

## **DJE3C - SHAKESPEARE**

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## UNIT I

### (A) SHAKESPEARE'S STAGE AND AUDIENCE

Shakespeare's plays have been conditioned a great deal by the stage that he wrote for and the world that he lived in. The Elizabethan audience craved for noise and outcry, for pomp and pageantry and Shakespeare provided them with plenty of it in every one of his plays. They liked broad jests and puns and word-jugglery. Shakespeare did not hesitate to let them have their fill of the same.

Shakespeare's plays were mostly staged at the Globe and Black Friars as he was mostly connected with them. The typical Elizabethan theatre was a wooden structure, hexagonal outside and round within. The stage and the boxes by the walls were covered. The rest of the theatre was open to the sky. The plays were staged by daylight. The stage was divided into four parts. The front stage projected far into the auditorium. This part of the stage served as a street or battlefield or garden and was open to the sky. The back stage was the part behind the pillars. It served as a large room, a palace hall; an office or a tavern as required. The walls of this part of the stage were hung with tapestry, black for tragedy and blue for comedy. At the back of the two side-walls were the entrance and the exit for the actors. There was a screened inner stage which served as the bedroom scene in *Othello* and *Macbeth*. It also served as Juliet's tomb and as Prospero's cell. Over the inner stage was the balcony or the upper stage. It served as the window in Shylock's house from which Jessica threw the casket on the street. It also served as Cleopatra's monument to which the dying Antony was raised to kiss Cleopatra farewell.

The audiences were made up of the groundlings in the pit and those in the galleries. The rich used the boxes, while the young gallants sat on seats provided at the edge of the stage itself. There was no curtain for the Elizabethan stage and very little of movable scenery. A scene therefore began with the entrance of the actors and ended with their exit. The dead bodies had to be carried off the stage in a funeral procession. In *Julius Caesar*, Antony and others carry off the dead body of Caesar. Hamlet drags away the body of Polonius from the stage. At the end of the comedies, generally and particularly in *Much Ado About Nothing* orders are given to the pipers to strike a tune and all exeunt dancing. The fact that at the end of every scene the players walked off the stage made the scenes end tamely. A scene could not be worked to a crisis. Two other characteristics of the Shakespearean stage deserve to be referred to. There was no painted backdrop. Shakespeare made good this lack with descriptive passages poetic in appeal. This also helped quick change of scenes. In Antony

and Cleopatra for instance, there are as many as forty-two scenes flitting all around the Mediterranean coast. This also helped a more rapid action than in a modern play. In spite of complicated plots any Elizabethan play could be staged in two hours.

Another significant fact about Elizabethan theatre that needs to be mentioned was that women's parts were played by boys. This explains why Shakespeare's plays do not have many women characters. In the tragedies they remain mostly in the background and some of the women characters like Portia, Nerissa, Jessica, Viola and Rosalind appear in the guise of men. It is difficult, however, to see how boy actors could have done full justice to women characters like Lady Macbeth or Cleopatra.

This brings us to Shakespeare's audience and their tastes. Shakespeare's pre-eminent consideration was success on the stage. Shakespeare quite often catered to the taste of the audience and gave them what they wanted. The people were generally crude and rough. They came to the theatre to have a laugh at the antics of the clowns, the discomfiture of the pompous or the rough and tumble of tavern brawls. They enjoyed scenes of bloodshed and violence. They wanted a laugh even in the middle of a tragedy. Shakespeare, therefore, had to bring in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as also the grave-diggers in *Hamlet*, the drunken porter in *Macbeth*, the clown in *Othello* and the fool in *King Lear*, Shakespeare also brought in a wrestling match in *As You Like It*, the rapier duels in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*, the sword fight in *Macbeth*. He had to provide good songs and singers in his plays. The Elizabethan audience was also superstitious. They believed in ghosts, witches and fairies. They also believed in supernatural happenings as in *Julius Caesar*.

The average Elizabethan went to the theatre for an escape from the sordid realities of life into the world of romance and laughter. Shakespeare transported his audience into such a world on the wings of his imagination.

Middleton Murray in his book on Shakespeare gives us a detailed description of the Elizabethan audience. "Nearly every country gentleman great or small went up to London to read a little law at one of the Inns of Court to equip himself for his duties as Justice of the Peace and manager of his own estates. They were the staples of the better class audience of the players. Murray also refers to the gentlemen of the Court and the captains and soldiers temporarily out of employment". He also mentions that "the chief nuisance of the stage was the gallant on the stage". The audience with which Shakespeare had to come to terms was not an audience of aristocrats but of the commonfolk. If they had a fault at all, it was that of uncritical catholicity of tastes. It was in fact the pit that above all demanded the poetic drama as well as horseplay mingled with vulgar wit.

Thus of Shakespeare, his theatre and his audience it could truly be said:

“The Drama’s laws, the drama’s patrons give  
For we that live to please, must please to live”

### **(B) SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY**

Shakespeare’s tragedies conform greatly to the Greek tradition except in one respect i.e. the introduction of comic relief. The Greek tradition expects a tragedy to excite the emotions of pity and terror which in the end should be resolved by catharsis, reconciliation of man to his fate, with the satisfying glorification of the soul of man. The Shakespearean tragedy like Greek tragedy does not leave behind a feeling of depression. It soothes and strengthens man’s belief in himself and in his destiny.

It will be well to remember, however, that Shakespeare wrote his tragedies for the Elizabethan stage and audience. He presented themes essentially sensational and often melodramatic, as Nicoll has pointed out. The excitements are such as to rouse the most apathetic audience. *Macbeth* has its witches, its ghosts and apparitions – its murder in a dark chamber, its drunken porter, its sleep-walking Lady Macbeth. In *Hamlet* we have the ghost, the killings, the play within a play and the grave-diggers. But Nicoll concludes, ‘Obviously this is only the outward framework’. Beyond and within this external sensationalism, Shakespeare has placed a more subtle, a more poetical and a less tangible tragic spirit. In discussing Shakespeare’s tragic vision, therefore, we must primarily concern ourselves with this inner or higher tragedy.

In Shakespeare’s tragedies there is generally one hero, a conspicuous person who stands above others in a high degree. Hamlet is a prince, Lear, a king; Macbeth is of the royal family and a brave general, as is Othello. There are, however, the exceptions concerning the fate of two, the hero and the heroine, in Shakespeare’s ‘Romeo and Juliet’ and ‘Antony and Cleopatra’. But a Shakespearean tragedy as Bradley points out “is essentially a tale of suffering and calamity conducting to death”. Macbeth after the murder suffers the tortures of Hell. Othello is racked with jealousy for the greater part of the play. Lear goes raving mad. Hamlet’s soul is torn within with feigned and spasmodic real madness.

But in as much as the fall of the hero leads to cataclysmic convulsions in the state, it produces a sense of the powerlessness of man and the omnipotence of fate. This is one way in which Shakespeare ushers in an element of universality in his tragedies.

The tragic hero is a character built on a grand scale. He is a person of high degree and an exceptional nature. But he has a fixation, a habit of mind, which works itself into a terrible force. Bradley refers to this state as the tragic flaw. Macbeth has vaulting ambition

and Hamlet, a noble indecisiveness. Othello is credulous and rash. Lear suffers from the follies of old age. This error of the tragic hero in an essentially alien or hostile environment leads him to his doom. In this sense the tragic hero shapes his own tragedy. At the same time, however, we find at the close of the tragedy that it is not only evil that is expelled, but also much that is good and admirable. Along with evil, the good is also destroyed. In *Othello*, Iago is punished. But Desdemona and Othello are dead. In *Hamlet and Lear*, the good is destroyed along with the evil. There is in fact no tragedy in the expulsion of Evil; the tragedy is that it involves waste of Good.

Shakespeare's tragedies are not mere tragedies of character. They are tragedies of character and destiny. The hero, we find, is a tragic misfit in his environment. It is destiny which places him in such a situation. Macbeth has vaulting ambition. That ambition is lighted and fuelled by the witches into the wild flame that consumes him. Othello is placed in a situation that calls for calm detached thinking, which capacity he has not. Hamlet finds himself where resolute action is called for. But he is given to brooding and indecisiveness. Othello in Hamlet's place or Hamlet in Othello's place would lead to no tragedy at all. The flaw in the character of the hero, therefore, proves a fatal flaw only in the peculiar circumstances in which cruel Destiny has placed him.

There are, moreover, some other conflicting factors that work upon the character and circumstances of the tragic hero. Macbeth suffers some hallucinations. Lady Macbeth walks in her sleep. Lear is half insane in his old age to begin with. The supernatural element that affects the heroes is not mere illusion. The witches in *Macbeth* and the ghost in *Hamlet* are objective entities. These elements, however, are used only to confirm the inner worthiness of the heroic mind. The ghost that Brutus sees at Philippi is but an expression of his sense of failure. The ghost in *Hamlet* only strengthens the suspicions already there in his mind. Even the witches in *Macbeth* may be said to be symbolic of the vaulting ambition within his soul. But the element of chance and accident plays a more decisive role in the development of the tragedy. Desdemona dropping her handkerchief, at just the critical moment, Juliet not waking up from her sleep, are significant instances of chance working against the hero or heroine. Such instances, however, occur only when the action is too far advanced.

The conflict in Shakespeare's tragedies is both external and internal. It may be noticed that in the earlier tragedies the conflict is more external than internal. In the love tragedies of '*Romeo and Juliet*' and '*Antony and Cleopatra*' the conflict is more external than internal. Destiny plays a dominant part. In the historical tragedies again in *Richard III* and *Richard II*, in *Julius Caesar* and in *Coriolanus*, the external conflict plays a greater part,

though the tragic ending is brought about both by the tragic flaw and hostile destiny. In the four great tragedies, however, the internal conflict in the hero plays a dominant and significant role. The spectacle of suffering by the hero is terrible and heart-rending and arouses the emotions of pity and terror as called for by Aristotle.

It may be noted that in the four great tragedies the tragic hero, just before his death, is granted a flash of what might have been. He appears at peace with himself and faces death with a sane and clear mind. A true conception of their own actions, painful as that may be, sheds light into their souls. Macbeth before he meets Macduff in the fight, in which he is killed, reflects ruefully on what might have been friends, the esteem of peers and the happy life which by his own actions he has lost. Othello regains his dignity and nobility just before he dies. A sort of calm descends on the tragic hero very much in the manner of the great Greek tragedy. It is the calm that the tragic hero attains before his end that gives the audience or the reader a sense of satisfaction and not of defeat. Man sees his destiny as glorious in the context of the immensity of space, the infinity of time and the mystery of life.

### **(C) SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDY**

A romantic comedy is a story of love, ending in marriage. Shakespeare wrote four romantic comedies, *As You Like It*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*. These comedies are pervaded by an atmosphere of mirth and merry-making.

Shakespeare's romantic comedies afford an escape from the sordid realities of everyday life. The action takes place either in a totally unfamiliar place such as Illyria in *Twelfth Night* or far-off places like Venice, as in *The Merchant of Venice* and the Forest of Arden, as in *As You Like It*. In this land the inhabitants have no other business but that of love-making. Except in *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Comedy of Errors* which opens on a public mart, nobody is ever perturbed by economic problems.

The focus in these plays is on love. People fall in love at first sight. One of the lovers in *As You Like It* swears by the Marlovian statement. 'Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?' Love is portrayed as a tidal feeling, sweeping people off their feet. All class barriers crumble and all resistance melts. Olivia, in *Twelfth Night* has decided to shun young men and mourn her brother's death in isolation, falls headlong in love with a girl disguised as a boy. This is the punishment that nature inflicts on her for her sexual repression. As in real life, in these comedies also lovers conceal their love because of their inhibitions and bitterly bicker with one another. This is what we find in *Much Ado About Nothing*. Benedic and Beatrice in this play always quarrel with each other. Interference by others finally breaks

down their icy inhibitions and enables them to express their love openly. In *As you Like It* Rosalind teases Orlando to the maximum possible extent and only finally yields to him. Love is represented in these plays both as a deep, unalterable bond and as a fickle feeling, changing frequently. Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night* is at first madly in love with Olivia but in the end switches his love with astonishing facility from Olivia to Viola. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, two pairs of lovers indulge in all sorts of permutations and combinations before finally settling down. Shakespeare portrays abiding love also. In one of his sonnets he declares firmly that 'love is not love that alters when it alteration finds'. Portia's love in *The Merchant of Venice* is such deep love and so is Viola's for Orsino in *Twelfth Night*. Often, unequal or incompatible marriages take place. For example, Celia willingly accepts the hand of the villainous Oliver. Similarly, the resourceful Viola marries Orsino who has no solid worth and spends all his time moaning and groaning for Olivia. It is said that Shakespeare brought about such unequal marriage because he was in a hurry to wind up the play and did not care to pair off Jill with a suitable Jack. But a better interpretation is that Shakespeare arranged such marriages because they were common in society. Shakespeare showed how people chose their partners erratically.

