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UNDERSTANDING DRAMA

B.E.G.E.-142

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(Publishers of Educational Books)

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MRP ₹ 280/-

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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2024

(Solved)

UNDERSTANDING DRAMA

B.E.G.E.-142

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer all questions. All questions carry equal marks.

SECTION – A

Q. 1. Write short notes on any two of the following:

(i) Medieval plays.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 6, Q. No. 5 (a).

(ii) Apron stage.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 6, Q. No. 5 (g), and Page No. 4, 'Apron Stage'.

(iii) Comedy of manners.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 16, 'Comedy of Manners'.

(iv) Tragedy.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 15, 'Tragedy'.

SECTION – B

Q. 2. Explain with reference to context any three of the following extracts:

(i) 'For how many years have I been bearing the burden of life? And for how many years have I been looking after this family?'

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from "Halfway House" by Mohan Rakesh.

Explanation: The given context portrays a person reflecting upon the passage of time and the responsibilities they have shouldered throughout their life. The individual contemplates the duration for which they have been carrying the weight of existence and taking care of their family. This introspective statement suggests a sense of weariness and a deep understanding of the sacrifices made over the years. The phrase "For how many years have I been bearing the burden of life!" Conveys a profound sentiment of enduring the challenges and hardships that life presents. It reflects the individual's acknowledgment of the struggles they have faced and the burdens they have shouldered throughout their existence. This line encapsulates the weight of responsibilities, setbacks, and difficulties that have accumulated over time.

(ii) 'Nothing bigger than that I'm his father and he's my son, and if there's something bigger than that I'll put a bullet in my head!'

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from "All My Sons" by Arthur Miller.

Explanation: Keller enters. Mother tells him that when Chris returns, Keller will have to explain himself, making sure that Chris knows that Keller understands the gravity of his offense. That is, she wants Keller to offer to go to prison, should Chris ask him to. Keller does not like this plan, because he thinks he made the choice for the sake of his wife and son. Furthermore, he spoiled them rather than making them earn their keep. Mother says that these points do not excuse his crime. Keller insists that nothing is greater than the family, but there is something still greater in Chris's mind. Keller says starkly that Chris will forgive him, because "I'm his father and he's my son, and if there's something bigger than that I'll put a bullet in my head." Keller says that Larry would have understood; Larry had a head for business.

(iii) 'Two laws, Two justices, One law and one justice protects the man of property, the man of wealth, the foreign exploiter.'

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from "The Trial of Dedan Kimathi" by Ngugi wa Thiong'o.

Explanation: Ngugi pointed out to the students that since Kenya was the first among the African colonies to confront the British via an armed struggle, the colonizers were determined to denigrate the movement as inhuman, as driven by primitive oath-taking ceremonies, by barbaric killing sprees all of which totally belied the organization and discipline of the Kenya Land and Freedom Army led by charismatic figures such as Dedan Kimathi. If the armed resistance succeeded in Kenya, this would be a dangerous precedent for other British colonies. Indeed, in a battle over naming, the British misnamed the struggle as "Mau

Mau” indicating mumbo jumbo pervaded by dark deeds and motives. The Mau Mau put a high price on loyalty, inducting members into the movement through a secret oath ritual. The British were hell-bent to get these oaths out of the captured Mau Mau; the ones who were captured were taken to “reeducation camps”, often subjected to physical and psychological torture. Throughout the struggle, the British lost less than 100, whereas 11,000 Mau Mau were killed. Along with physical killings, the British demonized Mau Mau as terrorists; hence Kenyans themselves, mainly the neo-colonial elite who came to power after independence, despised the movement as demonic and wanted to wipe it out. The British colonial tactic of divide and rule effectively divided Kenyans who were loyal to the British from their kinsmen belonging to the Mau Mau.

(iv) ‘Instead of fighting against one another, we who struggle against exploitation and oppression, should give one another strength and faith till victory is ours.’

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from “The Trial of Dedan Kimathi” by Ngugi wa Thiong’o.

