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EXPERT COMMITTEE

Dr. Anand Prakash (Retired)
Formerly at Hansraj College
University of Delhi

Prof. Malati Mathur
Director, School of Humanities

Dr. Hema Raghavan (Retd.)
Formerly at Gargi College
University of Delhi

IGNOU Faculty
Prof. Neera Singh
Prof. Malati Mathur
Prof. Nandini Sahu
Prof. Parmod Kumar
Dr. Pema Eden Samdup
Ms. Mridula Rashmi Kindo
Dr. Malathy A

Dr. Vijay Sharma
Principal (Retd.), RLA College
Delhi University

COURSE COORDINATION

COURSE EDITING

Block 1: Drama: *An Introduction*

Dr. Charu Sharma (Unit 1 to 4), Government College, Dharmshala (H.P)

Block 2: Arthur Miller: *All My Sons*

Ms. Mridula Rashmi Kindo (Unit 1 to 4), IGNOU, Maidan Garhi, New Delhi.

Block 3: Mohan Rakesh: *Halfway House*

Dr. Richa Bajaj (Unit 1 & 2), Hindu College, Delhi University

Dr. Anand Prakash (Retd.) (Unit 3 & 4), Hansraj College, Delhi University

Block 4: Ngugi Wa Thiong'o: *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*

Former Prof. Harish Narang (Unit 1 to 4), JNU, New Delhi

COURSE COORDINATION & EDITING

Ms. Mridula Rashmi Kindo, IGNOU – Course Coordination & Editing

Dr. Anand Prakash (Retd.) Hansraj College, Delhi University – Editing of Blocks 1 to 4

SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Munni Naudiyal, Assistant Executive (Data Processing)

PRINT PRODUCTION

Mr. Tilak Raj,
Assistant Registrar
MPDD, IGNOU, New Delhi

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

Understanding Drama is a significant course of the BDP programme of English. It is exclusive in itself as it is the only course that introduces learners to drama in English from different parts of the world. Plays from America, Africa and India are included in the course. The learners are taught the definition of drama and also introduced to the constituent parts of this genre before they are familiarized with the significant works in English such as Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*, Ngugi Wa Thion'go and Micere Githae Mugo's well-acclaimed play *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, and Mohan Rakesh's play *Halfway House*. Apart from the first block that contains the introduction to drama and deals with its salient features in detail, the other blocks look at individual playwrights with respect to one of their significant works. These blocks briefly look into the life and other works of each playwright along with the historical and socio-political background of the period in which these plays were written. In each block the important aspects of each play such as characterization, theme, and structure are discussed in detail.



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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

Block 1: Drama: An Introduction

Welcome to BEGE-142 blocks of English Drama. This block offers a study of development of theatre and drama. The blocks consist of four units structured as below:

Unit 1 titled **Drama and Theatre**

It examines the definition of drama in its introductory section thereafter discusses the origins of Drama/Theatre inclusive of Greek theatre and beginning of drama in England. It further dwells on the growth of drama till the birth of first tragedy and first comedy and in the end proceeds to discuss the types of stages evolved in the course of time.

Unit 2 titled **Aspects of Drama** contains a detailed explanation of Dramatic Structure and Dramatic Texture that build up any drama and are essential for dramatic writing in general. This includes a glossary of literary terms relevant to drama.

Unit 3 deals with **Different Types of Drama**. These have existed down the ages and variety of dramas emerged at different stages in history. This unit studies the kinds of drama inclusive of Classical Sanskrit Theatre.

Unit 4 is based on **Development in 20th Century Drama**. This unit is an extensive study of dramatists of twentieth century and how in the new age the new dramatists were innovative and experimental. This unit discusses not only the dramatists but also their works. From Ibsen to Strindberg and then on to Brecht, Beckett, Arden, Pinter, O Neil and Miller, about twenty dramatists are referred to in this unit.

Each unit carries questions and a list of suggested readings. Most of the references are from the book suggested.

Dear students, here's hoping you will savour the real essence of drama through this block and will be able to broaden your horizons and deepen your Understanding Drama. Happy Reading!

UNIT 1 DRAMA AND THEATRE

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Origins of Drama/Theatre
- 1.3 Growth of Drama
- 1.4 Types of Stage
- 1.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.6 Questions
- 1.7 Suggested Readings

1.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to familiarize the readers with the origin of drama, and to highlight the role and significance of theatre as a distinct practice. Drama has its roots in the oral literature of Greek theatre and religious-social life of the Athenian people. As time passed this initial beginning of performative behaviour gave way to dance drama which in turn paved way for formal written and performed plays. This unit intends to focus on the origin and growth of drama and, later emphasizes different kind of use of stage that evolved in the last few centuries. The soul of drama is its spectators. Thus the audience plays a vital and pivotal role for the aim and purpose of drama/theatre is performance.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Drama is a literary composition involving conflict, action, crisis and atmosphere meant to be acted by players on a stage before an audience. This definition may be applied to motion picture drama as well as to the traditional stage. In Abram's word the drama is, "the form of composition designed for performance in the theatre, in which actors take the roles of the characters, perform the indicated action and the written dialogue." Thus the essential ingredients of a drama are actors, dialogue, setting, plot and action. It is primarily meant for enactment on the stage. Thus the stage and the spectators are equally important. Marjorie Boulton says that "A true play is three dimensional; it is literature that walks and talks before our eye". A drama operates within the limits and framework of space and time. It is distinguished from other literary forms by its special, complex relationship to the reality we call time. As a narrative art, it addresses to the telling of events which take place in the past, present or future. But as a performing art, along with music and dance it has its existence in time. Thus it is a temporal act. Drama can never be a subject of purely literary study. It has to be known in relation to the stage, to the theatre. Tom F. Driver writes:

The act of performing the play in the theatre becomes a miniature reflection of historical action taking place within the limit imposed by the conventions of the theatre. This will be particularly true in those dramatic periods, such

as the Greek and the Elizabethan, where the theatre was frankly accepted as the locus of the action and where there was not, an attempt to black out both audience and theatre ... The theatre tends to reflect the assumptions of its age regarding time and history because it is on the one hand a narrative of temporal events, and on the other hand an enactment taking place within a moment of time. The mimetic instinct is confined to no single nation; it is universal in its appeal and reveals itself as one of the most primitive of human emotions. It is the earliest of imitative arts.

Drama may be defined as a well-told cohesive story presented in action. Compton-Rickett writes:

It must be articulate -that is, spoken; for a pantomime is a story in action, and the orator who declares may give us an articulate story, though not necessarily in action . . . for effective drama conflict of some kind is essential... If the conflict be a trivial one, we get a farce. If a serious one, ending happily for hero and heroine, we have a comedy. If a serious one with an unhappy ending, we term it a tragedy.

1.2 ORGINS OF DRAMA/THEATRE

Twenty-five hundred years ago, Western theatre was born in Athens, Greece. Between 600 and 200 B.C. the ancient Athenians created a theatre culture whose form, technique and terminology have lasted two millennia, and they created plays that are still considered among the greatest works of world drama. Their achievement is truly remarkable when one considers that there have been only two other periods in the history of theatre that could be said to approach the greatness of ancient Athens - Elizabethan England and the Twentieth century.

The theatre of Ancient Greece evolved from religious rites which date back to at least 1200 BC. At that time Greece was peopled by tribes that we in our arrogance might label 'primitive'. In northern Greece, in an area called Thrace, a cult arose that worshipped Dionysus, the god of fertility and procreation. The Cult of Dionysus practiced ritual celebration. The cult's most controversial practice involved, it is believed, uninhibited dancing and emotional displays that created an altered mental state. This altered state was known as 'ecstasies'. Ecstasy was an important religious concept to the Greeks, who would come to see theatre as a way of releasing powerful emotions. Though it met with resistance, the cult spread through the tribes of Greece. (Dionysiac, hysteria and 'catharsis' also derive from Greek words for emotional release or purification). During this time, the rites of Dionysus became mainstream and more formalised and symbolic. An essential part of the rites of Dionysus was the dithyramb. The word means 'choric hymn'. This chant or hymn was probably introduced into Greece early accompanied by mimic gestures, and probably music. It began as a part of a religious ceremony, like a hymn, describing the adventures of Dionysus. It was performed by a chorus of men, group of dancers, and band of revellers. In this way, over a period of time dithyramb evolved into stories in play form now known as drama.

