

# **Master of Arts (1<sup>ST</sup> YEAR)**

**MA-102**

**ENGLISH**



**Directorate of Distance Education Guru  
Jambheshwar University of Science &  
Technology**

**HISAR-125001**

<b>Subject : English</b>	
<b>Course Code : MA 102</b>	<b>Author : Dr. Pallavi</b>
<b>Lesson No. : 01</b>	<b>Vetter</b>
<b>Absalom &amp; Achitophel</b>	<b>By John Dryden</b>

## **1.0 Learning Objectives**

### **1.1 Introduction About the Poem**

### **1.2 Main Body of the Text**

### **1.3 Further Main Body of the Text**

### **1.4 Check our progress**

### **1.5 Summary**

### **1.6 Keywords**

### **1.7 Self-Assessment Test**

### **1.8 Answers to check your Progress**

### **1.9 References/Suggested Readings**

## **1.0 Learning Objectives**

- To make the students understand that satire is different from scolding and sheer abuse.
- This poem is a mock epic.
- This traditional English monarchy was restored when Charles II became king in 1660.
- This period from 1660 to around 1689 is called the Restoration period of Literature.
- Writers during this time emphasized the potential of logic and reason.

### **1.1 Introduction to the Poet**

#### **John Dryden (1631 - 1700)-Life & works**

Dryden was a versatile literary artist. Even in his early days of schooling, he showed literary promise. He made remarkable contributions to the development of the English language and the development of prose style. He was given the title of 'first' of the moderns, the Father of

English criticism. So in his writing we notice a remarkable change from the old of Christian to the new society which was emerging from the crises of the seventeenth century.

Dryden's literary development falls into three phases. During his first period, he showed himself a follower of the old orthodox monarchist theory. In later stages, he attached more importance to correctness. He realized the inadequacy of royalist theory in the context of real power politics. He wrote lyrics, odes, long poems, and verse satires - personal as well as political. He was a great literary critic also. 'Essay on Dramatic Poesy' is his first book on literary criticism. With him the English prose style received maturity. He was also the forerunner of Pope and eighteenth century classicism.

Heroic stanza on Cromwell; Astrea Redux on the restoration; Wild Gallant his first play; The Indian Queen; The Indian Emperor; on Dramatic Poesy; The Conquest of Granada; Aurangjeh; Mac flecknoe; Absalom and Achitophel; Religion Laici; The Hind and the Panther; The Satire and Favles- Ancients and Modern.

According to T.S. Eliot "It is hardly too much to say that Dryden found the English speechless and he gave them speech." So the versatility of Dryden's genius is revealed not only as a poet and a dramatist but also as a founder of modern English prose and literary criticism.

### **Introduction to the poem**

Absalom and Achitophel is a well-known poem by John Dryden (1631-1700). It was written probably at the suggestion of Charles II. The purpose was to discredit the Earl of Shaftesbury and the Whigs. This poem was written in 1681. The political situation in England inspired the poet to write this powerful satire. Dryden used biblical characters.

### **Historical and political background**

Charles II restored monarchy in England in 1660. He was a man of political vision. He was strongly opposed by the Whig party, led by the Earl of Shaftesbury. Charles II had no legitimate child. His immediate successor was his brother James, Duke of York. The Whigs made up their mind to promote the cause of Charles's bastard son, the Duke of Monmouth who was a Protestant. There were rumours of a Popish plot. Charles II did not believe it. But Oates's evidence intensified popular suspicion of the Duke of York. Circumstances were not in favour of Charles II. So, the King kept himself out of England. However, in 1681, circumstances became favourable for Charles II. Parliament met at Oxford in March but the king dissolved it. He also published his reasons for doing so. In July 1681, Shaftesbury was

charged with high treason. It was during these months that this great satire was written by Dryden as per the wishes of the King.

### **Biblical parallelism in "Absalom and Achitophel"**

Abbethdin -Lord Chancellor	Absalom-Duke of Monmouth	Achitophel-Earl of Shaftesbury
Annabel-Duchess of Monmouth	Barzillai- Duke of Ormond	Jebusite-Papists
Zimri-Duke of Buckingham	Western-Dolben of West	

### **ABSOLAM AND ACHITOPHEL**

During (1679-1681), a political crisis gripped the whole British nation as King Charles II had no legitimate child to succeed him. According to the law of the land, the throne would have gone to James Duke of York, the younger brother of Charles II, but some people wanted the accession of Charles's illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth to the throne. But this demand was considered as an attack.

Absolam and Achitophel is a political allegory. Dryden wrote at the instance of Charles II in order to expose. The immediate cause was the problem of succession to the British throne as Charles had no legitimate heir but political parties, the Whigs and the Tories, jumped into the fray and made matters more complex. With the passage of time, the crisis deepened and the whole nation was divided on this issue. The conflict gathered momentum when the Popish Plot - plot by Catholics to kill the King came to light. People in anger began to kill. Catholics were everywhere in the country, especially in the streets of London. Shaftesbury and the Duke of Monmouth were arrested. Dryden was asked by the King to write a rejoinder to the pamphlets. So, in these circumstances Dryden took up the cause of the King and wrote

'Absolam and Achitophel' which is undoubtedly, a political pamphlet but it is also a work of

high literary merit.

Dryden thought of an allegory as a vehicle to express himself forcefully. So the use of allegory and symbolism was considered by him a good tool to beat the enemies of the King with. He selected a well-known episode in the Old Testament. David, the King of the Hebrews, faced a similar situation of succession to the throne. So the poem deals with two histories - the Jewish and the English. So the poem implicitly indicates that one history is like another and that history repeats itself. Only the change noticeable is in the characters with different names and their individual characteristics. Dryden compares various events with those which occupy an important place in the old Jewish history. Dryden pleased the King by the use of allegorical framework and justified the misdeeds of King Charles II and as David was a sacred King - God's choice. Similarly, Charles II becomes a sacred King also and representative of 'God on Earth'. His immorality was condoned by the comparison with David who also had the same problem of illegitimate children. So this form of allegorical framework which he chose helped him in other ways also. By that he gave the impression that he was not a party in the conflict. It was his objective sort of looking at the matter - nonpartisan and neutral. It also gave freedom to his artistic talent with the help of impressive and dignified style.

## 1.2 Main Body of the Text-

### Original Text

In pious times, ere priest-craft did begin, Before polygamy was made a sin;  
When man, on many, multipli'd his kind, Ere one to one was cursedly confin'd: When Nature  
prompted, and no Law deni'd Promiscuous use of concubine and bride;  
Then, Israel's monarch, after Heaven's own heart, His vigorous warmth did variously impart  
To wives and slaves: and, wide as his command, Scatter'd his Maker's image through the land.

10

Michal, of royal blood, the crown did wear; A soil ungrateful to the tiller's care:  
Not so the rest; for several mothers bore To god-like David, several sons before.  
But since like slaves his bed they did ascend, No true succession could their seed attend.  
Of all this numerous progeny was none So beautiful, so brave, as Absalom: 20

Whether, inspir'd by some diviner lust, His father got him with a greater gust; Or that his  
conscious destiny made way, By manly beauty to imperial sway.  
Early in foreign fields he won renown, With kings and states alli'd to Israel's crown: In peace  
the thoughts of war he could remove,  
And seem'd as he were only born for love. Whate'er he did, was done with so much ease, In  
him alone, 'twas natural to please:  
His motions all accompani'd with grace; And Paradise was open'd in his face. 30

With secret joy, indulgent David view'd His youthful image in his son renew'd: To all his wishes  
nothing he deni'd;  
And made the charming Annabel his bride.  
What faults he had (for who from faults is free?) His father could not, or he would not see.  
Some warm excesses, which the Law forbore, Were constru'd youth that purged by boiling o'er:  
And Amnon's murder, by a specious name,  
Was call'd a just revenge for injur'd fame. 40

### Lines (1-50)

Thus prais'd, and lov'd, the noble youth remain'd, While David, undisturb'd, in Sion reign'd.  
But life can never be sincerely blest: Heav'n punishes the bad, and proves the best.  
The Jews, a headstrong, moody, murmur'ing race, As ever tri'd th'extent and stretch of grace;  
God's pamper'd people whom, debauch'd with ease, No king could govern, nor no God could  
please; (Gods they had tri'd of every shape and size,  
That god-smiths could produce, or priests devise:)

King David was the ruler of Israel in ancient pious times when polyamy was no longer considered sin. The King was absolutely free to have as many mistresses as he liked and so King David had a large number of bastard children (The poet is indirectly referring to Charles II who had also illegitimate children, thereby justifying and supporting King Charles II). David, the King of Israel was performing his duty to his maker (God) by scattering his images. Only Michal, was his lawful wife who could not give heir to the throne. She bore no son to David, the legitimate contender to the throne. So a war of succession started among the illegitimate children. It resulted in a lot of bitterness. Hence the problem became more knotty and ticklish as it divided the people on their choice. So it becomes the theme of the satire. David had many sons (of course, illegitimate) and one out of all these was very handsome because of his royal manners. He was a brave warrior who won many battles in the battle- fields. He was also conscious of their Royal traits and knew fully well of his worth and high destiny that one day luck might smile on him and he might ascend the throne. King David felt highly delighted to see in his son the reflection of his own youthful figure and personality. He married him to charming Annable. He took no notice of his mistakes and blunders and sometimes, the crimes committed by him were excused by the King. In one the particular case, Aman's murder which was justified by the King with the remarks that Manmouth had no other choice. So in this way in the atmosphere of love and cordiality, the Duke of Monmouth grew up and flourished while David, the King of Israel ruled his kingdom undisturbed. But life cannot be an uninterrupted story of joys and pleasure with no streak of tragedy and sorrow. So it happened with David. Because of his failing health, he felt the necessity of proclaiming an heir to the throne and this arose the problem of succession.

## Lines (50-90)

These Adam-wits, too fortunately free, Began to dream they wanted liberty:  
And when no rule, no precedent, was found Of men, by laws less circumscrib'd and bound,  
They led their wild desires to woods and caves, And thought that all but savages were slaves.  
They who, when Saul was dead, without a blow,  
Made foolish Ishbosheth the crown forego; Who banisht David did from Hebron bring,  
And, with a general shout, proclaim'd him king: **60**

Those very Jews, who, at their very best, Their Humour more than loyalty exprest, Now,  
wonder'd why, so long, they had obey'd An idol-monarch which their hands had made:  
Thought they might ruin him they could create; Or melt him to that golden calf, a state.  
But these were random bolts: no form'd design, Nor interest made the factious crowd to join:  
The sober part of Israel, free from stain,  
Well knew the value of a peaceful reign: **70**

And, looking backward with a wise afright, Saw seams of wounds, dishonest to the sight: In  
contemplation of whose ugly scars,  
They curst the memory of civil wars.  
The moderate sort of men, thus qualifi'd, Inclined the balance to the better side: And, David's  
mildness manag'd it so well, The bad found no occasion to rebel.  
But, when to sin our bias'd nature leans, The careful Devil is still at hand with means; **80**

And providently pimps for ill desires: The good old cause reviv'd, a plot requires.  
Plots, true or false, are necessary things, To raise up common-wealths, and ruin kings.  
Th' inhabitants of old Jerusalem  
Were Jebusites: the town so call'd from them; And theirs the native right—  
But when the chosen people grew more strong, The rightful cause at length became the wrong:  
And every loss the men of Jebus bore,  
They still were thought God's enemies the more. **90**

The Jews, the inhabitants of Israel, we're moody and obstinate people with a whimsical nature of fickle mindedness. They never felt satisfied with any king who might have been most benevolent and lenient to them. Consequently, most of them were corrupted because of the constant comforts they enjoyed under his regime. So the people of Israel, who are called 'wits' started grumbling that they lacked liberty and the regime of the King was too oppressive and restrictive to bear any longer. In comparison, they found themselves in better condition than their predecessors or fore-fathers but still they complained and wanted absolute freedom which is enjoyed by the heath. King David (Charles II) from Hebron (Scotland) and proclaimed him King amidst shouts of joy and cries of happiness. They were moody and even in their best, expressed their whims which go on changing from time to time. After some time, they wondered at their constant love and regard for the King and started grumbling why they had obeyed for such a long time that they had risen to this position. They were the makers of the

monarchs. So such thoughts troubled many mischievous minds and they are always in search of an opportunity to inflame the feelings of the people against monarchy. They preached that they were the ultimate authority. These were the first rumblings in the scheming minds of mischievous elements. Moreover, they were not united in their opposition to the king who ruled so gently. Even the bad element could not find any excuse to revolt against such a benevolent king. Since the sober sections of the society were against such disturbing thoughts of mischievous elements as they had seen enough of bitterness, deaths and destruction during the civil war and prevailed upon them for peace and harmony. So a plot was hatched up, when there is no genius cause for a common purpose, these plots, whether true or false, are necessary to overthrow kings and establish commonwealth (republic).

### **Lines (90-110)**

Thus, worn and weaken'd, well or ill content, Submit they must to David's government:  
Impoverish'd and depriv'd of all command, Their taxes doubled as they lost their land; And,  
what was harder yet to flesh and blood,  
Their gods disgrac'd, and burnt like common wood.  
This set the heathen priesthood in a flame; For priests of all religions are the same:  
Of whatsoe'er descent their godhead be, Stock, stone, or other homely pedigree, 100

In his defence his servants are as bold, As if he had been born of beaten gold.  
The Jewish Rabbins though their Enemies, In this conclude them honest men and wise: For  
'twas their duty, all the learned think,  
T'espose his cause by whom they eat and drink. From hence began that plot, the nation's curse,  
Bad in itself, but represented worse.  
Rais'd in extremes, and in extremes decr'd; With oaths affirm'd, with dying vows deni'd. 110

The Jebusites were the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In a very short time it was released by the chosen people that, the religion of the Jebusites was odious and hateful and there started persecution of the Jebusites (Roman Catholics). They were heavily taxed. All their power and authority was taken away from them. They were suppressed and harassed. Idols were burnt like common world. It made the Jebusites furious. In this respect, priests of other faith (Protestant) also were at one with Jebusites (Catholics) so far defence of their own religion was concerned. All the priests consider it their sacred duty to defend the Gods because it is their faith (religious) which brings to them their bread and butter. As a result of the persecution of the Catholics (Jebusites) Popish plot (1678) came to light. It proved very disastrous for the whole nation. But it created a wave of anger or fury against this plot which was considered an attempt of Catholics on the life of the King, Charles II. The reaction of the common man was blindly bellowing without moaning it thoroughly. It created an atmosphere of doubt and suspicion all



around.

**Lines (110-150)**

Not weigh'd, or winnow'd by the multitude; But swallow'd in the mass, unchew'd and crude.  
Some truth there was, but dash'd and brew'd with lies; To please the fools, and puzzle all the  
wise.

Succeeding times did equal folly call, Believing nothing, or believing all.  
Th' Egyptian rites the Jebusites embrac'd; Where gods were recommended by their taste.  
Such sav'ry deities must needs be good,  
As serv'd at once for worship and for food. 120

By force they could not introduce these gods; For ten to one, in former days was odds.  
So fraud was us'd, (the sacrificers' trade,) Fools are more hard to conquer than persuade. Their  
busy teachers mingled with the Jews;  
And rak'd, for converts, even the court and stews: Which Hebrew priests the more unkindly  
took, Because the fleece accompanies the flock.  
Some thought they God's anointed meant to slay By guns, invented since full many a day: 130

Our author swears it not; but who can know How far the Devil and Jebusites may go?  
This plot, which fail'd for want of common sense, Had yet a deep and dangerous consequence:  
For, as when raging fevers boil the blood,  
The standing lake soon floats into a flood; And ev'ry hostile humour, which before Slept quiet  
in its channels, bubbles o'er:  
So, several factions from this first ferment, Work up to foam, and threat the government. 140

Some by their friends, more by themselves thought wise, Oppos'd the pow'r, to which they  
could not rise.

Some had in courts been great, and thrown from thence, Like fiends, were harden'd in  
impenitence.

Some by their monarch's fatal mercy grown, From pardon'd rebels, kinsmen to the throne;  
Were rais'd in pow'r and public office high; Strong bands, if bands ungrateful men could tie.  
Of these the false Achitophel was first:  
A name to all succeeding ages curst. 150

The Jebusites accepted the Catholic rules which were practised in France (Egypt). The attempt of Catholics to convert Hebrew priests to their faith also infuriated the Hebrew priests.

Conversion to Catholicism also meant a sizable reduction in the number of their followers as well as their income also. So rumours of all sorts were spread. It was alleged that they wanted to kill the King. However, the Popish plot failed immediately. It led to many evil designs of various groups. Passions and tempers ran high and several groups rose to the surface and sought exploitation of the situation by propaganda against the government. Those who were rejected by the King got a good opportunity to malign the government. One of such treacherous persons was Achitophel (Lord Shaftesbury) whose name would be cursed by the generations for his ingratitude towards the King.

## Lines (150-230)

For close designs, and crooked counsels fit; Sagacious, bold and turbulent of wit: Restless,  
unfixt in principles and place;  
In pow'r unpleas'd, impatient of disgrace. A fiery soul, which working out its way, Fretted the  
pigmy-body to decay:  
And o'er inform'd the tenement of clay.  
A daring pilot in extremity;  
Pleas'd with the danger, when the waves went high 160

He sought the storms; but for a calm unfit, Would steer too nigh the sands, to boast his wit.  
Great wits are sure to madness near alli'd; And thin partitions do their bounds divide:  
Else, why should he, with wealth and honour blest, Refuse his age the needful hours of rest?  
Punish a body which he could not please; Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease?  
And all to leave, what with his toil he won To that unfeather'd, two-legg'd thing, a son: 170

Got, while his soul did huddled notions try; And born a shapeless lump, like anarchy. In  
friendship false, implacable in hate: Resolv'd to ruin or to rule the state.  
To compass this, the triple bond he broke; The pillars of the public safety shook: And fitted  
Israel for a foreign yoke.  
Then, seiz'd with fear, yet still affecting fame, Usurp'd a patriot's all-atoning name. 180

So easy still it proves in factious times, With public zeal to cancel private crimes: How safe is  
treason, and how sacred ill,  
Where none can sin against the people's will:  
Where crowds can wink; and no offence be known, Since in another's guilt they find their own.  
Yet, fame deserv'd, no enemy can grudge; The statesman we abhor, but praise the judge.  
In Jewish courts ne'er sat an Abbethdin With more discerning eyes, or hands more clean:  
Unbrib'd, unsought, the wretched to redress; Swift of dispatch, and easy of access. 190

Oh, had he been content to serve the crown, With virtues only proper to the gown;  
Or, had the rankness of the soil been freed From cockle, that oppress the noble seed: David, for  
him his tuneful harp had strung, And heav'n had wanted one immortal song. But wild ambition  
loves to slide, not stand; And fortune's ice prefers to virtue's land: Achitophel, grown weary to  
possess 200

A lawful fame, and lazy happiness; Disdain'd the golden fruit to gather free, And lent the crowd  
his arm to shake the tree.  
Now, manifest of crimes, contriv'd long since, He stood at bold defiance with his prince: Held  
up the buckler of the people's cause,  
Against the crown; and skulk'd behind the laws.  
The wish'd occasion of the plot he takes; Some circumstances finds, but more he makes.  
By buzzing emissaries, fills the ears 210

Of list'ning crowds, with jealousies and fears Of arbitrary counsels brought to light, And proves  
the king himself a Jebusite.  
Weak arguments! which yet he knew full well, Were strong with people easy to rebel.  
For, govern'd by the moon, the giddy Jews Tread the same track when she the prime renews:  
And once in twenty years, their scribes record, By natural instinct they change their lord.  
Achitophel still wants a chief, and none 220

Was found so fit as warlike Absalom: Not, that he wish'd his greatness to create, (For  
 politicians neither love nor hate:) But, for he knew, his title not allow'd,  
 Would keep him still depending on the crowd: That kingly pow'r, thus ebbing out, might be  
 Drawn to the dregs of a democracy.  
 Him he attempts, with studied arts to please, And sheds his venom, in such words as these.  
 Auspicious Prince! at whose nativity 230

Achitophel was a cunning intriguer, a crooked and unscrupulous politician. He was a man of tremendous energy and fiery spirit in him. Though he was short stature and physically weak yet he was a very bold and capable leader in the times of difficulty. He was a perfect master in the art of exploitation of situations to his advantage. Such a cunning nature and temperament possessed this man, Achitophel. In fact, he was a very ambitious statesman who was not satisfied with the honour, wealth, and high office or title that was conferred on him by the King. In the old age when he needed a peaceful life, he chose a life of struggle and disgrace. As a friend, Shaftsbury was not dependable and can be considered as a false friend who could betray at any time. He was a revengeful enemy. He even broke the Triple Alliance between England, Scotland and Ireland and tried to place England under foreign rule (France). In order to conceal his real intentions he assumed - the garb of patriotism and misled people by presenting himself a genuine patriot who loved his country most. He was a man of integrity. He possessed a massive keen intellect and was capable of sound judgement. He never accepted bribes though dispensed justice swiftly. He was not content with the easy and virtuous life that was his. Therefore he assumed the role of a politician, posed as a champion of the people and opposed his own King. So he was himself responsible for his downfall. He further excited the public with his revelation that King himself was a Catholic. History of Jews tells us that these giddy, thoughtless, whimsical people who are easily excitable rebel against their King after every twenty years. He was aware that Absalom was an ambitious young man who cherished the desire of becoming king one day but was not coming forward to take his stand openly. It was Absalom, the illegitimate son of Charles who was the most suitable person for this purpose. He did not love him because in politics there is neither love nor hate. The politicians want a tool for a particular purpose and so he was liked by Achitophel. He knew that Absalom had no legal claim to the throne and would remain ever their subservient. . So with great art and skill, he tried to please the young man and poisoned his ears in the following speech - :

### **Lines(230-310)**

Some royal planet rul'd the southern sky; Thy longing country's darling and desire; Their  
 cloudy pillar, and their guardian fire: Their second Moses, whose extended wand

Divides the seas, and shows the promis'd land: Whose dawning day, in very distant age,  
Has exercis'd the sacred prophet's rage: The people's pray'r, the glad diviner's theme,  
The young men's vision, and the old men's dream! Thee, Saviour, thee, the nation's vows  
confess; And, never satisfi'd with seeing, bless: 240

Swift, unbespoken pomps, thy steps proclaim, And stammering babes are taught to lisp thy  
name.

How long wilt thou the general joy detain; Starve, and defraud the people of thy reign?  
Content ingloriously to pass thy days Like one of virtue's fools that feeds on praise;  
Till thy fresh glories, which now shine so bright, Grow stale and tarnish with our daily sight.  
Believe me, royal youth, thy fruit must be, Or gather'd ripe, or rot upon the tree. 250

Heav'n has to all allotted, soon or late, Some lucky revolution of their fate:  
Whose motions if we watch and guide with skill, (For human good depends on human will,)  
Our fortune rolls, as from a smooth descent,  
And, from the first impression, takes the bent: But, if unseiz'd, she glides away like wind; And  
leaves repenting folly far behind.  
Now, now she meets you, with a glorious prize, And spreads her locks before her as she flies.  
260

Had thus Old David, from whose loins you spring, Not dar'd, when fortune call'd him, to be  
king.  
At Gath an exile he might still remain; And Heaven's anointing oil had been in vain. Let his  
successful youth your hopes engage;  
But shun th'example of declining age: Behold him setting in his western skies,  
The shadows lengthening as the vapours rise. He is not now, as when on Jordan's sand 270

The joyful people throng'd to see him land, Cov'ring the beach, and black'ning all the strand:  
But, like the Prince of Angels from his height, Comes tumbling downward with diminish'd  
light: Betray'd by one poor plot to public scorn:  
(Our only blessing since his curst return:) Those heaps of people which one sheaf did bind,  
Blown off, and scatter'd by a puff of wind. What strength can he to your designs oppose,  
Naked of friends and round beset with foes? 280

If Pharaoh's doubtful succour he should use,  
A foreign aid would more incense the Jews: Proud Egypt would dissembled friendship bring;  
Foment the war, but not support the king:  
Nor would the royal party e'er unite With Pharaoh's arms, t'assist the Jebusite;  
Or if they should, their interest soon would break, And with such odious aid, make David weak.  
All sorts of men, by my successful arts, Abhorring kings, estrange their alter'd hearts 290

From David's rule: And 'tis the general Cry, Religion, Common-wealth, and Liberty. If, you, as  
champion of the public good, Add to their arms a chief of royal blood;  
What may not Israel hope, and what applause Might such a general gain by such a cause? Not  
barren praise alone, that gaudy flow'r, Fair only to the sight, but solid pow'r:  
And nobler is a limited command, Giv'n by the love of all your native land, 300

Than a successive title, long, and dark, Drawn from the mouldy rolls of Noah's Ark. What  
cannot praise effect in mighty minds,

When flattery soothes, and when ambition blinds!  
Desire of pow'r, on earth a vicious weed, Yet, sprung from high, is of celestial seed: In God 'tis  
glory: And when men aspire, 'Tis but a spark too much of heavenly fire. Th' ambitious youth,  
too covetous of fame,  
Too full of angel's metal in his frame; 310

“O fortunate prince, at your birth, a royal state was in the ascendant. People love you, admire you and pin high hopes on you. It was already predicted by the Astrologers long ago. You were given a rousing welcome when you stepped on the soil of England. You have seen the love and affection of the people for you. You are at present leading an obscure life; come into the limelight. Time is running short; make full advantage of it. Now is the lucky time for you to seize upon the opportunity and strike when the iron is hot. Achitophel further told him that if he failed to make full use of the present moment. He should follow the example of his father who took courage and became the King. He is diminished in glory, like the Prince of light, Satan who fell from heaven and lost his glory as he fell.

Because of the Popish Plot, people have different friend's opinions of him. All his friends have left him and he is surrounded by enemies on all sides, if he sought outside help (from Pharaoh) it would be another cause for the people to feel more annoyed. Achitophel further tells him that he has successfully turned the people away from the King, and now they are demanding religion, commonwealth and liberty. Since royal blood is running in his vein, there is every possibility that people will gather around him and proclaim him as King. Moreover, "authority derived from the love of the people is much better than hereditary title, however, ancient it may be."

**Lines (310-480).**

Unwarily was led from virtue's ways;  
 Made drunk with honour, and debauch'd with praise.  
 Half loath, and half consenting to the ill, (For loyal blood within him struggled still) He thus  
 repli'd.—And what pretence have I To take up arms for public liberty?  
 My Father governs with unquestion'd right; The Faith's defender, and mankind's delight: Good,  
 gracious, just, observant of the laws;  
 And Heav'n by wonders has espous'd his cause. 320

Whom has he wrong'd in all his peaceful reign?  
Who sues for justice to his throne in vain? What millions has he pardon'd of his foes, Whom  
just revenge did to his wrath expose? Mild, easy, humble, studious of our good; Inclined to  
mercy, and averse from blood.

If mildness ill with stubborn Israel suit, His crime is God's beloved attribute.  
What could he gain, his people to betray, Or change his right, for arbitrary sway? 330

Let haughty Pharaoh curse with such a reign, His fruitful Nile, and yoke a servile train.  
If David's rule Jerusalem displease,  
The Dog-star heats their brains to this disease.  
Why then should I, encouraging the bad, Turn rebel, and run popularly mad?  
Were he a tyrant who, by lawless might, Oppress'd the Jews, and rais'd the Jebusite, Well might  
I mourn; but nature's holy bands  
Would curb my spirits, and restrain my hands: 340

The people might assert their liberty;  
But what was right in them, were crime in me.  
His favour leaves me nothing to require; Prevents my wishes, and out-runs desire. What more  
can I expect while David lives?  
All but his kingly diadem he gives:  
And that: but there he paus'd; then sighing, said, Is justly destin'd for a worthier head.  
For when my father from his toils shall rest, And late augment the number of the blest: 350

His lawful issue shall the throne ascend; Or the collat'ral line where that shall end.  
His brother, though oppress'd with vulgar spite, Yet dauntless and secure of native right,  
Of every royal virtue stands possess'd; Still dear to all the bravest, and the best.  
His courage foes, his friends his truth proclaim; His loyalty the king, the world his fame.  
His mercy ev'n th'offending crowd will find: For sure he comes of a forgiving kind. 360

Why should I then repine at Heaven's decree; Which gives me no pretence to royalty?  
Yet oh that Fate, propitiously inclin'd, Had rais'd my birth, or had debas'd my mind;  
To my large soul, not all her treasure lent, And then betray'd it to a mean descent.  
I find, I find my mounting spirits bold, And David's part disdains my mother's mold.  
Why am I scanted by a niggard-birth?  
My soul disclaims the kindred of her earth: 370

And made for empire, whispers me within; Desire of greatness is a god-like sin.  
Him staggering so when Hell's dire agent found, While fainting virtue scarce maintain'd her  
ground, He pours fresh forces in, and thus replies: Th'eternal God, supremely good and wise,  
Imparts not these prodigious gifts in vain; What wonders are reserv'd to bless your reign?  
Against your will your arguments have shown, Such virtue's only giv'n to guide a throne. 380

Not that your father's mildness I contemn; But manly force becomes the diadem.  
'Tis true, he grants the people all they crave; And more perhaps than subjects ought to have: For  
lavish grants suppose a monarch tame, And more his goodness than his wit proclaim.  
But when should people strive their bonds to break, If not when kings are negligent or weak?  
Let him give on till he can give no more, The thrifty Sanhedrin shall keep him poor: 390

And every shekel which he can receive, Shall cost a limb of his prerogative.  
To ply him with new plots, shall be my care; Or plunge him deep in some expensive war;  
Which, when his treasure can no more supply, He must, with the remains of kingship, buy. His  
faithful friends, our jealousies and fears Call Jebusites; and Pharaoh's pensioners: Whom, when  
our fury from his aid has torn, He shall be naked left to public scorn. 400

The next successor, whom I fear and hate, My arts have made obnoxious to the state; Turn'd all  
his virtues to his overthrow, And gain'd our elders to pronounce a foe.

His right, for sums of necessary gold, Shall first be pawn'd, and afterwards be sold:  
Till time shall ever-wanting David draw, To pass your doubtful title into law:  
If not; the people have a right supreme  
To make their kings; for kings are made for them. 410

All empire is no more than pow'r in trust: Which when resum'd, can be no longer just.  
Succession, for the general good design'd, In its own wrong a nation cannot bind:  
If altering that, the people can relieve, Better one suffer, than a nation grieve.  
The Jews well know their pow'r: ere Saul they chose, God was their king, and God they durst  
depose.  
Urge now your piety, your filial name,  
A father's right, and fear of future fame; 420

The public good, the universal call,  
To which even Heav'n submitted, answers all. Nor let his love enchant your generous mind;  
'Tis Nature's trick to propagate her kind.  
Our fond begetters, who would never die, Love but themselves in their posterity. Or let his  
kindness by th'effects be tri'd, Or let him lay his vain pretence aside.  
God said he lov'd your father; could he bring A better proof, than to anoint him king? 430

It surely show'd he lov'd the shepherd well, Who gave so fair a flock as Israel.  
Would David have you thought his darling son?  
What means he then, to alienate the crown? The name of godly he may blush to bear: 'Tis after  
God's own heart to cheat his heir.

He to his brother gives supreme command; To you a legacy of barren land:  
Perhaps th'old harp, on which he thrums his lays: Or some dull Hebrew ballad in your praise.  
440

Then the next heir, a prince, severe and wise Already looks on you with jealous eyes; Sees  
through the thin disguises of your arts,  
And marks your progress in the people's hearts. Though now his mighty soul in grief contains,  
He meditates revenge who least complains; And like a lion, slumb'ring in the way,  
Or sleep-dissembling, while he waits his prey, His fearless foes within his distance draws;  
Constrains his roaring and contracts his paws: 450

Till at the last, his time for fury found,  
He shoots with sudden vengeance from the ground: The prostrate vulgar, passes o'er, and  
spares;  
But with a lordly rage, his hunters tears. Your case no tame expedients will afford; Resolve on  
death, or conquest by the sword, Which for no less a stake than life, you draw; And self-  
defence is Nature's eldest law.  
Leave the warm people no considering time; For then rebellion may be thought a crime. 460

Prevail yourself of what occasion gives, But try your title while your father lives:  
And that your arms may have a fair pretence, Proclaim, you take them in the king's defence:  
Whose sacred life each minute would expose To plots from seeming friends and secret foes.  
And who can sound the depth of David's soul? Perhaps his fear, his kindness may control.  
He fears his brother, though he loves his son, For plighted vows too late to be undone. 470

If so, by force he wishes to be gain'd; Like women's lechery, to seem constrain'd:

Doubt not; but when he most affects the frown, Commit a pleasing rape upon the crown.  
Secure his person to secure your cause; They who possess the prince, possess the laws.  
He said, and this advice above the rest With Absalom's mild nature suited best; Unblam'd of  
life, (ambition set aside,)  
Not stain'd with cruelty, nor puff'd with pride. 480

Flattery consoles and ambition makes a man blind. Desire for power is of heavenly origin. It is the glory of God. So it had a desired effect on the mind of young Absalom and he was easily misled by cunning Shaftsbury. Absalom who coveted fame and was blessed with the spirit of an angel was misguided from the path of virtue. It created a struggle in his mind and soul because of inherent dislike for evil and his desire to accept the advice of Achitophel. Thus from within he replied, "On what ground should I come forward to champion the cause of the public literary. My father possesses all the qualities of a noble. There is no reason to revolt against him. His rule is of remarkably peaceful, harmonious atmosphere. He is just to all irrespective of age and position. He hates bloodshed, lawlessness, anarchy and he has ruled the country in peace. So to think of him as a despotic king is baseless and misleading if it happens in France, it does not mean the same is going to be repeated here. If people of this country are still not satisfied, these are symptoms of madness should they go against my father without any valid reason? It is nothing but an act of folly to run madly after popularity and power. I might be provoked but without any valid and justifiable reason I cannot go against my father. Blood relationship between father and son cannot allow this until there is full justification for it. King is so kind and gracious and loves me from the core of his heart and grants me before I express my desire and to go against him in these circumstances is unthinkable for me. He gives me everything but not the crown because it should go to my Uncle James, who is worthy of it and has full right to it, according to the rules and practice. Moreover, it is the will of God that only a lawful heir is justified to claim the crown and if I am an illegitimate son and no longer entitled for it, it shows the will of God not in my favour. I wish that either fate had made my birth legitimate or had given me a base nature. It should not have given me a royal nature and then cheated it (my soul) by making me an illegitimate child. Why is it that I have been put down by any illegitimate birth? My soul is made for the empire and forgetting its earthly birth it whispers to me that desire for greatness may be sin but it is the sin of the Gods. Even Gods are sinners in this respect." When Achitophel noticed the wavering mind of Absalom, he felt encouraged and advanced fresh arguments, more poisonous than before to win him over. So in reply to Absalom's speech, Achitophel, the evil agent of hell spoke thus, "God is good and wise and it is not his wish that his gift of extraordinary talents should go waste. I have no intention



of condemning your father but a King should have manly force. He is considerate and kind-hearted to his enemies but the King should not be so indulgent otherwise lavish grants by the King make people think that the King is weak. So clever, cunning and unscrupulous people take the first opportunity to strike against the King and dethrone him. In case of war, the King is determined to make a compromise and sell his rights to the Parliament. So far James is concerned; I have already poisoned the ears of the public against him and have made even his virtues the instruments of his fall. The King badly needs money and gradually he could have to pawn and then sell his kingly rights. As these days, Kings are made and unmade by the people themselves, so that day is not far off when he is crowned by the public for his noble traits and virtues which James does not possess.

So the executive authority of the King is vested in him by the people and when the people withdraw it, the King too forfeits all his authority and power. The Jews (The English) knew their power fully well. They even made Cromwell their Lord Protector and did not bother about God the King of the republic. You should give undue importance to the love of a father for a son. It is all natural. When they love their children, they love, actually their own selves in their offspring. If you feel that the King loves you then he should not hesitate to give you the crown which you otherwise serve. So he should prove his kindness. Similarly if David really wants you to be the heir-apparent, it is not a difficult task for him. But the present situation is just the opposite. King is giving all attention to his brother as if he is grooming him for sitting on the throne. He may give you a plot of barren land, some old harp or perhaps an old ballad in your praise. As a matter of fact, you are ignored and James, the brother of the King is given all importance and honour. He hates you, is afraid of you and is simply waiting for an opportunity to jump on you and destroy you. Your position is very delicate. Either you should be ready to be killed by him or strike him in self-defence. Self-defence is not a crime and you will be fully supported by the public. Declare that King is in danger from his treacherous friends and secret foes and you are taking up arms in his defence. So it is in the fitness of things that he should be conquered by force and he may say that he was compelled by circumstances to yield the throne to you. Do not forget, if you secure the throne King, your rights would be safe because one who controls the King can make or unmake the laws of the land.

#### **Lines (480-490)**

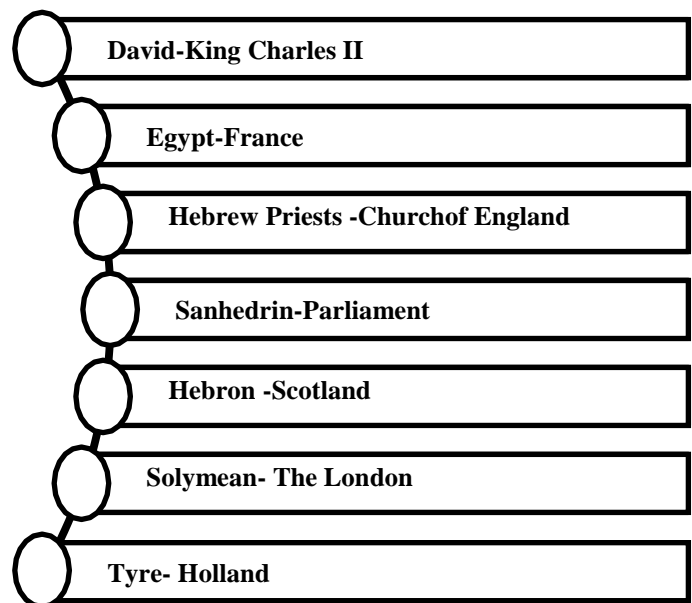
How happy had he been, if destiny Had higher plac'd his birth, or not so high!  
His kingly virtues might have claim'd a throne; And blest all other countries but his own: But  
charming greatness since so few refuse,

'Tis juster to lament him, than accuse. Strong were his hopes a rival to remove, With  
blandishments to gain the public love;  
To head the faction while their zeal was hot, And popularly prosecute the plot. 490

Advice of Achitophel appealed to the mild nature of Absolem, who was already half convinced. He was not disliked by the public. It was painful for him to see that he was most suitable yet he was denied the chance of showing his qualities as King. It is very difficult to refuse greatness and Absolem could not resist the temptation. He was fully confident of the support of the public because of his pleasant and charming manners, thereby defeating his rival in the race. He hoped to take the time by the forelock and lead the people against the King. Thus he yielded to Achitophel.

### Minor Characters

**The role of minor characters is important as they provide the real faces of the individuals mirroring the dark side of the individuals and their approach to harm the kingdom and their benefactors.**



### Further Main Body of the Text

#### Lines (490-550)

To farther this Achitophel unites The malcontents of all the Israelites:  
Whose differing parties he could wisely join, For several ends, to serve the same design. The  
best, and of the princes some were such, Who thought the pow'r of monarchy too much:

Mistaken men, and patriots in their hearts;  
Not wicked, but seduc'd by impious arts. By these the springs of property were bent,  
And wound so high, they crack'd the government. **500**

The next for interest sought t'embroil the state, To sell their duty at a dearer rate;  
And make their Jewish markets of the throne; Pretending public good, to serve their own.  
Others thought kings an useless heavy load, Who cost too much, and did too little good.  
These were for laying honest David by, On principles of pure good husbandry.  
With them join'd all th'haranguers of the throng, That thought to get preferment by the tongue.  
**510**

Who follow next, a double danger bring, Not only hating David, but the king; The Solymaeon  
rout; well vers'd of old In godly faction, and in treason bold;  
Cow'ring and quaking at a conqu'ror's sword, But lofty to a lawful prince restor'd;  
Saw with disdain an Ethnic plot begun, And scorn'd by Jebusites to be out-done. Hot Levites  
headed these; who pull'd before  
From th'Ark, which in the Judges' days they bore, **520**

Resum'd their Cant, and with a zealous cry, Pursu'd their old belov'd Theocracy.  
Where Sanhedrin and Priest enslav'd the nation, And justifi'd their spoils by inspiration:  
For who so fit for reign as Aaron's race,  
If once dominion they could found in Grace? These led the pack; though not of surest scent, Yet  
deepest mouth'd against the government. A numerous host of dreaming saints succeed;  
Of the true old enthusiastic breed: **530**

'Gainst form and order they their pow'r employ; Nothing to build, and all things to destroy.  
But far more numerous was the herd of such, Who think too little, and who talk too much.  
These, out of mere instinct, they knew not why, Ador'd their father's God, and property:  
And by the same blind benefit of fate, The Devil and the Jebusite did hate:  
Born to be saved even in their own despite; Because they could not help believing right. **540**

Such were the tools; but a whole Hydra more Remains, of sprouting heads too long, to score.  
Some of their chiefs were princes of the land: In the first rank of these did Zimri stand:  
A man so various, that he seem'd to be Not one, but all Mankind's Epitome. Stiff in opinions,  
always in the wrong;  
Was everything by starts, and nothing long; But in the course of one revolving moon,  
Was chemist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon: **550**

Achitophel advanced further in uniting all the dis-satisfied people into a single opposition party, when Absalom fell to his evil designs. By his tact and shrewdness, he created disaffection among the public for the King and brought them on one common platform. Some of them belonged to the Royal family. Some were patriots to the core but they also supported him. In this way the movement gathered momentum. There were some other people, who to serve their own purpose, wanted to involve the country in a civil war.

All pretended to be the champions of public good but in reality they were serving their own

ends. Now orators got an opportunity. These were some more dangerous sections of people who not only opposed David, the King of the land but were in favour of total abolition of the institution of Monarchy. The people of London were well versed in treachery and party strife. This mob was led by hot-headed, displaced and so dissatisfied, Presbyterian ministers. They wanted restoration of power and the parliament ruled the country in the name of God. There was also a group of dreaming saints. They were fanatics. They were most destructive in their designs. They wanted to destroy the established order but the largest crowd consisted of those people who were Orthodox and loved God because their father loved him and for the same reason, blindly hated Devil and the Catholics. So Achitophel spread the wave of disaffection against the King with the help of such fools.

### **Lines (550-630)**

Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking; Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking. Blest madman, who could every hour employ, With something new to wish, or to enjoy!

Railing and praising were his usual themes; And both (to show his judgment) in extremes: So over violent, or over civil,

That every man, with him, was god or devil. In squandering wealth was his peculiar art: Nothing went unrewarded, but desert. 560

Beggar'd by fools, whom still he found too late: He had his jest, and they had his estate. He laugh'd himself from court; then sought relief By forming parties, but could ne'er be chief: For, spite of him, the weight of business fell

On Absalom and wise Achitophel: Thus, wicked but in will, of means bereft, He left not faction, but of that was left. Titles and names 'twere tedious to rehearse Of lords, below the dignity of verse. 570

Wits, warriors, commonwealths-men, were the best: Kind husbands and mere nobles all the rest.

And, therefore in the name of dullness, be The well-hung Balaam and cold Caleb free. And canting Nadab let oblivion damn, Who made new porridge for the Paschal Lamb. Let friendship's holy band some names assure: Some their own worth, and some let scorn secure. 580

Nor shall the rascal rabble here have place, Whom kings no titles gave, and God no grace: Not bull-faced Jonas, who could statutes draw To mean rebellion, and make treason law. But he, though bad, is follow'd by a worse, The wretch, who Heav'n's Anointed dar'd to curse. Shimei, whose youth did early promise bring Of zeal to God, and hatred to his king; Did wisely from expensive sins refrain,

And never broke the Sabbath, but for gain: Nor ever was he known an oath to vent, Or curse, unless against the government. 590

Thus, heaping wealth, by the most ready way Among the Jews, which was to cheat and pray; The city, to reward his pious hate Against his master, chose him magistrate:

His hand a vane of justice did uphold; His neck was loaded with a chain of gold. During his  
office, treason was no crime.

The sons of Belial had a glorious time:  
For Shimei, though not prodigal of self, Yet lov'd his wicked neighbour as himself: 600

When two or three were gather'd to declaim Against the monarch of Jerusalem,  
Shimei was always in the midst of them. And, if they curst the king when he was by,  
Would rather curse, than break good company.  
If any durst his factious friends accuse, He pack'd a jury of dissenting Jews: Whose fellow-  
feeling, in the godly cause,  
Would free the suff'ring saint from human laws. For laws are only made to punish those 610

Who serve the king, and to protect his foes.  
If any leisure time he had from pow'r, (Because 'tis sin to mis-employ an hour;) His bus'ness  
was, by writing, to persuade, That kings were useless, and a clog to trade: And, that his noble  
style he might refine,  
No Rechabite more shunn'd the fumes of wine. Chaste were his cellars; and his shrieval board  
The grossness of a city feast abhorr'd:  
His cooks, with long disuse, their trade forgot; 620

Cool was his kitchen, though his brains were hot.  
Such frugal virtue malice may accuse; But sure 'twas necessary to the Jews:  
For towns once burnt, such magistrates require As dare not tempt God's providence by fire.  
With spiritual food he fed his servants well, But free from flesh, that made the Jews rebel: And  
Moses' laws he held in more account  
For forty days of fasting in the mount.  
To speak the rest, who better are forgot, 630

Some of the rebels belonged to the Royal family itself. Zimri stood on the first rank as Duke of Buckingham. He was rigid in his attitude and opinions and could not think of any change in his stand, though he was always in the wrong. Within a short span, he worked as a chemist, fiddler, statesman and a joker. He was profligate, given to wine and women. He was a mad man or lunatic who was either wishing or enjoying something every hour. He was usually in the habit of praising others or sneering at them. He was, sometimes, over violent and sometimes over civil. He was a perfect master in spending money lavishly, recklessly and thoughtlessly. He was such a thick-headed person that his friends made a fool of him by fleecing him of all his wealth with delightful and entertaining jokes etc. He was made to leave court and high office because of his involvement in a plot. Thereafter, He was wicked only in his intentions for he had no means to put his will into practice. There were many other leaders but of little significance, so the poet considers it a waste of time and below his dignity to describe them. There were Balam, Cabh, Nadah etc. There was one Joans who framed statues and tried to make any treason lawful, reasonable and valid. He was bad but his follower was even worse,

called Shimei. He was a worse rascal who even dared to curse the King. Shimei was a pious man who avoided all expensive sins and kept Sunday as a holiday as required by God.

