

## **B.A II (ENGLISH LITERATURE)**

### **SEMESTER THIRD**

#### **Topic –1**

**Que:** What is Renaissance? Discuss the impact of Renaissance on English literature.

**Ans:** The term Renaissance is one of the most famous terms of English Literature. The term was first used by French historian Jules Michelet in his book *Historian de France* published in 1855. However, it is not easy to define renaissance. In simple words it means rebirth, rebirth of knowledge which came to Europe in fourteenth and fifteenth century. The Renaissance was not only an English but European phenomenon. The dawn of renaissance came first to Italy and a little later to France. To England it came in sixteenth century. Michelet describes Renaissance as “Discovery by mankind of himself and of world.”

Renaissance influenced every department of social and literary history of fifteenth and sixteenth century England. In First place, Renaissance awakened the taste of life in England. Now, For the first time people started to lose their interest in religion. It created awareness among people. They became more alive to life. For the first time they realized life was not an illusion but a reality, a concrete reality. It helped people to change their attitude towards life. The Renaissance marked a change from theocentric to homocentric conception of life. Human life, human body and human beings were given the importance. The other- worldliness gave place to this worldliness. With advent of Renaissance people’s attitude became materialistic.

If Renaissance meant revival of learning, it was natural that it would deeply influence the universities of time. Some English scholars found it as a golden opportunity to improve their knowledge and learning. When they came to know about this movement, they went to Italy. These scholars were William

Grocyn, Linacre and Colet. Apart from scholars the educationists of time were also influenced by Renaissance. These educationists were Thomas Elyot and Roger Ascham.

However, the most marked influence of Renaissance was shown by prose writers of the time. These were Erasmus, Sir Thomas More, Lyly and Sidney. Erasmus was a great scholar who wrote "Praise of Folly" which is English translation of his book. Sir Thomas More is another important prose writer of the period. His Utopia was first book which achieved European fame. The book was first written in Latin but later on translated in English. The word Utopia is an imaginary island which means no place. It is an ideal place which is free from all problems. It is a place where life is pleasant for all. After Sir More and Erasmus, the essays of Bacon show deep influence of Renaissance.

Of all prose writers Bacon deserves a special study. He was a man who shows a deep influence of Renaissance not only in his essays but personal life as well. Bacon is given the dubious distinction of, "The wisest, brightest and meanest of mankind." Bacon's personal life shows that he was an opportunist of first order and his writings also make it clear that Bacon was a well learned person. His essays have become classics in English literature. His essay 'Of Studies' is a fine example of Bacon's love for knowledge and learning:

"Reading maketh a full man,  
Conference a ready man  
and writing an exact man."

Renaissance not only influenced prose of time, but also poetry. Sir Thomas Wyatt and Earl of Surrey were pioneers of new poetry in England. As we know Chaucer gave a wonderful beginning to English poetry, but followers of Chaucer failed in maintaining that good start. As a result poetry suffered decline. But poetry achieved new grace and glory in hands of these new poets. It

was early in 1557 that their work 'Total Miscellany' was published which is according to a critic "One of the landmarks of English Literature" These poets gave English poetry a new grace, dignity and delicacy. Wyatt has made an important contribution towards English poetry by introducing sonnet into English literature. Surrey is known for writing Blank Verse.

The Renaissance also influenced Drama of the period. The first English regular tragedy Gorboduc and comedy Ralph Roister Doister were copies of classical plays. The First English tragedy was "blood and Thunder" kind of tragedy. It was based on Senecan model. Later on University wits was a group of seven dramatists who were all educated from universities of time. Christopher Marlowe is often acknowledged as best dramatists of this group. He is generally described as "True child of Renaissance". Among such plays, His Dr Faustus is outstanding. The play tells us the story of a man who is mad after knowledge. In order to fulfill his ambition he turns to black magic. He is of the view that it is only magic which can give him what he wants. He is completely dissatisfied from his present situation.

"Yet are thou Dr. Faustus and a man."

He wants to be as powerful as God. Therefore he signs a pact with devil. According to pact he will enjoy twenty four years of his life and after his soul will go to Satan. At the end of the play Dr. Faustus has to face a very tragic death. Dr Faustus is sometimes compared with its creater means Marlowe.