Greek Theatre: By 600 BC in Greece the most prominent city state was Athens. It was here that the Rites of Dionysus evolved into theatre. In about 600 BC, Arion of Mehtymna (Corinth) wrote down formal lyrics for the dithyramb. Later

Thespis of Attica (Athens) added an actor who interacted with the chorus. This actor was called the *protagonist* meaning the main character of a drama. When Thespis, the director of choruses, his face smeared with white lead perhaps in simulation of the dead god, stood on a table and addressed the leader of the chorus, dialogue was born in Greece. With his inspired step Thespis also created the classic actor as distinct from the dancer. His table (which probably served as an altar for animal sacrifice) was the first inkling of a stage as distinguished from the primitive dancing circle. In time, a second speaker was introduced and one moved from one art to another, from choric chant to theatre. Gradually the leaders of the dithyramb could include other related details taken from the many tales of ancestral and local heroes which were being recited by poets. The words associated with dithyrambic dances became elaborate and dramatic plot was introduced. In 534 BC, Pisistratus the ruler of Athens, instituted drama competitions. These competitions became popular annual events. A government authority called the *archon* chose the competitors and the *choregos*, wealthy patrons financed the productions. The 'theatre' was constructed – The Theatre of Delphi, the Attic Theatre and the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens. In fact, the word 'theatre' derives from the Greek word 'theatron' which referred to the wooden spectator stands erected on the hill sides; and the word 'orchestra' is derived from the Greek word for a platform between the raised stage and the audience on which the chorus was situated. Thespis who acquired a theatre building where his plays (he was the first prize winning playwright in 535 BC) were performed in a permanent circular dancing ground of stone with a stone temple in the background. Plays in those days were performed in the daytime. Actors wore little or no make up. There was no scenery. Actors wore masks and buskins (leather boots up to the knees). Until 484 BC the Athenian drama competitions consisted of dithyrambs and a satyr play. Their style of presentation was choral rather than dramatic. Around 484 BC there appeared on the Athenian theatre scene a playwright named **Aeschylus**. He introduced props and scenery and reduced the chorus 50 to 12. *Aeschylus'* *Persians*, written in 472 BC, 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. Thematically, it is about the tragedy of excessive human pride, arrogance or hubris. Aeschylus is also known the Father of Tragedy. Of the ninety-two plays of Aeschylus only seven have come down to us. Hundreds of scattered fragments and comments provide an inkling of the subjects he treated. He is a master of the picturesque. His characters are colourful creatures, many of them supernatural, barbaric and his speech is metaphorical. *Prometheus Bound* is an unforgettable work as its theme was God himself. He turned from the drama of God to the drama of man in his last two tragedies of which one is *Agamemnon*. In 468 BC Aeschylus was defeated in the tragedy competition by Sophocles.

Sophocles, contribution to drama was the addition of actors, and an emphasis on drama between humans rather than between humans and Gods. He was a fine craftsman. He won 20 competitions. He experimented, tried different styles and struggled painstakingly for perfection. He used only one play for each plot and was consequently constrained to pack all his actions into it. In all respects the shorter form offered the greater dramatic possibilities. His works bear a strong resemblance to the architecture and sculpture of his time which favoured small temples and statues of gods who are not much larger than well-built human beings.

Sophocles is precise rather than rhapsodic. It is noteworthy that Sophocles is the first writer known to have used some comic details in his tragedies, a procedure that could only be motivated by a desire for contrast and variety. He is a master of the device of tragic suspense and tragic irony of which *Oedipus the King* is a supreme example. *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Antigone* and *Philoctetes* are the other well known works.

Another contemporary Greek playwright was **Euripides**. His plays were about real people. He placed peasants alongside princes and gave their feelings equal weight. He showed the reality of war, criticized religion, and portrayed the forgotten of society - women, slaves and old people. Euripides is credited with adding to the dramatic form the *Prologue* which set the stage at the beginning of the play. He managed to create the most forceful realism and social criticism of the classic stage. *The Trojan Women*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Cyclops* and *Alceste* are the well known plays of Euripides.

Tragedy was not the only product of Athenian theatre but comedy also thrived at the time. Greek comedy had two periods: **Old Comedy** represented by **Cratinus** and **Aristophanes**; and **New Comedy**, whose main exponent was **Menander**. Aristophanes, theatrical works were presented at the Athenian festivals. He used three actors, a chorus that sang, danced and sometimes participated in the dialogue. His first two comedies *The Banqueters* and *The Babylonians* were lost but it is known that they were a satire on new education and a political satire respectively. *The Acharnians* is the world's first anti-war comedy. His other comedies include *The Wmgs* on deterioration of Athens, *Peace* an anti- imperialistic comedy, *The Frogs* and *Plutus*.

The use of overt satire, topicality and the pointed lampooning of celebrated characters to be found in Aristophanes' style were replaced by mistaken identities, ironic situations, ordinary characters and wit. Menander is the more significant name in the New Comedy. His main contribution was to create a comedy model that greatly influenced later comedy. His characters were not celebrities but ordinary people. The chorus resembled modern chorus singers and dancers who provided fillers between acts. They were also portrayed as drunken audience members. His characters were classic comedy archetypes. Emphasis on mistaken identity, romance and situational humour became the model for subsequent comedy, from the Romans to Shakespeare to Broadway. His talent is witnessed in his comedy of errors – *The Girl From Samos*, *The Shearing of Glycera* and *The Arbitration*. The work of Menander was reincarnated in the Latin comedies of Plautus and Terrence.

1.3 GROWTH OF DRAMA

Gassner writes:

... there is not a single human impulse, moral or otherwise, that cannot be associated with the growth of the stage; the masters of the drama are the children of life The first playwright began indeed as a player and a magic maker. But he gradually took the whole world of experience and thought from his field....in copying movements or gestures, repeating sounds, and employing human, animal and even vegetable disguises, primitive man was instinctively bringing himself in touch with his environment. And in

playing he was not only discharging excess energy but preparing himself for purposeful action. ... Man danced out his desires until the pantomimic dance became the most finished early form of drama. ...The playwright leads the pantomime since the form and execution of the performances requires a guiding intellect ... he is also a social philosopher, for it is he who organizes the performance as a commercial activity and extends the psychological reality of commune.

From Greece, the stage was passed on to Rome. With the fall of Rome in the fourth century, the theatre virtually vanished. Drama in England does not begin until the tenth century. The **medieval theatre** also developed out of the religious services. It was the creation of the Church. Thus it is true to say that the “cradle of the drama rested on the altar.” The clergy were obliged to find some method of teaching and explaining to the ignorant masses the doctrinal truths of religion. The Gospel stories were illustrated by a series of living pictures in which the performers acted the story in dumb show. In the next stage the actors spoke as well as acted their parts. These early plays were known as **Mysteries and Miracles**. The former were stories taken from the Scripture narrative while the latter are plays dealing with incidents in the lives of Saints and Martyrs. Drama is inherent in the very ritual of the Church, and the Mass itself was a factor in the dramatic development.

Miracle plays grew out of the liturgy itself, with its solemn rites and the chants alternating between priest and congregation. They began as short dialogues. Recited at first inside the church these dialogues developed into title plays acted in the church porch. One of the most important was the play of Adam written in the 12th C by a Norman. It is in three parts, showing the fall of Adam and Eve, the death of Abel and the line of prophets announcing the advent of the Saviour. This play was written in French. Another important play was Noah, about *Noah*, about Noah finishing the Ark, informing his wife and begging her to enter the ark. Thus the plays folded scenes from the Scriptures, depicted scenes from the Life of Christ, and celebrated Holy days like Christmas, Easter or Corpus Christi.

Certain towns, either by reason of the importance of their fairs, or through the more powerful organization of their trade guilds became noted for the presentation of their miracle plays. These cycle plays were known by the names of the places where they were shown - Chester, York, Coventry, Norwich, Newcastle and Wakefield. The guilds played an important part in the powerful organization. One of the most touching plays is that of *Abraham and Issac*.

Mystery and miracle plays gave way to **Moralities and Interludes**. In the Mystery and Miracle plays, serious and comic elements were interwoven. Now they part: the Morality presenting the serious and the Interlude the lighter side of things. The characters typified certain qualities - Sin, Grace, Repentance. Moralities emanate from allegory. Bible characters are replaced by abstract virtues and vices personified. Their aim was primarily the teaching of the Christian faith. If in the miracle plays the scenes had a movable pageant, the moralities required a fixed stage. The moralities were concerned with wider issues and showed human life wavering between good and evil, between God and the Devil. Well known plays were *Castell of Perseverance*, *Everyman* and *Mankind*. The protagonist was mankind at large. If on one side were grouped the person of evil angel and his minions the Seven Deadly Sins, then on the other side were the

good angel and the Divine Graces. Thus the debate was between Sin, Jealousy, Malice, Gluttony etc. and Mercy, Justice, Peace, Truth, etc. The persons of the mystery plays were nearly all given individual names and the drama was rooted in reality. The performances consisted of a group of local amateurs who formed an association for the specific purpose of acting - in other words, a fifteenth century amateur dramatic society. The three plays mentioned above were pointers to the varied courses that drama looked to. The miracle plays ceased to be acted about 1600, but by that time the regular drama was established.

No masterpiece was produced during the years 1520 - 1578AD.

Interludes were comic dialogues and Heywood's interludes were popular as his originality consists in the fact that he avoids moralizing and aims at amusement. The best known is *The Four P's* - Palmer, Pardoner, Potheary and Pedlar. Heywood's *The Mery Play Between the Pardoner and the Frere* was also very popular. Such interludes indicate that an effort was made to combine good healthy instruction with much comic business.

