise and Duke Senior readily agrees to their marriage.

**The Silvius-Phoebe-Ganymede Sub-Plot :** The first sub-plot of the play is the Silvius - Phoebe - Ganymede complication. Silvius, a shepherd is in love with a shepherdess Phoebe who doesn't respond to his love. Ignorant of the fact that Ganymede is actually a woman by the name of Rosalind, Phoebe falls in love with Ganymede. She also sends a love-letter to Ganymede. The letter is carried by Silvius. Silvius feels hurt when he comes to know the contents of the letter. Ganymede rebukes Silvius for his servility to Phoebe who does not care for him at all. Finally Phoebe agrees to marry Silvius when Rosalind sheds her disguise. This sub-plot is closely linked with the main plot. It does not appear as a separate story without having any connection with the main plot of Rosalind-Orlando love-affair. Through Phoebe, Silvius and Corin, Shakespeare has given a faithful description of the pastoral life. Silvius is a love-sick man, Phoebe is a country girl and through the character of Corin Shakespeare has paid a compliment to the honest labour of a servant.

**The Touchstone-Audrey Sub-Plot:** Another sub-plot is that of the Touchstone's affair with a goat-herd Audrey. Audrey is a simple-minded girl who wants to be only a housewife. She decides to marry Touchstone only because he is city-bred and is superior to the man she had promised to marry



earlier. This man Williams is defeated by Touchstone in the battle of wits and therefore he leaves the thought of marrying Audrey. Touchstone, on the other hand wants to marry Audrey not because of any romantic feeling for her. He simply wants a girl who can look after his needs, without demanding anything from him, a woman whom he can fondle when he wants. Audrey has all these traits. So their love affair is far from being romantic. They come close to each other due to their practical reasons for getting married to each other. Finally, they get married the same day Rosalind and Orlando get married to each other.

**The Celia-Oliver Sub-Plot :** The romantic love affair of Celia and Oliver constitutes the third sub-plot of the play. This sub-plot is slightly improbable due to the suddenness with which Oliver and Celia fall in love with each other at first sight. This sub-plot is an important part of the main plot as Celia is the cousin of the heroine Rosalind and Oliver is elder brother of Orlando. Oliver undergoes a change of heart after being saved by Orlando from the attack of a lioness. He now becomes a suitable man to come closer to Celia. But this sub-plot is dealt with, in short by the dramatist. Not much space is given to the description of Oliver- Celia love affair.

**Superfluous Characters :** The above discussion however shows that although the play contains more than one plots they are closely knit and the structure of the play is not loose. All the sub-plots are significant and are intrinsically related to the main plot. There are, however, some characters who seem to be superfluous to the main plot. For instance, Touchstone, the court jester, falls in love with Audrey. This sub-plot offers a prosaic version of love. The play would have been complete even if this love story had been absent and Touchstone had remained only a humorist in the story. Secondly, Jaques also sometimes seems to have no significant role in the main plot of the play. He does nothing to forward the action of the play. He is merely a contemplative character, but he has a special place in the play as a full-fledged character. His observations and comments on various issues lend depth to the play. Although these two characters namely, Touchstone, the humourist and Jaques, the cynical philosopher have no substantial role in furthering the action of the

main plot, yet on the whole, they are important characters in themselves. The play would lose its humour and intensity without these characters.

**Songs in the Play :** *As You Like It* contains a number of songs. These songs are closely related to the action of the play. For instance, the two songs sung by Amiens clearly reflect the condition of Duke Senior and his comrades in the forest. On the whole, there is no loose thread in the play. All the characters are placed where they are required at different times. Shakespeare has also made use of another strategy of comparison and contrast to lend the play a wholeness. Duke Senior and Duke Frederick are antagonists to each other. Similarly, another pair of brothers i.e. Oliver and his youngest brother Orlando, are also found in a similar situation. They nurture strong dislike and hatred for each other. Again, Oliver undergoes a change of heart in the forest of Arden and becomes reconciled to Orlando. Similarly, Duke Frederick also gets transformed in the forest of Arden when he meets a saintly man. Love at first sight is again another common feature of all the four pairs who fall in love with each other. Then there are a number of contrasts in the play. The most striking contrast is between Celia and Rosalind. Then there is a contrast between the romantic love of Orlando and Rosalind and the practical love of Touchstone and Audrey. The artificial life of court serves as a contrast to the country life with its simplicity and honest labour. All these factors make *As You Like It*, a well-knit play from the structural point of view. The presence of so many sub-plots does not disturb the unity and beauty of the main plot of the Rosalind-Orlando love affair. Shakespeare has added some other strategies which contribute to strengthening the structure of the play on the whole. In short, *As You Like It* may comfortably be termed as a close-knit play with a taut structure.