## Topic –2

**Que: Write an essay on origin and growth of drama?**

**Ans:** Drama has always acquired a most respectable place in English Literature. The Drama in England developed from the liturgical play to Miracle play to Morality play, from the morality play to the interlude play and from that to the regular drama of Elizabethan age. The story of this development is however not so simple.

As in Greece, the drama had a religious origin. They took the form of Liturgical plays. These plays were dramatizations of the major events of Christ's life, such as birth and the resurrection and were enacted by priests in the church.

The next stage of development came with miracle and mystery plays. The first representations of a miracle play took place in 1119 in England. The Miracle plays and Mystery plays are often considered synonymous, but technically there is a difference between the two. The Miracle play dealt with the lives of Saints whereas the mystery plays took incidents from Bible. With the development of the liturgical play into miracle and mystery, there were significant changes of a locale and players. The place of performance shifted from inside of the church to the churchyard and the churchyard to the market place. The performance fell in the hands of layman.

The next stage in Drama came with morality plays. The morality plays have characters of symbolic nature, such as the personifications of various vices and virtues or other qualities. The morality plays conveyed a moral lesson for the better conduct of human life. The best known morality play is Everyman. It appeared at the end of fifteenth century and enjoyed great popularity. Then the Interlude signifies the transition from symbolism to realism. The most notable

writer of Interlude was 'John Heywood' who wrote The Four P's. The Four P's are a Pardoner, a Palmer, a Pothycary and a Pedler.

In between 1530 and 1580 the drama in England underwent a dramatic change with the dawn of Renaissance. English dramatists started looking back to Greek and Roman dramatists. The first English tragedy was Gorboduc which was based on Roman dramas. The first Regular English comedy was Ralph Roister Doister written about 1550. The another change in drama was brought by University wits. The University Wits were a group of seven dramatists who were educated from universities of time. These university wits were John Lyly, George Peele, Robert Green, Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlow.

Marlow is the most famous among all these. He wrote many plays like Doctor Faustus, The Jew of Malta and Edward II. Dr Faustus is the most famous among all his plays. In his plays he introduced a certain big flaw in his character. In this play Dr Faustus is an over ambitious person who wants to gain more and more knowledge. So he chooses a wrong way to acquire knowledge and the play ends with his tragic death. Thus each of the university wits carried the drama a step further. The great Shakespearean drama would have not been possible without the university wits. However it was with Shakespeare that drama reached on its peak and perfection. The Elizabethan age is considered as golden age of drama only due to Shakespeare. Ben Jonson paid remarkable tribute to him by saying that

He was not of an age, but for all the time.

He wrote many plays like King Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth, Julius Caesar, Romeo and Juliet. King Lear is a tragedy of a man who does not think before taking any action. The play ends with his tragic death. Macbeth is a tragedy of an over ambitious person. It is because of these plays he is generally called as "Poet of Nature."

### Topic –3

**Que: Write an account of the University Wits of England.**

**Ans:** Drama has always acquired a most respectable place in English Literature. The Drama in England developed from the liturgical play to Miracle play to Morality play, from the morality play to the interlude play and from that to the regular drama of Elizabethan age. The story of this development is however not so simple.

With the dawn of Renaissance, there came a significant change in the Drama. The Elizabethan age is known as the golden age of English drama. In this age the Drama reached at its peak and perfection. There is no doubt it was only due to Shakespeare, but the great Shakespearean drama would not have been possible without the University wits. The University wits were a group of well educated scholars and men who wrote in the closing years of sixteenth century. They were called University wits because they were educated from the two universities of time- Cambridge and Oxford. These University wits were John Lyly, George Peele, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Nashe, Thomas Kyd, Robert Green and Christopher Marlow. These University wits contributed in the formation of the Romantic Comedy which bloomed forth in the hands of Shakespeare. Lyly made notable contribution to the formation of English comedy. The comedies of Lyly are romantic as well as witty. The comedies of Peele are both satirical and humorous.

The University wits also made contribution in Plot construction and united the different threads of their stories into a perfect whole. The University wits prepared the ground for historical plays of Shakespeare. Marlowe's Edward II prepares the way for Richard II of Shakespeare. The University wits

had fondness for heroic themes, such as lives of great figures like Tamburlaine. These dramatists prepared the way for the later tragedy. For Marlowe tragedy was a thing of individual heroes. Marlowe introduced the element of struggle in the tragedy.