He was known never to swear or curse except the govt. He prayed and cheated and he used religion as a cloak for his dishonesty. The city of London, as a reward for his hatred for the King, selected him the sheriff of the city of London. He would carry a staff or wand in his hand as the symbol of his office.. He did not consider treason a crime and the wicked had a happy time during his tenure. He loved his wicked neighbour as much as himself. If people cursed the King, he would join them in cursing the King. If anybody dared to curse his republican friends, he would fix up for his trial a jury consisting of dis-satisfied people in his opinion. He was of the opinion that abstinence would help him refine his wit. He was also a frugal man, his enemies may call him miserly but ironically such frugality was necessary to save the English from the wrath of God. He was not in the favour of feasts for feasts are sinful. The only food which his servants got was spiritual food; He respected the law given by Moses who had fasted for forty days of the month.

#### **Lines (630-690)**

Would tire a well-breath'd witness of the plot: Yet, Corah, thou shalt from oblivion pass; Erect  
thyself thou monumental brass:

High as the serpent of thy metal made, While nations stand secure beneath thy shade. What  
though his birth were base, yet comets rise  
From earthy vapours e'er they shine in skies.

Prodigious actions may as well be done By weaver's issue, as by prince's son.  
This arch-attestor, for the public good, 640

By that one deed ennobles all his blood.

Who ever ask'd the witnesses' high race, Whose oath with martyrdom did Stephen grace?

Ours was a Levite, and as times went then, His tribe were God-almighty's gentlemen.  
Sunk were his eyes, his voice was harsh and loud, Sure signs he neither choleric was, nor  
proud: His long chin prov'd his wit; his saint-like grace  
A church vermilion, and a Moses' face. His memory, miraculously great, 650

Could plots exceeding man's belief, repeat; Which therefore cannot be accounted lies, For  
human wit could never such devise. Some future truths are mingled in his book;  
But, where the witness fail'd, the Prophet spoke: Some things like visionary flights appear;  
The spirit caught him up, the Lord knows where: And gave him his rabbinical degree,  
Unknown to foreign university.  
His judgment yet his mem'ry did excel: 660

Which piec'd his wondrous evidence so well: And suited to the temper of the times; Then  
groaning under Jebusitic crimes.  
Let Israel's foes suspect his Heav'nly call, And rashly judge his writ apocryphal;

Our laws for such affronts have forfeits made: He takes his life, who takes away his trade.  
Were I myself in witness Corah's place,  
The wretch who did me such a dire disgrace, Should whet my memory, though once forgot,  
670

To make him an appendix of my plot.  
His zeal to Heav'n made him his prince despise, And load his person with indignities:  
But Zeal peculiar privilege affords, Indulging latitude to deeds and words. And Corah might for  
Agag's murder call, In terms as coarse as Samuel us'd to Saul.  
What others in his evidence did join, (The best that could be had for love or coin,)  
In Corah's own predicament will fall: 680

For Witness is a common name to all.  
Surrounded thus with friends of every sort, Deluded Absalom forsakes the court: Impatient of  
high hopes, urg'd with renown, And fir'd with near possession of a crown: Th' admiring crowd  
are dazzled with surprise, And on his goodly person feed their eyes:  
His joy conceal'd, he sets himself to show; On each side bowing popularly low:  
His looks, his gestures, and his words he frames, 690

The poet further points out that he would like to make him immortal by his description so that nobody should become a traitor like him. Such persons are curses for the nation. He was of mean birth and rose high in life as comets rise upward to the sky from the earth. Though he was the son of a weaver, yet he had a good image of the King and the heart of people. This quality of Corah is sufficient to ennoble his blood. This Corah, who witnessed for one good, was the clergy of the Church of England. So because of this he was considered a very responsible person at that time. He was a man with eyes sunk in their sockets and his voice very harsh and loud. He had a wide chin giving indication thereby that he was a wise man and a man of intelligence. His memory was so sharp and wonderfully strong that he could repeat plots which were simply amazing. He prophesied the future with his will that it was the result of divine inspiration. He possessed a keen sense of judgement better than his memory. That it suited perfectly the temper of the people, who were groaning under the oppression of the Jebusites.

His religious enthusiasm made him hate his King and keep insults of all sorts on his sacred head but the religious seal confers special privileges on them and so their words and deeds must be taken leniently.

#### **Lines (690-730)**

And with familiar ease repeats their names. Thus, form'd by Nature, furnish'd out with arts, He  
glides unfelt into their secret hearts:  
Then, with a kind compassionating look, And sighs, bespeaking pity e'er he spoke: Few words  
he said; but easy those and fit:

More slow than Hybla drops, and far more sweet.  
I mourn, my country-men, your lost estate; Though far unable to prevent your fate:  
Behold a banish'd man, for your dear cause 700

Expos'd a prey to arbitrary laws!  
Yet oh! that I alone could be undone, Cut off from empire, and no more a son! Now all your  
liberties a spoil are made; Egypt and Tyrus intercept your trade, And Jebusites your sacred rites  
invade.

My father, whom with reverence yet I name,  
Charm'd into ease, is careless of his fame: And, brib'd with petty sums of foreign gold, Is  
grown in Bathsheba's embraces old: 710

Exalts his enemies, his friends destroys:  
And all his pow'r against himself employs. He gives, and let him give my right away:  
But why should he his own, and yours betray?  
He, only he can make the nation bleed, And he alone from my revenge is freed.  
Take then my tears (with that he wip'd his eyes) 'Tis all the aid my present pow'r supplies: No  
court-informer can these arms accuse;  
These arms may sons against their fathers use; 720

And, 'tis my wish, the next successor's reign May make no other Israelite complain.  
Youth, beauty, graceful action, seldom fail: But common interest always will prevail: And pity  
never ceases to be shown

To him, who makes the people's wrongs his own. The crowd, (that still believe their kings  
oppress,) With lifted hands their young Messiah bless: Who now begins his progress to ordain;  
With chariots, horsemen, and a num'rous train: 730

The misguided Absalom left the court in the company of his friends. He was intoxicated by the hope of getting name and fame. The crowd admired him and had all appreciation for his wonderful personality. Moreover, his words, gestures, looks and actions were so framed as to win their hearts and good-will. He was a young man of charming personality and manners and now he unconsciously moved into the hearts of the people. Sometimes he sighed sympathetically for them and spoke to the people in a kind and pitying voice. So they loved him and admired him and his words, to their ears, were sweeter than honey. He had been ruled by arbitrary laws; his only fault was that he had championed their cause. It was the plight of the people and their rights and liberties that were being taken away and that was too much for him to hear. He lamented the passive role of his father that neighbouring countries were taking undue advantage of the present situation prevailing in the country. France and Holland were interfering with their trade and the Catholics were attacking their religion. His father had grown careless of his name and fame. He is accepting petty sums from foreign countries and was leading a life of luxury with the Duchess of Portsmouth, his mistress. He made his people suffer, lifted up his enemies and had become his own worst enemy. Since blood relations



between father and son do not allow sons to take up arms against father to take revenge, at present the only help he could give them was the help of 'tears' (saying this, he wiped his face and tears).

**Lines (730-810)**

From East to West his glories he displays: And, like the sun, the Promis'd Land surveys. Fame runs before him, as the Morning-Star; And shouts of joy salute him from afar: Each house receives him as a guardian God; And consecrates the place of his abode: But hospitable treats did most commend Wise Issachar, his wealthy western friend. This moving court, that caught the people's eyes, And seem'd but pomp, did other ends disguise: 740

Achitophel had form'd it, with intent  
To sound the depths, and fathom where it went, The people's hearts; distinguish friends from foes; And try their strength, before they came to blows.  
Yet all was colour'd with a smooth pretence Of specious love, and duty to their prince.  
Religion, and redress of grievances,  
Two names, that always cheat and always please, Are often urg'd; and good King David's life Endanger'd by a brother and a wife. 750

Thus, in a pageant show, a plot is made; And peace itself is war in masquerade. Oh foolish Israel! never warn'd by ill: Still the same bait, and circumvented still!  
Did ever men forsake their present ease, In midst of health imagine a disease;  
Take pains contingent mischiefs to foresee, Make heirs for monarchs, and for God decree?  
What shall we think! Can people give away  
Both for themselves and sons, their native sway? 760

Then they are left defenceless to the sword Of each unbounded arbitrary lord:  
And laws are vain, by which we right enjoy, If kings unquestion'd can those laws destroy. Yet, if the crowd be judge of fit and just, And kings are only officers in trust,  
Then this resuming cov'nant was declar'd When Kings were made, or is for ever bar'd: If those who gave the sceptre could not tie By their own deed their own posterity, 770  
How then could Adam bind his future race? How could his forfeit on mankind take place? Or how could heavenly justice damn us all, Who ne'er consented to our father's fall?  
Then kings are slaves to those whom they command, And tenants to their people's pleasure stand.  
Add, that the pow'r for property allow'd, Is mischievously seated in the crowd:  
For who can be secure of private right,  
If sovereign sway may be dissolv'd by might? 780

Nor is the people's judgment always true: The most may err as grossly as the few.  
And faultless kings run down, by common cry, For vice, oppression and for tyranny.  
What standard is there in a fickle rout, Which, flowing to the mark, runs faster out? Nor only crowds, but Sanhedrins may be Infected with this public lunacy:  
And share the madness of rebellious times, To murder monarchs for imagin'd crimes. 790

If they may give and take whene'er they please, Not kings alone, (the godhead's images,) But

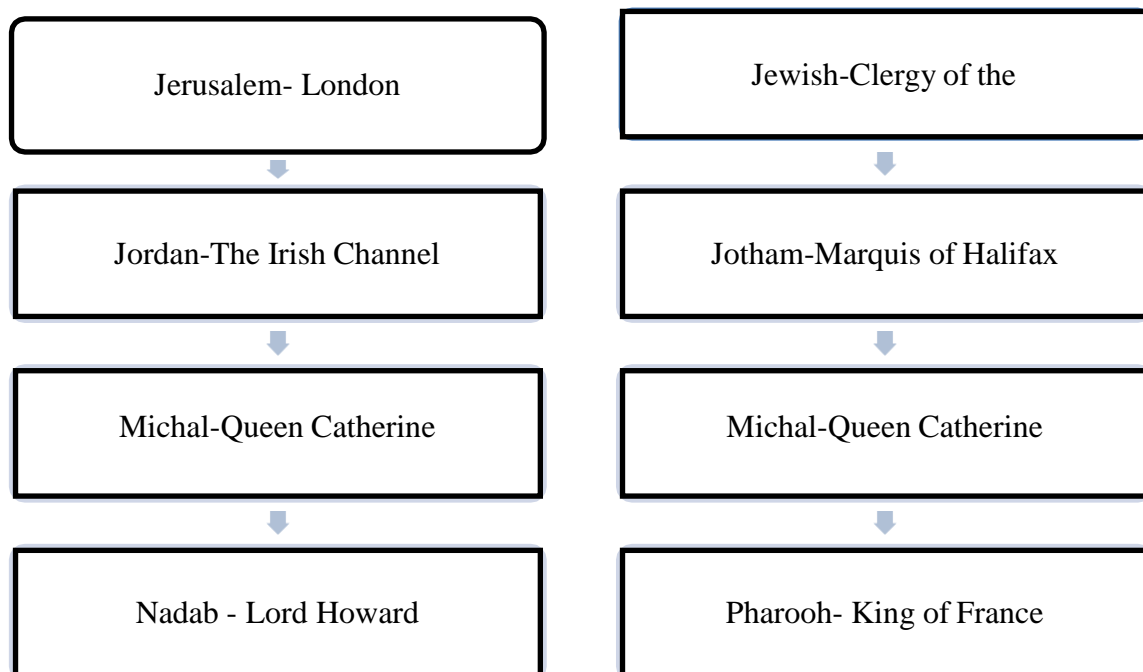
government itself at length must fall  
To nature's state, where all have right to all. Yet, grant our lords the people kings can make,  
What prudent men a settled throne would shake?  
For whatsoever their sufferings were before, That change they covet makes them suffer more.  
All other errors but disturb a state; But innovation is the blow of fate. 800

If ancient fabrics nod, and threat to fall, To patch the flaws, and buttress up the wall,  
Thus far 'tis duty; but here fix the mark:  
For all beyond it is to touch our Ark.  
To change foundations, cast the frame anew, Is work for rebels who base ends pursue: At once  
divine and human laws control; And mend the parts by ruin of the whole.  
The tamp'ring world is subject to this curse, To physic their disease into a worse. 810

Monmouth had youth, beauty and graceful manners. The crowds, who always believe that they are oppressed by their kings, are always ready to welcome with open arms anybody who poses before them as their saviour. He also toured the whole country from east to west in all his glory. He was looking glorious like the sun and he felt very proud to think of the land he was going to be ruler. He was considered a saviour by everybody wherever he went. But one person named Issachar (Thomas Thynne), his wealthy western friend, was more hospitable than anybody else. Achitophel had planned all this, with a view to ascertaining the wishes of the people and to fathom depth of their love for them and to judge who were their friends and who were their enemies. So they concealed their intentions and pretended love and duty to the King. So they were very concerned about this issue. Thus under the cover of peaceful precession, a cunning plot was hidden. War was masquerading as peace. The poet regrets the sad fate of the English nation which was always outwitted in the same way. It is said that the ultimate forever rests with the people and they have no right to make it hereditary and thus pass on to their sons and daughters. If it continues, the people will always be at the mercy of despotic kings and rulers. So people have every right to oppose their kings when they grow despotic and interfere with their rights. It is also said that these were also times when there was no monarch, no subject and all were equal. But there was no law and order and no safety. So the people entered into sacred contact with the kings, thereby transferring their right of governance to the rulers. The poet cites the example of Adam. For his fault, his progeny has to suffer. Just as Adam's progeny is bound by the acts of ancestors and has to suffer for them, so also the people are bound by the decision of their fathers who entrusted the supreme authority to the kings. We return to the earlier state of nature where 'might is right' is governing our conduct and actions. It results in lawlessness. People's judgement is not always correct. Mob mentality may prove more harmful and destructive. The judgement of a fickle mob or crowd cannot be trusted. Its

enthusiasm is short lived and soon exhausts itself. If the people get the right to take away the authority which they have given to the kings, who is the image of God, then there will be no govt and men would revert to the state of nature. If the government fails, there is civil war. The people would have to suffer more than they suffer under despotic rule. If some ancient building begins to and is about to fall, it is repaired and not destroyed. Similarly, if there are some faults in the king, there should be some remedial measures but there should be no revolt. So revolutions only make matters worse.

### Minor Character



### Lines (810-910)

Now what relief can righteous David bring?  
 How fatal 'tis to be too good a king!  
 Friends he has few, so high the madness grows; Who dare be such, must be the people's foes:  
 Yet some there were, ev'n in the worst of days; Some let me name, and naming is to praise.  
 In this short file Barzillai first appears; Barzillai crown'd with honour and with years: Long  
 since, the rising rebels he withstood  
 In regions waste, beyond the Jordan's flood: 820

Unfortunately brave to buoy the state; But sinking underneath his master's fate:  
 In exile with his god-like prince he mourn'd: For him he suffer'd, and with him return'd. The  
 court he practis'd, not the courtier's art: Large was his wealth, but larger was his heart:  
 Which well the noblest objects knew to choose, The fighting warrior, and recording Muse.  
 His bed could once a fruitful issue boast: Now more than half a father's name is lost. 830

His eldest hope, with every grace adorn'd, By me (so Heav'n will have it) always mourn'd,  
And always honour'd, snatch'd in manhood's prime  
B' unequal Fates, and Providence's crime: Yet not before the goal of honour won, All parts  
fulfill'd, of subject and of son;  
Swift was the race, but short the time to run.  
Oh narrow circle, but of pow'r divine, Scanted in space, but perfect in thy line!  
By sea, by land, thy matchless worth was known; 840

Arms thy delight, and war was all thy own: Thy force infus'd, the fainting Tyrians propp'd: And  
haughty Pharaoh found his fortune stopp'd.  
Oh ancient honour, Oh unconquer'd Hand, Whom foes unpunish'd never could withstand!  
But Israel was unworthy of thy name: Short is the date of all immoderate fame. It looks as  
Heav'n our ruin had design'd,  
And durst not trust thy fortune and thy mind.  
Now, free from earth, thy disencumber'd Soul 850

Mounts up, and leaves behind the clouds and starry pole: From thence thy kindred legions  
may'st thou bring,  
To aid the Guardian Angel of thy king.  
Here stop my Muse, here cease thy painful flight; No pinions can pursue immortal height:  
Tell good Barzillai thou canst sing no more, And tell thy soul she should have fled before; Or  
fled she with his life, and left this verse To hang on her departed patron's hearse?  
Now take thy steepy flight from Heav'n, and see 860

If thou canst find on earth another he; Another he would be too hard to find,  
See then whom thou canst see not far behind.  
Zadoc the priest whom, shunning, pow'r and place, His lowly mind advanc'd to David's grace:  
With him the Sagan of Jerusalem, Of hospitable soul and noble stem;  
Him of the western dome, whose weighty sense Flows in fit words and heavenly eloquence.  
The Prophet's sons by such example led, 870

To learning and to loyalty were bred: For colleges on bounteous kings depend, And never rebel  
was to arts a friend.  
To these succeed the pillars of the laws, Who best could plead, and best can judge a cause.  
Next them a train of loyal peers ascend: Sharp judging Adriel, the Muse's friend, Himself a  
Muse:—in Sanhedrin's debate True to his prince; but not a slave of state.  
Whom David's love with honours did adorn, 880

That from his disobedient son were torn.  
Jotham of piercing wit and pregnant thought, Endow'd by Nature, and by learning taught To  
move assemblies, who but only tri'd  
The worse awhile, then chose the better side; Nor chose alone, but turn'd the balance too; So  
much the weight of one brave man can do.  
Hushai, the friend of David in distress, In public storms of manly steadfastness;  
By foreign treaties he inform'd his youth; 890

And join'd experience to his native truth. His frugal care suppli'd the wanting throne; Frugal for  
that, but bounteous of his own: 'Tis easy conduct when exchequers flow; But hard the task to  
manage well the low: For sovereign power is too depress'd or high,

When kings are forc'd to sell, or crowds to buy.  
Indulge one labour more, my weary Muse, For Amiel, who can Amiel's praise refuse? Of  
ancient race by birth, but nobler yet 900

In his own worth, and without title great: The Sanhedrin long time as chief he rul'd, Their  
reason guided, and their passion cool'd; So dext'rous was he in the crown's defence, So form'd  
to speak a loyal nation's sense, That as their band was Israel's tribes in small, So fit was he to  
represent them all.

Now rasher charioteers the seat ascend, Whose loose careers his steady skill commend:  
They, like th' unequal ruler of the day, 910

David was a just David had only a few friends and whosoever became intimate with him was considered an enemy of the country. Now the poet names those who supported the King. Among the group of supporters was one leading personality named Barzillai, Duke of Ormand. He was old and honoured. He tried to sustain and strengthen the state but could not do much. He went into exile with his prince, suffered with him and returned with him when he was restored to the throne. He was a man of right judgement and rewarded those who deserved it. So he rewarded the warrior and the poet. His eldest son was snatched away from him in the prime of his life. He was reputed for his worth over land and sea. By his courage, he inspired the Dutch and stopped the advances of haughty France. He was a man of remarkable quality. England was not good enough for him. Now, his soul freed from the body, has risen high above the clouds and stars. The poet tells Barzillai that he can sing no more. He also regrets that he didn't die before such a noble son and warrior. In reality, the poet's soul also departed from his body with his death and has left behind this noble poem to be hung on his coffin. With these words, the poet looks for another person like him but he could find and decides to describe who comes next.

Zodac (William Suncroft) the Arch-Bishop of Canterbury was the next. He was modest and retiring. With him came Sagan of Jerusalem (Henry Compton), Bishop of London. He was hospitable and belonged to a noble family. There was also John Dolbem, Dean of Westminster, who fired the boys of Westminster. Then there was a group of peers loyal to the King.

Among this group was Adriel (John Sheffield Earl of Musgrave) who was a shrewd judge of human nature. He was himself a poet. David loved him and decorated him with titles and offices. There was also Jothams (Marquis of Halifax) he was intelligent and wise. He could move parliament with his eloquence. He also opposed the Exclusion Bill so very ably that it was defeated in the House of Lords. Then there was Hushai (Lawrence of Hyde, Earl of

Rochester) who was a friend of David in his troubles and bravely faced all storms of opposition. As Lord Treasurer, he helped David when he faced financial problems. He managed the state affairs with a great economy. Last of all, came Amial(Edward Seymor) , speaker of the House of Commons. He belonged to a noble and ancient family. He remained the speaker of the House of Commons for a long time. He defended the King very skilfully; Now his place has been taken by thoughtless and rash people and his skill and moderation shows all the higher by contrast. Edward Seymoor now smiles from his retirement at their incompetency.

## Lines (910-1030)

Misguide the seasons and mistake the way; While he withdrawn at their mad labour smiles,  
And safe enjoys the sabbath of his toils.

These were the chief; a small but faithful band Of worthies, in the breach who dar'd to stand,  
And tempt th'united fury of the land.

With grief they view'd such powerful engines bent, To batter down the lawful government.  
A numerous faction with pretended frights, In Sanhedrins to plume the regal rights. 920

The true successor from the court remov'd:

The plot, by hiring witnesses, improv'd. These ills they saw, and as their duty bound, They show'd the king the danger of the wound:

That no concessions from the throne would please; But lenitives fomented the disease:

That Absalom, ambitious of the crown, Was made the lure to draw the people down:

That false Achitophel's pernicious hate, Had turn'd the plot to ruin church and state: 930

The Council violent, the rabble worse: That Shimei taught Jerusalem to curse. With all these loads of injuries oppress, And long revolving in his careful breast Th'event of things; at last his patience tir'd,

Thus from his royal throne, by Heav'n inspir'd, The god-like David spoke; and awful fear His  
train their Maker in their Master hear.

Thus long have I by native mercy sway'd, My wrongs dissembl'd, my revenge delay'd: 940

So willing to forgive th'offending age; So much the father did the king assuage. But now so far  
my clemency they slight, Th' offenders question my forgiving right. That one was made for  
many, they contend: But 'tis to rule, for that's a monarch's end. They call my tenderness of  
blood, my fear: Though manly tempers can the longest bear. Yet, since they will divert my  
native course,

'Tis time to shew I am not good by force. 950

Those heap'd affronts that haughty subjects bring, Are burdens for a camel, not a king:  
Kings are the public pillars of the state, Born to sustain and prop the nation's weight: If my  
young Sampson will pretend a call

To shake the column, let him share the fall: But oh that yet he would repent and live!

How easy 'tis for parents to forgive!

With how few tears a pardon might be won From Nature, pleading for a darling son! 960

Poor pitied youth, by my paternal care, Rais'd up to all the heights his frame could bear:  
Had God ordain'd his fate for empire born, He would have giv'n his soul another turn:  
Gull'd with a patriot's name, whose modern sense Is one that would by law supplant his prince:  
The people's brave, the politician's tool;  
Never was patriot yet, but was a fool.  
Whence comes it that religion and the laws Should more be Absalom's than David's cause? 970

His old instructor, e'er he lost his place, Was never thought endued with so much grace. Good  
heav'ns, how faction can a patriot paint!  
My rebel ever proves my people's saint; Would they impose an heir upon the throne? Let  
Sanhedrins be taught to give their own.  
A king's at least a part of government; And mine as requisite as their consent: Without my  
leave a future king to choose, Infers a right the present to depose; 980

True, they petition me t'approve their choice: But Esau's hands suit ill with Jacob's voice.  
My pious subjects for my safety pray, Which to secure they take my pow'r away.  
From plots and treasons Heav'n preserve my years But save me most from my petitioners.  
Unsatiated as the barren womb or grave; God cannot grant so much as they can crave.  
What then is left but with a jealous eye To guard the small remains of royalty? 990

The law shall still direct my peaceful sway, And the same law teach rebels to obey: Votes shall  
no more establish'd pow'r control, Such votes as make a part exceed the whole:  
No groundless clamours shall my friends remove, Nor crowds have pow'r to punish ere they  
prove: For gods, and god-like kings their care express, Still to defend their servants in distress.  
Oh that my pow'r to saving were confin'd:  
Why am I forc'd, like Heav'n, against my mind, 1000

To make examples of another kind?  
Must I at length the sword of justice draw?  
Oh curst effects of necessary law!  
How ill my fear they by my mercy scan, Beware the fury of a patient man.  
Law they require, let law then show her face; They could not be content to look on grace, Her  
hinder parts, but with a daring eye  
To tempt the terror of her front, and die.  
By their own arts 'tis righteously decreed, 1010

Those dire artificers of death shall bleed.  
Against themselves their witnesses will swear,  
Till viper-like their mother plot they tear: And suck for nutriment that bloody gore Which was  
their principle of life before. Their Belial with the Belzebub will fight; Thus on my foes, my  
foes shall do me right:  
Nor doubt th'event: for factious crowds engage In their first onset, all their brutal rage;  
Then, let 'em take an unresisted course: 1020

Retire and traverse, and delude their force: But when they stand all breathless, urge the fight,  
And rise upon 'em with redoubled might: For lawful pow'r is still superior found,  
When long driv'n back, at length it stands the ground.  
He said. Th' Almighty, nodding, gave consent; And peals of thunder shook the firmament.  
Henceforth a series of new time began,

The mighty years in long procession ran: Once more the god-like David was restor'd,  
And willing nations knew their lawful lord. 1030

This small group remained loyal to him even in times of danger and firmly faced the anger of the people. In the parliament, the King's opponents tried to pluck royal rights from him. It also tried to exclude the lawful successor to the throne and it tried to prove the plot to be true by bribing witnesses. David's friends noticed all this. They told him that the concession he may give to opposition could not mend matters, rather it would have a reverse reaction. Absalom's role also came in for criticism. The clever, cunning and wicked Shaftsbury was using him as a tool against the King. Council was violent, the crowd was worse and Shimei was teaching the people of London to curse their monarch. However, his patience was exhausted and he did not want to remain silent. Inspired by god, he spoke at last and his courtiers listened to him with awe. He had postponed his revengeful policy and had been guided by mercy and fatherly kindness. His cup of patience was full. His subjects had lightly treated his kindness and had even questioned his right to forgive. They misinterpreted his lenient attitude as a sign of weakness. Now it was time to show that a mild attitude was not the result of any fear or pressure. The subjects should not insult their King in this way. The kings are the pillars of the state who strengthen and uplift the nation and bear many burdens for the common good. If young Samson(Monmouth) has decided to shake the throne, let him bear the consequences of his folly. Monmouth has been misguided and so is more to be pitied than abhorred but he has been deceived and made a tool by cunning politicians. David does not disregard old Shaftesbury, who has now become Absalom's Guide. Now that he has revolted, he has become the patriot and a saint all at once. In this matter, his consent is as essential as that of parliament. He lamented that they are ever dissatisfied. Even God cannot grant them as much as they desire. He would be guided by law and use that law to teach his subjects their duty. The power of the monarch is not subject to the whim of the majority. A King is God-like and it is his duty to protect those who serve him. He regrets that he has been compelled, much against his will, to draw the sword of justice. He is a patient man and -the fury of the patient man should be feared. They had so far enjoyed his mercy, now they could taste his justice, which could be terrible and overwhelming. In this way, he will have revenge upon his enemies. His victory is certain. He would allow rebels a free hand in the beginning till their power is exhausted and annihilate them. It should be remembered that lawful power is always superior when it takes up arms and faces its enemies.



## **A Quick Revision**

**Que-** Briefly describe the Jebusites and their Plot Or

The Polish Plot in Absalom and Achitophel.

**Ans-** The Jebusites (Catholics) were oppressed in various ways by the chosen people (Protestants). Their lands were taken away from them. They faced numerous difficulties. Then they tried to convert the Protestants. Such were the circumstances which led to the Popish Plot. This plot was affirmed on oath by Titus Gates and others, and it was denied on oath by the Catholics. It was even said that the Jebusites wanted to murder the king.

**Que-** How does Dryden portray the commoners (the English people).

**Ans-** Dryden describes the common people as restless, ungrateful and easily swayed. They are shown to be fickle-minded. Dryden calls the Commons the "rascal rabble", who are never content with what they have. In short, Dryden portrays the English people as "headstrong, moody and murmuring race". They demanded unlimited freedom and changed their principles, restlessly. Dryden gives a detailed description of hypocrisy, seditious talk, prejudiced juries, plotting all the tricks employed by the King's enemies.

**Que-** How does Dryden's poem 'Absalom and Achitophel' reflect the profligacy of the court at that time?

**Ans-** Dryden's age was an age of profligacy, corruption and indecency. The king was a rake. Dryden speaks of the time when polygamy was not a sin and when one to one was not "cursedly confined". The king had a number of mistresses. He had a number of illegitimate children. The most popular of these illegitimate children, and the king's favourite was the Duke of Monmouth, whose charm and grace have been realistically sketched in this poem.

**Que-** How does Achitophel tempt Absalom?

**Ans-** Achitophel was a cunning person. He wanted a suitable leader to work as his tool, and none was as suitable as Absalom. In order to win, his favour flattered him. He told him that there was the opportunity for him to become the popular leader of the masses. He told Absalom that the people wanted their liberty and rights and they needed a suitable leader. Absalom was much impressed by this appeal to his vanity. Achitophel told him that he should not waste his talents. In this way Achitophel tempted and won him to his side.

**Que-** Dryden was one of the greatest craftsmen in English. Do you agree?

### **Ans- Remarkable and noteworthy contribution**

English poetry was all brick before Dryden and with him became a marble. The English language before Dryden was having a number of flaws and imperfections, which in the hands of some of his predecessors had gone to the level of coarseness, but he put new life and vigour in it.

### **Improvement upon circumlocution and a roundabout way of expression**

Dryden improved upon its way of circumlocution to avoid low words and use of pseudo-classic poetic diction and frequent use of Latinism as well. In dealing with serious matters, no common words are used and the message is conveyed in a roundabout way or the expression of the sense of one word in many words. If used sparingly, personifications impart force and concentration, but should not be carried to an excess. So Dryden was half-conscious of it and avoided too much use of it.

### **Latinism imparted dignity to Dryden's language**

Dryden's diction is a frequent use of Latinism.

### **Use of French words and expressions**

To impart more dignity to the language, he has frequently allowed himself the use of French words and expressions thereby enriched its vocabulary.

### **New vigour and expressiveness to the language**

The other remarkable feature of the poetic diction of Dryden is conciseness or terseness of the lines. So Dryden is known for his epigrammatic style as well. In the words of Dryden he traded both in the dead and the living for the enrichment of his own language. "His purpose was not pedantic but to naturalise suitable words and phrases from classical authors.

### **Dryden made English language secure against gross imperfections**

Directness and simplicity is the other notable quality and characteristic of his language which made his poetry popular. These lines are the example of his simplicity and directness:

"Not that he wished his greatness to create For politicians neither love nor hate."

His frequent use of colloquialism makes him the most idiomatic of English writers. Dryden transformed the English language as well as concept of English poetry beyond recognition He

may not have attained the range of Pope, but did it in a remarkable way.

**Que-** Write an essay on Dryden as a representative poet?

**Ans- Dryden-emphatically of his times**

It is true that Dryden was the child of his age who best represented the spirit of the age in his works. He points out there are four things that are notable in his poetry and other writings. "Tendency to vulgar realism, a general formalism, the development of a simple and more direct prose style and prevalence of the heroic couplet in poetry." These are the main characteristics and tendencies of Restoration literature. These are all exemplified in the works of one man, John Dryden.

**Social and political tendencies**

Dryden was the representative poet of the age. His works represent the social, political and religious tendencies of contemporary life. 'Annus Mirabilis', reveals the great happenings of the year 1666 and gives a vivid account of the great fire of London and the great plague which caused a lot of disturbance in the life of the nation. Similarly, Absalom and Achitophel in particular hold a mirror to the life of the times.

Dryden shows this tendency through his chief and main character, the King Charles II, who was debauched and loved wine and women. He refers to this tendency of the age thus:

"When nature prompted and no law denied  
Promiscuous use of concubine and bride."

The King had illegitimate children and no rightful heir to the throne; it resulted in bitter controversy which shook the whole nation. It is also the subject and main theme of the satire in "Absalom and Achitophel."

**Reflection of religions and political controversies**

Next, we find the reflection of religious and political controversies. The political issue was the succession of a legal and rightful heir to the throne. The whole nation was divided in two parties on this issue. This originated the two political parties, the Whigs and the Tories. These two political parties played key roles and dominated English political life for the next hundred years or so.

**Political and religious controversies - their impact**

Dryden's masterpiece "Absalom and Achitophel" also mirrors the religious controversies of the

day. The Catholics and the Protestants did not know the true meaning and value of course existence, tolerance, mutual understanding and non-interference in the matter of faith and became the bitter enemies of one another. Religious passions ran to new heights and it was feared that the vicious atmosphere created by political and religious controversies may not engulf the whole nation in civil war and ruin the state or damage it irreparably.

### **Dryden - a representative in respect of the rise of satire**

The political and religious strife, the party spirit, the influence of the classics and the French language and culture, all contributed to the rise of satire in the restoration era.

### **Dryden represents the spirit of the age**

It was an age of re-action against the excesses of the Elizabethans and the Metaphysical as well as against the unnatural restraints of the Puritan regime. Dryden's works represent all these tendencies, events and characteristics realistically as the true facts of history.

### **No twisting and falsification of historical facts**

Dryden presented a true picture of the time. There is no invention and falsification of any kind.

## **1.3 Check Your Progress**

**Que-1** Comment on Dryden's use of history in Absalom and Achitophel?

**Que-2** Write a critical note on Absalom and Achitophel as a satirical allegory dealing with contemporary politics?

**Que-3** Write a critical note on Absalom and Achitophel as biblical allegory?

**Que-4** Write a brief character-sketch of David?

## **1.4 SUMMARY**

- **King David as A Successful King**
- King David of Israel (England) was a successful king. But he was very sexy. He kept a number of mistresses. He had many illegitimate children. His favorite legitimate child was Absalom (Duke of Monmouth). Absalom enjoyed people's love. He was a great soldier. He was blind to his faults.
- **Attitude of the Jews (Englishmen)**
- The Jews were very strong. They did not like King David. They thought that they

were empowered to throw the king out of power.

- King David was very kind and gentle. The rebels conspired against the King. Their plot against the King was called the Popish Plot.

- **Nature of the Popish Plot**

- The Jesuits (Catholics) had to face many difficulties. Their taxes were doubled. As a result, they made an effort to convert many people to the Roman Catholic faith. There was a strong rumour that the Catholics made a plot to destroy the parliament and kill the King and other important dignitaries. Corah (Titus Oates) and his friends said that the plot did exist. As a result of this plot, many people started opposing the government.

- **Achitophel (The Earl of Shaftesbury)**

- Achitophel (The Earl of Shaftesbury) was an enemy of the King. As a politician, he was corrupt and mean. However, as a judge he was honest. He exploited the Popish plot for inciting others to raise their voice against the King. He became the champion of the common man and their rights.

- **His First Speech**

- Achitophel thought that Absalom could be used to achieve his aim. Achitophel gave many reasons to justify his aim in his first speech. He said that people liked Absalom. They would regard him as their saviour. He told Absalom that he should not be afraid of the King. Absalom, according to Achitophel, had royal blood. So, he was the right person to succeed the King.

- **Absalom's Response**

- Achitophel's arguments had a powerful impact on Absalom's mind. He did not want to betray his father. His father was deeply in love with him. Moreover, the King's brother James (Duke of York) had been nominated by the King as his successor. He was intelligent and fair-minded. Absalom wanted to be the king but he decided not to fight against his father.

- **Achitophel's Second Speech**

- Achitophel noticed that Absalom was reluctant. He told Absalom that the King's goodness reflected his weakness. People did not want to be ruled by a weak man. Even the parliament did not provide enough funds to the king. People disliked James who was a Roman Catholic. He further argued that people had a right to change the law of succession. Achitophel told Absalom that the King did not love Absalom. He also told that the King was afraid of his own brother. If Absalom led the revolt, the King might also welcome his revolt. In this way,

Achitophel succeeded in his attempt to win over Absalom.

- **Zimri (Duke of Buckingham), Shimei (The Sheriff of London) and Corah (Titus Oates)**

- Dryden goes on to describe some important members of the group. Zimri was a very important member of the anti-royalist group. He was a great introvert. He tried to raise the banner of revolt against the King but could not succeed. Shimei was also an enemy of the King. He was totally opposed to the King. He also practiced fraud and deceit to earn money. Corah was a wicked fellow. He was the father of the Popish plot. He affirmed it on oath.

- **Absalom's Propaganda Tour**

- Absalom toured the country in order to convince people. He told the people that he was aware of their difficulties. People assured him of their support. They told him he was their saviour. This tour was undertaken by Achitophel and Absalom in order to judge their chances of victory against the king.

- **Achitophel's move to Misguide People**

- The anti-King group led by Achitophel misguided the people of Israel (England). People were told that the King was only a trustee. The real power lay with the people. They had a right to take over and throw the king. People were misguided by these arguments. People, in fact, had no legal right to revolt against the King. It would amount to a civil war. But as luck would have it, the Israelites (Englishmen) gave full support to the anti-King group.

- **The Royalist Camp**

King David had only a few supporters. His supporters included Barzillai (Duke of Ormond), Zadock (The Archbishop of Canterbury). Sagan of Jerusalem (The Bishop of London) and John Dolben (Dean of Westminster). They advised the King that he should take a firm stand.

- **Speech of King David (Charles II)**

- King David was satisfied with his loyal supporters. He told the people that he treated his subjects in the same way as a father would treat his children. He told them that he was fully aware of his rights. The Parliament had no right to impose any restriction on him. He declared that he would deal with the rebels according to the law. The enthusiasm of the mob ceased to exist. God heard his speech and blessed him. The revolt was crushed. The King's dignity was restored.

## 1.5 Keywords

- Abbethdin - Lord Chancellor
- Absalom - Duke of Monmouth
- Achitophel - Earl of Shaftesbury
- Annabel - Duchess of Monmouth
- Barzillai - Duke of Ormond
- Jebusites - Papists
- Jerusalem - London
- Jewish - Clergy of the
- Jordan - The Irish Channel
- Jotham - Marquis of Halifax
- Michal - Queen Catherine
- Nadab - Lord Howard
- Pharooch - King of France
- David - King Charles II
- Egypt - France
- Hebrew Priests – Church of England
- Hebron - Scotland
- Sanhedrin - Parliament
- Solymeane - The London
- Tyre - Holland
- Western - Dolben of West
- Zimri - Duke of Buckingham

## 1.6 Self-Assessment Test

**Que-** Write a critical note on the social and political background used by Dryden in Absalom and Achitophel?

**Que-** Discuss Absalom and Achitophel as a satire against the English people in general?

**Que-** Explain the Absalom and Achitophel as an allegorical satire?

**Que-** Explain the biblical basis of the poem?

## 1.7 Answer to check your progress

**Ans-1** Dryden is considered to be a very excellent observer of reality. After the restoration in 1660, the political situation in England took a sharp turn. Charles II had become the King of England. The Tories were by his side. But the Whigs did not accept the authority of the King. They wanted to strengthen the Parliament. Another important political question was the problem of succession. Charles II had many illegitimate children. But he had no legal heir. He nominated his brother James, Duke of York as his successor. The Whigs strongly opposed it. They wanted his illegitimate son, The Duke of Monmouth to be the next King; there was a controversy on this issue. The Parliament passed a bill that James could not become the King as he was a Roman-Catholic. The Earl of Shaftesbury incited the Duke of Monmouth to revolt against the King. Dryden was commissioned by the King to compose a poem in support of the King. The Earl of Shaftesbury was put behind the bars. He was waiting for his trial. Dryden's purpose was to create a public opinion against Shaftesbury. However, the Earl of Shaftesbury was released after the trial.

### **Dryden's Poem as an Expression of the Age**

Dryden's poem *Absalom and Achitophel* is an expression of the historical and political situation of the age. Dryden says that the common man has no right to question the established order of society. The poet categorically says that people have no right to overthrow the King:

For who can be secure of private Right,

If Sovereign sway may be dissolved by might?

It is a fact that the poet is on the side of the King. After reading the poem, one can know the authentic history of the age.

### **Depiction of Important Personages**

*Absalom and Achitophel* have been rightly regarded as a portrait gallery- Dryden has depicted the important personalities. The main characters described in the poem can be divided into two groups: those who support the King and those who oppose the King. Dryden's treatment of the King is very accurate. His description of David who stands for Charles II is very interesting. Dryden describes this quality of the King without any reservation. Many facts about Charles II are given through the speeches of Achitophel and Absalom. For example, the Parliament did not give enough money to the King. So, he was short of funds.



The thrifty Sanhedrin shall keep him poor; And every shekel which he can receive Shall cost him a limb of his prerogative.

Moreover, the King's speech at the end of the poem is also authentic.

### **Portraits of Achitophel and Absalom**

The poet exposes his intriguing nature in bitter words. The Earl of Shaftesbury is depicted as a man fit for "close designs". He is described as a man who "in friendship is falsely implacable in hate". However, the emphasis falls on his evil nature. His portrait corresponds to historical reality. The Earl of Shaftesbury was a cunning, reckless and shrewd politician in real life.

The portrait of Absalom (The Duke of Monmouth) is also true to historical facts. The poet describes him as a graceful, charming and beautiful person. He has affable manners.

### **Portraits of Corah, Zimri and Shimei**

Corah (Titus Oates) is the father of the Popish plot. He is described in a language which is highly devastating. He was a villain. He was a liar. Dryden presents him as a false witness and terrible conspirator. The Popish plot, in fact, did not exist.

Zimri is fond of women, drink and all other immoral deeds. The well-known historian Macaulay says that Dryden's depiction of Zimri is authentic. The portrait of Shimei (Slingsby Bethel) represents the strict puritan point of view. He was money minded. He was a staunch supporter of the Whigs.

### **Depiction of corruption in the Royal Court**

Dryden describes how corrupt practices were prevalent in the royal court. The restoration of monarchy in England was a sharp reaction against strict puritanism. It was an age of profligacy and sexual liberty. Dryden gives us a true picture of the age:

When nature prompted and now law denied  
Promiscuous use of concubine and bride

### **The Popish Plot and Religious Controversies**

The age of Dryden was full of religious controversies. It is true that the King had sympathies for the Catholics. But they were treated in a shabby manner. Their taxes were doubled. The puritans were against the Catholics. The poet rightly satirises Protestant priests and Roman-Catholic priests. As a result, Roman-Catholics were punished. Dryden describes the religious and political atmosphere of the age with the eye of a shrewd observer.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, it is clear that Absalom and Achitophel hold a mirror to contemporary society. The poet has not distorted any historical fact. He has portrayed the vulgarity of the age without any hesitation. It is a fine piece of work of art. It reflects the true spirit of the age of Restoration.

**Ans-2** According to Dryden, the aim of satire is "the amendment of vices by correction". Absalom and Achitophel have always been regarded as a fine satire. This poem contains a powerful political satire presented in a new heroic idiom.

## **Role of Political Situation**

Dryden drew his inspiration from the contemporary political situation. King Charles II asked Dryden to write a poem about the political scenario in England. In 1681, a conflict arose between the supporters of the King and his opponents. His opponents did not want James, Duke of York to become the King after King Charles II. His opponents wanted his illegitimate son, Duke of Monmouth to be the future King of England. On the other hand, Tories supported the cause of James because he was nominated by the King himself. The opponents of the King were led by the Earl of Shaftesbury. The Earl of Shaftesbury was arrested on a charge of high treason. It was at this time that Absalom and Achitophel was published to influence Shaftesbury's trial.

## **Satiric Portraits**

Absalom and Achitophel have plenty of satiric portraits. The portrait of Achitophel (The Earl of Shaftesbury) is quite impressive. He has been portrayed as a dangerous rebel. The Earl of Shaftesbury has been presented as a living embodiment of evil - "for close designs and crooked councils fit? While describing Shaftesbury's son, the poet called him "that untethered, two-legged thing, born a shapeless lump, like anarchy".

The description of Zimri (The Duke of Buckingham) is a fine example of "fine raillery". He is described as "chemist, fiddler, statesman and buffoon". He is portrayed as a "blest mad man who possesses a restless mind". "He is a living picture of folly, instability and wasteful energy.

The description of Shimei (Slingsby Bethel) is presented in a satiric mode. He possesses wisdom, zeal and piety. He is a living embodiment of avarice. Dryden sarcastically points out

that he was the most suitable Sheriff of the town who had once experienced the destruction of fire, because he had no courage to light his kitchen fire.

The description of Corah (Titus Oates) is presented in terms of contemptible language. He is insolent. His vanity is reflected when he is described as a "monumental brass". Corah had the ability to manufacture fantastic plots. They were used to spread anarchy in the society. He was fond of telling fantastic lies. There is no redeeming quality in his character.

The description of Absalom (The Duke of Monmouth) is presented in a mild language. . He was ambitious. He was always in a hurry to convert his ambition into reality. The poet presents him ironically:

What cannot praise effect in mighty minds? When flattery soothes and when ambition blinds?

Achitophel, Dryden used very powerful words. The Earl of Shaftesbury has been presented as a living embodiment of evil -"for close designs and crooked councils fit? While describing Shaftesbury's son, the poet called him "that untethered, two-legged thing, born a shapeless lump, like anarchy".

The description of Zimri (The Duke of Buckingham) is a fine example of "fine raillery". He is described as "chemist, fiddler, statesman and buffoon". He is portrayed as a "blest mad man who possesses a restless mind". "Ten thousand freaks died" in his thinking. He is a living picture of folly, instability and wasteful energy. He is a bundle of contradictions.

The description of Shimei (Slingsby Bethel) is presented in a satiric mode. He possesses wisdom, zeal and piety. But the inequalities are used in the pursuit of blasphemy, contempt and deceit. He is a living embodiment of avarice. Dryden sarcastically points out that he was the most suitable Sheriff of the town who had once experienced the destruction of fire, because he had no courage to light his kitchen fire. His corrupt practices are highlighted to show that the opponents of the King were highly immoral.

The description of Corah (Titus Oates) is presented in terms of contemptible language. He is insolent. His vanity is reflected when he is described as a "monumental brass". The poet exposes his false and corrupt practices in a language informed by irony and sarcasm. Corah had the ability to manufacture fantastic plots. These plots had no real basis. They were used to spread anarchy in the society. He was fond of telling fantastic lies. There is no redeeming quality in his character.