The first English drama was *Gorboduc* written by Sackville and Norton and played before Elizabeth at Whitehall in 1562. When published it was called *Ferrex* and *Porrex*. The tragic story is divided into five acts. Norton wrote the fourth and fifth. The action takes place behind the scenes, and each act ends with a chorus, in imitation of the tragedies of Seneca. It is written in blank verse and treats of an episode in national history.

The first regular English comedy was produced in 1553 by Nicholas Udall and was titled *Ralph Roister Doister*. Udall is justly entitled as the "Father of English Comedy." The play is neither farce nor debate but is a comedy full of incident and intrigue, well ordered and well planned. *Gammer Gurton's Needle* is the second English comedy written by Mr. S.

The foundation of a truly national theatre was helped by the formation of companies of professional players. In 1576, the first theatre was built in Shoreditch. Gradually the Rose, the Swan, the Globe and the Fortune were built.

1.4 TYPES OF STAGE

Drama has undergone significant changes with passage of time. Stage types also changed and have thus required different forms of acting.

Drama, period-wise can be classified into broad categories as follows:

1. Classical Theatre (Greek and Roman)
2. Native Drama (1066-1500)
3. Renaissance Drama (1500- 1660)
 - a) Elizabethan Drama: Shakespeare and Contemporaries.
 - b) Jacobean and Caroline
4. The Neoclassical Period or Restoration Drama (1660-1700)
5. Drama in 18th, 19th and 20th Century.

Plays in ancient Greece were staged in amphitheatres, which were marked by a round stage about three quarters surrounded by the audience. Since amphitheatres were very large and could hold great masses of people (upto 25,000), the actors could hardly be seen from far back, and for this reason, acting included speaking in a loud, declamatory voice, wearing masks and symbolical costumes and acting with large gestures. The chorus was a vital part of ancient drama. It had the function of commenting on the play as well as giving warning and advice to characters. The stage scenery was neutral and was accompanied by the real landscape surrounding the amphitheatre. Plays were performed in day light.

Ancient Greek drama was performed on special occasions like religious ceremonies, and it thus had a more ritual, symbolic and also didactic purpose. The audience consisted only of free men; slaves and women were excluded.

The Theatre in Epidaurus (Theatre in Stone): The theatre at Epidaurus shows an open-air Greek theatre, with seats for the audience hewn out on the slope of a hill. The most prominent feature of the theatre is the large dancing circle, or orchestra, for the chorus. At the side to the right is one of the passageways or *paradoi*, affording entrance and exit for the chorus and processions. At the back, are the ruins of the stone scene building, the *skene*, which could represent a temple or a palace, and served as a permanent scenic background for the stage productions. During 5th century BC, the *skene* became a two-storey stone building where the upper storey or *episkenion* was used for the stage machinery, by means of which the gods were lowered to the stage level. The front of the lower story had a colonnade or *proskenion*. Most of the acting transpired on a low platform in front of this structure, which had three doors and was flanked by projecting wings as *paraskenia*. The theatre at Epidaurus belongs to the Hellenistic period (4th century BC), but the above-mentioned architectural features were also present in the theatre of Dionysus. Gradually the stage production became elaborate. The *Skene* was usually rectangular and divided into rooms. The front wall of the ground story had a series of pillars between which were set painted wooden panels or *pinakes*. The actors usually performed on the second story level, so that the stage was about a foot high and from 8 to 10 feet deep running the entire length of the building. At the back of this stage stood the colonnaded front wall of the second story, pierced by three doors, and served as the background. Between the columns of this upper colonnade, too, *pinakes* might be placed. There was less inter-mingling between the actors and the chorus.

Later under Roman influence, the Greek theatre underwent other modifications, the stage or acting-area was lower by a few feet but deeper, the frontage of the stage lost its colonnade but became a highly decorated scenic facade, and the orchestra was no longer a complete circle.

Later, tragedy was stately and comedy was extravagant. The actors were trained in speech, dance and pantomime.

Native Drama

Medieval plays (Mysteries and Moralities) were performed during religious festivities. They were staged on wagons (pageants), which stopped somewhere in the market place and were entirely surrounded by the audience. The close

vicinity between actors and audience had to account for a way of acting. Actors took into account the everyday experiences. Rarely were the mystery plays exhibited anywhere except out of doors and no attempt was made to construct for them any theatre. Within the church stations or locations (*sedes*/ seats; *loci*/ places; *domus*/houses) were in view of the method of stage representation called 'simultaneous setting' or 'multiple setting'. When the liturgical plays ceded their position to the mystery cycles, the seats or small platforms elaborated into mansions - sometimes made into little rooms by provision of curtains at the sides and back, sometimes decorated with carved or painted scenery and the *platea* served its original function. The stationary set presented the mansions in a curving row facing the audience. The second involved the placing of the mansions on wheels, so that they became pageants, which could be drawn from spot to spot. The actors were amateur - members of various guilds or companies who for a time put aside their labour to perform. They were generally paid for their services. Heaven and Hell were presented either on left and right sides respectively or top and bottom. Costuming was not only gorgeous but imaginative. On a multiple stage live animals such as rabbits and lambs were employed. Placards were used. The attention of the audience was concentrated on gestures, delivery of numerous monologues and the many tirades for effect. There were no actresses, boys took the parts of women. The heterogeneous audience from the groundlings to courtiers were simple folk willing to be taught and edified. They appreciated the essentials of drama: life, pathos and humour.

Apron Stage

The Elizabethan stage was typically found in public theatres, i.e. plays were no longer performed outside. However it was still open air theatre. From 1580 to 1642 London theatres presented almost everyday a number of plays both old and new, each one a medley of styles. Theatres were simple in structure, mostly circular in form; within was a courtyard open to the sky, surrounded by two or three tiers of covered galleries. At one side of the courtyard projected a platform which formed the stage. In the centre, on either side of the platform, two pillars supported them ceiling; at the back, between two doors which served for the entrance and exit of the actors, was another stage overlooked by a gallery with balcony and windows; in front of this rear - stage was a movable curtain. There were no wings, only elementary accessories. The front stage served most purposes. On the bare stage the actors, performance was all important. The most common stage form in Renaissance England was the open stage which was surrounded by the audience on three sides and there was still close vicinity between audience and actors. The vestigial platform was known as the apron and it stood in front of the proscenium arch and accommodated most of the acting. Playwrights wrote long speeches regularly into their plays, employed the embellishments of rhetoric, and made free of asides and soliloquies. The Elizabethan theatre could hold upto 2,000 people and the audience was heterogeneous. Plays of the period typically combine various subject matters and modes because they attempted to appeal to as wide an audience as possible. The apron was cut down and was finally discarded entirely after the middle of the 19th century. Once the actor played close to the scenery within the setting, as became customary, he was disproportionately tall and the painted scenery looked false. Stage illusion deteriorated.

Theatres of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were considerably smaller than the Elizabethan theatre (held about 500 people) and performances took place in closed rooms with artificial lighting. Audience was seated in a fully illuminated room. The stage was closed in by a decorative frame and the distance between audience and actors was thus enlarged. There was no curtain and changes of scene had to take place on stage in front of the audience. The plays presented an idealized, highly stylized image of scenery, characters, language and subject of matter. Emergence of 'Patent' theatres and minor playhouses is a significant move of the drama in the 17th and 18th century. As the old tightly-knit aristocratic society began to disintegrate and the middle classes started to enter the playhouses, the playhouse established its own tradition, which were passed on to the nineteenth century and even to the present day. Nicoll writes: "Four popular species of entertainment must be noted - the operatic, the spectacular, the terpsichorean and the mimic." The men and women liked show; music appealed to them and dances were appreciated. The ballad-opera invented by John Gay exhibited that the tastes lay within the field of extravagant and satirical.

Proscenium Stage

The stage of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is called proscenium or picture frame stage because it is shaped in such a way that the audience watches the play as it would regard a picture: The ramp clearly separates actors and audience, and the curtain underlines this division. While the stage is illuminated during the performance, the auditorium remains dark, which also turns the audience into an anonymous mass. Since the audience is not disturbed and can fully concentrate; it became easier to create an illusion of real life in plays. Scenery is elaborate, and true-to-life. More detailed stage props, lighting and sound system are possible due to new technologies. Multiple stages are operative simultaneously. The play is not just a drama but moves like a film as it creates the illusion of a story world 'as it could be in real life.' There is a wide range of different types of stage in the present era, alongside the conventional proscenium stage or the modern street theatre. With passing time, dramatic power has heightened, artistry refined and situations secularized and universalized.

1.5 LET US SUM UP

At the end of this unit, we are familiar with

- the role of theatre
- the significance of theatre.