The University wits made definite improvement in the art of characterization. Lyly made advances in the presentation of characters fitted for romantic comedies. His characters are witty and sharp. Marlowe gave life and reality to characters. Marlowe's characters are no longer puppets, but living breathing human being. He gave life like characters full of vigor and life. Now let us briefly examine the works of university wits.

- 1) John Lyly: Lyly wrote several romantic comedies. His plays are Women in the Moon, Endymion, Midas and Lover Metamorphosis. John Lyly is a writer of a number of artistic and highly refined courtly plays. He wrote only for the fashionable lords and ladies of court. He has the credit of writing the most artistic plays before Shakespeare. They can be divided into three groups.
  - a) Those which are allegorical and mythical
  - b) Those which display realistic features
  - c) Those which mark the introduction of more or less historical features.
- 2) George Peele: Peele has left behind a pastoral, a romantic tragedy, a chronicle history and romantic satire. His main plays are The Arrangement of Paris, The Old Wives Tale, King Edward I. He also went to Oxford and for some time he wrote for the court.
- 3) Thomas Kyd: Thomas Kyd had neither Lyly's wit nor Marlowe's poetry but had the don du theatre. He could translate an exciting story into tense series of striking situations linked by suspense and surprise. His most famous and only play is The Spanish Tragedy. In this he emphasis the whole senecan model which is full of horror, madness, suicide and

employs them with such a skill that surprise everyone. This is a revenge play. It is well constructed.

- 4) Robert Green: Robert Green has left behind him five plays. The most famous among are: A Looking Glass for London and England, Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay and The Scottish History of James IV. Of these plays the most popular is Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay. It is a romantic comedy. In this we have three worlds mingled together- the world of magic, the world of aristocratic life and the world of country. His skill in plot construction is also commendable.
- 5) Christopher Marlowe: Marlowe's contribution to English drama raised it to a higher level. He provided big heroic subjects that appealed to audience. He gave life and reality to his characters. Characters in the hands of Marlowe were no longer puppets but living and breathing human beings. His main plays are Tamburlaine, Edward II, The Jew of Malta, Dr. Faustus. The last play of Marlowe is most famous. It is the study of a physician who wants to gain more and more knowledge. In the characters of Marlowe, there was a big flaw and this flaw is the reason of their fall. In this play Dr. Faustus is an over-ambitious person and this big flaw becomes the cause of his death.

So in all these ways the University Wits prepared the ground for Shakespeare and made notable contribution to the growth of drama during the Elizabethan age. Thus W.J Long says- "The Elizabethan drama is not springing full down from the head of one man, it is rather an orderly through rapid development in which many men bore the past."



## Topic –4

**Que: What are the chief characteristics of Metaphysical poetry?**

**Ans:** In the first decades of the 17<sup>th</sup> century there was a revolt against the outdated and exhausted Elizabethan poetry. It was a group of few poets who wrote a new type of poetry which came to be known as Metaphysical poetry. The leader of this revolt was John Donne. He is known as a founder of Metaphysical school. The other followers of Donne were Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw and Cowley. But this kind of poetry was not liked in Donne's times. His reputation was restored in 19<sup>th</sup> century when Coleridge praised Donne's poetry. It is T.S Eliot who with his wonderful essay gave a new life to those poets.

According to Grierson, Metaphysical poetry is a poetry which has been inspired by philosophical conception of Universe. It arises when the physical world loses its stability. The age in which Donne lived witnessed a crumbling of the old order of things and there was also a disturbing progress of science. The new scientists proved that the earth is not the centre of universe. Such discoveries shocked the people of times and they were confused between the worlds i.e the world of science and world of faith. Donne expresses his doubt by saying that The New Philosophy calls all in doubt.

Literally meta means beyond and physics means physical nature. It was Dryden who first used the word Metaphysical in connection with Donne's poetry and wrote Done affects the metaphysics and Dr Johnson confirmed the judgement of Dryden. But Dryden's poetry is not metaphysical as far as the content of the poem is concerned because his poetry is concerned with his emotions and feelings.

The following are the some of the salient characteristics of metaphysical poetry.