The description of Absalom (The Duke of Monmouth) is presented in a mild language. He was

ambitious. He was always in a hurry to convert his ambition into reality. The poet presents him ironically:

What cannot praise effect in mighty minds? When flattery soothes and when ambition blinds?

### **Choice of Biblical Allegory**

Dryden has presented his political satire through the famous biblical story. The poet is not only a lampooner. He has creatively used the biblical allegory to highlight the subtle nuances of contemporary political situations. It provided the poet a wonderful medium to satirize the King's opponents and praise the King.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, it becomes clear that *Absalom and Achitophel* is a wonderful political satire full of irony and sarcasm. Each character is brilliantly portrayed. Many passages of the poem are rhetorical triumphs. The whole poem is a consummate example of a great political satire.

**Ans-3** Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* is a remarkable allegorical satire. As a great satirist, Dryden used allegory - a literary device - in order to couch contemporary events in artistic terms. The poet drew inspiration from two English allegorical poems that are *Naboth's Vineyard* and *The Progress of Honesty*.

### **The Nature of the Contemporary Subject**

The contemporary subject before Dryden's creative imagination was the crisis generated by the opponents of King Charles II. Charles II had many illegal issues. However, he had no legal child. Towards the end of 1681, the Earl of Shaftesbury was arrested on account of high treason. He was put on trial. At this time, Dryden was asked probably by the King himself to compose a poem in order to counter the attack of the Whigs. Dryden wrote a narrative poem describing the events. However, he used the form of biblical allegory.

### **Advantages of Using Allegory**

The satirist in Dryden saw many advantages of using allegory. Everybody knew that David stood for Charles II, Achitophel stood for Shaftesbury, Absalom stood for Duke of Monmouth. The Biblical names established the link between what has happened in the past and what was happening now. Another advantage of the use of allegory was that Dryden had a free hand in describing the prominent qualities of his characters. This literary device provided a golden opportunity to the poet to highlight the corruption of politicians, moral degradation, abuse of

freedom and the plight of the common man in British society.

### **Difference Between the Biblical Story and Dryden's Allegory**

The story of Absalom ends with his death. Dryden did not use it in his poem as it differed from the actual political situation. Dryden knew that it was impossible to follow the Bible exactly and present the contemporary political situation in a new heroic idiom. Like an epic or a heroic play, this poem represents "nature wrought up to a higher pitch".

### **Use of Biblical Allusions**

Use of Biblical allusions gave a wonderful opportunity to the poet to present a realistic and satirical picture of all important historical personages. The device of allegory also gave a sharp edge to the satirical portraits. Without degrading the scriptures, the poet was able to parody the scriptures.

### **Conclusion**

In short, Dryden's use of the Bible gave him an opportunity to contemporary situations in the way he liked. He was able to present sexual relations in a charitable light. It lent an air of authenticity to various descriptions. The use of it gave it the structure of a consummate work of art.

**Ans-4** David is the alter ego of Charles II. The principle of the people called him "divine right of kings" in the term "godlike David." The elevation of David to a godlike state reconciles the discontinuity of the course of the poem. The continuous references to "god" in David's final declamation give the impression of one impervious to attacks by moral man.

## **1.8 References/ Suggested Readings**

- Robinson, K.E. "A Reading of 'Absalom and Achitophel'." *The Yearbook of English Studies* 6 (1976): 53-62
- Davies, Godfrey. The Conclusion of Dryden's "Absalom and Achitophel" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1946): 69-82.

<b>Subject : English</b>	
<b>Course Code : MA 102</b>	<b>Author : Dr. Pallavi</b>
<b>Lesson No. : 02</b>	<b>Vetter</b>
<b>The Rape of the Lock</b>	<b>By Alexander Pope</b>

## **2.0 Learning Objectives**

### **2.1 Introductions-About the Poem**

### **2.2 Main Body of the Text**

### **2.3 Further Main Body of the Text**

### **2.4 Check your progress**

### **2.5 Summary**

### **2.6 Keywords**

### **2.7 Self-Assessment Test**

### **2.8 Answers to check your Progress**

### **2.9 References/ Suggested Readings**

## **2.0 Learning Objectives**

- The student will learn about Pope and examine how he used satire, Cantos and heroic couplets.
- To understand the moral that love is too short, pay attention to what actually matters, don't steam yourself up over trivia.
- To familiarize with the life and works of Alexander Pope.
- To analyze the content and themes of the prescribed fragment.

## **2.1 About the poet**

### **ALEXANDER POPE-LIFE AND WORKS**

#### **Life**

Alexander Pope was born in London on 21 May, 1688. His parents were Roman Catholic. At the age of 12, he had a severe illness. As a result, he became a cripple. Thereafter, he didn't attend any school. He was practically self-educated. He had a good knowledge of Latin and a working knowledge of Greek. By 1704, he had written a lot of verse which attracted the attention of the famous writer Wycherley. He introduced the Pope to town-life and to other literary figures. The publication of his translation of Iliad and Odyssey brought him enough money to give him a position of independence. He led an active social life. He was a hunchback. He was tormented with head-aches and other diseases. He loved Martha Blount all his life but in vain. He had extreme vanity and sensitiveness to criticism. This made him revengeful, unjust and cruel. This resulted in frequent quarrels and loss of friends. On the other hand, he was often generous. He retained the friendship of men like Swift and Arbuthnot. He was a most dutiful and affectionate son. He died at the age of 56.

#### **Works**

Pope's first published work was the Pastorals (1709). It brought him praise from Wycherley and Addison. His Essay on Criticism (1711) was hardly an original work. In 1712, Pope wrote The Rape of the Lock in two cantos and republished it in 1714 after revising and expanding it into five cantos. He also wrote some short poems including Eloisa to Abelard and Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady. His translations of Iliad and Odyssey (1715-1720) were quite popular and brought him a lot of money. Dunciad, a satire on poor writing, was published in 1728 in three books. His Essay on Man (1733-34) is more than a mere versification of Bolingbroke's philosophy. His Moral Essays (1731-35) were imitations directed against the follies of polite society, corruption in politics, and false values, especially in arts and poetry.

#### **Evaluation as a Poet**

Pope's career as a poet has been marked with controversy. Matthew Arnold, in the 19th century, rejected the Pope's claim to being considered a poet. But Johnson's defence still is the best: "If the Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found?" He lacks the qualities of

imagination, sympathy, insight and pathos. His poetry reveals good sense, balance, precision

in the use of heroic couplet. In the forging of condensed, pointed and sparkling maxims of life and criticism, he has no equal.

## **SOURCES OF THE RAPE OF THE LOCK**

### **Based on a Real incident**

Lord Peter had cut off a lock of Arabella Fermor's hair. This has resulted in a quarrel between the two families. The poem was intended to make a joke of the whole affair so as to bring them married together again. The Carylls, Petres and Fermors were prominent intermarried Roman Catholic families. The Pope considered his own family a part of it. But it is possible that it took place at Hampton Court as suggested by Pope in his poem.

### **About The Poem**

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE RAPE OF THE LOCK**

The Rape of the Lock published in 1714 in its complete form is a mock- heroic poem which satirises the fashionable society of the 18th century. Around this trivial incident Pope wove an elaborate story cast in the epic form. Instead of gods and goddesses of the epic he introduces sylphs, gnomes, and other elemental spirits akin to those of A Midsummer Night's Dream. The fashions and foibles of polite society -are satirised with a most delicate and lively fancy. Pope was an imitative genius. Dr. Johnson described it as "the most airy, the most ingenious and the most delightful of all Pope's compositions".

### **Characters in the Poem**

1. **Belinda-** Belinda is the most famous character in Pope's poetry. She is a bundle of contradictions. She is the goddess of beauty and charm. Through her character, Pope describes the flippancy and depravity of the English society of the eighteenth century.
2. **Baron-** The Baron in The Rape of the Lock is counterpart of Belinda. He is the "adventurous Baron", a "bold lord, with manly strength indu'd". The pursuit of the lock involves the Baron in a "lover's toil". His aims are to kiss and tell, "on his foe to die," and to boast of the exploit. Defeated in the game of cards, he cuts Belinda's lock but is again humbled by her when she uses her bodkin and a charge of snuff. His portrait is an exaggerated



3. **Sir Plume-** Sir Plume is a minor character. He is rather a typical dandy. He is asked by Thalestris to demand the return of the lock. The Baron sarcastically comments on Sir Plume's fine by speech and refuses to return the lock. He is taken off by a frown but revived by Chloe's triumphant smile.

4. **Thalestris-** Thalestris serves to act as Belinda's wrathful (full of anger) mind. She asks if all the hard work Belinda had gone through in order to maintain her beauty has been in vain. She insists on the return of the curl so that it doesn't become an object of curiosity for the vulgar. Reputation is more important for her than even virtue.

5. **Clarissa-** Clarissa, in a parody of the assistance in arming knights for battle by "ladies of romance", presents the Baron a little pair of scissors with which he cuts Belinda's lock. But she is better known for her speech advocating good sense and virtue. She points out that glories of beauty are short-lived unless complimented for their virtues as well as for their pretty faces. Her speech bears the moral that the Pope offers to frivolous and fashionable ladies.

6. **Ariel-** Ariel tells her that she is protected by thousands of sylphs who roam airy regions. He assigns special duties to sylphs to protect and guard Belinda. He leaves Belinda when he finds her busy in thoughts of an earthly lover. He calls Belinda "The fairest of mortals" and advises her to realise her importance.

## 2.2 Main Body of the Text-THE RAPE OF THE LOCK

### PARAPHRASE OF THE TEXT

#### The Rape of the Lock: Canto 1

BY ALEXANDER POPE

Nolueram, Belinda, tuos violare capillos; Sed juvat, hoc precibus me tribuisse tuis. (*Martial, Epigrams 12.84*)

What dire offence from am'rous causes springs, What mighty contests rise from trivial things,  
I sing—This verse to Caryl, Muse! is due: This, ev'n Belinda may vouchsafe to view: Slight is  
the subject, but not so the praise, If she inspire, and he approve my lays.

Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel A well-bred lord t' assault a gentle belle?  
O say what stranger cause, yet unexplor'd, Could make a gentle belle reject a lord? In tasks so  
bold, can little men engage,

And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage?

Sol thro' white curtains shot a tim'rous ray, And op'd those eyes that must eclipse the day;  
Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake, And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake:  
Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knock'd the ground, And the press'd watch return'd a silver  
sound.

Belinda still her downy pillow press'd, Her guardian sylph prolong'd the balmy rest:  
'Twas he had summon'd to her silent bed The morning dream that hover'd o'er her head; A  
youth more glitt'ring than a birthnight beau, (That ev'n in slumber caus'd her cheek to glow)  
Seem'd to her ear his winning lips to lay, And thus in whispers said, or seem'd to say.

"Fairest of mortals, thou distinguish'd care Of thousand bright inhabitants of air!  
If e'er one vision touch'd thy infant thought, Of all the nurse and all the priest have taught, Of  
airy elves by moonlight shadows seen, The silver token, and the circled green,  
Or virgins visited by angel pow'rs,  
With golden crowns and wreaths of heav'nly flow'rs, Hear and believe! thy own importance  
know, Nor bound thy narrow views to things below.  
Some secret truths from learned pride conceal'd, To maids alone and children are reveal'd:

What tho' no credit doubting wits may give?

The fair and innocent shall still believe.

Know then, unnumber'd spirits round thee fly, The light militia of the lower sky;  
These, though unseen, are ever on the wing, Hang o'er the box, and hover round the Ring.  
Think what an equipage thou hast in air, And view with scorn two pages and a chair. As now  
your own, our beings were of old,  
And once inclos'd in woman's beauteous mould; Thence, by a soft transition, we repair From  
earthly vehicles to these of air.  
Think not, when woman's transient breath is fled, That all her vanities at once are dead;  
Succeeding vanities she still regards,  
And tho' she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards.

Her joy in gilded chariots, when alive, And love of ombre, after death survive. For when the  
fair in all their pride expire, To their first elements their souls retire: The sprites of fiery  
termagants in flame Mount up, and take a Salamander's name. Soft yielding minds to water  
glide away, And sip with Nymphs, their elemental tea.

The graver prude sinks downward to a Gnome, In search of mischief still on earth to roam.

The light coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,  
And sport and flutter in the fields of air.

Know further yet; whoever fair and chaste Rejects mankind, is by some sylph embrac'd: For  
spirits, freed from mortal laws, with ease Assume what sexes and what shapes they please.

What guards the purity of melting maids,  
In courtly balls, and midnight masquerades, Safe from the treach'rous friend, the daring spark,  
The glance by day, the whisper in the dark, When kind occasion prompts their warm desires,  
When music softens, and when dancing fires? 'Tis but their sylph, the wise celestials know,  
Though honour is the word with men below.

Some nymphs there are, too conscious of their face, For life predestin'd to the gnomes'  
embrace.

These swell their prospects and exalt their pride, When offers are disdain'd, and love denied:

Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,  
While peers, and dukes, and all their sweeping train, And garters, stars, and coronets appear,  
And in soft sounds 'Your Grace' salutes their ear. 'Tis these that early taint the female soul,  
Instruct the eyes of young coquettes to roll, Teach infant cheeks a bidden blush to know, And  
little hearts to flutter at a beau.

Oft, when the world imagine women stray, The Sylphs through mystic mazes guide their way,  
Thro' all the giddy circle they pursue, And old impertinence expel by new. What tender maid  
but must a victim fall To one man's treat, but for another's ball?

When Florio speaks, what virgin could withstand, If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand?  
With varying vanities, from ev'ry part, They shift the moving toyshop of their heart;

Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive, Beaux banish beaux, and  
coaches coaches drive.

This erring mortals levity may call,  
Oh blind to truth! the Sylphs contrive it all.

Of these am I, who thy protection claim, A watchful sprite, and Ariel is my name. Late, as I  
rang'd the crystal wilds of air, In the clear mirror of thy ruling star  
I saw, alas! some dread event impend, Ere to the main this morning sun descend,

But Heav'n reveals not what, or how, or where: Warn'd by the Sylph, oh pious maid, beware!  
This to disclose is all thy guardian can. Beware of all, but most beware of man!"

He said; when Shock, who thought she slept too long, Leap'd up, and wak'd his mistress with  
his tongue. 'Twas then, Belinda, if report say true,  
Thy eyes first open'd on a billet-doux; Wounds, charms, and ardors were no sooner read,  
But all the vision vanish'd from thy head.

And now, unveil'd, the toilet stands display'd, Each silver vase in mystic order laid.  
First, rob'd in white, the nymph intent adores With head uncover'd, the cosmetic pow'rs.  
A heav'nly image in the glass appears, To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;  
Th' inferior priestess, at her altar's side, Trembling, begins the sacred rites of pride.  
Unnumber'd treasures ope at once, and here The various off'rings of the world appear; From  
each she nicely culls with curious toil, And decks the goddess with the glitt'ring spoil.  
This casket India's glowing gems unlocks, And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.  
The tortoise here and elephant unite, Transform'd to combs, the speckled and the white.  
Here files of pins extend their shining rows, Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet-doux.  
Now awful beauty puts on all its arms; The fair each moment rises in her charms, Repairs her  
smiles, awakens ev'ry grace, And calls forth all the wonders of her face; Sees by degrees a  
purer blush arise,  
And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes. The busy Sylphs surround their darling care; These  
set the head, and those divide the hair,  
Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown; And Betty's prais'd for labours not her  
own.

## CANTO-1

Lines 1-6: O Muse! This verse is due to a suggestion from Caryl and even Belinda will support this contention. Though the subject is trivial, I am sure the poem will be praised.

Lines 7-12: O Muse! Please tell me what would cause a well-bred Lord to assault (physically attack) a gentle lady. Only small men can act in such a violent manner. How can such a powerful feeling of anger live in the soft heart of gentle and noble hope?

Lines 13-26: The sun opens her dazzling eyes that outshine the brightness of the day. Lap dogs are now up. Belinda still dozes on even when she was rung for her maid thrice. The clock has struck twelve. Her sleep was prolonged by the sylph that caused a dream. He appeared in the form of a handsome young man. He whispered to her a warning.

Lines 27-66: O fairest of mortals! Thousands of spirits are protecting you. They must have told you about silver tokens and green magic circles. You must hear and believe all this. You must know your own importance. You must not be bound by your narrow views of this world. You should know that a large number of spirits fly around you. They are the sylphs, the “light Militia of the lower sky”. They are unseen but they are always in the air. They fly around the fashionable carriage while driving in Hyde Park. We, sylphs were once beautiful women like

you. We have been transformed into sylphs. We cannot play cards but we enjoy watching the game. Our joy of riding in a bright chariot and playing Ombre, when beautiful women die in all the pride, their souls retire to their first elements. The spirits of noisy, quarrelsome women, like Salamander, are capable of living in fire. Those women who were serious prudes in their life turn into underground spirits and still wander on earth in search of mischief. Those women who were light coquettes in their life move high up in the air.

Lines 67-68: A beautiful and chaste woman who rejects men is embraced by some sylphs. They can easily assume whatever sex and shape they like. It is the sylphs alone who guard the plenty of virgins who are likely to yield their virtue in the romantic atmosphere of dance, midnight masques. The secret of protection by sylphs is known to wise heavenly figures but the men of the world.

Lines 79-90: There are some young and beautiful ladies who are too proud of their beauty and therefore reject the offers of love and treat men with contempt. Such ladies are destined to be embraced by none else except the underground spirits. The women who are thoughtless are overwhelmed by ideas of physical pleasure and are swept off their feet by lords and Dukes who flatter them. These temptations generally corrupt the young, immature ladies which make them coquettes, teach them to blush.

Lines 91-104: It is actually the sylphs who guide them through intricate paths that they follow. Sylphs protect women who otherwise fall victim to the threat given by a man. Women, with their vanities, shift their affection from one to the other as handsome young men with their wigs, sword-knots, and coaches contend with each other for their love.

Lines 105-120: Of these sylphs, I, Ariel, am one. I am very watchful, I saw an omen that some horrible event is about to take place before the sun-set. O pure virgin! you must be careful. Your guardian sylph can disclose only this much. You must be careful. At this, her lap dog Shock, who thought she had slept for a long time, jumped and lapped her cheek with his tongue to awaken her. It was that Belinda, according to the received information, opened her eyes. As a result you forgot everything about your dream and the warning.

Lines 121-148: Now Belinda's dressing table is uncovered. Belinda, in white robes, with uncovered head, devotedly worships her beauty aids. Near the altar (dressing table), the inferior priestess (maid) stands and trembling with awe of the goddess (reflection of Belinda in the mirror) begins the sacred rites of worship. From each silver vase, the maid, with strange labour, takes out the cosmetics and adds to the bright beauty of the goddess. There are combs

made of tortoise shells and ivory combs. Now the natural beauty is magnified by the beauty-aids and every moment this beauty is increased. Her smiles improve, her graces are revived and her face becomes wonderfully beautiful. The sylphs are busy in increasing this beauty. They set her hair, divide it, fold her sleeves, plait her gown and Betty is praised for the work actually done by the sylphs.

### **The Rape of the Lock: Canto 2**

**BY ALEXANDER POPE**

Not with more glories, in th' etherial plain, The sun first rises o'er the purpled main, Than,  
issuing forth, the rival of his beams Launch'd on the bosom of the silver Thames.  
Fair nymphs, and well-dress'd youths around her shone, But ev'ry eye was fix'd on her alone.  
On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore, Which Jews might kiss, and infidels adore.  
Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose, Quick as her eyes, and as unfix'd as those: Favours  
to none, to all she smiles extends; Oft she rejects, but never once offends.  
Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike, And, like the sun, they shine on all alike.  
Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride, Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to  
hide: If to her share some female errors fall,  
Look on her face, and you'll forget 'em all.

This nymph, to the destruction of mankind, Nourish'd two locks, which graceful hung behind  
In equal curls, and well conspir'd to deck

With shining ringlets the smooth iv'ry neck. Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains, And  
mighty hearts are held in slender chains.

With hairy springes we the birds betray,

Slight lines of hair surprise the finney prey, Fair tresses man's imperial race ensnare, And  
beauty draws us with a single hair.

Th' advent'rous baron the bright locks admir'd; He saw, he wish'd, and to the prize aspir'd.

Resolv'd to win, he meditates the way,

By force to ravish, or by fraud betray; For when success a lover's toil attends,

Few ask, if fraud or force attain'd his ends.

For this, ere Phoebus rose, he had implor'd Propitious Heav'n, and ev'ry pow'r ador'd, But  
chiefly love—to love an altar built,

Of twelve vast French romances, neatly gilt. There lay three garters, half a pair of gloves; And

all the trophies of his former loves; With tender billet-doux he lights the pyre,

And breathes three am'rous sighs to raise the fire. Then prostrate falls, and begs with ardent

eyes Soon to obtain, and long possess the prize:

The pow'rs gave ear, and granted half his pray'r, The rest, the winds dispers'd in empty air.

But now secure the painted vessel glides, The sun-beams trembling on the floating tides,

While melting music steals upon the sky, And soften'd sounds along the waters die.

Smooth flow the waves, the zephyrs gently play, Belinda smil'd, and all the world was gay.

All but the Sylph—with careful thoughts oppress'd, Th' impending woe sat heavy on his breast.

He summons strait his denizens of air; The lucid squadrons round the sails repair:

Soft o'er the shrouds aerial whispers breathe, That seem'd but zephyrs to the train beneath.

Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold, Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold.

Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight, Their fluid bodies half dissolv'd in light, Loose

to the wind their airy garments flew, Thin glitt'ring textures of the filmy dew; Dipp'd in the

richest tincture of the skies, Where light disports in ever-mingling dyes, While ev'ry beam

new transient colours flings,

Colours that change whene'er they wave their wings.

Amid the circle, on the gilded mast, Superior by the head, was Ariel plac'd; His purple pinions

op'ning to the sun,

He rais'd his azure wand, and thus begun.

"Ye Sylphs and Sylphids, to your chief give ear! Fays, Fairies, Genii, Elves, and Dæmons,  
hear! Ye know the spheres and various tasks assign'd By laws eternal to th' aerial kind.

Some in the fields of purest æther play, And bask and whiten in the blaze of day.  
Some guide the course of wand'ring orbs on high, Or roll the planets through the boundless  
sky.

Some less refin'd, beneath the moon's pale light Pursue the stars that shoot athwart the night,  
Or suck the mists in grosser air below,  
Or dip their pinions in the painted bow, Or brew fierce tempests on the wintry main,  
Or o'er the glebe distil the kindly rain. Others on earth o'er human race preside,  
Watch all their ways, and all their actions guide: Of these the chief the care of nations own,  
And guard with arms divine the British throne.

"Our humbler province is to tend the fair, Not a less pleasing, though less glorious care.  
To save the powder from too rude a gale, Nor let th' imprison'd essences exhale,  
To draw fresh colours from the vernal flow'rs, To steal from rainbows e'er they drop in  
show'rs A brighter wash; to curl their waving hairs, Assist their blushes, and inspire their airs;  
Nay oft, in dreams, invention we bestow, To change a flounce, or add a furbelow.

"This day, black omens threat the brightest fair That e'er deserv'd a watchful spirit's care;  
Some dire disaster, or by force, or slight,  
But what, or where, the fates have wrapt in night.  
Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law, Or some frail china jar receive a flaw;  
Or stain her honour, or her new brocade, Forget her pray'rs, or miss a masquerade; Or lose her  
heart, or necklace, at a ball;  
Or whether Heav'n has doom'd that Shock must fall.  
Haste, then, ye spirits! to your charge repair: The flutt'ring fan be Zephyretta's care; The drops  
to thee, Brillante, we consign; And, Momentilla, let the watch be thine;  
Do thou, Crispissa, tend her fav'rite lock; Ariel himself shall be the guard of Shock.

"To fifty chosen Sylphs, of special note, We trust th' important charge, the petticoat:  
Oft have we known that sev'n-fold fence to fail, Though stiff with hoops, and arm'd with ribs  
of whale.



Form a strong line about the silver bound, And guard the wide circumference around.

"Whatever spirit, careless of his charge, His post neglects, or leaves the fair at large,  
Shall feel sharp vengeance soon o'ertake his sins, Be stopp'd in vials, or transfix'd with pins;  
Or plung'd in lakes of bitter washes lie, Or wedg'd whole ages in a bodkin's eye:  
Gums and pomatums shall his flight restrain, While clogg'd he beats his silken wings in vain;  
Or alum styptics with contracting pow'r  
Shrink his thin essence like a rivell'd flow'r.  
Or, as Ixion fix'd, the wretch shall feel The giddy motion of the whirling mill,  
In fumes of burning chocolate shall glow, And tremble at the sea that froths below!"

He spoke; the spirits from the sails descend; Some, orb in orb, around the nymph extend, Some  
thrid the mazy ringlets of her hair, Some hang upon the pendants of her ear; With beating  
hearts the dire event they wait, Anxious, and trembling for the birth of fate

## CANTO-II

Lines 1-18: Belinda rises to move in a boat on the silvery Thames (river). She was wearing a bright cross on her breast which might be kissed by even Jews and worshipped by the Unbelievers of beauty. She doesn't fix her eyes on anyone. She favours none. She often rejects the suitors but without offending them.

Lines 19-28: This beautiful lady had two locks of hair that could "destroy" the whole world. These locks hung behind gracefully in equal curls. The birds are trapped in hairy springs and the fish are caught in lines thin like hair and similarly proud men are imprisoned and captivated by the beautiful locks.

Lines 29-34: There was an adventurous Baron in the boat. He admired the bright locks of Belinda. He wished to possess these locks. With this desire, he thought of a way to acquire those locks through force or fraud.

Lines 35-47: To achieve this purpose, he had appealed to heaven and worshipped every power, particularly the God of love. He lights the pyre with a soft love letter and breathes three sighs of love to raise fire. The divine powers listened to his appeal and granted half of his prayer and the rest was dispersed in the air.

Lines 47-72: The bright boat was gently sailing on the river. The waves flow smoothly. Only the sylph Ariel was worried because of his knowledge of the impending disaster. He summoned his fellow sylphs and their transparent squadrons moved around the boat to protect her. Some sylph opens up their wings to the light of the sun. These sylphs were transparent. Their airy clothes flew freely because of the soft wind. They appeared in the bright colours of the sky. Every sun ray threw up a new colour when it passed through the transparent sylphs. In the circle of these sylphs, He raised his blue wand and began to speak.

Lines 73-90: Oh Sylphs and Sylphids! Listen to your chief. Pay attention to your chief. You are bound by the laws that govern the spirits. Some of you play in outer space. Some guide the movements of the planets or trace shooting stars in the limitless sky. Some blow horrible storms and others allow gentle rain to fall. Most important among them are entrusted with the direction of nations and protect with weapons the British Empire,

Lines 91-100: Ariel and his companion sylphs are entrusted with the humble task of guarding the women. They save women's powder when a strong wind blows and prevent the perfumes from evaporating. They curl the waving hair of women, promote blushes and inspire changes in the design of dresses by suggestions made in dreams glorious with flowers.

Line 101-116: Belinda is the brightest beauty. She needs protection from spirits. She may lose her chastity or one of her China jars may be flawed. She might forget her prayers, or miss a masque. There could be a worse disaster that shock might be harmed, Therefore, O spirits, and take charge of your duties quickly.

Lines 117-122: Fifty chosen sylphs were ordered to protect the petticoat. It is no doubt stiffened with hoops and bound with whalebone. So the sylphs will form a strong line of defence.

Lines 123-136: Whatever spirit is careless of his charge, neglects his sun post, leaves his work, will be soon punished for his negligence. Powers of flight will be curbed since his wings will be an-clogged with gums and partum. He will beat his silken wings in vain. Alum may shrink his airy form like a shriveled flower.

Lines 137-142: He spoke thus and the spirits came down from the sails of the boat to their assigned tasks. They waited for the impending disaster, feverishly excited and worried.

### The Rape of the Lock: Canto 3

BY ALEXANDER POPE

Close by those meads, for ever crown'd with flow'rs, Where Thames with pride surveys his  
rising tow'rs, There stands a structure of majestic frame,  
Which from the neighb'ring Hampton takes its name.  
Here Britain's statesmen oft the fall foredoom Of foreign tyrants and of nymphs at home;  
Here thou, great Anna! whom three realms obey, Dost sometimes counsel take—and  
sometimes tea.

Hither the heroes and the nymphs resort, To taste awhile the pleasures of a court;  
In various talk th' instructive hours they pass'd, Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last; One  
speaks the glory of the British queen,  
And one describes a charming Indian screen; A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes; At  
ev'ry word a reputation dies.

Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat, With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that.  
Meanwhile, declining from the noon of day, The sun obliquely shoots his burning ray; The  
hungry judges soon the sentence sign, And wretches hang that jury-men may dine;  
The merchant from th' Exchange returns in peace, And the long labours of the toilet cease.  
Belinda now, whom thirst of fame invites, Burns to encounter two adventurous knights, At  
ombre singly to decide their doom;  
And swells her breast with conquests yet to come. Straight the three bands prepare in arms to  
join, Each band the number of the sacred nine.

Soon as she spreads her hand, th' aerial guard Descend, and sit on each important card: First  
Ariel perch'd upon a Matadore,  
Then each, according to the rank they bore; For Sylphs, yet mindful of their ancient race, Are,  
as when women, wondrous fond of place.

Behold, four Kings in majesty rever'd, With hoary whiskers and a forky beard;  
And four fair Queens whose hands sustain a flow'r, Th' expressive emblem of their softer  
pow'r; Four Knaves in garbs succinct, a trusty band, Caps on their heads, and halberds in their  
hand;  
And parti-colour'd troops, a shining train, Draw forth to combat on the velvet plain.

The skilful nymph reviews her force with care: "Let Spades be trumps!" she said, and trumps they were.

Now move to war her sable Matadores, In show like leaders of the swarthy Moors.

Spadillio first, unconquerable lord!

Led off two captive trumps, and swept the board.

As many more Manillio forc'd to yield, And march'd a victor from the verdant field. Him

Basto follow'd, but his fate more hard Gain'd but one trump and one plebeian card. With his broad sabre next, a chief in years,

The hoary Majesty of Spades appears; Puts forth one manly leg, to sight reveal'd; The rest, his many-colour'd robe conceal'd.

The rebel Knave, who dares his prince engage, Proves the just victim of his royal rage.

Ev'n mighty Pam, that kings and queens o'erthrew And mow'd down armies in the fights of loo,

Sad chance of war! now destitute of aid, Falls undistinguish'd by the victor Spade!

Thus far both armies to Belinda yield; Now to the baron fate inclines the field. His warlike Amazon her host invades,

Th' imperial consort of the crown of Spades. The Club's black tyrant first her victim died,

Spite of his haughty mien, and barb'rous pride: What boots the regal circle on his head, His giant limbs, in state unwieldy spread; That long behind he trails his pompous robe, And of all monarchs, only grasps the globe?

The baron now his diamonds pours apace;

Th' embroider'd King who shows but half his face, And his refulgent Queen, with pow'rs combin'd Of broken troops an easy conquest find.

Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, in wild disorder seen, With throngs promiscuous strow the level green.

Thus when dispers'd a routed army runs, Of Asia's troops, and Afric's sable sons, With like confusion diff'rent nations fly, Of various habit, and of various dye, The pierc'd battalions disunited fall.

In heaps on heaps; one fate o'erwhelms them all.

The Knave of Diamonds tries his wily arts,

And wins (oh shameful chance!) the Queen of Hearts.  
 At this, the blood the virgin's cheek forsook, A livid paleness spreads o'er all her look; She  
 sees, and trembles at th' approaching ill, Just in the jaws of ruin, and codille.  
 And now (as oft in some distemper'd state) On one nice trick depends the gen'ral fate.  
 An Ace of Hearts steps forth: The King unseen Lurk'd in her hand, and mourn'd his captive  
 Queen: He springs to vengeance with an eager pace,  
 And falls like thunder on the prostrate Ace. The nymph exulting fills with shouts the sky; The  
 walls, the woods, and long canals reply.

Oh thoughtless mortals! ever blind to fate, Too soon dejected, and too soon elate!  
 Sudden, these honours shall be snatch'd away, And curs'd for ever this victorious day.

For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crown'd, The berries crackle, and the mill turns  
 round.

On shining altars of Japan they raise The silver lamp; the fiery spirits blaze.  
 From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide, While China's earth receives the smoking tide.  
 At once they gratify their scent and taste, And frequent cups prolong the rich repast.  
 Straight hover round the fair her airy band; Some, as she sipp'd, the fuming liquor fann'd,  
 Some o'er her lap their careful plumes display'd, Trembling, and conscious of the rich brocade.  
 Coffee, (which makes the politician wise, And see through all things with his half-shut eyes)  
 Sent up in vapours to the baron's brain New stratagems, the radiant lock to gain. Ah cease,  
 rash youth! desist ere 'tis too late, Fear the just gods, and think of Scylla's fate!  
 Chang'd to a bird, and sent to flit in air, She dearly pays for Nisus' injur'd hair!

But when to mischief mortals bend their will, How soon they find fit instruments of ill! Just  
 then, Clarissa drew with tempting grace A two-edg'd weapon from her shining case; So ladies  
 in romance assist their knight Present the spear, and arm him for the fight.

He takes the gift with rev'rence, and extends The little engine on his fingers' ends;  
 This just behind Belinda's neck he spread, As o'er the fragrant steams she bends her head.  
 Swift to the lock a thousand sprites repair,  
 A thousand wings, by turns, blow back the hair, And thrice they twitch'd the diamond in her  
 ear, Thrice she look'd back, and thrice the foe drew near.

Just in that instant, anxious Ariel sought The close recesses of the virgin's thought; As on the

nosegay in her breast reclin'd, He watch'd th' ideas rising in her mind, Sudden he view'd, in  
spite of all her art, An earthly lover lurking at her heart.  
Amaz'd, confus'd, he found his pow'r expir'd,  
Resign'd to fate, and with a sigh retir'd.

The peer now spreads the glitt'ring forfex wide, T' inclose the lock; now joins it, to divide.  
Ev'n then, before the fatal engine clos'd, A wretched Sylph too fondly interpos'd;  
Fate urg'd the shears, and cut the Sylph in twain, (But airy substance soon unites again).  
The meeting points the sacred hair dissever From the fair head, for ever, and for ever!

Then flash'd the living lightning from her eyes, And screams of horror rend th' affrighted  
skies. Not louder shrieks to pitying Heav'n are cast,  
When husbands or when lap-dogs breathe their last, Or when rich China vessels, fall'n from  
high,  
In glitt'ring dust and painted fragments lie!

"Let wreaths of triumph now my temples twine," The victor cried, "the glorious prize is mine!  
While fish in streams, or birds delight in air, Or in a coach and six the British fair,  
As long at *Atalantis* shall be read, Or the small pillow grace a lady's bed,  
While visits shall be paid on solemn days, When num'rous wax-lights in bright order blaze,  
While nymphs take treats, or assignations give, So long my honour, name, and praise shall  
live!  
What time would spare, from steel receives its date, And monuments, like men, submit to  
fate!  
Steel could the labour of the gods destroy, And strike to dust th' imperial tow'rs of Troy; Steel  
could the works of mortal pride confound,  
And hew triumphal arches to the ground.  
What wonder then, fair nymph! thy hairs should feel The conqu'ring force of unresisted  
steel?"

## **2.3 Further Main Body of the Text**

### **CANTO-III**

Lines the 1-8: Near the grass fields where the Thames flows proudly surveying a high tower

which was called Hampton Court. Here Queen Anne the ruler of three Kingdoms – England, Scotland, and Ireland held her court and sometimes took tea here.

Lines 9-18: Here, the young lords and beautiful ladies enjoy the pleasures of the court. They interpret movements, looks and eyes of others and at each word a reputation is destroyed because they are busy in scandal mongering.

Lines 19-36: Hungry judges hurriedly pass sentences so that they may rush home for dinner and merchants leave the exchange. Belinda, eager to be famous, looks forward to a card game, Ombre. She is proud of the conquest she is likely to make in this battle of cards. As she spreads her hand, the protecting sylphs come down and sit on each important card. Ariel sits on matador and other sylphs take their places on the cards in order of importance.

Lines 37-44 : On the velvet plain (the card table) there are kings with their white moustaches and forked beards; with caps on their heads and halberds (weapons) in their hands and their parti-coloured troops (other cards)

Lines 45-64: The skilful Belinda reviews her force (cards) carefully. Her black forces (spades) move to war. The ace of spades leads the attack which is unconquerable. Manillio added to this triumph and marched as a conqueror from this fresh and green field. Basto, the ace of clubs, followed him but it was less successful. After this, the King of spades appears. It has a broad sabre (sword), its one leg is revealed hiding his many-coloured dress. The rebel Knave tries to engage the King in battle and is justly defeated. Even the Knave of Clubs, which had defeated Kings and Queens in the game of Loo, is now helpless and is conquered by the King of Spades.

Lines 65-74: His warlike Queen of Spades attacks her forces. Her King of Clubs is the first to be defeated in spite of his proud appearance and wild looks. He has a long flowing robe and has a globe in his hands.

Lines 75-86: The Baron's embroidered King and brilliant Queen of Diamonds combine their powers and triumph over a disordered array of Clubs, Diamonds and Hearts. In this way, Belinda's army of black and brown cards is defeated.

Lines 87-100: Belinda turns pale at this glimpse of possible ruin. She was just to get ruined completely in this battle of cards. The game is saved for her by her King of Hearts which had remained hidden in her hand. He steps out to seize the ace and falls like thunder on it. Belinda shouts with delight at winning the game.

Lines 101-104: O thoughtless mortals! You are always blind to fate. You are quickly disappointed and equally quickly delighted.

Lines 105-124: Soon the cups and spoons are brought there. The coffee is prepared over silver spirit lamps on Japanese tables. The sylphs carefully guard Belinda. Some of them cool the coffee as she sips it. Some cover her rich brocade gown with their wings. This coffee inspires the Baron to devise some new strategy to secure the bright lock. O rash youth! Stop. Wait before it is too late.

Lines 125-146: When human beings are bent on mischief, they find means for it. Just then, Clarissa, takes out a pair of scissors from her shining case and tempts the Baron to use it. The Baron takes the scissors respectfully and extends it in the hands behind Belinda's neck as she is sipping her coffee with bending head. A thousand sylphs rush there and with their wings blow back the hair to protect it from the scissors. Thrice the sylphs twitched her diamond earrings to warn her. At that very moment, Ariel searches the deep recesses of Belinda's heart. He was sitting on her to conceal breast and her watching thoughts, rising in her mind. He saw her too preoccupied by the thoughts of a mortal lover. Ariel couldn't do anything now. He resigned himself to fate and withdrew with a sigh.

Lines 147-154 and cuts: The Baron spreads the scissors wide to enclose the lock between them and cuts off the lock. Belinda's lock is, however, lost forever.

Lines 155-160: Belinda responds with cries of anger and horror.

Lines 161-170: The Baron shouts with joy at winning the glorious prize (the lock of hair). He believes that his honour, name and praise will live as long as fish swim.

Lines 171-178: Steel destroys whatever-even Time would spare. Steel can destroy even the labour of gods. No wonder that Belinda's hair could hardly resist the impact of steel's "conquering force"

### **The Rape of the Lock: Canto 4**

BY ALEXANDER POPE

But anxious cares the pensive nymph oppress'd, And secret passions labour'd in her breast.  
Not youthful kings in battle seiz'd alive, Not scornful virgins who their charms survive,  
Not ardent lovers robb'd of all their bliss, Not ancient ladies when refus'd a kiss, Not tyrants  
fierce that unrepenting die,



Not Cynthia when her manteau's pinn'd awry, E'er felt such rage, resentment, and despair, As  
thou, sad virgin! for thy ravish'd hair.

For, that sad moment, when the Sylphs withdrew, And Ariel weeping from Belinda flew,  
Umbriel, a dusky, melancholy sprite,  
As ever sullied the fair face of light, Down to the central earth, his proper scene, Repair'd to  
search the gloomy cave of Spleen.

Swift on his sooty pinions flits the Gnome, And in a vapour reach'd the dismal dome. No  
cheerful breeze this sullen region knows, The dreaded East is all the wind that blows.  
Here, in a grotto, shelter'd close from air, And screen'd in shades from day's detested glare,  
She sighs for ever on her pensive bed, Pain at her side, and Megrim at her head.

Two handmaids wait the throne: alike in place, But differing far in figure and in face.  
Here stood Ill Nature like an ancient maid, Her wrinkled form in black and white array'd;  
With store of pray'rs, for mornings, nights, and noons, Her hand is fill'd; her bosom with  
lampoons.

There Affectation, with a sickly mien, Shows in her cheek the roses of eighteen, Practis'd to  
lisp, and hang the head aside, Faints into airs, and languishes with pride, On the rich quilt  
sinks with becoming woe,  
Wrapp'd in a gown, for sickness, and for show.  
The fair ones feel such maladies as these, When each new night-dress gives a new disease.

A constant vapour o'er the palace flies; Strange phantoms, rising as the mists arise;  
Dreadful, as hermit's dreams in haunted shades, Or bright, as visions of expiring maids.  
Now glaring fiends, and snakes on rolling spires, Pale spectres, gaping tombs, and purple  
fires: Now lakes of liquid gold, Elysian scenes,  
And crystal domes, and angels in machines.

Unnumber'd throngs on ev'ry side are seen Of bodies chang'd to various forms by Spleen.  
Here living teapots stand, one arm held out, One bent; the handle this, and that the spout:  
A pipkin there, like Homer's tripod walks; Here sighs a jar, and there a goose pie talks; Men  
prove with child, as pow'rful fancy works, And maids turn'd bottles, call aloud for corks.

Safe pass'd the Gnome through this fantastic band, A branch of healing spleenwort in his hand.

Then thus address'd the pow'r: "Hail, wayward Queen!

Who rule the sex to fifty from fifteen: Parent of vapours and of female wit, Who give th' hysteric, or poetic fit,

On various tempers act by various ways, Make some take physic, others scribble plays; Who cause the proud their visits to delay, And send the godly in a pet to pray.

A nymph there is, that all thy pow'r disdains, And thousands more in equal mirth maintains.

But oh! if e'er thy gnome could spoil a grace, Or raise a pimple on a beauteous face, Like citron waters matrons' cheeks inflame, Or change complexions at a losing game; If e'er with airy horns I planted heads,

Or rumpled petticoats, or tumbled beds, Or caus'd suspicion when no soul was rude, Or discompos'd the head-dress of a prude,

Or e'er to costive lap-dog gave disease, Which not the tears of brightest eyes could ease:

Hear me, and touch Belinda with chagrin; That single act gives half the world the spleen."

The goddess with a discontented air Seems to reject him, though she grants his pray'r. A wondrous bag with both her hands she binds,

Like that where once Ulysses held the winds; There she collects the force of female lungs, Sighs, sobs, and passions, and the war of tongues.

A vial next she fills with fainting fears, Soft sorrows, melting griefs, and flowing tears.

The Gnome rejoicing bears her gifts away,

Spreads his black wings, and slowly mounts to day.

Sunk in Thalestris' arms the nymph he found, Her eyes dejected and her hair unbound.

Full o'er their heads the swelling bag he rent, And all the Furies issu'd at the vent.

Belinda burns with more than mortal ire, And fierce Thalestris fans the rising fire.

"Oh wretched maid!" she spread her hands, and cried, (While Hampton's echoes, "Wretched maid!" replied) "Was it for this you took such constant care

The bodkin, comb, and essence to prepare? For this your locks in paper durance bound, For this with tort'ring irons wreath'd around? For this with fillets strain'd your tender head, And bravely bore the double loads of lead? Gods! shall the ravisher display your hair, While the fops envy, and the ladies stare!

Honour forbid! at whose unrivall'd shrine Ease, pleasure, virtue, all, our sex resign. Methinks already I your tears survey, Already hear the horrid things they say, Already see you a

degraded toast,  
And all your honour in a whisper lost!  
How shall I, then, your helpless fame defend?"Twill then be infamy to seem your friend! And  
shall this prize, th' inestimable prize, Expos'd through crystal to the gazing eyes, And  
heighten'd by the diamond's circling rays, On that rapacious hand for ever blaze?  
Sooner shall grass in Hyde Park Circus grow, And wits take lodgings in the sound of Bow;  
Sooner let earth, air, sea, to chaos fall,  
Men, monkeys, lap-dogs, parrots, perish all!"

She said; then raging to Sir Plume repairs, And bids her beau demand the precious hairs: (Sir  
Plume, of amber snuff-box justly vain, And the nice conduct of a clouded cane) With earnest  
eyes, and round unthinking face, He first the snuffbox open'd, then the case,  
And thus broke out—"My Lord, why, what the devil? Z——ds! damn the lock! 'fore Gad,  
you must be civil!  
Plague on't! 'tis past a jest—nay prithee, pox! Give her the hair"—he spoke, and rapp'd his  
box.

"It grieves me much," replied the peer again "Who speaks so well should ever speak in vain.  
But by this lock, this sacred lock I swear, (Which never more shall join its parted hair; Which  
never more its honours shall renew, Clipp'd from the lovely head where late it grew) That  
while my nostrils draw the vital air,  
This hand, which won it, shall for ever wear." He spoke, and speaking, in proud triumph  
spread The long-contended honours of her head.

But Umbriel, hateful gnome! forbears not so; He breaks the vial whence the sorrows flow.  
Then see! the nymph in beauteous grief appears, Her eyes half-languishing, half-drown'd in  
tears; On her heav'd bosom hung her drooping head, Which, with a sigh, she rais'd; and thus  
she said:

"For ever curs'd be this detested day, Which snatch'd my best, my fav'rite curl away!  
Happy! ah ten times happy, had I been,  
If Hampton Court these eyes had never seen!  
Yet am not I the first mistaken maid, By love of courts to num'rous ills betray'd.  
Oh had I rather unadmir'd remain'd

In some lone isle, or distant northern land; Where the gilt chariot never marks the way,  
Where none learn ombre, none e'er taste bohea!  
There kept my charms conceal'd from mortal eye, Like roses, that in deserts bloom and die.  
What mov'd my mind with youthful lords to roam?  
Oh had I stay'd, and said my pray'rs at home! 'Twas this, the morning omens seem'd to tell,  
Thrice from my trembling hand the patch-box fell; The tott'ring china shook without a wind,  
Nay, Poll sat mute, and Shock was most unkind! A Sylph too warn'd me of the threats of fate,  
In mystic visions, now believ'd too late!  
See the poor remnants of these slighted hairs! My hands shall rend what ev'n thy rapine  
spares: These, in two sable ringlets taught to break, Once gave new beauties to the snowy  
neck.  
The sister-lock now sits uncouth, alone, And in its fellow's fate foresees its own; Uncurl'd it  
hangs, the fatal shears demands,  
And tempts once more thy sacrilegious hands. Oh hadst thou, cruel! been content to seize  
Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but these!