**Q.3 Discuss the importance of the opening scene in *As You Like It*.**

**Ans.** An impressive opening scene in a play should ideally serve as an eye-opener for the spectators. It should give an adequate and satisfying hint of the forthcoming story around which the plot is woven. In the opening scene, the playwright also introduces the leading characters either directly or indirectly.

Another challenging demand on the opening scene is that it should be interesting and forceful enough to capture the attention of the viewers. In other words, the dramatic action herein has to be such as arouses the curiosity of the audience to know further about the characters and their lives. The opening scene of *As You Like It* has been very finely devised and presented by Shakespeare. It is very well scripted and gives to the viewers a fair idea of the main thrust of the story. It gives a glimpse of the present events and also the events that have taken place in the past. These events of the past have not been enacted on the stage, but have indirectly been introduced through conversation and dialogues between various characters. The important characters have also been introduced. The dramatic action is also captivating enough to arouse the curiosity of the audience to know further. In short, Shakespeare has shown his skilful craftsmanship in introducing the whole work plan of the play in the opening scene.

The scene opens with Orlando's speech who is talking to Adam, the old family servant. Orlando is seen in a bad temper and is talking about the ill-treatment he has received at the hands of his eldest brother Oliver. We come to know through the speech of Orlando that Orlando is the youngest of the three sons of Sir Rowland de Boys. Through the conversation of Orlando with Adam, we also come to know that Oliver is a villainous character as he has shown utter disregard for the will of his late father Sir Rowland. In the will Sir Rowland had given Oliver the responsibility to look after his youngest brother Orlando and also to give him proper education. At this point, Oliver enters. Hot words are exchanged between the two brothers and they also go to the extent of manhandling each other. The dialogue between the brothers throws enough light on the hatred they have for each other. We also come to know about the nobility of Orlando's character and his immense physical strength. Orlando leaves in anger. Oliver is infuriated and calls for Charles, the court wrestler. Charles informs Oliver about the political happenings at the court. He tells him that the old Duke, Duke Senior has been banished by his younger brother, Duke Frederick. Three or four loyal comrades have accompanied Duke Senior into exile. He further informs that Duke Senior's

daughter Rosalind, has however, been held back to give company to her cousin, Duke Frederick's daughter, Celia. It is also informed that Celia loves Rosalind immensely and would prefer to go with Rosalind in exile rather than live alone in the palace. Charles also informs Oliver and indirectly the viewers that Duke Senior has headed towards the forest of Arden with his lords. Through this conversation, we are acquainted with the main happenings and the leading characters of the play. We get introduced with the banished Duke and with his younger brother Duke Frederick who has illegally usurped the whole empire of his elder brother.

This gives us an insight into what sort of characters are these two brothers. We are also introduced to Duke Senior's daughter, Rosalind and her cousin. Although her name is not mentioned in the first scene but we at once recognise her in the second scene when we meet her in conversation with Rosalind. The hatred that exists between the two brothers Oliver and Orlando is also introduced. Through their discussion we get an idea of Oliver being a jealous character with a negative bent of mind. Orlando, on the other hand, is a cultured and well-behaved man. The forest of Arden is also mentioned which will serve as the place where the major events of the play will take place. The opening scene, therefore, is a window to the whole play. Now the scene moves forward and gives an indication of the events to follow. Charles is instructed by Oliver to have a wrestling bout with his brother Orlando. Oliver tells Charles to break Orlando's ribs and if possible, to put an end to his (Orlando's) life. Oliver also confides to Charles that Orlando is not his brother, he is rather an object of hatred. Charles promises that he will follow Oliver's instructions and will break Orlando's neck. Now we come to know that the wrestling match is to take place the next day in the lawn of Duke Frederick's court. After the revelations in the first scene, it becomes obvious for the viewers to guess that Rosalind and Celia will also come to see the match as it will take place in the lawns near the Duke's court and also in the presence of the Duke. We also wish in the heart of our hearts that Orlando wins this match. Although we do not have any precise idea of the coming developments but we are fully prepared to enter into the lives of the characters already

introduced or hinted and also understand the events that will take place during the further course of action in the play. The opening scene, thus, unfolds the coming events that form the core of the plot and secondly, introduces to us the main characters of the play. It also fulfils another demand i.e. building an atmosphere of suspense and curiosity as well as of excitement. The audience are curious to know as to what happens to Orlando in the wrestling match; they want to know more about Rosalind and Celia, about how Duke Senior has adjusted to the life in the forest of Arden, so on.

