

READING DRAMA

BA ENGLISH

V SEMESTER (2011 ADMISSION)

III SEMESTER (2012 ADMISSION)

CORE COURSE



UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

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STUDY MATERIAL

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MODULE I: DRAMA AND THEATRE

1. WHAT IS DRAMA?

THE ORIGIN OF DRAMA

Drama is a literary composition meant to be staged. The term 'drama' is derived from the Greek word 'dran' which means 'to act'.

Aristotle's "Poetics" deals with dramatics. According to Aristotle, the aim of drama is to instruct and delight the spectators. He says that drama is an imitation of human action.

THE ORIGIN OF DRAMA.

Drama originated in ancient Greece. During the festivals of Dionysus (the god of nature, fertility and wine), there was much ritualized dancing and singing. Two types of plays originated from such celebrations. They are tragedy which represented the serious side and comedy which represented the lighter side of human life.

A SHORT HISTORY OF ENGLISH DRAMA.

In England drama originated from the religious performances of the Middle Ages. Priests played the roles of characters and Plays were usually performed inside the church. The dialogue was in Latin. In due course, Latin was replaced by English and Performance began to be carried on outside the church. Gradually drama became popular. The plays produced by Trade Guilds on religious themes became popular as Mystery Plays and Miracle plays. Mysteries have themes from the Bible and the Miracles dealt with the lives of saints. Morality plays were plays in which the characters represented abstract qualities. Interludes were the kind of play within the play i.e. a comic script in common topic introduced in the midst of a serious play.

Nicholas Udall's 'Ralph Roister Doister' (1550) was the earliest English comedy. The works of Roman philosopher, Seneca were an important model for English tragedies in the 16th century. The first English tragedy was 'Gorboduc' or Ferrex and Porex (1561) written by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton. Thomas Kyd wrote his famous melodrama "Spanish Tragedy". It is a revenge tragedy. John Webster's 'The Duchess of Malfi' bears the influence of Seneca. Christopher Marlow's plays, 'Tamburlaine', 'Doctor Faustus', 'the Jew of Malta' and 'Edward II' depicts the Renaissance spirit. The Senecan influence can be traced even in Shakespeare's King Richard III, Hamlet and Macbeth. Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlow were popularly known as 'the university wits'. They prepared the ground for Shakespeare. Ben Jonson was a famous writer of comedies during the Elizabethan age. Jonson's comedies are popularly known as 'comedy of humours'. They represented the eccentricities of characters. "Volpone" is a fine example.

The puritan attack on drama led to the closing down of all theatres in England in 1642 and this led to the steady decline of drama during this period. During the Restoration period (restoration of Monarchy in England in 1660) drama revived again. The Restoration plays were mainly comedies. They were modeled on the realistic comedies of Ben Jonson. They were known as comedy of manners. They portrayed the manners of the elites. Congreve's 'The way of the World' and William Wycherley's 'The Country Wife' are the best examples.

The Victorian age saw the rise of problem plays. They dealt with contemporary social problems. The works of Henrik Ibsen and Emile François Zola belong to this category. Their works were realistic and naturalistic in spirit. Bernard Shaw was the advocate of the problem play in England. He employed drama as a medium for social betterment. In the hands of John Galsworthy, drama became a powerful instrument for social criticism.

The early decades of the 20th century witnessed the rise of poetic drama. This form was experimented by Oscar Wilde, W. B. Yeats, J. M. Synge, Sean o' Casey, T.S. Eliot etc. Eliot's play 'Murder in the Cathedral' showed the spirit of Greek Drama. The 1950s saw the rise of working class drama. They portrayed frustration and anger of the post-war period. John Osborne's "Look Back in Anger" portrays the angry young man. The existential world view shared by Nietzsche, Sartre and Albert Camus also revolutionized the concept of modern drama. The Theatre of the Absurd is a significant development in the English theatre.

The absurd play seeks to explore the spiritual loneliness, complete isolation and anxiety of the down and outs of society.

Thus English drama continues to change, flourish and grow, and this despite the competition from the cinema and television, the work has been revolutionary and far-reaching.

DRAMA AS A PERFORMING ART

Performance is the essence of all dramatic literature. A dramatic text attains perfection through performance. In performance, a text progresses from situation to situation. However everything in a drama is bound by structural elements like acts and scenes. The various signs of drama are the language, the setting, the gestures, costumes, make-up, and voice inflations of the actors. A judicious combination of these elements contributes to the creation of meaning of a performance. Drama also incorporates other elements like painting, sculpture, architecture, and music.

DRAMA AND THEATRE

The word theatre has been derived from the Greek word, theatrons which means a place for viewing. It refers to the space used for a dramatic performance. Theatre is a form of self-expression and self-realization. It is a communal art involving the actors and the spectators alike. Theatre is a medium to entertain people. It portrays the conflicts and struggles of the times. It is also used as a means for propaganda.

Theatres can be of different types. It can be a house or an open space. Thespis was the first actor playwright in Greece. He is supposed to have initiated the one-actor tradition in theatre performance. Early Greek performances were staged in huge amphitheatres situated in open areas. The audience sat on tiers about 60 to 70 feet across around the stage. The theatre was rich in music, rituals and dance. Since there were no barriers between the actors and the audience, the actor-audience participation was high. There were only a few actors. The tragic actors wore masks, padded costumes and thick, high heeled shoes. The comic actors wore light-weight, low shoes. The masks prevented the actors from changing expressions and hence the actor's facial expression remained unchanged throughout performance.

In England, there was a time when plays were performed in the royal courts and the households of the elites. Due to the lack of permanent theatres, the players wandered from place to place performing in public places. Thus the theatres of Elizabethan England had a simple open structure.

In the Elizabethan theatre, there was no front curtain and scenes followed without a break. There was no theatrical scenery and cards hung on pillars of the upper stage showed the scene of action. There were no footlights and performances took place during daylight. There were no women actors and the role of women was played by young boys.

Modern theatre began to develop around the mid-nineteenth century England and culminated in the late nineteenth century European plays of Ibsen and Chekhov and also the realist plays that sprang after the World War II Emile Zola introduced realism in theatre, Brecht, the epic theatre and Beckett an anti-realistic theatre, expressing the existential predicament of modern man.

DRAMA AND SOCIETY:

DRAMA: A POWERFUL MEDIUM FOR SOCIAL CRITICISM.

Drama is an objective and impersonal representation of life. The chorus of the ancient Greek tragedies often functioned as the author's mouth piece. The main function of the chorus was to narrate the events that took place off the stage and to make some comments on the morality of the actions presented on the stage. In modern plays, the place of the chorus is taken by one of the characters in the play, who functions as the mouth piece of the playwright. In modern problem plays, we often come across a character whose principal function in the play is merely to move through it as a philosophic spectator. Thus Enobarbus in Shakespeare's 'Antony and Cleopatra' and Bluntschli in Bernard Shaw's 'Arms and the Man' function as a kind of Chorus. With the critical comments of such characters, the playwright tries to bring out a social criticism of life.

Bernard Shaw regards social criticism as the most important function of all art. Bertolt Brecht insists that drama is not just an imitation of an action but a powerful tool for the determination of social conditions. Apart from providing entertainment, it can become a powerful instrument for effecting social change. A socially committed playwright can use drama as a power medium to explore social issues of his times and express them through personal or domestic conflict in his plays. The ancient Greek plays criticized the social and

political issues taking themes of mythology. In the medieval age, drama was used to enact biblical stories and lives of the saints to teach morality.

In the modern period, playwrights like Henric Ibsen and Strindberg discussed in their plays complex social issues. Ibsen's 'A Doll's House' reveals the playwright's social concern, especially the status of women in a patriarchal society. Bernard Shaw was the advocate of the problem play in England. He employed drama as a medium for social betterment. In the hands of John Galsworthy, drama became a powerful instrument for social criticism.

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The absurd play seeks to explore the spiritual loneliness, complete isolation and anxiety of the down and outs of society. In the postmodern period, drama becomes a powerful medium to expose and criticize the demoralized and disintegrated modern society. These plays project a sense of alienation frustration and hopelessness of modern man drifting from nothingness to nothingness.

2. TYPES OF THEATRE.

i. THEATRE OF THE ABSURD.

The Theatre of the Absurd took its origin from the existential world view as expressed in the writing of such writers like Nietzsche, Sartre, and Albert Camus. These existentialists placed existence over essence. They proclaimed the motto “first existence and then essence.”

They analyzed man’s life in this universe as an alien one and that it is full of anguish and nausea. The absurd theatre having roots in existential philosophy, wanted to project a sense of isolation, frustration and hopelessness of modern man who is drifting from nothingness to nothingness only to learn that there is nothing significant in human life and that we are cast off into this alien world to learn the existential meaningless of human condition.

The term ‘Absurd’ is derived from the Latin ‘absurdum’ which means contradictory. The term is first used by Albert Camus in his essay “The Myth of Sisyphus” to describe the existential nothingness of human life. Martin Esslin borrowed the term absurd from Camus and applied it to the plays that reflected the spiritual apathy of the post-war world. The absurd play ignores the traditional notions of a well-knit plot, character and setting. The characters are caught in hopeless situations and are forced to do meaningless monotonous actions. Samuel Becket’s ‘Waiting for Godot’ is a significant play in this mode.

i. THE EPIC THEATRE.

The Epic Theatre was introduced by the German playwright, Bertolt Brecht. The epic theatre is quite different from the realistic and naturalistic theatre. Instead of getting the audience emotionally involved in the action of the play, the playwright of this mode tries to transport them to a state of social and political awareness. Brecht wanted to protect the audience from being overwhelmed by what they watch on the stage. In order to achieve this objective, Brecht introduced the alienation technique in his plays. The German term for the concept is ‘*verfrundung*’. It means de-familiarization. He wanted to ensure the participation of the audience. He wanted to develop their own thoughts and criticism about the events they spectate on the stage. For this they must have logical reasoning power. The alienation techniques that Brecht employed in his plays help the audience develop their power of reasoning so that they may be critical viewers of the play rather than being passive or emotionally overwhelmed spectators.

The alienation technique defined the style of the epic theatre. The audience must question what they see on the stage. Neither the audience nor the actors themselves are supposed to identify themselves with the characters and events of the play.

The following are some of the alienation techniques used by Brecht:

- i. The use of mask, music and dance.
- ii. A variety of non-realistic techniques like use of placards, film clips, glaring light effects.
- iii. Characters commenting on the action between scenes
- iv. Episodic plot.
- v. Establishing a more direct and honest relationship with the audience.

Changing of costumes, wearing of masks and creating stage effects are all done in the presence of the audience to highlight the fact that 'theatre is a theatre and nothing more.'

i. STREET THEATRE

This form of theatre is a dramatization of social and political issues usually enacted on a street or market place. It was born out of the specific needs of the working class people exploited by capitalism or feudalism.

The practitioners of this theatre make use of their own natural voice, physical abilities, simple costumes, and props. They also maintain direct interaction with the audience to enhance their maximum participation. It is a non-profit activity. No money is exacted from the audience. The plays are usually short and the communication is direct, intimate and effective.

ii. THE THEATRE OF CRUELTY.

The Theatre of Cruelty was conceived by Antonin Artaud. It combined in itself surrealism, ritualism, symbolism and improvisation. Artaud wanted to shock the audience with a total ritualistic environment of stylized movements, gestures, light, rhythm and sound. Thus he disturbed the elemental emotions and instincts of the audience. He wanted to remove the barrier between the actors and the audience. He presented gruesome murders and anti-social impulses on the stage with a view to purging the audience of such impulses. By seeing dire cruelty inside the theatre, the spectator never yields to the ideas of war and violence in real life.

iii. THE POOR THEATRE

The Theatre of the Poor was inaugurated by a Polish Theatre Director, named Jerzy Grotowski, the author of the book 'Towards a Poor Theatre (1968). His theatre was poor in the sense that it is stripped of all the unnecessary elements such as elaborate techniques, sound and light effect and costume. In his view, such extraneous elements would relegate the actor and his acting to the background. Grotowski focused on the actor's voice and body skills. He emphasized the relationship between the actor and the audience. In order to awe the audience, the actor require the aid of no theatrical devices such as the setting, costume, make-up, music, lighting and other special effects. Grotowsky formulated the concept of the 'holy actor'. The actor must act in a state of trance for which rigorous training is essential. The success of the play depends on the actor's skill in using his body, mind and voice.

iv. FEMINIST THEATRE

The feminist theatre views theatre as a tool for critiquing the subordination of women in a male dominated society. It is also a means of self-expression and self-exploration of women. It aims at the empowerment of women.

The feminist theatre challenges the male-dominated world of theatre. It gives expression to the under-represented experiences of women in a male-dominated society. It represented women as subjects in their own rights and definite identity. The feminist playwrights introduced new subjects, vocabularies, character forms, and alternate modes of perception. They shifted the emphasis from women's relationship to men to women's relationship to women.

In England many performing companies explored the impact of gender, race and class on women's experience. The feminist playwrights like Sarah Daniels, Caryl Churchill etc. portrayed issues related to family relationship, reproduction, motherhood, sexuality and rewriting of myths and history.

Megan Terry is the mother of American Feminist Drama. Modern feminist plays are largely written by women for women. They place women in the midst of an identity crisis examining their responses and ways of tackling it.

v. RITUALISTIC THEATRE.

Theatre originated in rituals. Ancient Greek drama took its origin to certain religious rituals performed during the worship of Dionysus, the God of wine and fertility.

Ritual and ceremonial drama usually make use of stylized enactments constructed by selecting the essence of a situation. Ritual performance incorporates all devices like music, dance, speech, masks, costumes, acting space, performers, and audience. The actors are highly skilled and disciplined. Usually the acting space is circular and surrounded by spectators. It ensured more of actor-audience participation. Many modern playwrights attempt to preserve the ritual in their plays. Genet makes use of the rituals relation to the church, the law, and the military in his play 'The Balcony' (1956). Harold Pinter's drama also abounds in the use of daily secular rituals in his attempts to confront the mysteries of man's life. 'The Birthday Party', 'The Dumb Waiter', and 'The Homecoming' are plays written in the ritualistic mode.

3. GENRES OF DRAMA

i. TRAGEDY.

Aristotle defines tragedy as ‘the imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude, in language embellished with each kinds of artistic ornaments, the several kinds being found in the separate parts of the play, in the form of action and not narrative, through pity and fear effecting catharsis or the proper purgation of these emotions.’

Aristotle regarded tragedy as the highest form of poetry. He identified six elements of tragedy. They are plot, character, thought, diction, music and spectacle. Tragedy is a serious play that deals with the misfortunes and sufferings of man. The tragic hero is neither too virtuous nor too vicious but his misfortune or fall is brought about by some error or frailty. Aristotle called it hamartia which means tragic flaw. Tragedy excites pity and fear in the minds of the audience, thus resulting in the purgation of their emotions.

Aristotle divides the plot of tragedies into two kinds: (i) simple and (ii) complex. The distinction is made on the basis of whether the plot is accompanied by peripatetic and anagnorisis. Peripeteia means reversal of the situation and anagnorisis means recognition or discovery. In a simple plot, there are no puzzling situations like peripeteia or anagnorisis.

Aristotle is quite emphatic that Plot is more important than character. He even says that there can be tragedy without character, but none without plot. The function of tragedy is the arousal of the feelings of pity and fear in the mind of the audience effecting catharsis or proper purgation of these emotions. As a result when the spectators leave the theatre, they attain a calm state of mind. This is the principle behind tragic pleasure.

Marlow made significant contribution in the field of tragedy. His heroes are not kings or princes but humble individual. However, they have heroic qualities. Tamburlaine and Dr. Faustus are examples, the former is a shepherd, and the latter a poor scholar. Their insatiable ambition leads them to their downfall. Marlow added to the English tragedy the element of struggle which was absent in the tragedy of the Middle Ages.

A Shakespearean tragedy is the story of the downfall of a man from a high status. The story leads up to the death of the hero. At the end the stage is littered with dead bodies.

Modern conception of tragedy differs from the Aristotelian, Medieval and Shakespearean conception. The hero of a modern tragedy is not a person of high rank and status. He is a person like us, who suffers terribly, for no fault of his own. The saying ‘character is destiny’ is not true of modern tragedy. For example, Thomas Hardy’s concept of tragedy is capsuled in a quotation drawn from Shakespeare’s “King Lear”: ‘As flies to wanton boys, Are we to God/ They kill us for their sport.’

ii. COMEDY

The roots of comedy lie deep in satirical verse as those of tragedy in epic poetry. Satirical verse itself owes its origin to the earlier phalli songs sung in honour of Dionysus, the god of fertility. Comedy represents men as worse than they are. While satire ridicules personalities, comedy ridicules general vices. The purpose of comedy was to correct manners and conduct. Nicholas Udall's 'Ralph Roister Doister' (1550) was the earliest English comedy.

Ben Jonson was a famous writer of comedies during the Elizabethan age. Jonson's comedies are popularly known as 'comedy of humours'. They represented the eccentricities of characters. "Volpone" is a fine example.

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iii. TRAGI-COMEDY

Tragicomedy is a type of drama which inter-mingled the characters, subject matter and plot forms of tragedy and comedy. Thus the important agents in tragicomedy included both people of high degree and people of low degree. Tragicomedy represented a serious action which threatened a tragic disaster to the protagonist, yet, by sudden reversal of circumstance, turns out happily. Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice" is the best example. The tragic-comic genre was adopted by Shakespeare in his 'Cymbeline', 'The Winter's Tale' and 'The Tempest'

iv. FARCE

It is a light dramatic work with improbable plot and exaggerated characters. It is regarded intellectually and aesthetically inferior to comedy. It provokes the audience to simple, hearty laughter. The antecedents of farce are found in ancient Greek and Roman theatre both in the comedies of Aristophanes and Plautus. Farce was a component in the comic episodes in medieval miracle plays. It derives its humour from amusing situations, tricks, verbal dexterity and sudden reversals of action. Earlier these were comic interludes studded into the main play to enhance its length. The characters in the farce were real people; the recurrent themes are petty dishonesty, illicit love, stupidity, and stubbornness. Farcical elements abound in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Comedy of Errors*.

v. MELODRAMA

“Melos” is a Greek term meaning ‘song’, and the term melodrama was, therefore, applied to musical plays including opera. In the 19th century musical accompaniment was a characteristic of most of the plays, because “legitimate” plays were permitted only in the Drury Lane and Convent Garden theatres while musical entertainment had no such restriction at all. In melodrama, the hero and the heroine were embodiments of virtue, and the villain was a monster of evil. The plot was centered round intrigues and violent actions. Credibility of plot and character was sacrificed for violent effect and emotional excitement. Now the term melodrama is applied to any work that contains improbable events and sensational actions.

vi. MASQUE

Masque was a dramatic entertainment with the French and English aristocracy during the 16th and 17th centuries. In a Masque, plot, character and even dialogue are subordinated to spectacle and music.

The origin of masque can be traced in the folk ceremony known as mummerly and gradually evolved into elaborate court spectacles. The performers wore rich costumes and the scenery was ravishing. The genre reached its height in 17th century England when Ben Johnson gave it a great social and literary force. His ‘Love Freed from Ignorance and Folly’ and Oberon were popular masques.