#### **CANTO-IV**

Lines 1-10: Belinda is greatly worried and sad. . Her anger and despair over the loss is worse than that felt by young Kings captured in battle.

Lines 11-16: At their sad moment, the disappointed sylphs and a weeping Ariel leave the scene. Umbriel, a melancholy spirit, dark in colour, descends down to the centre of the earth to search the melancholy Cave of Spleen.

Lines 17-24: This dull place knows no cheerful breeze. Here, in a cave, hidden from the open air, and from the bright light of the day, Spleen always sighs on her melancholy bed. She has her companions - Pain at her side and Megrim at her head.

Lines 25-30: Two maids wait at Spleen's throne. Ill-Nature stood here like an old maid. Her wrinkled body was dressed in black and white.

Lines 31-38: Affectation is the other maid, pretending to be sick. She blushes as an eighteen-year old girl. She is full of pride and false airs. She is wrapped in a gown and lying under a beautiful quilt pretending to suffer. She helps young ladies to feel similar ills whenever they have a new nightgown to show off to visitors.

Lines 39-46 Strange: Strange creatures rise here with the mists. They are as bright as the

dreams of old maids. These creatures are glaring fiends, snakes on rolling spires ( small towers) , pale ghosts, opening tombs and purple fires.

Lines 47-54 different: Numerous crowds are seen on every side of creatures changed into different forms by Spleen. A Pipkin walks there like Homer's Tripod. A jar sighs here and a goose pie talks. Men here get pregnant due to their powerful fancy. Maidens are turned into bottles, calling loudly for corks.

Lines 55-78: With the help of spleenwort, Umbriel makes his way safely through this odd assembly and addresses Spleen respectfully. Welcome, wayward Queen ! You rule ladies from fifteen to fifty and guide their actions. You are the parent of melancholy and female wit. You make irritated pious people to pray. Belinda, however, seems to defy Spleen's powers and keeps thousands of people cheerful. It is only the spleen that can make Belinda unhappy. In making Belinda unhappy, half of England's population ( male population devoted to Belinda) will also be unhappy.

Lines 79-88: The goddess Spleen, with an air of discontentment seems to reject his request at first, but she grants him his wish. She binds a wonderful bag with both her hands. She also fills a vial with fainting fears, sorrows, melting griefs and flowing tears. The happy Umbriel carries this gift and flies back on his black wings to Belinda's world.

Lines 89-120: Umbriel releases the bag over there and furies come out in their full force. It fans the anger of Belinda. Angry Thalestris intensifies their anger. O gods, shall the Baron display your hair while other fashionable young men envy him and ladies stare at him. Honour

forbid! At the great temple of Honour, we sacrifice all our comforts, pleasures and virtues. I can imagine you so degraded that none will toast in your name.

Lines 121-130: In anger, Thalestris moves to Sir Plume and asks him to demand the return of the lock. With earnest eyes but thoughtlessly, he opened the snuff box and then the case and spoke in the manner of a dandy. He uses the popular slang of the dandy, sputters and gasps ineffectually as he demands the lock and raps on his snuff-box.

Lines 131-140: The Baron ironically says, "I am very sorry that your fine speech is useless. I swear by this sacred lock that so long as I am alive, I shall wear it in my hand." This lock can never join the hair from which it has been separated. It can never regain its honour.

Lines 141-146: The hateful underground spirit Umbriel is not satisfied to leave the situation

as it is, he releases the sorrow filled vial. Her head is bent down on her breast. She raises her head with sigh and speaks.

Lines 147-176: Let this hateful day be cursed. It took my best favourite curl. I would have been very happy as I did not visit Hampton Court. Yet I am not the first Lady to be blinded by the splendour of Court life. These hairs had broken into two curls. They added to the beauty of my snow White neck. The second curl, now alone, looks ugly and knows it will meet the fate of its companion. It is now uncurled, inviting the scissors and once more is inviting the Baron to cut it off. I wish you had cut off any other curl, or at least a less obvious curl."

### **The Rape of the Lock: Canto 5**

BY ALEXANDER POPE

She said: the pitying audience melt in tears, But Fate and Jove had stopp'd the Baron's ears.  
In vain Thalestris with reproach assails, For who can move when fair Belinda fails? Not half  
so fix'd the Trojan could remain, While Anna begg'd and Dido rag'd in vain. Then grave  
Clarissa graceful wav'd her fan; Silence ensu'd, and thus the nymph began.

"Say, why are beauties prais'd and honour'd most, The wise man's passion, and the vain man's  
toast?

Why deck'd with all that land and sea afford, Why angels call'd, and angel-like ador'd?  
Why round our coaches crowd the white-glov'd beaux, Why bows the side-box from its  
inmost rows?

How vain are all these glories, all our pains, Unless good sense preserve what beauty gains:

That men may say, when we the front-box grace: 'Behold the first in virtue, as in face!'

Oh! if to dance all night, and dress all day, Charm'd the smallpox, or chas'd old age away;  
Who would not scorn what housewife's cares produce, Or who would learn one earthly thing  
of use?

To patch, nay ogle, might become a saint, Nor could it sure be such a sin to paint. But since,  
alas! frail beauty must decay,

Curl'd or uncurl'd, since locks will turn to grey, Since painted, or not painted, all shall fade,  
And she who scorns a man, must die a maid; What then remains but well our pow'r to use,  
And keep good humour still whate'er we lose? And trust me, dear! good humour can prevail,

When airs, and flights, and screams, and scolding fail.

Beauties in vain their pretty eyes may roll; Charms strike the sight, but merit wins the soul."

So spoke the dame, but no applause ensu'd; Belinda frown'd, Thalestris call'd her prude. "To arms, to arms!" the fierce virago cries, And swift as lightning to the combat flies.

All side in parties, and begin th' attack;

Fans clap, silks rustle, and tough whalebones crack; Heroes' and heroines' shouts confus'dly rise, And bass, and treble voices strike the skies.

No common weapons in their hands are found,  
Like gods they fight, nor dread a mortal wound.

So when bold Homer makes the gods engage, And heav'nly breasts with human passions rage; 'Gainst Pallas, Mars; Latona, Hermes arms; And all Olympus rings with loud alarms. Jove's thunder roars, heav'n trembles all around; Blue Neptune storms, the bellowing deeps resound;

Earth shakes her nodding tow'rs, the ground gives way; And the pale ghosts start at the flash of day!

Triumphant Umbriel on a scone's height Clapp'd his glad wings, and sate to view the fight: Propp'd on their bodkin spears, the sprites survey The growing combat, or assist the fray.

While through the press enrag'd Thalestris flies, And scatters death around from both her eyes,  
A beau and witling perish'd in the throng,

One died in metaphor, and one in song. "O cruel nymph! a living death I bear," Cried Dapperwit, and sunk beside his chair. A mournful glance Sir Fopling upwards cast, "Those eyes are made so killing"—was his last. Thus on Mæander's flow'ry margin lies Th' expiring swan, and as he sings he dies.

When bold Sir Plume had drawn Clarissa down, Chloe stepp'd in, and kill'd him with a frown;  
She smil'd to see the doughty hero slain,  
But at her smile, the beau reviv'd again.

Now Jove suspends his golden scales in air, Weighs the men's wits against the lady's hair; The doubtful beam long nods from side to side; At length the wits mount up, the hairs subside.

See, fierce Belinda on the baron flies, With more than usual lightning in her eyes, Nor fear'd  
the chief th' unequal fight to try, Who sought no more than on his foe to die. But this bold  
lord with manly strength endu'd,

She with one finger and a thumb subdu'd: Just where the breath of life his nostrils drew, A  
charge of snuff the wily virgin threw;

The Gnomes direct, to ev'ry atom just, The pungent grains of titillating dust.

Sudden, with starting tears each eye o'erflows, And the high dome re-echoes to his nose.

"Now meet thy fate", incens'd Belinda cried, And drew a deadly bodkin from her side. (The  
same, his ancient personage to deck, Her great great grandsire wore about his neck In three  
seal-rings; which after, melted down, Form'd a vast buckle for his widow's gown: Her infant  
grandame's whistle next it grew, The bells she jingled, and the whistle blew; Then in a bodkin  
grac'd her mother's hairs,

Which long she wore, and now Belinda wears.)

"Boast not my fall," he cried, "insulting foe! Thou by some other shalt be laid as low. Nor  
think, to die dejects my lofty mind; All that I dread is leaving you behind!

Rather than so, ah let me still survive, And burn in Cupid's flames—but burn alive."

"Restore the lock!" she cries; and all around "Restore the lock!" the vaulted roofs rebound.

Not fierce Othello in so loud a strain Roar'd for the handkerchief that caus'd his pain.

But see how oft ambitious aims are cross'd, The chiefs contend 'till all the prize is lost!

The lock, obtain'd with guilt, and kept with pain, In ev'ry place is sought, but sought in vain:

With such a prize no mortal must be blest,

So Heav'n decrees! with Heav'n who can contest?

Some thought it mounted to the lunar sphere, Since all things lost on earth are treasur'd there.

There hero's wits are kept in pond'rous vases, And beaux' in snuff boxes and tweezer-cases.

There broken vows and deathbed alms are found, And lovers' hearts with ends of riband  
bound; The courtier's promises, and sick man's prayers, The smiles of harlots, and the tears of  
heirs, Cages for gnats, and chains to yoke a flea,

Dried butterflies, and tomes of casuistry.



But trust the Muse—she saw it upward rise, Though mark'd by none but quick, poetic eyes:  
 (So Rome's great founder to the heav'ns withdrew, To Proculus alone confess'd in view)  
 A sudden star, it shot through liquid air, And drew behind a radiant trail of hair. Not  
 Berenice's locks first rose so bright,  
 The heav'ns bespangling with dishevell'd light.  
 The Sylphs behold it kindling as it flies, And pleas'd pursue its progress through the skies.

This the beau monde shall from the Mall survey,  
 And hail with music its propitious ray. This the blest lover shall for Venus take, And send up  
 vows from Rosamonda's lake.

This Partridge soon shall view in cloudless skies, When next he looks through Galileo's eyes;  
 And hence th' egregious wizard shall foredoom The fate of Louis, and the fall of Rome.

Then cease, bright nymph! to mourn thy ravish'd hair, Which adds new glory to the shining  
 sphere!

Not all the tresses that fair head can boast Shall draw such envy as the lock you lost.  
 For, after all the murders of your eye, When, after millions slain, yourself shall die: When  
 those fair suns shall set, as set they must,  
 And all those tresses shall be laid in dust, This lock, the Muse shall consecrate to fame And  
 'midst the stars inscribe Belinda's name.

## **CANTO-V**

Lines 1-8: Belinda's lament moves almost all of her audience to tears. Thalestris rebukes him but in vain. At this point, serious Clarissa waves her fan gracefully. Silence followed and thus she spoke.

Lines 9-34: Clarissa asks why beauties are most honoured and praised. Why do they excite the passions of men and why do vain men toast in their honour? The glories of beauty are transitory, unless complimented by good sense. Men should be able to say that the most beautiful woman is also the most virtuous. The use of make-up or staring would be right even for saints and using beauty-aids will not be a sin. But alas! Frail beauty must decay, locks will turn grey whether curly or not, beauty with or without make-up must fade away. A woman who treats men with contempt must die an unmarried woman. Therefore we should use our power properly. Believe me good humour may succeed where airs, flights, cries and rebukes fail. In the hard glare of reality, beauties roll their pretty eyes uselessly. While

prettiness may please spectators, final salvation depends not on this, but on virtues, including good sense.

Lines 35-44: Belinda frowned at this advice and Thalestris called her a prude. She called upon the followers to take up arms and moved quickly like lightning for the battle. The shouts of heroes and heroines are mixed up. Louder and louder voices rend the skies; the weapons in their hands are not common.

Lines 45-52: Their shouts rock Mount Olympus. Jove's thunder roars, heaven uses its force all around. There is a storm raised by sea-god Neptune and the stormy waves echo.

Lines 53-56: Umbriel joyfully rejoices as he views the battle. The sylphs remain fascinated spectators of the growing fight or join the battle.

With fans, silk gowns and puffs and powders in the fight men are killed with frown of the ladies, but they are revived with a smile. Belinda subdues and overpowers her adversary just with Lines 57-66: Angry Thalestris rushes through the crowd, and "kills" wherever she looks. Dapper With cries cruel lady, I am undergoing a living death," and fell down near his chair. Sir Fopling looks upwards mournfully and his last words were.

Lines 67-70: When brave Sir Plume has pushed Clarissa down. She smiles to see the greathero killed and he is revived by Chloe's triumphant smile.

Lines 71-74: Jove weighs men's wits against Belinda's hair on his golden scales.

Lines 75-86: Angry Belinda rushes upon the Baron. The Baron was not afraid of fighting in this unequal battle. This brave lord was endowed with great strength but she could defeat him with a finger and a thumb. The underground spirits direct each atom of snuff to its aim. He is reduced to tears and sneezes. The high roof echoes the blowing of his nose.

Lines 87-96: Angry Belinda draws out a terrible hair pin and cries, "Now you meet your fate." This pin was used by his great grandfather on his neck to decorate himself in old age. She turned it into a hair-pin gracing Belinda's mother's hair. She wore it for a long time and now Belinda wears it.

Lines 97-102: He cried, "O insulting enemy! Do not boast. You will be conquered by somebody else. Rather than killing me, let me live and be burnt alive in Cupid's flames.

Lines 103-112: The prize is lost while the warriors are busily engaged in dispute. The lock which was obtained in a guilty manner and kept painfully was looked for everywhere but this

entire search was useless. No human being should possess such a prize.

Lines 113-122: The heroes' wits are kept there in large cases and beaux' wits in snuff-boxes and tweezers cases. Broken vows, and deathbed promises are found there. Also to be found there are lovers' hearts, harlots' smiles, courtiers' promises, a sick man's prayer, heirs' tears, gnats' cages, fleas' chains, dried butterflies, and huge volumes of casuistry involving hair-splitting arguments.

Lines 123-132: The lock was drawn to the heavens like a comet or new star. Not even Berenice's famous hair was so bright. The heavens are shining with its dazzling light.

Lines 133-140: The fashionable world will survey it from the Mall and welcome with music its lucky rays. Partridge will soon study it when he looks at it through the telescope.

Lines 141-150: Therefore, O bright Belinda! Stop lamenting your lost hair which now adds a new glory to heaven. All the lovely hair in the world will not draw as much envy as the lost-curl now will. In spite your lost curl will, however, be consecrated to fame by the Muse of poetry.

## **2.4 Check your Progress**

**Que-1** Write a note on 'The Rape of The Lock' as a burlesque of classical epic device?

**Que-2** "The purpose of Pope is to laugh at the little unguarded follies of the female sex".Elaborate.

**Que-3** Write a brief note on Pope's imitation of Agamemnon's sceptre in The Rape of the Lock.

**Que-4** How does Ariel arrange for Belinda's safety?

## **2.5 SUMMARY**

The Rape of the Lock consists of five cantoes. The origin of The Rape of the Lock lies in a quarrel between the family of Miss Arabella Fermor and Lord Petre "On the trifling occasion of his having cut off a lock of her hair." Pope's friend Mr. Caryll told Pope about this quarrel. This suggestion resulted in the poem written in a mock-heroic form.

### **CANTO 1**

#### **Summary**

Pope says that the subject matter of the poem is trifling but he would justify it and make

itmemorable. The poet describes how Belinda sleeps till mod daym on waking she calls her

maids by ringing the bell. No maid answers her call. Her guardian Sylph ( Ariel) asks her to listen carefully to what will be told to her. He warns her that many sylphs are continuously keeping an eye on her activities. All these spirits can take any form, assume any sex. The sylph (Ariel) predicts that some great misfortune will visit them. Belinda during the course of the day. Belinda's eyes fall on a love-letter with the help of her maid servant Betty. She performs her toilet. The poet describes how Belinda grows beautiful every moment as she proceeds to the toilet. She improves her appearance with the help of cosmetics.

## **CANTO 2**

### **Summary**

After finishing her breakfast Belinda makes a pleasure trip on a barge on the Thames. She is accompanied by many friends, and she remains the centre of attraction. Her perfect beauty is enhanced by two curling side locks of hair. The Baron (Lord Petre) is also in that company. He has a burning desire to seize one of the curling locks at any cost. Ariel is aware of the danger . He orders his sylphs to guard Belinda. Ariel himself takes the charge of her favourite lap dog. The hurried movements of the sylphs are described.

## **CANTO 3**

### **Summary**

The poet describes how the party of Belinda enters the Royal Palace which is known as Hampton Court. Belinda is playing a game of cards with her two male Pro friends - the Baron and a gentleman. This game is known as Ombre. It is played among three people. Belinda examines her hand. She offers to win the other two. She declares spades as trumps. The whole game is pursued in the spirit of a battle. Finally, Belinda wins the game. However, her joy is short-lived. She is destined to lose her lock of hair. The party sits to enjoy coffee. In this party, the sylphs guard Belinda's rich dress. The fumes of coffee intoxicate the Baron. He thinks of a plan for having the coveted lock. Clarissa gives him a pair of scissors. The Baron stands behind Belinda's back. The sylphs warn Belinda. However, Ariel peeps into the heart of Belinda. He finds there the image of an earthly lover. Ariel decides to leave her to her fate. The Baron cuts off the lock. After the lock is cut off, Belinda is deeply anguished. There is a flash in her eyes. He says that he has done a brave task. He is lucky to possess this precious lock.

## **CANTO 4**

### **Summary**

Belinda is angry. The loss of her hair makes her miserable. Now that the sylphs and their chief Ariel have left her, a gloomy gnome Umbriel takes charge of her. He exercises his bad influence on her. He flies down to the Cave of Spleen (Goddess of ill-temper) in the centre of the earth. The goddess lies on her bed. Her friends Pain and Headache attend to her. Her maids are Ill-nature and Affectation. The cave is full of misty shapes. The gnome addresses the goddess as wayward. She is primarily responsible for giving women fits of melancholy and depression. The goddesses find that a lady named Belinda hates her power. He then begs her to give Belinda I'll humour. The goddess gives him a bag full of passions, sobs, sighs and a phial full of tears, griefs and sorrows. The effect of Umbriel's gifts on Belinda is described. He noticed Belinda resting in the arms of her friend Thalestris. He empties the bag on them. After this, Belinda starts burning in the fire of terrible anger. Thalestris at once becomes gloomy and incites her anger. Thalestris goes to Sir Plume to ask him to demand the lock back from the Baron. The Baron bluntly refuses to return the lock. Umbriel then pours down the contents of his phial on Belinda's head. As a result, Belinda starts shedding tears of sorrow. She thinks that it would have been better if she had been a simple country lass. One of the locks is gone.

## **CANTO 5**

### **Summary**

People show sympathy for the poor Belinda. But the Baron remains unconcerned. Clarissa tries to pacify Belinda. She tells Belinda that the value of womanhood lies in virtue. Beauty is bound to decay. Her locks must turn grey with the passage of time. She asks Belinda to remain in good humour. Thalestris does not agree with Clarissa's views. She calls the ladies to the battle of wit and charm against the opposite sex.

Umbriel and other spirits watch the battle with deep interest. The description of the battle is mock heroic. Belinda throws a pinch of snuff into the Baron's nostrils. She makes him surrender at her hair pins point. She demands her lock back. But alas type locks cannot be found anywhere. It is said that the particular lock of her hair has risen to the sky. It has become a shining star.

## 2.6 Keywords

- Belinda
- Baron
- Sir Plume
- Thalestris
- Clarissa
- Ariel
- Sylphs
- Nymphs

## 2.7 Self-Assessment Test

- **Que-1** The Rape of the Lock is, infact,” a satire upon feminine frivolity”. Elucidate.
- **Que-2** Write a critical note on The Rape of the Lock as a burlesque of classical epicdevices?
- **Que-3** Show how the Rosicrucian philosophy of spirits lends a special charm to The Rape of the Lock?

## 2.8 Answer to check your Progress

**Ans-1** A mock epic or mock heroic or heroic comical is a term applied to a poetic form which employs the epic devices to describe a trivial or insignificant subject. ‘The Rape of The Lock’ is a masterpiece of its kind. It belongs to the category of a burlesque or parody. The mockery tales different forms and employs different devices. Apart from the general mockery of the epic form and substance, it uses the epic manner also.

There is particular mockery of a scene, or a detail, or a certain speech, or a comment by the poet. It contains, among others, a parody of Homer(in the description of the battle), Virgil, Aristo and Milton. But the imitation of the epic tradition on the whole is one of the diminutions. This poem also announces its subject in the very first couplet:

What dire offence from amorous causes springs? What mighty contests rise from trivial things?

And the subject of the poem or its occasion is the cutting of a lock from a lady's hair by a

Baron. It is called 'triumph of insignificance'. But as the poem is a satire on the daily life of a London beauty, the garb of a mock epic form makes the whole thing look absurd. Alexander Pope invokes the Muse in the epic. The poet expresses his shock and surprise rather mockingly

In task so bold can little men engage?  
And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage.

The epic always uses supernatural machinery. In *The Rape of The Lock* there are sylphs and gnomes. These aerial spirits are very small. The whole description about these 'light militia of the lower sky' is very ludicrous. They remain invisible and are always on the wings. They keep hovering over the Box to protect the virginity of the ladies. For example: The Nymphs are the spirits of submissive and yielding ladies, the light-hearted coquettes become the Sylphs and the severe ones become Gnomes. They are ever ready to embrace a lady who rejects mankind though they are to guard the purity of melting maids. Ariel is the chief of these spirits. He warns Belinda against the impending danger. Just like Satan, he too addresses his followers.

Ye sylphs and sylphids to your chief, give ear  
Fays, fairies, genii, elves and Demons hear

And the dangers about which he talks are very funny and comical.

Whether the Nymph shall break Diana's law  
or some frail china jar receive a flaw  
or stain her honour, or her new brocade

Ariel threatens his followers of dire consequences if they fail in their assigned duties. 'The Rape of the Lock' contains certain episodes. They rather deal with the game of Ombre on a table. In the game of the Ombre, Belinda wins and is delighted. But then her lock is cut by the Baron and she cries for it. Her cry is described in a very ridiculous manner. Belinda starts showing all the signs of an angry lady and she gives a call to arms. And then starts the battles. Ladies are armed, charged with snuff and attack him with a deadly bodkin. In this single

combat the Baron is completely defeated.

**Ans-2** Introduction: The age of Alexander Pope was commonly known as the Augustan age or the Neo-classical age. This age was satirical in spirit. Alexander Pope, being a true representative of his age is a great satirist and he depicts the evils of the society, especially the fashionable society using such weapons as humour, wit, irony, mockery and ridicule. As a satirist Pope has been admired by all the critics. Lowell has remarked that "as an intellectual observer and describer of personal weaknesses, Pope stands \_by himself in English verse."

The Rape of the Lock is a satire on the aristocratic section of the society; it exposes their weaknesses and absurdities. It paints the idle life of the pleasure-seeking young men and women. The lives of these fashionable people seem to be devoid of seriousness and morality. All is vanity and emptiness. It exposes to ridicule the -idleness, frivolities, vanities, follies, shallowness, superficiality and hypocrisy. Alexander Pope also aims at getting the society rid of its evils that are afflicting fashionable people. In the very beginning Pope laughs at the little men engaging themselves in tasks so bold and at gentle ladies who are capable of mighty rage. Pope exposes the frivolities of the fashionable ladies through the character of Belinda. She is a perfect coquette and a flirt. She has a number of admirers around her. Pope mocks the habit of late rising. Belinda keeps sleeping and dreaming of young lovers till noon as "sleepless lovers just at twelve awake". Soon after leaving bed, they become busy decorating their faces. It appears that the only thing which matters most for these ladies is how to cause flutter in the hearts of young men.

Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace And calls for all the wonders on her face.

Thus, Pope points out how the ladies considered her toilet a religious ceremony. He says that Belinda's love is for all alike. Her love is not confined to one person. Thus Belinda has an obliging nature and obliges all by casting her amorous glances at all. Pope then says that these ladies do not know the difference between the noble and the ignoble things. For them it is all the same: Whether it is the loss of their virginity or the breaking of a china jar. Belinda's cry for her lock finds a satirical description when Pope equates her cry to that for the death of her husband or her lap dog. Pope then satirizes the lack of moral scruples. The Baron admires the locks of Belinda and aspires for them and resolves to get them "By force to ravish, or by fraud betray".

Pope satirizes the system of justice.



The hungry judges soon the sentence sign, And wretches hang that jury men may dine

The judges of the time were not serious. Their chief concern was eating and drinking. The poet in a very subtle manner satirizes the activities of the palace. The serious and the frivolous have been mentioned in the same breath. It is in this palace that Belinda and her companions play the game of Ombre and enjoy coffee. Thus 'Rape of The Lock' is being a characteristic product of the life and is a great satire upon social pleasantries of the age.

**Ans-3** In the final battle between the beautiful ladies and the fashionable men both sides fought bravely. Belinda was in command of the ladies. She threw a pinch of snuff into the Baron's nostrils, He started sneezing. Pope gives the history of this bodkin. First it was a silver ornament for Belinda's great grandfather. After his death, it was melted down and made into a large buckle. Later it was melted again and made into a whistle for Belinda's grandmother. After her death it was melted again and made into a bodkin. This description is a parody of a similar passage in Homer's 'Ilia'. Pope's description of Belinda's bodkin is a comic imitation of this Greek legend.

**Ans-4** Belinda was on the large. On the other hand, Ariel, the sylph Ariel, was worried about her safety. He called all the sylphs who were under him. He asked some of them to guard her watch, her earrings, and her family, while to fifty of them he assigned the most important duty of looking after her petticoat. He warned the sylphs that if any of them neglected his duty, he would be severely punished. The offender may be given a severe punishment.

## **2.9 References/ Suggested Readings**

- Crider, Richard. "Pope's 'The Rape of the Lock.'" *The Explicator* 49, no.2 (Winter 1991): 80-82.
- Rumbold, Valerie. *Women's Place in Pope's World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989

<b>Subject : English</b>	
<b>Course Code : MA 102</b>	<b>Author : Dr. Pallavi</b>
<b>Lesson No. : 03</b>	<b>Vetter</b>
<b>The Way of the World</b>	<b>By William Congreve</b>

### **3.0 Learning Objectives**

- 3.1 Introduction About the Novel**
- 3.2 Main Body of the Text**
- 3.3 Further Main Body of the Text**
- 3.4 Check our Progress**
- 3.5 Summary**
- 3.6 Keywords**
- 3.7 Self-Assessment Test**
- 3.8 Answer to Check your Progress**
- 3.9 References/ Suggested Reading**

### **3.0 Learning Objectives**

- To introduce students to the once banned 17<sup>th</sup> Century genre of restoration comedy. The manners are typified by foppish, bawdy humor and fast moving plots.
- To make the students examine the use of character names and what hints these provide to the audience about the characters traits.
- Restoration comedies are marked by their emphasis on highly sexual situations.

### **3.1 Introduction about the Author**

#### **Life and Works**

William Congreve was born at Bardsey near Leeds on January 24, 1670. His father was a commissioned officer. His education started in 1681 at Kilkenny, regarded as Eton of

Ireland.

He obtained his master's degree in 1696. In 1690, after getting a better post as an agent for the Earl of Cork, his father was able to send him to Middle Temple, London, in 1691 to study law.

He wrote all his plays before he was thirty. He left literature to spend the rest of his life as a very popular society gentleman. Congreve next brought out a tragedy, *The Mourning Bride*. It is written in the style of later Elizabethan tragedians. His last play was *The Way of the World* which appeared in 1700. It is his most brilliant play but it was a failure on the stage. Congreve is undoubtedly the greatest of the Restoration comedy-writers. His plays are a faithful reflection of the upper-class life of his day. His tone is lively though cynical. His prose is lucid, concise and pointed. He shows an excellent ear for rhythm. He is a polished and brilliant artist.

It is skilful in characterisation. It is completely free from obscenity and realism which spoil the work of his contemporaries.

**Success and Fame:** Congreve moved freely in the literary circles of London and became one of the most brilliant writers of his age. He got famous after the publication of *The Old Bachelor*, his first comedy, in 1693. His third play *Love for Love* was greatly appreciated and showered upon him much success and popularity.

**Government Job:** By 1695, he was well-known among the men of letters; He was made commissioner for licensing hackney coaches and was given a salary of one hundred pounds per annum.

**His Masterpiece:** Congreve's masterpiece *The Way of the World* was produced in 1700. It got a poor reception from the audience of his own days but now it is considered to be Congreve's best work.

**His Later Years:** In 1705, he became a commissioner for wines and retained this post up to 1714.

**His Relations:** Congreve had so many friends including legendary personalities and insignificant persons as well. Jonathan Swift was his intimate friend from his early days in Ireland. Alexander Pope dedicated his *Iliad* to him. Congreve never married. In his later years, he was attached to the second Duchess of Marlborough and it is speculated that he was the father of her second daughter, Lady Mary Godolphin. Thus she was the sole heir of his

entire fortune; He died in London at the age of fifty-nine in 1729 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

The types of Congreve's first work were the common conventional properties of stage tradition but the fine and clear cut style was his own. His first poetic tragedy the Mourning Bride (1697) contains the quoted lines of blank verse, now a proverb;

"Heav'n has no Rage, like Love to Hatred turn'd. Nor Hell a Fury, like a Woman scorn'd."

The first line of this play has also become very famous, "spoken by Almeria in Act I, Scene I. This play was an instant success and it began a long career of good fortune for the dramatist. In 1700, Congreve's play The Way of the World was performed on the English stage at Lincoln's Inn Fields. The play is aptly named for two reasons. First, its action takes place in the "present," which means it reflects the same social period during which the play was originally performed. Second, as a comedy of manners, its purpose is to expose to public scrutiny and laughter the often absurd, yet very human, passions and follies that characterize social behavior.

### **Characteristics of Restoration Comedy of Manners**

The Restoration age is mainly associated with the rise and development of Comedy of Manners. It was a true mirror of the temper and outlook of the upper class society of that age. Its chief practitioners were Sir George Etherege, William Wycherley, William Congreve, Sir John Vanburgh and George Farquhar.

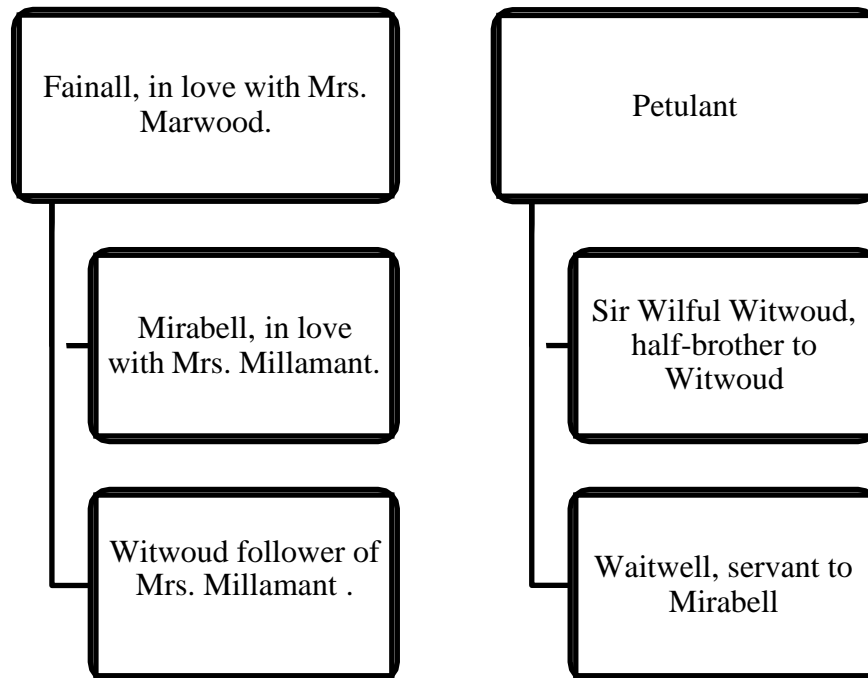
Restoration Comedy deals only with the manners of the upper class. The Comedy of Manners was written by "gentlemen? For "gentlemen" and about "gentlemen", this comedy concentrated on the activities, intrigues and amorous (lustful) achievements of gay, frivolous (non-serious), rakish (immoral) type of young men and women. Unlike the Elizabethan Comedy, the Restoration Comedy of Manners presents a combination of realism and satire. Its use of prose heightens the realistic effect. Its aim was to copy minutely (in detail) the manners of domestic life. The immorality was generally expressed in the attack on the sacred bond of marriage and in the advocacy of free love. Cuckoldom (unfaithfulness of wife) was a popular theme. The whole concept of love was anti-romantic and cynical.

### **Introduction to the novel**

The Way of the World, a play written by Congreve, is an entertaining comedy. Congreve enlivens the action with a fine gallery of fools, including Sir Wilfull Witwoud, Lady

Wishfort's boisterous and good-natured country nephew; they serve to highlight the central contrast between the passionate and grasping relationship of Fainall and Mrs Marwood and the delicate process by which Mirabell persuades Millamant that even in such a mercenary society, love can survive into marriage.

### MAIN CHARACTERS



### 3.2 Main Body of the Text

**Background:** Lady Wishfort is the widow of the late Sir Jonathan Wishfort, by whom she has a daughter Arabella, now Mrs. Arabella Fainall. Arabella married, first, Languish, who died very soon. Fainall is her second husband. Lady Wishfort also had two sisters. The first was the first wife of Sir Witwoud, owner of lands in Shropshire. She had a son, who is now Sir Wilfull Witwoud. After her death, her husband remarried, and had a son, Anthony Witwoud. The other sister of Lady Wishfort had a daughter,

Millamant has been under her aunt's (Lady Wishfort) thumb since her mother died. Half of Millamant's inheritance is held in trust by Lady Wishfort. According to the will, in order to get this portion of her inheritance, Millamant must marry according to aunt's wishes. Mirabell wants to marry Millamant. In order to get to Millamant, has faked falling in courting love with her aunt. But Mrs. Marwood has told Lady Wishfort that he was only courting her to get to her niece. And Lady Wishfort is now furious and has decided that she won't marry Millamant, Lady Wishfort's daughter who had an affair with Mirabell. Thinking that she

had become pregnant by Mirabell, she married Fainall to preserve her reputation. The marriage was arranged by Mirabell, and Fainall agreed to it hoping to benefit from Arabella's mother wealth.

At the same time Fainall is cheating on his wife with Mrs. Marwood, who's really more interested in Mirabell.

### **Female Characters**

Lady Wishfort, enemy to Mirabell

Mrs. Fainall, daughter to Lady Wishfort

Mrs.  
Marwood, friend to Mr. Fainall, and likes Mirabell.

Mrs. Millamant, niece to Lady Wishfort,

Betty, waiting- woman at the Chocolate-

Mincing, woman to Mrs.  
Millamant.

Foible, woman to Lady Wishfort

Peg, waiting- woman to Lady

### **ACT I**

Mirabell and Fainall are playing cards in a coffee house. Fainall teases him about having his mistress, Millamant, on his mind. A servant comes into tell "Mirabell that his valet, Waitwell and Foible, Lady Wishfort's maid "have married and bedded." Mirabell sets up a meeting with Foible. It is his plan to disguise Waitwell as "Sir Rowland," Mirabell's pretended rich uncle, and make him propose to Lady Wishfort. Once she has agreed to. This will mean that Millamant's property will come to him. Mirabell wants to meet Foible. Mirabell and Fainall continue to talk, then a messenger comes for Witwoud with a letter for him from his half-brother, Sir Wilfull, Witwoud complains about Sir Wilful for a while, and then Petulant, his

sidekick. We come to know that Petulant pays some ladies to follow him around.

### **Critical Comments**

There is only partial exposition (Explaining the situation). It is indirectly suggested that the relation between Mirabell and Mr. Fainall are strained (tense). Fainall suspects that Mirabell loved his wife Mrs. Fainall, before her marriage. He also suspects that his beloved Marwood loves Mirabell. Mirabell suspects Mrs. Marwood to be Fainall's Mistress. There is a brilliant display of wit, particularly by Mirabell.

### **ACT II**

Mrs. Marwood suspects that she has an affair with Mirabell. Mrs. Fainall goes off with Mirabell and Fainall walks with Mrs. Marwood. Fainall tells Mrs. Marwood that he knows his wife has perhaps a love affair with Mirabell. Mrs. Marwood is furious, even though it's true, and threatens to reveal their affair and how Fainall has spent her fortune as well. Fainall tells her that if she hadn't told Lady Wishfort that Mirabell was faking his courtship of her, Mirabell and Millamant would have been married. According to Fainall, Mrs. Marwood spilled the beans on Mirabell because she wanted Mirabell for herself. Mirabell and Mrs. Fainall are talking. Mirabell tells her that she has a rich husband in spite of her double standard. Then he tells her about his plot to marry Millamant. After some time, Millamant enters, squashes Witwoud with her cleverness. Mirabell meets Foible and Waitwell and sends Foible on to Lady Wishfort so that she can talk to her about Mirabell's rich uncle who wants to marry her. For this Mirabell has offered Foible a bribe of harm for the servant couple of the plot.

### **Critical Comments**

Thai acts show that love outside marriage is a fashion in this society. That is why Mr. Fainall loves Mrs. Marwood but marries Lady Wishfort's daughter, Mrs. Fainall. Mirabell loves Mrs. Fainall and though there is no hindrance in their marriage he persuades her to marry Mr. Fainall. Mrs. Marwood loves Mirabell and pretends to love Mr. Fainall. Love here seems just a game without faith and trust.

### **ACT III**

Lady Wishfort is having her make-up done. Mrs. Marwood arrives, Lady Wishfort complains that Foible's been gone since morning. Lady Wishfort tells Mrs. Marwood to go into her closet while she questions Foible, Foible arrives, tells Lady Wishfort that "Sir Rowland" is

already madly in love with her. Foible tells Lady Wishfort that the only reason she was talking to him was to defend her against his nasty jokes.

Lady Wishfort leaves, forgetting that Mrs Marwood is still in the closet. Mrs. Fainall comes rushing in, worried that Mrs. Marwood has told Lady Wishfort about the meeting .Mrs. Fainall tells Foible that she knows about the "Sir Rowland " plot, thus revealing it to Mrs. Marwood. Foible reassures her that she has fixed things despite Mrs. Marwood's intervention. Foible and Mrs. Fainall leave. Mrs. Marwood comes out of the closet. She is furious and is determined to take revenge herself on Mrs. Fainall and Mirabell. Lady Wishfort comes back in, and Mrs. Marwood tells her that she ought to get Sir Wilful to marry Millamant. Lady Wishfort leaves to get dressed. Millamant and Mrs. Marwood have a bit of a spat over Mirabell. In the dining hall , Fainall and Mrs. Marwood talk about how to foil Mirabell's ' Sir Rowland' plot. Fainall is furious. Mrs. Marwood suggests that he take his revenge by telling Lady Wishfort of Mrs. Fainall's affair with Mirabell. Lady Wishfort, she says, will do anything to save her daughter's reputation, even sacrificing her niece Millamant's happiness and fortune. Fainall agrees to keep Sir Willful drunk. Mrs. Marwood offers to write an anonymous letter to Lady Wishfort, telling her about Mrs. Fainall and Mirabell's affair.

### **Critical Comments**

The plot seems to move forward quickly. Mirabell's intrigue and the counterintrigue of Mr. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood are being put in action. Lady Wishfort's efforts to hook a husband appear very funny. Her library is full of devotional books and anti-theatrical books. On the other hand, she is full of lust even at fifty-five.

### **ACT IV**

Lady Wishfort is preparing for "Sir Rowland's" arrival. She cannot decide if she would meet him standing or she would receive him while lying on the bed. Lady Wishfort sends Foible off to make sure Sir Wilful is proposing to Millamant as she ordered him to. Sir Wilful tries to propose to Millamant, but he can't muster up the courage. So Mrs. Fainall locks them in together. Millamant dismisses him with an apt quotation. Mirabell and Millamant set the terms for their marriage. This is the "proviso scene" of the play. As Mirabell leaves, Witwoud and Petulant come. Both are drunk. Without explaining that Petulant and Sir Wilful have been fighting about Millamant, Petulant bluntly asks Millamant if she'll marry him. She



ignores him. Waitwell, in disguise as "Sir Rowland," appears and Lady Wishfort welcomes him. He presses Lady Wishfort for an early date for their marriage. Mrs. Marwood's anonymous letter arrives, revealing "Sir Rowland's" identity, but Foible manages to make Lady Wishfort believe that the letter is a plot by Mirabell to prevent her marrying his uncle."

### **Critical Comments**

Here the country squire is ridiculed in his comic courtship. Sir Rowland's courting of Lady Wishfort is equally farcical. The proviso scene in *The Way of The World* is thought to be the best in Restoration Comedy. Both Morabell and Millamant are in love with each other. There is little display of emotion. Ladies had to be very careful in choosing their husband. Carelessness in such affairs might lead to an unhappy marriage. The woman had to be quite wary (cautious) before her final consent to marry.

### **ACT V**

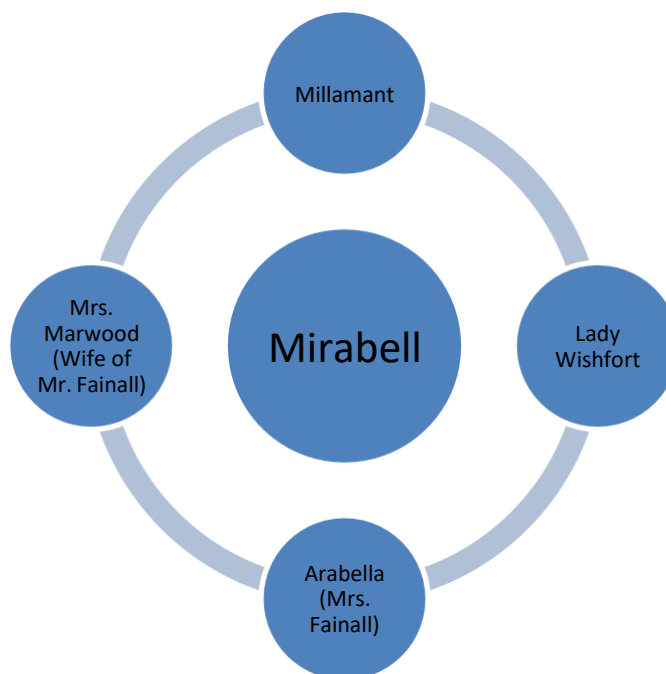
Lady Wishfort has evidently found out that "Sir Rowland " was a fake, and is in the process of dismissing Foible. Foible explains to Mrs. Fainall that Mrs. Marwood has told Lady Wishfort everything and that Fainall has had Waitwell arrested. Foible tells her that her husband has been having an affair with Mrs. Marwood. Lady Wishfort takes her daughter to task for the affair with Mirabell. Mrs. Marwood takes the opportunity to terrify Lady Wishfort with the scandal of a divorce. Fainall comes in and tries to blackmail Lady Wishfort. He lays down his conditions for not divorcing his daughter. The first condition is that Lady Wishfort will sign over her estate to his management. Secondly, she will not marry again, the third is that Mrs. Fainall will give the rest of her fortune to her husband and the fourth condition is that she be engaged to Mirabell without Lady Wishfort's consent. Fainall returns with the deeds that will sign over his wife's estate and Millamant's money to him. Mirabell offers to save Lady Wishfort from Fainall's tyranny. In return, Lady Wishfort gives her consent for Millamant to marry him. Foible comes in and testifies to the affair between Fainall and Mrs. Marwood. Waitwell comes with a black box. It contains a deed of conveyance. While\_ Mrs.Fainall was widowed, and before she married Fainall, she secretly signed over all her property to Mirabell in trust. This means that Mirabell still controls it and Faint can't get his hands on it, and never could. They go out in anger and disappointment. Sir Wilful takes back his proposal of marriage to Millamant so that Mirabell can marry her. Mirabell returns Mrs.Fainall her deed of conveyance. But Mirabell assures her that he's got no money of his own. And he is now going to be completely dependent on his wife for

money.

### Critical Comments

Sir Wilful, a country square, is presented in a gentle manner. Fainall's intrigue is condemned because its aim is money. Mirabell's intrigue is sympathetically treated because its sole motive is love. Lady Wishfort evokes our sympathy in spite of her faults and vanities. The ending of the play is quite artificial. The black box containing Mrs. Fainall's deed is quite an arbitrary device to arrange a happy ending.

### Relationships of Mirabell



### A Quick Revision

**Que-** Write a brief Character-sketch of Sir Wilful Witwoud?

**Ans-** Sir Wilful! Witwoud plays a brief role in the play. Like other characters in the play, Sir Wilful does not quite conform to type. He is shown as having country manners: he calls for slippers; he drinks too heavily; he is very shy with Millamant, awed by the city lady. He is justifiably angry in his encounter with his brother His attitude in other matters suggests a sensible person; he certainly does not wish to marry Millamant if she does not choose; he obviously likes Mirabell, presumably a sign of good judgement, and gladly helps to foil Fainall.

**Que-** Write a note on the proviso scene or the bargaining scene?

**Ans-** The proviso scene or the bargaining is an important scene in Act IV of the play. Millamant lays certain conditions before Mirabell. She insists on full liberty after marriage. She asks him not to call her by names of endearment such as 'wife', 'spouse', 'my dear', 'joy', 'jewel', 'love', etc. She also makes it clear that after marriage, she would be at liberty to pay and receive visits to and from whom she pleases, to write and receive letters.

**Que-** Write a brief character sketch of Petulant?

**Ans-** Although Petulant is one of the most minor characters, he is a sparkling one. Congreve has drawn his character with gusto. He amuses us because of his ingenious fabrications. Petulant has a high sense of humour. His humour is refined humour. Petulant is a man of pretensions. Mirabell considers his pretensions rather impudent. But he is a frank and honest fellow. On the whole, the character of Petulant has been drawn brilliantly.

**Que-** Write a brief character-sketch of Mrs. Marwood?

**Ans-** Mrs. Marwood is the angry young woman of *The Way of the World*. She hates Mirabell because he has rejected her offer of love. Mrs. Marwood is not only an ideal dreamer, but she is a scheming little enchantress. Her plan is quite simple and well-conceived. It is disclosed in the end that both have conspired to deprive Lady Wishfort and Millamant of their fortunes. It is also their plan that they will marry each other when Fainall divorces his wife. Thus, we find that Mrs. Marwood is the discarded beauty.