The Shakespearean comedy is full of music and poetry. Duke Orsino is a great lover of music as well as poetry. *Twelfth Night* begins with his command to his orchestra to play,'

'If music be the food of love, play on.'

He indulges in a comparison of his heart to a hart that is torn to pieces by his desire for Olivia, as the hunter Actaeon was changed into a hart and torn to death by his own hounds for gazing at the naked moon-goddess. In the *Merchant of Venice* there is a most poetic passage by a lover about the beauty of moonlight.

'In such a night as this . . . . . '

The passage is crowded with references to ancient mythological lovers. There are many songs in the romantic comedies, throwing light on the character of the listener as well as the singer. The songs help to conjure up the atmosphere of the play like the songs in *As You Like It* creating a pastoral atmosphere. The songs sung by Feste in *Twelfth Night* serve the purpose of exposing the hollow sentimentality of Duke Orsino.

Shakespeare diversified his romantic comedy by including coarse scenes representing low or unromantic life. The romantic love represented in the main plot is burlesqued in the sub-plot. Thus the Duke's wooing of Olivia by proxy in the main plot of *Twelfth Night* is paralleled in the subplot by Sir Andrew's efforts to win Olivia through Sir Toby's interference. Of course Andrew is a far cry from Duke Orsino. In the same way,

Touchstone's courtship of the shepherdess Audrey is a farcical counterpoint to the sugared Orlando-Rosalind affair. Jaques's melancholy reflections in this play serve to deflate the romantic notions aired by the major characters. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the asinine Bottom's flirtation with Titania brings out the absurdity of all infatuations. Thus the characters in the sub-plots of Shakespeare's romantic comedies serve to contrast and complement the goings-on of the main characters. As a result, the play becomes a rounded whole.

In some of his romantic comedies Shakespeare mingles an element of tragedy. Shylock with his inhuman philosophy, demanding a 'pound of flesh' drags *The Merchant of Venice* to the very brink of tragedy. It is Portia's sagacious argument that finally saves the desperate men. Similarly, Malvolio, with his vehement opposition to the rollickers, casts a gloomy shadow on the sunny *Twelfth Night*. Only when he is shut up in a dark room, the others can pursue their romance unhindered, but shutting up an able administrator like Malvolio has certainly a tragic undertone. In *As You Like It* the comedy is tempered by Jaques's gloomy reflections. Thus Shakespeare's romantic comedies are broad-based and represent both the joys and sorrows of life.

#### **(D) WOMEN CHARACTERS IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS**

The range and variety of women characters in Shakespeare tempts most critics to assert that Shakespeare has comprehensively covered the entire gallery of women in his plays and that his portraits of women have never been surpassed. Critics have also taken great pains to classify his heroines. Mrs. Jameson's classification may be accepted as briefer and simpler than most others. The commonsense classification, however, would be to differentiate them as clever and assertive like Portia in 'The Merchant of Venice', Beatrice in 'Much Ado About Nothing' and Rosalind in 'As You Like It'. The next group will be the loving and fanciful like Juliet, Helena, Viola, Ophelia and Miranda. In the third group would come the tragic heroines, Desdemona and Cordelia, even Hero in *Much Ado About Nothing* as also, Hermione. The last group would comprise aggressive and dominant creatures like Lady Macbeth, Goneril and Regan and Cleopatra.

Women who stand out for their cleverness, their assertiveness and who come out unscathed from the conflicts in which they are involved are the favourites among Shakespeare's heroines. Among these may be included Viola, Beatrice and Rosalind of Shakespeare's most brilliant comedies, as also Portia in "The Merchant of Venice". These glittering heroines, bright, beautiful and witty, always hold the front of the stage. They achieve the purpose by their practical wisdom and single-mindedness, in the final scenes of



the play Beatrice displays the deeper and finer qualities of her nature. The next most lovable of Shakespeare's heroines is Viola in *Twelfth Night*. The Viola who is lovable is not the Viola of the sentimental critics who see her as one who simply allows herself to be carried along by the stream of time and events to happiness at the end. The lovable Viola is more the character said to have been portrayed by the great Ellen Terry in her prime. Viola is hearty, though not heartwhole. In her scenes with Orsino, instead of very nearly betraying herself, she cleverly drops hints, the most blatant of which is "I am all the daughters of my father's house".

Viola is always as shrewd and sure of herself. She understands quickly that Olivia has fallen in love with her disguise and says to herself "Disguise, I see; thou art a wickedness". She is able to hold her own in her encounters with Feste and Malvolio as with Olivia. It is only when she is faced with having to fight a duel with Sir Andrew that she betrays her womanly weakness. Rosalind, displays her love and her womanliness in her scenes with Orlando.

In the second grouping of Shakespeare's women, is Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a passive and sentimental young woman. Lysander says of Helena that she "Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry" on Demetrius. When Demetrius tells her that he hates her she cries out.

"And even for that do I love you the more  
I am your spaniel",

Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* is passionate, constant and self-sacrificing. Love has transformed her. But the physical basis of love does, in no way, make her less pure of modest. Even Portia, in *The Merchant of Venice* surrenders herself, her wealth and all to Bassanio who she has accepted as her lord and master. Even Portia, the wife of Brutus who asserts her right to share her husband's thoughts and worries, kills herself, unable to bear her separation from Brutus.

Ophelia in *Hamlet*, like Hero in *Much Ado* shows herself passive in love and pathetic in her helplessness. Miranda in 'The Tempest' is loving and fanciful, but a passive character in the play.

It is such women characters that lent credence to the contention of some critics that Shakespeare's female characters are inferior to his men. Of all Shakespeare's tragic heroines, Desdemona evokes our sympathy the most.

In her extraordinary innocence she was, 'Half the wooer' and almost invited Othello's courting and gave him all her love. Desdemona's love for Othello oversteps the brink of

idolatry. She cannot bring herself to see any fault in him even when he strikes her publicly in his blind rage of jealousy. Emilia had been shocked by Desdemona's passive submission to Othello's brutality. Her docile reactions only show the strength of her love and the refinements of her nature. When Othello strangles her to death, her last words to Emilia who asks her who has killed her, are

“Nobody; I myself, Farewell,  
Commend me to my kind Lord”.

In Cordelia, one could see passivity combined with pride. She is proud, she is obstinate and she is strong in mind. Cordelia's character holds unadulterated tenderness and love with strength when occasion demands it. She has foresight and practical sense. She exercises the influence of a strong nature over others. But she is selfless. She does not see things from the standpoint of her own loss or gain.

Among the aggressive and evil women in the gallery of Shakespeare's women characters, Lady Macbeth stands out as the Clytemnestra of English tragedy. She possesses a frightful, determined will, and iron stability of resolve. But this in the end proves her ruin. In self-reliance and in intelligence, she is superior to Macbeth as Portia is to Bassanio and Rosalind to Orlando. Her womanliness comes out in her last minute reluctance to kill Duncan in his sleep because she saw her father's face in his.

It is also to be seen in her tender concern for Macbeth to the last. She stands out in contrast to Goneril and Regan in that she suffers the compunctious visitings of Nature. The other two are seen as absolutely remorseless.

In the delineation of the characters of Goneril and Regan, however, Shakespeare appears to be content to assure that there are really incorrigibly wicked people. They are realists. They give their father the smooth speech which he wants of them. Goneril is a schemer. Regan but echoes Goneril. She appears to shrink from acting on her own. The two sisters are different even in their monstrous cruelty. Goneril is cruel with a method and purpose. Regan positively delights in the infliction of pain. Granville-Barker has pointed out how the devil of lust comes to match the devil of cruelty in the two women. In their separate but illicit love for one and the same man, Edmund, they become reckless, shameless and foolish.

The last to be considered among Shakespeare's women characters but certainly not the least of them is Cleopatra, daughter of the Ptolemy. Her ability to attract and hold men like Pompey, Julius Caesar and Antony lies in her skilful wit and feminine changeableness. Enobarbus says of her:

“Age cannot wither her nor custom  
Stale her infinite variety”.

## UNIT II

### (A) SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORICAL PLAYS

Shakespeare's historical plays may be broadly classified as plays based on English history and on Roman history. They are "a creation of fiction woven around historical characters". Schlegel, one of the outstanding German critics, of Shakespeare, has called his plays of the past "a mirror for kings". Shakespeare's plays based on English history are Henry VI in three parts, Richard III, Richard II, King John, Henry IV in two parts and Henry V. His histories are pageants of Kingship

Shakespeare was aware of the faults and womaness of the monarchs of the country. Shakespeare in fact fully exposes the incompetence, the treachery, the cruelty, the dominant selfishness of the kings of England. The kings are shown either as weak and inefficient or as hardened criminals. Dowden, therefore, divides Shakespeare's kings into two groups – one group consisting of studies in kingly weakness and the other of studies in kingly strength. In the first group, we find King John, Richard II and Henry VI; and in the other, we have Henry IV, Henry V and Richard III.

Dowden writes, "John is the royal criminal, weak in his criminality: Henry VI is the royal saint, weak in his saintliness, Richard II is an inefficient, sentimental monarch. Richard III is the royal criminal strong in his crime, Henry IV, the usurping Boling-broke, is crafty in dealing with events by resolution and policy, by equal caution and daring". John Bailey says that Shakespeare thus almost makes the history of England a chronicle of royal and noble crimes. Henry V is the one honourable exception. Henry V is Shakespeare's ideal of a man of action. He is also most subtly studied human being of all the kings in historical plays. He is a plain man, an honest man and a hero – all in one.

English Historical plays cannot be complete without reference to the immortal Sir John Falstaff. With him Shakespeare turned the chronicle of kings into a picture of human life, filled out the peace and war pageantry of history with the reality of the life of ordinary men and women. Falstaff speaks no more than the truth when he makes his claim: "I am not only witty in myself, but the cause of that wit in other men". Falstaff is a comic Hamlet but unlike Hamlet he is in love with life.

### (B) LAST PLAYS OF SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare's final plays – 'Cymbeline', 'The Winter's Table', 'The Tempest' and 'Pericles' – stand in a class by themselves. They are also called Dramatic Romances. They share certain common characteristics.

Several reasons have been advanced as to why Shakespeare wrote such plays during the last stage of his dramatic career. Prof. Dowden says that Shakespeare, having sounded the depths of life in his tragedies, emerged from them and attained serenity and calm of mind which are reflected in the last plays. Forgiveness and reconciliation are the dominant notes of these plays and evil is subdued.

Prof. Lytton Strachey questions this view. He does not find any serenity and calmness in these plays. He cites the bitter curses of Caliban to prove the dominance of evil in the play. As for forgiveness Caliban is not forgiven at the end of "The Tempest". Lytton Strachey says that the last plays express a mood of boredom which is the result of having wrestled with great tragic themes. Lytton Strachey says 'it is difficult to resist the temptation that Shakespeare was getting bored with himself, bored with people, bored with real life, bored with drama, bored, in fact, in everything except poetry and poetic drama'. This boredom is seen in the faulty craftsmanship of the last plays and in the improbable and impossible situations which abound in them.

Lytton Strachey's theory of boredom is sharply criticized by Dover Wilson, Tillyard, Middleton Murray and Quiller-couch. Tillyard says that the proper perspective in which to view the last plays is to regard them as a reconstruction and regeneration and continuation of life after the pervasive destruction recorded in the tragedies. The last plays constitute "the final phase of the tragic pattern". Thus Florizel and Perdita re-enact the marriage of Leontes and Hermione but with greater success. Similarly, Perdita and Miranda symbolize the fertility of nature and the continuance of the new order that has survived destruction.

Dr. Tillyard's views have come in for a good deal of criticism. It is said that Tillyard's views are not based on facts. Florizel and Perdita are no doubt married, but the dramatist does not give us any picture of their married life. It cannot be taken for granted that they live happily ever afterwards. Moreover, the happiness of the younger generation is no compensation for the sufferings of Hermione of the older generation. Therefore Tillyard's view that what is destroyed in the old couple is recreated in the younger is not valid.