The characters in a masque were deities of classical mythology, nymphs, and personified abstractions like love, delight, harmony etc. Dances of various kinds are introduced at appropriate places along with elaborate scenery and costumes. Milton’s ‘Comus’ has been described as a masque. Shakespeare in his play ‘The Tempest’ introduced the element of masque in a scene where the engagement of the hero and heroine are solemnized.

vii. ONE-ACT PLAY:

One-Act play is a play in only one act. Its action gets completed in a single act. The Mystery and Miracle plays of the Middle Ages in England and the short farces popular in Italy from the 15th to 16th centuries were the prototypes of the modern one-act plays. The development of the modern one-act play is the result of the Little Theatre Movement.

The one-act play has a limited range and a restricted canvas. Yet it has its own distinct individuality. The difference between one-act play and a play in three or five acts is the same as that between a short story and a novel.

One-Act play stresses on one aspect- character, action, atmosphere or emotion. It cleverly utilizes the principle of economy. It develops a single dramatic situation or idea. The number of characters is strictly limited to enable the principle characters to dominate the stage. The dialogue too follows the quality of brevity.

The stage directions are so complete and full in regard to speech, gesture, movement, and arrangement of things on the stage, to bring out economy in time. Technically the one-act play imposes severe restrictions on the playwright. He is unable to develop his

characters and situations in a gradual manner. He must present them and the plot with a few suggestive strokes.

Brevity is the soul of the one-act play; brevity in plot which cannot be complex, brevity in characterization, and brevity in dialogue from the beginning to the end. In the hands of a master playwright, this medium can be used to leave a lasting impression.

In 1903 when W.W. Jacob's "The Monkey's Paw" was acted as a curtain riser, it appealed to the audience so much that most of the people left the theatre when the curtain descended upon this play without waiting to see the long play. Thus the one-act play became a serious rival to the long play. The one-act play may be tragic as in Synge's "Riders to the Sea". It can be didactic as Willis Hall's "The Day's Beginning". It can be comic and satirical as Stanley Houghton's "The Dear Departed" Or it can be a fantasy like Lord Dunsany's "The Golden Doom". It can be farcical like Arnold Benet's "The Step Mother" or melodramatic like "The Monkey's Paw".

4. ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

i. SETTING.

The setting of the drama provides the physical and social contexts in which the action of the story is laid. Setting includes time, place and the social environment that frames the characters. Setting carries significant background information about the play. It also helps to create an atmosphere of the play. The dramatic text provides the detailed description of the play's setting. In a performance, the setting is brought to life through lighting, props and scenery.

Setting can be realistic or non-realistic. Realistic settings demand extensive scenery and stage property. Non-realistic setting, on the other hand, is symbolic and representational. Playwrights like Bernard Shaw and Henric Ibsen make use of realistic setting. Playwrights like Samuel Beckett make use of non-realistic setting. His "Waiting for Godot" presents two tramps in a waste place.

ii. PLOT AND ITS STRUCTURE.

Plot refers to the pattern of events in a play. It provides an organic unity to the play. Conventionally, a plot is designed with a story. .

The German playwright Gustov Freytag introduced an analysis of the plot. It is known as Freytag's Pyramid. He described the typical plot of five-act as a pyramidal shape, consisting of a rising action, climax and falling action. Theme of the play passes through five stages

They are exposition, complication, climax, denouement and catastrophe.

The 'exposition' introduces the circumstance from which the initial incident is to begin. It aims at giving all the information essential for the proper understanding of the play. Every incident should have logical consistency. There should be nothing that is unimportant that obscures what is essential.

In 'Climax' or Crisis, the story reaches a point at which the balance begins to learn decisively to one or the other side. This is therefore known as the turning point also. Usually the Crisis is placed about the middle of the play.

'Denouement' is the falling action. It determines whether the play is going to end happily or unhappily. In comedy, it implies the removal of the obstacles which stood in the way of the good fortune of the hero and heroine. In tragedy, it lies in the removal of those resisting powers which have been holding the powers of evil in check. 'Catastrophe' is usually applied to tragedy only. Denouement is a more general term for the final scene, and it is applied to both comedy and tragedy. Denouement is the French term for 'unknotting'. The action ends in success or failure for the protagonist, the conflicts are settled, the mystery is resolved, or the misunderstanding cleared away. 'Resolution' a frequently used term for the outcome of the plot.

Plot always involves conflict. It may be an outer conflict between the major characters and the others, or an inner conflict in the mind of the protagonist.

Aristotle remarks that plot is the soul of the tragedy. According to him, the plot must be complete, with a beginning, middle and an end. The plot must be a unified whole. All the parts must be so closely connected that if any one of them is removed, or displaced, the whole will be dislocated.

Plots can be either simple or complex. A simple plot is a plot in which there is no 'reversal' or 'recognition' whereas the complex plot is accompanied by reversal or recognition or both. (The Greek term for 'reversal' is 'Peripetia' and that for 'recognition' is 'Anagnoris')

Plot may also be linear or non-linear. A linear plot is based on causality. i.e. one event causing another event to happen. A non-linear plot does not follow causality.

A sub-plot is a second story that is complete and interesting in its own right. It is introduced into the play in order to contrast with or reinforce the main plot. The sub-plot may have the relation of analogy to the main plot as in the case of the Gloucester story in 'King Lear'. It may also be counter-point to the main plot as in the case of the sub-plot involving Falstaff in "Henry IV"

In modern absurd plays, the plot usually remains static without any significant development. They are circular in the sense that the play ends where it began. In Samuel Becket's "Waiting for Godot" nothing happens nobody comes and nobody goes. The plot of the post-modern play is usually disjointed and fragmentary.

iii. CHARACTER

Characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work. Each character in a play has distinct moral, intellectual and emotional qualities. It is by inferences from what they say i.e. dialogue and what they do i.e. action that the reader is able to interpret the characters.

E.M. Forster in his "Aspects of Novel" classifies character into 'flat' and 'round' characters. A flat character is built on a single idea or quality that remains unchanged over the course of the narrative. A round character is complex and is capable of growth and change in the course of the narrative.

In Greek drama, the hero is called the protagonist and the rival is called the antagonist. The deuteragonist is the character who supported the hero throughout the narrative.

A 'foil' is a character who exhibits opposite traits or same traits in a greater or lesser degree. For example Falstaff in Shakespeare's Henry IV part I is a foil to the prince and in "Othello" Iago is a foil to the hero, Othello.

A Confidant' is someone in whom the central character confides. In the play 'Hamlet' Horatio is the confidant to prince Hamlet. It is to him that the prince reveals his personality, thoughts and intentions.

Stock characters are character types that occur repeatedly in comedies. Examples are the boastful soldier, the miserly father, the trickster servant etc.

A 'raisonneur' is a character who serves as the mouth piece of the playwright and tells the audience certain truths relating to the plot. The Fool in Shakespeare's "King Lear" and Bluntschli in Bernard Shaw's "Arms and the Man" are examples.

The process of developing character is called characterization. Most often the character is delineated through dialogue and action. 'Showing' and 'Telling' are two alternative methods for characterizing. In showing, the author simply presents the characters talking and acting and leaves the reader to infer the motives and dispositions that lie behind their dialogue and action. The author may show not only external speech and action, but also a character's inner thoughts, feelings, and responsiveness to events.

In 'telling' the author intervenes in order to describe and often to evaluate, the motives and dispositional qualities of the characters.

iv. STYLE

Style involves the playwright's method of presentation. It is the playwright's treatment and shaping of dramatic materials, setting and costumes in a specific manner. There is different variety of styles like the realistic, anti-realistic, naturalistic, symbolic, and expressionistic and so on. A realistic style attempts to portray a convincing replica of real life situations and tries to create an illusion of reality on the stage. Naturalism is an extreme form of realism. The naturalists hold the view that man's fortunes and character was determined by natural forces like heredity and environment that are beyond his control. Expressionist dramatis perceives reality in a highly subjective manner. They attempt to capture man's subconscious reality through innovations in language structure, and technical effects. Expressionist dramatists dislocated the time sequence, wrote stylized language, and used masked characters, distorted stage sets, and special effects in light and sound. Eugene O'Neill's "The Emperor Jones" is an expressionist play. The symbolist movement originated in France under the influence of Mallarme, Verlaine and Richard Wagner. The symbolists were interested in the spiritual realm of man's being, his dreams, fears and fantasies. For them drama is a 'mysterious ceremony of moods, suggestions and evocations.' They convey ideas by indirections. Their symbols were drawn from religious and esoteric traditions. They also developed symbols by themselves. Henric Ibsen, W.B Yeats, J.M Synge, Eugene O'Neill are some of the major symbolist playwrights.

v. THEME.

Theme refers to the recurrent idea in a play. The theme must have certain amount of universality. It is the main concept of the story. It must account for all the major details of the story. Nothing in the play should contradict the theme. The theme is usually implied and gets revealed as the action progresses. The theme implies the author's views on human nature. It may be stated through dialogue or action. It may also arise as a result of the interplay of plot, character, thought and dialogue and the attitude of the playwright towards them. Classical Greek drama often borrowed theme from epics, myths, legends and histories. In modern times, drama focuses on themes related to contemporary social and political issues and complexities of human interaction.

vi. AUDIENCE

The audience watches a dramatic performance in order to get some pleasure. Theatre is a mirror in which the audience sees itself reflected on the stage. According to Aristotle, tragedy gives the audience an emotional release by purging of their feelings of pity and fear. This is what Aristotle calls catharsis.

In the theatre the audience maintains proximity with the actors and interacts with them. There is an opportunity in the theatre for continuous feed-back between the actors and the audience. While the play is being staged, the spectators focus their vision within the stage. The reactions of the audience are governed by the phenomena of 'collective mass' rather than individual psychology. It is the spectator's imagination that produces the ultimate meaning of a dramatic work.

vii. DIALOGUE

Dialogue, monologue and soliloquies are the means through which idea is communicated in a dramatic performance. The dialogue reveals the nature and attitude of the character. The action progresses through dialogue. The dialogue provides necessary exposition of the past events, the complexity in relationships, tensions and conflicts. Dialogue reflects interpersonal relations. Quite often, characters just give implication to convey meaning. This unspoken thought is known as sub-text. It is referred to as the inner essence of the drama.

Unlike conversation in day-to-day life, the dialogue in drama is deliberate and not spontaneous. It is moulded by playwrights to be uttered by the characters on the stage. It is governed by the relationship that exists among the characters, their attitudes and conflicts. The dialogue in drama is delivered not for its own sake, i.e. not for the sake of communication between or among the characters, but for the sake of the communication between the playwright and the audience. Thus dramatic dialogue is unique from other elements of drama.

REVISIONARY EXERCISES:

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each.

1. What is drama?

Drama is a form of composition meant for performance in the theatre, in which actors take the roles of the characters, perform the indicated action and utter the written dialogue.

2. What is a dramatic monologue? How is it different from soliloquy?

A monologue is a lengthy speech by a single person. In a play, when a character utters a monologue that expresses his private thoughts, it is called a soliloquy. However, dramatic monologue is a type of lyric poem that was perfected by Robert Browning who used it as a medium for unraveling the inner most thoughts and feeling of the character under study.

3. Where did the literature of the absurd take its origin from?

The literature of the Absurd originated from the movements of expressionism and surrealism, as well as from the fiction of Franz Kafka and from the existential philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus.

4. What is peculiar about Samuel Beckett's play 'Waiting for Godot'?

'Waiting for Godot' is an absurd play. It projects the irrationalism, helplessness, and absurdity of life. It has no realistic setting, logical reasoning, or well-built plot.

5. Distinguish between Act and Scene?

An Act is a major division in the action of a play. The Elizabethan dramatists structured the action into five acts. Scenes are the sub-division of acts.

6. Who is an anti-hero?

An Anti-hero is the chief person in a modern play or novel, His character is widely different from that of the hero in a serious literary work. The anti-hero is petty, passive, ignominious, ineffectual or dishonest.

7. Identify the author of the work "Aspects of Novel"

E.M. Forster is the author of the work "Aspects of Novel"

8. Who made the distinction between flat and round characters? Explain the concepts.

E.M. Forster in his work, "Aspects of Novel", made a distinction between flat and round character. A character built around a single idea or quality without much detail is a flat character. A character who is complex and who undergoes an evolution as the work of art proceeds is a round character. Such a character is capable of surprising the audience.

9. Write a note on Chorus.

Among the ancient Greeks, the chorus was a group of people, wearing masks, who sang or chanted verses while performing dances at religious festivals. A similar chorus played a part in Greek Tragedies. They served mainly as commentators on the actions and events.

They expressed traditional moral, religious, and social attitudes.

10. Define comedy.

A comedy is a fictional work in the subject matter, characters, and dialogue in order to amuse the audience.

11. Satiric comedy.

A satiric comedy is a type of play which ridicules political policies of philosophical doctrines and the violations of social standards.

12. Comedy of manners.

The comedy of manners developed in the restoration period. It deals with the activities, intrigues and amorous achievements of frivolous men and women who used to meet in cafes, clubs and gambling centres in London.

13. What is a farce?

A farce is a type of light comedy designed to provoke the audience to simple, hearty laughter.

14. Define in your own words the comedy of Humours.

It is a type of comedy developed by the Elizabethan playwright Ben Jonson. It was based on the ancient theory of the 'four humours', i.e. melancholic, choleric, sanguine and phlegmatic. The ideal mixture of these elements was held to determine a person's physical condition and character type. Any imbalance of one of these elements was said to produce four kinds of disposition. In Jonson's comedy of humours, each of the major characters has an imbalanced humour that gives him a characteristic eccentricity.

15. What is imitation (mimesis)?

In his poetics, Aristotle defines poetry as an imitation of human actions. By "imitation" he means representation. The poet imitates things as they are or as they were or as they are said to be or believed to be or ought to be. In other words the poet imitates the past the present, the belief and the ideal.

16. What is a masque?

It is an elaborate form of court entertainment that combined poetic drama, music, song, dance splendid costuming, and stage spectacle. The plot is mythological or allegorical and the characters are supernatural deities.

17. What is a melodrama?

The term melodrama is often applied to some of the typical plays especially during the Victorian period, which were written to be produced with musical accompaniment.

18. Write short notes on Miracle plays, Morality plays and Interludes.

The Miracle play had its subject either a story from the Bible or else the life and martyrdom of a saint. However, according to some historians, the term Miracle Play denotes only dramas based on saints' life and the term mystery play or "Mystery" is applied only to dramas based on the Bible.

Morality plays were dramatized allegories of a representative Christian life in the plot form of a quest for salvation.

Interlude is a term applied to a variety of short stage entertainments, such as secular farces and witty dialogues with a religious or political point.

19. What do you mean by plot?

By plot is meant the artistic arrangement of the events in a work of art in an organic whole.

20. How did Aristotle classify plot?

Aristotle classified plot into simple plot and complex plot. A simple plot is one which is not accompanied either by peripetia or anagnorisis whereas a complex plot is one which is characterized either by peripetia or anagnorisis or both.

21. What is peripetia?

It means a sudden change of fortune in a play or story. Generally the hero discovers a vital truth which leads to his destruction (In tragedy) or his success (in comedy).

22. What do you mean by anagnorisis?

In Greek drama, the term anagnorisis means a discovery which reveals some vital truth hitherto unknown. It is a change of circumstance due to a shift from ignorance to knowledge.

23. Who are referred to as angry young men/

The phrase 'angry young men' refers to a group of British writers who were hostile towards the tradition standards and manners of the upper social classes. Their work exposes the hypocrisy of these classes in a comic manner. John Osborne's "Look Back in Anger" is a best example of a play in this mode.

24. Who is referred to as a confidant?

A trusted friend of the protagonist in a drama or novel, to whom he confesses his intimate thoughts, is called a confidant. Horatio in Shakespeare's Hamlet is an example.

25. What is denouement?

The final unraveling of the plot in drama or fiction is called denouement. It is a French term meaning unknotting.

26. Who is a foil?

A foil is a character set off against another for contrast. Iago is a foil to Othello in Shakespeare's play: "Othello".

27. What is a sub plot? Give an example.

A sub-plot is a secondary story in a play. It is complete and interesting in itself but it is interwoven with the main plot to enhance rather than diffuse the effect. The Gloucester story in "King Lear" is an example.

28. Who is the author of the play "The Four P's"? What is peculiar about it?

John Hey Wood wrote the play "The Four P's" It is a well-known example of an interlude. In this play, a Pardoner, a Peddler, a Palmer, and (a) Potheary are engaged in comic dialogue

29. Who were the University Wits?

The Pre-Shakespearean dramatists such as John Lyly, Robert Greene, Thomas Nash and Christopher Marlow were known as university Wits because they came from Oxford or Cambridge University.

30. What are the features of the Restoration Drama?

The dramas of the Restoration period, mainly comedies, were modeled on the realistic comedies of Ben Jonson. They were known as comedy of manners. They truthfully portrayed the manners, ways, love intrigues, and foppery of the aristocratic, elite classes of the society.

31. Name a few Restoration Comedies.

George Etherege's "She Would If She Could", William Congreve's "The Way of the World" and William Wycherley's "The Country Wife" are a few instances of the Restoration comedies. They reflect the social realities of the age.

32. What is a problem play? Give examples.

Problem play is a type of drama popularized by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. In problem plays, the situation faced by the protagonists is put forward by the author as a representative instance of a contemporary social problem; often the dramatist proposes a solution to the problem. Henrik Ibsen's "A Doll's House" and Bernard Shaw's "Arms and the Man" are instances of problem plays.

33. What do you know about Eliot's play "Murder in the Cathedral"?

Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral" imbibes the conventions of Greek drama, and combines myth, ritual, and poetry to create a heightened theatrical effect.

34. What is special about the play "Look Back in Anger"?

John Osborne's "Look Back in Anger" belongs to the tradition of "Angry Young Man". It portrays an angry young man raging against the corrupt social systems.

35. Who is the author of the work "The Myth of Sisyphus"?

The existential philosopher, Albert Camus is the author of the work "The Myth of Sisyphus"

36. What are the names of Emile Zola, Bertolt Brecht and Beckett associated with in the world of dramaturgy?

Emile Zola introduced realism in the theatre, Brecht, the epic theatre, and Beckett, anti-realistic theatre.

37. Write a note on the Epic Theatre.

38. What is a flash drama?

A flash drama is a sub-type of a one-act play. It is a ten minute play popular in writing competitions.

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.

1. Discuss the characteristic features of the theatre of the absurd.

The absurd theatre having roots in existential philosophy, wanted to project a sense of isolation, frustration and hopelessness of modern man who is drifting from nothingness to nothingness only to learn that there nothing significant in human life and that we are cast off into this alien world to learn the existential meaninglessness of human condition.

The tern 'Absurd' is derived from the Latin 'absurdum' which means contradictory. The term is first used by Albert Camus in his essay "The Myth of Sisyphus" to describe the existential nothingness of human life. Martin Essilin borrowed the term absurd from Camus and applied it to the plays that reflected the spiritual apathy of the post-war world. The absurd play ignores the traditional notions of a well-knit plot, character and setting. The characters are caught in hopeless situations and are forced to do meaningless monotonous actions. Samuel Becket's 'Waiting for Godot' is a significant play in this mode.