**Q.4 Discuss the significance of the closing scene in *As You Like It*.**

**Ans.** The opening and closing scenes play a very significant role in the scheme of a drama. These scenes in Shakespearean drama are masterpieces of dramatic craft. Whereas the opening scene gives us an insight into the forthcoming events of the play, the closing scene sums up all the conflicts either in a tragic or in a happy way. Although an entire play of Shakespeare presents his highly creative genius as a playwright, yet his opening and closing scenes come out as unforgettable pieces. Besides the main plot of Rosalind-Orlando love affair, *As You Like It* has many sub-plots. Therefore, the demands on the closing scene become all the more exacting as it needs to resolve all the fragments into one single whole in a reasonable and credible way. Shakespeare has managed to achieve this effect in a masterly manner in *As You Like It*. Even before the last scene, the indications are given that the playwright is winding up the issues that were raised during the course of the play. In Act V, Scene II, Ganymede prepares Phoebe to marry Silvius in case Phoebe doesn't marry Ganymede. In this very scene she asks Orlando, Phoebe and Silvius to be present at the time of the wedding of Aliena and Oliver the next day. They all promise to be there and it is enough of an anticipation of the final resolution being close at hand. In Act V, Scene III, Touchstone is seen telling Audrey that they are going to get married the next day. Infact, the marriage of Touchstone and Audrey is withheld from being solemnised in Act III, Scene III only because Shakespeare wants this pair to be married along with the other three pairs in the closing scene in order to heighten the effect at the end of the play. When the closing scene opens, we see Duke Senior talking

to Orlando about the efficacy of Ganymede's magic. Orlando replies that he himself is not very sure about it. Sometimes, he believes it and sometimes he doesn't. Ganymede then asks the Duke if he would agree to give his daughter Rosalind in marriage to Orlando if she happens to appear before them by magic. Duke Senior promises to do so. Ganymede then reminds Duke Senior, Phoebe, Silvius and Orlando once more of their promise. Rosalind and Celia depart together. Duke Senior tells Orlando that this young man Ganymede bears a stark resemblance with his daughter Rosalind. Orlando agrees and says that he too first suspected him to be Rosalind's brother, and also enquired about it, but Ganymede told him that he was forest born and had learnt magic from his uncle.

His revelation made Orlando change his view. Now Touchstone and Audrey join the band and Audrey is introduced to the Duke by Touchstone in his particular humorous way. Jaques, who has already developed a liking for Touchstone enters into a witty conversation with him. In this conversation, Touchstone make a scathing attack on the behaviour of the courtiers but in a humorous and witty manner. Duke Senior is also impressed and compliments Touchstone by saying that he is a wise fool. Meanwhile, Rosalind and Celia get enough time to shed their disguise and assume their natural self once again. At this juncture, Hymen, the God of marriage enters with his train in a masque. And now Rosalind and Celia, accompanied by God Hymen, appear in their original selves. Ganymede's magic has produced Rosalind and Celia but Ganymede and Aliena are nowhere to be seen. Phoebe discovers, with mixed feelings of amazement and disappointment that Ganymede was actually a girl by the name of Rosalind in disguise. She, however, has no other option to accept Silvius' love whose love for Phoebe is atleast pure and sincere. It is a perfect scene where no threads are left loose. There is, however, one more issue that is still unresolved, i.e. the restoration of Duke Senior to his throne so as to re-instate law and order. This is accomplished by the sudden entry of Jaques de Boys, the son of Sir Rowland de Boys. He brings the news that Duke Frederick was heading towards the forest of Arden with an intention to put an end to Duke Senior's life, but he came

across a hermit on the outskirts of the forest. The Duke was influenced by this hermit's views to such an extent that he got transformed, decided to renounce this world and to spend his remaining life in the forest of Arden. This means that Duke Senior, the rightful Duke, will be reinstalled & his companions will also get back their lost glory. Jaques, the cynical philosopher seeks an assurance from Jaques de Boys whether Duke Frederick has chosen the religious life in all sincerity and Jaques de Boys confirms it by saying, "He hath" Jaques, the melancholy philosopher, declares his decision to accompany Duke Frederick as he will get enough opportunity to share philosophical ideas with Duke Frederick. Now the celebrations are made for the four pairs of couples getting married and also for the rightful re-installation of Duke Senior. The closing scene is, therefore, the most satisfying and artistically excellent scene in the play. It meets all the demands of a well-conceived, logical and agreeable ending in the play *As You Like It*.