Another reason that is often suggested for the different atmosphere of the last plays is that they were written for a different theatre whose conditions vastly differed from those of the old theater for which the preceding plays were written. His earlier plays were written for the open-air theatre, but now he was writing for the indoor theatre Black-friars. "The indoor theatres, with their candle light and with facilities of vision little affected by the weather, were suited to masque and pageantry; while their enclosedness and the good behavior of the audience enclosed encouraged delicacy in intonation rather than shouting". The masque-like

quality and the pageantry of the final plays suited the indoor theatre. Another influence that shaped up the final plays, might have been exerted by Beaumont and Fletcher. These two rising dramatics had popularized a new type of drama full of improbable situations. Shakespeare could have learnt from these dramatists the art of improbable melodrama and tried his hand at it in the last plays.

The final plays share certain characteristics of the comedies and the tragedies and at the same time are different from them. There is plenty of tragic material in these plays, as in earlier tragedies. Imogene and Hermione are deeply wronged like Desdemona. Prospero, like Lear, is driven from his inheritance. Yet the destructive forces do not triumph at the end in the final plays. Instead, here is forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness and reconciliation was there in the earlier comedies too but here it is a different affair. In the earlier comedies, there was exultation over the evil-doer. But the final plays are marked by an embracing tolerance and kindness. Unlike the careless gaiety of the earlier comedies, the happiness of the final plays is wrung from a profound experience of disaster and tragedy.

A prominent feature of the final plays is that in these plays the reconciliation of the grown-ups is invariably brought about by their children. "Perdita and Florizel, Miranda and Ferdinand, Guiderius and Arvinagus", all make amends for the faults and misfortunes of their parents. Prospero and Alonso become friends through the love of Ferdinand and Miranda. The sins of the fathers are not visited on the children; Perdita is happily united with Florizel, Miranda with Ferdinand, Imogene with Posthumus and Marina with 'Periles and all this happens despite the faults of the parents.

There is a lot of difference between the way evil is resolved in the earlier plays and the way it is done in the final plays. In the comedies, evil is present in the shape of obstacles to true love and these obstacles are moved by the intervention of kindly fortune. In the tragedies, Fate joins hands with evil and much ruin and suffering are caused. In the final plays, Destiny takes a palpable and visible form to help human beings. In 'Winter's Tale', Appollo proclaims the truth about Hermione; in 'Cymbeline', Jupiter appears on the scene riding on his eagle and sways the fortunes of the British and the Roman forces. In "The Tempest", Destiny places herself in the control of man; Destiny has indeed become man. Prospero with his magic wand has absolute control over human affairs, over the forces of nature and even over the spirits of the air".

The last plays are replete with symbols. Perdita and Miranda symbolize the fertility and continuity of nature. Caliban symbolizes sensuality, grossness and meanness. Caliban also represents the dispossessed native and Prospero stands for the coloniser. Prospero also

represents the artist who is absorbed in his art and neglects his social duties and so is rejected by society. Lytton Strachey looks upon Prospero as a symbol of “imagination incarnates using the animal (Caliban) and the spiritual (Ariel) to do its ministry, making Art subservient to the redemption and transformation of man”.

The language of the last plays is also remarkably different from that of the earlier plays. Raleigh says that the style of these plays is a further development of the style of the tragedies. “The very syntax is the syntax of thought rather than of language, constructions are mixed, grammatical links are dropped, the meaning of many sentences is compressed into one; hints and impressions count as much as full blown prepositions”.

### (C) SHAKESPEARE’S SONNETS

Shakespeare’s sonnets have been for long looked upon as the secret key to the poet’s love. “With this same key Shakespeare unlocked his heart” writes Wordsworth. Browning echoes Wordsworth’s tribute. Shelley and Tennyson eulogize the sonnets in the same strain.

In the complete modern edition of Shakespeare’s sonnets Dowden traces a fairly clear outline of that section of Shakespeare’s personal life during which he wrote the sonnets, “A young man, the poet’s friend, beautiful and brilliant, is exposed to temptations. It is possible that his mother wants to see him married. The poet certainly wants it; he urges marriage upon his friend. First, Shakespeare urges the Fair Youth to ‘perpetuate his beauty in his offspring. In the fair youth refuses, the poet will fight against Time and Decay and confer immortality upon his friend by his verse.

This Fair Youth is eulogized by the poet as the pattern of Beauty, including both the male and female, Adonis and Aphrodite, even the Hermaphrodite principle of beauty. The image of Hermaphrodite in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* must have possessed the imagination of Renaissance literature. It is this image, projected in the Elizabethan theatre by the boy actors of women’s parts which have given sensual substance to the cult of friendship and the tradition of the praise of lovely boys. Stephen Spender’s speculation that the Fair Youth could well be Will Huges comes nearest the mark. It is right to presume therefore that the language of the sonnets addressed to the Fair Youth, extravagant as it now seems, is the language of complement and passion. It cannot therefore be mistaken “for anything else than the expression of a friendship is delicate enough to be wounded and manly enough to be outraged”.

The Fair Youth has been variously identified as Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton and William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. Both these young men were

Shakespeare's patrons, whose favour he sought. The internal evidence is against the Fair Youth being either Southampton or Pembroke. R.L. Eagle argues that the lines in one of his sonnets can possibly refer only to a favourite boy actor. The lines are as follows:

What is your substance, whereof are you  
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?

Oscar Wilde indulges in a fond fancy evoking before our vision the image of beautiful youth. Shakespeare loved the youth on the verge of idolatry. The sonnets are addressed to a particular young man whose personality for some reason seems to have filled the soul of Shakespeare with terrible joy and no less terrible despair.

Shakespeare however was involved not only with a fair youth but also with a dark lady. Dowden observes "Shakespeare at some time of his life was snared by a woman, the reverse of a beautiful lady according to the conventional Elizabethan standard. Dark-haired, dark-eyed, pale-cheeked, skilled in touching the virginal (a form of harpsichord), skilled also in playing on the heart of man, who could attract and repel, irritate and soothe; join reproach with caress, a woman faithless to her vow in wedlock". Shakespeare praises the dark lady as a woman without beauty. She is voluptuous and clever, she is a coquette and she is cruel.

When the Dark Lady makes her delayed but most effective entry (in the 127<sup>th</sup> sonnet) one would almost think that Shakespeare's theatrical cunning had something to do with it. The process of introspection continues at a faster tempo and with ever-increasing intensity. The lady is depicted with grossly familiar equality, a bitter and bawdy ferocity. Her promiscuity is described in a language of indecent and unpoetic realism. The poet's perception that the Dark Lady is a whore makes him write in a moral tone far fiercer and deeper, and self-examination more searching than anything before. In the last couplet of his 150<sup>th</sup> sonnet, the poet writes that he has loved the dark lady for her unworthiness. This, in turn, has infected him. It has made him unworthy. His unworthiness makes him worthy of her. In the next sonnet the poet admits in terms unusually religious for Shakespeare, that his love is betraying his soul.

The dark lady has been variously identified as Mary Fitton or even as a creature of Shakespeare's own invention. Critics like Sidney Lee believe that Shakespeare's fertile dramatic imagination was not content with borrowing the conventional portrait of cruel mistress from the Italian Sonneteers. He went one step further and made her immoral as well as cruel. 'The dark lady' says Nothrop Frye, 'is an incarnation of desire rather than of love' Shaw has rightly pointed out that the cruelty about which the poet writes is in the language of sexual passion. In this context, Stephen Spender asks the pertinent question "Is not the poet's



love-hate for the Dark Lady related to the disgust for physical sex which is a feature of the last plays and of *King Lear*?" We may then see in the idealized relationship of the poet with his friend a sublimation of sex, and an escape from that kind of relationship which leads to revulsion and disgust. One finds in the sonnets an occasional autobiographical reference to a rival poet. Pinto however opines that the rival poet referred to was Chapman who also claimed Pembroke and Southampton as his patrons.

Studying the sonnets as a whole we find that as the sequence precedes the texture of the poems show a slowly increasing complexity. They become more introspective. The interest is often far more on the state of the mind than the object of his love or even the love itself. IN the sixty-sixth sonnet Shakespeare writes 'tired with all these for restful death I cry'. Self-disgust and self-reproach are the usual tones of his introspection. The poet is bitter at the thought of age. He feels even more deeply the conviction of failure as a poet. The Mutual Flame in consuming the grossness of love attains a spiritual consummation dreamt of by Dante in his "Divine Comedy". Such a sacred flame, doubtless, is burning behind the sonnets of Shakespeare.

#### **(D) FOOLS OF SHAKESPEARE**

Shakespeare fools are usually clever peasants or commoners that use their wits to outdo people of higher social standing. They are very similar to the real fools and Jesters of the time. They are largely heterogeneous. The groundlings (theatre goers who were too poor to pay for seats thus stood on the 'ground' in the front by the stage) that frequented the Globe theatre were more likely to be drawn to these Shakespearean fools. Shakespearian fools may be generally divided into two category – the clown, a general term that was originally intended to designate a rustic or otherwise uneducated individual who's dramatic purpose was to evoke laughter with his ignorance and the courtly fool or Jester in whom wit pointed satire accompany low comedy.

The dramatic sources of Shakespeare's simple minded clowns are as old as classical antiquity. In the play themselves, such figures as Bottom of a *Midsummer Night's Dream* and Dogberry of *Much ado about nothing* are typically classified as clowns, their principle function being to arouse the mirth of audiences. By the time of Queen Elizabeth reign courtly fools were a common feature of English society and where seen as one of two types - Natural (or) Artificial, the former could include misshapen (or) mentally deficient individuals afflicted with dwarfism. The artificial fool in contrast, was possessed of a verbal wit and talent for intellectual repartee. In to this category critics place Shakespeare intellectual or

wise fools notably Touchstone of *As You Like It*, Feste of *Twelfth Night* and King Lear's unnamed fool.

Shakespeare's fools generally appear as servants of principal characters. Touchstone is the servant of the Duke in '*As You Like It*'. Feste is a dependant of Olivia. The fool is invariably a lover of creature comforts. Launcelot Gobbo complains that he is famished in the Jew's household. Feste is seen cringing for money. Sir John Falstaff and Sir Toby Belch are drunkards and big eaters. They are also braggarts and cowards. The clowns are also shown indulging in pranks. They enjoy baiting as seen from the baiting of Malvolio by Feste and others. The clowns also indulge in vulgar jokes and word jugglery. This sometimes leads to sheer nonsensical talk as indulged in by Feste and the fool in '*Lear*'.

The fool as stated already plays an integral and significant function in Shakespeare's plays. He adds spice to the comedy by his humour and foolery. He provides dramatic relief as well as heightens the intensity of the tragic scenes in the tragedies. This heightening of the tragic effect is by the properly timed juxtaposition of the comic and the tragic. This is best seen in *Antony and Cleopatra* and *King Lear*. In the comedies, the fool frequently corrects the extra sentimentality of the romantic characters as does Feste in *Twelfth Night* and Touchstone in *As You Like It*. In *Twelfth Night*, Feste ridicules the ridiculously inflated grief of Olivia for her dead brother. He suggests to Duke Orsino that he should get his tailor to make his clothes of changeable taffeta to suit his quick changing romantic moods. "It is the clown's office to restore the equilibrium of life which is the essence of comedy, whenever that equilibrium is too much disturbed".

The fool in Shakespeare sometimes performs the function of the chorus in Greek Tragedy. He frequently comments on the course of action and on the different characters as well as supplies the information necessary for a proper understanding of a play. If any character in the plays of Shakespeare may be said to express the view of the playwright, he is certainly the fool. The fool in Shakespeare is not just a purveyor of wit and pranks. He is also a philosopher and a critic.

The true function of the fool, the clown or the clumsy rustics is to help bring out the ridiculous and the incongruous in the action of the play. Feste in '*Twelfth Night*' clashes with Malvolio who strongly disapproves of him. Feste plays a great part in the gulling and baiting of the pretentious and unfortunate steward. Feste acts as a goad in bringing out the pretensions of Malvolio. Feste is also shown crossing swords with Viola who comes in the guise of Cesario as an ambassador of love from Olivia. Feste, then appears as the boon

companion of Sir Toby and Sir Andrew in the caterwauling scene. Feste is seen at his best exposing the sentimentality of Olivia and Orsino.