2. Discuss the salient features of the epic theatre.

The Epic Theatre was introduced by the German playwright, Bertolt Brecht. The playwright of this mode tries to transport the spectators to a state of social and political awareness. Brecht wanted to protect the audience from being overwhelmed by what they watch on the stage. In order to achieve this objective, Brecht introduced the alienation technique or de-familiarization in his plays.

The following are some of the alienation techniques used by Brecht:

- vi. The use of mask, music and dance.
- vii. A variety's of non-realistic techniques like use of placards, film clips, glaring light effects.
- viii. Characters commenting on the action between scenes
- ix. Episodic plot.
- x. Establishing a more direct and honest relationship with the audience.

Changing of costumes, wearing of masks and creating stage effects are all done in the presence of the audience to highlight the fact that 'theatre is a theatre and nothing more.'

3. Discuss the reasons for the emergence of the feminist theatre

The feminist theatre emerges as a tool for critiquing the subordination of women in a male dominated society. It is also a means of self-expression and self-exploration of women. It aims at the empowerment of women. The major reason for the emergence of the feminist theatre is an extra-ordinary masculine society with laws written by men and with prosecutors and judges who regard feminine conduct from a patriarchic point of view.

The feminist theatre gives expression to the under-represented experiences of women in a male-dominated society. It represented women as subjects in their own rights and definite identity. The feminist playwrights introduced new subjects, vocabularies, character forms, and alternate modes of perception.

The feminist portrayed issues related to family relationship, reproduction, motherhood, sexuality and rewriting of myths and history.

4. Write a note on the significance of the audience in drama.

The audience watches a dramatic performance in order to get some pleasure. Theatre is a mirror in which the audience sees itself reflected on the stage. According to Aristotle, tragedy gives the audience an emotional release by purging of their feelings of pity and fear. This is what Aristotle calls catharsis.

In the theatre the audience maintains proximity with the actors and interacts with them. There is an opportunity in the theatre for continuous feed-back between the actors and the audience. While the play is being staged, the spectators focus their vision within the stage. The reactions of the audience are governed by the phenomena of 'collective mass' rather than individual psychology. It is the spectator's imagination that produces the ultimate meaning of a dramatic work.

III Write an essay on each of the following in about 350 words.

1. The essence of the absurd drama.

The Theatre of the Absurd took its origin from the existential world view as expressed in the writing of such writers' like Nietzsche, Sartre, and Albert Camus. These existentialists placed existence over essence. They proclaimed the motto "first existence and then essence."

They analyzed man's life in this universe as an alien one and that it is full of anguish and nausea. The absurd theatre having roots in existential philosophy, wanted to project a sense of isolation, frustration and hopelessness of modern man who is drifting from nothingness to nothingness only to learn that there nothing significant in human life and that we are cast off into this alien world to learn the existential meaningless of human condition.

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2. The alienation technique introduced in epic theatre.

The Epic Theatre was introduced by the German playwright, Bertolt Brecht. The epic theatre is quite different from the realistic and naturalistic theatre. Instead of getting the audience emotionally involved in the action of the play, the playwright of this mode tries to transport them to a state of social and political awareness. Brecht wanted to protect the audience from being overwhelmed by what they watch on the stage. In order to achieve this objective, Brecht introduced the alienation technique in his plays. The German term for the concept is 'verfrundung'. It means de-familiarization. He wanted to ensure the participation of the audience. He wanted to develop their own thoughts and criticism about the events they spectate on the stage. For this they must have logical reasoning power. The alienation techniques that Brecht employed in his plays help the audience develop their

power of reasoning so that they may be critical viewers of the play rather than being passive or emotionally overwhelmed spectators.

The alienation technique defined the style of the epic theatre. The audience must question what they see on the stage. Neither the audience nor the actors themselves are supposed to identify themselves with the characters and events of the play.

The following are some of the alienation techniques used by Brecht:

- xi. The use of mask, music and dance.
- xii. A variety of non-realistic techniques like use of placards, film clips, glaring light effects.
- xiii. Characters commenting on the action between scenes
- xiv. Episodic plot.
- xv. Establishing a more direct and honest relationship with the audience.

Changing of costumes, wearing of masks and creating stage effects are all done in the presence of the audience to highlight the fact that 'theatre is a theatre and nothing more.'

3. The theory of alienation counters the Aristotelian concept of catharsis. Discuss.

Aristotle defines tragedy as 'the imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude, in language embellished with each kinds of artistic ornaments, the several kinds being found in the separate parts of the play, in the form of action and not narrative, through pity and fear effecting catharsis or the proper purgation of these emotions.'

Aristotle regarded tragedy as the highest form of poetry. He identified six elements of tragedy. They are plot, character, thought, diction, music and spectacle. Tragedy is a serious play that deals with the misfortunes and sufferings of man. The tragic hero is neither too virtuous nor too vicious but his misfortune or fall is brought about by some error or frailty. Aristotle called it hamartia which means tragic flaw. Tragedy excites pity and fear in the minds of the audience, thus resulting in the purgation of their emotions.

The Epic Theatre introduced by the German playwright, Bertolt Brecht is quite different from the Aristotelian concept of catharsis. The playwright of the epic mode never gets the audience emotionally involved in the action of the play. Instead the playwright of this mode tries to transport them to a state of social and political awareness. Brecht wanted to protect the audience from being overwhelmed by what they watch on the stage. In order to achieve this objective, Brecht introduced the alienation technique in his plays. The German term for the concept is 'verfremdung'. It means de-familiarization. He wanted to ensure the participation of the audience. He wanted to develop their own thoughts and criticism about the events they spectate on the stage. For this they must have logical reasoning power. The alienation techniques that Brecht employed in his plays help the audience develop their power of reasoning so that they may be critical viewers of the play rather than being passive or emotionally overwhelmed spectators.

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iv. Write short notes on the following terms.

i. Dramatic Monologue

Dramatic monologue is an extension of the soliloquy in plays it is a type of poem perfected by Robert Browning . A single person who is not the poet himself, utters the entire poem at a critical moment in his life .In Browning’s “My Last Duchess” the duke negotiating with an emissary for a second wife ,speaks throughout the poem. Secondly, the speaker addresses another person whose presence is felt though he says nothing. His response is given in clues in the discourse of the speaker. Thirdly, the speaker unwittingly reveals his character, especially his moral calibre and sense of values. In “My Last Duchess” the duke reveals his self-centered nature and possessiveness through his own words. The poem is a monologue because it is a speech by single character; it is dramatic because it presents many arresting scenes like the pleasure ride of the Duchess on mule, the gift of a bough of cherries by a clown and the smiling picture of the Duchess in “My Last Duchess”.

ii. Expressionism

Expressionism was an artistic movement that began in Germany during the decade following the First World War. It began under the influence of the Swedish dramatist Strindberg. The main feature of expressionism is a protest against realism both in style and subject. Poets and painters aim at presenting how the world appears to the troubled, and often abnormal, mind of a person. This mental condition represents anxiety-ridden modern man in an industrial and technological world, on the verge of chaos .Expressionist dramatists dislocated the time-sequence, used stylized dialogue, distorted stages sets and used such modern devices as revolving stage and special effects of light and sound .Eugene O’Neill’s “The Emperor Jones” is an expressionistic play .Expressionism is allied to surrealism and has influenced the theatre of the absurd.

iii. Humanism

Originally the word “humanist” signified one who taught worked in humanities---- history, poetry, moral philosophy, etc--- as distinguished from subjects as mathematics, science and theology. The humanists who wrote on educational, moral and political problems after studying Plato, Aristotle and Cicero. Since the nineteenth century, “humanism implies an attitude of mind based upon human values, human experience and human nature”. Moral and practical, rather than aesthetic, values are stressed. Renaissance humanists were pious Christians who emphasized the values achievable in this world and abandoned the idea of withdrawal from this world. Such Christian humanism has been expressed by Sir Philip Sidney, Milton and Spenser. In the Victorian period Matthew Arnold defended the sort of culture which is a perfection of our humanity proper, as

distinguished from animality. In the twentieth century the American movement known as New Humanism led by Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More, argued for a return to a primarily humanistic education based largely on classical literature.

iv. One-Act play:

One-Act play is a play in only one act. Its action gets completed in a single act. The Mystery and Miracle plays of the Middle Ages in England and the short farces popular in Italy from the 15th to 16th centuries were the prototypes of the modern one-act plays. The development of the modern one-act play is the result of the Little Theatre Movement.

The one-act play has a limited range and a restricted canvas. Yet it has its own distinct individuality. The difference between one-act play and a play in three or five acts is the same as that between a short story and a novel.

One-Act play stresses on one aspect- character, action, atmosphere or emotion. It cleverly utilizes the principle of economy. It develops a single dramatic situation or idea. The number of characters is strictly limited to enable the principle characters to dominate the stage. The dialogue too follows the quality of brevity.

The stage directions are so complete and full in regard to speech, gesture, movement, and arrangement of things on the stage, to bring out economy in time. Technically the one-act play imposes severe restrictions on the playwright. He is unable to develop his characters and situations in a gradual manner. He must present them and the plot with a few suggestive strokes.

v. Melodrama

The word “melo” in Greek means song, and the term “melodrama” originally meant musical plays including opera. But in nineteenth century London many plays were accompanied with music to circumvent the Licensing Act that allowed legitimate plays only as a monopoly of Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatres, but permitted musical entertainments everywhere. During the Victorian period melodrama with its virtuous heroes and chaste heroines, monstrous and violent actions earned a bad reputation. The plot revolves round malevolent intrigue, and both characterization and plot construction are paid little attention to by the writers. Violent effect and emotional opportunism are aimed at. Now the word is applied to something sensational and containing improbable events.

vi. Naturalism

Naturalism is a term used by Emile Zola and other French writers to distinguish their methods from the realism of Balzac and Flaubert. It is an extreme form of realism in which man is reduced to a higher order of animals, shearing animal’s instincts like hunger, thirst and sexual urges. Man is regarded as soulless, enjoying no protection from God. His fortunes are decided by two natural forces heredity and environment. Naturalistic period in fiction is characterized by writings in which men and women are shown as being victimized by hereditary, environmental, sociological factors.

vii. Senecan Tragedy

Seneca was a Roman dramatist who wrote ten closet plays full of melodrama and rhetoric. His tradition was followed by some Elizabethan dramatist who thought that his tragedies had been intended for the stage. The English playwrights wrote fully-developed five act plays with a complex plot and a formal elaborate style of dialogue. In the Elizabethan age, Senecan drama developed in two lines. One of them consisted of academic tragedies written in imitation of Senecan plays including even the chorus and observing the three unities. Sackville and Norton's "Gorboduc" (1562) is an example of this type. The other was more developed and was called the "revenge tragedy" or the "tragedy of blood". This involved Seneca's favorite materials of revenge, murder, ghost and violent events. But Seneca had such matters only reported by messengers while the Elizabethan dramatists had them act on the stage. An excellent example is Thomas Kyd's "The Spanish Tragedy".

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MODULE II: TWO PLAYS

A DOLL'S HOUSE

- Henrik Ibsen

INTRODUCTION

HENRIC IBSEN (1828-1906)

Henric Ibsen was a well-known Norwegian playwright. The works of Ibsen along with those of Emile Zola (1840-1902) introduced the spirit of realism and naturalism in drama. Ibsen placed the themes and situations of contemporary life on stage and made serious drama a mirror as well as a stern monitor of his age. His first play, 'Catillina' (1850), is a tragedy in verse. 'Love's Comedy', a satire was published in 1862. It was followed an national drama entitled 'The Pretenders' (18643). In 1869, he published 'League of Youth' and in 1873, 'Emperor Galelian', a philosophical historical drama on the Roman Emperor Julian, the Apostle. 'Pillars of the Society: (1877) is a realistic social drama, exposing the hypocrisy and degradation of community leaders. 'A Doll's House (1879), portrayed a woman's assertion of her independence and individuality by breaking off her family bonds. 'Ghosts'(1881) 'An Enemy of the People' and 'The Wild Duck' are some of the major plays of Ibsen.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY "A DOLL'S HOUSE"

"A Doll's House" (1879) is one of the greatest realistic social plays written by Henric Ibsen. The theme of the play is the status of women in society in general and in marriage in particular. It is a total plea for women's rights not merely to vote but for her right to exist as a responsible member of society. Ibsen was conscious of society's prejudiced expectation of woman. This had troubled him. In "A Doll's House", Ibsen elevates the heroine, Nora Helmer from the status of a doll to an individual in her own rights who is capable of taking of her own decisions. The dominant theme of the play is thus the emancipation of the self. Ibsen also draws attention to secondary issues like the injustice of stringent social laws, inherited illness etc. Ibsen boldly asserts that it is not the prerogative of man alone to militate against those social institutions, obsolete ideas of duty, loyalty and moral obligation that keep him from a realization of self. Women too have equal right to the freedom of the self. The play charts Nora's progressive growth in self-realization from her early doll-like existence; from being a caged song bird and dependent squirrel totally reliant upon her husband Torvald Helmer for emotional and economic security to a young woman from whose eyes the scales have fallen. Nora, in the end, becomes aware of the stifling nature of her dependency and of the little premium that is allowed to her love and self-sacrifice and ultimately gains the courage to turn her back upon a catastrophic existence.

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

In “A Doll’s House”. Nora Helmer is the daughter of a government official. It was while officially examining her father’s accounts that Helmer first met her. He falls in love with her and marries her. By the time the play opens they had been married for nine years. Soon after their marriage, Helmer had been seriously ill and Nora’s father too is on his death bed. Not desiring to trouble her father for a loan, Nora secretly borrows the money from Krogstad without Helmer’s Knowledge and permission. Nora signs her father’s name on the promissory note. Helmer’s life is saved and Nora manages to pay off a part of her secret debt. She is not seriously bothered by her concealment as in her mind; it is justified because of her love for her husband.

After some years of frugal living, Helmer gets a well-paid job as the manager of a bank. Nills Krogstad from whom Nora has borrowed the money is a clerk in the same bank where Helmer has been promoted to the position of a manager. Krogstad’s character is shady and one of Helmer’s first decision as bank manager is to dismiss Krogstad. It is at this point that the drama begins. Krogstad approaches Nora and makes known that he is aware that she had forged her deceased father’s signature. He makes her aware of the serious and criminal nature of her action. Nora says that she has not done anything to hurt anyone and that her motive was based only on love for her husband who was seriously ill and her father who lay dying; when Krogstad threatens to reveal her secret to Helmer, she is forced to intercede for him with her husband with the request that he be reinstated. When her intercession has been ineffectual Krogstad threatens to reveal the whole situation in a letter to Helmer.

When the curtain rises, Nora is seen telling silly lies in a childlike manner. Helmer treats her like an irresponsible being. She is nothing more than a plaything to him. Her father and husband have conspired to keep her ignorant of the true realities of life, of her rights, of her obligations. She has always felt a vague longing for a life more satisfying. It is this desire that has afforded her a secret satisfaction in her struggle to hold on to her priceless secret regarding the money to which Helmer owes his life. But Nora is totally misunderstood by her husband.

The play depicts Helmer as a kind of moral sensualist, thoroughly self-righteous, shallow and egoistic. When the play opens he is Nora’s hero, who would protect and shield her from all harm. But all the goodness with which she invests her husband is in fact a reflection of all the goodness that lies within her. Nora believes that in the event of Krogstad exposing her, Heller will take the blame upon himself in order to protect her. Overcome by her love for her husband, she even contemplates committing suicide.

Krogstad drops the letter revealing all into Helmer’s letter box. Inspired by the influence of Christine Linde, Nora’s old classmate whom Krogstad had once loved, he could be persuaded to demand his letter back unopened. Nora somehow wants to distract Helmer’s attention from the mail-box in order to gain time. On the pretext that she is not through with the Tarantella, the dance that she is to perform at the costume ball the next day, she begs Helmer to devote his complete attention to her. Her over wrought condition prompts Helmer to postpone opening the letter box till the next day. Nora insists that Helmer go and read his letters, intending in the meanwhile to escape from the house and drown herself. However Helmer rushes in from his study with Krogstad’s letter in his hand.

Helmer now reveals himself to be an extremely selfish and unloving person. He overwhelms Nora with painful and brutal reproaches and in that moment Nora sees him for what he actually is. Her idol crumbles down before her. In the midst of Helmer's chastisement of Nora, another letter arrives from Krogstad enclosing the forged note and relinquishing all vindictive designs. Overcome by relief, Helmer 'forgives' Nora and once again. But Nora is now a disillusioned woman. She has now discovered the reality of the character of her husband.

Nora is now a changed woman. She is no longer prepared to continue to be a doll-wife. Her father had always treated her as a baby-doll and that her husband has always treated her as a doll-wife. She tells Helmer, that she has decided to leave her doll-house. She is now an individual in her own rights. She is no longer prepared to submit blindly to the conventions of society or the dictates of morality or religion. She walks out of the house slamming the door behind her, leaving her husband and children alone to find out by first-hand experience what is right and what is wrong.

“A DOLL’S HOUSE”: A SYNOPSIS

THE STORY OF A WOMAN’S LIBERATION FROM CONVENTIONAL RESTRAINTS:

“A Doll’s House” written by the Norwegian dramatist, Henric Ibsen, is a play in three Acts. It was written at a time when women were completely subordinated to their husbands. No matter how much a husband might love his wife, she was regarded by him in those days as his property. Custom and convention demand that she should be guided completely by her husband and should in all respects, adjust herself to his ideas, views, opinions and tastes. This meant that a woman had no opportunity to develop her own mind and her own individuality.

“A Doll’s House” tells the story of a woman called Nora who, after having lived as a conventional kind of wife to her husband for nine years or so ultimately decided to liberate herself from the clutches of a male dominated society. In order to liberate herself this woman left her husband and even her three children. She went into the world outside to get a firsthand experience of life and to discover her own right to live as a responsible member of society.

A LOAN AND AN ACT OF FORGERY:

Torvald Helmer, his wife Nora and their three children are living in a comfortable apartment in a big town where Helmer has been a lawyer of modest means so that Nora has always found it necessary to exercise the utmost economy in household expenses. The play begins on a Christmas eve and ends about three days later. Eight years ago Helmer had fallen critically ill and the doctors had advised Nora to take him to a warm climate in southern Europe. Nora did not have enough money for such a trip and yet it was necessary for her to take her husband to a warm country, if his life was to be saved. Without telling

her husband anything about the step, she was going to take a loan in order to obtain the money required for the purpose. She entered into a transaction with a man called Krogstad. She borrowed twelve hundred dollars on interest from him and executed a bond. It had been necessary for her to have the bond signed by someone who would stand surety for the repayment of the loan.

As there was no other surety available, she was forced to forge her own father's signature on the bond without realizing that forgery was a criminal act. It so happened that Krogstad detected the forgery. But he kept silent about it because Nora had been paying regular monthly instalments to him against the loan. She had taken her husband to Italy. After a year's stay, he had completely recovered his health. Nora had never told him about the loan or forgery. It would have hurt his self-respect to know that his wife had borrowed the money for his sake. He would never have tolerated her act of forgery if he had come to know of it.