1.6 QUESTIONS

1. Elaborate Boulton's statement; "A true play is three dimensional."
2. Elucidate the fact that the 'cradle of the drama rested on the altar'.
3. Write notes on:
 - a) Greek theatre

- b) Growth of British drama
- c) Origin of tragedy and comedy
- 4. Development of stage is proportional to the growth of drama. How?
- 5. Define the terms:
 - a) Mystery plays
 - b) Morality plays
 - c) Chorus
 - d) Dithyramb
 - e) Theatre
 - f) Interludes
 - g) Apron stage

1.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 2 ASPECTS OF DRAMA

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Dramatic Structure
- 2.3 Dramatic Texture
- 2.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.5 Questions
- 2.6 Suggested Readings
- 2.7 Glossary of Literary Terms

2.0 OBJECTIVES

The focus of this unit is on dramatic structure which includes plot, character and unities, and the dramatic texture that has a wide range from imagery and symbolism to setting and props, from dialogues and action to acts and scenes, from atmosphere and setting to the tone of the play. The unit hopes to update the readers with dramatic terminology and the aspects of drama which constitute a play in general. The various ingredients of drama were rightly used to make the play a success or a failure. These ingredients also categorized the kind of drama which we will read in the next unit. Therefore, before reading various kinds of drama it is important to focus on the essentials that go into the making of a play.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Drama is the most 'dependent' of art forms – director, actor, dialogues, story, actor, dialogues, story, action setting, props, costumes, stage and spectators, all are required to make it happen as a 'play'. Also consider that the play involves conflict, action, crisis and atmosphere. The same is true of films, too. New entrants in this area are T.V. serials. All these are entertaining to watch plays enjoyable to read as text also where words alone are the medium. If we are to do justice to plays it does seem essential to take into account their unique nature as a sequence of situations that underlie 'action'. Plays are acted on a public stage and focus on prouder social issues. Spectators go to the theatre as members of the public and in some way associate with questions raised in the play which is about the order man has created in society, and conversely the threat to the established social order. Thus, drama is a most peculiar, elusive and enthralling of all forms of literature. It has a universe appeal and "lies near to the deeper consciousness of the nation in which it takes its rise" (Nicoll). It is capable of addressing widely and diversely to people of different epochs and cultures.

Before we move to the terms related to structure let us be clear as to what structure is and what texture is: This we shall take up here. A literary text reminds us of a building. The foundation, pillars, beams, walls, roof, etc. are the structure of a building but the finish with paints, colour-combination, accessories, wood-work,

flooring, etc. is the texture of the building. In any literary work the structure comprises the story, the characters, action and the dialogues whereas the texture is highlighted through images, symbols, metaphors, settings, audio-visual aids, etc.

Thus the dramatist presents life on the stage. S/he deals with a much larger question of human experience and concern. One must grasp this wider meaning of the play. This is implicit in the action and characterization, the dramatic theme and the dialogues which reveal the soul of the play.

2.2 DRAMATIC STRUCTURE

Plot

If we tell a story through a play we are constructing a simple account of what happens. Plot is a more inclusive term: it is a fully developed version of the story. It takes account of the nature of the characters, the way in which events are related to each other and their dramatic effect. Plot talks about the overall significance of the play.

The plot (Aristotle termed it *mythos*) in a dramatic or narrative work is constituted by a number of events as these are presented in an order so that specific artistic effects are created. Plot and characters are interdependent. To put it into Henry James words, “What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?” The dramatist is given the task of providing the actors with such dialogues as will enable them adequately to interpret their parts and at the same time are in complete harmony. Nicoll writes : “[when] Any dramatist sets to work he will have, at the outset, three things to determine - the theme which is to be dealt with, the characters by means of which that theme is to be displayed, and the medium (the actual dialogue) through which both are to be given expression.” Thus the plot is the main entity that controls the intricate machinery of the play. The order of a unified plot is a continuous sequence of beginning, middle and end. The beginning initiates the main action and is also known as the exposition; the middle presumes what has gone before and requires something to follow and the rising action reaches its climax. Crisis comes later through a reversal of happenings following which denouement and the final resolution takes us to the end of the play. German critic Gustavo Freytag introduced the analysis of plot as Freytag’s Pyramid. He described the typical plot of a five-act play as a pyramidal shape.

In many plots the denouement involves a reversal, in the protagonist’s fortunes, whether to protagonist’s failure as in tragedy or success as in comic plots. ‘Recognition’ also happens at this moment. This is the recognition by the protagonist of something essential and important. As a plot evolves, it arouses expectation as well as surprise. The interplay of suspense and surprise is plot.

So far as conflict in drama is concerned one can say that it may arise between characters and ideas or between characters and events, or between characters, situations and the larger forces of existence. Still, each development must follow logically from a preceding development and every situation that arises in the course of the play has to be logical and convincing.

A plot may have a sub-plot i.e. a second story that is complete and runs parallel to the main plot. The subplot seems to broaden our perspective on the main plot. For example, in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Lear's story and Gloucester's story run parallel.

Character

The people involved in the action of a play are referred to as characters. We assess them on the basis of what they say and do. A character is an individual or a type representing distinct traits through speech (dialogue) and deeds (actions). According to Aristotle 'Ethos' i.e. the moral element, and 'Dionia' i.e. the intellectual element are the two basic elements that constitute a character. The main character is called the hero or protagonist; the opponent is the antagonist or villain. A character may remain stable or may undergo a radical change but he should be consistent from beginning to end. E.M. Forster in *Aspects of Novel* distinguished between a 'flat' or 'type' character built around a single idea or quality and a 'round' or 'complex' character who is primarily an individual in his/her own right and has many intricacies as well as depth and intensity in temperament. If a flat character is two-dimensional then a round character is three dimensional. Apart from simple and complex characters there are 'stock' and 'shadow' characters that are new functionaries and assist in the development of the plot. Introduction of the characters in the growth of drama has been discussed in the earlier units.

Some of the plays titled on the name of the characters are *Romeo and Juliet*, (the major tragedies of Shakespeare) - *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Prince of Denmark*, *Othello*, and *Macbeth*, *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar* Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Ben Jonson's *Volpone*, Brecht's *Mother Courage*. The player/actor should have technical equipment in voice, facial expression, bodily praise, gesture and must understand the essence of his character. He should respect his parts, as well as fellow players and the audience. It is he who reveals the feelings, emotions, intentions and conflicts inherent in the dialogues meant for the play and these have to be made lucid and interesting.

Three Unities

The three unities are the unity of action, place and time. In simplest terms, the unity of action means that the action represented by a play should approximate the actual conditions of the staging of the play; the unity of place is that the action represented be limited to a single location and unity of time means that the time be limited to two or three hours to enact the play. Because the unity of place and time were often flouted, they became optional. Aristotle emphasized the desirability of preserving some kind of unity in action, pointing out that this unity must be organic and could not be seconded by the mechanical device of making one man the centre and cause of the plot. It presupposes that no subplot of importance be made to appear in any serious play and no admixture of tragedy and comedy is permissible. But these two assumptions raised controversy and with the passage of time, the comic and tragic fused harmoniously with each other; tears and laughter were in close proximity as comedy and tragedy were not dissimilar, nor were they fundamentally opposed to each other as to be treated in isolation.

Unity of place and time restrict the length of time and the place of dramatic action to one locality while performing the play on the stage. It is true that for certain plays the unities can never be applied but just as drama itself presents a kind of concentration of life, a certain amount of restriction helps the dramatist considerably in his task. The whole thing may be summed up by saying that in drama the one essential unity is the unity of impression. Alardyce Nicoll in *The Theory of Drama* writes: "This unity of impression is closely linked to the ancient unity of action, but places essentially stress not on the creative process involved in the construction of the play, but on the effect which the whole drama will have on an average audience. ... Drama as we have seen, must be excessively concentrated and this very concentrated demands the securing of a unity of impression. On the other hand, by unity of impression is not necessarily implied mere monotony and sameness of emotions, for the unified impression as such may be gained by means of the utilization of a variety of emotions." Thus drama shows a subordination of some particular elements of which it is composed. In every great drama there is an idea and through the unity of action and significance of characters, the whole structure of drama is produced.

2.3 DRAMATIC TEXTURE

Act and Scene: An act is a major division in the action of a play. In British drama this division was introduced by Elizabethan dramatists and there were five acts. In the nineteenth century there were four acts and in the twentieth century non-musical dramas constitute only three acts. Acts are subdivided into scenes. In recent times, plays are a sequence of scenes and there are no major acts. If Shakespeare's plays were divided into five acts and each act contained scenes, then Brecht's plays are divided into scenes and no acts (e.g. *Mother Courage* and *Her Children* is a play staged in twelve scenes); and Kalidasa's plays are divided into Acts only. An act and a scene can be differentiated easily by the two following dramatic presentations:

- i) The curtain falls only after the act ends and the scene can change just by dimming of light. Intermission is usually between acts.
- ii) A scene is an independent unit marked by the continuity of action without any change of place or a break in time.