In Shakespeare's plays we come across lasting types of ridiculous humanity who are not exactly fools or clowns. Topping the list of such characters is Sir John Falstaff. He is a great figure of fun. He is witty in himself and evokes the wit of others. He is irrepressible. Bottom, the weaver, is another such classic character. He is preposterously vain and ambitious to play all roles in 'Pyramus and Thisbe'. He is not at all perturbed when his head is transformed into an ass's head. He takes Titania's falling in love with him as a matter of course. Dogberry and Verges, pompous fools parading their legal knowledge and wisely dodging dangers, are exquisite comic characters.

Shakespeare's fools are integral manifestations of his humour which is generally kind and tolerant. Shakespeare laughs with the fool and the coxcomb and not at them. He at times, indulges in lash-like satire. Malvolio, cross-gartered and yellow-stockinged with the eternal smile on his face, quoting repeatedly from Olivia's supposed love letter is a cruel satire on vanity and Puritanism. Sometimes Shakespeare's humour can be grim and morbid as in the grave-digger's scene in "*Hamlet*". In *King Lear* the fool has been introduced in the most tragic situations not only to heighten the tragic effect by contrast but also to serve as the chorus of the play to kindle the sentiments of the audience. Thus Shakespeare's characterisation of fools is a fine design of wit which the author owns.

### UNIT III

#### AS YOU LIKE IT

The play starts with Orlando and Adam talking together. Orlando tells Adam how his father left for him a small sum of a thousand crowns in the charge of Oliver so that he may educate and bring him up. Orlando complains that Oliver has misused the money. Instead of educating him like a gentle man, Orlando is treated like a peasant, while his younger brother Jacques is sent to school. Oliver spends more money even on his horses that are better looked after by costly riders to train and feed them. He feels very bitter that he is given no chance for self-improvement. With such thoughts in his mind, Orlando grows rebellious against his brother Oliver.

At this moment, Oliver enters. The two brothers exchange hot words. Orlando tells Oliver that he does not like the way he is treated and left uneducated and neglected. Orlando tells him that just because Oliver is his elder brother; it does not mean that he should use his better position to curb him down, while he respects his elder brother as his father. Orlando seizes Oliver by the neck and threatens to pull out his tongue. Adam, who is an old and loyal servant of the family, separated the two brothers. Orlando demands of Oliver that he should discharge the trust placed in him by his father or give him the share of money that is in his charge to enable him to do what he can. Oliver promised to give him a part of the money he thinks proper. Orlando and Adam now leave the scene. Oliver is left alone. He feels much and decides to get rid of Orlando and Adam.

Oliver learns that the next day, the Duke Junior is to hold a wrestling match at the court and that Orlando is to fight the famous court – wrestler, Charles. He calls his servant Dennis and asks him to bring Charles. Charles who had already come to see Oliver is waiting outside for an opportunity to meet him and Dennis takes him in, to his master. Charles has come to inform Oliver that Orlando is to fight him in disguise and since he would not like to lose in the match, he should advise his younger brother not to fight him. Oliver takes this occasion to incite the wrestler's hatred for Orlando and even suggests that when Orlando enters the wrestling match, Charles should not spare him even death. Charles takes the hint and departs promising that he will not spare Orlando in the wrestling bout.

Rosalind feels sad because she is left alone and her father has been banished. Celia tries to make her feel happy and cheerful. Celia, out of her love Rosalind tells her that she is her father's only child and no more brothers are to be born to him. So, when Duke Junior dies, the dukedom would come to her, and she will, instead give up her claims to it in favor of

Rosalind. This makes Rosalind feel more assured of Celia's sincere love for her and suggests that they play at falling in love.

Celia suggests that they may play at making fun of Dame Fortune because her gifts are so badly distributed. She feels that with every virtue that fortune gives to women, she attaches a drawback. This discussion is interrupted by the entrance of Touchstone, a fool. They welcome him as a sharpener of their intelligence. Touchstone informs them that they have been called by the Duke and swears by his honor that this is so.

Le Beau, a courtier attending upon Duke Frederick (Duke Junior) comes in, to inform the maids that they have missed much fun. He refers to the wrestling match which the two (Celia and Rosalind) have not seen and gives them a part description of the bloody affair. Touchstone wonders how such a terrible duel could be fun for enjoyment by ladies and ridicules Le Beau about the fun he refers to. Then it is decided that the rest of the wrestling match is to take place at the spot where Celia and Rosalind are there. The Duke Frederick, along with his Lords, Orlando and Charles come to the place. Rosalind and Celia stay on to see the wrestling match. Since the Duke has not been successful in his effort to stop Orlando from entering this match, he leaves it to Rosalind and Celia to persuade Orlando that he should not fight with Charles. Orlando begs them to leave him alone and requests that they should instead give him their good wishes and blessings for coming out successful in the wrestling bout.

The wrestling match begins, with the proviso that there shall be only one round of wrestling. IN the very first round, Orlando easily overthrows Charles. Charles is unable to speak. He faints and is carried away from the area. The duke comes to know that Orlando is the son of Sir Rowland de Boys, his enemy. At once he quickly leaves the place with his followers without giving the customary prize, for the winner. Rosalind and Celia are very much grieved to see the rude behavior of the Duke. To make up for her father's rude behavior, Celia also speaks words of praise to Orlando. Rosalind presents Orlando with a necklace she is wearing. When these two ladies have gone, he begins to curse himself. Now Le Beau comes back just to inform Orlando of the Duke's disposition towards him and advises him to get away from the place. Orlando also comes to know how these two are devoted to each other. He is now puzzled and does not know what to do and whom to face.

Rosalind and Celia are alone. Rosalind is unable to talk and Celia encourages her to speak. Rosalind's mind is not at rest. She is unable to find the cause for this mental change. Celia requests her to master her feelings and not to worry. Rosalind replies that her father,

the banished duke loved Orlando's father. But Celia's father hated Orlando's father. Hence Rosalind entreats Celia not to hate Orlando for her sake.

The Duke comes with his Lords and orders Rosalind to leave his dominions within ten days else she would lose her life. She pleads innocent of any offence. The Duke does not give his reasons but simply says that his suspicious about her are a sufficient reason for her banishment.

At this stage, Celia intervenes and pleads for Rosalind with her father. But he would not listen to her. The Duke explains to Celia that because of Rosalind, Celia is under-valued and ignored. When Rosalind is banished, Celia will become more well-known among the people and get better respect. These arguments do not impress Celia. She is firm that either Rosalind should be allowed to stay or Celia should also be allowed to go with her in exile. The Duke threatens that if Rosalind overstays, she will have to face death.

Celia wishes that she were the daughter of Duke Senior, who is more reasonable, kind and thoughtful. Celia assures Rosalind that she will share her misfortunes. Celia proposes that they should go to the Forest of Arden. Rosalind is afraid of this journey to the forest since they are maidens. Celia suggests that they should paint their faces to disguise them and dress themselves as men. Rosalind dresses herself like a man and becomes a hunter. Celia dresses like a woman without disguise. Rosalind takes the name of Ganymede and Celia, Aliena. Rosalind suggests taking Touchstone with them. Celia is filled with pleasure to have their own liberty and joy which they miss at the court.

The Duke Senior, Rosalind's father lives with his followers in this forest. He seems to have happily adjusted himself to the changed life and circumstances. The duke explains that in the forest life, we are made to feel the inconvenience caused by the changing seasons. He feels that adversity is a blessing in disguise and that the hard, forest life has opened his eyes to many valuable truths which cannot be learnt otherwise. Amiens congratulates the Duke on his intellectual capacity to find happiness in misery. But the duke is sorry to kill the innocent deer for food.

Jacques philosophises. He sees a wounded deer coming to the bank of a stream to die while he is lying under an oak tree. He observes that the wounded deer groans with pain and weeps so intensely. Jacques moralises the scene. The deer adds its tears to the waters of the stream which already has too much of its own. He compares this to that of a man who leaves all his riches to one who already has much more than what he needs. The Duke desires to meet Jacques in such a moment when he expresses great sense.

The Duke calls his court and orders them to investigate the flight of Rosalind and Celia. The First Lord reports that the women attending Celia saw her go to bed at night but found her missing in the morning. The second Lord informs the court that Touchstone is also missing. Hesperia, the princess's gentle woman had overheard Celia and Rosalind praise Orlando and that Orlando may also have gone with them. The Duke at once sends a messenger to Oliver's house to bring Orlando. If Orlando is not found, then Oliver should be brought.

Adam meets Orlando returning home after the wrestling match. He warns Orlando not to live in the house he lives in because Oliver has secretly planned to set fire to the house and burn him to death. He asks Orlando to run away from his brother. But Orlando plans to submit willingly to the anger and ill-will of his brother than face an uncertain future. Adam requests Orlando not to do so. He offers him five hundred crowns which he has saved. Orlando admires the loyalty and devotion of Adam.

Rosalind, Celia and Touchstone have arrived at the Forest of Arden. Rosalind and Celia are very tired. Touchstone realizes that he was more comfortable at the court and has made a fool of himself by coming all this dreary way to the Forest of Arden. Here they meet Silvius, a young man and Corin, an old man, both shepherds. Corin advises Silvius that he should behave better and wisely in matters of love. Silvius explains that he so intensely loves Phebe, a shepherdess that Corin cannot realise. Silvius abruptly leaves Corin and runs in search of Phebe.

Celia now prompts Touchstone to enquire from Corin if they can get some food and shelter. He is unable to offer hospitality to them on his own account. They learn from him that his master is going to sell his flock and his pasture lands and cottage as well. Rosalind offers to buy if it is not unfair to Silvius. Rosalind and Celia offer to employ Corin as their shepherd on a better pay.

Amiens sings a song inviting all to love the peaceful, forest life and be happy as the birds. Jacques wants Amiens' music more. Amiens confesses of his rough voice. All Jacques wants is a song. Amiens agrees and sings a song inviting all who have no ambitions to come and live a healthy open air life in the forest. In his turn, Jacques sings, making an indirect reference, to the Duke, describing him a fool for leaving his wealth and possessions to live in the forest.

Orlando and Adam have reached the Forest of Arden. Adam is exhausted and cannot proceed further. Orlando leaves him in a shady place and decides to search for food and shelter. Orlando asks Adam to feel comfortable and be courageous. He assures him to bring

something for him to eat. Adam feels more cheerful. Orlando leaves Adam exhausted with hunger and fatigue.

Jacques is not to be found in their company as they are about to sit to dinner. The Duke enquires about Jacques. The First Lord informs that he went away a little while ago, merrily hearing a song. The Duke asks one of the Lords to go and find out Jacques. Jacques just then enters, exclaiming that he has met a fool who talks sense and philosophizes on life and the world. He is dressed in multi-colour. He wonders that the fool has also been a courtier, full of rich experience and wisdom of life. Jacques desires to become a fool like him. He wishes to give an open criticism and reform the world.

Orlando rushes in, forbidding them to eat until his needs have been satisfied. The Duke enquires him of his rash approach. He appeals to the Duke to be generous and explains that he has a poor old man who has fainted of hunger and needs food. The Duke asks Orlando to bring that old man and promises that he will not eat anything till Orlando brings him back.

The Duke observes that there are people in the world who are more distressed than what they are. Now, Jacques gives out his description of man's life. He says that the world is a stage when men and women are mere players. Each man, in his turn, has to play many parts. Jacques describes the first stage as the infant stage. The second is the school boy. IN each of this stage, there is nothing admirable – the infant always cries and vomits milk while the nurse tries to keep it amused. In the second stage, the school boy slowly and unwillingly goes to school. In the third stage, we meet the lover, who is full of sighs and writes out pitiful verses to his mistress. Then comes the soldier who swears by oaths unheard of and is ready to search for fame even in the face of death. Next comes the judge with a severe appearance and a well-cut beard, full of wise principles and up to date references. In the sixth and the last stage, we see the old man who presents a funny picture with a spectacle on his nose, a big pouch on his side, wearing a pantaloon, and a full-throated voice turned to the feeble utterances of a child. In this final stage, we see the decay of old age, when man forgets everything and loses teeth, eyes, taste and everything else.

Orlando now returns with Adam in his arms. Orlando thanks the Duke. Then they begin to dine. Amiens sings a song. In the meantime, Orlando whispers to the Duke that he is Sir Rowland's son. The Duke recognizes him. The Duke tells Orlando that he loved his father and is happy to meet him.

Oliver is now banished and in his terror seeks the forest. All the characters save Duke Frederick, are now in the Forest of Arden. The Duke Junior Summons Oliver and orders him



to produce his brother Orlando, alive or dead within 12 months time. He should either produce Orlando or be banished from the dukedom and forfeit his possessions to the Duke. Orlando has run away and is not to be found. The Duke orders his officers to forfeit the property and estate of Oliver. Oliver receives the hard treatment he gave to Orlando.