**Que-** Write critically on the complex structure of *The Way of the World*? Or.

Discuss *The Way of the World* as a play of intrigues?

**Ans-** The Restoration audiences wanted only relaxation and amusement in a playhouse. Without the fable and action, no play could be written. A well-known Restoration dramatist, Etherege, is reported to have observed that "a plot's too gross for any play. Another feature of the plot of Restoration Comedy is its hotchpotch character. A large number of incidents, dealing with intrigue and deception are stuffed into the body of a plot for the sake of variety. They are loosely strung together with little regard to what may be called "unity of action" or "Design".

Samuel Sorbiere, who visited England in 1663 noted this casual treatment of plot by the English dramatists, "for they mind only the parts as they come one after another and have no regard to the whole composition ". Intrigues and counter intrigues are, in fact, the main

elements of a Restoration Comedy. In his desire to present scenes of amusement, the dramatist doesn't mind holding up the action of the plot and sometimes even forgetting that there is such a thing as a story in his play or that the characters are supposed to do much more than mere talking.

The plot of *The Way of the World* is likewise confusing and complicated. The play's main story is Mirabell's efforts to marry Millamant with Lady Wishfort's consent and the way he overcomes the obstacles raised by Fainall and Marwood. Mirabell needs Lady Wishfort's consent for marriage with Millamant because Lady Wishfort is her guardian and custodian of her marriage portion of six thousand pounds a year. He would lose this amount if Lady Wishfort doesn't give her consent. The counter-intrigues of Fainall and Mrs. Marwood are designed to prevent this consent. At first Mirabell indulged in mock-wooing. He flattered the old lady with verses in her praise. He even made her believe that she was in labour when she lay in a fit of dropsy (disease). This plan was foiled by Mrs. Marwood's counter-intrigue who exposed Mirabell's intrigue. When Foible was talking with Mrs. Fainall about Mirabell's intrigue, Mrs. Marwood overhears them. Fainall, then, in collaboration with her, plans another counter-intrigue. She plans to write a letter to Lady Wishfort informing her of Mirabell's intrigue. The letter is designed to be delivered to Lady Wishfort right when she is in conversation with "Sir Rowland." Fainall also plans to tell Lady Wishfort that he would seek divorce from his wife on the charge of adultery unless Lady Wishfort wills all her property to him and undertakes not to marry in future.

Mirabell's intrigue is innocent in the sense that its purpose is the union of true lovers, whereas Fainall-Marwood counter-intrigue is for money and revenge and, therefore, malicious. Fainall-Marwood seems to succeed to a large extent. Love affairs between Fainall and Marwood are being proved with the evidence of Mincing and Foible. Finally, Mirabell frustrates Fainall's intrigue by producing a deed whereby Mrs. Fainall had already transferred everything to Mirabell. Thus, truth and honour ultimately prevail over open libertinism and studied heartlessness which was then the way of the world. The plot of *The Way of the World* leaves many loose ends. Fainall and Marwood had almost succeeded in their efforts at blackmailing Lady Wishfort. Suddenly, without any adequate preparation for it, Witwell brings the black box that contains a deed. Witwoud and Petulant testify having signed the document without reading it. All this appears to be too contrived and incredible.

**Que** "The Way of the World is a true and faithful mirror to contemporary society". Discuss?

Or

What does Congreve mean by the world in the context of the play?

**Ans-** In 1660, the Monarchy was restored in England and Charles-II became the king. During his exile, Charles II had been living in France. When he returned to England, he brought with him French attitude and ways of life, after his restoration, to the throne. These vices became virtues for his courtiers. As a result, the upper-middle class of the society – the Drobles, courtiers and the lords became corrupt and immoral.

**Comedy of Manners:** The comedy of manners is a kind of comedy in which the manners, customs and outlook of a particular section of the society are depicted. This kind of comedy became very popular in the latter half of the Seventeenth Century or the Restoration age. In the hands of playwrights like Wycherley, Vanburgh, Etherege and Congreve, this comedy flourished.

**The Way of the World: As a Mirror to the Society:** In this play, Congreve mirrors the manners of his contemporary society. The main ingredients of this play are intrigues, love-affairs, jealousy, cuckoldry, legacy-conflicts and dazzling wit. That is perhaps why the play is considered as "the best and finest flower of Restoration Comedy."

**Social Life of the Upper Classes:** The Way of the World, depicts the social life of the upper classes with all its foibles and manners. Mirabell and Mr. Fainall, the young gallants and rakes, are chasing women. Lady Wishfort, even at the age of fifty five, considers herself a young woman. Arabella, the daughter of the lady, is also of the same nature. Millamant is in the habit of keeping lap-dogs. Petulant hires women to come and ask for him in the chocolate-houses. Witwoud does not recognise his own brother as it is against the fashion of the time.

**Fashionable Women with their tastes:** The Way of the World presents women in a ridiculous light, with their vanities, affectations and fashions. Some of their remarks are self-contradictory and a satire on themselves. We find Lady Wishfort, worried about her makeup, even at the age of fifty five and in search of a suitor.

**Man-Woman Relationship:** The ingredients of family, marriage and fortune were the staple of Restoration Comedy. In the play, the debate between Mirabell and Millamant on the man-woman relationship in marriage reflects something of the upper-class social and domestic milieu.

**Places of Scandal and the Clubs:** Generally, a comedy implies a social attitude towards life, for without society mankind cannot survive. This comedy represents the nights and clubs of the Restoration period. The charge of immorality or lewdness or pornography hangs over the Restoration Comedy. The servants and maid servants are of loose morals and are victims of their master's sexual lust. The places of scandal and intrigue are St. James Park, Hyde Park and the Mall, where lovers and the intrigues come and play their games.

**Spurious love and frailty:** Pure love and emotions were far away from the social life of the Restoration age.

**Conclusion:** The restoration age was a corrupt age and the playwright paints a damaging picture of contemporary society. Avarice, lust and sexual jealousy appear to govern all the actions and this picture corresponds, no doubt, to historical reality.

**Que-** Evaluate the Way comedy of the World manners?

**Ans-** The realistic comedy which flourished during the Restoration period is generally known as the "Comedy of Manners". The imaginative flight of the Elizabethans and the idealistic or philosophical poetry were discarded in favour of down to earth expressions. The Restoration Comedy of manners was largely influenced by the French dramatist Moliere. He provided the dramatists with new ideas about plot and comic characterization. The point of hard realism and a hard sitting satirical temper are due to the effect of Johnson's comedy of humour.

A "manner" is generally speaking, a kind of superficial behaviour. Manners are of the nature of follies and vices. The plays of this period were written for a small section of society. The players catered to the tastes of only the courtly classes. The play represents the peak and perfection of this type of comedy. It gives us a kaleidoscopic view of morals, behaviour, habits, fashions, affections etc. It has a lot of historical value as it gives us a prep into the social life of the upper class people of London in the latter part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He conveys to us the illicit love and adulterous relationship of contemporary higher society through Fainall. Mrs Fainall, Mrs. Marwood and the hero Mirabell. All these characters commit adultery and never have any qualms of conscience. George Shreburn says "Restoration comedy is rather less a representation of life than it is commentary upon manners. There is a wide gap between what they appear or show and what they actually are. The wildness in the hero is considerably restrained, we have seen, by the fashion code and the necessity of being well bred. He sacrifices all other pleasures to his love. The heroine is never permitted to cross the conventional danger line of physical chastity. The dramatist has

imitated his society but never glorified the immorality; he criticised it. Sex and money are dominant themes in the Restoration Comedy of Manners. A sign of Witwoud's affectation that he doesn't know who Sir Willful is. He says that it is not fashion in the town to recognise one's relatives whereupon Sir Wilful rightly says, "The fashion is a fool and you are a GOP, dear brother". Witwoud and Petulant have been intended as fake wits. One of the major qualities of the Restoration Comedy is the witty exchange of words. The Dialogue is sharp and witty. Repartee is the very soul of their conversation. The plot of *The Way of the World* does not cover much time. It has a relative lack of the conventional type of dramatic action. Some critics have attacked the comedy of manners for the elements of sex, and immortality in it. The love or sex is conveyed to the readers only through dialogues, there is no actual representation of love scenes on the stage. The dramatists apply wit and sharp talk to the purpose of probing the depth of sex life. Sex in the Comedy of Manners is the focus of an analytical study.

**Que-** The characterization in *The Way of The World* has a subtlety which separates it from any obvious portrayal of type, Comment?

Or

"Congreve's characters in *The Way of the World* are living persons and not puppets". How far do you agree with this statement?

**Ans-** Introduction: Congreve's *The Way of the World* is regarded as "the best and the finest flower of Restoration comedy". Congreve's plays are particularly known for their brilliant characterisation. The dramatist is able to present a kaleidoscopic view of contemporary social morality.

**Characterization in *The Way of the World*:** In this play, Congreve exhibits great skill and profound understanding in character portrayal. The Restoration Age, being an age of loose moral behaviour and free sex, could find expression only through characters which are typed. They represent one aspect or the other of contemporary society very well.

**True Wits and False Wits:** Congreve's success as an artist of characterisation, however, lies in providing different shades to his characters. True wit is represented by Mirabell and Millamant. Wilfull and even Lady Wishfort represent false wit.

**Names as Index-cards:** All characters bear ticket names which reveal their true nature. Mirabell could also be interpreted as 'one who is admired by belles.' and Marwood is 'one

who would destroy everything', these names are highly suggestive and, in fact, they reveal the true nature of various characters.

**Lady Wishfort:** Lady Wishfort is a unique character. She plays a major role in the play. She wants to make her presence felt among the gentlemen of the town. Her affected behaviour in the presence of Sir Rowland and her fascination for Mirabell make her a truly comic character.

**Mirabell:** He is a typical urbane gentleman. He possesses all the polish, grace and refinement of a middle-class gentleman and this makes him popular among young ladies. He is intelligent, shrewd, practical and manipulative. Mirabell is a practical man.

**Millamant:** Millamant reminds us of the Shakespearean heroines, Rosalind of *As You Like It*. She is Congreve's great triumph. She is wise, witty, practical and unsentimental. She loves Mirabell. Because of her sparkling wit, beauty and realistic attitude, Millamant becomes the memorable heroine.

**Mr. Fainall:** Mr. Fainall emerges as a villain in the play. Mrs. Marwood, who is his mistress, Fainall blackmails Lady Wishfort but he is outwitted by Mirabell both in shrewdness and in brilliance.

**Mrs. Fainall:** Mrs. Fainall is a minor character but plays an important role in bringing the two lovers together in marriage. She had an affair with Mirabell before marriage and is still on friendly terms with him but her husband doesn't love her. She hates him and he leaves her in the end.

**Mrs. Marwood:** She is a complex character who is jealous, and bitter. Her villainous nature is seen when she joins hands with Mr. Fainall and tries to put obstacles in the union of the two lovers.

**The Fops:** The fops are Witwoud, Petulant and Sir Wilfull Witwoud. They are not villains. They are comic characters and are 'types' to serve the purpose of the playwright.

**Conclusion:** His characters are "lively" and they impress the reader in the pages of the play and the audience on the stage. Congreve shows himself as a master of character portrayal in the play.

**Que-** Write a critical note on the plot construction of the *Way of the World*?  
Or



Discuss the Plot of Construction of the 'The Way of the World' with special reference to the elements of intrigue and dissimulation?

**Ans-** Introduction: Congreve's last play, "The Way of the World", which is generally regarded as his masterpiece, has a complex and intricate plot. The play has a baffling plot without much action. When the play is read, a hawk's eye is required to detect them and keep them in order.

**Confusing Family Relationships:** The mode of narration further intensifies the complexity. Sir Wilful is Lady Wishfort's nephew. Millamant is her niece. Witwoud also is her nephew. Witwoud is half-brother to Sir Wilful. All such information puzzles the reader as the family history of Lady Wishfort has not been given. Lady Wishfort had two sisters who were already dead. One of them was the mother of Millamant. The other was the mother of Sir Wilful but after her death, her husband married again and thus came Witwoud. Hence he is half-brother to Sir Wilful.

**Various Love Affairs:** The play has many love affairs. Mirabell and Millamant but Millamant cannot marry against her wishes and if she does, she will lose half of her fortune. Mirabell starts courting the aunt herself. He arranges a marriage between his servant Waitwell and Foible, Lady Wishfort's maid servant. He introduces Waitwell in guise of Sir Rowland. Mrs. Marwood has a soft corner for Mirabell but she is carrying an illicit relationship with Mr. Fainall. Mr. Fainall is the husband of Arabella, Lady Wishfort's daughter who had a premarital relationship with Mirabell. Lady Wishfort wants Millamant to marry Sir Wilful, her nephew. This net of relationships and love-affairs is very confusing and baffling for the reader.

**Baffling Intrigues:** There are countless schemes and intrigues planned and brought into action by various characters. Mr. Fainall joins hands with Mrs. Marwood, his mistress and devises a scheme to claim the fortunes of Mrs. Fainall, Lady Wishfort and Millamant. But Mirabell outshines him by his counter-intrigue and entraps Fainall. He prepares Sir Wilful and Millamant to pretend that they have agreed to marry each other. Again, he presents a black box containing some documents. According to these legal documents, Mirabell is the trustee of Mrs. Fainall's fortune and Mrs. Fainall has nothing of her own. In this way, he defeats Fainall in the battle of wits and protects the fortunes of both Mrs. Fainall and Millamant.

**Conclusion:** In this way, it is seen that The Way of the World has a very complex and

baffling plot. The witty dialogues, that the. Exchanges are one of the best qualities of the play. Except, these one or positive aspects, the play produces an irritating effect.

**Que-** Bring out the differences between romantic comedy, comedy of humour and Restoration comedy of Manners?

**Ans- Its characteristics**

Comedy is a term that is applied to plays which have a non-tragic ending and plays in which characters and situations are treated humorously and the purpose is to excite laughter and amuse the audience. The main difference in various kinds of comedies is that they are different kinds. They may be silly, tickle the spectator, or give him pinpricks without hurting him; or they "hit him with a blown up bladder, but they do not hurt, and are inoffensive. A real comedy always aims at evoking laughter, or at least, a smile of pure enjoyment. We have various kinds of comedies such as classical, Roman, medieval, Elizabeth or romantic, comedy of humour of Ben Johnson, Restoration comedy "of manners, comedy of intrigue, and sentimental comedy. A dramatist, it has been stated by a critic, writes comedies because he finds "the spectacle of human life, or some of its aspects, amusing or absurd, or find that some aspects of life need to be improved or corrected and proceeds to satirize, mock, scorn, or ridicule them. Thus these three comedies, the romantic, the comedy of humour and the comedy of manners, differ from each other and all seek to deal with the incongruous, or the absurd, or what is bad in life.

The Elizabethan comedy or romantic comedy, It is primarily a comedy built around the theme of love – love in all its varieties, love between man and woman, between man and man (friendship) and between woman and woman. The hero and heroine meet under strange circumstances. The heroines in such comedies are usually disguised as men and their disguise causes great deal of confusion and misunderstanding which becomes the source of laughter and amusement. All the comedies of Shakespeare are set off in far off places which are the creation of his imagination. All the characters in Shakespeare's romantic comedies such as Twelfth Night are real, creatures of flesh and blood. All the comedies of Shakespeare contain parts which are comic amuse and hurt not, but the realistic portions are also vivid uses realism to ridicule romantic notions about life and love. Shakespeare never didactic openly, but implications of his realism and satire are quite clear.

## **Comedy of Humour**

Along with the romantic comedy, it deals with everyday life in the taverns, inns, and shops of the period. Jonson's comedy of humour, or more appropriately Jonson's satiric comedy was a logical development from the realistic comedy. The basis of comedy of humour is the medical theory that human constitution contains four fluids, blood, choler and black bile (cause of melancholy, passivity, depression etc.) Comedy of Manners of the later part of the seventeenth century is a comedy because, it has several elements found in all comedies, and that is, it is comic, satirical, and even farcical.

The subject matter is realistic as it aims to depict the life of a section of the upper class of the period and treats their activities which centre around marriage and comically as well as satirically. In treating this theme these plays are indecent but they are not immoral as it has been attacked as such by several critics. But these plays have a deeper meaning. "It is this dialectic between inner desires and outward appearance-not instinct alone or manners alone-that informs the comedies with masks, play-acting, disguise, intrigue and perhaps most important, create their language." A major difference between the Jonsonian comedy of humour or satirical comedy and comedy of manners is that the former deals with universal evils, vices and the like while the latter deals with the manners of a narrow section of the upper class of the Restoration period. The former becomes almost satirical and banishes the comic from it, while the Restoration Comedy of Manners ridicules and satirises the artificial and unnatural lifestyle of this class. The basic theme of all these comedies is the difference between appearance and reality. These are artificial social conventions of this sophisticated and shallow class and nature, that is, the fundamental traits of human nature. It is because of this reason that Norman Holland calls them the first modern comedies.

**Que-** Comment on the vision of the central subject of an ideal marriage which conjured up Congreve in *The Way of The World*?

Or

"In Congreve's *The Way of the World* the Central theme is undoubtedly the relations of men and women in marriage." Discuss?

**Ans-** The central subject of most Restoration comedies was love and marriage. Congreve's comedies seem to be subtle comments on love and marriage. As a result, *The Way of The World* comes before us as a portrayal of the Restoration society reflecting love, marriage

and

sex. To quote Karl Marx, “The immediate, natural and necessary relationship of one human being to another is that of man to woman “. Its theme is the relationship of men and women not only in marriage but outside marriage also.

**Treatment of Love:** The Restoration period was a period of loose morals. Although the principal love affair is in the play. The Way of the World, is the one between Mirabell and Millamant. Yet Mirabell has already had a love affair. Mirabell, in order to save his reputation, got her married to Mr. Fainall. Thus, we see that there is no morality in Mirabell's character. Mirabell in Act II says to Mrs. Fainall : “ You should have just so much disgust for your husband as may be sufficient to make you relish your lover”. The emotional side of love has been totally ignored.

The love-affair of Mr. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood is another false relationship. Mr. Fainall suspects her love with Mirabell and frankly tells her about that. At this, Mrs. Marwood feels annoyed and threatens Mr. Fainall to expose his affair with her. The core of the play is the love-affair between Mirabell and Millamant. Millamant knows that in the past, her lover was the lover of her cousin, who is now Mrs. Fainall. But she doesn't mind a lover with such a past.

**Treatment of Marriage:** The social institution of marriage is presented, as bondage and not as something sacred. The marriage of Arabella (Lady Wishfort's daughter) with Mr. Fainall proves an utter failure. This marriage takes place to cover up her illicit relations with Mirabell and the suspected pregnancy. .

**Proviso Scene:** In this scene emerge the conditions that are necessary for the success of a marriage between men and women in love. Millamant knows disillusionment that comes to people after marriage. She has known the unhappy experience of her cousin.

**Sex:** Congreve aimed chiefly depicting sex as a battle of wit. There is so much verbal sex in this drama that gives us the idea of the temper of time and makes palmer say, “Sex in Congreve is a battle of wit.”

**Conclusion:** To conclude, The way of the World is not merely a play depicting the manners but morals of the age, and this age is preoccupied with only one aspect of life mainly – Sex, and only Sexual Intrigues.

### 3.4 Check Your Progress

**Que-1** In what respects do you regard *The Way of The World* as a restoration comedy? Give a reasoned answer.

**Que-2** Discuss the *The Way of the World* as an excellent comedy which exposes false wit by contrasting it with true wit.

**Que-3** Write a critical note on the character of Mirabell.

**Que-4** Show how the title of *The Way of the World* projects the main theme of the play.

### 3.5 Summary

#### "The Way of the World"

Mirabell is a young man-about-town. He is in love with Millamant, a niece of Lady Wishfort. He has pretended to make love to the aunt to conceal his love for the niece. Mrs. Marwood has been in love with Mirabell but her advances have been rejected. So she, to revenge herself on Mirabell, discloses his deception to Lady Wishfort. Therefore, Lady Wishfort decides to deprive her niece of half of the inheritance if she marries Mirabell. Mirabell, plans that his servant Waitwell shall disguise himself as Sir Rowland, shall make love to Lady Wishfort and pretend to marry her. To prevent any betrayal he arranges the servant's marriage to Lady Wishfort's maid, Foible.

This plot is discovered by Mrs. Marwood. She also comes to know that Mirabell has in the past had an affair with Mrs. Fainall, daughter of Lady Wishfort. Mr. Fainall, outwardly a friend of Mirabell, is the lover of Mrs. Marwood. Fainall is to threaten to divorce his wife and discredit Lady Wishfort unless he is given full control of Mrs. Fainall's property and of Millamant's portion. The scheme of Mr. Marwood and Mr. Fainall fails. Mrs. Fainall brings proof of Mr. Fainall's relations with Mrs. Marwood. Mirabell produces a deed by which Mrs. Fainall, before her last marriage, made him trustee of her property. Lady Wishfort feels grateful to him for her release from Millamant. Mr. Fainall's threat. So she forgives Mirabell and permits his marriage with Millamant.

There is only partial exposition (Explaining the situation). It is indirectly suggested that the relation between Mirabell and Mr. Fainall are strained (tense). Fainall suspects that Mirabell loved his wife, Mrs. Fainall, before their marriage. He also suspects that his beloved Marwood loves Mirabell. Mirabell suspects Mrs. Marwood to be Fainall's Mistress. There is a

brilliant display of wit, particularly by Mirabell.

This act shows that love outside marriage is a fashion in this society. That is why Mr. Fainall loves Mrs. Marwood but marries Lady Wishfort's daughter, Mrs. Fainall. Mirabell loves Mrs. Fainall and though there is no hindrance in their marriage, he persuades her to marry Mr. Fainall. Mrs. Marwood loves Mirabell and pretends to love Mr. Fainall. Love here seems just a game without the faith and trust.

The plot seems to move forward quickly. Mirabell's intrigue and the counter intrigue of Mr. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood are being put in action. Lady Wishfort's efforts to hook a husband appear very funny. She is presented as a hypocrite. Her library is full of devotional books and anti-theatrical books. On the other hand, she is full of lust even at fifty-five.

Here the country squire is ridiculed in his comic courtship. Sir Rowland's courting of Lady Wishfort is equally farcical. The Proviso Scene in *The Way of the World* is thought to be the best restoration comedy. Both Mirabell and Millamant are in love with each other. There is little display of emotion. Ladies had to be very careful in choosing their husbands. Carelessness in such affairs might lead to an unhappy marriage. The woman had to be quite wary (cautious) before her final consent to marry.

Sir Wilful, a country square, is presented in a gentle manner. Fainall's intrigue is condemned because its aim is money. Mirabell's intrigue is sympathetically treated by her because of its faults and sole vanities. The ending of the play is quite artificial. The black box containing Mrs. Fainall's deed is quite an arbitrary device to arrange a happy ending.

### 3.6 Keywords

- **Male Characters** -Mr. Fainall, Mirabell, Mr. Witwoud, Sir Wilful Witwoud, Waitwell, Petulant
- **Female Characters**- Lady Wishfort, Mrs. Fainall, Mrs. Marwood, Mrs. Milamant, Peg (Waiting Woman), Betti (Waiting Woman).

### 3.6 Self-Assessment Test

- **Que-** Discuss *The Way of The World* as “the best and finest flower of restoration comedy”.
- **Que-** "The plot of *The Way of the World* is complicated and yet it is not without unity" Discuss.

- **Que-** Mirabell is the most brilliant hero in the Restoration comedy. Comment.
- **Que-**What point of view does Congreve reflect through the title *The Way of the World* ? Discuss.

### 3.7 Answer to Check your Progress

**Ans-1** *The Way of The World* is a typical restoration comedy. It represents a true picture of the restoration age. The term “Restoration Comedy” and “Comedy of Manners” are synonyms. In 1660, monarchy was restored in England Charles II became the King. The comedies written after the Restoration period are called Restoration Comedies or Comedy of Manners. They deal with the life of the upper classes in the restoration period. The social behaviour of the people had changed because society as a whole was taking a new turn. The restoration dramatist worked on the experimental temper of the society. During this period, men and women experimented. They frequently indulged in rationalising human relationships. Money had become the be-all and end-all of their life. The dramatists exposed their impurities in a satirical manner. Satire, wit, irony and humour were used as very powerful weapons by the restoration dramatists. All restoration comedies deal with the artificial aspect of life. In the words of Bonamy Dobree, "restoration comedy, then, expressed, not licentiousness, but a deep curiosity, and a desire to try new ways of living." *The Way of the World* presents a true picture of 18th century society. He describes the peculiarities, conflicts between youth and age, between parents and children in this great comedy of manners. Congreve provides us a deep insight into the social and moral atmosphere of the age.

It is true that the play is a traditional love story in the sense that its hero woos and finally wins the heroine. The dramatist's purpose is to show how Mirabell and Fainfall chase women in order to have fun and exploit them for the sake of money. On the other hand, Lady Wishfort regards herself as a young woman even at the age of 55. She wishes to be wooed. She uses her position to impose her views on Millamant. She tells Mirabell : "one's cruelty is one's power; and when one parts with one's cruelty, one parts with one's power." This shows the real nature of Lady Wishfort. The dramatist also shows how women have become victims. Their self- contradictory statements show that they are fickle minded.

Restoration comedy deals with the social and economic situation of the age. *The Way of the*

World aptly dramatizes this aspect of family life. For instance, the relationship between Mrs. Fainall and Mirabell clearly throws light on this complexity. Mrs. Fainall was once loved by Mirabell. She remains loyal to Mirabell. She is extremely upset because she is not loved by her husband. The insane jealousy between Mrs. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood is quite bitter and reflects that in a fashionable society, all is not well between different types of human beings. Mrs. Marwood is Fainall's mistress. Mrs. Fainall has all the more reason to be jealous of her. The theme of love has been presented in a typical restoration way. From the very beginning of the play it is clear that Millamant and Mirabell really love each other. When Mirabell blunders into the "Cabal Night", he presumes that Millamant blushes for herself. For the first time Mirabell is jealous of a woman. He feels that he is "somewhat too passionate a love; for I like with all her faults; nay, like her for her faults. The Proviso-scene is the finest and wittiest exchange of dialogues. The proviso-scene or the bargaining-scene between Mirabell and Millamant has a great comic value. It serves the dual purpose of providing comic-fun and of presenting the true idea of happy married life. Their use of legal language is justified because the whole society at that time was based upon the legal system. Millamant cannot inherit her 6000 pounds unless Lady Wishfort approves of her marriage. He has to manipulate the law for his own benefit. Both of them want to enjoy equality of status after marriage. As life-partners they want to have respect for each other. The concluding speech of Mirabell ends with a promise that "those duly endowed may live life truly. The Way of The World is a first rate Restoration comedy. One finds here, the sexual wit of Fainall and brilliant and healthy wit of Mirabell and Millamant. The dramatist shows that Millamant's wit can be charming as well as malicious. But she never becomes crude. She is alive and breathing.

## **Conclusion**

The dramatist has depicted all the weaknesses, vices and sex intrigues / immoralities of the age in this powerful play. It has all the features of a Restoration comedy. It is a supreme achievement of wit and elegance.

**Ans-2** The Way of the World is considered to be one of the finest Restoration comedies. It is rich in dazzling wit and brilliant dialogue. Many critics point out that this play is a failure because it lacks structural unity. When the play was staged, it could not become popular. It is true that this satiric comedy has plenty of wit and humour but the intricacies of the plot make it a confused play. In order to explain the discrepancies between the public and the



private world, the dramatist uses certain techniques which harm the structure of the play.

The Way of the World has many characters and various types of family relationships which are confusing. The family history of Lady Wishfort has not been presented. Thus, the information about the relationships is given bit by bit which confuses the readers. We learn that Mirabell pretends to be in love with Lady Wishfort. But the reality is something else. On the other hand, he wants to win her approval of his marriage to Millamant. But Mirabell's action cannot be understood. Again we are told about Mirabell's disclosure to Mrs. Fainall that her husband is a designing lover. When Fainall and Mrs. Marwood are engaged in conversation, one thing is clear about Fainall that his devotion is beyond doubt. The way love-affairs are presented in The Way of the World, it becomes clear that these love-affairs irritate the reader. For example, Mirabell and Millamant. In order to entice Lady Wishfort, Mirabell starts wooing the aunt. He also introduces Waitwell in the guise of Sir Rowland. The love affair between Mirabell and Lady Wishfort's daughter is also confusing in the sense that Lady Wishfort's daughter had pre marital relationship with Mirabell. On the other hand, Petulant and Witwoud want to marry Millamant. All this adds confusion and hampers the artistic growth of the plot. The play is full of intrigues and counter intrigues. We have Mirabell's two intrigues which are intended to secure the consent of Lady Wishfort for marriage between Mirabell and Millamant. Moreover, the ending of The Way of the World is artificial. Production of black box which contains a deed is also very sudden. Witwoud and Petulant testify that they have signed the document without reading it. Congreve expressed his faith in the neoclassical theories about observes three unities: Unity of Place, Unity of Time and Unity of action.

## **Conclusion**

However, Congreve's style has a typical beauty. In fact, Congreve's primary aim was to portray fashionable life in the London of his day. The power of wealth, selfishness and fashion determine the idea of marriage in this society. In spite of its architectural defects The Way of the World has a beauty of its own.

**Ans-3** Mirabell is undoubtedly a brilliant character in the Restoration comedy. He is in love with Millamant. But he has to get the approval of Millamant's aunt Lady Wishfort before marriage. In case Mirabell and Millamant marry without the approval of Lady Wishfort, Millamant will lose half of her fortune. Mirabell is a clever manipulator. He indulges in intrigues to achieve his aim. At first, he starts wooing Lady Wishfort. When his plan is

exposed by Mrs. Marwood, he does not surrender easily. He indulges in the second intrigue.

He tells everybody that he has a bachelor uncle who is rich. He also persuades his servant Waitwell to play the role of Sir Rowland. This proves that he is a clever manipulator. Mirabell is an astute judge of character. He never allows himself to be threatened by people like Waitwell and Foible. He tries to execute his plans in order to have the desired result. He knows the weaknesses of Fainall, Mrs. Fainall, Mrs. Marwood and Lady Wishfort. He studies their behaviour. Mirabell is a living example of an archetypal wit. Whenever he talks he is always to the point. He knows what is wrong and what is right. He knows how to convert his disadvantages into advantages. He also knows how to refuse the arguments of the other person.

Mirabellis in love with Millamant. He wants to marry her. However, Mirabell does not yield. Like a bold lover, he keeps on pursuing his aim. He ultimately succeeds. Mirabell's relationship with Millamant is quite typical. It is Millamant who succeeds in beating him at his own game. She teases him. She calls him too serious as well as too pompous. However, the fact remains that he is deeply in love with her. In Act II scene I, Mirabell explains his dilemma:

A Fellow that lives in a Windmill, has not more whimsical Dwelling than the Heart of a Man  
that is lodg'd in Woman. There is no point of the Compass to which they cannot turn,  
And by which they are not turn'd; and by one as well as another; For Motion not Method is  
their Occupation.

Mirabell enjoys the reputation of a chivalrous man. Mirabell is quite reasonable in his demands. He is against extremism. He does every effort to win Millamant. In the Proviso-scene, he expresses his ideas in a witty manner. Both Mirabell and Millamant reach any agreement regarding their marriage. They express their faith in a happy married life. That is why they believe that they have to be cautious and have to understand the nature of true love.

### **Conclusion**

Mirabell, thus, is a memorable character. He defeats Fainall's scheme by producing a legal document. He is a typical Restoration hero.

**Ans-4** The title of this comedy is quite apt because it reflects the main theme of the play. The

dramatist also presents the marriage of sparkling and true minds in this play. The meaning of the phrase shows that the play is concerned with materialism and problems of social living. Congreve deals with material elements of life. Congreve wants to depict the fashionable world of the town of London. It is also shown that characters belonging to the urban area hate those from the country. For example, Peg and Sir Willful Witwoud have rural backgrounds. They are perhaps not liked by other characters that have been brought up in the fashionable world of London.

Money plays a very crucial role in the fashionable world of the town. In fact, the way of the world is determined by money and power. It never occurs to Mirabell that he should marry Millamant without her whole fortune of 12,000 pounds. Fainall also marries his wife for her money. He is ready to divorce her to get more money. Power of money determines happiness and successful marriage. Lady Wishfort becomes the target of two plots because she is a rich lady. Thus, the yardstick of successful marriage is money.

The problem of responsibility and adjustment is also connected with the way you behave in society. The primary aim of the dramatist is to show that happiness and marriage depends upon understanding, responsibility and the desire to maintain one's own personality. It has been shown that Mrs. Fainall's irresponsible affair with Mirabell brings grief to her. Fainall's adulterous relationship with Mrs. Marwiid betrays the spirit of the way of the world. Mirabell's Sensible act as a safeguard and protects Mrs. Fainall's wealth. The Proviso-scene throws brilliant light on the theme of the play. The dramatist expresses his idea of love. The witty exchange of ideas between Mirabell and Millamant sums up the importance of the way of the world. Both Mirabell and Millamant agree how they will conduct themselves in marriage. Millamant tells Mirabell clearly : "I'll fly and be followed to the last moment, though I am upon the very verge of Matrimony, I expect you should solicit me as much as if I were wavering at the grate of a Monastery with one foot over the threshold." Millamant lays down certain conditions. She says that if Mirabell abides by these conditions she may "by degrees dwindle into a wife." This is really the way of the world.

## **Conclusion**

The play also presents life with all its and its changing circumstances. Congreve shows us that this world is constantly shifting. It has ambiguous moral judgements. It is also an absolute value.

### **3.9 References/ Suggested Reading**

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<b>Subject : English</b>	
<b>Course Code : MA 102</b>	<b>Author : Dr. Pallavi</b>
<b>Lesson No. : 04</b>	<b>Vetter</b>
<b>The School for Scandal</b>	<b>By John Dryden</b>

#### **4.0 Learning Objectives**

##### **4.1 Introduction About the Poem**

##### **4.2 Main Body of the Text**

##### **4.3 Further Main Body of the Text**

##### **4.4 Check our Progress**

##### **4.5 Summary**

##### **4.6 Keywords**

##### **4.7 Self-Assessment Test**

##### **4.8 Answer to Check your Progress**

##### **4.9 References/Suggested Readings**

#### **4.0 Learning Objectives**

- The students will learn about a play satirizing the behavior and customs of upper classes through witty dialogue.
- To understand an intricate plot with comic situations that expose characters' shortcomings.
- To make the students aware of malicious gossip and hypocrisy in the fashionable society.

##### **4.1. The School For Scandal (About the Author)**

##### **Life and works**

Richard Brinsley Sheridan is rightly regarded as the greatest and most popular writer of English comedy after Shakespeare.

**Birth and Early Education:** Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in Dublin in 1751. His mother was a novelist. His father, Thomas Sheridan was an actor and teacher of elocution. Sheridan was sent to the famous public school at Harrow. But, he was not a bright student and was denied admission to the university.

**Social Life at Bath:** Sheridan's parents moved to Bath in 1770. Bath was the pivot of fashionable social life in England at that time. Sheridan spent about two years here and during these two years he wrote sonnets, satires, verses. Bath proved to be a wonderful school for his social and literary education.

**His Elopement with Miss Linley Dules and Marriage:** At Bath he came across Elizabeth Linley, a sixteen year old girl. It is said that she decided to run away from home in order to escape from an unwelcome suitor. She asked Sheridan to accompany her. So, they escaped to France but were soon overtaken by the girl's father who forced her to return to Bath. Sheridan also came back. He had to fight a couple of fierce duels to win the hand of Elizabeth Linley. In 1773 Sheridan and Linley were formally married.

**"The Rivals" - His First Play:** On January 17, 1775 Sheridan's first play 'The Rivals' was first performed at Covent Garden Theatre. The first performance did not prove to be a success.

**Some Other Comedies:** In May of the same year, Sheridan put on a farce, 'St. Patrick's Day' or 'The Scheming Lieutenant'. In November he produced a comic opera in collaboration with his father-in-law under the title 'The Duenna'. It was a big success and ran for seventyfive nights at Covent Garden. This opera brought a great name to Sheridan.

**The School for Scandal:** In May 1777 Sheridan produced The School for Scandal which was enthusiastically received and brought Sheridan considerable prosperity. In 1779 'The Critic' was Produced.

**In Politics:** Sheridan decided to enter politics. He was elected member of parliament in 1780. Sheridan was an excellent orator. Sheridan made his mark as an orator when the trial against

Hastings began. In his brilliant speeches he exposed Hastings's malpractices in India. His career as a parliamentarian came to an end with his defeat at the polls in 1812.

**A Miserable Life Later On:** His relationship with his wife suffered greatly because of his social and political activities. She died in 1792 and three years later he married again. His financial problems multiplied as he was generally careless and easy going. His second wife was very extravagant. He had serious trouble with his creditors and in the last days of his life he had to bear the humiliation of being arrested for non-payment of debts. He died in a miserable condition in 1816.

### **The School for Scandal - an Appreciation**

The School for Scandal has been described by the critics as Sheridan's best comedy of the eighteenth century. It was first staged on 8th May, 1777. A frank, good-natured man taken in by a hypocritical brother was not a new situation, and was well-remembered from King Lear and Tom Jones, but. Sheridan made a fresh and superb contrast in the portrayal of Charles Surface and his brother Joseph Surface. Lady Teazle's good sense does not desert her as she listens to Joseph's cleverly stressed arguments.

### **Sentiments**

Gassner remarks, "Sheridan's play is the last splutter of the comic spirit of the Restoration in English theatre. In his play, The School for Scandal Sheridan points out that good nature could not cure all the ills of society. What distinguishes good from the bad was the degree of heartlessness in human behaviour. Real generosity of spirit might enhance the life of an extravagantly competitive, fashionable set.

### **The Screen Scene**

The Screen Scene in Act IV -Scene iii of the play The School for Scandal, is, however, a brilliantly contrived climax to the whole theme sentiment after which it only remains to twist the knife a couple of times to increase Surface's discomfort. The scene in a dramatic situation brings together different plots - Lady Sneerwell's love for Charles Surface, her scandal-game with Joseph, Sir Peter's suspicion of Charles relation with Lady Teazle, plotted by Lady Sneerwell and Joseph with the help of Snake; and the disillusionment of Sir Peters and Sir Oliver's Surface - and the screen is thrown down in a magnificent theatrical action to bring the four characters - Joseph, Lady Teazle, Sir Peters and Charles - face to face with each other to see the truth.

### **A Masterpiece**

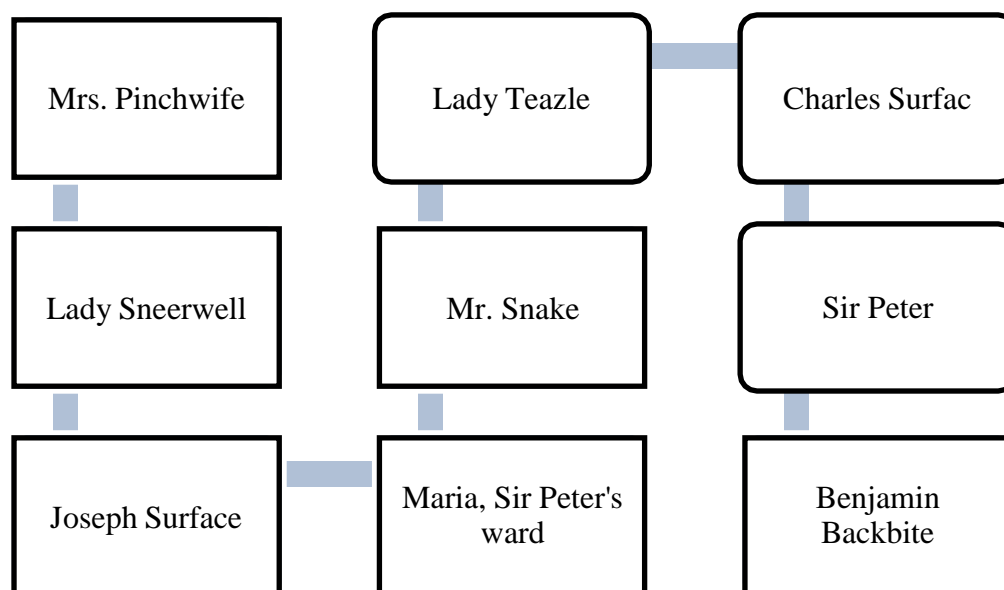
This comedy is considered to be Sheridan's and shows the excellence and the limitations of

Georgian drama. Sheridan combines the wit and elegance and the comic purely plot is mingled with the sentimental. As a result, the play becomes more subtle.

## As a Comedy of Manners

The School for Scandal marks the height of the development of the comedy of manners. It is the artificial comedy of the Restoration purged of indecency but undiminished in lustre. The ceaseless sparkle of its dialogue inevitably recalls Congreve. Lady Teazle and Mrs. Pinchwife are both moths attracted by the flame of temptation, but Lady Teazle is not seared by the fire that ruthlessly consumes her Restoration prototype. The School for Scandal is not merely the redemption of the artificial comedy of the Restoration from its grossness but the triumph of the comedy of manners over sentimental comedy. The farcical elements have been removed, the characterisation is firm, penetrating and human and above all, the plot is one of the most perfect in the whole range of English Comedy. The characters, too, are penetrating portraits so that one must go back to Congreve, and sometimes beyond Congreve to Shakespeare, to find the likes of Charles Surface and Lady Teazle.

## Major Characters



## 4.2 Main Body of the Text

### Act wise Detailed Summary of the Play The School for Scandal



Sheridan's comedy, *The School for Scandal* is a combination of two sketches *The Slanderers* and *The Teazles*. The play is beautifully composed to suit Sheridan's theatre requirements. It has five Acts with two or more scenes in each Act.

## **Act I Scene I**

Act I Scene I opens in the house of Lady Sneerwell sitting at the dressing table with her trusted Mr. Snake drinking chocolate. In a later Act (Act V Scene iii) Lady Teazle describes Lady Sneerwell as the President of the Scandalous College. Lady Sneerwell and Snake are busy in their process of spreading scandals. Snake then asks her the reason for her keen interest in Sir Peter Teazle and his wife. There are two young men whom Sir Peter has acted as a guardian since their father's death. The elder is an amiable person. The other is a dissipated and extravagant young man. The elder (Joseph Surface) is an admirer of Lady Sneerwell, and the other (Charles Surface) loves Maria, Sir Peter's ward. She also loves him. Snake remarks that he fails to understand why Lady Sneerwell was planning with Joseph to destroy the love affair of Charles and Maria. As a matter of fact Joseph is interested in Maria and in league with her he wants to destroy the love between Maria and his brother Charles. Snake wants to know her interest in the affair/Lady Sneerwell. She is taking interest in Joseph. He is "artful, selfish and malicious." In this way Lady Sneerwell describes how she wants to exploit the hypocrisy and sentimentalism of Joseph to gain her love, Charles Surface. She knows that Joseph would help her because he loves Maria and wants to end her love for Charles.

In the meantime, Joseph Surface comes to Lady Sneerwell's house and she informs him how she was discussing the affair with Snake. Joseph informs her that Charles is going from bad to worse and expresses his sentiment. He says that besides the sentiments, he wants to rescue Maria from the love of the libertine and he is hopeful that with Lady Sneerwell's help he would be able to achieve his objective. In the meantime, Maria enters the stage. She is scared by another disagreeable lover, Benjamin Backbite, and so she has come to Lady Sneerwell's place. In talk she hits out at scandal : "Well, I'll not debate how far scandal may be allowable; but in man, I am sure, it is always contemptible We have pride, envy, rivalry and a thousand motives to depreciate each other, but the male slanderer- must have the cowardice of a woman before he can traduce (slander) one." Sheridan in a good theatrical technique quickly introduces the major characters of the comedy with their motives and underlying conflict.

Scene ii of the Act I. Sir Peter is an old bachelor, but of late he has married a young girl, and so suffers from great tension. His tension and Lady Teazle's dialogue provide a lot of humour and exposes the life of fashionable leisurely society of London. In Scene ii Sir Peter Teazle a nice old gentleman has married a young Lady Teazle and is musing over his mistake. Sir Peter finds her extravagance unbearable and suspects her fidelity. The dialogue between Sir Peter and Lady Teazle is amusing. In the next act he reminds her of his poor circumstances and how he has made her a woman of fashion, of fortune and rank. Sir Peter points it out to make her his widow. Sir Peter objects to her relations with people who take pleasure in spreading scandals. In Scene ii (Act II) Lady Sneerwell, Mrs, Candour, Crabtree, Sir Benjamin and Joseph Surface are present in the house of Lady Sneerwell and are enjoying scandal- mongering, when Lady Teazle and Maria also arrive on the stage. Sir Peter also reaches there. He does not like scandal. Sir Peter leaves the company and Sir Benjamin Backbite cracks jokes at him. Joseph points to Maria that it appears she does not like the company. "Joseph defends the company that they have no malice at heart. He tells her that he wants to know that she does not dislike him. After all why she is so favourably disposed toward Charles. Maria reiterates her love for Charles and sarcastically remarks, "Whatever my sentiments of that unfortunate young man are, be assured I shall not feel more bound to give him up because his distresses have lost him the regard even of a brother." In the meantime Lady Teazle returns and now Joseph invites her to his library. She says that it is imprudent and she considers him a lover no further than fashion requires. He also admits that his attachment towards her was only platonic, and nothing more than a London wife's requirement. Lady Teazle quits but Joseph talks to himself about his situation.

### **Act II - Scene III**

Sir Peter's house. Sir Oliver Surface and Rowley enter the stage. Sir Oliver is laughing at the news that his old friend has married a young wife out of the country! Rowley cautions Sir Oliver that the marriage is only seven months old. Rowley expresses his astonishment at that but he is jealous of Charles due to Lady Teazle, whereas he suspects that the lady is favourably inclined to his brother, Joseph. Rowley is happy that Charles, the son of his good master, has at least one good friend. Sir Peter Teazle enters the stage, and welcomes his old friend to England almost after sixteen years. Sir Oliver congratulates him on his marriage; Sir Peter expresses his satisfaction with Joseph. But Sir Oliver has a different opinion: But he points out that he would like to test them to find out the truth about them. In return Sir Peter expresses his confidence in Joseph Surface. But Oliver again cautions Sir Peter against

Charles.