One of the most productive ways of discussing a play is to focus on individual scenes, for any scene will tell us a lot about the play as a whole. Our focus in looking at a scene is, thus, twofold: we are getting hold of the play as a whole, identifying the thematic issues; and we look at the complex texture of the scene i.e. the use of imagery, similes, metaphors, poetry etc.

We have already read One Act Plays.

Atmosphere: It is the tone pervading a section or whole of the drama. The atmosphere can be happy, sad, suspenseful, fearful, religious, etc. E.g. in *Hamlet* at the initial stages of the drama the ghost makes the whole atmosphere tense and fearful.

Aside: These are lines whispered to the audience or to another character on stage (not meant to be heard by all the characters on stage). Sometimes the purpose is to inform the audience.

Comic relief: It is a bit of humour injected into a serious play to relieve the heavy tension of tragic events. The introduction of comic characters, speeches or scenes in a serious work of art to alleviate tension and add variety. Comic relief characters amuse the audience. This theatrical device was frequently used in Elizabethan tragedy e.g. the horse courser scene in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* or the grave diggers in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

Deus ex Machina: It is Latin for "a god from a machine." It describes the practice of some Greek playwrights (especially Euripides) to end a drama with a god, lowered to the stage by a mechanical apparatus, who by his judgement and commands resolved the dilemmas of the human characters. The phrase is now used for any improbable device by which the plot is resolved.

Foreshadow: This indicates lines that give a hint or clue to future events.

Flashback: It is used by the playwright to narrate an incident from the past and this either interrupts the main story line of the play or is used by the chorus at the beginning of the Act or scene.

Irony: Dramatic irony is a method of expression in which the ordinary meaning of the word is opposite to the thought in the speaker's mind and the events are contrary to what would be naturally expected. The audience or reader shares with the author the knowledge of present or future circumstances of which the character is ignorant. Sophocles' *Oedipus* is an example of tragic irony and Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* is an example of irony in comedy. In the former, Oedipus engages in a hunt for the incestuous father-murderer and the object of the hunt turns out to be the hunter himself, for he is responsible for the incest and the plague. In the latter play, a comedy, Malvolio is ignorant of the prank being played on him by the subplot characters and his speech heightens the dramatic effect.

Masque: (Mask) was introduced in Renaissance Italy and flourished in England. It was an elaborate form of court entertainment that combined poetic drama, music, song, dance, costume and stage spectacle. The characters wore masks and at the end doffed their masks.

Motif: It is a conspicuous element, such as a type of incident, dance, reference and formula which occurs frequently.

Pantomime: also known as "Dumb-show". It is to enact on the stage without speech, using only posture, gestures, bodily movement and exaggerated facial expressions. At times music was introduced. Charlie Chaplin movies are a fine example of pantomime shows.

Poetic Justice: The term was coined by Thomas Rymer. It signifies the distribution of rewards and punishment in proportion to virtue or vice, at the end of the literary work, which must be governed by ideal principles of decorum and morality.

Setting: It is the general locale, historical time and social circumstances in which action occurs. Setting is synonymous with decor which denotes scenery and the properties used on the stage.

Soliloquy: It is the act of talking to oneself, usually aloud and alone on the stage. This is a dramatic presentation of the character's inner thoughts and this theatrical

device is used for the purpose of exposition and to guide the judgements and responses of the audience. The best known are Hamlet's soliloquies in Shakespeare's play of the same name. The purpose of such speeches is to reflect on the wider significance of the action. Marlowe's Doctor Faustus opens with a long expository soliloquy and concludes with another which expresses Faustus' mental and emotional condition.

2.4 LET US SUM UP

All ages have tried to find the secret of the art that embraces the tragic and the comic, magnificent heights of poetic dramatization and forceful dialogue delivery, extravagant settings to bare stage, serious and joyful, crisis and resolution.

2.5 QUESTIONS

1. Differentiate between structure and texture of play.
2. Distinguish between a drama, novel and motion pictures.
3. Write notes on:
 - a) Plot
 - b) Character
 - c) Three Unities
 - d) Atmosphere, Setting and Tone
4. "Drama is a dependent art form". How?

2.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

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2.7 GLOSSARY OF LITERARY TERMS

- Boulevard drama** : Originally the body of plays produced in the late nineteenth century. The term is applied to comedies of some sophistication, designed primarily as commercial products.
- Bourgeois drama** : The modern realistic drama dealing with the problems of middle-class characters.
- Closet drama** : A play written to be read rather than performed. Also plays intended to be performed but survived as literature rather than theatre.

- Passion play** : A passion play is the acting out of the passion, or suffering and death of Jesus as told in New Testament. It was put up by many groups of actors and in many cities and towns. Today the most famous performance of the passion play takes place once every ten years.
- School Plays** : Plays influenced by Roman comedy, performed in schools and colleges during the early Sixteenth century in England.
- Stichomythia** : Dialogue consisting of single line spoken alternately by two characters. Usually a verbal duel. It is characterized by repetitive patterns. This was used in classical drama and by the Elizabethans.



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UNIT 3 DIFFERENT TYPES OF DRAMA

Structure

- 3.0 Objective
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Tragedy
- 3.3 Comedy
- 3.4 Tragi-Comedy
- 3.5 History Plays
- 3.6 Problem Plays
- 3.7 Realistic Drama
- 3.8 Poetic Drama
- 3.9 Epic Theatre
- 3.10 Theatre of the Absurd
- 3.11 Classical Sanskrit Theatre
- 3.12 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.13 Questions
- 3.14 Suggested Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this unit is to discuss in detail the kinds of drama that we see being performed or read. Plays are categorised and labelled as tragedy, comedy, history, problem plays, poetic drama, epic drama, the theatre of the absurd, etc. The present unit explains as to how these distinctions are made; what reasons behind the specific labels are; and what time period (socially and politically) has been responsible for their growth. The unit has a sub-division on Indian Classical Sanskrit Theatre which discusses the Indian aesthetic theory. One would do well not to ignore Sanskrit drama as it has been a landmark development in the growth of theatre at the world level. This also initiates the growth of drama as part of new literatures which is inclusive of Spanish, German, French, Indian dramatic writing, etc.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Different types of Drama have existed down the ages from Greek classical theatre to the present times. We have already read about the origin and growth of drama in our first unit. Let us answer a few questions about drama which helps us understand the different kinds of drama entertaining, realistic, romantic, relations-based, theme-oriented, etc.

3.2 TRAGEDY

Aristotle first defined tragedy in his *Poetic's* around 330 BC. He defined tragedy as "the imitation of an action that is serious and also as having magnitude,

complete in itself,” in the medium of poetic language and in the manner of dramatic rather than of narrative presentation, involving “incidents arousing pity and fear wherewith to accomplish the catharsis of such emotion.”

Aristotle says that the **tragic hero** will evoke pity and fear if he is neither thoroughly good nor thoroughly bad but a mixture of both but is certainly “better than we are in the sense that he is of higher than ordinary moral worth. Such a man is exhibited as suffering a change in fortune from happiness to misery because of his mistaken choice of an action, to which he is led by his **hamartia**, the tragic flaw or the error of judgment or a moral weakness in character. The plot evokes tragic pity and fear. In this way tragedy relieves the spectators of harmful emotion. The dramatist depicts incidents which arouse pity and fear for the protagonist, bringing the plot to a logical and foreseeable conclusion. This explains how an audience experiences satisfaction even from an unhappy ending. In Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, Lear’s madness and his death arouses pity and fear in the audience, thus catharsis in spectators gives a satisfaction despite it being a tragic play. “In his tragedies Shakespeare is indeed grappling with the whole world on a scale approximated only by the profound tragedians of Greece. Tragedy in his work goes beyond individual failure, Nations crumble, and ambition, lust and ingratitude sear the earth. Sensitive souls shudder. They question the chimeras of man and fate, receiving dusty answers. Love for them turns to mockery, common decency become a jest, they see blood flowing like a torrent; conscience gnaws at the marrow of their being; self disgust and a general disgust with mankind ravage many of them” (Gassner:234). Thus Hamlet and Lear are partially authors of their own suffering because of their conduct. Hamlet’s sharp questioning of man and society emanates from the dramatic shock of discovering the murder of his father and his mother’s infidelity; but later his procrastination are aberrations from sound policy. Man struggles against man. Thus it is drama of individual will. Aristotle’s definition excludes many plays which are commonly thought of as tragedies. Not all tragic heroes suffer because of a tragic error.

Contemporary critics suggest a cluster of overlapping perspectives which collectively describe the tragic vision.

First, tragedy begins by asking the ultimate questions: why are we here? Does life have meaning or purpose? Can life have meaning in the face of so much suffering and evil in the world? Does death negate the significance of the protagonist’s life and the goals he/she was seeking? Tragedy offers no singular solution: people suffer because of their own actions. At times the tragic hero appears to suffer simply because he/she lives in a cruel and unjust universe. Though the causes of suffering are diverse, yet the purpose of suffering appears almost universally acknowledged: only through suffering does a person attain wisdom. According to Francis Fergusson, the plays follow a tragic pattern of purpose, passion and perception.