Orlando, out of love for Rosalind goes about carving verses upon the barks of the trees in the Forest of Arden. Touchstone meets Corin and ridicules him. He tells Corin that because he has not lived at court, he would go to hell. Corin argues that what Touchstone considers being good manners in pleasant life. Meanwhile, Rosalind, in the guise of Ganymede enters the scene reading a verse which Orlando has hung in the tree. Celia also comes in reading another verse she has found elsewhere. In this verse, Orlando, has given high praise to Rosalind and raised her up to the skies. Celia requests Corin and Touchstone to go away as she wishes to talk to Rosalind. They doubt who the writer could be. Now Orlando and Jacques enter. They are contrasting characters. One is in love and the other is melancholic. Jacques advises Orlando not to spoil the trees by writing bad verses. Orlando tells him not to spoil his verses by reading them badly.

When Orlando is alone, Rosalind approaches him and asks for the time. They discuss as to speed, Time travels with different men. She complains him that somebody in this forest spoils the trees by cutting the name 'Rosalind'; He says that he is that person. She replies that he bears none of the marks that a lover has. Love sets in, a kind of madness. She suggests that she can cure Orlando if he calls at her cottage everyday and woe her as if she were Rosalind. Audrey, a simple peasant girl, whom Touchstone wants to marry, is presented in this scene. Touchstone foolishly asks Audrey if she likes his features. She tells him that she is not fair and that the gods might make her honest. He confesses that he has made up his mind to marry her. Jacques has been overhearing this talk. The priest of the next village, Sir Oliver Martext has arrived by this time to get them married. Jacques comes there and offers to give away Audrey's hand in marriage to Touchstone.

Orlando has failed to turn up as he promised to Rosalind. She is moody. Celia finds fun in teasing her. Rosalind imagines that Orlando is a deceitful person and hence he has not turned up. Celia also supports Rosalind that he is untrue, but praises Orlando for his boldness to hang verses in the trees. Corin now enters and requests Rosalind and Celia to witness a love scene between Silvius and Phebe. Incidentally, Rosalind has met her father, the Duke Senior who has not been recognized.

Phebe detests Silvius. He appeals to her. Rosalind convinces Phebe and advises her not to be proud of her beauty. As Rosalind in the guise of a man, Phebe falls in love with her.

Rosalind tells her to accept the love of Silvius because she cannot find a lover at all times and in every place. Silvius continues courting her. Phebe behaves more kindly towards Silvius and shows him favours.

Jacques begins to like Ganymede for his wit and humour. But Rosalind is fed up with melancholy. Jacques gives an analysis of his own melancholy. Rosalind is astonished to know that he has been to Venice. Jacques boasts of his experience. Orlando arrives and at once, Jacques takes leave of Rosalind. Rosalind rebukes Orlando for not keeping time.

Silvius brings Phebe's letter to Rosalind. She opens the letter and finds Phebe's passionate declaration of her love for her. Orlando, wounded, is unable to come and sends Oliver with a message to Rosalind. This serves to introduce Oliver to Celia. As Oliver tells the story of his own rescue, the noble nature of Orlando is further displayed to the two ladies. When Rosalind hears that Orlando is wounded, she swoons. It also confirms the depth of Rosalind's love for Orlando.

Audrey gets restless to marry Touchstone. She feels that priest Sir Oliver is good for their purpose. But Touchstone does not agree. William drops in. Touchstone is happy to meet a clown as he considers William to be. They greet each other. Touchstone starts fooling him and in a twisted speech, tries to convince William that he has no claim upon Audrey. Touchstone threatens Williams that he has no claim upon Audrey. William departs. Now Corin comes with Ganymede and Celia.

Oliver tells Orlando that he has suddenly fallen in love with Aliena (Celia) and also for his permission to marry. Orlando gives his consent to marry Aliena. He wishes to invite, The Duke and his followers to the wedding function. He does not mind if the marriage takes place the next day. Rosalind asks Orlando to put on his best clothes and invite his best friends also to come for he will be married the next day to Rosalind. Silvius and Phebe enter in. Silvius now declares that he loves Phebe. Silvius explains that sincere love is made up of faith in and devotion for the person loved and he is, in this fashion, in love with Phebe. Rosalind (Ganymede) assures that she will bring Rosalind for Orlando and asks them all to assemble well prepared the next day.

Touchstone expects to get married the following day and Audrey too. They are joined by two of the Duke's pages. Touchstone welcomes them. They sing a song about the rustic lover and his lady love making Touchstone sit between them. Touchstone comments that the song has neither substance nor music and part company with these two pages.

Orlando tells the Duke everything about the promise which Ganymede (Rosalind) has made. The Duke doubts her ability to do this. At this moment, Rosalind comes in and she is

accompanied by Silvius and Phebe. She asks them that if she produces Rosalind, the Duke will give her in marriage to Orlando. Both the Duke and Orlando agree. Rosalind and Celia are brought in, led by Hymen. The Duke recognizes his daughter and is happy to seal the pact of love between Orlando and Rosalind. When Phebe comes to know that Ganymede has been changed into a woman, she ceases to love him and turns to Silvius. Hymen then sings a song and blesses the marriages of the four couples with remarks on each.

Jacques de boys, brother of Orlando enter in and seek an interview with the Duke. He brings a message from Duke Frederick. He informs the Duke senior that his usurping brother has collected an army and is leading it himself to the Forest of Arden to capture him and to put him to death. But when he came to the outskirts of the forest, he met a hermit who made him give up his wicked plans and retire from worldly life. So, Jacques informs the Duke Senior that Duke Frederick has given up the dukedom and restored it to his brother. Duke senior is pleased with the restoration of his kingdom.

Jacques enquires Jacques de Boys if the Duke has really taken up a religious life and renounced the world. It appears forest life has interested him. Jacques gives some advice to the married couples before he leaves. He wishes Orlando, every happiness which he deserves for marrying Rosalind. He wishes Oliver, the joy of his lands and the love of his partner in life, and his great friends. He wishes Silvius a happy married life with Phebe. To Touchstone he says that his married life is full of discord and will not last for more than a couple of months. The Duke wants him to stay but he refuses. He likes to live in the forest and get the benefits of a religious life staying in the cave when the Duke goes back to his kingdom.

## **Theme of Love**

The theme of love in As You Like It is central to the play, and nearly every scene makes reference to it in one way or another. Shakespeare utilises a range of different perceptions and presentations of love in As You Like It; everything from the bawdy love of the lower class characters to the country love of the nobles.

Romantic and Courtly Love is demonstrated in the central relationship between Rosalind and Orlando. The characters fall in love quickly and their love is articulated in love poetry and in carvings on trees. It is a gentlemanly love but is fraught with barriers needing to be overcome. This kind of love is undermined by Touchstone who describes this type of love as dishonest. Orlando has to overcome many obstacles in order to be married; his love is tested by Rosalind and proved to be genuine. However, Rosalind and Orlando only met a

couple of times without the disguise of Ganymede. It is hard to say therefore, whether they truly know one another. Rosalind is not unrealistic however, and although she enjoys the wooing side of romantic love, she is aware that it is not necessarily genuine, which is why she tests Orlando's love for her. Romantic love is not enough for Rosalind she needs to know that it is deeper than that.

Touchstone and Audrey act as a foil to Rosalind and Orlando's characters. They are cynical about romantic love and their relationship is based more on the physical side of love. At first they are happy to be married straight away under a tree, which reflects their primitive desires. They have no barriers to overcome they just want to get on with it there and then. Touchstone even says that this would give him an excuse to leave. Touchstone is uncomplimentary about Audrey's looks but loves her for her honesty. The audience is given the opportunity to decide which kind of love is more honest. Courtly love could be seen as superficial, based on manners and appearance as opposed to bawdy love which is presented as cynical and base but truthful.

Sisterly and Brotherly Love is clearly evident between Celia and Rosalind as Celia abandons her home and privileges to join Rosalind in the forest. The pair are not actually sisters but support each other unconditionally. Brotherly love is severely lacking at the beginning of *As You Like It*. Oliver hates his brother Orlando and wants him dead. Duke Frederick has banished his brother Duke Senior and usurped his dukedom. However, to an extent, this love is restored in that Oliver has a miraculous change of heart when Orlando bravely saves him from being savaged by a lioness and Duke Frederick disappears to contemplate religion after speaking to a holy man, offering Duke Senior his restored dukedom. It appears that the forest is responsible for the change of character in both of the evil brothers (Oliver and Duke Frederick). On entering the forest both the Duke and Oliver have a change of heart.

Duke Frederick loves his daughter Celia and has indulged her in that he has allowed Rosalind to stay. When he has a change of heart, and wants to banish Rosalind he does it for his daughter Celia, Believing that Rosalind overshadows his own daughter in that she is taller and more beautiful. He also believes that people will look unfavourably on him and his daughter for banishing Rosalind's. Celia rejects her father's attempts at loyalty and leaves him to join Rosalind in the forest. His love is somewhat unrequited due to his wrong-doing. Duke Senior loves Rosalind but fails to recognise her when she is in disguise as Ganymede. They cannot be particularly close as a result. Rosalind preferred to stay in court with Celia

than to join her father in the forest. Duke Frederick's love for his daughter is somewhat unrequited.

The main characters who represent this category of love are Silvius and Phoebe and Phoebe and Ganymede. Silvius follows Phoebe around like a love-sick puppy and she scorns him, the more she scorns him the more he loves her. These characters also act as a foil to Rosalind and Orlando – the more Orlando speaks lovingly of Rosalind the more she loves him. The pairing of Silvius and Phoebe at the end of the play is perhaps the least satisfying in that Phoebe is only marrying Silvius because she has agreed to on rejecting Ganymede. This is therefore not necessarily a match made in heaven. Ganymede does not love Phoebe because she is a woman and on discovering Ganymede is a woman Phoebe rejects her suggesting that she only loved Ganymede on a superficial level. Silvius is happy to marry Phoebe but the same cannot be said for her. William's love for Audrey is also unrequited. The play concludes with a romantic touch.

#### **THE SEVEN STAGES OF HUMAN LIFE:**

Shakespeare's plays contain many memorable set pieces or purple passages. Jacques' division of human life into seven stages is one such passage. The iterative image of the world in Shakespeare is that of a stage. Jacques repeats this allusion, where men and women are mere actors. They are born to play their parts which culminate on their death. This part is played by man in different stages. These stages, totally seven in number, are like the seven acts of a drama. The first stage is when a man is an infant. He cries and slobbers in the arms of his nurse. He graduates into boyhood and a grumbling school boy, as he reluctantly trudges along to school with his bag of books hanging from his shoulder and his face shining from the morning wash. The third stage is that of youth, when he falls in love, sighs like a furnace and composes verses in praise of the beauty of his beloved. In the fourth stage of the advanced youth, man is seen as a soldier. He utters strange oaths and has a beard as rough as the hair of a leopard. In this stage he is very sensitive about his reputation. He is prone to pick up a fight easily in order to save his honour. He is prepared to even risk his life and face the cannons of his enemy in a vain attempt to save it, only to realize that honour and reputation are as transient as a bubble. From here on he reaches the fifth stage of manhood. Here we see him as a justice of peace with a fine round stomach filled with the best meat of capon received as a bribe. He has stern looks in order to pass off as an honest man. His beard is neatly trimmed unlike the shabby beard he had when he was a soldier. His speech is full of wise sayings and trite examples. The sixth stage is of advanced manhood, when he is

lean and thin, wears spectacles on his nose and a pruch by his side. He still wears the old knee breeches of his younger days which are too big for his withered legs. His voice has changed to the high pitched voice of a child. It makes a weak, speaking sound when he walks. The last stage and eventful life to a close. This stage marks a total loss of memory. A man has no teeth. He has no eyesight, he is without taste and in fact without anything.

Jacques has nothing special to say about human life. Wordsworth's child who comes trailing clouds of glory from God and old man attunes his mind to the 'still, sad music of mankind' – these, to say the least, do not find a place in Jacque's long list. However, it must be admitted that Jacque's speech is full of memorable expressions such as 'creeping like snail', 'sighing like furnace', 'bubble reputation', 'second childishness', etc.