Explanation: This famous verse describes the spiritual battle that exists in the lives of believers. It does so perhaps better than any other words in Scripture. First, Paul affirms our battle is indeed spiritual, not physical. However, it would seem that quite a bit of energy and resources are used for fighting among professing followers of Christ—to the advantage of the true enemy. Imagine the immaturity and the short-sightedness of Allied troops choosing to bicker over

tea vs. coffee or best uniform or comparing military strategies and philosophies. Rather than a victory for the winner of the intramural debate, the infighting would be a win for the common enemy of them both. Yet Christians turn their guns on other Christians who have a different musical preference, service schedule, dress code, etc.

SECTION – C

Q. 3. Answer any three of the following questions:

(i) Write a character sketch of Dedan Kimathi.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 137, ‘Characters in the Play’.

(ii) What is the role of family in the life of a middle class woman in our times ? Discuss with reference to Mohan Rakesh’s *Halfway House*.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 97, Q. No. 3.

(iii) Comment on Ngugi’s ideology and worldview with special reference to the relationship between politics and literature.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-14, Page No. 120, Q. No. 2.

(iv) What view of the justice system emerges from the exchanges between the judge and Dedan Kimathi ? Elaborate.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 133, Q. No. 2.

(v) Discuss the character of Ann Deever.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 71, Q. No. 6 and Page No. 67, ‘Ann Deever’.



Sample Preview of The Chapter

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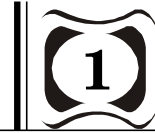
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UNDERSTANDING DRAMA

BLOCK-1 : DRAMA : AN INTRODUCTION

Drama and Theatre



INTRODUCTION

Drama can be defined as a literary work acted by players on a stage. It involves action, a plot, conflict, crisis and atmosphere. Drama can be a motion picture as well traditional stage play. Abram defines drama as a form of composition designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors play the role of different characters, perform action and speak the written dialogue. Actors, dialogue, setting, plot and action are the essential parts of a drama. It is performed on the stage and the audience is important. According to Marjorie Boulton, “A true play is three dimensional; it is literature that walks and talks before our eyes.” A drama is different from other literary forms because of the time. A narrative art tells the events which happen in the past, present or future. A performing art has its existence in time.

Tom F. Driver says drama is “A miniature reflection of historical action taking place within the limit imposed by the conventions of the theatre”. It is a narrative of temporal events as well as an enactment taking place within a moment of time. He says drama is the earliest of imitative arts. The mimetic instinct is universal and exposes one of the most primitive of human emotions.

According to Compton-Rickett, drama is a story in action. He says for effective drama conflict is essential. If the conflict is trivial one, it becomes a farce. If the conflict is serious with a happy ending, the drama becomes a comedy. If the conflict is serious with unhappy ending, it becomes a tragedy.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

ORIGINS OF DRAMA/THEATRE

Western drama has its origin in Athens, Greece, between 600 and 200 B.C. The ancient Athenians created plays that are still among the greatest works of drama.

The form, technique and terminology applied by the Athenians are still relevant. It can be said that the greatness of ancient Athens has not been reached by any period except Elizabethan England and the 20th century.

In Greece, the theatre is believed to have evolved from religious rites. In about 1200 B.C. primitive tribes in Thrace in northern Greece used to worship Dionysus, the god of fertility and procreation. They practiced ritual celebration which included uninhibited dancing and emotional displays with an altered mental state, called “ecstasies”. Another part of the rites of Dionysus was the dithyramb, which means “choric hymn”. This chant was accompanied by mimic gestures and music. It was performed by men, group of dancers and band of revellers. Over a period of time, dithyramb evolved into stories in play which is now called as drama.

Greek Theatre: The rites of Dionysus evolved into theatre in Athens by 600 B.C. Arion of Mehtymna (Corinth) wrote the formal lyrics for the dithyramb for the first time during that period. Thespis of Attica later added an actor to interact with the chorus. The actor was called the protagonist or the main character. Dialogue was born when Thespis, the director of choruses, smeared with white lead on his face, stood on a table and addressed the leader of the chorus. The table, which was the altar for animal, was the first indication of a stage. Later a second speaker was introduced. Gradually other related details taken from the many tales of ancestral and local heroes were included in the dithyramb. Later dramatic plot was introduced in dithyrambic dances. In 534 B.C. the ruler of Athens, Pisistratus, organised drama competitions which became popular annual event. The government authority called the *archon* select the participants and the wealthy patrons, called the *Choregoes*, financed the productions.