**Q.5 Discuss *As You Like It* as a romantic comedy.**

**Ans.** *As You Like It* is one of the finest romantic comedies that Shakespeare has written. A romantic comedy is a play where the romantic elements are combined with comic elements. While the romantic elements thrill us, the comic elements make us laugh. The romantic elements shift us to an ideal world in which things are more pleasing than the actual world in which we live. And the comic elements make us laugh and forget our worries and anxieties. *As You Like It* contains so many characters and situations which provoke laughter although, there are sad incidents at the base of the play. Whereas Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone arouse the reader's/audience's laughter by their witty remarks; Jaques amuses us with his cynical, whimsical but wise comments.

**The Mixture of Comic Elements and Sad Happenings :** The plays before Shakespeare were purely tragic or purely comic. The mixture of these two elements, either tragic and comic was not considered healthy in the ancient plays. The very mixture of the comic situations and characters with sad and serene happenings is romantic. Shakespeare has made a daring attempt to write plays in a different mould. Therefore, the description of the

play as romantic is quite justified. We have, for instance, the sad elements in *As You Like It* as the banishment of Duke Senior, the violent quarrel between Oliver and Orlando, Oliver's plan to get Orlando killed, the banishment of Rosalind for no reason at all, and many other such events. But simultaneously, we have the presence of Touchstone, the court jester, Jacques's melancholy wit, the romantic love affairs of Rosalind-Orlando, Celia-Oliver, Touchstone-Audrey and Phoebe-Silvius; the beauty of life in the forest of Arden despite its hardships; and above all the happy ending of the play - all these factors amuse the readers.

**The Theme of Love - Highly Romantic:** The play has at its centre the theme of youthful love. All the four love pairs present the same example of love-at-first-sight. Rosalind falls in love with Orlando at first sight and he too falls in love with her instantly. Rosalind gives him a chain which she had been wearing round her neck. In the forest of Arden, we find Orlando composing verses in praise of beauty and virtue of Rosalind, hanging these verses on the branches of the trees, carving the name of Rosalind on the trunks of the trees - all these show Orlando as a passionate romantic lover of the highest order. As for Rosalind she also responds to Orlando's love in the same romantic manner. She plays the game of love with Orlando in a fantastic manner. Being herself disguised as a male by the name of Ganymede, she prepares Orlando make love to her as if she were his own Rosalind. And the mock-wooing scene in the play is highly romantic. The love of Celia and Oliver too is a romantic affair. They too fall in love at first sight. But their love is quite sudden. Phoebe's love for Ganymede also is very romantic. She falls immediately in love with Ganymede, struck by his handsome appearance. All these are the examples of romantic love in the youthful phase. However, we have another pair, Touchstone and Audrey who present a kind of love quite different from the romantic love. Theirs is a kind of practical love based on the factors of mutual convenience of both people. But on the whole, *As You Like It* is a striking example of the romantic theme of youthful love.

**The Romantic Setting:** The Forest of Arden: The major part of the story is being set in the rural surroundings of the forest of Arden. Far from the



crowds of people in the city and the shrewd and diplomatic people there, the forest of Arden presents a congenial atmosphere for the feelings of love to flourish. As Duke Senior says, one may have to face rough weather and icy winds, but there is no place for hypocrisy here in the forest of Arden. And that is the reason why the passion of love gets enough scope to grow here. Orlando's passion for Rosalind, Rosalind's passion for Orlando, Phoebe's passion for Ganymede, Celia's passion-all these find a proper atmosphere to mature. The pastoral element also heightens the romantic quality of the play.