### **ORLANDO**

Orlando de Boys, the youngest of the three sons of Sir Rowland de Boys, is 'everything that doth become a man'. He is also everything that a gentleman should be. He is healthy, kind and considerate towards the weak, and strong against oppression. Even Oliver, his eldest brother, whose soul 'hates nothing more than he', is forced to acknowledge his goodness, when he claims.

Orlando is gentle, never schooled and yet learned, full of noble device, of all sorts enchantingly beloved, and indeed so much in the heart, of the world, and especially of my own people, who best know him, that I am altogether mispriced. Shakespeare was undoubtedly, a believer in heredity. Duke Frederick claims that Orlando's father was held in high esteem by the world.

Orlando did not go to any school. He was neglected and undernourished, and had herdsmen and grooms for company. Despite these heavy odds, his father's virtues are unmistakably evident in him. What distinguished his father in the eyes of the world are also unmistakably evident in him. He is extremely proud of his birth, and 'would not change that calling to be adopted heir to Frederick.'

Orlando's bravery is very evident in the wrestling bout where, despite being advised not to contest, he boldly wrestles with the ferocious wrestler, Charles, who has already killed many in wrestling bouts. He has been reared plainly and in the country, and his upbringing makes him very strong, and even Duke Frederick acknowledges that he is 'a gallant youth'. He is not scared that Charles has killed three wrestlers, all 'proper young men, of excellent growth and presence.' Even the endearing entreaties of Celia and Rosalind are of no avail.

He has moral courage too. For he not only defeats the wrestler, but also the attempt of his own brother to master him by force.

Orlando was left to the mercy of his cruel brother at a very tender age when his father died. He is brought up unschooled, underfed and neglected. Yet he is always full of hope, and allows no thought of despair to rest in the mind of Adam. He meets the duke and his friends who are dressed s outlaws. Undeterred he challenges them single-handedly and demands food for his hungry and loyal servant. He sees hope even in his cruel brother, Oliver, and save him from certain death as the hands of a hungry lioness.

Orlando is as gentle as a woman. He carries his servant Adam in his arms, he saves even his wicked brother from the lioness, the same brother who had caused him unlimited anguish, and wanted to burn him alive while he was asleep. In addition he is a man of action rather than of meditation or philosophic brooding. Modesty too is an attribute of genuine bravery and courage. He is modest in the wrestling match in sharp contrast to the vanity and arrogance of his adversary. He calls himself 'a poor brother' of Oliver, and shows him the respect that the 'courtesy of nations' demanded from the younger brother. In the most desperate circumstances his uprightness will not let him suffer to 'enforce a thievish living on the common road'. This feeling becomes even stronger due to his acute awareness of his nobility of birth.

Orlando is essentially a man of action, and is the exact opposite of Jaques who is forever contemplating and brooding. Neither does Orland find fault with others. He is too busy living life to be aware of other's faults. When the sad and melancholic Jaques suggests that the two 'will rail against the world, and all our misery', Orlando's eloquent reply sums up the contrast between the two.

Orlando is by nature happy and gay, and it comes as no surprise that Jaques is so repulsed by his sensibilities. It is another matter altogether that he more than holds his own in wit whenever he is in the melancholic philosopher's company. He is comfortable with Rosalind's humour for playful bandinage, and never appears to be at a loss. To him the thought that a lover can be tongue-tied in the presence of his mistress is incomprehensible.

Orlando is held in high esteem by everyone who knows him. Even the jealous brother and the cruel and tyrannical duke are unable to hold back praises for him. Adam calls him "gentle master", "sweet master" and "memory of old Sir Rowland." Duke Senior initially welcomes him for his father's sake, but later esteems him for himself. Jaques is impressed by his "nimble wit", and even forgives his fault of falling in love sine it is superimpose with the

virtue of faith. Although “but young and tender”, he is even acknowledged by Duke Frederick as “a gallant youth.”

Even in his extreme passion we get a feeling of quite assurance in him. He seizes his brother by the throat in a moment of passion, but restrains himself immediately and refrains from taking advantage of his superior strength. The pitiable condition of his loyal servant makes him pounce at the duke for food, but here too he apologises as soon as he is welcomed with kindness. His first impulse on seeing Oliver in imminent danger of his life is to leave him to his fate, but “kindness nobler ever than revenge” makes him turn back and save his brother, even at the cost of his own life. It is this quality in Orlando which makes him rebel against his servitude. Coupled with this, his indomitable courage makes him volunteer against massive odds, to fight the monstrous Charles, despite being dissuaded by Frederick, and later more lovingly by Celia and Rosalind. He even battles it out with the ferocious lioness and wins in order to save the life of his treacherous and envious brother.

Despite his manly strength, and despite being a man of prompt action, he can still appreciate Rosalind’s playful and feminine wit, and in fact can more than hold his own, whether he is pitted against the playful wit of Rosalind, or the brooding loquacity of Jaques. His courtesy, gentleness, bravery, strength, sturdy independence and filial devotion make Orlando an embodiment of all that was virtuous in the Anglo-Saxon era.

Having established him as a knight of sorts, Shakespeare then exposes his flaws. He is “overthrown by love”, and in the forest of Arden, he plays the role of man who is “overshaken”. He pins verses on trees and carves out the name of Rosalind on the branches. He has no wish to be cured of his love sickness as suggested by Ganymede. He is a strutting, fiery, strong and sensual male, who can be conquered by no other foe barring the whim of Eros. He is manacled by a simple necklace from a beautiful woman’s neck.

## **ROSALIND**

Rosalind is undoubtedly one of the most magnificent of Shakespeare’s heroines. The profundity of her character is not easily revealed in the play, and we are not sure how she would behave amid the travails of our modern world. She is charming, and we could not find a better companion to spend our time with in careless abandon in the forest of Arden. But her actions spring from caprice rather than from character, and it is as difficult to analyse her as it is to assess a perfume. Her’s is the existence of a butterfly which can be delightfully expressed but not truly explained. She admits that she is “more than common tall” and without any problem assumes “a swashing and a marital outside”. Her beauty was more



robust than fragile. Orlando's views about her beauty may be one-sided since he loves her. They are nonetheless poignant. Phebe gives us a description of her graces in a more detailed manner. Though she examines Rosalind (disguised as a man) "in parcels", her appreciation leaves in our mind the essential charm that Rosalind possesses.

Phebe is haughty to the point of being annoying, and praises the youth in spite of herself. She cannot withhold her compliments despite having "more cause to hate him than to love him.

Her love for Celia goes beyond the realm of sisterly love and stands the strain of every situation. Even the brutish wrestler Charles admits to Oliver that "Never two ladies loved as they do". Rosalind cheers up when her friend tells her not to grieve over her father's banishment. In the forest when Celia faints due to fatigue, Rosalind hides her own fatigue to comfort "the weaker vessel". They have no secrecy between them. They share every secret with each other. The more serious minded Celia can accept her irrepressible friend because of her spontaneous affection, when Rosalind tells her of her love. she was "no less beloved of her uncle than his own daughter," yet it is certain that she remained in court, and did not trace the footsteps of her banished father to the forest of Arden, because of her love for Celia. She must have believed that she was there on sufferance.

In the freer, purer atmosphere of the forest, Rosalind immediately feels gaiety. At court she was submissive and quiet. In the forest she is voluble and happy. At the court, Celia takes the lead. In the forest she is abashed in his presence, playfully torments him and draws from him the protestations of his love, but is silent regarding the state of her own heart, except in the presence of Celia. At first she considers her affection as a wound to be endured with patient resignation. It renders her more sympathetic towards other lovers than she might have otherwise been. She accepts that love is a great leveler, a bond of nature uniting all humanity, affecting the high and low alike. It makes her intolerant of heartless pride. Her unabashed love transforms into blushes when she hears of her lover's presence in the woods as she laments. She is filled with pity when she learns the fate of the old man's three sons. She feels the same pity for Orlando as he steps out to wrestle with Charles.

In the forest of Arden she is sympathetic to all lovers and unites them. Her vivacity appeals enormously. She is as effervescent as the spirits of animals, and her mind thinks as rapidly as her heart feels. She skips from one subject to another with an exuberance that cannot but be infectious. She chides Orlando one moment, and playfully beseeches him at the next. She has a befitting reply for everyone, from the royal duke to the morose Jaques. The brightness of her intellect impresses even the hateful Duke Frederick. She is

quick to expose inefficiency, and does not spare even the adoringly written love poems that Orlando hangs from trees. Her quick wit and love for playful intrigue serves her well. In the forest of Arden she not only uses it to feed her appetite for love but to also test Orlando's love at the same time. She has the ready wit and the charming devices at her disposal to avoid being exposed in her disguise. She says some of the most charming things in the world, and some of most humorous, but we accept them not as maxims, but for the magnificent felicity with which they are spoken.

So tender and gentle is she that there is not a single character in the play who is affected by her. She has all a woman's admiration for physical courage in Orlando when he refuses to be persuaded from fighting Charles. When she learns from Oliver about how Orlando fought the lioness she is all eagerness to know how her lover acquitted himself. Though she is disguised as a male, she constantly reminds us that she does not carry the "doublet and hose" in her heart.

In the presence of Orlando she is both tender as well as playful. Her frown, she says, "will not kill a fly", and faints when she hears that Orlando has been injured by the lioness. She speedily recovers and has the presence of mind to say that she was merely behaving in the manner Rosalind would have behaved.

### **TOUCHSTONE**

Jaques is a type and also a personality. Touchstone never fully develops into a character and tends to remain a theatrical convenience, albeit a delicious one, to whom a sensitive actor can give an excellent allusion of life. He can expostulate about Ovid's exile among the Goth's, but does not know what marriage is. His satire on dueling delights Jaques by its appropriate detail and induces the duke to remark that he uses his folly as a stalking-horse and under cover of it shoots his wit. This, however, is what the real Touchstone in fact is just the thing he does not do. His successes are "the squandering glances of the fool". Rosalind sums him up, when she remarks, "that he speaks wiser than he is aware of."

He has no profound intelligence of his own. His cleverness and acumen which could make him a real touchstone to sift the worthless from the worthwhile. His scholarly allusions, mock logic and fancy speech are, however, only a folk idiom. He singularly lacks profundity. He does not mock because there is something intrinsically mockable. He does so because that is his business as well as his pastime. He is an allowed fool.

Till Shakespeare wrote "As You Like It", he had created fools only vaguely aware of their folly, if in fact he did at all. Dogberry has no idea that he is funny and comical.

Touchstone wants to be both funny and comical. Touchstone wears the common garment of the fool which, whether he is a court jester or just the dim-wit in the lineage, is a child's long coat. His immaturity keeps him in this for life. Wherever he went, the fool was known by his dress, mocked, perhaps, but also protected. This was definitely the attire of an allowed fool, kept primarily to entertain a court or noble household.

In the stage directions of the first folio, Touchstone is presented as a "clown"; later he is called a "fool". The "clown" was basically a country bumpkin. A fool in contrast was a professional jester. Rosalind calls him a "natural", which may amount to mean that she thinks that he is a born fool. But in fact she is most likely attempting a pun on the words "natural" and "nature", and an obvious question mark on Touchstone's wisdom.

Touchstone more aptly is what Jaques describes him "a motley fool", a man who is recognized by his motley costume, which the professional jester wore. He thus has all the outward appearances of a fool, without having his wisdom and profundity. In the forest of Arden he may have been more soberly attired, and is sober enough to entitle him to be treated as a gentleman. There is no doubt, however, that Touchstone fancies himself as a courtier and a fool. This shows that some remnants, at least of a manly heart in him, have asserted their force in the shape of unselfish regards, strong as life, for whatever is purest and best in the characters about him.

It is a parody upon the marriages of the other pairs of lovers of the forest. Others fall in love with beauty. Touchstone falls in love with ugliness. It is obvious that Touchstone does not love his wife. And as there can be no happiness in a marriage bereft of love, we can wholeheartedly accept the prophesy made by Jaques that "For thy loving voyage; Is but for two month's victuall'd".

## UNIT IV

### OTHELLO

One of Shakespeare's most famous tragedies, Othello is concerned with the themes of jealousy and possessiveness, gullibility and blind passion, and the dangers that can arise from a failure to see beyond the surface appearances, Othello is set in a quite private world and focuses on the passions and personal lives of its major figures, Othello and Desdemona. Othello the play has often been described as a "tragedy of character". The plot of the play Othello is one of Shakespeare's most highly concentrated, tightly constructed tragedies, with no subplots and no humor to relieve the tension.. The play exerts a 'relentless emotional grip' on its audience. Shakespeare has examined with great psychological complexity and depth the powerful feelings of love and hatred, jealousy and revenge. The intensity of the drama is heightened because all the minor characters and events are designed to highlight the protagonists and their actions. The play is so spellbinding because of the contradictions and tensions it contains: a black soldier marries the daughter of a white nobleman, an evil ensign corrupts a great soldier, and passionate love is turned to overwhelming jealousy.