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The theatre of Delphi, the Attic Theatre and the Theatre of Dionysus were built in Athens. The term "theatre" is derived from the Greek word "theatron" which means the wooden spectator and the term "orchestra" is derived from the Greek word for a platform. Thespis acquired the theatre building, a permanent circular dancing ground of stone and a stone temple in the background. There was no scenery on the background. Plays were staged during the daytime. Actors wore masks and buskins, leather boots laced up to the knees. They had little or no make up. In 484 B.C. a playwright named Aeschylus appeared on the Athenian theatre scene. He introduced props and scenery and reduced members of the chorus from 50 to 12. *Aeschylus' Persians*, written in 472 B.C., is the earliest play in existence. His crowning work was *The Orestia*, which tells the legend of Agamemnon, the Greek war hero who was murdered by his wife Clytemnestra and pursuit of justice by his children, Orestes and Electra. It is about the tragedy of excessive human pride, arrogance or hubris. Aeschylus is the father of tragedy. Seven of his ninety-two plays he had written has survived. He added colour to his characters. Many of his characters were supernatural and barbaric. He also introduced metaphorical dialogue. His *Prometheus Bound* is an unforgettable work. Its theme is the god himself. In his last two tragedies of which one is *Agamemnon*, he wrote about the man. It is believed that in 468 B.C., Aeschylus was defeated by Sophocles in the tragedy competition.

Sophocles added more actors and put emphasis on humans instead of humans and Gods. He introduced different styles and worked for perfection. He wrote one play for each plot and included all actions into it. The shorter form provided the greater dramatic possibilities. His resembled the architecture and sculpture of his time which was in favour of small temples and statues of gods. He introduced tragic suspense and tragic irony. Sophocles also introduced comic details in his tragedies to give contrast and variety. His famous works included *Oedipus the King*, *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Antigone* and *Philoctetes*.

Euripides, another contemporary Greek playwright, wrote about real people. He put equal weight to all his characters whether they were princes or peasants. He tried to present the reality of war, criticized religion and portrayed women, slaves and old people. Euripides introduced the *Prologue*. His famous works included: *The Trojan Women*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Cyclops* and *Alcestis*.

Athenians theatres also staged comedy. Greek comedy is divided into two periods: Old comedy and New Comedy. Old Comedy is represented by Cratinus and Aristophanes and New Comedy by Menander. Aristophanes used three actors, a chorus that sang, danced and sometimes took part in the dialogue. His two first two comedies *The Banqueters* and *The Babylonians* were lost but were a satire on new education and a political satire respectively. His *The Acharnians* is considered as the first anti-war comedy. *The Wimps*, *Peace*, *The Frogs* and *Plutus* are his comedies.

Menander introduced ordinary people as his characters. He also added the chorus which provided fillers between acts. He put emphasis on mistaken identity, romance and situational humour which later influenced the Romans to Shakespeare to Broadway. His famous works included: *The Girl From Samos*, *The Shearing of Glycera* and *The Arbitration*.

GROWTH OF DRAMA

Describing the growth of drama, Gassner says the development of stage is associated with all human impulses. He says the playwrights are the children of life. The first playwright started as a player and a magic maker. Gradually, the dramatist took the whole world of experience and copied movements or gestures and sounds. He discharged excess energy with plays and prepared for purposeful action. Man used dance to express his desires. The playwright gradually organized the performance as a commercial activity.

After Greece, Rome was the next place that saw development of drama. The theatre vanished with the fall of Rome in the fourth century. The medieval theatre in England in tenth century developed out of the religious services in the Church. The clergy used the gospel stories to teach and explain the doctrinal truths of religion. The performers acted the gospel stories in dumb show. Gradually, the actors used dialogue and acted. These early plays were called Mysteries and Miracles. Mystery plays were based on stories taken from the scripture narrative, while Miracle plays were based on the incidents in the lives of Saints and Martyrs.