**Romantic Friendship:** The element of romance is found not only in the persons of opposite sex, but there is something very touching about the beauty of relationship between Celia and Rosalind; and between Adam and Orlando too. Celia's love for Rosalind is very special in nature. She cannot stand the separation with Rosalind. When Duke Frederick passes an order of banishment for Rosalind, Celia defends her cousin and tells her father that she and Rosalind have slept together, risen from bed together, studied together, played together, eaten together, and gone everywhere together and therefore, if Rosalind is a traitor, why is she spared. She is as much a traitor as Rosalind is. It is Celia who offers to go with Rosalind into exile. Such affection is really touching. Similarly, there is something romantic about the loyalty and devotion of Adam to Orlando. Adam suggests Orlando to quit the house of his brother Oliver at once as his life there was in danger because of Oliver's plan to put an end to Orlando's life. Again, Adam places his whole life's savings at Orlando's hands and also offers to accompany him anywhere. Such devotion is also very moving.

**The Three Dramatic Unities Not Observed :** The ancient classical plays recommended that an authentic play should observe the three unities - of time, place and action. The unity of time demands that the play should cover not more than twenty four hours; The unity of place demands that the entire action of the play should occur in the same town; the unity of action demands that the play should have a single plot. Shakespeare has violated all these conditions. *As You Like It* is a romantic play from this perspective also. It, therefore is lightly termed as a romantic comedy which appeals greatly to our

emotions, imagination and our faculty of laughter.

#### **14.5 SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS**

**Q.1 Write in brief the escapade of Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone from the Duke's palace.**

**Ans.** Infact, out of sheer jealousy, for Rosalind's popularity among people, Duke Frederick passed an order of banishment for Rosalind. Despite a strong protest from Celia, Duke Frederick refused to reverse his order. Celia was deeply attached to Rosalind right from the childhood. She could not bear the idea of being separated from Rosalind. Therefore, she suggested a plan to Rosalind. The plan was that both of them would slip out of the palace in disguise. It was decided that Rosalind would disguise herself as a male by the name of Ganymede whereas Celia would smirch her face with umber and put on poor, rough clothes. According to the plan Celia assumed a new name 'Aliena'. They now acted like a brother and sister. They took all their wealth and jewels with them. They also took Touchstone, the court jester with them and fled from the palace unnoticed. The Forest of Arden was their destination. It was, no doubt, a brilliant plan.

**Q.2 Describe the first meeting between Orlando and Duke Senior and his lords.**

**Ans.** Orlando, fled to the Forest of Arden realising the risk to his life from his eldest brother Oliver. The old loyal servant Adam was with him. Orlando and Adam had reached the outskirts of the Forest of Arden. Both were exhausted and extremely hungry. Being young Orlando could tolerate hunger and fatigue, but Adam was an old man of eighty and was almost dying of starvation. Orlando was deeply indebted to Adam for his loyalty and was committed to save his life at any cost. So, he put Adam under a tree in a safe place and went in search of food. Duke Senior with his comrades was sitting in front of his cave. They were about to start their meal. Orlando suddenly burst upon them with his sword drawn. He warned them not to touch food until he had taken some share of food for the starving old man. Duke Senior assured him that he was welcome to their camp and there was no need for him to behave

in such a rude and uncultured manner. The Duke asked Orlando to go and bring Adam there. The Duke also promised that nobody will touch anything till the old man was well fed. Orlando and Adam were welcomed by the group of Duke Senior. Orlando introduced himself as the youngest son of late Sir Rowland de Boys who was a great friend of Duke Senior. Orlando, thus, got a shelter for himself in the forest of Arden. He was accepted as a member of the camp of Duke Senior and his lords.

**Q.3 Describe how Rosalind and Orlando fell in love with each other at first sight.**

**Ans.** Orlando accepted the open challenge of Charles, the court wrestler. Everyone present there, including Duke Frederick, Rosalind and Celia tried to dissuade Orlando from entering into a wrestling bout with Charles who was undoubtedly a strong man and had broken the bones of three contestants before Orlando. Orlando was determined and said that he wanted only the blessings and good wishes of everyone to win this match. To the astonishment of all the audience, Orlando very soon overthrew Charles. Rosalind was extremely impressed and she fell for his bravery and sense of determination. She felt all the more drawn to him when Duke Frederick refused to provide any reward to Orlando simply because he was son of his rival, late Sir Rowland de Boys. She took a chain from her neck and requested him to wear the chain round his neck for her sake. Orlando was too spell-bound to utter a single word. He was captivated by Rosalind's heavenly beauty. In this way, Rosalind and Orlando fell in love with each other at first sight. Orlando became so speechless that he could not even ask the two ladies about their identity. When Le Beau returned and told him that his life was in danger and he must leave the palace immediately, then Orlando enquired about the names and identities of the ladies. He was informed that the smaller one was Duke Frederick's daughter Celia and the tall one was the daughter of the banished duke. Orlando left the place thinking about Rosalind.