### **Act III - Scene I**

Sir Peter and Sir Oliver with Rowley think of a plan to find out the truth about the two brothers, Joseph and Charles. Sir Peter dislikes Charles and suspects him that he has relations with Lady Teazle. He likes Joseph. Sir Oliver has a different opinion. He suspects the hypocrisy of Joseph and considers Charles a good person. Charles needs money so he borrows money from Moses. Moses informs that he has brought with him a gentleman Mr. Premium, who is ready to lend money to Charles. Charles does not recognise his uncle, Sir Oliver. So Sir Peter Teazle asks Sir Oliver to represent Mr. Premium and get first-hand information about the scandals afloat in the society about Charles. Sir Oliver accepts the plan and leaves with Moses. In his absence Sir Peter meets Maria and asks her opinion about Charles. He is interested that she should change her love for Charles and agree to marry Joseph. But she is adamant. She refuses to change her love, Maria leaves, but Lady Teazle enters the stage. Sir Peter and Lady Teazle again provide a lot of humour to the audience. They part fretting and fuming and threatened separation.

### **Scene II**

Sir Oliver and Moses reach Charles and seek meeting with Charles. After some delay they meet Charles.

### **Scene III**

Charles is sitting with his friend Careless and enjoying wine. He offers wine to his visitors and sings. Later on Moses introduces Sir Oliver as Mr. Premium. Charles introduces himself as a plain dealing businessman. Sir Oliver asks for some security for the money he is ready to lend him. Charles points out that he has nothing to offer as security but assures them that he has a devilish rich Uncle. Charles further tells Sir Oliver that his uncle has changed and nobody recognises him. Sir Oliver laughs. Sir Oliver then points out that Charles needs a few hundred immediately, for that he has any security, Ultimately Charles suggests he has paintings of his ancestor and if the gentleman is interested in buying them. Sir Oliver agrees to purchase them.

### **Act IV - Scene**

Charles Surface, Sir Oliver Surface (disguised) Moses and Careless enter the picture room of

Charles. Sir Oliver expresses pleasure at the paintings. Auction of the painting is, again, a very amusing scene. Paintings of the ancestors are sold by Charles, unknowingly of course, to Sir Oliver, his uncle. After all the pictures were sold, Sir Oliver asked Charles to sell the painting of an ill-looking short person as well. But Charles tells him that this painting is of myuncle Oliver. It was painted before he left for India. Sir Oliver passes derogatory remarks about Sir Oliver's portrait. Charles tells Sir Oliver he won't sell it. He asks Charles a fabulous price for the portrait, but he refuses. At this Sir Oliver is pleased with Charles and forgives him. Charles laughs to himself and says in jest "For heaven! I find one's ancestors are more valuable relations than I took them for!"

### **4.3 Further Main Body of the TextScene ii**

The scene is in the parlour. Sir Oliver and Moses enter. Moses tells Sir Oliver that he has seen Charles in high glory. He is so extravagant. Rowley enters and looks at Oliver's purchase, Sir. Oliver again repeats, but he did not sell his paintings. He is so damned charitable.

### **Scene iii (The Screen Scene)**

The scene opens in a library. Joseph Surface and his servant enter. Joseph enquires if there is any letter from Lady Teazle. He is a bit worried. Sir Peter does not suspect him. There is a knock at the door. The servant feels that it must be Lady Teazle. Joseph is apprehensive that he is playing a very difficult role in the play. He believes that Lady Teazle has lately suspected his views about Maria. Lady Teazle enters. Joseph scolds her for being so late. Lady Teazle asks him to behave. He is so jealous of Charles too. She believes that it would be good if he would let Maria marry Charles. That alone will convince him. Joseph thinks that Lady Teazle was wrongly convinced. Lady Teazle complains that her friend Lady Sneerwell has circulated so many scandals about her, and all are baseless. But Joseph tells her that when a husband entertains a groundless suspicion, the original compact is off and she is free to outwit him. She tells him to leave honour out of argument. The servant announces the arrival of Sir Peter. Lady Teazle is taken aback Joseph sends her behind the screen to hide herself. In the meantime, Sir Peter Teazle enters. Sir Peter tells him that he has come to talk to him about an urgent matter. Lady Teazle's conduct of late has made him very unhappy. He is quite sure that she has

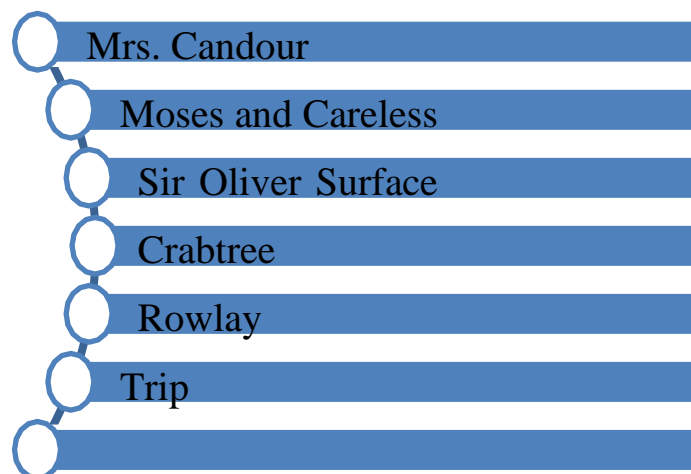
developed an attachment with some other person. Sir Peter further told him that he knows the

person. Sir Peter says that he suspects Charles Joseph disagrees. Joseph defends Lady Teazle but Sir Temple scoffs at her, "What's her principle - against the flattery of a handsome, lively young fellow?" Sir Peter feels sad and tells him that he cannot make it public. Joseph insists on proof, but he agrees that he was no longer his brother for a man who can break through the laws of hospitality - and attempt the wife - of his friend deserves to be branded as the pest of the society, Sir Peter praises Joseph for his sentiments. Sir Peter is sad and wishes that his suspicion about her may turn out to be baseless. But for the present he has decided to part with her and may in turn allow her the enjoyment of £800 /- for a year while he lives and by another will bulk of his property will belong to her after his death. Joseph is happy at Sir Peter's generosity. In the meantime, the servant informs that a gentleman wants to meet Sir Peter. Sir Peter feels panicky and asks Joseph to hide him from Charles. Joseph laughs and puts Sir Peter in a closet. Charles greets his brother, and enquires where Sir Peter. Joseph informs him that he was here but on hearing that Charles is coming he leaves. Joseph tells him that he is the cause of uneasiness. He feels that he is trying to gain Lady Teazle's affections. Charles laughs loudly. Joseph tells his brother that there is nothing in it to laugh at. Charles denies that he has never thought about it. He thought the lady had a weakness for him, but he did not bother, for you know my love for Maria. He tells his brother that he is surprised to hear his name when he has felt that the lady is interested in him. Joseph is badly upset and charges Charles that he should not talk so foolishly. Joseph asked him to 'shut up' but Charles points out that he is serious, and he has seen them together. Joseph begs him to be quiet, for Sir Peter has heard all this. Charles is struck and shouts but where is Sir Peter? Joseph points to the closet. He pulls him out of the closet and tells him the Old Guardian is trying to inquire about him incognito. On the other hand, Sir Peter informs him that he suspected him wrongly. All the show was Joseph's plan.

He promised that he would not think ill of him. Charles now hints at Joseph, convinced about his hypocrisy. Servant enters and informs Joseph that Lady Sneerwell has arrived. Joseph asks him to stop her. He begs leave from others. Sir Peter tells Charles that if he has remained in the company of his brother, one could hope that he should not have dissipated to the extent. Sir Peter asks Charles not to defame Joseph. Charles replies that he must be joking that Joseph had a girl with him. Sir points out that there was a little French milliner and he is sure that she is in the room. Charles moves towards the screen. Joseph enters, but at the same time Charles throws down the screen and he is wonder-struck to find Lady Teazle behind the screen. Sir Peter also gets upset. ... "While leaving the stage he addresses his brother,

"I'm sorry to find you have given that worthy man so much uneasiness! Sir Peter, there is nothing in the world as noble as a man of sentiment!" Joseph requests Sir Peter to listen to him a bit. Sir Peter asks him to proceed. He continues that "Lady Teazle, knowing my pretensions to your ward, Maria and afraid of your temper came to explain the situation to me, but on your sudden arrival she got scared and he had to hide her behind the screen". Sir Peter remarks that it is good. But Lady Teazle sharply replies that "There is not one syllable of truth in what that gentleman has told you." Joseph immediately reacts madam 'you will also betray me", Lady Teazle calls Joseph 'a hypocrite". Joseph calls her 'mad'. She replies that she is in her senses. Sir Peter, the tenderness he expressed for her, when he was not aware that she was listening, has gone deep in her heart and as "for that smooth-tongue hypocrite. I behold him now in a light so truly despicable, that I shall never respect myself for having listened to him". She leaves the stage abruptly. Joseph tries to convince Sir Peter. The climatic screen scene ends here.

## Minor Characters



## Act V -Scene i

Joseph entered the library with a servant, Joseph said to himself, "Sure, Fortune never

played a man of my policy (calculations) such a trick, before my character with Sir Peter! My hopes with Maria ! Destroyed in a moment ... I must try to recover myself"- and put up a brave face. Sir Oliver and Rowley enter the stage. . He is critical of Joseph. He tells him that he is glad to learn that he was related to him through his mother. Sir Oliver tells him if his Uncle Sir Oliver had been here, he should have a friend. Sir Oliver is a worthy man but avarice is the voice of the age. Sir Oliver asks him "does that mean he has not given you a billion of rupees! Pagodas!" Joseph says that nothing of that sort. He offers an apology and in distress Sir Oliver (Mr. Stanley) leaves the house. Sir Oliver begs to leave and humbly says that he was his most humble servant.

Rowley feels sorry for interrupting Joseph, but he gives him a note, which is quite urgent. It informs Joseph that his uncle Oliver Surface has arrived and is anxious to meet him at the earliest to embrace his worthy nephew. He is unhappy at the news. He asks Rowley to contact Mr. Stanley immediately but he is told that he has left and is beyond reach. Rowley leaves and Joseph expresses his real sentiment- Certainly his coming at this time is the cruellest piece of misfortune.

## **Act V - Scene ii**

Mrs. Candour and Maid, Maid, inform Mrs.Candour that her mistress will not see anybody at this time. Sir Benjamin Backbite enters. Mrs. Candour feels sorry for all the parties. Sir Benjamin Backbite feels no pity for Sir Peters for he was so partial to Mr. Surface. But Mrs.Candour points out that it was with Charles that Lady Teazle was detected. Sir Benjamin Backbite denies and points his finger at Joseph. Mrs. Candour contested, No!it was Charles as they are quarrelling Lady Sneerwell arrives. Lady Sneerwell informs Mrs.Candour about the affairs of Lady Teazle. Mrs.Candour still insists that Charles was her lover. Sir Benjamin Backbite, feels sad for Sir Teazle. Lady Teazle seeing Sir Peter ran out of the room in strong hysterias, and Charles after her. Then they began to fight with swords. Lady Sneerwell moves out to find the truth. Sir Oliver Surface enters and is pestered with all sorts of enquiries. In the meantime, Sir Peter Teazle also enters. Sir Ben is shocked to discover him. He told him that all are happy that the story of the duel is false. Sir Peter is so annoyed that he asks them to leave his house at once. They are made to leave the house.

Rowley comes to the house. Sir Peter states that it is a damned wicked world in which they live. Rowley informs them he had met Lady Teazle and she has requested him to be her leader. Sir Oliver knows about the closet, Sir Peter supports him, Joseph and his

sentiments ha! Ha! And that rogue Charles pulls Sir Peter out of the closet ha! Ha! Devilish entertainment ha! Ha! Both Sir Oliver and Sir Peter enjoy their experience and laugh to their heart's content. Rowley interrupts and asks Sir Peter for reconciliation. Sir Oliver quits allowing Sir Peter and Lady Teazle to understand each other. Sir Peter tells Rowley that she is not coming in the room. Rowley points out that she has kept the door open. She is in tears. Sir Peter feels that a little mortification appears very becoming in a wife. It would certainly do her good.

### **Scene iii \_ The Library**

Lady Sneerwell is quite upset at the thought that Sir Peter will be reconciled soon and then there will be no hurdle in the marriage of Charles and Maria. Joseph tells her that he was the greatest sufferer yet he was bearing calmly. Actually Lady Sneerwell loved Charles. But Charles loved Maria. So Lady Sneerwell plotted with Joseph to bring about an attachment between him and Maria. Joseph wants to marry Maria for the money attached with her name. So Lady Sneerwell wants either Joseph or Maria to come closer to bring about an estrangement between Charles and Maria; so that Charles, in that case, could develop love for Lady Sneerwell and marry her. But Joseph fails to pursue his plan properly and thus marriage between Charles and Maria is certain. This upsets Lady Sneerwell and she is left hurt. For that she is angry with Joseph. She feels he is responsible for the failure.

At this time, Sir Oliver enters the stage. Joseph had known him as Mr. Stanley. Sir Oliver comes to Joseph and says that his uncle is expected here in England at any time. Joseph wants to get rid of him. But Mr. Stanley tells him that he would love to meet his uncle. Joseph is annoyed and tries to push out of his room. But Charles enters the room. He shouts why they are manhandling his uncle. Joseph feels that Mr. Stanley is with Charles - Charles tells Joseph that he is not Stanley but Mr. Premium. Mr. Premium or Mr. Stanley. Sir Peter, Lady Teazle, Maria and Rowley enter. Sir Peter tells Sir Oliver how wonderful it looks that the two dutiful nephews are assaulting their uncle. Lady Teazle tells Sir Oliver that they have come at the right time to rescue him. Joseph and Charles look at each other and are totally confused. Sir Oliver then points out look at the elder nephew, how much he has received from him so far, and he was to get half of my fortune, but he is disappointed to find him completely destitute of truth, charity and gratitude. Sir Peter says he would not have accepted his judgement of Joseph if he had not found him treacherous and hypocritical. Charles is afraid that the family pictures would ruin him. But Rowley intervenes to say that Sir Oliver cannot



be harsh to Charles. Sir Oliver points out to Sir Peter that the rogue bargained with him. Charles accepts the charge but feels grateful to his uncle being his benefactor. Sir Oliver is pleased with Charles. Sir Oliver remembers that he heard about his attachment. Sir Peter asks Charles to speak out his sentiment. Maria blushes and leaves it to Charles to speak out. Charles adds, 'Maria: Sir Peter asks for the cause. Maria replies his own heart and Lady Sneerwell knows the cause.

Charles is surprised by the name of Lady Sneerwell. Lady Sneerwell enters. Joseph points out the evidence of one more person is necessary. Rowley brings in Snake. Snake immediately comes out, "I beg your ladyship- ten thousand pardon - you paid me extremely liberally for the lie in question - but I have unfortunately been offered double to speak the truth." Lady Sneerwell is virtually mad with rage and curses everybody. Lady Teazle tells her: "Hold, Lady Sneerwell - before you go, let me thank you for the trouble you and that gentleman have taken in writing letters to me from Charles, and answering them yourself. Joseph feels sad about the role of Lady Sneerwell and Snake to rule over them and to inspire him to avenge his brother, Sir Peter enjoins 'Moral to the last drop!' and Oliver suggests to him to marry Lady Sneerwell, if he can. Together they would do quite well. Lady Teazle now proposes to Sir Oliver to reconcile his nephew and Maria. The comedy comes to a happy end with a verse to the audience:

You can, indeed, each anxious fear remove  
For even Scandal dies, if you approve.

### **A Quick Revision**

**Que-** The School for Scandal is a satirical comedy in which Sheridan attacks not only the scandal loving society of his age but also the sentimental tradition of the Eighteenth Century Drama. Discuss?

**Ans.** Puritanism in England suppressed drama in England. With the Restoration of Charles II, drama appeared again and it is often referred to as Restoration Comedy of manners. By the beginning of the eighteenth century a new drama came into being with Addison and Steele, which was full of satire, comedy and moral sentiments. This comedy dominated the eighteenth century English drama. This comedy was based on liberal Christian and human virtues as in Paradise Lost or Pilgrim's Progress.

The story was the main interest in the comedy, often involving the partings and sorrows of lovers ultimately leading to a happy end, with the theme that charitable good always triumphs

over cunning evil. There was strong un-dramatic preaching in the play. Comedy was mixed with sad scenes to act as tear-jerkers.

Heroines, who from Shakespeare to Congreve had been lively and fascinating, placed cheerless passive creatures always in mortal danger. Plots became dramatic and wit, truth and zeal in life disappeared from the stage. The *School for Scandal* is a thorough going exposure of sentiment. He saw that complacent sentiments could easily conceal hypocrisy. So the unmarking of Joseph Surface in the play is made one of the mainsprings of the action. Sheridan, wants to retain occasional flavour of sentiment to please audience. Maria is a passive heroine. She does make a few spirited comments on scandal-mongering women:

"We have pride, envy, rivalry and a thousand motives to depreciate each other, but the male slanderer must have the cowardice of a woman before he can traduce one". She comes in contact with Charles only in the Last Act, but her speeches do reflect her love for him right from the beginning of the play; this makes her, heroine of a sentimental play.

In Joseph Surface, sentiment is mercilessly exposed. Joseph's sentimentality is a pose which has become a part of his nature.

Surface: the man who does not share in the distresses of his brother, even though merited by his own misconduct, deserves -

Sneerwell: O Lud! You are going to be moral, and forget that you are among friends. Surface:

Egad, that is true! I will keep the sentiment till I see Sir Peter.

In this dialogue the use of 'moral' is satirical.

The Screen Scene is a brilliantly contrived climax to the whole theme of sentiment. "Till I have her more in my power is ominous, followed by a skill of variety of approach - lies, insinuation, direct challenge, flattery, appeal and what Lady Teazle calls "honourable logic" - is the whole gamut of seduction. The eaves-dropping situation is very funny. Sir Peter is emotional and the pathetic situation is that Lady Teazle is overhearing his sincere distress and generosity. This sincerity is placed in acute ironical revealing contrast with Joseph's sentiment: he says, " ... the man who can break the laws of hospitality and tempt the wife of his friend deserves to be branded as the pest of society. "

Sheridan introduces more complications. To expose Surface's duplicity, Charles is announced. Joseph's attempt to instigate Charles to profess his interest in Lady Teazle comes

to nothing. Charles and Sir Peter make fun of Joseph's good name. Charles, his suspicion over his brother confirmed, behaves with exemplary correctness, and without attempting to preach leaves ... Surface attempts a tissue of lies, but both the Teazles now know him" And the sentiment is thoroughly discredited.

**Que-**What do you think, are the reasons for The School for Scandal's tremendous popularity? Give a reasoned answer.

**Ans.** Introduction: The School for Scandal was performed on 8<sup>th</sup> May, 1777 for the first time and was immediately acclaimed as "a master-piece". Among the various reasons for its popularity, the following are the most conspicuous.

- (a) Witty dialogues.
- (b) Well-integrated plot.
- (c) Variety in characterization.
- (d) Brilliantly executed scenes.
- (e) Authentic satire on the vanities of contemporary society.

The dialogues are crisp and delightful not only to the ear but present a concrete verbal picture and thus become concrete to the eye too. A critic suggests that the play is characterised by "a dazzling glitter of wit".

There are three strands of plot in the play.

- The malicious scandal-mongers spreading slanderous rumours about their friends, acquaintances and relatives.
- The domestic life of Sir Peter and Lady Teazle including their spicy quarrels.
- The rivalry of the two brothers Charles Surface and Joseph Surface over Maria.

The lives of the four important characters Sir Peter, Lady Teazle, Charles and Joseph-criss-cross each other in the Screen Scene and thus bring about a highly dramatic climax. Sheridan exploits these stock characters to present a multi-dimensional view of human nature. They have been infused with an individuality of their own, no stage uncle has been so full of life and fun and Sir Oliver is no hypocrite indulging in such big double-speak as Joseph does. The way Joseph uses witty and epigrammatic phrases is simply unmatched. All these characters through the play impart a certain quality of life to the play and lend an indefinable charm to it. The School for Scandal has a number of brilliantly executed scenes.

- (a) The Screen Scene.
- (b) The Auction Scene.
- (c) The Scandal-mongers mistaking Sir Oliver as a Doctor.
- (d) The Scene in which the two brothers push Sir Oliver out.

The Screen scene is a marvelous scene. Full of comic irony, the scene exposes the hypocrisy of Joseph who, according to Sir Peter is "a man of sentiment". It also enables Sir Peter to know the reality about the rumours spread about a relationship between Lady Teazle and Charles. The Auction Scene is the high mark of farcical comedy wherein Charles's character is fully exposed and he emerges as a totally irresponsible, extravagant and dissipated youth. In the same way, there is another highly comic scene in which the scandalmongers throng Sir Peter's house in order to have first-hand information about the duel fought between him and Joseph. All these scenes provide the play a sun-shine quality which radiates it with a never- before seen quality of laughter and comedy.

The School for Scandal also deals with the values of honesty, virtue, sympathy and charity. The hypocrisy, the well-mouthed sentiments of Joseph stand exposed and the real virtue and charitable attitudes of Charles are vindicated in the play.

The School for Scandal is that it is a brilliant comedy without the vulgarity, obscenity and coarseness for which the comedy of manners was famed. The dialogues are brightly lit with wit but at no point do they become coarse or vulgar. There is no doubt that The School for Scandal has been popular both among readers and viewers, for its various extraordinary qualities."

**Que-** Write a note on the theme of the play?

**Ans.** There are various themes presented in the play. Sheridan employs the act of criticism of the odious practices of slander in the form of written letters and libel. Another theme is the theme of Hypocrisy whereby Joseph Surface pretends to be an honourable man while he tries to sabotage his brother's affairs with Maria. Mrs. Candour and her ilk also act as if she is against gossip while, in the real sense, she delights in spreading rumours. There is also the theme of deceptive appearance, and this is brought out clearly through Charles Surface who is considered a scoundrel double dealer who in reality is an upright man, and supremely a decent fellow.

**Que-** Write a note on the School for Scandal as a Comedy of manners?

**Ans.** The School for Scandal concerns the manners and the conventions of an artificial, highly sophisticated society. Characters are more likely to be types than individuals. The dialogue is witty and finished, sometimes brilliant. The appeal is more intellectual than imaginative.

SATIRE is directed in the main against the follies and deficiencies of typical characters, such as fops, would be wits, jealous husbands, cox-combs. A distinguishing characteristic of the comedy of manners is its emphasis on an illicit love duel, involving at least one pair of witty and often amoral lovers.

#### **4.4 Check your Progress**

**Que-1** Comment on the Characters of Joseph Surface and Charles Surface.

**Que-2** Write School an for extended note on the significance of the title of the play ‘The School for Scandal’.

**Que-3** Discuss Sheridan's art of characterisation in The School for Scandal?

**Que-4** Discuss briefly the dramatic significance of the Auction Scene (Act IV Scene i).

#### **4.5 Summary**

In this play R.B. Sheridan contrasts two brothers Joseph Surface, the hypocrite and Charles Surface, the good-natured reckless spendthrift. Charles is in love with Maria, Sir Peter Teazle's ward and his affection is returned, and Joseph is courting her for her fortune, while at the same time making love to Lady Teazle Sir Peter, an old man who has married a young wife six months before, is made miserable by her frivolity. The scandal-mongers, Sir Benjamin Backbite, Lady Sneerwell and Mrs. Candour provide the background. Sir Oliver Surface, the rich uncle of Joseph and Charles, returns unexpectedly from India and decides to test the characters of his nephews. He visits Charles in the character of a moneylender, and Charles light-heartedly sells him the family pictures, but refuses to sell at any price the portrait of Sir Oliver himself and thus wins the old man's heart. Meanwhile Joseph receives a visit from Lady Teazle in his library and attempts to seduce her. The sudden arrival of Sir Peter obliges Lady Teazle to hide behind a screen. The arrival of Charles sent Peter in turn to cover. Sir Peter takes refuge in a cupboard. The conversation between Joseph and Charles proves to Sir Peter that his suspicion of Charles' attachment to his wife was unfounded, and

the throwing down of the screen reveals Lady Teazle. Sir Oliver visits Joseph in the character of a needy by deserving relatives applying for assistance, which Joseph refuses. This completes the exposure of Joseph. Charles is united to Maria, and Sir Peter is reconciled to Lady Teazle.

#### **4.6 Keywords**

- Mrs. Pinchwife :
- Lady Teazle :
- Charles Surface:
- Lady Sneerwell :
- Mr. Snake :
- Sir Peter :
- Joseph Surface:
- Maria, Sir Peter's ward:
- Benjamin Backbite:

#### **4.7 Answers to check your Progress**

**Ans-1** Joseph Surface is one of the two Surface brothers in *The School for Scandal*. He is a thorough villain. He is devoid of all moral scruples. His talk abounds in moral utterances. But inside he is a thorough villain. He matches Lady Sneerwell in hypocrisy and villainy. According to some critics, the play might well have been titled "*The Unmasking of Joseph Surface and Lady Sneerwell*".

In the beginning of the play, Lady Sneerwell rightly sums up Joseph Surface's character. She describes him as "artful, selfish and malicious, in short, a sentimental knave". They want to prevent the marriage of Charles Surface and Maria. Joseph himself wants to marry Maria. So with the help of Lady Sneerwell, he tries to malign Charles's character. A member of Lady Sneerwell's circle, Joseph is not formally a member of the school for scandal. It is because he possesses the qualities of gossip and spreading malicious rumours as the members of her school do. His remarks are generally witty. For instance, he says about Sir Benjamin and Mr. Crabtree : "There is no advantage in not knowing him; for he'll abuse a stranger just as soon as his best friend-and his uncle's as bad. He makes an acute observation about Snake also when he tells Lady Sneerwell that fellow "Joseph is anxious to please both Lady Teazle and Maria. But in the end both of them know his real nature. As Lady Sneerwell tells Snake, Joseph has, "with the assistance of his sentiments and hypocrisy", prevailed upon Sir Peter to agree to

Joseph's proposed marriage with Maria.

Sir Oliver decides to test the character of both his nephews. When Sir Oliver, disguised as Mr. Stanley, meets Joseph, he is sadly disappointed. He poses to be a needy and poor relative and requests him for help. But Joseph completely denies having received any money from his uncle, Sir Oliver. Thus Joseph proves to be completely ungrateful to the man who had sent him an amount of twelve thousand pounds. In his efforts to win Maria as a wife, he tries to take the help of Lady Teazle. But Lady Teazle misunderstands his attention to her and begins to look upon him as her lover. He is a great hypocrite. He has a false sympathy for Sir Peter. When Sir Peter tells him that he suspects his wife of having developed a hay love-affair with Charles. When Stanley comes to him for financial help, he pretends to have sympathy for him. But he has no intention of helping him. Joseph Surface plays a major role in the play. His character portrayed by Sheridan is more complex than that of any other person in this play. In short, Joseph is a villainous intriguer, a hypocrite and utterly unscrupulous.

**Ans-2** The title of Sheridan's famous comedy *The School for Scandal* is highly appropriate. Lady Teazle describes Lady Sneerwell as "the president of the Scandalous College". Their chief hobby is to indulge in scandalous gossip. Lady Sneerwell herself is adept in spreading and circulating scandalous stories about persons of her acquaintance. When the play opens, we find her consorting with a man called Snake. Lady Sneerwell's scandal mongering is distinguished by what she calls a "delicacy of hints and mellowness of sneer". Lady Sneerwell takes an active part in the malicious gossip that goes on when the members of her circle gather at her house. Lady Sneerwell's most malicious remark is made when Maria abruptly leaves the company on hearing the adverse comments that are being made on Charles. Lady Sneerwell's insinuation is that Maria may already have become pregnant by Charles and may now, being in a state of excitement, may need somebody's help.

There are two main strands in the plot of this comedy. . One of these relates to the scandal-mongers who include, apart from Lady Sneerwell, Joseph, Mrs. Candour, Sir Benjamin Backbite, Crabtree and others. The second strand of the plot relates to the two brothers, Joseph Surface and Charles Surface, who are rivals for the hand of Maria. The scandal-mongers do not even spare their own friends and relations. But the false stories circulated by Lady Sneerwell and Joseph about the extravagance and the bankruptcy of Charles are important from the point of view of the plot-construction. Lady Sneerwell and Joseph each have their own selfish motives in maligning Charles. At the same time, Sir Peter is deceived

by the hypocrisy of Joseph who is villainous but maintains an outer show of virtue. He often speaks in a moral tone but is, in fact, an immoral fellow. It is only Rowley who knows the truth about the two brothers, and it is he who urges Sir Oliver to keep an open mind about them till he is able to know the truth about them first hand. In short, the members of this 'school' for scandal, magnify, distort, twist, and even fabricate facts in order to throw dust into the eyes of people. As Sheridan makes clear perception throughout the play, scandal results in defaming personalities. The School for Scandal, a comedy of manners, takes aim at London's new high-society and its preoccupation with gossip, defamation, foppishness, and false morality. It contains stock character types with names which show their qualities. Sheridan's purpose in this play is both to delight and to instruct. Sheridan attacks the backbiting nature of people.

Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour, Sir Benjamin Backbite and Crabtree, Snake unreformed the Lady Teazle. In their circle we find a world of destructive gossip, of "private" revelations, factual or fictitious, for public consumption. Scandal-mongering is presented as a learned art that includes a variety of tactics like getting false reports published in newspapers, circulating rumours, the profession of sympathy for malicious characters, etc. We depend on their gossip to know about the stories of Charles, Maria, Sir Peter and the rest on which the play will turn. Thus the story of the play depends on its action on the members of the 'school' for scandal. Lady Sneerwell is always trying to induct more members to her school. Therefore, the title given to the play is very appropriate.

**Ans-3** One of the great features of the school for scandal is its super characterization. The characters in this play are stocked or stereo-typed. The important characters in this play are Sir Peter Teazle, Lady Teazle, Maria, Joseph Surface and Charles Surface. Then there are Sir Oliver Surface and Rowley. There are some important members of the Scandal Club like Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour, Crabtree, Sir Benjamin Backbite, Mr. Snake and Mr. Careless.

The names act as the labels to these characters. The names indicate some special quality of the characters. Lady Sneerwell goes on sneering. Mrs. Candour always pretends to be candid. Sir Benjamin only backbites and Mr. Snake acts as a snake ready to sting with his venomous tongue and pen.



## Characters as Types

**Sir Peter Teazle:** Sir Peter Teazle is a traditional well-meaning old man. He represents the quality of generosity along with eccentricity.

**Sir Oliver:** Sir Oliver represents the type of universal uncles who are generous hearted and caring. He is a mere type of a generous old relative or a family friend.

**Charles Surface:** Charles Surface is more open to temptation and can be found in any Comedy of Manners.

**Lady Teazle:** She represents the country girl inducted in the fashionable world of London and dazzled by it.

**Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour and other scandalmongers:** It represents the malicious scandal-mongering women we come across in the upper class society.

**Sir Benjamin and Mr. Crabtree:** Sir Benjamin is the typical fop or a wit only pastime is to exercise his wit and pursue young women. Crabtree is a minion who acts always as a hanger-on.

**Scandal-mongering:** The moral decadence of these characters is well-revealed in their light-hearted dialogues. Whether it is Lady Sneerwell Or Lady Teazle ; Charles or Joseph; Sir Benjamin or Crabtree all revel in the heartless revelry in which other people's characters are dissected with the precision of a surgeon's knife. Sir Oliver too is saved as he has been away from the frivolous London society for a long time.

Sheridan presents him. Characters as types, yet he infuses them with certain individual qualities. Sir Peter and Sir Oliver are apt examples to prove this point. Sir Peter represents a type of an elderly nobleman who has been foolish enough to marry a young woman. Though the quarrel between the elderly husband and his young vivacious wife creates much fun in the play, we are always aware of the sagacious nature of Sir Peter. Sir Oliver has been individualised by Sheridan. He is presented as a fun-loving uncle who would judge his nephews on his own and thus disguises himself as Mr. Premium and Mr. Stanley.

The portrayal of Lady Teazle is a special gift of Sheridan. She is so full of life and vivacity that she simply dazzles the whole London fashionable world. Her sense of humour and wit, the cool way in which she crosses swords with her elderly husband is simply fantastic. One special quality that the reader comes across in the play is the quality of wit. One special scene

worth mentioning for its wit is the quarrel between Sir Peter and Lady Teazle. The School for Scandal, no doubt, is a brilliant study of wit and character portrayal. The characters are presented only externally, their psychological conflicts have not been presented. The Comedy of Manners, the characters were supposed to be cast in some specific moulds.

**Ans-4** Sir Oliver comes back from India and meets his friend, Sir Peter after sixteen years. His two nephews were quite young, and so do not remember his face. Sir Oliver has good fortune. Sir Peter has married a young girl and suspects that she has relations with younger Surface, Charles and informs Sir Oliver about his libertine nature and his bankruptcy. This makes Sir Oliver very sad but he decides to meet his nephews in disguise. Sir Oliver is not aware that his suspicion of Charles was planted in his mind by scandal-mongers, Lady Sneerwell.

In the play, Charles is described by Lady Sneerwell very early as 'a libertine' and a broken person, but she loves him. He is charitable. Charles is presented in a rowdy 'aristocratic leisurely society of heavy drinking and songs, protesting about the degeneracy of an age that will not drink.

Sir Oliver's (disguised as Mr. Premium the money-lender) first impression about Charles is sad. Charles is busy drinking and singing with a friend, Careless. Sir Oliver feels that he should have not done it, but Charles shows some courtesy and his bluntness and honesty in business dealings, later, impresses Sir Oliver. The dialogue between (disguised Sir Oliver) and Charles provides a lot of humour for the audience, Sir Oliver's condemnation of Charles remains when he tells him about his disposal of his family's property. Family portraits have less significance for Sir Oliver, but "the scene is symbolic representation of the young rake cutting himself off from his family, and incidentally, indulging in the youthful "imprudence" which Sir Oliver has admired until he sees it in action.

Charles informs Sir Oliver that he has nothing of family property, but a room full of family pictures, and he would bargain for them. Sir Oliver accepts the offer and thinks that he will never forgive Charles for this. Sir Oliver finds them a good collection. Charles asks Careless to act as an auctioneer and for that use the old chair of his grandfather.

Charles first presents the paintings of his great uncle, Sir Charles Raviline. Moses tells him that Mr. Premium would like him to quote the price. Sir Oliver takes the painting. After that Charles offers other paintings of his ancestors. He sells the whole lot for three hundred pounds. But there is one painting left of Sir Oliver himself. Sir Oliver Charles points out that

for that I'll look for a fellow over the settee. Charles replies that it is his uncle Oliver. Careless describes his eyes and calls him 'an inveterate knave'. Sir Oliver agrees to be ill with the whole lot. Charles replies, "I will not part with poor Noll. The old fellow has been very good to me, and I'll keep this picture while I have room to put it in" "Sir Oliver feels pleased. Charles politely replies that he is sorry, but he won't sell it Sir Oliver says that he would give him as much for the painting as for the whole. Sir Oliver gives Charles a draft of eight hundred pounds for the painting Charles again refuses to part with the painting. Sir Oliver then asks Charles to give out his price and he would take it, But Charles finally tells him 'no bargain', Sir Oliver is pleased with Charles and tells Moses, "A dear extravagant rogue! Good day! –

#### **4.8 Self-Assessment Test**

**Que-** The School for Scandal is Sheridan's masterpiece. Discuss the play in view of the above remark?

**Que-** Describe briefly the quarrel between Sir Peter Teazle and his wife?

**Que-** Write a note on the character of Rowley?

**Que-** Write a brief character-sketch of Lady Sneerwell?

#### **4.9 References / Suggested Readings**

- Richard Brinsley Sheridan. "The School For Scandal." Project Gutenberg. February 26, 2017
- Bok, Sissela. "School For Scandal." Agni, no. 31/32, 1990, pp. 124-131., [www.jstor.org/stable/23009391](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23009391)

## CHAPTER-5

### Preparation for Exam

#### Absalom and Achitophel

**Que-1 Comment on Dryden's use of history in Absalom and Achitophel.**

**Write a critical note on the social and political background used by Dryden in Absalom and Achitophel.**

**Ans- Introduction** Dryden is considered to be a very excellent observer of reality. After the restoration in 1660, the political situation in England took a sharp turn. Charles II had become the King of England. The Tories were by his side. But the Whigs did not accept the authority of the King. They wanted to strengthen the Parliament. Another important political question was the problem of succession. Charles II had many illegitimate children. But he had no legal heir. He nominated his brother James, Duke of York as his successor. The Whigs strongly opposed it. They wanted his illegitimate son, The Duke of Monmouth to be the next King, There was a controversy on this issue. The Parliament passed a bill that James could not become the King as he was a Roman-Catholic. The Earl of Shaftesbury incited the Duke of Monmouth to revolt against the King. Dryden was commissioned by the King to compose a poem in support of Pro the King. The Earl of Shaftesbury was put behind the bars. He was waiting 5G his trial. Dryden's purpose was to create a public opinion against Shaftesbury. However, the Earl of Shaftesbury was released after the trial.

#### Dryden's Poem as an Expression of the Age

Dryden's poem Absalom and Achitophel is an expression of the historical and political situation of the age. Dryden says that the common man has no right to question the established order of society. The poet categorically says that people have no right to overthrow the King:

For who can be secure of private Right,

If Sovereign sway may be dissolv'd by might?

It is a fact that the poet is on the side of the King. . After reading the poem, one can know the authentic history of the age.

#### Depiction of Important Personages

Absalom and Achitophel have been rightly regarded as a portrait gallery- Dryden has

depicted the important personalities. The main characters described in the poem can be divided into two groups: those who support the King and those who oppose the King. Dryden's treatment of the King is very accurate. His description of David who stands for Charles II is very interesting. Dryden describes this quality of the King without any reservation. Many facts about Charles II are given through the speeches of Achitophel and Absalom. For example, the Parliament did not give enough money to the King. So, he was short of funds.

The thrifty Sanhedrin shall keep him poor; And every shekel which he can receive Shall cost him a limb of his prerogative.

Moreover, the King's speech at the end of the poem is also authentic.

### **Portraits of Achitophel and Absalom**

The poet exposes his intriguing nature in bitter words. The Earl of Shaftesbury is depicted as a man fit for "close designs". He is described as a man who "in friendship is falsely implacable in hate". However, the emphasis falls on his evil nature. His portrait corresponds to historical reality. The Earl of Shaftesbury was a cunning, reckless and shrewd politician in real life.

The portrait of Absalom (The Duke of Monmouth) is also true to historical facts. The poet describes him as a graceful, charming and beautiful person. He has affable manners.

### **Portraits of Corah, Zimri and Shimei**

Corah (Titus Oates) is the father of the Popish plot. He is described in a language which is highly devastating. He was a villain. He was a liar. Dryden presents him as a false witness and terrible conspirator. The Popish plot, in fact, did not exist.

Zimri is fond of women, drink and all other immoral deeds. The well-known historian Macaulay says that Dryden's depiction of Zimri is authentic. The portrait of Shimei (Slingsby Bethel) represents the strict puritan point of view. He was money minded. He was a staunch supporter of the Whigs.

### **Depiction of corruption in the Royal Court**

Dryden describes how corrupt practices were prevalent in the royal court. The restoration of monarchy in England was a sharp reaction against strict puritanism. It was an age of profligacy and sexual liberty. Dryden gives us a true picture of the age:

When nature prompted and now law denied  
Promiscuous use of concubine and bride

### **The Popish Plot and Religious Controversies**

The age of Dryden was full of religious controversies. It is true that the King had sympathies for the Catholics. But they were treated in a shabby manner. Their taxes were doubled. The puritans were against the Catholics. The poet rightly satirises Protestant priests and Roman-Catholic priests. As a result, Roman-Catholics were punished. Dryden describes the religious and political atmosphere of the age with the eye of a shrewd observer.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, it is clear that Absalom and Achitophel hold a mirror to contemporary society. The poet has not distorted any historical fact. He has portrayed the vulgarity of the age without any hesitation. It is a fine piece of work of art. It reflects the true spirit of the age of Restoration.

**Que-2 Write a critical note on Absalom and Achitophel as a satirical allegory dealing with contemporary politics.**

**or**

**Discuss Absalom and Achitophel as a satire against the English people in general.**

**Ans: Introduction** According to Dryden, the aim of satire is "the amendment of vices by correction". Absalom and Achitophel have always been regarded as a fine satire. This poem contains a powerful political satire presented in a new heroic idiom.

### **Role of Political Situation**

Dryden drew his inspiration from the contemporary political situation. King Charles II asked Dryden to write a poem about the political scenario in England. In 1681, a conflict arose between the supporters of the King and his opponents. His opponents did not want James, Duke of York to become the King after King Charles II. His opponents wanted his illegitimate son, Duke of Monmouth to be the future King of England. On the other hand, Tories supported the cause of James because he was nominated by the King himself. The opponents of the King were led by the Earl of Shaftesbury. The Earl of Shaftesbury was arrested on a charge of high treason. It was at this time that Absalom and Achitophel was published to influence Shaftesbury's trial.

## Satiric Portraits

Absalom and Achitophel have plenty of satiric portraits. The portrait of Achitophel (The Earl of Shaftesbury) is quite impressive. He has been portrayed as a dangerous rebel. The Earl of Shaftesbury has been presented as a living embodiment of evil -"for close designs and crooked councils fit? While describing Shaftesbury's son, the poet called him "that unfeathered, two- legged thing, born a shapeless lump, like anarchy".

The description of Zimri (The Duke of Buckingham) is a fine example of "fine raillery". He is described as "chemist, fiddler, statesman and buffoon". He is portrayed as a "blest mad man who possesses a restless mind". "He is a living picture of folly, instability and wasteful energy.

The description of Shimei (Slingsby Bethel) is presented in a satiric mode. He possesses wisdom, zeal and piety. He is a living embodiment of avarice. Dryden sarcastically points out that he was the most suitable Sheriff of the town who had once experienced the destruction of fire, because he had no courage to light his kitchen fire.

The description of Corah (Titus Oates) is presented in terms of contemptible language. He is insolent. His vanity is reflected when he is described as a "monumental brass". Corah had the ability to manufacture fantastic plots. They were used to spread anarchy in the society. He was fond of telling fantastic lies. There is no redeeming quality in his character.

The description of Absalom (The Duke of Monmouth) is presented in a mild language. . He was ambitious. He was always in a hurry to convert his ambition into reality. The poet presents him ironically:

What cannot praise effect in mighty minds , When flattery soothes and when ambition blinds?

Achitophel, Dryden used very powerful words. The Earl of Shaftesbury has been presented as a living embodiment of evil -"for close designs and crooked councils fit? While describing Shaftesbury's son, the poet called him "that untethered, two-legged thing, born a shapeless lump, like anarchy".

The description of Zimri (The Duke of Buckingham) is a fine example of "fine raillery". He is described as "chemist, fiddler, statesman and buffoon". He is portrayed as a "blest mad man who possesses a restless mind". "Ten thousand freaks died" in his thinking . He is a living picture of folly, instability and wasteful energy. He is a bundle of contradictions.

The description of Shimei (Slingsby Bethel) is presented in a satiric mode. He possesses wisdom, zeal and piety. But the equalities are used in the pursuit of blasphemy, contempt and deceit. He is a living embodiment of avarice. Dryden sarcastically points out that he was the most suitable Sheriff of the town who had once experienced the destruction of fire, because he had no courage to light his kitchen fire. His corrupt practices are highlighted to show that the opponents of the King were highly immoral.

The description of Corah (Titus Oates) is presented in terms of contemptible language. He is insolent. His vanity is reflected when he is described as a "monumental brass". The poet exposes his false and corrupt practices in a language informed by irony and sarcasm. Corah had the ability to manufacture fantastic plots. These plots had no real basis. They were used to spread anarchy in the society. He was fond of telling fantastic lies. There is no redeeming quality in his character.

The description of Absalom (The Duke of Monmouth) is presented in a mild language. He was ambitious. He was always in a hurry to convert his ambition into reality. The poet presents him ironically:

What cannot praise effect in mighty minds, When flattery soothes and when ambition blinds?

### **Choice of Biblical Allegory**

Dryden has presented his political satire through the famous biblical story. The poet is not only a lampooner. He has creatively used the biblical allegory to highlight the subtle nuances of contemporary political situations. It provided the poet a wonderful medium to satirize the King's opponents and praise the King.

### **Conclusion**

Thus, it becomes clear that Absalom and Achitophel is a wonderful political satire full of irony and sarcasm. Each character is brilliantly portrayed. Many passages of the poem are rhetorical triumphs. The whole poem is a consummate example of a great political satire.

**Que-3 Write a critical note on Absalom and Achitophel as biblical allegory.or**

**Discuss Absalom and Achitophel as an allegorical satire.Ans: Introduction**

Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel is a remarkable allegorical satire. As a great satirist, Dryden used allegory - a literary device - in order to couch the contemporary events in artistic terms. The poet drew inspiration from two English allegorical poems that are Naboth's



Vinyard and The Progress of Honesty.

### **The Nature of the Contemporary Subject**

The contemporary subject before Dryden's creative imagination was the crisis generated by the opponents of King Charles II. Charles II had many illegal issues. However, he had no legal child. Towards the end of 1681, the Earl of Shaftesbury was arrested on account of high treason. He was put on trial. At this time, Dryden was asked probably by the King himself to compose a poem in order to counter the attack of the Whigs. Dryden wrote a narrative poem describing the events. However, he used the form of biblical allegory.

### **Advantages of Using Allegory**

The satirist in Dryden saw many advantages of using allegory. Everybody knew that David stood for Charles II, Achitophel stood for Shaftesbury, Absalom stood for Duke of Monmouth. The Biblical names established the link between what has happened in the past and what was happening now. Another advantage of the use of allegory was that Dryden had a free hand in describing the prominent qualities of his characters. This literary device provided a golden opportunity to the poet to highlight the corruption of politicians, moral degradation, abuse of freedom and the plight of the common man in British society.

### **Difference Between the Biblical Story and Dryden's Allegory**

The story of Absalom ends with his death. Dryden did not use it in his poem as it differed from the actual political situation. Dryden knew that it was impossible to follow the Bible exactly and present the contemporary political situation in a new heroic idiom. Like an epic or a heroic play, this poem represents "nature wrought up to a higher pitch".

### **Use of Biblical Allusions**

Use of Biblical allusions gave a wonderful opportunity to the poet to present a realistic and satirical picture of all important historical personages. The device of allegory also gave a sharp edge to the satirical portraits. Without degrading the scriptures, the poet was able to parody the scriptures.

### **Conclusion**

In short, Dryden's use of the Bible gave him an opportunity to contemporary situations in the way he liked. He was able to present sexual relations in a charitable light. It lent an air of authenticity to various descriptions. The use of it gave it the structure of a consummate work

of art.