Miracle plays originated from the liturgy including its rites and the chants between priest and congregation. They gradually became short dialogues. These dialogues developed into title plays which were acted in the church. One of the most important Miracle plays was that of Adam written in the twelfth century by a Norman. Another important play was *Noah*. These plays depicted

DRAMA AND THEATRE / 3

scenes from the Life of Christ, unfolded scenes from the Scriptures and celebrated Christmas and Easter.

Miracles plays were staged regularly in some important towns such as Chester, York, Coventry, Norwich, Newcastle and Wakefield. These plays were known by the names of these places. The guilds of these places played an important role in the organization of these plays. *Abraham and Issac* is one of the most touching miracle plays of that period.

Moralities and Interludes developed out of mystery and miracle plays. Morality plays were the serious and the Interludes had the lighter elements. The characters in these plays typified qualities like sin, grace and repentance. Moralities were based on allegory. The characters were from the Bible. Morality plays needed a fixed stage and were concerned with wider issues. They presented human life wavering between God and the Devil and good and evil. Some famous morality plays were *Castell of Perseverance, Everyman and Mankind*. The characters in the mystery plays were given individual names. It was also based on reality. These plays were staged by local amateurs who formed association for the purpose of acting. The miracle plays were staged until about 1600 when the regular dramas were staged.

During 1520-1578 AD, not a single masterpiece was produced. Interludes included comic dialogues and aimed at amusement. One of the best known interludes is *The Four P's* – Palmer, Pardoner, Potheary and Pedlar. Another famous interlude is Heywood's *The Mery Play Between the Pardoner and the Frere*.

Sackville and Norton wrote the first English drama, *Gorboduc*, which was staged in 1552 before Queen Elizabeth at Whitehall. It was later published as *Ferrex and Porrex*. It is a tragedy divided into five acts. Sackville wrote the first three acts. Written in blank verse, each act ended with a chorus. It was an imitation of Seneca's tragedies.

In 1553, Nicholas Udall wrote the first regular English comedy titled, *Ralph Roister Doister*. Udall is considered as the Father of English Comedy. Mr. S. wrote the second English comedy, *Gammer Gurton S. Needle*.

The first theatre was built in 1576 at Shoreditch. Later several other theatres including the Rose, the Globe, the Swan and the Fortune were built.

TYPES OF STAGE

On the basis of different periods, drama can be divided into the following broad categories:

- (i) Classical Theatre (Greek and Roman).

- (ii) Native Drama (1066-1500).

- (iii) Renaissance Drama (1500-1660).

- (a) Elizabethan Drama: Shakespeare and Contemporaries.

- (b) Jacobean and Caroline.

- (iv) The Neo-classical Period or Restoration Drama (1660-1700).

- (v) Drama in 18th, 19th and 20th Century.

Greek Theatre

Amphi-theatres were used to stage plays in ancient Greece. Amphi-theatres had a round stage three quarters of which were surrounded by the audience. They were very large and could accommodate up to 25,000 people. The stage used the real landscape surrounding the amphitheatre. Plays were performed in day light. The actors spoke in a loud, declamatory voice. They had masks and symbolical costumes and used large gestures. The chorus was an important part of Greek Theatre.

The audience included only of free men. Slaves and women were excluded from the audience. Ancient Greek drama had a more ritual, symbolic and didactic purpose since it was performed on special occasions such as religious ceremonies.

The Theatre in Epidaurus (Theatre in Stone): It is an open-air Greek theatre. The seats for the audience are made on the slope of a hill. It had a large dancing orchestra for the chorus. There are passageways or *paradoi* at the right side for entry and exit of the chorus and processions. The ruins of the stone scene building, the *skene*, are set on back. The *skene* could be the replica of a temple or a palace. During 5th century B.C., the *skene* was a two-storey stone building. The upper storey or *episkenion* was used for the stage machinery. There was a colonnade or *proskenion* on the front of the lower story. Most of the acting happened in front of this structure on a low platform. There were three doors in the low platform flanked by projecting wings as *paraskenia*. This theatre belongs to the Hellenistic period (4th century B.C.), but these architectural features were there in the theatre of Dionysus. Gradually, it was further developed. The *Skene* was rectangular and divided into rooms. It had a series of pillars and painted wooden panels or *pinakes* in between. The stage was 8 to 10 feet deep and about a foot high. The colonnaded front wall of the second story with three doors served as the background. *Pinakes* might be placed between the columns of the upper colonnade. The actors and the chorus had less inter-mingling.