**Q.4 Describe briefly the love game which Rosalind played with Orlando.**

**Ans.** Rosalind, disguised as the man by the name of Ganymede, meets Orlando in

the Forest of Arden. She is overwhelmed to see the verses composed in praise of her beauty and virtues hanging on the trees and her name carved on the tree trunks by none else than her Orlando. She manages a meeting with him. Orlando confides in Ganymede and reveals his love-sickness to Ganymede. At this, Ganymede suggests a plan to cure Orlando of his affliction. The plan is that they should meet daily and Ganymede will play the role of Rosalind and Orlando will give a free expression to his feelings for Rosalind, considering Ganymede as Rosalind. Orlando agrees to this and starts coming to their cottage. He does not have the slightest idea that Ganymede is his own beloved Rosalind. This love game forms the most romantic part of the play. It also displays Rosalind at the best of her wits. Both of them reveal their most subtle emotions in this love-making. The scene in which Orlando woos Rosalind is one of the best scenes of the play.

**Q.5 Describe briefly how Adam, the old servant came to the help of Orlando.**

**Ans.** Since the time of (Orlando's) father Sir Rowland de Boys, Adam had been the servant in Orlando's house. After the death of Sir Rowland, Oliver ill-treated his younger brother Orlando. He did not discharge the responsibility of providing proper education or upbringing to Orlando and also wanted to hold back the money that Sir Rowland had left in Orlando's share. Oliver went to the extent of instigating the court wrestler Charles to break Orlando's ribs and if possible, to put an end to his life. This plan of Oliver turned out to be a failure as Orlando overthrew Charles in the wrestling bout. Oliver again planned to set on fire the lodging where Orlando used to sleep at night. Adam overheard all this and requested Orlando not to stay any longer in that city as his life was in danger. Orlando asked Adam how he would sustain himself without any money and any specialised skill for any work. At this, Adam offered him five hundred crowns which was the savings of his lifetime. He also offered to accompany Orlando wherever Orlando went and promised to provide Orlando his services till the end. Orlando felt deeply indebted to Adam and both left for the Forest of Arden.

**Q.6 How was Oliver saved from the attack of a lioness by Orlando?**

**Ans.** Rosalind and Celia were found missing from the palace and, Orlando has also fled from the city. It was, therefore, widely suspected that Orlando was a party to this conspiracy. Oliver, the eldest brother of Orlando was summoned by Duke Frederick to enquire from him the whereabouts of Orlando, which would provide clue to the whereabouts of Rosalind and Celia also. After a haughty conversation between Duke Frederick and Oliver, Duke Frederick seized Oliver's property and expelled him from his kingdom. Oliver also headed towards the Forest of Arden. Orlando happened to pass by that way when he saw Oliver lying asleep and a snake encircling itself around Oliver's neck. On seeing Orlando approach, the snake uncoiled itself and slipped away into a bush. Behind the bush, was a lioness waiting for Oliver to wake up. It is well known that lions and lionesses never attack a sleeping person. When Orlando saw it was Oliver, his first instinct was to leave him in danger as Oliver was the mean brother who manoeuvred Orlando's murder but brotherly affection overcame Orlando's feelings of hatred. He took the initiative and fought the lioness at the risk of his own life. The lioness was ultimately killed. In this way, Orlando succeeded in saving Oliver's life. Oliver woke up when Orlando was engaged in fierce fight with the lioness. He felt ashamed of his attitude towards Orlando. He repented for his past follies and both the brothers shed tears and became reconciled to each other. Orlando's forgiving Oliver is a reinforcement of the theme of forgiveness and love in the play *As You Like It*.

**14.6 ANSWER KEY**

**Activity:** Villian- Sir Rowland de Boys, Oliver, reason-noble, monster.

**14.7 SUGGESTED READING**

Michael Dobson and Stanley W. Wells, editors. *The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare*. 2nd ed., Oxford University Press, 2015.

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