- 1) The Metaphysical imagery and conceit: Donne's poetry is metaphysical as far as style of the poem is concerned. It is heavily overloaded with conceits which may be defined as the excessive use of overelaborated similes and metaphors. Poets have always found similarity between dissimilar objects. Their similes and metaphors are far fetched and are often drawn from logical and intellectual rather than sensuous or emotional.
- 2) Difficulty and Obscurity: Metaphysical poets use words which have no associative value. In their conceits they constantly bring together the abstract and concrete, remote and near, spiritual and physical. Donne always draws his imagery from philosophy, astronomy and science. So the charge of obscurity has been brought against him
- 3) Language and Versification: Metaphysical poetry is a poetry of revolt against the worn out conventions of the day. Donne uses a new vocabulary. It has no associative value. He uses the natural language of men not when they are emotionally excited but when they are engaged in commerce or in science.
- 4) Abrupt openings: Metaphysical poetry always has abrupt openings. It is for this reason Donne often begins his poems abruptly as in the Canonization, he says, "For God sake hold thy tongue."
- 5) Learnedness: Metaphysical poetry is always brain spring and heart felt. It is intellectual and witty to a fault. Learning is an asset for a metaphysical poet.
- 6) Unification of Sensibility: In Metaphysical poetry there is always an intellectual analysis of emotion. Donne's poetry always arises out of some emotional situation and then the emotion is thoroughly analysed. This gives his poetry a hard intellectual tone, but it also results in unification of sensibility means the combination of thought and feeling.

## Topic –5

**Que: Describe chief features of Neo- Classical Literature?**

**OR How Eighteenth century is an age of Prose and Reason?**

**Ans:** Eighteenth Century literature was a kind of revolt against imaginative literature of 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was a literature of prose and reason. The age of Pope and Dr. Johnson is known by a variety of names. This age is also known as Augustan age. It was the age of great writers in prose and poetry. Some of the brightest names in English literature created in this period like Swift, Pope, Addison, Steele, Fielding, Dr. Johnson. The age witnessed the rise of periodical essays and the novel. A number of political and social causes contributed to the growth of this type of literature in the eighteenth century.

It was an age of reason and prose. The new interests of the age, arising from the changed political and social conditions demanded expression through pamphlets, Magazines and newspapers. The result was in the development of periodical essays. The periodical essay first of all started by Steele. He published them under the title of The Tatler. Very soon he was joined by Addison who completely overshadowed his friend. Addison wrote nearly four hundred essays. His main purpose was to expose the vanity and pull of the disguises of cunningness. In the second half of the eighteenth century Dr. Johnson wrote periodical essays. These essays were lighter and shorter and those published in the periodical The Rambler. Even the poetry of the age was prosaic in spirit. Imagination and passion came to be replaced by wit and reason. It was full of realism.

All the major writers of the period wrote great satires. Pope wrote The Rape of the Lock and Addison wrote Female Orators. They attacked human

vices, follies, failings but their attack was always humorous and pleasant. Their main purpose was to expose the hypocrisy of aristocratic section of the society. All the major writers of the period tried to write in the way as ancient poets did. They insisted that poetry should follow rules, the rules which had been laid down by ancient writers as Aristotle, but they tried to copy only style but suffered from other reasons. That is why eighteenth century is also called Pseudo-Classical age. Although the literature written in eighteenth century is important yet it can not be placed with great literature. The Eighteenth Century writer wrote poetry in there was complete absence of nature. They wrote what may be described as drawing room poetry. Their main purpose was to show human nature not external nature.

### **Features:**

- 1) The Age of Satire:** This age was full of satirical verses. The writers passed satire on the vanities and affectations of upper class society. Pope satirizes the false life style of London people who keep duplicate and spurious appearances.
- 2) No place for Nature and Feelings:** The literature of this period was away from nature. They were confined to only city life. Nature was lifeless to them. Moreover they were away from true human feelings which for them were baseless and mother of lies.
- 3) Age of Rules and Regulations:** The poet of this age strictly followed the minute rules and regulations of composing poetry. They were not aware about free verse. Liberty for them was a uncivilized idea and they modelled their ideas in proper and systemic versification. They followed all those rules and regulations which were cultivated by the ancient Romans and Greeks.
- 4) Use of Heroic Couplet:** The Neo-Classical age was the age of artificiality in verse form. The poets of this age were chiefly adhered to

heroic couplet mostly consist of iambic pentameter. Dryden has used this couplet in his Absalom and Achitophel and Pope has used the same in the poem The Rape of the Lock.

- 5) Age of Intellect and Logical reasoning:** The poets of this age were not attached to natural feelings. Rather they followed those ideas which appeal to the minds. For them feelings were dead and reason was everything. If they expressed any feeling, it was the modified form of logical reasoning.