The Greek theatre saw changes under Roman influence. The stage became lower by a few feet but

deeper. The front of the stage became a highly decorated even as it lost its colonnade. The orchestra was no longer a complete circle. The actors got training in dance, dialogue and pantomime.

Native Drama

Mysteries and Moralities plays during Medieval period were staged on wagons (pageants) during religious festivities. The wagons had to stop market places for the performance and the audience surrounded it. All the mystery plays were staged out of doors. It was convenient because of simultaneous setting or multiple setting. After the liturgical plays became the part of the mystery cycles, the small platforms developed into mansions or little rooms by using curtains at the sides and back. The stages were often decorated with scenery. The mansions were presented by the stationary set in a curving row facing the viewers. The actors belonged to various guilds or companies. They were generally paid for their services. Left and right sides or top and bottom were represented as Heaven and Hell. Costuming was gorgeous and imaginative. Live animals such as rabbits and lambs were employed in multiple stage settings. Placards were also used. Acting includes gestures and delivery of monologues. Nobody played the role of women. The audience was heterogeneous and willing to be taught and edified. The ingredients of drama: life, humour and pathos were appreciated by the audience.

Apron Stage

During the Elizabethan period, dramas were staged in public theatres. It was not performed outdoors. The stage was however still open air theatre. During 1580-1642, a number of plays both old and new were staged at London theatres. Theatres were mostly circular in form and simple in structure. It generally had an open courtyard with two or three tiers of covered galleries around it. A platform projected at one side of the courtyard formed the stage. Two pillars supported the ceiling on either side of the platform in the centre. There was another stage overlooked by a gallery with balcony and windows between two doors which served for the entrance and exit of the actors at the back. Only elementary accessories were used. The front stage was used for all purposes. During Renaissance period, the open stage surrounded by the audience on three sides was the most common stage form. There was close vicinity between audience and actors in such type of stage. The apron referred to the vestigial platform. Such stage stood in front of the proscenium arch and most of

the acting was held on the stage. The actors gave long speeches which are embellished with rhetoric. They also used asides and soliloquies. Upto 2,000 people could sit in the Elizabethan theatre. The audience was heterogeneous. Plays combined different subject matters since they tried to appeal to wider audience. After the middle of the 19th century, the apron was cut down and finally discarded entirely. The actor played close to the scenery as per the setting.

Restoration Stage

During the 17th and 18th centuries, theatres were smaller than the Elizabethan theatre. They could accommodate about 500 people. Dramas were staged in closed rooms. Artificial lightings were used on the stage. People sit in the illuminated room. A decorative frame was used to close the stage. They did not use curtain and scene changed happened in front of the audience. A highly stylized image of characters, scenery, language and subject of matter were used. A major development during the 17th and 18th century was the emergence of Patent theatres and minor playhouses.

The middle classes started to enter the playhouses and playhouses set up their own tradition. According to Nicoll, four popular species of entertainment during the period were the operatic, the terpsichorean, the mimic and the spectacular. People liked show, music and dances. People also like extravagant and satirical plays. The ballad-opera invented by John Gay proved this point.

Proscenium Stage

The proscenium stage means picture frame stage. It was the stage developed during the 19th and 20th centuries. Actors and audience were separated by the ramp. The stage was illuminated when the actors performed. The auditorium remained dark during the performance. Scenery were elaborate and true-to-life. New technologies were introduced for more detailed stage props, lighting and sound system. The play Different types of stage have been developed in the present era. Gradually, artistry has refined and dramatic power heightened.

TERMINAL QUESTIONS

Q. 1. Elaborate Boulton's statement: "A true play is three dimensional".

Ans. A true play is three dimensional means a drama should have actions and dialogue to be performed and said by the actor and audience to view the drama. The first ingredient is that the actor has to act to tell a story or to show the emotion and feeling of the character he