Mrs. LYND'S VISIT TO NORA:

Mrs. Lynde, a friend of Nora's school days comes to see Nora. Lynd is now a widow. She needs a job. She thinks that Nora might be able to help her. Nora introduces Lynd to her husband who promises to give Mrs. Lynd a job in the bank of which he has recently been appointed the manager.

HELMER'S REASONS FOR DISMISSING KROGSTAD:

Krogstad is already working in a subordinate position in the same bank. Helmer and Krogstad had been great friends during their boyhood but now Helmer holds Krogstad in contempt. Krogstad spoilt his reputation by an act of forgery. However he had escaped punishment by placing the crime on someone else's shoulder. Helmer had come to know of Krogstad's act of forgery and had therefore formed a low opinion about him. Therefore Helmer had decided to dismiss Krogstad from his post in the bank, and now when Nora recommends Lynd for a job, Helmer makes up his mind to appoint Lynd to the post which would be vacated by the dismissal of Krogstad. Helmer has also another reason for his contempt of Krogstad. Krogstad always speaks to Helmer in a familiar manner, addressing him by his Christian name and behaving as if the friendship still exists. Helmer does not want that a man in a subordinate position should behave as if he were his friend. Helmer is totally unaware of the fact that his wife had borrowed money from this man and that she too is guilty of forgery.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN Mrs. LYND AND KROGSTAD:

Krogstad and Mrs. Lynd had been lovers when they were both unmarried. Christine Lynd had promised to marry Krogstad, but for certain compelling family circumstances she had married a man of wealth. When she deserted Krogstad, he felt that the earth under his feet had crumbled. However, in due course, he too had married and had begotten children, but he had subsequently lost his wife and is now a widower. Mrs. Lynd had also lost her husband and she is a widow now. But she has no children. When Mrs. Lynd comes to Nora in order to get her help in getting a job, Krogstad comes to see Helmer in order to request him not to dismiss him. Mrs. Lynd and Krogstad see each other. But they give no sign of mutual recognition.

HELMER'S REJECTION OF NORA'S RECOMMENDATION ON KROGSTAD'S BEHALF:

Krogstad does not get any assurance from Helmer in the matter of retaining him in the bank. Therefore Krogstad deliberates a plan for revenge. He would use the bond in which Nora forged her father's signature as a weapon against the Helmers. He meets Nora secretly and asks her to exercise her influence upon Helmer so that he could continue in his post in the bank. He threatens that if she fails to do so, he would make public her act of forgery. Nora is scared. She speaks to Helmer on behalf of Krogstad. But he rejects Nora's recommendation. In fact, he sends an order of dismissal to Krogstad.

KROGSTAD'S INCRIMINATING LETTER:

The order of dismissal makes Krogstad indignant. He meets Nora once again. He now wants that he should be promoted to a higher position in the bank. He wants to wash away the stigma that is attached to his name by his act of forgery. He has brought with him a letter describing Nora's entire transaction with him and her act of forgery and he says that if her husband does not accept his demand, he will publicly disgrace both of them. As Nora is in no position to help Krogstad, he drops the incriminating letter into Helmer's letter box.

Mrs. LYND TO MARRY KROGSTAD:

Nora reveals all the facts to Mrs. Lynd. Mrs. Lynd thinks that she can still influence Krogstad on the basis of the love that had existed between them. Lynd makes a visit to Krogstad and tells him of the circumstance in which she had to marry another man. Now she promises him that she would be mother to his motherless children. Lynd's offer of marriage fills Krogstad with greatest pleasure. He readily accepts the offer and also offers to withdraw the incriminating letter which he had dropped into Helmer's letter box. But Mrs. Lynd now feels that Helmer should be allowed to know all the facts of the case so that the husband and wife can come to a stable understanding. Mrs. Lynd meets Nora and tells her that it would be best for her if Helmer comes to know all the facts from Krogstad's letter. In the meanwhile Nora has tried to obtain some money from a family friend by the name of Dr. Rank who has been secretly in love with her. Her purpose in obtaining money from him was to pay the balance of the loan which she owes to Krogstad and to get rid of the man altogether. But she has failed to obtain the money.

Helmer goes through Krogstad's letter and becomes furious to learn that Nora had borrowed money from that man and had forged her father's signature to get the money. He begins to scold her calling her a hypocrite, a liar and a criminal. He says that the public disclosure of her act of forgery would disgrace him and might even lead to his losing of the job. Nora had thought that, on coming to know the facts, Helmer would take the entire responsibility for her guilt and would face Krogstad's threat boldly. In fact she had even thought of committing suicide in order to prevent Helmer from taking the responsibility for her guilt, because she did not want that he should have to make such a great sacrifice for her sake. But she is shocked to find that her husband is not trying to protect her, and that he is accusing her of immorality.

NORA COMPLETELY DISILLUSIONED WITH HER HUSBAND:

Just at this time, a second letter comes from Krogstad. This letter contains an apology and for having threatened Nora and Helmer. This second letter implies that there is no longer any danger of a public disclosure of Nora's criminal act. The crisis for the Helmers is now over. Helmer now becomes jubilant and promptly assumes once again the role of a loving and dotting husband. He now tells Nora that he forgives her and that she has nothing to fear now. He will love her, protect her, and guide her through out life, just as he has been doing in the past. But Nora is now a disillusioned woman. She has now discovered the reality of the character of her husband to whom she has been so devoted and whose word had always been law for her.

NORA'S EXIT FROM HER HUSBAND'S HOME:

Another crisis develops. Nora is now a changed woman. A light has dawned upon her mind. She tells her husband that she is no longer prepared to continue to be his doll-wife. Her father had always treated her as a baby-doll and that her husband has always treated her as a doll-wife. She tells Helmer that she has decided to leave this doll's house. She has now realized that she is an individual in her own rights. She is no longer prepared to submit blindly to the conventions of society or to the dictates of morality and religion. She is determined to go into the world to find out by first-hand knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. Her most sacred duty, she says, is not to her husband or to her children, but to herself. She thinks it imperative that she should discover the truths of life. She demands from Helmer the wedding ring which she had given him at the time of their marriage and she gets it back. She returns his wedding ring to him and tells him that she is now leaving him, her home, and even her children to begin a new life. After saying all these and paying no attention to Helmer's entreaties, she walks out of the house, slamming the door behind her.

REVISIONARY EXERCISES:

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each.

1. Why does Nora say that this is the first Christmas on which they need not economize?

Nora says so, because her husband, Helmer has been promoted to the position of a bank manager and he would get a better salary.

2. What is Helmer's motto about borrowing money?

"No debt, no borrowing" is Helmer's motto. According to him there can be no freedom or beauty about a home that depends on borrowing and debt.

3. How many children do the Helmers have? What are their names?

The Helmers have three children. They are Ivar, Bob and Emmy.

4. Why does Helmer say that Nora is very much like her father?

Like her father, Nora is also a spendthrift. She is always wheedling money out of him and the moment she gets it, she spends it. That is why Helmer says that Nora is like her father.

5. Who is Dr. Rank?

Dr. Rank is a doctor who is an intimate family friend of the Helmers. He visits them daily. However, he is suffering from tuberculosis.

6. Who is Mrs. Lynd?

Mrs. Christine Lynd was Nora's class mate of school days. They had not met each other for the past ten years. Lynd had changed so much and so Nora could not identify her at first.

7. Why does Mrs. Lynd come to see Nora?

Mrs. Lynd visits Nora in order to get her help in finding a job.

8. Why does Nora have to take her Husband to Italy?

Nora had to take her husband to Italy at the commission of the doctor. Helmer had been seriously ill and the doctor advised Nora to take her husband to a place where the climate is warm.

9. Why did Lynd choose to marry a man she did not love?

Lynd chose to marry a man she did not love due to specific family circumstances. Her mother was seriously ill and she had to look after two younger brothers. Lynd was at that time in great financial crisis. She was thus forced to marry a rich man.

10. What happened to Lynd after her husband's death?

Lynd's husband was very rich at the time of their marriage. But soon after the marriage, his business collapsed. He left nothing for his wife. Lynd had to start a small shop at first and then a school.

11. What was the incident that makes Nora feels proud of herself?

It was Nora who had saved Helmer's life by borrowing money necessary for their trip to Italy.

12. Why does not Nora reveal the truth about her debt?

Toward Helmer was so ill that Nora was not able to discuss the matter with him. Later she realizes that he would not like it if she tells him that he owed to her for his life. Besides, Helmer was deadly against the idea of borrowing and debt.

13. Why does Krogstad come to meet Helmer?

Krogstad is a subordinate in the bank where Helmer has been promoted to the position of a manager. One of the first decisions Helmer took after his promotion was to dismiss Krogstad from the office. Krogstad has come to request Helmer to maintain him in his post.

14. Why is Lynd embarrassed to find Krogstad at the Helmers?

Krogstad and Lynd had been in love with each other. But she had jilted him by marrying a rich man. So they fell embarrassed when they see each other at the Helmers and they give no sign of mutual recognition.

15. Who is Anne?

Anne had been Nora's nurse. She had been a like a good mother to Nora whose mother had passed away. Anne is now a nurse to Nora's children and would continue to play a great role in the life of the children when Nora leaves them in the end.

16. What does Lynd suspect about Nora's relationship with Dr. Rank?

Lynd feels that Dr. Rank is secretly in love with Nora and that he must be the secret admirer of Nora who lent the money required for the Helmers trip to Italy.

17. What reasons does Nora give for recommending Krogstad's case?

Nora gives the reason that a man like Krogstad who writes in the most scurrilous newspapers can harm them by defamation, if Helmer dismisses him.

18. Why does Helmer decide to dismiss Krogstad?

Helmer and Krogstad had been friends at school. Now Krogstad has spoiled his reputation by an act of forgery. Besides, Krogstad always speaks to Helmer in a familiar manner addressing him by his Christian name as if their friendship still existed. Helmer does not want to retain a man of ill-fame in his office.

19. Why does Dr. Rank say that he will send Nora a card with a black cross on it?

Dr. Rank is suffering from tuberculosis. He knows that his end is near. He sends Nora a yellow card with a black cross on it to signify his impending death.

20. How does Krogstad react when he gets the dismissal order from Helmer?

Krogstad comes to Nora and tells her that if he is not reinstated in his post, he would make a public disclosure of her criminal act of forging her father's signature for raising the money required for Helmer's trip to Italy. He has already brought a letter addressed to Helmer revealing all the facts about her criminal act.

21. How does Mrs. Lynd Help Nora?

Mrs. Lynd helps Nora by influencing Krogstad by promising to marry him. Lynd's promise makes Krogstad jubilant and he is forced to withdraw his plan of revenge of the Helmers.

22. How does Nora prevent Helmer from looking through his mail?

Nora pretends to be nervous of the tarantella dance that she is supposed to perform at the social dancing. She asks Helmer to play on the piano so that she could practice the dance.

23. What is tarantella?

Tarantella is actually a poisonous spider. A dance form originated from the writhing movements of a person stung by a tarantella.

24. How did Krogstad feel when Mrs. Lynd had jilted him?

Krogstad felt that the whole earth under his feet had been swept away.

25. What is the similarity between Krogstad and Mrs. Lynd?

Krogstad and Lynd had been in love with each other before their marriage. But Lynd married another man. In due course Krogstad also got married and begotten children. Lynd is now a widow and Krogstad a widower. Lynd compares themselves to two shipwrecked persons.

26. Why does Lynd prevent Krogstad from asking back from Helmer his incriminating letter unread?

Mrs. Lynd feels that there should be no secret between a husband and a wife. Therefore Helmer should be revealed everything regarding Nora's act of borrowing and forgery. They must have a complete understanding between them which is not possible with any sort of secrecy between them. That is why Lynd insists on Krogstad allowing Helmer to read his incriminating letter.

27. Why does Helmer suspect that someone has tried to open his letter box?

The sight of Nora's broken Hairpin in the letter box makes him suspect that someone has tried to open his letter box.

28. How does Helmer react to Krogstad's first letter?

On reading Krogstad's letter, Helmer becomes furious and accuses Nora in strong terms calling her a hypocrite, criminal and a liar.

29. What is the point of Helmer's comparison between Nora and her father?

Nora possesses all her father's vices and lack of moral principles.

30. What is the condition that Helmer lays down before Nora?

Helmer says that Nora can remain with him in the same house, but that their married life is over. They will be husband and wife only in the eyes of the public. She will not be allowed even to look after her own children.

31. What makes Helmer forgive Nora?

Krogstad sends Helmer a letter of apology along with the bond Nora had executed which bears proof to her forgery. He promises to relinquish all his plans for revenge. On realizing that his reputation is not stained, Helmer once again assumes the role of a loving and dotting husband and forgives Nora unconditionally.

32. Why is Nora disillusioned?

Nora is shocked to find the true nature of her husband who accused her in strong terms on reading Krogstad's first letter, but who forgives her on reading his second letter as there is no harm to his public image. Nora is totally disillusioned by the capricious nature of her husband who is concerned about only his public image.

33. Why does Nora say that she has been greatly wronged?

When Nora was a child, her father had treated her like a doll-baby, after her marriage, Helmer treated her like a doll-wife and she was forced to do things as per the tastes and dictates of a male dominated society.

34. Why does Nora leave her husband, her children and her home?

Nora feels that her most sacred duty is to herself and not to her husband or to children. She wants to go into the world to gather first-hand experience to learn what is right and what is wrong. i.e. she wants to find out whether the dictates of her mind or those of society, religion and morality are right.

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph of about 100 words.

1. What is Nora's secret?

Torvald Helmer, his wife Nora and their three children are living in a comfortable state. Eight years ago Helmer had fallen critically ill and the doctors had advised Nora to take him to a warm climate in southern Europe. Nora did not have enough money for such a trip and. She borrowed twelve hundred dollars on interest from a man by the name Krogstad and executed a bond in which she was forced to forge her own father's signature on the bond she had taken her husband to Italy. After a year's stay, he had completely recovered his health. Nora had never told him about the loan or forgery. It would have hurt his self-respect to know that his wife had borrowed the money for his sake. He would never have tolerated her act of forgery if he had come to know of it.

2. How is the secret revealed?

Krogstad is a subordinate in the same bank where Helmer has been promoted the manager. Helmer and Krogstad had been great friends once but now Helmer holds Krogstad in contempt. Krogstad spoils his reputation by an act of forgery. Therefore Helmer had decided to dismiss Krogstad from his post in the bank

Krogstad does not get any assurance from Helmer in the matter of retaining him in the bank. He meets Nora secretly and asks her to exercise her influence upon Helmer so that he could continue in his post in the bank. Helmer rejects Nora's recommendation. In fact, he sends an order of dismissal to Krogstad. He writes a letter describing Nora's entire transaction with him and her act of forgery and drops the incriminating letter into Helmer's letter box thereby revealing Nora's secret.

3. Mrs. Lynd's past history and her relationship with Krogstad.

Krogstad and Mrs. Lynd had been lovers when they were both unmarried. Christine Lynd had promised to marry Krogstad, but for certain compelling family circumstances she had married a man of wealth. When she deserted Krogstad, he felt that the earth under his feet had crumbled. However, in due course, he too had married and had begotten children, but he had subsequently lost his wife and is now a widower. Mrs. Lynd had also lost her husband and she is a widow now. But she has no children. When Mrs. Lynd comes to Nora in order to get her help in getting a job, Krogstad comes to see Helmer in order to request him not to dismiss him. Mrs. Lynd and Krogstad see each other. But they give no sign of mutual recognition. When Nora reveals all the facts to Mrs. Lynd, Lynd thinks that she can still influence Krogstad on the basis of the love that had existed between them. Lynd makes a visit to Krogstad and tells him of the circumstance in which she had to marry another man. Now she promises him that she would be mother to his motherless children.

Lynd's offer of marriage fills Krogstad with greatest pleasure. He readily accepts the offer and also offers to withdraw the incriminating letter.

4. The dramatic significance of tarantella.

Tarantella is actually a poisonous spider. A dance form originated from the writhing movements of a person stung by a tarantella. Nora herself had studied this dance form at Capri, an island on the West Italy in the Bay of Naples. That particular Christmas, the Helmers were invited to attend a fancy-dress ball at the Stenberg's. Helmer wanted Nora to present this dance disguised as a Neapolitan fisher girl. This was the time when Nora was suffering from great mental agony due to the thread made by Krogstad, a poisonous tarantella in the form of a human. When Krogstad's request for being reinstated in the bank was totally rejected, he writes an incriminating letter to Helmer revealing all Nora's secret transactions. It is this that causes great mental agony to Nora. It is in such a situation that she performs the tarantella. Her performance was very realistic and a great success because she was actually the victim of a poisonous tarantella in the form of Krogstad. The dance looked like the spasmodic movements of a person writhing in pain under the poisonous effect of the sting of a tarantella.

5. Symbolism in "A Doll's House"

'A Doll's House' is built on irony, suggestion and implicit symbolism. More is implied than stated. The irony of Nora's condescending behavior towards Mrs. Lynd becomes clear only at the end of the play when we find Nora in Mrs. Lynd's position. Ibsen was obsessed with the idea of using symbols when he wrote "a Doll's House". The Christmas tree in the opening scene denotes security, happiness and improved financial status of the family. Later stripped of its decorations, the tree represents the breaking down of family security and Nora's inner tension. The Macaroons also have a symbolic significance. It is a symbol of Nora's inner urge to be free. Her rebellious nature is seen even in the beginning of the play. Similarly Nora's simple game of Hide and Seek with her children becomes significant when it is interrupted by Krogstad's arrival because she has been playing a sort of hide and seek with Krogstad. Then there is the great symbolic dance the tarantella, a dance which symbolizes the inner turmoil in Nora. Nora, leaving Helmer in order to find for herself the right to exist as a responsible member of society, is the beginning of a new outlook of women in Modern age. Bernard Shaw writes: "Nora's revolt is the end of a chapter of human history. The slam of the door behind her is more momentous than the cannon of Waterloo or sedan. Thus a new movement to the dramatic form has been presented by Ibsen in "A Doll's House" which conquered Europe and founded a new school of dramatic art.

III. Write an essay:

1. Evaluate “A Doll’s House” as a social drama.

(or)

The themes of Ibsen’s play “A Doll’s House”

(or)

“Ibsen for the first time turned social drama into the drama of ideas” substantiate with reference to “A Doll’s House”

“A Doll’s House” (1879) is one of the great realistic social drama written by Henrik Ibsen. The theme of the play is the status of women in society in general and in marriage in particular. It is a total plea for women’s rights not merely to vote but for her right to exist as a responsible member of society. Ibsen was conscious of society’s prejudiced expectation of woman. This had troubled him very much. In “A Doll’s House”, Ibsen elevates the heroine, Nora from the status of a doll to an individual in her own rights who is capable of taking of her own decisions. The dominant theme of the play is thus the emancipation of the self. Ibsen also draws attention to secondary issues like the injustice of stringent social laws, inherited illness etc. The play charts Nora’s progressive growth in self-realization. Nora, in the end, becomes aware of the stifling nature of her dependency and turns her back upon a catastrophic existence.

In “A Doll’s House” Nora and Helmer had been married for nine years. Soon after their marriage, Helmer had been seriously ill and Nora’s father too is on his death bed. Nora secretly borrows the money required for the trip to Italy from Krogstad without Helmer’s Knowledge and permission. Nora signs her father’s name on the promissory note. Helmer’s life is saved and Nora manages to pay off a part of her secret debt. She is not seriously bothered by her concealment as in her mind; it is justified because of her love for her husband.