Othello begins in the city of Venice, at night. Iago, an ensign in the Venetian army, is bitter about being passed over for lieutenant in favour of Cassio. Iago tells Roderigo that he serves Othello, the Moor who is the army's general, only in order to serve him. Iago knows that Desdemona, the daughter of nobleman Brabantio, has run off to marry Othello. He also knows that Roderigo lusts after Desdemona, so Iago manipulates him in to alerting Venice. Learning of his daughter's elopement, Brabantio panics, and calls for people to try and find Desdemona. Iago joins Othello, and tells him about Roderigo's betrayal of the news of his marriage to Brabantio. Cassio comes at last, as do Roderigo and Brabantio; Brabantio is very angry, swearing to the men assembled that Othello must have bewitched his daughter. Brabantio's grievance is denied, and Desdemona will indeed stay with Othello. However Othello is called away to Cyprus, to defend it from an invasion of Turks. Iago assures an upset Roderigo that the match between Othello and Desdemona will not last long and at any time Desdemona could come rushing to him. Iago decides to break up the couple, using Roderigo as his pawn.

A terrible storm strikes Cyprus, and the Turkish fleet is broken apart by the storm. While Othello is still at sea, Cassio arrives. Iago, Desdemona and Emilia follow in another ship. Somehow, Iago and Desdemona enter into an argument about Iago's low opinion of

women. Othello arrives at last, and is very glad to see Desdemona. Iago speaks to Roderigo, convincing him that Desdemona will stray from Othello, as she has already done with Cassio. He convinces Roderigo to attack Cassio that night, as he plans to visit mischief on both Othello and Cassio. While on watch together, Iago convinces Cassio to drink, knocking he can't hold his liquor. Iago stokes a fight between Cassio and Roderigo. The ruckus wakes Othello. Iago fills him in making sure to fictionalize his part in the fight. Cassio laments that he has lost his reputation along with his rank. Iago tries to convince him that if he talks to Desdemona may be he can get her to vouch for him with Othello. Iago knows he will be able to turn their friendship against them both.

Desdemona belongs to do everything she can to persuade her husband to restore Cassio's rank. Cassio leaves just as Othello enters because he does not wish for a confrontation. Iago seizes on this opportunity to play on Othello's insecurities, making Cassio's exit seem guilty and in crinating. Soon, Othello begins to doubt his wife fidelity. Desdemona drops the handkerchief that Othello gave her on their honeymoon. Emilia gives it to Iago, who then tells Othello that Cassio has the handkerchief. Othello is incensed to hear that Desdemona would give away something so valuable, and comes to believe that Desdemona is guilty. Othello then swears revenge. Desdemona tells Cassio and Iago that Othello has been acting strangely, and Iago goes to look for him, feigning concern. Emilia thinks that Othello's change has something to do with his jealous nature. Cassio asks Bianca to copy the handkerchief that he found in his room, Cassio has no idea it is Desdemona's.

Othello tries not to condemn Desdemona too harshly. Iago calls Cassio in, while Othello hides. Iago speaks to Cassio of Bianca, but Othello in his disturbed state, believes that Cassio is talking of Desdemona. Convinced of her infidelity, Othello is resolved to kill Desdemona himself, and charges Iago with murdering Cassio. When Desdemona mentions Cassio in front of nobleman Lodovico, Othello becomes very angry and slaps her. Othello questions Emilia about Desdemona's guilt, and she swears the Desdemona is pure and true. Emilia thinks that someone has manipulated Othello, however, Iago is there to dispute this opinion. Iago comes across Roderigo, he is not pleased that Iago has failed to deliver on his promises regarding Desdemona; Iago quiets him by making him believe that if he kills Cassio, then he will win Desdemona, Roderigo decides to go along with it, but Iago is coming dangerously close to being revealed. Desdemona knows that she will die soon, she sings a song of sadness and resignation, and decides to give her fate.

Spurred on by Iago, Roderigo and Cassio fight, and both are injured badly. Iago enters, pretending that he knows nothing of the scuffle; Gratiano and Lodovico also stumble

upon the scene Roderigo is still alive, so Iago feigns a quarrel and finishes him off. Bianca comes by, and sees Cassio wounded Iago makes some remark to implicate her Cassio is carried away. Othello enters Desdemona's room while she is asleep. Desdemona awakens and pleads with Othello not to kill her, but he begins to smother her. Emilia bring the news of Roderigo's death, and Cassio's wounding. Emilia soon finds out that Desdemona is nearly dead, by Othello's hand, Desdemona speaks her last words and then Emilia pounces on Othello. Othello is not convinced of his folly until Iago confesses his part, and Cassio speaks of the use of the handkerchief. Othello is overcome with grief. Iago fatally stabs Emilia for uncovering his plots. The Venetian nobles reveal that Brabantio, Desdemona's father, is dead, and thus cannot be grieved by this tragedy. Othello stabs Iago when he is brought back in, Othello then tells all present to remember him how he is, and kills himself Cassio becomes the temporary leader of troops at Cyprus, and Lodovico and Gratiano are to carry the news of the tragedy back to Venice.

### **CHARACTER SKETCH OF DESDEMONA**

Desdemona is a lady of spirit and intelligence. For all the claims of military straight forwardness of some other characters, Desdemona is the most direct and honest speaker in the play. Her speeches are not as lengthy as those of the men, but with Desdemona, every word counts. For Desdemona, Othello is the hero of many exciting and dangerous adventures, who also has the appeal of the orphan child who needs love. And to this the fact that he is now an honoured and powerful man in her country.

In Cyprus, in charge of her own household, Desdemona continues to fulfill her duties, receiving petitions as the commander's wife and being hostess at official receptions. Her marriage has brought her position and happiness, so much so that she finds it unbearable to think that her husband has turned against her. This numbness lasts until she sees that he actually intends to kill her, then she puts up a brave and spirited defense, insisting on her innocence. In despair at losing his love, she still defends him from the consequences of his actions, but he is past seeing what is clear to her and to Shakespeare's audience, that she has committed herself wholly to love him, with his love, she cannot live.

#### Theme of Love

In Othello, love is a force that overcomes large obstacles and is tripped up by small ones. It is eternal, yet derail-able. It provides Othello with intensity but not direction and gives Desdemona access to his heart but not his mind. Types of love and what that means are different between different characters.

Othello finds that love in marriage needs time to build trust, and his enemy works too quickly for him to take that time. The immediate attraction between the couple works on passion, and Desdemona builds on that passion a steadfast devotion whose speed and strength Othello cannot equal.

Iago often falsely professes love in friendship for Roderigo and Cassio and betrays them both. For Iago, love is leverage. Desdemona's love in friendship for Cassio is real but is misinterpreted by the jealous Othello as adulterous love. The true friendship was Emilia's for Desdemona, shown when she stood up witness for the honor of her dead mistress, against Iago, her lying husband, and was killed for it.

#### Theme of Jealousy

Jealousy is what appears to destroy Othello. It is the emotion suggested to him by Iago. Iago thinks he knows jealousy, having rehearsed it in his relationship with Emilia to the extent that Emilia believes jealousy is part of the personality of men, but Iago's jealousy is a poor, weak thought compared to the storm of jealousy he stirs up in Othello.

Iago has noticed Othello's tendency to insecurity and overreaction, but not even Iago imagined Othello would go as far into jealousy as he did. Jealousy forces Othello's mind so tightly on one idea, the idea that Desdemona has betrayed him with Cassio, that no other assurance or explanation can penetrate. Such an obsession eclipses Othello's reason, his common sense, and his respect for justice.

Up to the moment he kills Desdemona, Othello's growing jealousy maddens him past the recall of reason. Upon seeing that she was innocent and that he killed her unjustly, Othello recovers. He can again see his life in proportion and grieve at the terrible thing he has done. Once again, he speaks with calm rationality, judging and condemning and finally executing himself.

### **OTHELLO**

Othello is essentially a soldier. It is only by chance that he is thrown into the role of a lover. His cherished occupation in life is fighting in the battle-field. On the very day of his marriage he receives the Senate's commission that he should proceed at once to Cyprus to be in command of the army that would fight against the Turks. When Iago poisons his mind in regard to Desdemona his main regret is not the loss of domestic bliss but that of the thrill of warfare. His marriage was, as it were, a means and not the end. The origin of his marriage was more martial than amatory in nature. He captured the imagination of Desdemona by relating to her his heroic deeds and adventures in the battle-field. She loved him for the

dangers that he had passed and he loved her for she pitted them. Desdemona was drawn to Othello not by the usual charms of youth or beauty that attract a maiden's heart. She found in him the hero of her dreams, a valiant warrior.

Othello is totally ignorant of the ways of the world and so may easily be worked upon by a villain. He completely trusts everyone, including the wicked Iago. It is his great misfortune that a villain in human form like Iago should enter into his life. The villain seeks to achieve his purpose by misinterpreting innocent things. He stirs up in Othello a deep jealousy and fiery wrath against Desdemona and her alleged lover Cassio. Iago takes a full advantage of this ignorance of Othello of the ways of the world. He becomes a passive tool in Iago's hands and kills his innocent wife without pausing for a moment to test the truth of what Iago said.

Othello is completely transformed by the poison of jealousy infused into him by wicked Iago. That tranquil mind and contentment which has been always his, are now completely gone. He falls into a fainting fit, rages like a mad man, talks incoherently and even strikes his wife in the presence of all.

Othello loses the poise and balance of mind which was his distinctive trait. He ceases to be himself and is completely disintegrated. We see the normal Othello in the beginning of the play but at the end of it we see a person who has completely lost his identity and behaves in a manner most uncharacteristic of him. His love is most ardent and passionate even when hate towards Desdemona has filled his mind through Iago's influence. His love for her continues undiminished down to the last.

This tragic conflict between love and hate in Othello's mind is fully developed in the last scene where Othello kills Desdemona. He looks at the sleeping Desdemona, shudders to think that once the light of that lamp was put out by him nothing would be able to rekindle it. He kisses her and feels that if he delays, "justice would break her sword" and her charm would paralyse his hand. He proceeds to do it not in the spirit of a murderer but in that of a priest going to perform a holy act of sacrifice. He had no sense of guilt and there was nothing mean or selfish in what he had done.

Othello makes on us the impression that he is a great man with a noble soul, thrust by Fate into the clutches of a demi-devil and succumbing to his machinations not for any fault of his but on account of the excess of his noble virtues. Iago works successfully on Othello not because he was a credulous fool, or a person over-jealous by temperament, but because he was an idealist, great and noble in his mind and spirit, but a misfit in the world of scheming



villainy. Othello's tragedy, therefore, is the result of an interaction of his own character and the circumstances in which he is placed.

Othello was a complete whole before his marriage and is a complete whole once again after his murder of Desdemona. In between came a romantic episode of love,-a sort of aberration in his life of action, which disintegrated and transformed him. The episode has a tragic end in the killing of Desdemona by Othello's own hands. He has completely recovered himself. He is thus greater at the end of the play than he was at the start, this being a common feature of Shakespeare's tragic heroes.

### **IAGO**

Iago is a born villain. He has been endowed by Nature with a restless malignity that is constantly impelled to injure and destroy all that is good and beautiful. He is alone the root of all the mischief and mischances in the play. The only motive that urges him to work this wholesale havoc is his perverse and malicious glee at the suffering of others. A character like this that waits for no provocation from without and is goaded on by his own wicked impulse to cause grave and fatal troubles for all is a terrible danger to the community to which he belongs. One such person is enough to create an all-round confusion and ruin. Iago is such an instrument of tragedy in the world of the play, Othello.

The wickedness of Iago is rooted in his nature. Evil is ingrained in him and must always seek to destroy good. Although he is only twenty-eight years of age he is a perfect cynic. He hates Cassio, despises Othello and holds women in contempt. He is unable to recognize or believe in goodness in human nature. The deity he worships is "Divinity of hell." There is not the slightest trace in his mind of any conflict between good and evil. Evil in him is free from scruple and is never disturbed by any "compunctious visitings of nature." He maintains a devilish consistency in his villainy from the beginning to the end. He does not atone for his crime by self-inflicted death as any other person in this circumstance would have done. He is an incarnation of evil.