**Que-4 Bring out the element of allegory in 'Absalom and Achitophel'. Ans: What is an allegory**

An allegory is defined as a literary piece of writing with a double meaning. On its surface, it is a story based on political, religious and social realities but under the veil of the story, the writer conveys some more teachings, some more hidden motives to specify purpose.

He also is fully aware of the fact that direct attack is most offensive and not so effective. Hence the writer conceals his real motive and intentions under the guise of an allegory.

### **Absalom and Achitophel as an allegory**

Allegory had become almost the fashion of the day not only in England but in France also. The writer was dealing with current politics which involved the greatest personalities of the day. Exposure of those high dignitaries and their motives behind their action was a highly risky-affair. So he had to take recourse to allegory form whereby through another story (which of course, runs parallel) he gives suggestions of the present state of affairs for the readers to decide what praise is worthy and what is contemptuous.

### **Biblical Parallels**

The parallels between the events of the reign of David and those of its Characters requires a little of strain on the minds of the readers to understand it. Biblical story is the story of a King, David who has got a number of illegitimate children but could not allow his brother to ascend the throne. So his illegitimate son, Absalom was instigated by some shrewd politicians to rebel against his father. Absalom, the illegitimate son of David, instigated by some of David's friends and counsellors rebelled against him. He was chiefly supported and guided by Achitophel, who was once, David's close friend.

### **Dryden's handling of allegory - superb and highly entertaining**

Such is the Biblical parallel in Absalom and Achitophel. An allegory is essentially a technique of vision. Dryden raised it to epic grandeur in miniature by his tactful handling of the allegory.

### **Dryden's contribution to the field of political allegory**

In one respect this poem stands alone in literature.

### **The use of Biblical story - an advantage to Dryden**

Dryden was at liberty to manipulate the characters as he liked and as suited him in that particular context. Secondly, his motive for writing of the allegory was to expose the sham and immoral behaviour of various top-ranking personalities of the day with the theme of temptation, the illegality of the rebellion and the corruption of the politicians.

### **Conclusion**

Dryden attempted to convert a sordid drama into something dignified and highly moral."

**Que-5 Wrote an essay on the social and political background to the study of Absalom and Achitophel.**

**Ans- Dryden represents the English mind during Restoration period**

Every writer is the product of the age he lives in. As a matter of fact, the Age of Dryden began with the restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660 and it continued till his death in 1700. So Dryden was a dominant literary figure of the time and represents the English mind during this period.

### **Political crisis during the years 1679-81**

"Absalom and Achitophel" deals with a political crisis which England faced during the years 1679-81. Charles II became King of England in 1660. His reign is generally known as the restoration period. Charles had no legitimate son. As he had no legitimate child, the crown was to pass on to his brother, the Duke of York. He was Catholic by faith.

These were two political parties in the country, the Whigs and the Tories.

The Tories supported the King, but the Whigs under the leadership of Shaftsbury favoured the Duke of Monmouth, who was an illegitimate son of Charles and a Protestant by faith. The problem became more complicated. The alleged plot which was given the name of "Popish Plot" proved false later.

The King wanted Dryden to lead the pamphlet war started by the enemies of the King. So Dryden wrote the satire, 'Absalom and Achitophel' to expose the treacherous behaviour of Shaftsbury and his party and to support the King by telling the world of Divine Rights of Kings.

## **The Political, social and religious background**

There were three major historical events

1 It was the restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660 the immorality of the Court

3 religious and political controversies

### **Immorality of the age**

The restoration of Charles II to the English throne brought about a revolution in the social life of England. Now it started a new era of absolute freedom in social life. People, released from restraint by the Puritan regime, abandoned the decencies of life and respect for the law. The whole society plunged into excesses more unnatural than had been the restraints of Puritanism.

### **The licentiousness of the court**

The King was unspeakably vile in his private life. Coarseness in life and manners was evident everywhere and it appeared as if "England lay sick of a fever."

### **Bitterness of political and religious passions**

Two political parties - the Whigs and the Tories dominated the political scene. The rise of the political parties gave afresh importance to men of literary ability for both parties that they tried to enlist their support and bribed them with positions and pension. Dryden was Tory and he ably advocated the cause of monarchy in his satire 'Absalom and Achitophel'.

**Que-6 What are the various aspects of the restoration log that Dryden had mirrored in 'Absalom and Achitophel'.**

### **Ans- Achitophel-malicious nature and intriguing mind**

'Absalom and Achitophel' reflects various aspects of restoration life. There are the portraits of the mal-contents and the portrait of the loyalist. The malcontents include, Shaftsbury or Achitophel, Zimri (The Duke of Buckingham), Absalom (The Duke of Monmouth), Shimei (Slingsby Bethel) and Corah (Titus Oates).

1. Achitophel represents malicious nature, intriguing mind and evil forces in human personality. He is a rebel, intolerant of the King's authority and position.
2. Zimri (Duke of Buckingham), He knows no moderation. He is an extremist in every matter. He is either over-violent or over-civil.

### **Absolam and Shimei- The Sheriff of London**

He is ambitious. He has too much of Lucifer's pride in his nature. Shimei has an immoderate love for money and never violates the sanctity of Sabbath. He accumulates wealth by cheating. During his tenure of office (as the Sheriff of London) treachery towards the King is regarded as something normal by him.

### **Corah and the mob**

He is described as 'monumental bras' because of his shameless imprudence, pride and arrogance. We see the mob, unruly, moody, fickle, undependable, unscrupulous and arrogant.

### **Duke and Armond - the good, trustworthy friend**

The brief sketch of the loyalists restores our faith in human nature. The loyalists possess noble qualities like moderation, order, tolerance, patience and humility.

1. There is Barzillai (Duke of Armond) who is considerate, kind and a good trustworthy friend. He is generous without being wasteful. He is depicted as a man of rare qualities whose premature death is mourned by the poet.
2. The son of Musgrave, a man of keen and penetrating judgment who always stands by the King and supports the King vehemently in parliamentary debates. Jothan, (George Savile) is a man of fertile brain, who can influence and sway the audience.
3. Lord of the Treasury who exercises a great restraint in public expenditure.
4. Amid (Edward Seymour) a noble man by birth. He is the speaker of the Parliament.

### **Conclusion**

King Charles II, in his speech, also claims the qualities of tolerance, patience and humility.

**Que-7 How far would it be correct to say that "Absalom and Achitophel is a typical product of the pseudo-classical age in English poetry?"**

**Ans-** The rise of pseudo-classicism literature of the restoration period saw a tremendous change in every field and aspects of life. Post restoration is the converse of the previous Elizabethan Romanticism.

### **French Influence**

French influence inspired them to write realistically. So we find realism to a marked degree in the post restoration period. The tendency of the early writers was to paint a realistic picture of court life and society only from one angle and that was the vices, follies, affectations,

hypocrisy, pride and variety and coarseness of life.

### **Correctness and brevity**

It was an age of re-action against the excesses and extravagances of both the Elizabethans and the Metaphysicals headed by Donne. Consequently, there is marked tendency towards directness and simplicity of expression. More importance was given to "correct adherence to the rules of the ancients as interpreted by the French, Dryden has this new tendency in marked degree. Dryden is the first great exponent in English literature in the 17th century of Neoclassicism or Pseudo classicism.

### **An age of reason and prose**

In the person of Dryden, the age witnessed a remarkable change in thought and expression. He wrote short crisp, clear- cut sentences. So the Restoration era can be considered as an age of reason and prose.

### **The Rise of satire**

The poets are given to reasoning in verse. Poetry no longer remains the expression of 'Divine Frenzy'. Now it is used for narrative, satire and didactic purposes-lyric spirit in poetry is on the decline and is almost missing. So the best poetry of this age is satirical.

### **Heroic couplet**

The other important factor which helped the growth and perfection of the Heroic couplet was that it became literary fashion of the day. A tendency to formalism and the immense popularity of the heroic couplet all these tendencies are well represented in the works of John Dryden.

### **Short Answer Questions-**

#### **Que-1 Write a brief character-sketch of David.**

**Ans-** David is the alter ego of Charles II. The principle of the people called him "divine right of kings" in the term "godlike David." The elevation of David to a godlike state reconciles the discontinuity of the course of the poem. The continuous references to "god" in David's final declamation give the impression of one impervious to attacks by mortal man.

#### **Que-2 Portrait of Zimri.**

**Ans-** In the poem the character of Zimri is based on is Duke of Buckingham. He was a poet,

dramatist and also a politician. The poet presents different aspects of his life for example his occupation, life styles, his reactions, likes, dislikes, his attitudes towards people and the way he spends money. From the poet's description, we come to know that Zimri is fickle, inconsistent, irrational, irresponsible and profligate.

**Que-3 What is the subject matter of the poem?**

**Ans-** The essential theme of the poem is the origin of several factions against the government and the king as the Popish plot of the Titus Oates. The rest of the poem deals with the beginning of rebellion under the leadership of Shaftsbury whose speeches are calculated to persuade the Duke of Monmouth (Absalom) to lead a revolt against his father, King (David). The power of the poem essentially lies in the mechanism of Biblical allegory. Every contemporary character is given a biblical name. The principal political personages are : Monmouth ( Absalom) ; Shaftsbury the false tempter ( Achitophel) ; the Duke of Buckingham ( Zimri) ; Charles II ( David) ; Titus Oates ( Corah) ; Slingsby Bethel, Sheriff of London ( Shimei).

**Que-4 Explain the biblical basis of the poem.**

**Ans-** The poem is based upon the biblical story of Absalom's rebellion against his father, David. Dryden's analogy between the English and the people of ancient Israel works on several levels, one of which is to mock parallels the Puritans had observed between their deeds and the events of the Old Testament.

**Que-5 Briefly describe the Jebusites and their Plot Or**

**The Polish Plot in Absalom and Achitophel.**

**Ans-** The Jebusites (Catholics) were oppressed in various ways by the chosen people (Protestants). Their lands were taken away from them. They faced numerous difficulties. Then they tried to convert the Protestants. Such were the circumstances which led to the Popish Plot. This plot was affirmed on oath by Titus Oates and others, and it was denied on oath by the Catholics. It was even said that the Jebusites wanted to murder the king.

**Que-6 How does Dryden portray the commoners (the English people).**

**Ans-** Dryden describes the common people as restless, ungrateful and easily swayed. They are shown to be fickle-minded. Dryden calls the Commons the "rascal rabble", who are never content with what they have. In short, Dryden portrays the English people as "headstrong,

moody and murmuring race". They demanded unlimited freedom and changed their principles, restlessly. Dryden gives a detailed description of hypocrisy, seditious talk, prejudiced juries, pamphleteering all the tricks employed by the King's enemies.

**Que-7 How does Dryden's poem 'Absalom and Achitophel' reflect the profligacy of the court at that time?**

**Ans-** Dryden's age was an age of profligacy, corruption and indecency. The king was a rake. Dryden speaks of the time when polygamy was not a sin and when one to one was not "cursedly confined". The king had a number of mistresses. He had a number of illegitimate children. The most popular of these illegitimate children, and the king's favourite was the Duke of Monmouth, whose charm and grace have been realistically sketched in this poem.

**Que-8 How does Achitophel tempt Absalom?**

**Ans-** Achitophel was a cunning person. He wanted a suitable leader to work as his tool, and none was as suitable as Absalom. In order to win, his favour flattered him. He told him that there was the opportunity for him to become the popular leader of the masses. He told Absalom that the people wanted their liberty and rights and they needed a suitable leader.

Absalom was much impressed by this appeal to his vanity. Achitophel told him that he should not waste his talents. In this way Achitophel tempted and won him to his side.

## **Chapter-2**

**The Rape of The Lock Que-1 Discuss Pope's 'The Rape of The Look' as a parody.Or**

**Write a note on 'The Rape of The Lock' as a burlesque of classical epic device.Or**

**The Rape of The Lock is the perfection of the mock heroic, said Hazlitt. Elucidate this statement.**

**Ans-** A mock epic or mock heroic or heroic comical is a term applied to a poetic form which employs the epic devices to describe a trivial or insignificant subject. 'The Rape of The Lock' is a masterpiece of its kind. It belongs to the category of a burlesque or parody. The mockery takes different forms and employs different devices. Apart from the general mockery of the epic form and substance, it uses the epic manner also.

There is particular mockery of a scene, or a detail, or a certain speech, or a comment by the



poet. It contains, among others, a parody of Homer (in the description of the battle), Virgil, Aristo and Milton. But the imitation of the epic tradition on the whole is one of the diminutions. This poem also announces its subject in the very first couplet:

What dire offence from amorous causes springs  
What mighty contests rise from trivial things.

And the subject of the poem or its occasion is the cutting of a lock from a lady's hair by a Baron. It is called 'triumph of insignificance'. But as the poem is a satire on the daily life of a London beauty, the garb of a mock epic form makes the whole thing look absurd. Alexander Pope invokes the Muse in the epic. The poet expresses his shock and surprise rather mockingly

In task so bold can little men engage?

And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage.

The epic always uses supernatural machinery. In *The Rape of The Lock* there are sylphs and gnomes. These aerial spirits are very small. The whole description about these 'light militia of the lower sky' is very ludicrous. They remain invisible and are always on the wings. They keep hovering over the Box to protect the virginity of the ladies. For example: The Nymphs are the spirits of submissive and yielding ladies, the light-hearted coquettes become the Sylphs and the severe ones become Gnomes. They are ever ready to embrace a lady who rejects mankind though they are to guard the purity of melting maids. Ariel is the chief of these spirits. He warns Belinda against the impending danger. Just like Satan, he too addresses his followers.

Ye sylphs and sylphids to your chief, give ear  
Fays, fairies, genii, elves and Demons hear

And the dangers about which he talks are very funny and comical.

Whether the Nymph shall break Diana's law  
Or some frail china jar receive a flaw  
Or stain her honour, or her new brocade

Ariel threatens his followers of dire consequences if they fail in their assigned duties. 'The Rape of the Lock' contains certain episodes. They rather deal with the game of Ombre on a table. In the game of the Ombre, Belinda wins and is delighted. But then her lock is cut by the

Baron and she cries for it. Her cry is described in a very ridiculous manner. Belinda starts showing all the signs of an angry lady and she gives a call to arms. And then starts the battles. Ladies are armed with fans, silk gowns and puffs and powders. In the fight men are killed with the frown of the ladies, but they are revived with a smile. Belinda subdues and overpowers her adversary just with a charge of snuff and attacks him with a deadly bodkin. In this single combat the Baron is completely defeated.

**Que-2 The Rape of the Lock is, in fact, satire upon feminine frivolity'. Discuss with illustrations.**

**Or**

**"The purpose of Pope is to laugh at the little unguarded follies of the female sex". Elaborate.**

**Ans-** Introduction: The age of Alexander Pope was commonly known as the Augustan age or the Neo-classical age. This age was satirical in spirit. Alexander Pope, being a true representative of his age is a great satirist and he depicts the evils of the society, especially the fashionable society using such weapons as humour, wit, irony, mockery and ridicule. As a satirist Pope has been admired by all the critics. Lowell has remarked that "as an intellectual observer and describer of personal weaknesses, Pope stands \_by himself in English verse."

The Rape of the Lock is a satire on the aristocratic section of the society; it exposes their weaknesses and absurdities. It paints the idle life of the pleasure-seeking young men and women. The lives of these fashionable people seem to be devoid of seriousness and morality. All is vanity and emptiness. It exposes to ridicule the -idleness, frivolities, vanities, follies, shallowness, superficiality and hypocrisy. Alexander Pope also aims at getting the society rid of its evils that are afflicting fashionable people. In the very beginning Pope laughs at the little men engaging themselves in tasks so bold and at gentle ladies who are capable of mighty rage. Pope exposes the frivolities of the fashionable ladies through the character of Belinda. She is a perfect coquette and a flirt. She has a number of admirers around her. Pope mocks the habit of late rising. Belinda keeps sleeping and dreaming of young lovers till noon as "sleepless lovers just at twelve awake". Soon after leaving bed, they become busy decorating their faces. It appears that the only thing which matters most for these ladies is how to cause flutter in the hearts of young men.

Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace And calls forth all the wonders of her face.

Thus the Pope points out how the ladies considered her toilet as a religious ceremony. He says that Belinda's love is for all alike. Her love is not confined to one person. Thus Belinda has an obliging nature and obliges all by casting her amorous glances at all. Pope then says that these ladies do not know the difference between the noble and the ignoble things. For them it is all the same: Whether it is the loss of their virginity or the breaking of a china jar. Belinda's cry for her lock finds a satirical description when Pope equates her cry to that for the death of her husband or her lap dog. Pope then satirizes the lack of moral scruples. The Baron admires the locks of Belinda and aspires for them and resolves to get them "By force to ravish, or by fraudbetray".

Pope satirizes the system of justice.

The hungry judges soon the sentence sign, And wretches hang, that jury men may dine

The judges of the time were not serious. Their chief concern was eating and drinking. The poet in a very subtle manner satirizes the activities of the palace. The serious and the frivolous have been mentioned in the same breath. It is in this palace that Belinda and her companions play the game of Ombre and enjoy coffee. Thus 'Rape of The Lock' is being a characteristic product of the life and is a great satire upon social pleasantries of the age.

## **9 September**

### **Que-1 Describe in brief, Belinda's Toilet.**

**Ans-** Belinda had to go out to Hampton Court. Her dressing table was loaded with costly ornaments, powders, puffs, rouges, hair pins, combs, perfumes and sundry other articles. Her maid, Betty, began to decorate her. As a result of the skilful use of the rouge, there was a purer blush on her face. Beauty was thus fully armed for the conquest of her lovers. The sylphs, too, took a keen interest in her toilet.

### **Que-2 Write Brief Note On Pope's imitation of Agamemnon's scepter in The Rape of the Lock.**

**Ans-** In the final battle between the beautiful ladies and the fashionable men both sides fought bravely. Belinda was in command of the ladies. She threw a pinch of snuff into the Baron's nostrils, He started sneezing. Pope gives the history of this bodkin. First it was a silver ornament for Belinda's great grandfather. After his death, it was melted down and made

into a large buckle. Later it was melted again and made into a whistle for Belinda's grandmother. After her death it was melted again and made into a bodkin. This description is a parody of a similar passage in Homer's 'Iliad'. Pope's description of Belinda's bodkin is a comic imitation of this Greek legend.

**Que-3 How does Ariel arrange for Belinda's safety?**

**Ans-** Belinda was on the large on the other hand, Ariel, the sylph Ariel, was worried about her safety. He called all the sylphs who were under him. He asked some of them to guard her watch, her earrings, and her family, while to fifty of them he assigned the most important duty of looking after her petticoat. He warned the sylphs that if any of them neglected his duty, he would be severely punished. The offender may be given a severe punishment.

**Que-4 Describe in brief The Game of Ombre.**

**Ans-** Belinda, and the group of lords and ladies who surrounded her, reached the Hampton Court. Belinda now desired to play the fashionable card-game known as Ombre and challenged two of her companions to the game. She wanted to defeat them single handed and thus gain name and fame. She won the card game. She shouted with joy and the walls of the building and the woods around echoed back her shout. At this time Belinda was so happy; she did not know that very soon she would curse that victorious day.

**Que-5 Describe the scene where the Baron cuts Belinda's lock of hair.**

**Ans-** After the game of Ombre, it was coffee time. Hot, fragrant coffee was poured into the cups of the Lords and ladies. It was the coffee which now inspired Lord Peter with a clever plan to cut Belinda's lock of hair. The sylphs tried their best to protect Belinda from harm. They twitched her ear rings three times and all the three times Belinda looked back and so the Lord could not succeed in his aim. Ariel was anxious to know the secret thoughts of the maiden. He looked into the heart. He found that she loved a human being. He went away in despair. Now the Lord could succeed in his attempts.

**Que-6 What was Clarissa's advice to Belinda?**

**Ans-** The lament of Belinda filled all present with pity. It was now that grave and serious lady. Clarissa advised Belinda not to grieve so much over the loss of her hair. A beautiful lady should also have good sense to retain the conquests her beauty makes. Beauty must decay, and fair locks must turn grey with the passing of time. This was very sound advice, but nobody heeded her. Belinda was angry with her and Thalestris called her a prude.

**Que-7 What happens to the lock of hair in the end?**

**Ans-** In the battle between the ladies and the men, the ladies won. The Baron requested her to spare his life. Belinda was very angry and demanded her lock of hair back in a loud, fierce voice. But during this conflict the precious lock was lost. It could not be found. It was thought it had gone up to the Moon, where all things lost on earth are treasure. There it was transformed into a bright star. Belinda should not feel sorry for the loss of her lock. His poem has made it immortal.

**Que-8 Moral of the poem The Rape of The Lock.**

**Ans-** The Rape of The Lock had a moral motive. His aim was to teach the lesson of “concord” and good humour between two quarrelling families. In such a scheme of poetry, there is not much scope for serious moral lessons. It would not be wrong then to say that the Pope did have a moral preoccupation, even if it is covered in a Veneer of wit and humour, the poem has a moral purpose. He gives wise counsel here to the gay and silly pursuers of pleasures and vanities, about the transience of all fashions and show, and the triumph of the quality of character.

**Que-22 Clarissa's speech in The Rape of The Lock.**

**Ans-** The speech of Clarissa introduced in the concluding Canto of the poem serves a very significant purpose of the Pope. It gives out the moral which the Pope has offered for the frivolous fashionable ladies of all times. It is also a grand criticism of life. The speech of Clarissa contains the cardinal aspect of Pope's teaching that the virtue of character is far greater and more profitable than all the exhibitions of shows and fashions.

**Long Answer Questions**

**Que-1 What purpose is served by the “Celestial machinery” in The Rape of the Lock?**

**Or**

**Do you think the sylphs and gnomes in The Rape of The Lock are not so much external guardians as projection outward of states of mind, from co-sen quietist concern with one's appearance to the self-pitying rancour of the spoil-For sport, and the ideal of good humour, explicitly introduced by Classicism, is everywhere present?**

**Ans-** It is Pope's use of machinery which more than any other single feature made the poem the signal success that it is. Pope succeeded eminently in his design of introducing this

element of the "marvellous". The introduction of machinery was necessary because, as Dryden says, "No heroic poem can be writ on the Epicurean principles." He didn't want to revive classical deities, nor follow Boileau in setting personified moral qualities. Therefore, Pope hit on the notion of basing his machinery on the Rosicrucian spirits described in Le Comte de Gabalis. The Rosicrucian spirits had about them a suggestion of the fanciful and the far-fetched which made them particularly suitable for a mock epic. "Pope freely extended his imagination. Pope claimed in the dedication of the poem that "human persons in this poem are as fictitious as the airy ones". By introducing the machinery, Pope made the poem more impersonal and proved that his claim was true. The Rosicrucians believed that the four elements – air, water, earth and fire are inhabited by spirits. These spirits are sylphs, nymphs, gnomes and menders. Pope says that the beautiful women, when they die, retire to their first element. Their vanity, however, remains with them even after their death. Their love of cards and for gilded coaches survives death.

The sylphs are the guardian angels of women. They guard the purity of virgins. The sylphs save them from false friends. The sylphs help the ladies at their toilet table also. They improve their smiles, revive their graces and make them beautiful and provocative. They teach the young maidens how to blush and attract attention. But when they are swept off their feet by Lords and Dukes who flatter them and are overwhelmed by ideas of physical pleasure, the sylphs shift "the moving Toyshop of their heart". Ariel is the leader of the sylphs. He assigns different tasks to the sylphs. He collects his inferior sylphs around the sails of the vessel and addresses them. He asks Zephyretta to guard her fan. Brilliants her ear rings, Momentilla her watch and Crispissa her lock of hair and the charge of petticoat is given to fifty chosen sylphs. He himself guards Belinda's lapdog, Shock. The sylphs who neglect their duty would be imprisoned in vial or in the needle's eye.

The sylphs are present at every crucial situation in the play. They are present in the course of Belinda's journey by boat to Hampton Court. They hover around her when she ships coffee. "A gnome, called Umbriel, goes to the cave of Spleen and returns with a bag full of sighs, sobs, screams and outbursts of anger. The sylphs are also present to witness the flight of Belinda's lock of hair to the sky. The world of Ariel and his followers, their shapes and colours, their history and conduct are all led to the creation of a mystic fairy land where everything seems to be woven of charms and dreams.

But as one of the critics puts it, the sylphs have been added to the poem "not simply as

shining trinkets and threepenny bits to a Christmas pudding but to develop and flavour the whole". They express perfectly the value system of the beau monde. They help in enhancing the satirical nature of the poem. It is through them that the Pope satirises the vanity, coquettishness, fickleness and whimsicality of the ladies of the day. They represent the superficiality of the social world. The sylphs in the poem, satirises the manners and behaviour of the ladies and the customs and conventions of the society of the time which govern the conduct of the maiden. The scheme of the Rosicrucian spirits is well assimilated and has enhanced the brilliance of the poem. Its inclusion has enhanced the Brilliance of the poem. It is also a part of the mild satiric moral scheme. But more than anything else, the sylphs ate botha mirror and mock apotheosis of customs and conventions of Queen Anne's society.

**Que-4 In The Rape of the Lock Pope shows Belinda's ruling passion unmistakable pride in the dual sense of self conceit and self-assertion.**

**Or**

**Write a character sketch of Belinda.**

**Ans-** The axis of the story of The Rape of the Lock is the character of Belinda Brooks thinks that the girl is out to catch a husband. They are protégées (protected and helped by) of the gnomes (underground spirits), with whom she has no dealings until Umbriel appears in the IVth Canto. Before Umbriel's arrival, the poem pauses over the hidden irony of Belinda's self-sufficiency as a reigning beauty. Pope compares her grief at the loss of the lock to that of "scornful virgins whose charms survive", and to that of "ancient ladies when refused a kiss". Likewise Clarissa pointedly reminds Belinda that "since locks will turn to grey ... she who scorns a man, must die a maid." Her search is plainly, not for a man in her life but for men at her feet. She likes "with youthful lords to roam" and yet chooses to "reject a lord" as lover or husband. Pope's heroine here is not a bride-to-be, but a coquette par excellence. Belinda's motives, like her spirits and actions, stamp her as a coquette. Her motives are those which observers of Coquettes have singled out –vanity, desire of conquest, self-love. She herself protests after her loss that she doesn't know what moved my mind with youthful Lords to roam. Belinda's ruling passion is unmistakable pride, in the dual sense of self-conceit and self-assertion.

Belinda displays herself most vividly in what are perhaps the purples of the poem's purple passages - the ritual at her dressing table. She is in person the chief priestess and in the mirror the "goddess". In keeping with her honour, Belinda's religion is primarily not beauty-worship,

but self-worship. She is her own "goddess," Like Eve and Narcissus, Belinda is vain and is in love with her own image. But she manages her love affair in her own way. She "decks the goddess" to evoke the worship of mankind. Belinda shouts with delight at winning the game of Ombre. The victory serves to feed her pride further. Her cries echo through the walls, gardens, woods and canal. The loss of her lock is the evidence of her pride. Her reaction at the loss of the lock is further proof of her pride that has suffered a fall. That is why Clarissa's speech has no sobering effect on her. The speech of Thalestris is in harmony with her mood as she must regain the lock to retrieve her pride. The lock ultimately settles below and the tide of battle turns. Belinda is denied a complete revenge by fate. The prize "lock" disappears through the decree of heaven. Belinda and Baron have fought the affair of honour with cards, scissors and snuff. Their ambitious aims are frustrated and the contest is drawn. The consecration invests her with a finer and surer glory than any she could achieve by her own arts as a coquette.

**Que-2 Discuss The Rape of The Lock as The most exquisite specimen of filigree work.**

**Ans-** The theme of the poem is slight. The subject-matter of the poem is insignificant. It is all about the rape of the lock of a lovely belle. It is because of the rare beauty and grace of the poem that Hazlitt described it as "the most exquisite specimen of filigree work". It is the iridescent myth of the sylphs which chiefly lends to the poem the quality of filigree. The world of Ariel and his followers, their shapes and their history and conduct are all led to the creation of a mystic fairyland where everything seems to be woven of charms and dreams. The sylphs are artificial spirits. It is a band of these spirits who wait upon Belinda. They come in "lucid squadrons" and they speak to one another in aerial whispers. Their fluid bodies are half dissolved in insight. Their airy garments, dipped in the richest tincture of the skies, fly loose to the wind. They are transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight. The first and foremost work for the sylphs is to "tend the fair ". When young maids, under the influence of passion, are about to surrender to their treacherous lover, it is the sylphs who save them by shifting "the moving toyshop of their heart".

Belinda herself moves in a filigree world – a world dominated by frivolous and artificial activities and a witty description of such a world lends to the poem a beauty of its own. The poet gives a witty description of the woman of this world; the toilette is a great business of life and the right adjustment of her hair, the decoration of her face, the chief employments of her time. In amusing lines we are told that for a lady, staining her new brocade was as



disastrous as staining her honour, and losing a necklace was as calamitous as losing her chastity. The breaking of a china-jar and the death of a lap dog was as great a misfortune for the woman as the death of a husband. The loss of virtue was no serious matter.

For men, the cutting off of a lock from a belle's head is a great accomplishment. For the belles and beaux of this fashionable world, the game of Ombre is a good pastime and they spend many "instructive hours" in talking over cups of coffee which makes them wise. There are other elements also which contribute to the ornamental character of the poem. These are the airy elves seen by moonlight shadows, the silver token and the circled green. There are the virgins visited by "angels' powers as golden crowns and wreaths of heavenly flowers". The heroic couplet used by Pope achieves every known poetic effect, including high seriousness and low comedy, optimism and gloom, mirth and despair, and a host of other atmospheres or poetic states. Pope's stylistic devices include balance and parallelism, antithesis juxtaposition, zeugma etc. Pope makes plentiful use of romantic hyperbole. Hazlitt's use of the phrase "filigree work" for the poem is brilliant, and nevertheless, it is apt also if we ignore its serious significance and moral purpose. But all satire has a moral purpose. The Rape of the Lock, a masterpiece of satire, does fulfil that condition.

**Que-1 Justify the title Rape of the Lock as a clue of the technique and form of the poem.**

**Or**

**The Rape of the Lock is an exquisite piece of workmanship. (K.U.K. Elaborate 2006) Or**

**Ans-** The Rape of the Lock is considered to be a masterpiece so far as its craftsmanship is concerned and it is also matchless for treating a trivial subject in a heroic style and parodying the epic form in its full detail. Pope has made more attention to form than the content. He has practised refinement and correctness in poetry. Correctness is a distinguished characteristic of Pope's style and diction. Pope has followed his own dictum that True ease in writing comes from art not chance As those move easiest who have learned to dance.

His poetry is the selection of beautiful words, balanced epigrams and striking antithesis. Pope has made the 'heroic-couplet' his tool for expressing his ideas in his poems. It is called 'heroic' because it was the typical measure used in English epic or heroic poetry. Each couplet, therefore, is a separate entity. In the heroic couplet, it was possible for Pope, in some passages, to use antithesis in each line to enhance the irony. The ironic contrast between the 'little men' and 'tasks so hold' and 'soft bosoms' and 'mighty rage' effectively serve the satiric purpose. Pope's stylistic devices include balance, parallels, antithesis, juxtaposition

and zeugma. Here the 'heart' is balanced by 'necklace' and 'honour' by brocade.

Here everything is contrasted with everything: Belinda's favours with her 'smiles', 'money with 'all's, 'off with 'never'. Another characteristic feature of Pope's style in 'The Rape of the Lock' is his use of juxtaposition: 'puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, Billet doux' is perhaps the single best description in the poem of the confusions of Belinda's elegant world represented by Belinda's untidy dressing table. Zeugma is a device of joining two unlike objects governed by a single verb. It is a form of pun. Pope has made plentiful use of romantic hyperbole.

In the following lines Belinda's eyes have been described as the rival of the sun's beams: Not with more glories, in the ethereal plain,

The sun first rises o'er the purpled main,

In the battle where ladies and gentlemen are fighting, Sir Plume is killed with a frown and revived with a smile. The use of hyperbole in the concluding lines is noteworthy.

For after all the murders of your eye

When after millions slain, you yourself shall die.

Pope has made use of various images but most frequently. 'The vessel imagery Vases, bottles, pots and china jars are among the striking articles of the furniture of the poem. There is the array of the jars on Belinda's dressing table. The grand style used for epics. Pope also uses words of Latin origin to make his poem appear grand. These words are 'dire offence' 'amorous', 'Muse, 'vouch safe'. Then there are French words too - e.g. "belle' 'beau', 'billet-doux', 'rousing shake', 'downy'. It is because of the various artistic qualities of 'The Rape of the Lock' that Hazlitt has called it the "most exquisite specimen of filigree work ever invented."

## Chapter 3

### The Way of the World

**Que-1 In what respects do you regard The Way of The World as a restoration comedy? Give a reasoned answer.**

**Or**

**Discuss The Way of The World as “the best and finest flower of restoration comedy”.**

**Ans-1** The Way of The World is a typical restoration comedy. It represents a true picture of the restoration age. The term “Restoration Comedy” and “Comedy of Manners” are synonyms. In 1660, monarchy was restored in England Charles II became the King. The comedies written after the Restoration period are called Restoration Comedies or Comedy of Manners. They deal with the life of the upper classes in the restoration period. The social behaviour of the people had changed because society as a whole was taking a new turn. The restoration dramatist worked on the experimental temper of the society. During this period, men and women experimented. They frequently indulged in rationalising human relationships. Money had become the -all and end-all of their life. The dramatists exposed their impurities in a satirical manner. Satire, wit, irony and humour were used as very powerful weapons by the restoration dramatists. All restoration comedies deal with the artificial aspect of life. In the words of Bonamy Dobree, "restoration comedy, then, expressed, not licentiousness, but a deep curiosity, and a desire to try new ways of living." The Way of the World presents a true picture of 18th century society. He describes the peculiarities, conflicts between youth and age, between parents and children in this great comedy of manners. Congreve provides us a deep insight into the social and moral atmosphere of the age.

It is true that the play is a traditional love story in the sense that its hero woos and finally wins the heroine. The dramatist's purpose is to show how Mirabell and Fainfall chase women in order to have fun and exploit them for the sake of money. On the other hand, Lady Wishfort regards herself as a young woman even at the age of 55. She wishes to be wooed. She uses her position to impose her views on Millamant. She tells Mirabell: "one's cruelty is one's power; and when one parts with one's cruelty, one part with one's power." This shows the real nature of Lady Wishfort. The dramatist also shows how women have become victims. Their self-contradictory statements show that they are fickle minded.

Restoration comedy deals with the social and economic situation of the age. *The Way of the World* aptly dramatizes this aspect of family life. For instance, the relationship between Mrs. Fainall and Mirabell clearly throws light on this complexity. Mrs. Fainall was once loved by Mirabell. She remains loyal to Mirabell. She is extremely upset because she is not loved by her husband. The insane jealousy between Mrs. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood is quite bitter and reflects that in a fashionable society, all is not well between different types of human beings. Mrs. Marwood is Fainall's mistress. Mrs. Fainall has all the more reason to be jealous of her. The theme of love has been presented in a typical restoration way. From the very beginning of the play it is clear that Millamant and Mirabell really love each other. When Mirabell blunders into the "Cabal Night", he presumes that Millamant blushes for herself. For the first time Mirabell is jealous of a woman. He feels that he is "somewhat too passionate a love; for I like with all her faults; nay, like her for her faults. The Proviso-scene is the finest and wittiest exchange of dialogues. The proviso-scene or the bargaining-scene between Mirabell and Millamant has a great comic value. It serves the dual purpose of providing comic-fun and of presenting the true idea of happy married life. Their use of legal language is justified because the whole society at that time was based upon the legal system. Millamant cannot inherit her 6000 pounds unless Lady Wishfort approves of her marriage. He has to manipulate the law for his own benefit. Both of them want to enjoy equality of status after marriage. As life-partners they want to have respect for each other. The concluding speech of Mirabell ends with a promise that "those duly endowed may live life truly. *The Way of The World* is a first rate Restoration comedy. One finds here, the sexual wit of Fainall and brilliant and healthy wit of Mirabell and Millamant. The dramatist shows that Millamant's wit can be charming as well as malicious. But she never becomes crude. She is alive and breathing.

### **Conclusion**

The dramatist has depicted all the weaknesses, vices and sex intrigues / immoralities of the age in this powerful play. It has all the features of a Restoration comedy. It is a supreme achievement of wit and elegance.

**Que-2 Discuss the The Way of the World as an excellent comedy which exposes false wit by contrasting it with true wit.**

**or**

**"The plot of The Way of the World is complicated and yet it is not without unity". Discuss.**

**Ans-2** The Way of the World is considered to be one of the finest Restoration comedies. It is rich in dazzling wit and brilliant dialogue. Many critics point out that this play is a failure because it lacks structural unity. When the play was staged, it could not become popular. It is true that this satiric comedy has plenty of wit and humour but the intricacies of the plot make it a confused play. In order to explain the discrepancies between the public and the private world, the dramatist uses certain techniques which harm the structure of the play.

The Way of the World has many characters and various types of family relationships which are confusing. The family history of Lady Wishfort has not been presented. Thus, the information about the relationships is given bit by bit which confuses the readers. We learn that Mirabell pretends to be in love with Lady Wishfort. But the reality is something else. On the other hand, he wants to win her approval of his marriage to Millamant. But Mirabell's action cannot be understood. Again we are told about Mirabell's disclosure to Mrs. Fainall that her husband is a designing lover. When Fainall and Mrs. Marwood are engaged in conversation, one thing is clear about Fainall that his devotion is beyond doubt. The way love-affairs are presented in The Way of the World, it becomes clear that these love-affairs irritate the reader. For example, Mirabell and Millamant. In order to entice Lady Wishfort, Mirabell starts wooing the aunt. He also introduces Waitwell in the guise of Sir Rowland. The love affair between Mirabell and Lady Wishfort's daughter is also confusing in the sense that Lady Wishfort's daughter had pre marital relationship with Mirabell. On the other hand, Petulant and Witwoud want to marry Millamant. All this adds confusion and hampers the artistic growth of the plot. The play is full of intrigues and counter intrigues. We have Mirabell's two intrigues which are intended to secure the consent of Lady Wishfort for marriage between Mirabell and Millamant. Moreover, the ending of The Way of the World is artificial. Production of black box which contains a deed is also very sudden. Witwoud and Petulant testify that they have signed the document without reading it. Congreve expressed his faith in the neoclassical theories about observes three unities: Unity of Place, Unity of Time and Unity of action.

## **Conclusion**

However, Congreve's style has a typical beauty. In fact, Congreve's primary aim was to portray fashionable life in the London of his day. The power of wealth, selfishness and fashion determine the idea of marriage in this society. In spite of its architectural defects *The Way of the World* has a beauty of its own.

**Que-3 Write a critical note on the character of Mirabell.or**

**Mirabell is the most brilliant hero in the Restoration comedy. Comment.Or**

**Write a critical essay on the character of Mirabell.**

**Ans-3** Mirabell is undoubtedly a brilliant character in the Restoration comedy. He is in love with Millamant. But he has to get the approval of Millamant's aunt Lady Wishfort before marriage. In case Mirabell and Millamant marry without the approval of Lady Wishfort, Millamant will lose half of her fortune. Mirabell is a clever manipulator. He indulges in intrigues to achieve his aim. At first, he starts wooing Lady Wishfort. When his plan is exposed by Mrs. Marwood, he does not surrender easily. He indulges in the second intrigue. He tells everybody that he has a bachelor uncle who is rich. He also persuades his servant Waitwell to play the role of Sir Rowland. This proves that he is a clever manipulator. Mirabell is an astute judge of character. He never allows himself to be threatened by people like Waitwell and Foible. He tries to execute his plans in order to have the desired result. He knows the weaknesses of Fainall, Mrs. Fainall, Mrs. Marwood and Lady Wishfort. He studies their behaviour. Mirabell is a living example of an archetypal wit. Whenever he talks he is always to the point. He knows what is wrong and what is right. He knows how to convert his disadvantages into advantages. He also knows how to refuse the arguments of the other person.

Mirabellis is in love with Millamant. He wants to marry her. However, Mirabell does not yield. Like a bold lover, he keeps on pursuing his aim. He ultimately succeeds. Mirabell's relationship with Millamant is quite typical. It is Millamant who succeeds in beating him at his own game. She teases him. She calls him too serious as well as too pompous. However, the fact remains that he is deeply in love with her. In Act II scene I, Mirabell explains his dilemma:

A Fellow that lives in a Windmill, has not more whimsical Dwelling than the Heart of a Man that is lodg'd in Woman. There is no point of the Compass to which they cannot turn, and by

which they are not turn'd; and by one as well as another; For Motion not Method is their Occupation.

Mirabell enjoys the reputation of a chivalrous man. Mirabell is quite reasonable in his demands. He is against extremism. He does every effort to win Millamant. In the Proviso-scene, he expresses his ideas in a witty manner. Both Mirabell and Millamant reach any agreement regarding their marriage. They express their faith in a happy married life. That is why they believe that they have to be cautious and have to understand the nature of true love.

### **Conclusion**

Mirabell, thus, is a memorable character. He defeats Fainall's scheme by producing a legal document. He is a typical Restoration hero.

**Que-4 Show how the title of The Way of the World projects the main theme of the play.**  
**or**

**What point of view does Congreve reflect through the title The Way of the World ? Discuss.**

**Ans-4** The title of this comedy is quite apt because it reflects the main theme of the play. The dramatist also presents the marriage of sparkling and true minds in this play. The meaning of the phrase shows that the play is concerned with materialism and problems of social living. Congreve deals with material elements of life. Congreve wants to depict the fashionable world of the town of London. It is also shown that characters belonging to the urban area hate those from the country. For example, Peg and Sir Willful Witwoud have rural backgrounds. They are perhaps not liked by other characters that have been brought up in the fashionable world of London.

Money plays a very crucial role in the fashionable world of the town. In fact, the way of the world is determined by money and power. It never occurs to Mirabell that he should marry Millamant without her whole fortune of 12,000 pounds. Fainall also marries his wife for her money. He is ready to divorce her to get more money. Power of money determines happiness and successful marriage. Lady Wishfort becomes the target of two plots because she is a rich lady. Thus, the yardstick of successful marriage is money.

The problem of responsibility and adjustment is also connected with the way you behave in society. The primary aim of the dramatist is to show that happiness and marriage depends

upon understanding, responsibility and the desire to maintain one's own personality. It has been shown that Mrs. Fainall's irresponsible affair with Mirabell brings grief to her. Fainall's adulterous relationship with Mrs. Marwiid betrays the spirit of the way of the world. Mirabell's sensible act as a safeguard and protects Mrs. Fainall's wealth. The Proviso-scene throws brilliant light on the theme of the play. The dramatist expresses his idea of love. The witty exchange of ideas between Mirabell and Millamant sums up the importance of the way of the world. Both Mirabell and Millamant agree how they will conduct themselves in marriage. Millamant tells Mirabell clearly : "I'll fly and be followed to the last moment, tho

I

am upon the very verge of Matrimony, I expect you should solicit me as much as if I were wavering at the gate of a Monastery with one foot over the threshold." Millamant lays down certain conditions. She says that if Mirabell abides by these conditions she may "by degrees dwindle into a wife." This is really the way of the world.

### **Conclusion**

The play also presents life with all its and its changing circumstances. Congreve shows us that this world is constantly shifting. It has ambiguous moral judgements. It is also an absolute values.

### **Questions & Answers**

**Que-5 Write critically on the complex structure of The Way of the World.Or.**

**Discuss the The Way of the World as a play of intrigue.**

**Ans-5** The Restoration audiences wanted only relaxation and amusement in a playhouse. Without the fable and action, no play could be written. A well-known Restoration dramatist, Etherege, is reported to have observed that "a plot's too gross for any play. Another feature of the plot of Restoration Comedy is its hotchpotch character. A large number of incidents, dealing with intrigue and deception are stuffed into the body of a plot for the sake of variety. They are loosely strung together with little regard to what may be called "unity of action" or "Design".

Samuel Sorbiere, who visited England in 1663 noted this casual treatment of plot by the English dramatists, "for they mind only the parts as they come one after another and have no



regard to the whole composition “. Intrigues and counter intrigues are, in fact, the main elements of a Restoration Comedy. In his desire to present scenes of amusement, the dramatist doesn't mind holding up the action of the plot and sometimes even forgetting that there is such a thing as a story in his play or that the characters are supposed to do much more than mere talking.

The plot of *The Way of the World* is likewise confusing and complicated. The play's main story is Mirabell's efforts to marry Millamant with Lady Wishfort's consent and the way he overcomes the obstacles raised by Fainall and Marwood. Mirabell needs Lady Wishfort's consent for marriage with Millamant because Lady Wishfort is her guardian and custodian of her marriage portion of six thousand pounds a year. He would lose this amount if Lady Wishfort doesn't give her consent. The counter-intrigues of Fainall and Mrs. Marwood are designed to prevent this consent. At first Mirabell indulged in mock-wooing. He flattered the old lady with verses in her praise. He even made her believe that she was in labour when she lay in a fit of dropsy (disease). This plan was foiled by Mrs. Marwood's counter-intrigue who exposed Mirabell's intrigue. When Foible was talking with Mrs. Fainall about Mirabell's intrigue, Mrs. Marwood overhears them. Fainall, then, in collaboration with her, plans another counter-intrigue. She plans to write a letter to Lady Wishfort informing her of Mirabell's intrigue. The letter is designed to be delivered to Lady Wishfort right when she is in conversation with "Sir Rowland." Fainall also plans to tell Lady Wishfort that he would seek divorce from his wife on the charge of adultery unless Lady Wishfort wills all her property to him and undertakes not to marry in future.

Mirabell's intrigue is innocent in the sense that its purpose is the union of true lovers, whereas Fainall-Marwood counter-intrigue is for money and revenge and, therefore, malicious. Fainall- Marwood seem to succeed to a large extent. Love affairs between Fainall and Marwood is proved with the evidence of Mincing and Foible. Finally, Mirabell frustrates Fainall's intrigue by producing a deed whereby Mrs. Fainall had already transferred everything to Mirabell. Thus, truth and honour ultimately prevail over open libertinism and studied heartlessness which was then the way of the world. The plot of the way of *The World* leaves many loose ends. Fainall and Marwood had almost succeeded in their efforts at black mailing lady Wishfort. Suddenly, without any adequate preparation for it, Waitwell brings the black box that contains a deed. Witwoud and Petulant testify having signed the document without reading it. All this appears to be too contrived and incredible.