Nills Krogstad from whom Nora has borrowed the money is a clerk in the same bank where Helmer has been promoted to the position of a manager. Krogstad’s character is shady and one of Helmer’s first decision as bank manager is to dismiss Krogstad. It is at this point that the drama begins. Krogstad approaches Nora tells her that she had forged her father’s signature which is criminal Nora says that her motive was based only on love; when Krogstad threatens to reveal her secret to Helmer, Nora request her husband that he be reinstated. When her request has been ineffectual Krogstad threatens to reveal the whole situation in a letter to Helmer.

The play depicts Helmer as a kind of moral sensualist, thoroughly self-righteous, shallow and egoistic. When the play opens he is Nora’s hero, who would protect and shield her from all harm. But all the goodness she sees in her husband is in fact a reflection her own goodness Nora believes that in the event of Krogstad exposing her, Helmer will take the blame upon himself in order to protect her. Overcome by her love for her husband, she even contemplates committing suicide.

Krogstad drops the letter revealing all into Helmer's letter box. Inspired by the influence of Christine Lynd, Nora's old classmate whom Krogstad had once loved, he could be persuaded to demand his letter back unopened. Nora somehow wants to distract Helmer's attention from the mail-box in order to gain time. On the pretext that she is not through with the Tarantella, the dance that she is to perform at the costume ball the next day, she begs Helmer to devote his complete attention to her. Helmer postpones the opening of the letter box till the next day. Nora insists that Helmer go and read his letters, intending in the meanwhile to escape from the house and drown herself. However Helmer rushes in from his study with Krogstad's letter in his hand. Helmer now reveals himself to be an extremely selfish and unloving person. He overwhelms Nora with painful and brutal reproaches and in that moment Nora sees him for what he actually is. Her idol crumbles down before her. In the midst of Helmer's scolding of Nora, another letter arrives from Krogstad enclosing the forged note and relinquishing all vindictive designs. Overcome by relief, Helmer 'forgives' Nora and once again he assumes the role of a loving husband. But Nora is now a disillusioned woman. She has now discovered the reality of the character of her husband.

Nora is now a changed woman. She is no longer prepared to continue to be a doll-wife. Her father had always treated her as a baby-doll and that her husband has always treated her as a doll-wife. She tells Helmer, that she has decided to leave her doll-house. She is now an individual in her own rights. She is no longer prepared to submit blindly to the conventions of society or the dictates of morality or religion. She walks out of the house slamming the door behind her, leaving her husband and children alone to find out by first-hand experience what is right and what is wrong. In the words of Bernard Shaw, "Nora's revolt is the end of a chapter of human history". The slam of the door behind her turns a new leaf in the history of the liberation of women.

2. Significance of the title of the play.
3. "A Doll's House" as A Modern Tragedy
4. Character sketch of Torvald Helmer
5. Character sketch of Nora Helmer
6. Character sketch of Mrs. Lynd
7. Character sketch of Krogstad
8. The part played by Dr. Rank in "A Doll's House"

RIDERS TO THE SEA

- J.M. Synge.

EDMUND JOHN MILLINGTON SYNGE

Edmund John Millington Synge (pronounced Sing) was born in 1871 in a Dublin Suburb of Anglo-Irish Protestant Landowners. An uncle of Synge had gone to the Aran Islands as a Protestant Missionary. His family was much associated with the church. Young Synge was brought up in the strict form of Protestantism. Yet his boyhood was spent among the hills and mountains of South Dublin. His passions for the countryside helped him to acquire “a knowledge of natural history more intimate than Wordsworth’s” and his love of nature continuously reflected in the imagery and descriptive passages of his plays.

Synge’s meeting with W. B Yeats was a turning point in his dramatic career. Yeats advised him thus:

“.....Go to the Aran Islands, live there as if you were one of the people themselves, express a life that has never found expression”.

This advice came at a time when Synge himself was meditating upon going to Aran Islands. Synge went to the Aran Islands in 1898. It was the time of Irish Literary Renaissance. He wrote a series of articles on the kind of life he saw on the island. The time was congenial to dramatize the new life and stage it at the Abbey theatre. The Irish National Theatre Society formed in 1902 assisted Synge to stage his first play “In the Shadow of the Glen (1903) at the Abbey, followed by “Riders to the Sea” (1904).

BACKGROUND TO “RIDERS TO THE SEA”

The Aran Islands consist of three small islands: Irishmoore, Irishmaan and Irisheer in the Atlantic between the coasts of Galway and Clare. The land is stony and not very good for cultivation.

Synge’s life among the people of Aran Islands, his temperament and his negative capability along with his knowledge of Gaelic language gives an easy access to befriend them. He could feel the contrast between his life in Paris and this one; he feels quite comfortable in their company. The main source of livelihood was fishing. The sea has both been the preserver and the destroyer of life. The people never learned swimming as it would prolong their suffering before death. There are superstitious stories among the Islanders. If one’s hat is blown off by the wind he must not try to get it back; one has to go for another hat. Likewise, they should not try to snatch anything from the sea. A star seen rising close to the Moon is conceived to be ominous. Thus these islanders are steeped in their supernatural beliefs and omens, in spite of having Christians.

“Riders to the Sea” is full of references to omens, to death, to burial, to the scene in the churchyard, to the coffin boards, to the keen and to the ghastly story told by Bride Dara. All these beliefs and references build the tragic atmosphere of the play.

“Riders to the Sea” is a tragedy in one Act. It presents the essential conflicts that are known and bound to happen and accepted as a part of life on the Islands. The conflict is between the raging sea and the humble humanity. The protagonist Maurya undergoes untold mental agony from the beginning in spite of the prayers and consolations offered by Christianity. The prayers become powerless in the cruel face of reality.

CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY:

Mauria, an old woman

Bartley, her son

Cathleen, her daughter

Nora, a younger daughter

Men and women

The scene of action is laid in a cottage on an island off the West of Ireland.

SYNOPSIS OF THE PLAY:

Synge’s ‘Riders to the Sea’ is a stark modern tragedy in one act. It is equivalent of Greek tragedy. The scene of action is laid in a cottage on an Aran Island off the West of Ireland.

The play is based on the incidents Synge observed during his visit to the Aran Island. While talking to the people of the Island, he felt as though they were fated people foredoomed to suffering. The play presents the unequal fight between man and the sea. The sea has been a source of livelihood to the family of Mauria but it has also devoured all the sturdy men folk of the family. The Riders to the Sea under reference in the title are Maura’s father-in-law, her husband, and her six sons. But in the play there are only two riders- Mauria’s last surviving son Bartley and his spectral brother Michael. Her father-in-law, her husband and her five sons have already been swallowed by the sea before the play begins.

When the play begins we see some white boards in Mauria’s Kitchens. These have been brought to make coffin for Michael who had been drowned some nine days before the play begins. The grief stricken mother would frequently go the sea-beach to look if Michael’s body is being washed ashore.

Cathleen, Mauria’s Elder daughter is preparing a cake for Bartley. Her younger sister Nora enters with a bundle of clothes kept hidden under the shawl. The clothes belong to a man drowned in the sea. The village priest had given Nora these clothes for identification. Cathleen proposed to hide them in the turf-lot lest the mother should find it. Bartley had decided to go big horse fair in Connemare. Mauria forbids him. She has a vague fear that the voyage would be fatal to him. Mauria had also seen a star rising close

by the Moon; she takes it to be ominous. Still Bartley leaves riding on a red mare and being followed by a grey pony which is made to run after him without a rider.

Mauria cries out that Bartley would soon die. She says “I will have no son left me in the world.” Cathleen admonishes her to go and bless Bartley and give him a cake. Mauria goes out. The two sisters now opens the bundle to compare the flannel shirt with Michael’s other shirt. But Bartley had put it on. However the stockings are the one knit by Nora. Michael’s fate is doomed. The girls begin to bemoan.

Mauria returns weeping softly. The cake meant for Bartley is still in her hand. She has seen a fearful sight: Bartley riding on red mare being followed by a grey pony with the ghost of Michael upon it. Mauria is so astonished by the sight that she could not give Bartley either Blessing or cake. It is the “fearfullest thing seen since Bride Dara saw the dead man with a child in his arm”

Mauria reminiscences how she had lost her husband, father-in-law, then her four sturdy sons in the sea. When the fourth son Patch was dead, she saw women coming to keen with her and men carrying his dead body and laying it before her. At this moment an old woman comes in, weeping and lamenting. Mauria could not be sure whether her neighbours were lamenting for Patch or Michael. Cathleen informs her that Michael’s dead body had been found in the far north and decently buried. Now several men come in carrying the dead body of Bartley on a plank. Bartley died by being knocked over into the sea by the grey pony.

Bartley’s dead body is placed by the neighbours on the table in the room. The women began to keen softly. The men knelt near the door. Cathleen and Nora knelt at one end of the table. Mauria knelt down at the head of the table. With calm resignation, she says she has no male folk left in her house. She would care no more for tide and storm.

“They are all gone, and there is n’t

Anything more the sea can do to me.”

All her prayers for Bartley had proved futile. She would now have long rest and quite sleep in the winter night. She sprinkled holy water on Bartley’s dead body and Michael’s clothes and invoked the blessing of God on the soul of her dead sons and the soul of every one left living in the world. She found consolation in the thought that she had done to the dead all that was humanely possible to do and that no man could be living forever.

REVISIONARY EXERCISES:

I. Answer the following questions in a sentence or two each.

1. What is the theme of the play “Riders to the Sea”?

The theme of the play, “Riders to the Sea”, is the unequal fight between the sea and the humble humanity. The sea has been a source of livelihood to the people of Aran Islands but at the same time it has devoured many a sturdy men of the village.

2. What does the title “Riders to the Sea” signify?

The riders to the sea are Mauria’s father-in-law, her husband, and her six sons who have been drowned in the sea. But in the play only two riders make their appearance. They are Mauria’s last surviving son, Bartley and his spectral brother Michael.

3. What do the wooden planks placed against the kitchen wall of Mauria’s cottage symbolize?

The wooden planks suggest the theme of death. These planks have been brought for making coffin for Michael who has been drowned some nine days before the action of the play begins.

4. Why does Cathleen hide the bundle of clothes in the turf-lot?

The bundle of clothes belongs to a man drowned in the sea. The village priest had given Nora these clothes for comparing them with those of Michael. Cathleen hides the bundle in the turf-lot lest their mother should find it.

5. Why does Bartley need the rope?

Bartley needs the rope as a halter for riding the mare on his way to Connemara horse-fair.

6. Why does Mauria refuse to give Bartley the rope?

Mauria refuses to give Bartley the rope as they would be required when Michael’s body would be washed ashore. Mauria wants to bury him deep in the grave and the rope would be needed for placing the coffin in the grave.

7. How does Mauria respond when Bartley leaves for Connemara?

When Bartley leaves for Connemara, Mauria laments that she would have no son left living in the world. She wails what she would do with the girls if Bartley gets drowned.

8. What does Cathleen asks Mauria to do after Bartley’s departure?

Cathleen asks Mauria to go to the spring well and hand over the bread and give blessing to Bartley.

9. What was ‘the fearfulest’ sight that Mauria had seen when she went to give Bartley bread and blessing?

Mauria saw Bartley coming along on his red mare with grey pony following. On that grey pony, was seen the ghost of Michael in fine clothes and new shoes.

10. What does “the fearfulest’ sight Mauria had seen signify?

‘The fearfulest’ sight Mauria had seen signifies that Bartley is also doomed. The sight was ominous.

11. How did Bartely die?

Bartely had been knocked down by the grey pony and was drowned in the sea.

12. How does Mauria console herself in the end?

Mauria consoles herself with the stoic resignation that the sea cannot do anything more to her, she would have no more calls and she need not bother about the breaks or surfs in any direction. She need not go in the dark nights asking for holy water.

13. How does Synge generalize Mauria's tragic experience?

The playwright universalizes Mauria's tragic experience with the statement that no man at all can be living forever.

14. What is the significance of the Bride Dara's story?

Bride Dara had seen a dead man with a child in his arms. It signifies the belief of the people of the Islands about the dead coming back to life and doing things. It is a comparison to the visitation of Michael riding on the grey horse after Bartley who goes in front on the red mare.

15. Colour symbolism in the play "Riders to the Sea"?

Bartley is seen coming along on his red mare with grey pony following. On that grey pony, was seen the ghost of Michael. The two colours red and grey symbolize life and death.

II. Answer the following in a paragraph.

1. The significance of the sea in 'Riders to the Sea'

The Sea is the major symbol in Synge's play 'The Riders to the Sea'. The play depicts the life of a group of illiterate and superstitious rustic people of the Aran Islands. The sea plays a significant role in the life of the people of the Island. It has been the giver as well as the taker of their lives. People carried on their work surrendering themselves to the will of sea. The action centers upon Maurya, an old lady and her daughters Cathleen and Nora. The sea is the archetypal symbol in the play. It is both the giver and taker. It has already taken the lives of Maurya's husband, her father-in law and four sturdy sons. When the play opens, Maurya has fallen into a state of restless sleep after nine days of constant mourning for her missing son Michael who is feared to have drowned at sea. Maurya tries to discourage Bartley, her only surviving son, from going to Connemara fair in the mainland. Ignoring her pleas to stay back, Bartley heads towards the boat without Maurya's blessings. When she went to give Bartley bread and blessing, Mauria saw Bartley coming along on his red mare with grey pony following. On that grey pony, was seen the ghost of Michael in fine clothes and new shoes. 'The fearfulest' sight Mauria had seen signifies that Bartley is also doomed. The sight was ominous. Bartley had been knocked down by the grey pony and was drowned at the sea. The play closes on a note of Maurya's accepting surrender to the sea and to the course of life. This is what is signified by the last line of the play: "No man can be at all living forever, and we must be satisfied."

2. The theme of resignation and reconciliation in the play "Riders to the Sea"

J. M. Synge's play 'The Riders to the Sea', depicts the life of a group of illiterate and superstitious rustic people of the Aran Islands. The action centers upon Maurya, an old

lady and her daughters Cathleen and Nora. The sea which is both the giver and taker of the lives, has already taken the lives of Maurya's husband, her father-in law and four sturdy sons. When the play opens, Maurya has fallen into a state of restless sleep after nine days of constant mourning for her missing son Michael who is feared to have drowned at sea. Maurya tries to discourage Bartley, her only surviving son, from going to Connemara fair in the mainland. Ignoring her pleas to stay back, Bartley heads towards the boat without Maurya's blessings. When she went to give Bartley bread and blessing, Maurya saw Bartley coming along on his red mare with grey pony following. On that grey pony, was seen the ghost of Michael in fine clothes and new shoes. 'The fearfulest' sight Maurya has seen signifies that Bartley is also doomed. The sight was ominous. Bartley had been knocked down by the grey pony and was drowned at the sea. The play closes on a note of Maurya's accepting surrender to the sea and to the course of life. In the end she says: "No man can be at all living forever, and we must be satisfied."

III. Write an essay on the following

1. Maurya in "Riders to the Sea" as a universal mother.

The action centers upon Maurya, an old lady and her daughters Cathleen and Nora who belong to the illiterate, superstitious rustic group of people of the Aran Islands, a group of Islands off the west coast of Ireland. The play presents the unequal fight between man and the sea. The sea has been a source of livelihood to the family of Maurya but it has also devoured all the sturdy men folk of the family. Her father-in-law, her husband and her five sons have already been swallowed by the sea before the play begins.

When the play opens, Maurya has fallen into a state of restless sleep after nine days of constant mourning for her missing son Michael who is feared to have drowned at sea. The grief stricken mother would frequently go the sea-beach to look if Michael's body is being washed ashore.

Bartley had decided to go the big horse fair in Connemara. Maurya forbids him. She has a vague fear that the voyage would be fatal to him. Maurya had also seen a star rising close by the Moon; she takes it to be ominous. Still Bartley leaves riding on a red mare and being followed by a grey pony which is made to run after him without a rider.

Maurya cries out that Bartley would soon die. She says "I will have no son left me in the world." Cathleen admonishes her to go and bless Bartley and give him a cake. Maurya goes out. Maurya returns weeping softly. The cake meant for Bartley is still in her hand. She has seen a fearfulest sight: Bartley riding on red mare being followed by a grey pony with the ghost of Michael upon it. Maurya is so astonished by the sight that she could not give Bartley either Blessing or cake. It is the "fearfulest thing seen since Bride Dara saw the dead man with a child in his arm"

Maurya reminiscences how she had lost her husband, father-in-law, then her four sturdy sons in the sea. When the fourth son Patch was dead, she saw women coming to keen with her and men carrying his dead body and laying it before her. When an old woman comes in, weeping and lamenting, Maurya could not be sure whether her neighbours were lamenting for Patch or Michael. Cathleen informs her that Michael's dead

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body had been found in the far north and decently buried. Bartley's dead body is placed by the neighbours on the table in the room. The women began to keen softly. The men knelt near the door. Cathleen and Nora knelt at one end of the table. Maurya knelt down at the head of the table. With calm resignation, she says she has no male folk left in her house. She would care no more for tide and storm.

“They are all gone, and there is n't
Anything more the sea can do to me.”

All her prayers for Bartley had proved futile. She would now have long rest and quite sleep in the winter night. She sprinkled holy water on Bartley's dead body and Michael's clothes and invoked the blessing of God on the soul of her dead sons and the soul of every one left living in the world. She found consolation in the thought that she had done to the dead all that was humanely possible to do. The play closes on a note of Maura's accepting surrender to the sea and to the course of life. In the end she says: “No man can be at all living forever, and we must be satisfied.”

MODULE III: WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

MACBETH

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Shakespeare is perhaps the greatest name in the whole realm of English literature, yet there is no authoritative biography available; only the barest outlines of the man are known for certain. It is generally believed that William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born on 23 April, 1564 at Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire, England, as the son of John and Mary Arden Shakespeare. The poet's father was a butcher and wool merchant in turn, who rose to be an alderman of the town (municipal councilor). At the age of seven, William was sent to the Town Grammar school where the chief study was Latin. He was not a studious boy in the narrow sense of the word. William seems to have learnt more from his companionship with other boys and from outdoor activities, than from the formal education at school; moreover the natural surroundings of the places in and around Stratford sank deep into his sensitive and extraordinary mind.

When William was only twelve years of age his father's fortunes began to decline, as a result of which the boy had to leave school and help his father in business. It is not known for certain what all jobs William took up in order to help his family which was indeed passing through a crisis. Before he was twenty, he married Anne Hathaway, daughter of a farmer, who was eight years his senior. The couple had three children- a daughter Susanna and a set of twins, Hamlet, and Judith. At twenty two, William Shakespeare left Stratford for London in search of work. The immediate cause of his departure seems to have been police action following his poaching (hunting without permission) deer on the estate of Sir Thomas Lucy.

Shakespeare had a tough time initially in London. For some time he worked in theatres looking after the horses of gentlemen who came to watch plays. This gave him an opportunity to become familiar with acting and even writing plays. Gradually Shakespeare improved his skills and at the age of twenty seven he began writing and producing his first play. Soon he acquired wealth, married off his two daughters and at fifty two; he passed away, having lived a contented and happy life at his home in Stratford.