Iago is merely a born villain but is also an artist in villainy; he not merely practises villainy but loves to practise it. He is actuated by a desire to assert his power over his fellow-creature. He loves to feel that he is supreme and is immensely pleased to see others dancing to his tune.

But although the motives of Iago are the two inward motives indicated above, namely, a motiveless malignity and intellectual pride, Iago sought to discover other motives for his action. But this is only motive-hunting of a motiveless malignity. He flies from one motive

to another which only shows that these are all not motives but excuses. Shakespeare no doubt paints in Iago a devil in human form. But he is not altogether without human features. Shakespeare always draws men, not “humours.” In spite of his villainy he compels a certain reluctant admiration for him. He knows Desdemona’s innate generosity well enough to be sure that she will help Cassio and he knows Cassio’s purity of mind well enough to be certain that he will unhesitatingly take up his suggestion of using Desdemona as his advocate with Othello.

Iago’s malignity is Iago’s fate. It springs from within and completely possesses him. Iago starts on his wicked course and cannot turn back. He is caught in his own web and is unable to get out of it. He is himself his own fate and is completely dominated by the devil that he is. Iago’s plot against Othello is Iago’s own character in action, just as Othello’s fall into the snares of Iago is Othello’s character in action. He did not hesitate to steal Othello’s handkerchief through the agency of his wife. Iago is disillusioned when he finds that Emilia means to speak the truth about the handkerchief and give him away. Iago’s entire scheme is foiled by his stupid ignorance of the moral order of the world.

## UNIT V

### HENRY IV PART I

King Henry IV is having an unquiet reign. His personal disquiet at the usurpation of his predecessor Richard II would be solved by a crusade to the Holy Land, but broils on his borders with Scotland and Wales prevent that. Moreover, he is increasingly at odds with the Percy family, who helped him to his throne, and Edmund Mortimer, the Earl of March, Richard II's chosen heir. Adding to King Henry's troubles is the behaviour of his son and heir, the Prince of Wales. Hal (the future Henry V) has forsaken the Royal Court to waste his time in taverns with low companions. This makes him an object of scorn to the nobles and calls into question his royal worthiness. Hal's chief friend and foil in living the low life is Sir John Falstaff. Fat, old, drunk, and corrupt as he is, he has a charisma and a zest for life that captivates the Prince. The play features three groups of characters that interact slightly at first, and then come together in the Battle of Shrewsbury, where the success of the rebellion will be decided. First there is King Henry himself and his immediate council. He is the engine of the play, but usually in the background. Next there is the group of rebels, energetically embodied in Henry Percy ("Hotspur") and including his father, the Earl of Northumberland and led by his uncle Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester. The Scottish Earl of Douglas, Edmund Mortimer and the Welshman Owen Glendower also join. Finally, at the centre of the play are the young Prince Hal and his companions Falstaff, Poins, Bardolph, and Peto. Streetwise and pound-foolish, these rogues manage to paint over this grim history in the colours of comedy.

As the play opens, the king is angry with Hotspur for refusing him most of the prisoners taken in a recent action against the Scots at Holmedon. Hotspur, for his part, would have the king ransom Edmund Mortimer (his wife's brother) from Owen Glendower, the Welshman who holds him. Henry refuses, berates Mortimer's loyalty, and treats the Percys with threats and rudeness. Stung and alarmed by Henry's dangerous and peremptory way with them, they proceed to make common cause with the Welsh and Scots, intending to depose "this ingrate and cankered Bolingbroke. Meanwhile, Henry's son Hal is joking, drinking, and thieving with Falstaff and his associates. He likes Falstaff but makes no pretense at being like him. He enjoys insulting his dissolute friend and makes sport of him by joining in Poins' plot to disguise themselves and rob and terrify Falstaff and three friends of loot they have stolen in a highway robbery, purely for the fun of watching Falstaff lie about it later, after which Hal returns the stolen money. Rather early in the play, in fact, Hal informs us that his riotous time will soon come to a close, and he will re-assume his rightful high place in affairs by

showing himself worthy to his father and others through some (unspecified) noble exploits. Hal believes that this sudden change of manner will amount to a greater reward and acknowledgment of prince-ship, and in turn earn him respect from the members of the court. The revolt of Mortimer and the Percys very quickly gives him his chance to do just that. The high and the low come together when the Prince makes up with his father and is given a high command. He vows to fight and kill the rebel Hotspur, and orders Falstaff to take charge of a group of foot soldiers and proceed to the battle site at Shrewsbury.

The battle is crucial because if the rebels even achieve a standoff their cause gains greatly, as they have other powers awaiting under Northumberland, Glendower, Mortimer, and the Archbishop of York. Henry needs a decisive victory here. He outnumbers the rebels but Hotspur, with the wild hope of despair, leads his troops into battle. The day wears on, the issue still in doubt, the king harried by the wild Scot Douglas, when Prince Hal and Hotspur, the two Harrys that cannot share one land, meet. Finally they will fight – for glory, for their lives, and for the kingdom. No longer a tavern brawler but a warrior, the future king prevails, ultimately killing Hotspur in single combat. On the way to this climax, we are treated to Falstaff, who has "misused the King's press damnably", not only by taking money from able-bodied men who wished to evade service but by keeping the wages of the poor souls he brought instead who were killed in battle "food for powder, food for powder" Left on his own during Hal's battle with Hotspur, Falstaff dishonourably counterfeits death to avoid attack by Douglas. After Hal leaves Hotspur's body on the field, Falstaff revives in a mock miracle. Seeing he is alone, he stabs Hotspur's corpse in the thigh and claims credit for the kill. Though Hal knows better, he allows Falstaff his disreputable tricks. Soon after being given grace by Hal, Falstaff states that he wants to amend his life and begin "to live cleanly as a nobleman should do".

The play ends at Shrewsbury, after the battle. The death of Hotspur has taken the heart out of the rebels and the king's forces prevail. Henry is pleased with the outcome, not least because it gives him a chance to execute Thomas Percy, the Earl of Worcester, one of his chief enemies (though previously one of his greatest friends). Meanwhile, Hal shows off his kingly mercy in praise of valour; having taken the valiant Douglas prisoner, Hal orders his enemy released without ransom. But the war goes on; now the king's forces must deal with the Archbishop of York, who has joined with Northumberland, and with the forces of Mortimer and Glendower. This unsettled ending sets the stage for Henry IV.

## **Prince Harry**

The complex Prince Harry is at the center of events in Henry IV. As the only character to move between the grave, serious world of King Henry and Hotspur and the rollicking, comical world of Falstaff and the Boar's Head Tavern, Harry serves as a bridge uniting the play's two major plotlines. An initially disreputable prince who eventually wins back his honor and the king's esteem, Harry undergoes the greatest dramatic development in the play, deliberately transforming himself from the wastrel he pretends to be into a noble leader.

Harry is nevertheless a complicated character and one whose real nature is very difficult to pin down. As the play opens, Harry has been idling away his time with Falstaff and earning the displeasure of both his father and England as a whole. He then surprises everyone by declaring that his dissolute lifestyle is all an act: he is simply trying to lower the expectations that surround him so that, when he must, he can emerge as his true, heroic self, shock the whole country, and win the people's love and his father's admiration. Harry is clearly intelligent and already capable of the psychological machinations required of kings. But the heavy measure of deceit involved in his plan seems to call his honor into question, and his treatment of Falstaff further sullies his name: though there seems to be real affection between the prince and the roguish knight, Harry is quite capable of tormenting and humiliating his friend. Shakespeare seems to include these aspects of Harry's character in order to illustrate that Falstaff's selfish bragging does not fool Harry and to show that Harry is capable of making the difficult personal choices that a king must make in order to rule a nation well. In any case, Harry's emergence here as a heroic young prince is probably Henry IV's defining dynamic, and it opens the door for Prince Harry to become the great King Henry V in the next two plays in Shakespeare's sequence.

## **Sir John Falstaff**

Old, fat, lazy, selfish, dishonest, corrupt, thieving, manipulative, boastful, and lecherous, Falstaff is, despite his many negative qualities, perhaps the most popular of all of Shakespeare's comic characters. Though he is technically a knight, Falstaff's lifestyle clearly renders him incompatible with the ideals of courtly chivalry that one typically associates with knighthood. For instance, Falstaff is willing to commit robbery for the money and entertainment of it. Falstaff perceives honor as a mere "word," an abstract concept that has no relevance to practical matters. Nevertheless, though Falstaff mocks honor by linking it to

violence, to which it is intimately connected throughout the play, he remains endearing and likable to Shakespeare's audiences. Two reasons that Falstaff retains this esteem are that he plays his scoundrel's role with such gusto and that he never enjoys enough success to become a real villain; even his highway robbery ends in humiliation for him.

Falstaff seems to scorn morality largely because he has such a hearty appetite for life and finds the niceties of courtesy and honor useless when there are jokes to be told and feasts to be eaten. Largely a creature of words, Falstaff has earned the admiration of some Shakespearean scholars because of the self-creation he achieves through language: Falstaff is constantly creating a myth of Falstaff, and this myth defines his identity even when it is visibly revealed to be false. A master of punning and wordplay, Falstaff provides most of the comedy in the play. He redeems himself largely through his real affection for Prince Harry, whom, despite everything, he seems to regard as a real friend. This affection makes Harry's decision, foreshadowed in *Henry IV*, to abandon Falstaff when he becomes king seem all the more harsh.

#### **KING HENRY IV**

The title character of *Henry IV* is ambitious, energetic, and capable Bolingbroke, who seizes the throne from the inept Richard II after likely arranging his murder. Though Henry is not yet truly an old man, his worries about his crumbling kingdom, guilt over his uprising against Richard II, and the vagaries of his son's behavior have diluted his earlier energy and strength. Henry remains stern, aloof, and resolute, but he is no longer the force of nature. Henry's trouble stems from his own uneasy conscience and his uncertainty about the legitimacy of his rule. After all, he himself is a murderer who has illegally usurped the throne from Richard II. Therefore, it is difficult to blame Hotspur and the Percys for wanting to usurp his throne for themselves. Furthermore, it is unclear how Henry's kingship is any more legitimate than that of Richard II. Henry thus lacks the moral legitimacy that every effective ruler needs.

With these concerns lurking at the back of his reign, Henry is unable to rule as the magnificent leader his son Harry will become. Throughout the play he retains his tight, tenuous hold on the throne, and he never loses his majesty. But with an ethical sense clouded by his own sense of compromised honor, it is clear that Henry can never be a great king or anything more than a caretaker to the throne that awaits Henry V.

## **HISTORICAL PLAY**

Shakespeare's History plays help us to understand his personality to some extent at a certain period of his career. History plays mark a stage in the development of his mind and art. While writing Historical Plays, Shakespeare is mainly concerned to deal with the problem of man's success or failure in the world. The English History of the middle age is the history of the King versus his Barons. If the King has the power to keep all his barons under his control, all is well. If not the country is ruined by internal strife and civil war.

Shakespeare has given six full length historical plays on English Kings. Three of the plays 'King John', 'King Richard II' and 'King Henry VI' study the weaknesses of the Kings. Three other plays 'King Henry IV', 'King Henry V' and 'Richard III' study the strength of the Kings. King Richard II is a weak sentimental King. On the other hand King Richard III is strong in his crime. Henry IV is cautious and daring. The prominent theme of Shakespeare's historical plays is how a man fails and how a man succeeds.

Henry IV was treacherous to Richard II and his nobles helped him to ascend the throne. The nobles turn against King Henry IV. So that Worcester and Vernon do not convey to Hotspur the message of the King faithfully. The Earl of Northumberland simply sends a message that he is gravely ill and he cannot join the rebels and he is unable to raise a force. The King suspects his own son and fears that he is plotting against him. Douglas attacks Blunt and kills him. The Prince is wounded in the battle. When the Prince is alone Hotspur challenges him. In the fight Hotspur died. At the end of the battle, the King pronounces the penalty of death upon Worcester and Vernon Douglas has also been captured

Through Falstaff and his companions Shakespeare presents a realistic and a comprehensive picture of the life of his times. Through them we come to know of cheap taverns, way laying of merchants, highway robberies and people give way to eating and drinking and for jokes and jests. The character of mistress Quickly is unique. Shakespeare minimizes the theme of the King as God's deputy. The King's position is often questioned in this play. On many occasions the rebels question it verbally and finally by force of arms.