Second, tragedy pushes the individual to the outer limits of existence where one must live or die by one’s convictions. Facing the end of life, a person quickly recognizes life’s ultimate values. Tragedy depicts men and women who dissatisfied with the hand destiny has dealt with them, challenge the rules of the game. Tragedy does not depict man as a helpless puppet dancing to the strings of destiny. The tragic vision does not assure man’s ultimate downfall. Instead, it explores ways in which free will exerts itself in the world. The determination to

act rather than submit often leads to disastrous results but at the same time it tests the basic substance of humanity. This tremendous strength of will to scale the heights and accomplish the impossible sets the hero apart from the ordinary humanity but inspires us with a vision of human potential. Thus tragedy far from being a pessimistic view of life, is ultimately optimistic about the value of human achievement and the unconquerable strength of human spirit. To put into Eric Bentley's words. "Tragedy cannot entail extreme pessimism, for that would be to lose faith in Man." The tragic vision encompasses the paradox of human freedom, admitting the possibility of great goodness and great evil.

Some of the kinds of tragedy are:

- i) **Revenge tragedy** or the tragedy of blood which derives from Seneca its materials of murder, revenge, ghosts, mutilation and carnage. It was a dramatic genre that flourished in the late Elizabethan and Jacobean period. Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1586) established this popular form, later to be followed by Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (1592) Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612) and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1602).
- ii) **Domestic tragedy** was written in prose and presented a protagonist from the middle or lower social ranks who suffer a commonplace or domestic disaster. This was popularized by eighteenth century writers. For example, George Lillo's *The London Merchant*.
- iii) **Social tragedy** revolved around an issue of general social or political significance. These represent middle class or working class heroes and heroines. Notable tragedies of nineteenth and twentieth centuries are Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and, *Ghosts*, and Arthur Millers *Death of a Salesmen* (1949).
- iv) **Melodrama:** originally applied to musical plays including opera. The protagonists are flat types. Here drama relies on implausible events and sensational action. Continuous action drives the plot through a series of adventures. It thrives on thrills, excitement, suspense and rescues. The conflict is external and everything is delineated as black or white. Melodrama appears to deal with serious subjects, but its seriousness is only pretence. Most of the serious dramas never reach the heights of tragedy and thus become melodramas. Adventure films are examples of this.
- v) **Romantic tragedy:** Romances which end unhappily or with the death of the hero and heroine are categorised as romantic tragedies e.g. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.
- vi) **Heroic drama:** Heroic dramas may not look deeply into the philosophical questions of good, evil, man's relation to supernatural, etc. but they abide by the rule of poetic justice and portray swash-bucking adventures. e.g. *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

3.3 COMEDY

At the most fundamental level, comedy focuses on pleasure and amusement. The spectators are made to feel confident that no great disaster will occur and usually the action turns out to be happy for all.

Allardyce Nicoll describes three techniques of comedy which create a comic detachment (i.e. we laugh at the hardships of comic characters because the author sets them at a psychological distance): derision, incongruity and automatism.

Derision takes aim at human frailties such as stupidity, hypocrisy and arrogance, knocking the victim off his self-built pedestal. The character too pretends more, thus setting himself up for the fall. With insults and sarcasm, comedy's sharp wit seeks to pierce the over-inflated egos of pompous politicians, bragging generals and haughty aristocrats. Derision creates distance by placing its subjects beneath us as contemptible and foolish. Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* is a classic example of this.

Incongruity provokes laughter by means of ridiculous contrast in situation, character or dialogue. The unexpected element takes us by surprise. Misplaced words or statements are also a source of laughter. For instance, Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night Dream* or Gogol's *The Inspector General*.

Automatism occurs when people are depicted as acting without thinking. Comic characters often have annoying habits or mannerisms. They lose the ability to interact naturally. For example, Chekhov's *The Marriage Proposal*.

Comedies make use of several of the traditional roles. They tend to portray characters as recognizable stereotypes. Comic characters remain on the other side of line separating fiction from reality. This aesthetic distance allows us to laugh at their troubles without feeling pity and fear of tragedy. The world of comedy is characterized by absence of real pain. For all its criticism of human limitations, hypocrisy and foolishness, comedy views human beings as survivors. In comedy we laugh at our shortcomings and learn from our failures.

In his work on ethics, Aristotle describes two types of contrasting characters. The braggart (*alazon*) pretends to be more than he is, while the ironist (*eirone*) seems to be less than he is. Aristotle defined comedy as written about persons of minor importance whom their faults rendered ridiculous. The pair of crafty schemer and the parasite was one of the most popular plots. This can be witnessed in Jonson's *Volpone* (1606) where Volpone and Mosca trick others out of money and wives both. Similarly Horner in *The Country Wife* (1675).

Within the broad spectrum of comedy the following types are often distinguished:

- i) **Farce:** It is a type of comedy designed to provoke the audience to hearty laughter – 'belly laugh.' This employs highly exaggerated or caricatured type of characters, puts them into improbable and ludicrous situations, and makes free use of sexual mix-ups, broad verbal humour, and physical bustle and horseplay. At times the sustained brilliance and wit of dialogue helps to achieve the comic effect in a better way. Human beings are presented as helpless victims of their bodily urges, hungry for food, drink and sex. Characters in farce are usually single minded, seeking to satisfy their cravings with reckless desperation. Little emphasis is on depth of characters. Thus comedy which focuses on physical humour or "slapstick" is called farce. Plot complications, mistaken identities and miscommunication make it effective. Facial expressions and body gestures bring farce to life. Farce is effective in performance than as literature. Comedians like Charlie Chaplin and Keaton became masters of farce.

Commedia dell Arte was a form of comic drama developed around mid-, sixteenth century by guilds of professional Italian actors. Playing stock characters, the actors largely improvised the dialogue around a given scenario. Commedia performers relied on stereotypes and familiar situations to invent dialogue and action. The plot is enlivened by the buffoonery of 'Punch' and other clowns. Wandering Italian troupes played in all the large cities of Renaissance Europe and influenced various writers of comedies.

- ii) **Comedy of Manners** is the most prominent form of high comedy as it holds the customs of aristocratic society up to ridicule. It uses verbal wit and sarcasm to depict the charm and reveal the pretensions of its characters. It exhibits two contrasting impulses: to celebrate and to criticize. The comic vision professes both hope and discouragement about the human condition, looking for the best but expecting the worst. It originated in the *New Comedy* of the Greek Menander as distinguished from the *Old Comedy* of Aristophanes. Shakespeare's *Loves Labour Lost* and *Much Ado About Nothing* are examples of comedy of manners. The comedy of manners, as its name implies, concentrates upon the depiction of men and women living in a social world ruled by convention. Its manners are not simply the behaviour of humanity in general but the affectations and cultured veneer of a highly developed and self-conscious group. Intellectual refinement, epigrammatic wit and easy dalliance had been made the prime qualities sought after by the gallants and their mistresses. At the same time, it tends to tone down and to intellectualize ordinary emotions.

This form of comedy was given a high polish in Restoration Comedy (1660-1700), and is much indebted to French writer Moliere (1622-73). It deals with the relations and intrigues of men and women living in a sophisticated upper Different class society and relies for comic effect on the wit and sparkle of the dialogue often in the form of repartees. Each person tries to cap the remark of the other, or to turn it to his or her advantage. William Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700) and William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675) are classic examples of mastery of wit.

- iii) **Sentimental comedy** grew out of this comedy of manners. It represented the 18th century middle class life and its reaction against what had come to be considered the immorality of a situation and indecency of dialogue. Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, Sheridan's *The Rivals* and *A School for Scandal* and Wilde's *The Importance of Being Ernest* deleted the indecency, revived the wit and gaiety of Restoration comedy.
- iv) **Comedy of Humour** was a type of comedy developed by Ben Jonson based on the ancient physiological theory of the 'few humours' the primary fluids i.e. blood, phlegm, choler (yellow bile) and melancholy (black bite) whose mixture was held to determine both a person's physical condition and character type. Thomas Shadwell had a flair and skill in depicting humorous types. This is also called the 'satiric comedy' or the 'corrective comedy'. It tends to see the dark side of humanity and uses laughter as a satiric weapon. Jonson's *Volpone* is an example of this comedy which exposes the false premises on which people stand.

- v) **Tendency comedy** is another mode of the comic in which one is made to laugh at a person not merely because he is ridiculous but because he is being ridiculed; the laughter is derisive with contempt and malice.
- vi) **Festive comedies:** They emphasized celebration; the victory symbolized the process of renewal and regeneration which allows life to continue. Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* is a perfect example of love found, lost and regained and the traditional wedding at the end of comedy represents the continuance of life itself. This was also categorized as the Romantic comedy. *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Shakespeare are examples of romantic comedy as they represent a love affair which goes topsy-turvy due to problems or disguises but ends in a happy union.