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS AND POEMS:

Shakespeare's dramatic career extends over a period of nearly twenty-two years from 1590 to 1612. His literary output includes two long poems, namely, 'The Rape of Laurence', and 'Venus and Adonis', 153 sonnets and 37 plays. Some of his famous plays are as follows:

- (a) Comedies
 - Two Gentlemen of Verona
 - As You Like It
 - A Midsummer Night's Dream

- (b) Tragic-Comedies
 - Merchant of Venice
 - Much Ado about Nothing
 - Measure for Measure

- (c) Tragedies
 - Hamlet
 - Othello
 - King Lear
 - Macbeth

- (d) History plays
 - Richard II
 - Henry IV

- (e) Roman plays
 - Julius Caesar
 - Antony and Cleopatra

- (f) Last plays (Romances)
 - Cymbeline
 - The Winter's Tale
 - The Tempest

As a poet and dramatist, Shakespeare enjoys a unique position in the history of English literature. He has written plays on a wide variety of themes- domestic, personal, romantic, political and psychological. He did not invent his plots; instead he borrowed freely from every available source, but transmuted or changed them into something new and superior. Shakespeare was an expert in describing several kinds of characters including kings, nobles, queens generals, villains and clowns. Shakespeare is fortunate to have lived during the Elizabethan period (16th century), since queen Elizabeth was a great patron of art and literature and encouraged Shakespeare and his likes most generously. Many of his plays were written and staged to felicitate some royal function such as a wedding or a triumph.

Detailed, Scene-wise Summary of the play with Critical Comments

ACT 1

Scene 1

On a secluded, desolate heath, three witches meet in stormy weather. They cast their magic spell, and then depart, promising to meet Macbeth as he returns from the battlefield. That would be before the end of the day. The last words of the Witches, “Fair is foul, foul is fair,” strike the key-note of the play. Macbeth who is fair will soon become foul. Evil will henceforth be his good.

Scene 2

King Duncan of Scotland, his two sons-Malcolm and Donalbain are shown in a camp near Forres. A bleeding sergeant comes to tell them the news from the battlefield. He presents Macbeth as the decisive factor, and Ross gives the same impression from his point of view. We get a remarkable picture of Macbeth as a kind of superman, fearless, ferocious, almost invulnerable champion of right against treachery. The picture of brave Macbeth-“Bellona’s bridegroom” and “Valor’s minion”-presented in this scene should be compared with our impression of him at the close of the play.

In this scene Shakespeare has telescoped in place and time two battles-the one at Forres and the other at Fife-separated by hundred miles.

Scene 3

As they had decided in scene I, the three witches assemble again on a desolate heath, to meet Macbeth returning from the battlefield. They greet him as the Thane of Glamis and Thane of Cawdor and also foretell that he would be the king of Scotland hereafter. They prophecy that Banquo’s sons would be the future kings of Scotland. The first prophecy is fulfilled soon after as Ross and Angus come to inform Macbeth that the title of Cawdor has been conferred upon him, and the present Thane of Cawdor is to be beheaded shortly for treachery.

This is the scene for which the first two scenes were a mere preparation. We are now introduced to Macbeth for the first time. His ‘start’ on hearing the prophecy of the witches shows his guilty soul. Both Banquo and Macbeth are affected by the prophecy of the witches, but, says Hudson, while Macbeth is beside himself with excitement and transported with guilty thought and imaginings, Banquo remains calm, unexcited and self-poised. The witches are the personifications of the evil in nature always eager to establish contact with the guilty heart (as that of Macbeth). Macbeth’s first words, “so fair and foul a day I have not seen”, closely echo the witches words “Fair is foul, and foul is fair”. They are an expression of this kinship.

Scene 4

Banquo and Macbeth reach Forres, meet the king and are affectionately and warmly received by him. Duncan nominates Malcolm as his heir and then decides to pass the night at Inverness, the palace of Macbeth, to honour him. Macbeth leaves the king immediately and hurries home in order to make suitable arrangements for the reception of the king.

The scene is important in two respects: (1) Duncan's nomination of Malcolm as his successor destroys Macbeth's hope of getting the throne by lawful means, and (2) the king's desire of visiting his castle provides him with the opportunity of securing the throne by criminal means. It is, as if, Fate is pushing Macbeth on the road to crime.

Scene 5

Macbeth has already informed Lady Macbeth about the prophecy of the witches, and she is shown reading his letter. The prophecy can be fulfilled only through the murder of Duncan, and now that the king would be their guest for the night, they have a good opportunity to do so. But Lady Macbeth is afraid of the noble nature of husband who is "full of the milk of human kindness", and so unfit for such a task.

The scene introduces us to the second great character of the drama, Lady Macbeth. She is a woman of iron will and determination and it is she who will goad him on to murder. Hence, some critics have called her the "fourth witch". Her soliloquy, after she has read the letter of Macbeth, shows that they had talked on some previous occasion of the possibility of Macbeth getting the crown of Scotland. The slumbering ambition is now awakened by the prophecy of the witches, and the arrival of the king at their castle.

Scene 6

The king and his party have arrived at Inverness and stand outside admiring the peaceful atmosphere of the place. There is a dreadful irony about this scene; with the innocent king delighting in the appearance of Macbeth's castle and in what he sees is the generous hospitality of the Macbeth and Lady Macbeth themselves. Lady Macbeth seems almost to overdo her humble greeting (lines 14-20) but the king suspects nothing.

The appearance of the castle and that of its mistress are both pleasant. But as Duncan himself had remarked earlier, appearances are deceptive. He does not even dream that he is about to enter a den of crime, from where he will never return alive. The scene provides a fine example of dramatic irony.

Scene 7

In the scene Macbeth clearly and fully argues the case against murdering Duncan, and decides against it. The force of Lady Macbeth's scorn and eloquence change his mind again; her determination and confidence brush aside his fears and scruples. It is decided that Macbeth would murder Duncan that very night when he is asleep. The scene is important from the point of view of character-revelation. First; it brings out the "poetic imagination" of Macbeth. His imagination is the handmaid of his conscience and it is pictorial. It is the conflict between his ambition and his imagination which will lead to his undoing. Secondly, the scene also brings out the iron will and determination of Lady Macbeth. It is she who goads her husband on to crime.

Macbeth hesitates at the last moment on the brink of this crime. He is met by the concentrated will of his wife, who, summoning up every means of appeal, in a few passionate sentences overcomes his resistance, and identifies herself irrevocably with the deed. Though the soliloquy shows Macbeth's concern with the earthly consequence of the deed, it bears unmistakable indications of the outraged moral sense.

ACT 2

Scène 1

The scene is laid in Inverness, Macbeth's castle; late in the night. The murder is to be committed soon after. Apart from furthering the action and creating the atmosphere of horror before the murder, this scene also shows the difference between Banquo and Macbeth as men. Banquo and his son Fleance are good companions, and Banquo afflicted with cursed thoughts, appeals to the merciful powers of goodness for aid in fighting them. He also makes it fairly clear just afterwards that he is not happy with Macbeth's association with the witches.

The scene takes place just a moment before the murder. The characters of Macbeth and Banquo have been well contrasted." The guiltless man confesses his dreams; the guilty man denies further thoughts about the weird sisters. Macbeth has hallucinations, and the fact clearly shows that the thought of murder has driven him almost to the verge of insanity.

Scene2

Lady Macbeth had said earlier she intended to make the servants drunk and incapable of doing their duty properly in guarding the king. She now reveals that she, too has been drinking, but in her case the effect has been to give her an artificial courage. Macbeth murders the king and besmears his drunken grooms with blood so that the guilt may be fastened on them. All the same he horrified at the foul deed he has done.

This is the murder scene. It has been highly praised by all Shakespearean scholars. "The murder seems to be mirrored in the souls of the two agents, through them it seems to be visible to us. We see eye-witness of the deed of death, through it is transacted off the stage." The horrible deed is done, but Macbeth is filled with remorse. His conscience tells him that he will sleep no more, and he wishes that the deed had never been done. But Lady Macbeth is clam and self-controlled and manages the affair with great skill.

Scene3

It is near day break and loud and continuous knocking is heard at the door of Macbeth's castle. A drunken porter wakes up and gets ready to open the door. His incoherent speeches provide the much needed dramatic relief. Writes R.B. Kennedy, "This drunken porter has always been a controversial figure. Even such an important Shakespearean critic as Coleridge felt sure that Shakespeare couldn't have written the first part of this scene. But others have regarded the first 42 lines as very important, for the following reasons: the audience require some relief after the tension of the previous scene; there is a compelling irony about the fact that the Porter compares himself with the porter of hell gate, and this is almost what he is-certainly Macbeth has just acted and spoken as slowly responding is about to bring Macduff and Lennox on the scene, outsiders who become representatives of ordinary human decency."

— "All action in any direction is best expounded, measured and made apprehensible by reaction. Now apply this to the case in Macbeth. Here, as I have said, the retiring of the human heart and entrance of the fiendish heart was to be expressed and made sensible.

Another world has stepped in; and the murderers are taken out of the region of human things, human purposes, and human desires. They are transfigured: Lady Macbeth is unsexed; Macbeth has forgotten that he was born of woman; both are transformed to the image of devils; and, the world of devils is suddenly revealed. But how shall this be conveyed and made palpable? The murderers, and the murder must be insulated-cut off by an immeasurable gulf from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs-locked up and sequestered in some deep recess; we must be made sensible that the world of ordinary life is suddenly arrested-laid asleep-trance- racked into a dread armistice; the time must be annihilated; relation to things without abolished; and all must pass self-withdrawn into a deed syncope and suspension of earthly passion. Hence it is that when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the clouds, the knocking at the gate is heard; and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced; the human has made its influx upon the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings- on of the world in which we live first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that has suspended them.”

_ (De Quincy)

Scene 4

The scene is laid outside Macbeth’s castle. Ross talks with an old man of the horrible and unnatural events that took place during the night. Macduff joins them and from him we learn that the guilt has been fired on the two grooms who must have been bribed by king’s sons for they have run away. But it becomes clear that in their heart of people already suspect Macbeth.

This short scene is intended to provide relief from the stress and strain caused by the horror of the discovery of the murder. It also gives us useful information. Macbeth is to be the new king, and he has very cleverly fastened the guilt on the sons of the murdered king. A hint is also thrown out that Macduff already suspects Macbeth. This is why he does not intend to go to his coronation.

ACT 3

Scene 1

Macbeth has been crowned as the king of Scotland, and the scene is laid at Forres, in the king’s palace. Macbeth is to host a feast that night to celebrate his coronation and Banquo is to be the chief guest. Banquo has remained an honest and decent man and is now almost certain that Macbeth became king by foul means. He, too, would like to have the witches’ prophecies about him fulfilled, but has no intention of using wicked methods to bring this about.

Macbeth has already hired two murderers and he intends that both Fleance and Banquo should be murdered as they came to the castle at night for the feast.

The scene is important in two respects. First, it shows that the poison of the witches is working on Banquo. He suspects Macbeth but does not reveal his crime. Rather, he

professes loyalty to him. He does not actively deny the evil deed, but he passively connives at it. Secondly, the scene shows us that Macbeth is going deeper and deeper into crime. Like a common murderer, he plots the murder of Banquo and his son.

Scene 2

This scene is also laid in Forres, the king's palace, sometime later the same evening. There is striking change in the relationship between Macbeth and his wife. They are both disillusioned about the power and poison they have gained at so great a cost; they both say that it's better to be dead than suffer the misery they are going through at the time. This is about all they agree on. Lady Macbeth is sinking into a kind of depressed fatalism, while Macbeth is planning more crimes and desperate schemes to assert himself and wipe out the possibility of Banquo's descendants inheriting the throne

Scene 3

Banquo is murdered but Fleance escapes. Thus fears, doubts and uncertainty would continue to torture the soul of the murderous Macbeth.

The scene represents the climax of the play. The murder of Banquo is the last success of Macbeth. Henceforth; the tide will turn against him. The supernatural, which has been so far assisting him, would from now onwards turn against him

Scene 4

This is the famous banquet scene. The guests have arrived, the feast is on, but Banquo has not yet come. Macbeth has hallucinations. He wishes that Banquo also were there, and his wish is fulfilled by the ghost of Banquo taking the seat meant for Macbeth. This is repeated a second time. All would have been disclosed, had not Lady Macbeth saved the situation by her prompt and tactful handling. The guests depart with doubt and uncertainty in their minds.

Macbeth's fortunes are now on the decline. The suspicions of his guests are roused and very soon their crime will come to light. Like a common murderer, Macbeth will now commit one murder after another. Macduff has not come to his banquet at his bidding, and this is the first sign of revolt against him

Scene 5

The witches are seen once again on a desolate and secluded heath. They will meet Macbeth whom they know will soon come to them. They will make him feel secure and so spell his doom, for, "Security is mortals' chiefest enemy." The scene is generally regarded as an interpolation. It is supposed that it was not written by Shakespeare, but by some other person, probably the dramatist Middleton, the author of *The Witch*.

Scene 6

The scene is laid outside the king's palace at Forres. It does not advance the action of the play, but provides valuable information through the conversation of Lennox and another lord. People have begun to see through Macbeth, and there are ironic references to his actions. Macduff did not come to his coronation and so Macbeth is angry with him. He may be the next to be taken off.

The scene does not advance the action of the play, but it gives us valuable information regarding the public reaction to Macbeth's crimes. Macbeth has grown a tyrant, and dissatisfaction and revolt against him are mounting. His lords have begun to suspect him, and Macduff is fled to England. Nemesis will soon overtake Macbeth.

ACT 4

Scene 1

The three witches are seen again near a cave in stormy weather. They have already cast their spells, as Macbeth comes to meet them. They equivocate to him, and send him back home feeling more secure and self-confident. He decides henceforth, to be both bloody and bold. He would now be more deeply involved in crime.

The scene takes place on a desolate heath. There is thunder and lightning. In a cavern are seen the three witches dancing around a boiling cauldron. They throw into the boiling pot the strange ingredients associated with their magic powers. They sing a weird song as they prepare for the coming of Macbeth. Hecate soon joins the three weird sisters and they all dance round the boiling cauldron to complete their magic-spell.

Macbeth enters and asks the witches to give him the information which he requires. An apparition rises out of the cauldron. It is an armed head. From the armed head comes the warning to Macbeth that he must fear Macduff, the Thane of Fife. The apparition then goes down. It does not tell anything further.

The next apparition is a bloody child. The strange direction which Macbeth gets from this apparition is that he should be: "Bloody, bold and resolute" and that, "none of woman born shall harm Macbeth". The third apparition is a child wearing a crown. It bears trees in its hand, just as Macduff's soldiers will do towards the end of the play. It tells Macbeth that he will not be defeated until Birnam wood moves to Dunsinane Hill. Then arises before him a procession of eight apparitions (all of them Scottish Kings) followed by the ghost of Banquo. This means that Banquo's sons would be the future kings of Scotland.

Clark, commenting on the significance of the scene, writes, "At the beginning of the play, the weird women suggested no line of action to Macbeth. The violence which followed was the production of his own wicked mind. Now, however, the apparitions conjured up by their magic do urge Macbeth to be bloody, bold and resolute. Moreover, their predictions are clearly worded with the deliberate intent to deceive. They began by connecting with Macbeth's secret fear, as the ghost connected with Hamlet's latent thought, and warn him to beware of Macduff. Then, his attention won, they tell him that no man of woman born can harm him, thereby encouraging him to think that he can be bold, bloody and resolute with impunity. The prophecy that he shall never be vanquished till Birnam wood comes to Dunsinane lifts his self-confidence to such a height that his fall is all the greater, more sudden and unexpected."

Scene 2

This is the brutal murder scene in which Lady Macduff and her child are murdered in cold blood by the hired ruffians of Macbeth. Macduff has secretly fled to England, and

Macbeth has his revenge on him through his wife and child. Macduff's small son, with his precocious questions and answers, provides an interval of partly comic Shakespearean 'back-that' which accentuates the horror of the end of the scene. There is, of course, pathos too, and the scene that Macbeth is going to take a further step against the natural order of things by killing these helpless people.

S.T. Coleridge comments on the scene---“The scene, dreadful as it is, is still a relief, because it is a variety, because it is domestic, and, therefore, soothing as associated with the only real pleasure of life. The conversation between Lady Macduff and her child heightens the pathos, and preparatory for the deep tragedy of their assassination”

Scene 3

The scene is laid in England outside the palace of King Edward. Malcolm and Macduff are seen in close conversation. Malcolm tests Macduff's loyalty, and when he is sure that he is true and sincere he discloses to him his plans. The English King has promised him every possible help, and they would soon march to rescue their motherland from the clutches of the tyrant Macbeth.

Towards the end of the scene, Ross comes to them with the sad tidings that Macduff's wife and children have been murdered.

The scene is long and tiresome. It does not advance the action of the play. There is also much in it that is superfluous. For example, the information which the doctor gives regarding “the king's cure, “has no relevance, introduced merely as a compliment to King James I. However, the scene has great dramatic significance. As Verity points out, it shows, “from what quarter and how vengeance is coming upon Macbeth; and the crime perpetrated in the last scene becomes here the final incentive to the avenger.” It is the pause, the lull before the storm. It is the gathering of the storm which will burst on the head of the tyrant.

ACT 4

Scene 1

We have not seen Lady Macbeth since the middle of Act 111. At that point (scene 4) she was still trying to comfort and strengthen her husband (“You lack the season of all nature, sleep” were her last words then) but he was beginning to live a desperate inner life, out of touch with her. After the interval, it is she who cannot sleep and lives in a fearful world of fantasies.

The scene is introduced in almost documentary prose by the doctor and the Gentlewoman, preparing the way for Lady Macbeth's contrastingly wild but significant remarks.

The scene shows to us the former resolute and determined Lady Macbeth, now a nervous wreck .Nemesis has overtaken her, and her essentially feminine nature has given way. As she sleep-walks, she is a pathetic sight, which touches the heart of the readers. “In

the presence of the awful, unseen power that controls her poor divided self, we hush the breath and now the head.”

Scene 2

The scene is laid near Macbeth’s castle named Dunsinane. A number of Lords and nobles have deserted Macbeth, and are now marching towards Birnam, to meet Malcolm and his army there, Macbeth’s days are numbered.

Scene 3

Macbeth is seen in his castle in Dunsinane. He is growing desperate, but still derives courage from the prophecy of the witches. He has little else to encourage him. His wife is mentally ill, he has no real friends, and his castle is being hemmed in by the English forces under Malcolm, Siward and Macduff, and by those Scots who have already rebelled.

Macbeth then calls for his attendant, Seyton, and while awaiting his coming, he indulges in a soliloquy which makes it plain that he is sorely troubled in spirit, in spite of the security which he feels to be his. He realizes that he lost all honor, friends, love and affection and in their place has received only curses and flattery. To Seyton he gives orders that more horsemen be sent out, and asks him to give him his armour. Though in haste, he finds time to ask the doctor regarding the health of Lady Macbeth. When the doctor informs him that she is not sick, but “troubled with thick---coming fancies,” he asks him if he can cleanse her memory of the troubled thought that cause her sad condition. And when the doctor replies that for mental disorders, “the patient must minister to himself.” Macbeth cries indignantly. “Throw physic (medicine) to the dogs; I’ll none of it.