**Que 6 "The Way of the World is a true and faithful mirror to contemporary society". Discuss.**

**Or**

**What does Congreve mean by the world in the context of the play?**

Ans-6 In 1660, the Monarchy was restored in England and Charles-II became the king. During his exile, Charles II had been living in France. When he returned to England, he brought with him French attitude and ways of life, after his restoration, to the throne. These vices became virtues for his courtiers. As a result, the upper-middle class of the society – the Drobles, courtiers and the lords became corrupt and immoral.

**Comedy of Manners:** The comedy of manners is a kind of comedy in which the manners, customs and outlook of a particular section of the society are depicted. This kind of comedy became very popular in the latter half of the Seventeenth Century or the Restoration age. In the hands of playwrights like Wycherley, Vanburgh, Etherege and Congreve, this comedy flourished.

**The Way of the World: As a Mirror to the Society:** In this play, Congreve mirrors the manners of his contemporary society. The main ingredients of this play are intrigues, love-affairs, jealousy, cuckoldry, legacy-conflicts and dazzling wit. That is perhaps why the play is considered as "the best and finest flower of Restoration Comedy."

**Social Life of the Upper Classes:** The Way of the World, depicts the social life of the upper classes with all its foibles and manners. Mirabell and Mr. Fainall, the young gallants and rakes, are chasing women. Lady Wishfort, even at the age of fifty five, considers herself a young woman. Arabella, the daughter of the lady, is also of the same nature. Millamant is in the habit of keeping lap-dogs. Petulant hires women to come and ask for him in the chocolate-houses. Witwoud does not recognise his own brother as it is against the fashion of the time.

**Fashionable Women with their tastes:** The Way of the World presents women in a ridiculous light, with their vanities, affectations and fashions. Some of their remarks are self-contradictory and a satire on themselves. We find Lady Wishfort, worried about her makeup, even at the age of fifty five and in search of a suitor.

**Man-Woman Relationship:** The ingredients of family, marriage and fortune were the staple of Restoration Comedy. In the play, the debate between Mirabell and Millamant on the man-woman relationship in marriage reflects something of the upper-class social and domestic milieu.

**Places of Scandal and the Clubs:** Generally, a comedy implies a social attitude towards life, for without society mankind cannot survive. This comedy represents the nights and clubs of the Restoration period. The charge of immorality or lewdness or pornography hangs over the Restoration Comedy. The servants and maid servants are of loose morals and are victims of their master's sexual lust. The places of scandal and intrigue are St. James Park, Hyde Park and the Mall, where lovers and the intrigues come and play their games.

**Spurious love and frailty:** Pure love and emotions were far away from the social life of the Restoration age.

**Conclusion:** The restoration age was a corrupt age and the playwright paints a damaging picture of contemporary society. Avarice, lust and sexual jealousy appear to govern all the actions and this picture corresponds, no doubt, to historical reality.

**Que-7 Evaluate the Way comedy of the World manners.**

**Ans-7** The realistic comedy which flourished during the Restoration period is generally known as the "Comedy of Manners". The imaginative flight of the Elizabethans and the idealistic or philosophical poetry were discarded in favour of down to earth expressions. The Restoration Comedy of manners was largely influenced by the French dramatist Moliere. He provided the dramatists with new ideas about plot and comic characterization. The point of hard realism and a hard sitting satirical temper are due to the effect of Johnson's comedy of humours.

A "manner" is generally speaking, a kind of superficial behaviour. Manners are of the nature of follies and vices. The plays of this period were written for a small section of society. The players catered to the tastes of only the courtly classes. The play represents the peak and perfection of this type of comedy. It gives us a kaleidoscopic view of morals, behaviour, habits, fashions, affections etc. It has a lot of historical value as it gives us insight into the social life of the upper class people of London in the latter part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He conveys to us the illicit love and adulterous relationship of contemporary higher society through Fainall. Mrs Fainall, Mrs. Marwood and the hero Mirabell. All these characters

commit adultery and never have any qualms of conscience. George Shreburn says "Restoration comedy is rather less a representation of life than it is commentary upon manners. There is a wide gap between what they appear or show and what they actually are. The wildness in the hero is considerably restrained, we have seen, by the fashion code and the necessity of being well bred. He sacrifices all other pleasures to his love. The heroine is never permitted to cross the conventional danger line of physical chastity. The dramatist has imitated his society but never glorified the immorality; he criticised it. Sex and money are dominant themes in the Restoration Comedy of Manners. A sign of Witwoud's affectation that he doesn't know who Sir Willful is? He says that it is not fashionable in the town to recognise one's relatives whereupon Sir Wilful rightly says, "The fashion is a fool and you are a GOP, dear brother". Witwoud and Petulant have been intended as fake wits. One of the major qualities of the Restoration Comedy is the witty exchange of words. The Dialogue are sharp and witty. Repartee is the very soul of their conversation. The plot of *The Way of the World* does not cover much time. It has a relative lack of the conventional type of dramatic action. Some critics have attacked the comedy of manners for the elements of sex, and immorality in it. The love or sex is conveyed to the readers only through dialogues, there is no actual representation of love scenes on the stage. The dramatists apply wit and sharp talk to the purpose of probing the depth of sex life. Sex in the Comedy of Manners is the focus of an analytical study.

**Que-8 The characterization in *The Way of The World* has a subtlety which separates it from any obvious portrayal of type. Comment.**

**Or**

**"Congreve's characters in *The Way of the World* are living persons and not puppets". How far do you agree with this statement?**

**Ans-8** Introduction: Congreve's *The Way of the World* is regarded as "the best and the finest flower of Restoration comedy". Congreve's plays are particularly known for their brilliant characterisation. The dramatist is able to present a kaleidoscopic view of contemporary social morality.

**Characterization in *The Way of the World*:** In this play, Congreve exhibits great skill and profound understanding in character portrayal. The Restoration Age, being an age of loose moral behaviour and free sex, could find expression only through characters which are typed. They represent one aspect or the other of contemporary society very well.

**True Wits and False Wits:** Congreve's success as an artist of characterisation, however, lies in providing different shades to his characters. True wit is represented by Mirabell and Millamant. Wilful and even Lady Wishfort represent false wit.

**Names as Index-cards:** All characters bear ticket names which reveal their true nature. Mirabell could also be interpreted as 'one who is admired by belles.' and Marwood is 'one who would destroy everything'. These names are highly suggestive and, in fact, they reveal the true nature of various characters.

**Lady Wishfort:** Lady Wishfort is a unique character. She plays a major role in the play. She wants to make her presence felt among the gentlemen of the town. Her affected behaviour in the presence of Sir Rowland and her fascination for Mirabell make her a truly comic character.

**Mirabell:** He is a typical urbane gentleman. He possesses all the polish, grace and refinement of a middle-class gentleman and this makes him popular among young ladies. He is intelligent, shrewd, practical and manipulative. Mirabell is a practical man.

**Millamant:** Millamant reminds us of the Shakespearean heroines, Rosalind of *As You Like It*. She is Congreve's great triumph. She is wise, witty, practical and unsentimental. She loves Mirabell. Because of her sparkling wit, beauty and realistic attitude, Millamant becomes a memorable heroine.

**Mr. Fainall:** Mr. Fainall emerges as a villain in the play. Mrs. Marwood, who is his mistress, Fainall blackmails Lady Wishfort but he is outwitted by Mirabell both in shrewdness and in brilliance.

**Mrs. Fainall:** Mrs. Fainall is a minor character but plays an important role in bringing the two lovers together in marriage. She had an affair with Mirabell before marriage and is still on friendly terms with him but her husband doesn't love her. She hates him and he leaves her in the end.

**Mrs. Marwood:** She is a complex character who is jealous, and bitter. Her villainous nature is seen when she joins hands with Mr. Fainall and tries to put obstacles in the union of the two lovers.

**The Fops:** The fops are Witwoud, Petulant and Sir Wilfull Witwoud. They are not villains. They are comic characters and are 'types' to serve the purpose of the playwright.

**Conclusion:** His characters are "lively" and they impress the reader in the pages of the play and the audience on the stage. Congreve shows himself as a master of character portrayal in the play.

**Que-9 Write a critical note on the plot construction of the Way of the World.Or**

**Discuss the Plot Construction of 'The Way of the World' with special reference to the elements of intrigue and dissimulation.**

**Ans-9** Introduction: Congreve's last play, "The Way of the World", which is generally regarded as his masterpiece, has a complex and intricate plot. The play has a baffling plot without much action. When the play is read, a hawk's eye is required to detect them and keep them in order.

**Confusing Family Relationships:** The mode of narration further intensifies the complexity. Sir Wilful is Lady Wishfort's nephew. Millamant is her niece. Witwoud also is her nephew. Witwoud is half-brother to Sir Wilful. All such information puzzles the reader as the family history of Lady Wishfort has not been given. Lady Wishfort had two sisters who were already dead. One of them was the mother of Millamant. The other was the mother of Sir Wilful but after her death, her husband married again and thus came Witwoud. Hence he is half-brother to Sir Wilful.

**Various Love Affairs:** The play has many love affairs. Mirabell and Millamant but Millamant cannot marry against her wishes and if she does, she will lose half of her fortune. Mirabell starts courting the aunt herself. He arranges a marriage between his servant Waitwell and Foible. Lady Wishfort's maid servant he introduces Waitwell in guise of Sir Rowland. Mrs. Marwood has a soft corner for Mirabell but she is carrying an illicit relationship with Mr. Fainall. Mr. Fainall is the husband of Arabella, Lady Wishfort's daughter who had premarital relationship with Mirabell. Lady Wishfort wants Millamant to marry Sir Wilful, her nephew. This net of relationships and love-affairs is very confusing and baffling for the reader.

**Baffling Intrigues:** There are countless schemes and intrigues planned and brought into action by various characters. Mr. Fainall joins hands with Mrs. Marwood, his mistress and devises a scheme to claim the fortunes of Mrs. Fainall, Lady Wishfort and Millamant. But Mirabell outshines him by his counter-intrigue and entraps Fainall. He prepares Sir Wilful and Millamant to pretend that they have agreed to marry each other. Again, he presents a

black box containing some documents. According to these legal documents, Mirabell is the trustee of Mrs. Fainall's fortune and Mrs. Fainall has nothing of her own. In this way, he defeats Fainall in the battle of wits and protects the fortunes of both Mrs. Fainall and Millamant.

**Conclusion:** In this way, it is seen that *The Way of the World* has a very complex and baffling plot. The witty dialogues, that the exchange, are one of the best qualities of the play. Except, these one or positive aspects, the play produces an irritating effect.

**Que-10 Bring out the differences between romantic comedy, comedy of humour and Restoration comedy of Manners.**

**Ans-10 Its characteristics**

Comedy is a term that is applied to plays which have a non-tragic ending and plays in which characters and situations are treated humorously and the purpose is to excite laughter and amuse the audience. The main difference in various kinds of comedies is that they are different kinds. They may be silly, tickle the spectator, or give him pinpricks without hurting him; or they "hit him with a blown up bladder, but they do not hurt, and are inoffensive. A real comedy always aims at evoking laughter, or at least, a smile of pure enjoyment. We have various kinds of comedies such as classical, Roman, medieval, Elizabeth or romantic, comedy of humour of Ben Johnson, Restoration comedy of manners, comedy of intrigue, and sentimental comedy. A dramatist, it has been stated by a critic, writes comedies because he finds "the spectacle of human life, or some of its aspects, amusing or absurd, or find that some aspects of life need to be improved or corrected and proceeds to satirize, mock, scorn, or ridicule them. Thus these three comedies, the romantic, the comedy of humour and the comedy of manners, differ from each other and all seek to deal with the incongruous, or the absurd, or what is bad in life.

Elizabethan comedy or romantic comedy, it is primarily a comedy built round the theme of love – love in all its varieties, love between man and woman, between man and man (friendship) and between woman and woman. The hero and heroine meet under strange circumstances. The heroines in such comedies are usually disguised as men and their disguise causes great deal of confusion and misunderstanding which becomes the source of laughter and amusement. All the comedies of Shakespeare are set off in far off places which are the creation of his imagination. All the characters in Shakespeare's romantic comedies such as *Twelfth Night* are real, creatures of flesh and blood. All the comedies of Shakespeare contain

parts which are comic amuse and hurt not, but the realistic portions are also vivid and uses realism to ridicule romantic notions about life and love. Shakespeare never didactic openly, but implications of his realism and satire are quite clear.

### **Comedy of Humour**

Along with the romantic comedy it deals with everyday life in the taverns, inns, and shops of the period. Jonson's comedy of humour, or more appropriately Jonson's satiric comedy was a logical development from the realistic comedy. The basis of comedy of humour is the medical theory that human constitution contains four fluids, blood, choler and black bile (cause of melancholy, passivity, depression etc.) Comedy of Manners of the later part of the seventeenth century is a comedy because, it has several elements found in all comedies, and that is, it is comic, satirical, and even farcical.

The subject matter is realistic as it aims to depict the life of. Section of the upper class of the period and treats their activities which cent around marriage and comically as well as satirically. In treating this theme these plays are indecent but they are not immoral as it has been attacked as such by several critics. But these plays have a deeper meaning. "It is this dialectic between inner desires and outward appearance-not instinct alone or manners alone-that informs the comedies with masks, play-acting, disguise, intrigue and perhaps most important, create their language." A major difference between the Jonsonian comedy of humour or satirical comedy and comedy of manners is that the former deals with universal evils, vices and the like while the latter deals with the manners of a narrow section of the upper class of the Restoration period. The former becomes almost satirical and banishes the comic from it, while the Restoration Comedy of Manners ridicules and satirises the artificial and unnatural lifestyle of this class. The basic theme of all these comedies is the difference between appearance and reality. These are artificial social conventions of this sophisticated and shallow class and nature, that is, the fundamental traits of human nature. It is because of this reason that Norman Holland calls them the first modern comedies.

**Que-11 Comment on the vision of an ideal marriage which conjured up Congreve in The Way of The World.**

**Or**

**"In Congreve's The Way of the World the Central theme is undoubtedly the relations of men and women in marriage." Discuss.**



**Ans-11** The central subject of most Restoration comedies was love and marriage. Congreve's comedies seem to be subtle comments on love and marriage. As a result, *The Way of The World* comes before us as a portrayal of the Restoration society reflecting love, marriage and sex. To quote Karl Marx, "The immediate, natural and necessary relationship of one human being to another is that of man to woman ". Its theme is the relationship of men and women not only in marriage but outside marriage also.

**Treatment of Love:** The Restoration period was a period of loose morals. Although the principal love affair is in the play. *The Way of the World*, is the one between Mirabell and Millamant. Yet Mirabell has already had a love affair. Mirabell, in order to save his reputation, got her married to Mr. Fainall. Thus, we see that there is no morality in Mirabell's character. Mirabell in Act II says to Mrs. Fainall : " You should have just so much disgust for your husband as may be sufficient to make you relish your lover". The emotional side of love has been totally ignored.

Lady Wishfort

Arabella ( Mrs. Fainall)Mirabell

Millamant

Mrs. Marwood

Mr. Fainall

The love-affair of Mr. Fainall and Mrs. Marwood is another false relationship. Mr. Fainall suspects her love with Mirabell and frankly tells her about that. At this, Mrs. Marwood feels annoyed and threatens Mr. Fainall to expose his affair with her. The core of the play is the love-affair between Mirabell and Millamant. Millamant knows that in the past, her lover was the lover of her cousin, who is now Mrs. Fainall. But she doesn't mind a lover with such a past.

**Treatment of Marriage:** The social institution of marriage is presented. As bondage not as much something sacred. The marriage of Arabella (Lady Wishfort's daughter) with Mr. Fainall proves an utter failure. This marriage takes place to cover up her illicit relations with Mirabell and the suspected pregnancy. .

**Proviso Scene:** In this scene emerge the conditions that are necessary for the success of a marriage between men and women in love. Millamant knows disillusionment that comes to people after marriage. She has known the unhappy experience of her cousin.

**Sex:** Congreve aimed chiefly depicting sex as a battle of wit. There is so much verbal sex in this drama that gives us the idea of the temper of time and makes palmer say, " Sex in Congreve is a battle of wit."

**Conclusion:** To conclude, The way of the World is not merely a play depicting the manners but morals of the age, and this age is preoccupied with only one aspect of life mainly – Sex, and only Sexual Intrigues.

### **Short Answer Type Question**

**Que-1 Write a brief Character-sketch of Sir Wilful Witwoud.**

**Ans-** Sir Wilful! Witwoud plays a brief role in the play. Like other characters in the play, Sir Wilful does not quite conform to type. He is shown as having country manners: he calls for slippers; he drinks too heavily; he is very shy with Millamant, awed by the city lady. He is justifiably angry in his encounter with his brother His attitude in other matters suggests a sensible person; he certainly does not wish to marry Millamant if she does not choose; he obviously likes Mirabell, presumably a sign of good judgement, and gladly helps to foil Fainall.

**Que-2 Write a note on the proviso scene or the bargaining scene.**

**Ans-** The proviso scene or the bargaining is an important scene in Act IV of the play. Millamant lays certain conditions before Mirabell. She insists on full liberty after marriage. She asks him not to call her by names of endearment such as 'wife', 'spouse', 'my dear," joy', 'jewel', 'love', etc. She also makes it clear that after marriage, she would be at liberty to pay and receive visits to and" from whom she pleases, to write and receive letters.

**Que-3 Write a brief character sketch of Petulant.**

**Ans-** Although Petulant is one of the most minor characters, he is a sparkling one. Congreve has drawn his character with Gusto. He amuses us because of his ingenious fabrications. Petulant has a high sense of humour. His humour is refined humour. Petulant is a man of pretensions. Mirabell considers his pretensions rather impudent. But he is a frank and honest fellow. On the whole, the character of Petulant has been drawn brilliantly.

**Que-4 Write a brief character-sketch of Mrs. Marwood.**

**Ans-** Mrs. Marwood is the angry young woman of The Way of the World. She hates Mirabell

because he has rejected her offer of love, Mrs. Marwood is not only an ideal dreamer, but she is scheming little enchantress. Her plan is quite simple and well conceived. It is disclosed in the end that both have conspired to deprive Lady Wishfort and Millamant of their fortunes. It is also their plan that they will marry each other when Fainall divorces his wife. Thus, we find that Mrs. Marwood is the discarded beauty.

**Que-5 Write a brief character-sketch of Lady Wishfort.**

**Ans-** Lady Wishfort is one of the important characters in this play. She is fifty-five years of age, an age that certainly seemed very old. She is also the character with most lines in the final acts of the play. Her vanity is made clear from the first. She misinterpreted Mirabell's flattery, which he describes in the first act. Her indecorous interest in men is a part of her character and important for the action. Lady Wishfort as mother and guardian has a depth beyond the usual for her type.

**Que-6 Write a note on the role played by Foible in the play 'The Way of the World.'**

**Ans-** Foible, is the maidservant of Lady Wishfort. Mirabell wants to marry Millamant. But Lady Wishfort is not going to grant her the permission. So Mirabell gets his servant Witwoud married to Foible. He does so in order to include Foible in his plan to deceive Lady Wishfort. Foible is obviously a very intelligent young woman and, presumably eager to play the go between. She is prepared to deceive her. Her loyalty to Mirabell is based on clear pecuniary interest. Her loyalty is only to herself.

**Que-7 Write a note on the change of heart of Lady Wishfort.**

**Ans-** Lady Wishfort is a blocking character in the play. "The Way of the World." She is very eager to marry again. This weakness of Lady Wishfort is exploited by Mirabell who sends his servant Waitwell, in the guise of Sir Rowland, as her suitor. The plan is revealed and she is very angry with Mirabell. When Fainall threatens that he will claim her money as well as her niece Millamant as she is marrying without her aunt's permission. Lady Wishfort grants permission to Millamant to marry Mirabell. So Lady Wishfort's change of heart makes the play end on a happy note.

**Que-8 What is wit? Characterize false wit in 'The Way of the World'.**

**Ans-** Wit in literature is defined as the ability to discover brilliant, surprising and paradoxical figures and to produce a shock of comic surprise. Congreve uses the term false wit for his

play *The Way of the World*. Congreve describes false wit as a product of affectation. He says: "A wit, which at the same time is affected, is also a false wit."

**Que-9 Write a short note on the prologue in 'The Way of the World'.**

**Ans-** The Prologue in this play was delivered by the sixty-five-year-old Betterton, the grand old man of the Restoration stage. The fact that he describes his play as having no farce indicates that he planned the Willful-Witwoud scenes and the Lady Wishfort scenes as less broadly burlesque than some of his contemporaries might have wished.

**Que-10 Relationship of Mrs. Marwood and Mr. Fainall in 'The Way of the World'.**

**Ans-** Mr. Fainall ignores the treachery of his wife. He possesses an extra-marital affair with Mrs. Marwood. He puts his arguments in order to defend himself. We can judge the moral degradation of Mrs. Marwood; she is also involved with Mirabell. He thinks himself an over-intelligent fellow. He fabricates intrigues for others but he is himself being deceived by his wife and Mrs. Marwood. They provide a clear picture of the moral impoverishment of their contemporary society.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The School for Scandal**

**Que-1. Comment on the Characters of Joseph Surface and Charles Surface.**

**Ans-** Joseph Surface is one of the two Surface brothers in *The School for Scandal*. He is a thorough villain. He is devoid of all moral scruples. His talk abounds in moral utterances. But inside he is a thorough villain. He matches Lady Sneerwell in hypocrisy and villainy. According to some critics the play might well have been titled "The Unmasking of Joseph Surface and Lady Sneerwell".

In the beginning of the play, Lady Sneerwell rightly sums up Joseph Surface's character. She describes him as "artful, selfish and malicious, in short, a sentimental knave". They want to prevent the marriage of Charles Surface and Maria. Joseph himself wants to marry Maria. So with the help of Lady Sneerwell, he tries to malign Charles's character. A member of Lady Sneerwell's circle, Joseph is not formally a member of the school for scandal. It is because he possesses the qualities of gossip and spreading malicious rumours as the members of her school do. His remarks are generally witty. For instance, he says about Sir Benjamin and Mr.

Crabtree : "There is no advantage in not knowing him; for he'll abuse a stranger just as soon as his best friend-and his uncle's as bad. He makes an acute observation about Snake also when he tells Lady Sneerwell that fellow "Joseph is anxious to please both Lady Teazle and Maria. But in the end both of them know his real nature. As Lady Sneerwell tells Snake, Joseph has, "with the assistance of his sentiments and hypocrisy", prevailed upon Sir Peter to agree to Joseph's proposed marriage with Maria.

Sir Oliver decides to test the character of both his nephews. When Sir Oliver, disguised as Mr. Stanley, meets Joseph, he is sadly disappointed. He poses to be a needy and poor relative and requests him for help. But Joseph, completely denies having received any money from his uncle, Sir Oliver. Thus Joseph proves to be completely ungrateful to the man who had sent him an amount of twelve thousand pounds. In his efforts to win Maria as a wife, he tries to take the help of Lady Teazle. But Lady Teazle misunderstands his attention to her and begins to look upon him as her lover. He is a great hypocrite. He has a false sympathy for Sir Peter When Sir Peter tells him that he suspects his wife of having developed a hay love-affair with Charles. When Stanley comes to him for financial help, he pretends to have sympathy for him. But he has no intention of helping him. Joseph Surface plays a major role in the play. His character portrayed by Sheridan is more complex than that of any other person in this play. In short, Joseph is a villainous intriguer, a hypocrite and utterly unscrupulous.

**Que-2 Write School and for extended note on the significance of the title of the play 'The School for Scandal'.**

**Ans-** The title of Sheridan's famous comedy The School for Scandal is highly appropriate. Lady Teazle describes Lady Sneerwell as "the president of the Scandalous College". Their chief hobby is to indulge in scandalous gossip. Lady Sneerwell herself is adept in spreading and circulating scandalous stories about persons of her acquaintance. When the play opens, we find her consorting with a man called Snake. Lady Sneerwell's scandal mongering is distinguished by what she calls a "delicacy of hints and mellowness of sneer". Lady Sneerwell takes an active part in the malicious gossip that goes on when the members of her circle gather at her house. Lady Sneerwell's most malicious remark is made when Maria abruptly leaves the company on hearing the adverse comments that are being made on Charles. Lady Sneerwell's insinuation is that Maria may already have become pregnant by Charles and may now, being in a state of excitement, may need somebody's help.

There are two main strands in the plot of this comedy. . One of these relates to the scandal-

mongers who include, apart from Lady Sneerwell, Joseph, Mrs. Candour, Sir Benjamin Backbite, Crabtree and others. The second strand of the plot relates to the two brothers, Joseph Surface and Charles Surface, who are rivals for the hand of Maria. The scandal-mongers do not even spare their own friends and relations. But the false stories circulated by Lady Sneerwell and Joseph about the extravagance and the bankruptcy of Charles are important from the point of view of the plot-construction. Lady Sneerwell and Joseph each have their own selfish motives in maligning Charles. At the same time, Sir Peter is deceived by the hypocrisy of Joseph who is villainous but maintains an outer show of virtue. He often speaks in a moral tone but is, in fact, an immoral fellow. It is only Rowley who knows the truth about the two brothers, and it is he who urges Sir Oliver to keep an open mind about them till he is able to know the truth about them first hand. In short, the members of this 'school' for scandal, magnify, distort, twist, and even fabricate facts in order to throw dust into the eyes of people. Sheridan makes clear perception throughout the play, scandal results in defaming personalities. The School for Scandal, a comedy of manners, takes aim at London's new high- society and its preoccupation with gossip, defamation, foppishness, and false morality. It contains stock character types with names which show their qualities. Sheridan's purpose in this play is both to delight and to instruct. Sheridan attacks the backbiting nature of people.

Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour, Sir Benjamin Backbite and Crabtree, Snake and the unreformed Lady Teazle. In their circle we find a world of destructive gossip, of "private" revelations, factual or fictitious, for public consumption. Scandal-mongering is presented as a learned art that includes a variety of tactics like getting false reports published in newspapers, circulating rumours, the profession of sympathy for malicious characters, etc. We depend on their gossip to know about the stories of Charles, Maria, Sir Peter and the rest on which the play will turn. Thus the story of the play depends on its action on the members of the 'school' for scandal. Lady Sneerwell is always trying to induct more members to her school. Therefore, the title given to the play is very appropriate.

**Que-3 Discuss Sheridan's art of characterisation in The School for Scandal.**

**Ans-** One of the great features of the school for scandal is its super characterization. The characters in this play are stocked or stereo-typed. The important characters in this play are Sir Peter Teazle, Lady Teazle, Maria, Joseph Surface and Charles Surface. Then there are Sir Oliver Surface and Rowley. There are some important members of the Scandal Club like

Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour, Crabtree, Sir Benjamin Backbite, Mr. Snake and Mr. Careless.

The names act as the labels to these characters. The names indicate some special quality of the characters. Lady Sneerwell goes on sneering. Mrs. Candour always pretends to be candid. Sir Benjamin only backbites and Mr. Snake acts as a snake ready to sting with his venomous tongue and pen.

### **Characters as Types:**

**Sir Peter Teazle:** Sir Peter Teazle is a traditional well-meaning old man. He represents the quality of generosity along with eccentricity.

**Sir Oliver:** Sir Oliver represents the type of universal uncles who are generous hearted and caring. He is a mere type of a generous old relative or a family friend.

**Charles Surface:** Charles Surface is more open to temptation and can be found in any Comedy of Manners.

**Lady Teazle:** She represents the country girl inducted in the fashionable world of London and dazzled by it.

**Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour and other scandalmongers:** It represents the malicious scandal-mongering women we come across in the upper class society.

**Sir Benjamin and Mr. Crabtree:** Sir Benjamin is the typical fop or a wit only pastime is to exercise his wit and pursue young women. Crabtree is a minion who always acts as a hanger-on.

**Scandal-mongering:** The moral decadence of these characters is well-revealed in their light-hearted dialogues. Whether it is Lady Sneerwell Or Lady Teazle ; Charles or Joseph; Sir Benjamin or Crabtree all revel in the heartless revelry in which other people's characters are dissected with the precision of a surgeon's knife. Sir Oliver too is saved as he has been away from the frivolous London society for a long time.

Sheridan presents him. Characters as types, yet he infuses them with certain individual qualities. Sir Peter and Sir Oliver are apt examples to prove this point. Sir Peter represents a type of an elderly nobleman who has been foolish enough to marry a young woman. Though the quarrel between the elderly husband and his young vivacious wife creates much fun in the play, we are always aware of the sagacious nature of Sir Peter. Sir Oliver has been

individualised by Sheridan. He is presented as a fun-loving uncle who would judge his nephews on his own and thus disguises himself as Mr. Premium and Mr. Stanley.

The portrayal of Lady Teazle is a special gift of Sheridan. She is so full of life and vivacity that she simply dazzles the whole London fashionable world. Her sense of humour and wit, the cool way in which she crosses swords with her elderly husband is simply fantastic. One special quality that the reader comes across in the play is the quality of wit. One special scene worth mentioning for its wit is the quarrel between Sir Peter and Lady Teazle. The School for Scandal, no doubt, is a brilliant study of wit and character portrayal. The characters are presented only externally, their psychological conflicts have not been presented. The Comedy of Manners, the characters were supposed to be cast in some specific moulds.

**Que-4 Discuss briefly the dramatic significance of the Auction Scene (Act IV Scene i).**

**Ans-** Sir Oliver comes back from India and meets his friend, Sir Peter after sixteen years. His two nephews were quite young, and so do not remember his face. Sir Oliver has good fortune. Sir Peter has married a young girl and suspects that she has relations with younger Surface, Charles and informs Sir Oliver about his libertine nature and his bankruptcy. This makes Sir Oliver very sad but he decides to meet his nephews in disguise. Sir Oliver is not aware that his suspicion of Charles was planted in his mind by scandal-mongers, Lady Sneerwell.

In the play, Charles is described by Lady Sneerwell very early as 'a libertine' and a broke, but she loves him. He is charitable. Charles is presented in a rowdy 'aristocratic leisurely society of heavy drinking and songs, protesting about the degeneracy of an age that will not drink.

Sir Oliver's (disguised as Mr. Premium the money-lender) first impression about Charles is sad. Charles is busy drinking and singing with a friend, Careless. Sir Oliver feels that he should have not done it, but Charles shows some courtesy and his bluntness and honesty in business dealings, later, impresses Sir Oliver. The dialogue between (disguised Sir Oliver) and Charles provides lot of humour for the audience, Sir Oliver's condemnation of Charles remains when he tells him about his disposal of his family's property. Family portraits have less significance for Sir Oliver, but "the scene is symbolic representation of the young rake cutting himself off from his family, and incidentally, indulging in the youthful "imprudence" which Sir Oliver has admired until he sees it in action.

Charles informs Sir Oliver that he has nothing of family property, but a room full of family



pictures, and he would bargain for them. Sir Oliver accepts the offer and thinks that he will never forgive Charles for this. Sir Oliver finds them a good collection. Charles asks Careless to act as an auctioneer and for that use the old chair of his grandfather.

Charles first presents the paintings of his great uncle, Sir Charles Raviline. Moses tells him that Mr. Premium would like him to quote the price. Sir Oliver takes the painting. After that Charles offers other paintings of his ancestors. He sells the whole lot for three hundred pounds. But there is one painting left of Sir Oliver himself. Sir Oliver Charles points out that for that I'll look for a fellow over the settee. Charles replies that it is his uncle Oliver. Careless describes his eyes and calls him 'an inveterate knave'. Sir Oliver agrees to be ill with the whole lot. Charles replies, "I will not part with poor Noll. The old fellow has been very good to me, and I'll keep this picture while I have room to put it in." Sir Oliver feels pleased. Charles politely replies that he is sorry, but he won't sell it. Sir Oliver says that he would give him as much for the painting as for the whole. Sir Oliver gives Charles a draft of eight hundred pounds for the painting. Charles again refuses to part with the painting. Sir Oliver then asks Charles to give out his price and he would take it, But Charles finally tells him 'no bargain', Sir Oliver is pleased with Charles and tells Moses, "A dear extravagant rogue! Good day! –

**Que 6. Describe briefly the dramatic significance of Screen Scene or Act IV scene iii.**

**Ans-** The critic of the London Chronicle said, "The fable is well conducted and. Incidents are managed with great judgement. The test of time has fully confirmed the unqualified praise thus bestowed on the 'screen scene'. It remains not merely the most notable scene in English comedy of manners, but one of the masterpieces of English dramatic art."

In Joseph Surface, sentiment is ruthlessly exposed. Joseph always mouths sentiments, when he is 'artful, selfish and malicious' by nature. At the beginning of the scene, Surface's motives seem confused. On the one hand he says that he wants to ingratiate himself with Lady Teazle to gain her support when the time comes for his marriage with Maria. Actually Joseph Surface is merely giving an innocent explanation for guilty feeling which is not yet evident. On the other hand, it soon becomes clear that Surface is bent on seducing Lady Teazle.

Joseph Surface and his servant are in Joseph's library. Joseph enquires if there is any letter from Lady Teazle. There is a knock at the door. But Joseph points out that he should first draw the screen before the window before opening the door. Lady Teazle enters and the servant quits. She overhears Joseph talking to himself. Lady Teazle explains that the late Sir

Peter has become ill-tempered with her. Joseph thinks that Lady Teazle was wrongly convinced about his design on the silly girl. She complains that Lady Sneerwell has circulated so many scandals about her. He suggests that she should say in her defence and part, with her virtue to preserve her reputation. She only suggests to him to leave honour out of argument. The servant rushes in and announces the unexpected arrival of Sir Peter. Joseph immediately hides Lady Teazle behind the screen. In the meantime, Sir Peter enters. Peter asks Joseph if he has come to him to talk about an urgent matter. Lady Teazle's conduct of late has made him very unhappy. Joseph is astonished and disagrees with Sir Peter. Sir Teazle replies sharply, "What is her principle -against the flattery of a handsome lively young fellow?" Sir Peter feels hurt because the cause is a young boy, his oldest friend. Joseph points out that "when ingratitude barbs the dart of injury, the wound has the double danger in it". Joseph insists on proof, but he agrees that he was no longer his brother, for a man who breaks through the laws of hospitality. Sir Peter only wishes that his suspicion may turn out to be baseless. But for the present he has decided to part with her. Now he turns toward Maria but Joseph puts it off.

In the meantime, the servant informs that a young gentleman wants to meet Sir Peter. He moves toward the screen and is amazed to find a listener already there. He swears that he saw a petticoat. Charles Surface enters the library and greets Joseph Surface. Charles asks him where Sir Peter is. He thought he was with him. Joseph informs him that he was with him but hearing his name he immediately left. Joseph tells him that he was the cause of Sir Peter's uneasiness. Charles laughs loudly. Charles denies that he has never thought about it, he knows about his love for Maria. Joseph is badly upset to hear this and asks Charles that he should not talk foolishly. Joseph pleads with Charles to keep. Quiet, he tells him that Sir Peter is listening. Joseph points to the closet. Charles goes to the closet and pulls out Sir Peter. Charles is now convinced that Joseph was a hypocrite and the reason for the scandal. Charles points out to Sir Peter that he should have also suspected Joseph as well.

The servant enters and informs Joseph that Lady Sneerwell is waiting for him. Sir Peter tells Charles about Joseph satirically, "He is a man of sentiment. Sir Peter asks Charles not to defame Joseph and says that there was a girl with him when he came. Charles, now, moves toward the screen. Sir Peter shouts he should not go to the screen. Joseph enters but at the same time Charles throws the screen and he is wonder-struck to find Lady Teazle behind the screen. Sir Peter is also badly upset. Charles leaves.

Joseph enters and explains to Sir Peter that Lady Teazle was scared of him. But Lady Teazle points out, "There is not one syllable of truth in what the gentleman has told you." Lady Teazle calls him a hypocrite who wanted to seduce her. Sir Peter is completely disillusioned. He is changed. The scene is the climax of the play. The game of the scandal mongers is up.

Joseph is exposed and the change in characters paves the way for the marriage of Charles and Maria and a happy end to the comedy.

**Que-7. The School for Scandal is a satirical comedy in which Sgeridan attacks not only the scandal loving society of his age but also the sentimental tradition of the Eighteenth Century Drama. Discuss.**

**Ans.** Puritanism in England suppressed drama in England. With the Restoration of Charles II, drama appeared again and it is often referred to as Restoration Comedy of manners. By the beginning of the eighteenth century a new drama came into being with Addison and Steele, which was full of satire, comedy and moral sentiments. This comedy dominated the eighteenth century English drama. This comedy was based on liberal Christian and human virtues as in Paradise Lost or Pilgrim's Progress.

The story was the main interest in the comedy, often involving the partings and sorrows of lovers ultimately leading to a happy end, with the theme that charitable good always triumphs over cunning evil. There was strong un-dramatic preaching in the play; comedy was mixed with sad scenes to act as tear-jerker.

Heroines, from Shakespeare to Congreve had been lively and fascinating, where placed by cheerless passive creatures always in mortal danger. Plots became dramatic. Wit, truth and zeal in life disappeared from the stage. The School for Scandal is a thorough going exposure of sentiment. He saw that complacent sentiments could easily conceal hypocrisy. So the marking of Joseph Surface in the play has made one of the mainsprings of the action. Sheridan, wants to retain occasional flavour of sentiment to please the audience. Maria is a passive heroine. She does make a few spirited comments on scandal-mongering women:

"We have pride, envy, rivalry and a thousand motives to depreciate each other, but the male slanderer must have the cowardice of a woman before he can traduce one". She comes in contact with Charles only in the Last Act, but her speeches do reflect her love for him right from the beginning of the play; this makes her, heroine of a sentimental play.

In Joseph Surface, sentiment is mercilessly exposed. Joseph's sentimentality is a pose which has become a part of his nature.

Surface: ... the man who does not share in the distresses of his brother, even though merited by his own misconduct, deserves - Sneerwell : O Lord! You are going to be moral, and forget that you are among friends. Surface: Egad, that is true! I will keep the sentiment till I see Sir Peter.

In this dialogue the use of 'moral' is satirical.

The Screen Scene is a brilliantly contrived climax to the whole theme of sentiment. "Till I have her more in my power is ominous, followed by a skill of variety of approach - lies, insinuation, direct challenge, flattery, appeal and what Lady Teazle calls "honourable logic" - is the whole gamut of seduction. The eaves-dropping situation is very funny. Sir Peter is emotional and the pathetic situation is that Lady Teazle is overhearing his sincere distress and generosity. This sincerity is placed in acute ironical revealing contrast with Joseph's sentiment: he says, "... The man who can break the laws of hospitality and tempt the wife of his friend deserves to be branded as the pest of the society. "

Sheridan introduces more complications. To expose Surface's duplicity, Charles is announced. Joseph's attempt to instigate Charles to profess his interest in Lady Teazle comes to nothing. Charles and Sir Peter make fun of Joseph's good name. Charles, his suspicion over his brother confirmed, behaves with exemplary correctness, and without attempting to preach leaves ... Surface attempts a tissue of lies, but both the Teazles now know him" And the sentiment is thoroughly discredited.

**Que-8 What do you think are the reasons for The School for Scandal's tremendous popularity? Give a reasoned answer.**

**Or**

**The School for Scandal is Sheridan's masterpiece. Discuss the play in view of the above remark.**

**Ans.** Introduction: The School for Scandal was performed on 8<sup>th</sup> May, 1777 for the first time and was immediately acclaimed as "a master-piece". Among the various reasons for its popularity, the following are the most conspicuous:

(a) Witty dialogues.

- (b) Well-integrated plot.
- (c) Variety in characterization.
- (d) Brilliantly executed scenes.
- (e) Authentic satire on the vanities of contemporary society.

The dialogues are crisp and delightful not only to the ear but present a concrete verbal picture and thus become concrete to the eye too. A critic suggests that the play is characterised by "a dazzling glitter of wit".

There are three strands of plot in the play.

- The malicious scandal-mongers spreading slanderous rumours about their friends, acquaintances and relatives.
- The domestic life of Sir Peter and Lady Teazle including their spicy quarrels.
- The rivalry of the two brothers Charles Surface and Joseph Surface over Maria.

The lives of the four important characters Sir Peter, Lady Teazle, Charles and Joseph-criss-cross each other in the Screen Scene and thus bring about a highly dramatic climax. Sheridan exploits these stock characters to present a multi-dimensional view of human nature. They have been infused with an individuality of their own. No stage uncle has been so full of life and fun and Sir Oliver is no hypocrite indulging in such big double-speak as Joseph does. The way Joseph uses witty and epigrammatic phrases is simply unmatched. All these characters through the play impart a certain quality of life to the play and lend an indefinable charm to it. The School for Scandal has a number of brilliantly executed scenes.

- (a) The Screen Scene.
- (b) The Auction Scene.
- (c) The Scandal-mongers mistaking Sir Oliver as a Doctor.
- (d) The Scene in which the two brothers push Sir Oliver out.

The Screen scene is a marvelous scene. Full of comic irony, the scene exposes the hypocrisy of Joseph who, according to Sir Peter is "a man of sentiment". It also enables Sir Peter to know the reality about the rumours spread about a relationship between Lady Teazle and Charles. The Auction Scene is the high mark of farcical comedy wherein Charles's

character is fully exposed and he emerges as a totally irresponsible, extravagant and dissipated youth. In the same way, there is another highly comic scene in which the scandalmongers throng Sir Peter's house in order to have first-hand information about the duel fought between him and Joseph. All these scenes provide the play a sun-shine quality which radiates it with a never- before seen quality of laughter and comedy.

The School for Scandal also deals with the values of honesty, virtue, sympathy and charity. The hypocrisy, the well-mouthed sentiments of Joseph stand exposed and the real virtue and charitable attitudes of Charles are vindicated in the play.

The School for Scandal is that it is a brilliant comedy without the vulgarity, obscenity and coarseness for which the comedy of manners was famed, the dialogues are brightly lit with wit but at no point do they become coarse or vulgar. There is no doubt that The School for Scandal has been popular both among readers and viewers, for its various extraordinary qualities."

### **Short Answer Questions**

#### **Que-1. Write a note on the screen scene.**

**Ans.** The Screen-Scene in this play has justly become famous as one of the most outstanding in English Comedy. She hears her husband refer to Joseph's offer for Maria's hand and is disillusioned. Charles arrives at this point and after a little more hide and seek with Sir Peter, Charles hearing that a little milliner is behind the screen throws it down and reveals Lady Teazle. Lady Teazle now thinks much better of her husband and is reconciled to him. Then Joseph stands completely exposed.

#### **Que-2. Write a brief character-sketch of Lady Teazle.**

**Ans.** Lady Teazle is an important female character in the play. She is a member of Lady Sneerwell's circle. She never knew any entertainment beyond the annual festival of a dance held on the occasion of the races. After her marriage to Sir Peter Teazle, a great change came in her. She squanders her husband's wealth. She thinks that her husband does not love her. Lady Teazle also wants to have a lover. So she selects Joseph Surface as her lover. But her husband suspects that she has a relationship with Charles Surface, However late there is a change of heart in Lady Teazle. Then she repents and her husband forgives her.

**Que-3 Write a brief character-sketch of Sir Peter Teazle.**

**Ans.** Sir Peter Teazle is one of the important male characters in the play. Sir Peter was an older bachelor when he married his much younger wife. He loves his wife, although his friends sneer at him for letting her take advantage of him. Joseph's hypocritical nature is revealed when Lady Teazle confesses to her husband that Joseph was attempting to seduce her. Eventually, Sir Peter approves of the marriage of his ward, Maria, to Charles.

**Que-4. Write a brief character-sketch of Maria.**

**Ans.** Maria is the heroine of the play. She is a sensible and intelligent girl who strongly disapproves of the manner in which Lady Sneerwell and other members of her circle talk. Maria is in love with Charles and feels an aversion to Joseph. Although Maria appears to be a serious minded person, she is not totally devoid of the sense of humour. Sir Oliver suggests that Charles and Maria get married the next day and Charles says that she has already given her consent. At this Maria , "For shame, Charles, I protest, Sir Peter, there has not been a word."

**Que-5 Write a brief character-sketch of Lady Sneerwell**

**Ans.** Lady Sneerwell is the young widow of a knight. Lady Sneerwell is a widow who loves to create and spread gossip. She is a neighbour of Sir Peter and is secretly in love with Charles Surface, thus desires to help Joseph obtain Maria's affection. She takes an active part in malicious gossip. Scandal mongering and the harm done by it are the major themes of the play and Lady Sneerwell is involved in it. While the scandalous gossip at her residence is very amusing, her own discomfiture at the end is one of the funniest episodes in the play.

**Que-6 Write a note on the character of Rowley.**

**Ans.** Rowley is one of the minor characters in the play. He was a steward in the service of John Surface, the father of Joseph and Charles. In the beginning of the play, we find Rowley talking to Sir Peter about the two brothers. Rowley is not ignorant of the faults of Charles. But he is sure that Charles will mend his ways in due course. It is he who paves the way for Sir Oliver to test the characters of the two brothers. Also at the end, Rowley arranges for the testimony of Mr. Snake without Charles' honour could not have been cleared.

**Que-7 Describe briefly the quarrel between Sir Peter Teazle and his wife.**

**Ans.** In the first scene of Act II, there is a quarrel between Sir Peter Teazle and his wife Lady

Teazle. Lady Teazle insists on living a life of fashion, like other ladies of her status and her But Sir Peter is opposed to her extravagant ways. On the contrary she herself recalls the dull and tedious routine she used to follow in her home. Sir Peter is also opposed to his wife's mixing with the social circle of Lady Sneerwell. But Lady Teazle finds nothing wrong with those people. Sir Peter is miserable because his wife contradicts everything he says.

**Que-8. Write a note on the theme of the play?**

**Ans.** There are various themes presented in the play. Sheridan employs the act of criticism of the odious practices of slander in the form of written letters and libel. Another theme is the theme of Hypocrisy whereby Joseph Surface pretends to be an honourable man while he tries to sabotage his brother's affairs with Maria. Mrs. Candour and her ilk also act as if she is against gossips while, in the real sense, she delights in spreading rumours. There is also the theme of deceptive appearance, and this is brought out clearly through Charles Surface who is considered a scoundrel double dealer who in reality is an upright man, and supremely a decentfellow.

**Que-9. Write a note on the School for Scandal as a Comedy of manners:**

**Ans.** The School for Scandal concerns the manners and the conventions of an artificial, highly sophisticated society. Characters are more likely to be types than individuals. The dialogue is witty and finished, sometimes brilliant. The appeal is more intellectual than imaginative. Satire is directed in the main against the follies and deficiencies of typical characters, such as fops, would be wits, jealous husbands, cox-combs. A distinguishing characteristic of the comedy of manners is its emphasis on an illicit love duel, involving at least one pair of witty and often amoral lovers.