3.4 TRAGI-COMEDY

According to Horace Walpole, "Life is a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel". Not all plays fit into a single category; in fact most plays consist of elements from two or more genres. It was a type of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama which intermingled both the standard characters and subject matter and the standard plots of tragedy and comedy. People were of high degree and low degree and the plot was serious criticism with lowbrow farce and slapstick humour. Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess* (1610), Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* and *The Winter's Tale* are popular tragicomic romances. It is thus defined as an interpretation of emotional reaction where tragedy and comedy are both present yet one does not merely follow upon the other but arises from it.

One of the first dramatists to explain tragicomedy as a uniquely modern world view, Friedrich Duerrenmatt (1921-1990) felt that the 20th century was an era lying in the shadow of two wars, and the Holocaust, and could no longer support the spirit of exaltation and therefore the true reflection of modern humanity is a paradox in which the tragic is depicted as comic; thus man is like a circus clown with a sad face, whose actions appear comical but the implication of ultimate meaninglessness behind those action came closer to tragic despair.

3.5 HISTORY PLAYS

Chronicle plays were dramatic works based on the historical materials in the English Chronicles by Raphael Holinshed and others. Chronicles were written accounts in prose or verse, of national or worldwide events. These works achieved high popularity in the sixteenth century. The early chronicle plays were a loosely knit series of historical events and depended for effect on stage battles. Public was fascinated by these historical dramas. The dramatic presentation of historical events such as *Julius Caesar*; *Richard II*, *Edward I*, *Henry V* are popular Elizabethan historical plays and recent examples are Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953) and Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* (1962). The concern with history committed the playwright to deal with all sorts of situations, ambiguities and apparent irrelevancies. The fusion of the outer (events) and inner (character) i.e. the close interdependence of action and character brings the dramatic effect.

3.6 PROBLEM PLAYS

Problem plays pertain to drama with a specific contemporary problem by making the protagonist face it. It was a type of drama popularized by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. The dramatist manages to propose a solution to the problem which is at odds with the prevailing opinion. From Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well* to Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession* are examples of problem plays as they explore problems like morality of behaviour, capital punishment, dignity of women, capitalist society, racial and ethnic issues, etc. Social issues are either incorporated into the plot or are debated amongst characters, but may not necessarily search a solution and thus the problem may remain unresolved. Such plays create awareness on social issues and force the spectators to think.

3.7 REALISTIC DRAMA

Realistic and Naturalistic drama of 20th century has been discussed at length in the last unit.

3.8 POETIC DRAMA

In poetic drama the dialogue is written in verse, which in English is usually the blank verse. This was chiefly associated with the work of T.S. Eliot and Christopher Fry. *Murder in the Cathedral*, *The Family Reunion*, *The Cocktail Party*, are popular plays of Eliot. He emphasized vigorous and bold use of all devices proper to the form of verse drama, emphatic melody, alliterative values, arresting imagery. The dialogue is so shaped that the audiences are not made conscious of the fact that they are listening to verse at all. The drama floats on moving words and musical melodies. The choruses were formal and fluid. Spanish writer Lorca made effective use of poetic overtones. In his play *The Home of Bernard Alba* (1936), Lorca created a nationalistic prose-poetry, combining realistic exposition with theatre of local colours. Lyrics and ballads were dramatized in a unique and stylized way. Dialogues became formal poetry. *Blood Wedding* (1933) and *Yerma* (1934) are rare dramatic presentations of this kind.

3.9 EPIC THEATRE

The term epic theatre was first used in Germany in 1920s and became associated with the name of Bertolt Brecht. It cuts across the traditional divisions. Epic story telling is objective. The beginnings of epic theatre coincide with German experiments in the use of the theatre as an instrument of political instruction. Brecht rejected the convention theatre for he said that it delighted the senses without impinging on the mind. In his essay *On Experimental Theatre* (1939) Brecht asked: "How can the theatres be entertaining and at the same time instructive?" He was looking for a theatre that would help to change the world.

He set out the contrasts between dramatic theatre and epic theatre as follows:

dramatic	epic
plot enactment	narrative

implicates the spectator in a stage in a stage situation	turns the spectator into an observer
wears down his capacity for action	arouses his capacity for action
provides him with sensations	forces him to take decisions
experience	picture
spectator is involved in something	he is made to face something
suggestion	argument
instinctive feeling preserved	brought to the point of recognition
spectator is in the thick of it	spectator stands outside (observer)
the human being is taken for granted	human being is the object of inquiry
he is unalterable	able to alter
eyes on finish	eyes on course
one scene makes another	each scene for itself
growth	montage
linear development	in curves
evolutionary determinism	jumps
man as a fixed point	man as a process
thought determines being	social being determines thought
feelings	reason

Dramatic theatre enacted plots, involved the audience and stimulated their emotions. Epic theatre tells a story in a way that invited the audience to consider the events involved and to make their assessment of them. Adjustments had to be made in the form of the play. If the dramatic play was a closed system of underdevelopment scenes, but with a plot so structured that the audience was in suspense till the end; then the epic play was a montage of independent incidents which showed a process and it moved from scene to scene by curves and jumps which kept the audience alert to judge what was right. Brecht sometimes compared his plays to scientific experiments and change for the better lay at the centre of thinking. Brecht rejected the notion that human nature was fixed and that man's own thinking governed his being. In epic theatre man's thinking is conditioned by his social situation and will change if that changes. He is the agent of social change. *Mother Courage and her Children* (1941) is a good example of an epic play. By employing a detached narrator and other devices to achieve **alienation effects**, Brecht aimed to subvert the sympathy of the audience and the identification of the actor with his role. He hoped to encourage his audience to criticize and oppose the social conditions. The theatre of illusion had always carefully concealed machinery behind the curtain. Brecht had a bare grey stage and had minimal scenery and properties. Bright white light was used for every scene. The songs invite the actors to step out of their roles and address themselves to the audience. Brecht always insisted on the texture of the reality.

Brecht's theory which rejected Aristotelian principles, regarded a play as a series of loosely connected scenes, dispensed with dramatic climaxes and used songs to comment on the action.

3.10 THEATRE OF THE ABSURD

It is a term applied to drama that reflects the attitudes that the universe is without purpose and that human life is futile and meaningless. Under such circumstances,

man's existence becomes absurd. In both form and content, it portrays human beings as isolated from others. There is no conventional plot, dialogue or character motivation. This formlessness and apparent irrationality are an expression of the absurd predicament of man, whose existence has no reason. Important playwrights are Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter, Albee and Adamov. Martin Esslin writes: "A term like Theatre of the Absurd must be understood as a kind of intellectual shorthand for a complex pattern of similarities in approach, method and convention of shared philosophical and artistic premises whether conscious or subconscious, and of inferences from a common store of transition." Sense of loss of meaning (due to political and social upheavals in the first half century) must inevitably lead to questioning of the recognized instrument for communication of meaning - Language. Conversation is absurd and nonsensical as the language reflects the preoccupation of contemporary philosophy with the discovery of reality and it emphasizes the basic absurdity of human condition. Thus it has much in common with the existential philosophy of Heidegger, Sartre and Camus. The theatre of the Absurd attacks the comfortable certainties of religious or political orthodoxy. "It does not provoke tears of despair but the laughter of liberation" says Martin Esslin.

3.11 CLASSICAL SANSKRIT THEATRE

Kalidasa belongs to Sanskrit Classical Theatre. The sources of classical Indian drama probably antedate the Gupta period in which most literary compositions are complex, multi-layered works that display and play with conflicting philosophies of life and art. The earliest extant works are fragments of plays of Buddhist poet Asvaghosa. It was during the Gupta period that drama emerged as a sophisticated form of public literature. Sudraka's satiric romance *Mrcchakatika* (*The Little Clay Card*), Visakhadatta's political drama *Mudraraksas* (*The Minister's Signet Ring*) and Kalidasa's dramatic romances were performed. The *Natyasastra* was probably compiled during the Gupta period.

"Bharata's dramatic theory recognizes the emotional and ethical instruction afforded by the spectacle of theatre. Like Aristotle, Bharata stresses the emotional satisfaction that spectators may enjoy through the action of drama. Although their modes of ordinary experience are significantly different, Greek tragedy and Indian heroic romance (*nataka*) were conceived and performed as sources of pleasure and insight for the audience. Indian heroic romances represent human emotions in a theatrical universe of symbolically charged characters and events in order to lead the audience into a state of extraordinary pleasure and insight. The goal of a Sanskrit drama is to re-establish emotional harmony in the microcosm of the audience by exploring the deeper relations that bind apparent conflicts of existence. The manifestation of these relations produces the intense aesthetic experience called *rasa*. (Miller: 13 - 14).

Rasa is essentially the flavour that the poet / dramatist distils from a given emotional situation for aesthetic appreciation. There are eight *rasas*: the erotic, the heroic, the comic, the marvellous, the horrible, the furious, the pathetic and the disgusting. Every drama has a dominant *rasa*. For Indian aesthetics human emotions (*bhava*) also exist. There are eight (*bhava*) also known as *sthayi bhava* (permanent emotions) - *rati/shringar* (romance); *haas* (comic); *shok* (melancholy); *krodh* (angry); *uthsaah* (zeal); *bhay* (fear); *jigyasa* (anxiety); and

vismay (surprise). The ninth sentiment is *shaant* (tranquillity). *Anubhava* is the outward manifestation of the internal feelings through the eyes, face, gestures, etc.