Scène 4

Combined English and Scottish forces are gathered near Birnam wood. They are soon to begin their march towards Dunsinane. In order to camouflage their numbers, they carry branches of trees before them, so that Birnam Wood seems to be on the move.

We are also informed that though Macbeth is still holding out in his castle at Dunsinane with great confidence, more of his supporters are leaving him. They must advance towards the fortress which the tyrant still defends, for the issue can be decided only through an attack on the castle.

Scene 5

When Macbeth is told that Birnam Wood is on the march, he decides to march out of his castle and fight the English face to face. The news of his Queen’s death at this moment further unnerves him and adds to his desperation. In spite, however, of the hardening of his heart, the sad tidings move Macbeth. He says bitterly that the queen, “should have died hereafter,” and then indulges in a soliloquy which expresses his sense of the futility of human life. Life, he now realizes, is a tale told by an idiot signifying nothing.

Scene 6

The combined English and French forces are now quite close to Dunsinane. The fight will begin soon.

Scene 7

The fight is on, and many a stalwarts on both sides is killed. Macbeth at last faces Macduff. When Macduff tells him that he is the man not born of woman, Macbeth's self-confidence is shaken, and he realizes that the witches whom he trusted were "equivocating fiends". His doom is sealed.

Scene 8

Macbeth fights desperately, and is at last killed by Macduff, the man not born of woman. Macduff brings to Malcolm his head fixed on his spear. Malcolm is unanimously elected the king of Scotland and he promises to reward them all, according to their many merits.

The tragedy ends on a note of peace. Macbeth is killed and peace is restored. The period of convulsion is over and the moral orders are once again in full control. Evil has been expelled and poetic Justice has been rendered to the evil-doer.

GENERAL ESSAYS

1. Shakespearean Tragedy: Chief Characteristics.

The four Great Tragedies.

Shakespeare has left behind him a number of great tragedies. But 'Hamlet', 'Othello', 'Macbeth' and 'King Lear' are his greatest creations. They rank among the greatest tragedies of the world

Conflict of Good and Evil

The theme of a Shakespearean tragedy is the conflict between Good and Evil. It is concerned with the ruin of the life of man. Its subject is the struggle between the struggle of Good and Evil in the world. It portrays men and women struggling with Evil; they often yield to Evil and are brought to death by :

Melodramatic effect.

Shakespeare wrote for the stage and not for our arm-chair reading. In his tragedies he introduces a series of excitements. The themes of all the four great tragedies are sensational. 'Macbeth' presents witches, ghosts, apparitions, and the murder of King Duncan in a darkened castle, the scene of the drunken porter and that of Lady Macbeth's sleep walking. In 'Hamlet', we have the ghost and the grave diggers, and in 'Othello' night alarms and sword fights.

A Tale of Suffering.

Shakespearean tragedy is pre-eminently the story of one person, "the hero" or at the most of two, the hero and the heroine. It is only in the love tragedies like 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Antony and Cleopatra' that the heroine is as much the center of action as that of the hero. A typical Shakespearean tragedy is a single star. The story leads up to the death

of the hero. At the end, the stage is often strewn with dead bodies. A Shakespearean tragedy is essentially a tale of suffering.

Tragic Hero

The tragic heroes all stand in a high degree. They are either kings or princes, or great military generals. Thus Hamlet is the prince, Lear is a king, and Macbeth is a general. These great personages suffer greatly. Their suffering is exceptional. Thus Macbeth, after the murder of King Duncan, suffers the tortures of Hell, as if there were scorpions in his brain. Othello is on the rack with jealousy. Lear goes mad and Hamlet's soul is torn within. The hero is such an important personality that his fall affects the welfare of a whole nation. His fall produces a sense of helplessness of man in front of the powerful fate.

Tragic Flaw

The tragic heroes of Shakespeare are all driven to their downfall on account of their hamartia or tragic flaw. Thus Macbeth has 'over vaulting ambition', Hamlet suffers from inability to take action, and Othello has suspicious jealousy, and Lear, uncontrollable passion. Owing to the fault of his character, the tragic hero falls from greatness. The character of the hero is responsible for his actions. They appear to be the instruments shaping their own destiny. It is in this sense that the dictum "Character is Destiny" is true of Shakespearean tragedy.

Three Complicating Factors

The characteristic deeds of the hero are influenced and complicated by the following three additional factors.

- i. Some abnormal conditions of the mind such as Lear's madness, Macbeth's hallucinations, Lady Macbeth's somnambulism etc.
- ii. The supernatural, ghosts and witches.

The supernatural element is not a mere illusion of the hero. The witches in Macbeth and the ghost in Hamlet have an objective existence as they are seen by other characters also. Further, the supernatural does contribute to the action, and is often an indispensable part of it. It gives an insight into the inner working of the hero's mind. The witches Macbeth sees are symbolic of the guilt switching his soul.

- iii. Chance or accident.

In most of the Shakespearean tragedies such as 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Othello' and 'Hamlet' chance plays a prominent part. For example, it is just a chance that Desdemona dropped her handkerchief at the crucial moment and that Bianca arrived on the scene just at the time to serve the purpose of Ingo. It is just a chance that Edgar arrived too late at the prison to save Cordelia's life. Macbeth is the only tragedy of Shakespeare from which chance events are absent.

Conflict – Internal and External.

The action of a Shakespearean tragedy always develops through conflict. The conflict is both external and internal. External conflict is the conflict between two persons

or two groups. Internal conflict is the struggle in the mind of the hero between two opposing courses of action. Thus there is conflict in Macbeth between ambition and loyalty to the king. Othello is torn within himself between love and jealousy, and Hamlet hesitates and broods and does nothing. In this way the soul of the hero is laid bare before us. The spectacle of suffering is terrible. It arouses the feelings of pity and fear. Shakespearean tragedy is truly "Cathartic" i.e. it purges the readers of the emotions of pity and fear.

No poetic Justice

Many critics point out that there is no poetic justice in a Shakespearean tragedy. The tragic heroes suffer more than is deserved by their faults. The good and the virtuous are often crushed and they do not get the prosperity they deserve. Lear and Othello suffer terribly out of all proportion to their faults; and Desdemona and Cordelia are wholly good.

Still, the former is choked to death and the latter, hanged. Poetic justice is not a fact of life and so Shakespeare, the realist does not introduce it in his tragedies.

In short, Shakespeare's tragic vision is solemn, terrible and convincing in its reality.

2. 'Macbeth' as a typical Shakespearean tragedy

A Shakespearean tragedy is the story of a man in high status, whose deeds and sufferings have impact upon a nation or empire. A Shakespearean tragic hero is impelled irresistibly by his own character and circumstances to engage in a series of actions. They bring about widespread ruin and desolation and the ultimate destruction of himself. Tragedy reflects the conflict and tension between good and evil in the external world and a Shakespearean tragedy is no exception. In addition to this external conflict, there is always an inner conflict in the character of the hero himself. The final impression left on our minds is not a feeling of gloom and depression but a heightened sense of the value and beauty of life.

"Macbeth" conforms to this pattern fully. Macbeth appears always as an exalted personage. He is at first the thane of Glamis and then the thane of Cawdor and afterwards King of Scotland. His deeds and sufferings are of a great significance to the whole nation. He strikes us as the leader in a war as "Bellona's bridegroom lapped in proof". He is a man of mature experience. He is capable of deep philosophical reflection.

Macbeth is the agent of his own tragedy. His own action brings about his destruction. There is no external compulsion on him. The supernatural element exercises only suggestion and no compulsion on his will.

The conflict between the forces of good and evil is more clearly marked in Macbeth than in any other tragedy. Macbeth himself is fascinating in his villainy. The death of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth alone cannot be adequate atonement for all the sufferings and calamities they have inflicted on the families of Duncan, Banquo, Macduff and countless other people. The deaths of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth do not move our pity, nor do we feel happy in their passing away.

Macbeth presents us with a character who is at once the hero and villain of his own tragedy. He betrays himself before he betrays King Duncan. He is the symbol of all frail humanity. The end of the play does not leave us depressed because Malcolm has been restored to the throne and his reign promises to be peaceful and happy. Macbeth's epitaph on Duncan i.e. "After life's fretful fever, he sleeps well!" is more appropriate to the death of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

3. The supernatural element in 'Macbeth'

Shakespeare has introduced the supernatural in a number of his plays. In 'Macbeth', he has introduced the ghost of Banquo as well as the unnatural ominous events such as those that take place on the night after the murder of Duncan. But, 'Macbeth' is the only play in which Shakespeare introduced the witches.

The supernatural in Macbeth can be analyzed on two levels: (i) The part played by the witches and (ii) the appearance of the ghost.

The role of the witches:

There are three witches in the play. Hecate is the Goddess of the witches. They are accompanied by their attendant spirits, a toad and a cat. They appear and disappear like bubbles of water. They use to cast their spells in a cauldron. They are unnatural creatures, neither men nor women, and they symbolize the evil in Nature. They meet in storms and can raise tempests, they are unnatural themselves, women with beards. They work their spell with fragments torn from the organs of men and animals. Their appearance is withered with 'choppy fingers and skinny lips' and they reduce their victims to the same condition. Their most powerful symbol is that of the 'birth strangles babe/Ditch-delivered by a drab.

In 'Macbeth' the witches combine the element both of superstition and scepticism. They have all reality and vividness of actual belief, but there are also suggestion that they are the products of the excited imagination, and so hallucinatory in nature. They are the vivid external presentation of the forces of evil.

The very first words uttered by the witches are "Fair is foul and foul is fair" These words strike the key-note of the play. They echo Macbeth's first words: 'so fair and foul a day I have not seen'

The witches' doctrine is in fact a self-deceiving one. 'Foul is not fair, but it only appears to be so. The witches equivocate with Macbeth in their initial promise to him of things that do sound so fair, as well as in the prophecies of the apparitions.

He achieves the title of King, but finds that he has sold his soul- his 'internal jewel' for something that proves worthless. They keep word of promise to his ear, but break it to his hope. Banquo does not believe in them and he seems not to care for their prophecy at the time, but their poison works on him also and there are suggestion that he too is lured by their prophecy that he would be the founder of a dynasty of kings.

In the case of Macbeth, the influence of these instruments of darkness is much more profound. On his very first appearance on the stage, Macbeth echoes them when he says “So foul and fair a day I have not seen”. They tempt and lead him away from goodness. Macbeth is peculiarly vulnerable to their influence because he hears them voice the desires of his heart and after his initial fear at being caught out, his mind moves easily along the route that indicate towards ‘the imperial theme’.

The theme of equivocation works out obviously through the witches and they are most striking voices of unnaturalness and disorder. The witches utter the riddles, which Macbeth in his weakness interprets in his own apparent interest. He is, therefore deceived not by the witches but by his ill-founded reliance on his own interpretations. However the witches cannot be dismissed as mere hallucinations as products of Macbeth’s beat oppressed brain, like the air drawn bloody dagger which he sees, for Banquo also sees and hears the witches.

The Ghost

Unlike the witches, the ghost of Banquo which appears in the Banquet scene is entirely hallucinatory in character. It is purely a subjective phenomenon. It is an objectification of the subjective state of Macbeth. It is a creation of his guilt-obsessed imagination and as Lady Macbeth reminds him very much like the dagger he sees just before the murder of Duncan. That is why none else sees the Ghost. It does not speak and it vanishes as soon as Macbeth begins to address it. Macbeth himself regards it as an ‘unreal mockery’, a mere creation of his heated brain.

Macbeth sees the Ghost just after the murder of Banquo. It is a product of his guilt-obsessed imagination, an instrument of divine punishment and justice. Macbeth, a man celebrated for his courage in battle, cringes before the creation of his troubled conscience, and almost betrays himself to the assembled guests. Henceforth they are suspicious, and their suspicion goes on increasing as Macbeth marches ahead on his bloody career.

In short, the supernatural in the play has been closely integrated both with character and action. It is not merely horrible phenomenon. Shakespeare has introduced the supernatural in his plays because that was what the audience wanted as they believed in ghosts and witchcrafts.

4. The soliloquies of Macbeth

“Macbeth” is the only tragedy of Shakespeare in which the tragic hero turns a villain. However, Macbeth does not lose our sympathy. The soliloquies that Macbeth delivers at different stages of his career of murder, give us a glimpse into his inner soul.

Macbeth’s first soliloquy:

The first real soliloquy of Macbeth occurs in Act I, Scent vii. It reveals Macbeth’s ambivalent attitude to the murder of Duncan. He is desirous of becoming the king of Scotland and to fulfil his desire, he is willing to take the shortest and the meanest way such as that of murder. But, he is afraid of the pricks of conscience and is bothered about the punishment in the other world. He cannot murder his own king who is good, virtuous and generous, a king who is a guest, a king who has done no harm to him but has rewarded him

with honor and title. Macbeth gives expression to his ambivalent attitude through the first soliloquy. This soliloquy places Macbeth on a much higher plane than Lady Macbeth. Lady Macbeth is more ambitious, more cruel and devilish than her husband. She has no sense of conscience at all.

Second Soliloquy.

This soliloquy of Macbeth occurs in Act II scene I as he proceeds to the bed-chamber of Duncan with his dark motive. The thought of the crime that he is about to commit oppresses his brain and he begins to have terrible hallucinations. He sees an air-drawn dagger with its hilt turned towards him, coming to him. He is to use such a kind of dagger to do away with Duncan. This soliloquy gives us a peep into the struggle in Macbeth's mind.

The third soliloquy:

This soliloquy occurs in Act III, scene i of the play Just before Macbeth prepares himself for the murder of Banquo. He is troubled by the prophecy of the witches that the sons of Banquo shall become the kings of Scotland. Therefore he feels insecure so long as Banquo and his son are alive. He decides to have them murdered. The soliloquy reveals Macbeth's fear and sense of insecurity.

Fourth soliloquy:

In his soliloquy at the end of Act IV, scene ii Macbeth expresses his determination not to lose a single moment inputting his thought to action- that is, to order at once for the massacre of the family of Madoffs' family. This soliloquy reveals Macbeth's inclination to commit further crimes.

Last soliloquies

Macbeth's last two soliloquies reveal his frustration and disillusionment. These soliloquies begin "tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow" and "I have lived long enough". When Lady Macbeth's death is announced to him, Macbeth receives it calmly. He says that her death might have happened later. He points out how time makes fools of us by leading us from day to day with the hope of an infinite number of tomorrows to follow every today. All those who have lived and died had been subjected to the same foolish illusions in their time. In the concluding part of the soliloquy Macbeth conceives life as 'a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing.

The soliloquy of Lady Macbeth:

Lady Macbeth also utters one important soliloquy. She indulges in this soliloquy just after receiving the news that Duncan is to be her guest that night. She calls upon the murdering ministers, the powers of darkness, to unsex her, and the very violence of this invocation is a measure of womanly instincts that have to be suppressed. The violence done to nature in such suppression results in complete nervousness break-downs and we witness the terrible spectacle of her somnambulism.

5. The character of Macbeth

Macbeth is the tragic hero of the play. The first reference to Macbeth is made by the witches. In Act I, scene, I the witches say that they would assemble on a desolate heath to meet Macbeth. At the end of the play Malcolm refers to him as ‘the dead butcher...’ The play has been rightly named after him, since he is the tragic hero.

Macbeth’s bravery and heroism:

Macbeth is a brave and heroic general. He is also the cousin of King Duncan. He successfully suppresses the rebellion of Macdonald, the Thane of Cawdor and his ally, the king of Norway. ‘Valour’s Minion’ and ‘Bellona’s Bridegroom’ are the epithets used to refer to Macbeth’s bravery and heroism.

His kindness:

Lady Macbeth refers to her husband as ‘too full of the milk of human kindnesses. He is also identified to be the cat in the proverb, which is desirous of catching the fish, but not willing to wet his paw.

The evil within him:

Macbeth is basically dishonest. On his first appearance on the stage, he echoes the words of the witches. He says “so fair and foul a day I have not seen” He has played most foully to gain the throne. In the second half of the play he is referred to as the tyrant. At the end ‘the cursed head of the dead butcher is displayed’

Macbeth’s over-vaulting ambition:

Macbeth is ambitious to become the king of Scotland. In fact ambition is the keynote of his character. He is ambitious to have kingship not only for his own self, but also for his progeny. It is this evil within him that transforms him into a murderer.

His war on the future.

He might have been content to get the crown of Scotland But the witches also prophesied that Banquo would father a dynasty of kings, and so his own children would not be kings. He decides to have Banquo and Fleance murdered. Banquo is killed but Fleance escapes. The ambition to be the founder of a dynasty persuades him to meet the witches again. They prophecy that no man born of woman shall harm him. But ultimately he meets his doom at the hands of Macduff, ‘the man not born of woman.’

Poetic imagination:

It is the poetic imagination that makes Macbeth have hallucinations. It makes him see the air drawn dagger and also the ghost of Banquo. It is his poetic imagination that makes him enumerate the values of sleep. His imagination makes him realize that he would sleep no more for ‘he has murdered sleep’. It is again his imagination that makes him visualize the consequences of the murder of Duncan and make him decide “we shall precede no further in this business”. Lady Macbeth chastises him and overcomes his opposition to murder. It is his imagination that makes him visualize his guilt in all its aspects.

Weakness of will:

Macbeth is weak of will and is easily carried away by the suggestion of others. He is never unaware of the enormity of his crime. He realizes the futility of the murder. Still he becomes a prey to the temptation of the witches and to the valour of the tongue of Lady Macbeth.

Bloody tyrant:

Macbeth is embarked on a career of crime. The evil in his is let loose and he becomes a tyrant. He murders Banquo but it brings him no peace. He also becomes suspicious of Macduff. Since Macduff is out of reach, he wreaks his vengeance on his wife and child.

His despair:

Macbeth ruined his peace in life with his murder of King Duncan. None of the good he philosophizes stoically. He says: life is tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing.

His tragic end:

Macbeth's end is truly tragic. We feel great pity for him who has suffered so much. At the beginning of the play, we heard how Macbeth cut off a traitor's head; and at the end, his won head is brought in as a symbol that evil has been destroyed.

6. The character of Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth has been referred to as "the fourth witch". "The fiend-like queen" is the epithet used by Malcolm to refer to her. It is she who chastises Macbeth by the valour of her tongue. She goads him overcome his hesitations and drives him to commit the murder of Duncan. She is ruthless in the pursuit of her goal. Duncan would never have been murdered, if Lady Macbeth had no iron will and determination. She calls upon the powers of evil to unsex her and to take away from her all womanly charity and kindness and to fill her from top to bottom with direct cruelty. But in the end it becomes clear that she is a woman with common feminine weakness.

Lady Macbeth is ambitious not for herself but for her husband. She considers him to be worthy of becoming the king of Scotland. The witches have prophesied the crown for Macbeth. Lady Macbeth is determined that he would have the crown. She says:

"Glamis thou art and Cawdor. And shalt be
What thou art promised"

Nothing deflects her from her purpose. She knows that her husband is infirm of purpose. To her there is no separation between the will and the deed. By sheer force of her will, she impels him to the deed. Her passionate courage makes him admire her in the following words:

"Bring forth men-children only
For thy undaunted mettle should compose
Nothing but males"

At her instigation, Macbeth murders the old king. But her essential feminine nature is noticeable from the very beginning. It is revealed in her famous words:

“Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done it”

Again her womanly feeling is revealed when she says:

“I have given suck, and I know
How tender it is to love the babe that milks me”

Lady Macbeth is full of self-control and resourcefulness. She takes upon herself the direction of affairs and arranges everything for the easy execution of the deed. She maintains self-control in the Banquet scene. It is her presence of mind that saves the situation. The appearance of the ghost of Banquo and Macbeth's reaction to it entirely ruins the feast. Neither Lady Macbeth nor the guests can understand his terror. With quick witted invention Lady Macbeth makes up an excuse. Macbeth has had this illness since his youth. It is nothing. They should take no notice of it. She tries her hardest to make him pull himself together, but no effect. Lady Macbeth's last resort is to ask the guests not to question him and then, with a complete lack of ceremony, she tells them all to go home. Doubts are aroused. But a full disclosure is prevented.

It is due to the lack of imagination that Lady Macbeth is not able to understand the consequence of the crime. The realization comes to her soon after the murder. At once she begins to sink. The glory of her dream soon fades away and exhausted and sleepless she exclaims:

“Naught is had, all is spent
Where our desire is got without content”

In the sleep walking scene she is broken, frustrated woman. She commits suicide. The strain of keeping up appearance has been too much for her. Shakespeare has made us pity her, evil though she is.

II. Answer the following questions in a paragraph.

1. The significance of the opening scene of the play “Macbeth”.

The opening scene in “Macbeth” strikes the key-note to the play. On a secluded, desolate heath, three witches meet in stormy weather. They cast their magic spell, and then depart, promising to meet Macbeth as he returns from the battlefield. That would be before the end of the day. The last words of the Witches, “Fair is foul, foul is fair,” strike the key-note of the play. Macbeth who is fair will soon become foul. Evil will henceforth be his good. The very first words uttered by Macbeth echoes the parting words of the witches in the first scene. Macbeth says: “so fair and foul a day I have not seen”. Macbeth is doomed by the magic spell of the witches.

2. The banquet scene in “Macbeth”

It is the poetic imagination that makes Macbeth have hallucinations. It makes him see the air drawn dagger and also the ghost of Banquo. In the famous banquet scene, the guests have arrived, the feast is on, but Banquo has not yet come. Macbeth has hallucinations. He wishes that Banquo also were there, and his wish is fulfilled by the ghost of Banquo taking the seat meant for Macbeth. This is repeated a second time. All would have been disclosed, had not Lady Macbeth saved the situation by her prompt and tactful handling. The guests depart with doubt and uncertainty in their minds.

3. The air-drawn dagger

It is the poetic imagination that makes Macbeth have hallucinations. It makes him see the air drawn dagger just before he proceeds to the bed-chamber of King Duncan with his darkest motive. He feels that the hilt of the dagger is turned towards him. He likens it to the sword that he has drawn. He begins to see drops of blood on it gudgeon. He realizes that there was no drop of blood on the knife when he saw it first. He comes to the conclusion that it is nothing but the result of his heat-oppressed brain.

4. Lady Macbeth as the fourth witch.

Lady Macbeth has been referred to as “the fourth witch”. “The fiend-like queen” is the epithet used by Malcolm to refer to her. It is she who chastises Macbeth by the valour of her tongue. She goads him overcome his hesitations and drives him to commit the murder of Duncan. She is ruthless in the pursuit of her goal. Duncan would never have been murdered, if Lady Macbeth had no iron will and determination. She calls upon the powers of evil to unsex her and to take away from her all womanly charity and kindness and to fill her from top to bottom with direst cruelty. But in the end it becomes clear that she is a woman with common feminine weakness.

5. The philosophy of Macbeth as expressed in his last soliloquy.

Macbeth’s last two soliloquies reveal his frustration and disillusionment. These soliloquies begin “tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow” and “I have lived long enough”. When Lady Macbeth’s death is announced to him, Macbeth receives it calmly. He says that her death might have happened later. He points out how time makes fools of us by leading us from day to day with the hope of an infinite number of tomorrows to follow every today. All those who have lived and died had been subjected to the same foolish illusions in their time. In the concluding part of the soliloquy Macbeth conceives life as ‘a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing.

6. The soliloquy of Lady Macbeth:

Lady Macbeth also utters one important soliloquy. She indulges in this soliloquy just after receiving the news that Duncan is to be her guest that night. She calls upon the murdering ministers, the powers of darkness, to unsex her, and the very violence of this invocation is a measure of womanly instincts that have to be suppressed. The violence done to nature in such suppression results in complete nervousness break-downs and we witness the terrible spectacle of her somnambulism.

7. The Cauldron Scene.

The cauldron scene in “Macbeth” takes place on a desolate heath. There is thunder and lightning. In a cavern are seen the three witches dancing around a boiling cauldron. They throw into the boiling pot the strange ingredients associated with their magic powers. They sing a weird song as they prepare for the coming of Macbeth. Hecate soon joins the three weird sisters and they all dance round the boiling cauldron to complete their magic-spell.

Macbeth enters and asks the witches to give him the information which he requires. An apparition rises out of the cauldron. It is an armed head. From the armed head comes the warning to Macbeth that he must fear Macduff, the Thane of Fife. The apparition then goes down. It does not tell anything further.

The next apparition is a bloody child. The strange direction which Macbeth gets from this apparition is that he should be: “Bloody, bold and resolute” and that, “none of woman born shall harm Macbeth”. The third apparition is a child wearing a crown. It bears trees in its hand, just as Macduff’s soldiers will do towards the end of the play. It tells Macbeth that he will not be defeated until Birnam wood moves to Dunsinane Hill. Then arises before him a procession of eight apparitions (all of them Scottish Kings) followed by the ghost of Banquo. This means that Banquo’s sons would be the future kings of Scotland

Answer the following questions in a sentence to two each.

1. What is the significance of the words “fair is foul and foul is fair”?

‘Fair is foul and foul is fair’ are the last words uttered by the witches in the opening scene of the play. They strike the key-note of the play. Macbeth who is fair will soon turn out to be foul. The very first words that he utters “so foul and fair a day I have not seen’ echo the words of the witches.

2. How do the witches hail Macbeth?

The witches hail Macbeth as ‘the Thane of Glamis’. ‘the Thane of Cawdor’ and ‘the King hereafter’

3. What prediction do the witches make to Banquo?

The witches make to Banquo the prediction that his sons shall become the kings of Scotland.

4. “Two truths are told as a happy prologue to the swelling act of an imperial theme”
Explain

Soon after the prediction of the witches Macbeth has been declared Thane of Cawdor by the king. They hailed him first as the Thane of Glamis, It is a truth. He is already the thane of Glamis. The two truths are referred to as the happy prelude to the act in which Macbeth attains imperial power.

5. Who is the Thane of Cawdor? Why is he put to death?

The Thane of Cawdor is one of the rebels. He is treacherous, for he has betrayed the trust of the King.

6. What are the epithets used to describe Macbeth's valour?

Macbeth is referred to as Valour's minion and Bellona's Bridegroom. Valour was the Roman Goddess of war and heroic courage and a minion would be her favourite. Bellona was the goddess of courage and Heroism in classical mythology and her bridegroom would be a brave and heroic person

7. Why does Macbeth give a 'start' on hearing the prophecy of the witches? What is the prophecy?

The prophecy that Macbeth would be the future king of Scotland startles Macbeth because the prophecy is but an expression of his own guilty ambition.

8. How do Macbeth and Banquo respond to the prophecy of the witches?

Banquo is honest and so he is afraid of the witches. The rationalist in him does not allow him to be bewitched by their predictions. Macbeth has a guilty conscience and so he gives a 'start' when he hears the prophecy of the witches.

9. Give the gist of the soliloquy Lady Macbeth utters while she awaits her husband's return from the battlefield.

Lady Macbeth invokes the powers of hell to "unsex" her so that nothing shall stop her from her ruthless pursuit of her unscrupulous ambition. She calls upon night to descend swiftly and to cover the earth lest her dark motive be detected.

10. How does Lady Macbeth chastise her husband?

Lady Macbeth tells her husband that he is not sufficiently schooled in villainy to make his face a mask for his heart. He is so full of the milk of human kindness. His mind is like a book from which strange things can be easily readily.

11. Macbeth's mental conflict regarding the murder of King Duncan

Macbeth is afraid that the murder of Duncan will have far reaching consequences. He will be thus damning his soul in this life and in the life to come. The horrible deed would invoke universal pity. He concludes that merely for the sake of his over vaulting ambition he would not take the risks involved in the murder of Duncan.

12. Why does not Lady Macbeth kill King Duncan herself?

Lady Macbeth does not kill King Duncan herself because the sleeping King resembled her own father.

13. The value of sleep as expressed by Macbeth after the murder of Duncan

After the murder of Duncan, Macbeth utters a soliloquy which dwells on the value of sleep for he has murdered the sleeping King. Sleep knits the nerves of the careworn man, it puts an end to the labours of the day; it refreshes the toiler; it is the balm of the

hurt mind; it assists nature to revive the lost energy; it is the chief nourisher in life's feast.

14. What comment does Macbeth make on looking at his own blood-stained hand?

Looking at his own blood-stained hand, Macbeth says that they pluck out his eyes. He asks himself whether all the ocean wash his hand. He laments that nothing can make his hands clean, but his hand will render the ocean red.

15. What is the fancy of the porter of Macbeth's castle? What is its significance?

The porter of Macbeth's castle fancies that he is the porter of Hell. This becomes true, for the castle of Macbeth has become a hell with the murder of Duncan.

16. Enumerate the most likely people that the porter fancies he should be admitting into hell.

The porter fancies that he should be admitting into hell a farmer, an equivocator and a French tailor.

17. Why does the porter fancy that the farmer, the equivocator and the French tailor are likely to be admitted into hell?

The farmer's greed was so great in the expectation of a good harvest. But as a result of the fall in price, he committed suicide. An equivocator is a liar with a 'double tongue', and the French tailor has stolen a piece of cloth entrusted with him.

18. How does Macbeth praise Duncan in his funeral oration?

In the funeral speech, Macbeth praises Duncan in the following words: 'From henceforth life itself is an idle, meaningless affair, all that is gracious and renowned has departed, the world has lost its richest essence, and what is left over is merely the dregs of humanity.'

19. Why does Macbeth envy Banquo?

Macbeth envies Banquo because the latter is wise and amiable and full of courage and manliness. Above all, the witches predicted that the sons of Banquo would be the kings of Scotland.

20. Why does Macbeth in a soliloquy muse that the murder of Duncan is a futile deed?

Macbeth thinks that the murder of Duncan is a futile deed because Banquo's heirs are to succeed the throne ultimately as predicted by the witches. Besides, Banquo's credentials has become a personal and political annoyance to Macbeth.

21. Why does Macbeth decide to meet the witches again?

Macbeth decides to meet the witches again because the murder of Duncan and his own coronation following has not given him any peace of mind; rather it torments his mind relentlessly. He is troubled at the doubt whether it was for the sake of Banquo's sons that he has done the deed.

22. What was the first warning of the witches to Macbeth in the witchcraft scene?

Macbeth is warned by the first apparition with an armed head to beware of Macduff.

23. What was the second apparition? What was its bidding to Macbeth/

The second apparition that is conjured up from the magic cauldron is a 'bloody child'. It bids Macbeth to be 'bloody, bold and resolute', for no one born of woman has power to harm him.

24. What was the assurance given to Macbeth by the third apparition in the conjuration scene?

The third apparition, a child crowned with a tree in his hand, assured Macbeth that he shall never be vanquished till 'Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill shall come against him'.

25. What happens in the witchcraft scene when Macbeth persists in his demand to know whether the sons of Banquo will ever reign in his kingdom?

On being enquired whether the sons of Banquo will become the kings of Scotland, the witches show Macbeth a spectral procession of eight kings, the last with a glass in his hand and followed by Banquo.

26. Why does he call the last sight he sees in the witchcraft scene a "horrible sight"?

The last sight Macbeth sees in the witchcraft scene is a horrible one because it is symbolic of the fact that Banquo's sons will not only come to occupy the throne, but will have a prosperous and long tenure.

27. In what sense has Macbeth 'supped full with horrors'?

Macbeth has "supped full with horrors" because he has committed murders, one after another, and has constantly suffered from great spiritual anguish. He has also seen the 'ghost' of Banquo who was murdered by his hired murderers.

28. How does Lady Macbeth die?

Lady Macbeth commits suicide.

29. Who tells us in the play how Lady Macbeth died?

It is Malcom who tells us of the way in which Lady Macbeth died. He tells his followers that she died "by self and violent hands" i.e. she committed suicide.

30. Explain the soliloquy of Macbeth beginning with 'tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.....'

Macbeth reflects on the emptiness and vanity of human life. One day after another passes on slowly in daily routine. It will be so, till ultimately, time itself comes to an end. The ultimate end of human life is death. Day by day man moves only towards the grave; there is no other meaning in life.

31. How does Macbeth behave in the Banquet scene?

At the Banquet, Macbeth expresses regret at the absence of Banquo. When he is about to take his seat, he is unable to find it. All the seats seem occupied to him. When his seat is pointed out, he finds Banquo's ghost sitting there. Startled, Macbeth addresses the ghost asking it not to shake its gory head.

32. How does Lady Macbeth save Macbeth from revealing his guilt conscience in the banquet scene?

Lady Macbeth explains away her husband's remark as arising from an old illness which makes him behave in a strange manner every now and then.

33. Who is Hecate?

Hecate is the patron goddess of the witches.

34. Why is Hecate angry with the witches?

Hecate is angry with the witches because they have ventured to deal with Macbeth without informing her and taking her aid.

35. Why does Malcolm put Macduff to a test?

Malcolm puts Macduff to a test because he suspects him to be a hireling of Macbeth.

36. How does Malcolm put Macduff to a test?

Malcolm paints himself in the blackest colours, as one full of vices. He says that his reign will be worse than Macbeth's. Then Macduff says that if the rightful king i.e. Malcolm is worse than Macbeth, then Scotland is doomed.

37. Comment on Lady Macbeth's somnambulism.

Lady Macbeth's somnambulism is a grim pointer to her involvement in the murder of King Duncan and Banquo.

38. How does Lady Macbeth behave in her somnambulism?

Lady Macbeth is seen walking with a lighted candle in her hand. Her eyes are open but the senses in them are shut. She moves her hand as if washing them. She says that there is a spot of blood which cannot be removed not even by all the perfumes of Arabia. She also says that no one would have thought so much blood in the old man and that Banquo cannot leave his grave.

39. Why does Macbeth remain undisturbed in spite of repeated reports about invasion?

In spite of the repeated reports about invasion, Macbeth remains calm because of the assurance of the witches' prophecy that he cannot be defeated by any man born of a woman and that no danger threatens him until Birnam wood moves to Dunsinane.

40. How does Macbeth respond on hearing the news of the death of Lady Macbeth?

Macbeth receives the news of the death of Lady Macbeth with calm resignation. He says that if she had died later, his heart free from its numbness, might have been moved as it ought to be.

41. The philosophy of life as expressed by Macbeth in the last soliloquy.

Life is a shadow without substance, a tale told by an idiot, meaning nothing, but full of noise and passion.

42. How is it that Birnam wood is seen moving towards Dunsinane?

Malcolm at Birnam wood calls upon his soldiers to cut branches and conceal themselves behind them, so as to mislead the enemy about their real strength. This stratagem makes Birnam wood appear moving towards Dunsinane.

43. What is the impact of Birnamwood seen moving towards Dunsinane?

The sight of Birnam wood moving towards Dunsinane provokes Macbeth into an outburst against the deceiving witches. He lost confidence and decides to die fighting.

44. How does the witches' prediction that no man born of woman shall hurt Macbeth?

Towards the end of the battle, Macduff reveals himself as a man not born of woman. He reveals the shocking truth that he was not born in the ordinary way but ripped from his mother's womb prematurely. Thus the prediction of the witches turns futile.

45. Comment on the ending of the play.

The play ends on a note of peaceful consolation. The rightful king, Malcolm, the son of late King Duncan is hailed as the new king of Scotland

MODEL QUESTIONS

University of Calicut

BA Programme in English Language and Literature Core Course

EN 5B1 Reading Drama.

Time: 3 Hours.

Total Weightage: 30

I. Answer all questions as Directed.

A. Choose the correct answer.

1. Who is the author of the work "Poetics"
 - a. Aristotle
 - b. Plato
 - c. Socrates
 - d. Homer.

2. Choral odes sung in honour of Dionysus were known as –
 - a. Poetica
 - b. Hymns
 - c. Chantings
 - d. Dithyrambs

3. Ben Jonson's "Voplon" is an example of -----
 - a. Comedy of manners
 - b. Comedy of humours
 - c. Romantic Comedy
 - d. Anti-romantic comedy.

4. Who among the following does not belong to the group of playwrights known as "The University Wits"
 - a. George Peele
 - b. Thomas Kyd
 - c. Christopher Marlow
 - d. John Heywood

B. Fill in the blanks

1. Eliot's play -----imbibes the conventions of Greek drama.
2. The name of Bertolt Brecht is associated with -----
3. Samuel Beckett's ----- is an absurd play.
4. -----is hailed as the mother of American Feminist drama.

C. Match the following

- | | | |
|----|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. | Existentialism | Bertolt Brecht |
| 2. | Epic Theatre | Albert Camus |
| 3. | The Theatre if Cruelty | Megan Terry |
| 4. | Feminist Theatre | Antonin Artaud |

D. Name the following

1. The play by John Osborne that heralded the Angry Theatre movement in Britian.
2. Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" is a -----
3. The British playwright who invented antimasque.
4. The light dramatic work that uses highly improbable situation , stereotyped characters and broad humour

II. Answer the following in about one or two sentences each.

1. What is striking about the plot of "Waiting for Godot"?
2. What are the features of Epic Theatre?
3. What is a tragi-comedy? Give an example
4. How does Aristotle define tragedy?
5. What is Catharsis?
6. Why does Macbeth have Banquo killed?
7. Why does not Lady Macbeth herself kill King Duncan?
8. What is "the fearfulest sight" seen by Maurya?
9. How did Bartley die?
10. Why does Nora forge her father's signature?
11. Why does Helmer dismiss Krogstad from the Bank?

III. Answer any five of the following questions in about 100 words.

1. The Sea symbolism in “Riders to the Sea”
2. The Absurd Theatre
3. Lady Macbeth’s somnambulism.
4. The significance of the Tarantella dance in “A Doll’s House”
5. The supernatural element in “Macbeth”
6. The character of Krogstad
7. Poetic drama.
8. Bertolt Brecht.

IV. Answer two of the following questions in about 350 words.

1. The role of fate and the theme of resignation and reconciliation in “Riders to the Sea”
2. “A Doll’s House” is Ibsen’s great realistic social drama. Discuss.
3. Drama as a tool for social criticism.
4. “Macbeth” is a statement of evil. Do you consider this view to be fair?