Drama is a representation of the emotional states of the threefold universe and includes concerns of duty (*dharma*); play (*krida*); desire (*kama*); material gain (*artha*); peace (*sama*); mirth (*hasya*); war (*yuddh*) and death (*nadha*). Drama is a holy representation that the gods originated to offer ethical instruction through diversion. Drama as patronized by royalty and permanent troupes of actor were associated with major courts. Royal palaces contained a theatre with a backstage greenroom. The world is created by enactment, gestures and verbal delivery, costume, make up and emoting *bhava* and *rasa*.

As Miller writes:

Bharata analyses acting into four components:

1. Acting through the body (*angika*), relating to gestures and movements.
2. Acting through speech (*vacika*), relating to voice intonation, recitation and singing.
3. Acting through accessories (*aharya*), such as makeup, costume, jewellery, props.
4. Acting through signs of emotion (*sattvika*), relating to the physical manifestation of emotional states such as tears, (Miller: 18).

Gestures function to make vivid pictures, to communicate motions and emotions and therefore must not be mechanical but graceful and spontaneous. "In the Indian theatre acting is considered a discipline (*yoga*) where the actor and acted became one. Arduous training is essential to the perfect acting (*abhinaya*) that can produce /aesthetic experience (*rasa*)". (Miller: 19).

Nature functions as a setting as well as a representative of creation and destruction of life. The eight essential principles of empirical existence - air, water, earth, fire, ether, the sun, the moon and the ritual sacrifice express Siva (*ardhanarisvara*) - the male and the female; the *purusa* and *prakriti*; Siva and Parvati. These concepts are the basic tenets of Kalidasa's drama. The Indian drama begins with an invocation and a prologue (*prastavana*). The invocation of the recital of *Nandi* suggests the gist of the plot. The Prelude may begin with a brief allusion to the poets' literary attainment, his genealogy etc; the *Sutradhara* (Chorus) suggests the subject, names the character about to enter and pleases the audience with sweet songs descriptive of some season. The prelude marks a transition to the action of drama itself. The swift rhythms give way to dialogue, poetry and action. This also sets the zones on the stage that represent different realms of the dramatic universe. The whole matter is well- determined and divided into Acts and Scenes. An act must not be too long and should be full of *rasa*. The play should end with a Benediction or prayer (*Bharatvakya*). The language used by the hero and the higher character is Classical Sanskrit, while female and other minor characters speak in the different Prakrit dialects. The plot should be drawn from real life; the Hero must be of ministerial rank or a Brahman; the Heroine may be a maiden of a noble family or a courtesan, and the character to be represented should be celestial as well as human. It is observed that the characteristic peculiarities of

the Indian drama are mainly three - 1) its peculiar structure, 2) the absence of the distinction between comedy and tragedy and 3) the diversity of language spoken by the characters. The Sanskrit verses are rich in imagery and metaphor and follow the aesthetic norms whereas the Prakrit verses are lyrical, expressive and imaginative.

The hero in each play is a king and it is through the king that the natural, social and divine worlds unite. The King's spiritual powers can be equated with his martial strength and moral superiority. He is the royal sage. His responsibility is to guide and protect those beneath him. The heroine of drama is the vehicle for transforming erotic passion into aesthetic experience.

Kalidasa's literary reputation is based on his six surviving works: *Malavikagnimitra* (*Malavika and Agnimitra*); *Vikramorvasiya* (*Urvashi won by valour*); *Abhijnanasakuntalam* (*Sakuntala and the Ring of Recollection*); *Meghduta* (*The Cloud messenger*); *Raghuvamsa* (*The Lineage of Raghu*) and *Kumara Sambhava* (*The Birth of Siva's son*). Coherent language, poetic technique; style and sentiment makes Kalidasa the acknowledged master poet of Sanskrit. The heroines are endowed with physical forms, language, dance movement and magical relations to nature. The heroes are also connoisseurs of natural beauty and art. The audience tends to forget the everyday world and enters the fantastic realm of imagination. His plays are also known as the "**Theatre of Memory**" for memory is crucial to the production of romantic sentiment throughout Sanskrit literature. Miller writes: "... memory has the power to break through the logic of everyday experience - it makes visible what is invisible, obliterates distances, reverses chronologies, and fuses what is ordinarily separate" (Miller : 39 - 40).

David Gitomer describes the playhouse as follows:

... most attention is given to the medium rectangular varietyNinety-six feet in length, forty-eight in width, but divided so that equal halves were given over to audience and performers, these halls could have accommodated no more than 200 spectators sitting on a mat-covered floor with benches for the distinguished and elderly on the sides. Wooden pillars supported the roof, which was thatched. At least few of these pillars stood away from the walls within the audience area. Each was associated with one of the four classes (*varnas*) . . .

The part of the house which was the domain of the performer was again subdivided there was a wall between the backstage area and the stage, with two doorways cut near the centre for entrances and exits....there were sliding curtains over these doors between the doors were two large drums; clustered around them were the other musicians of the ensemble, which seems to have provided an almost continuous accompaniment to any dance-dramathe actual playing area may have been as small as twelve feet square; another scheme works out to a rectangular 24' x 12'

Every aspect of the construction of the playhouses, from the laying of the string to measure the foundation to the drawing of a mandala for the installation and worship of gods in the building, was part of a great ritual, undertaken at the proper astrological moment, which drew on traditional modes of vedic sacrifice.... (Miller : 63 - 65).

The stage becomes a fluid space in which divisions are established by dialogue and movement, highlighted by lights and costumes and the audience transported through earthly and cosmic spaces.

From the time of Kalidasa to the present times poetic drama or verse play is popular on the Indian stage. Verse plays like Batalvi's *Luna* or love legends of *Laila-Majnu*, *Sassi-Punu* and *Heer-Ranjha* belong to a single cultural tradition and seek to teach didactic and moral lessons. The epical modes of Eastern epic have remained dependent on established and elitist notions. With the passage of time imaginative construction gave way to a new direction in literary creation which amounts to flouting of the tradition and searching for new meanings and interpretations.

3.12 LET US SUM UP

After reading this unit we get to know that there are different kinds of plays such as Tragedy, Comedy, Tragi Comedy, History plays, Problem plays, Realistic plays, Poetic drama, Epic theatre and Absurd Theatre. This unit also makes us familiar with Classical Sanskrit theatre.

3.13 QUESTIONS

1. Enlist the different types of drama and point out two distinctive features of each.
2. Differentiate between high comedy and low comedy.
3. Trace the growth of tragedy and comedy in English Literature.
4. How does comedy offer a balance to the perspective of tragedy?
5. Compare and contrast Greek theatre with Sanskrit drama.

3.14 SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 4 DEVELOPMENTS IN 20TH CENTURY DRAMA

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4.8 Questions

4.9 Suggested Readings

4.10 Glossary

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit you will be introduced to drama written in the 20th century and its growth and development. The characteristic features of 20th century Drama and the important dramatists of this period are also discussed in this unit.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The drama written and performed in the 20th century is by any standards a major achievement. There has been much innovation and experiment and this has been related to the growth and crisis of civilization. The new movements in 20th century were influenced by liberty, equality and fraternity and the challenging attitude in Art and Life. There was an array of complex and confusing trends. This century witnessed the final culmination of the stage's commercialism and this was evident in the rise of the repertory playhouses and the associated movements (some of which we have already studied in Kinds of Drama). A new style of acting emerged: "less polished, less virtuoso, but stronger, more direct and individualistic, more related to behaviour outside the theatre" (Russell Brown: 1).

The characteristic features of drama in 20th century are:

1. New acting schools and theatres: Royal Academy of Dramatic Art of the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art; Abbey Theatre in Dublin (1903); Gaiety Theatre in Manchester (1907); People's Theatre at New Castle (1911); British Drama League founded by Geoffrey Whitworth (1919) and the establishment of Scottish Community Drama Association, to list a few.
2. Emergence of silent cinema which rapidly destroyed the tradition of theatre. In thirties came the sound films and then television.
3. Translations of foreign works proliferated and were at equal footing with English drama, in fact influenced it more.
4. The stage of this period was influenced and altered by historical, social, political, economic and scientific trends. The two wars, the economic depression, the technological advancements - from washing machines to nuclear bombs, from emergence of fractions of religious cults to man's conquest of space, all have led to diverse and manifold growth of human mind.
5. Emergence of new plays and new young dramatists with newer creative ideas and more imaginative presentations. Kitchen sink drama, neo-realist drama, drama of non-communication, absurd drama, comedy of menace, dark comedy, drama of cruelty, etc. evolved from the long tradition of stage and drama writing. To understand the new movement we must look beyond individual play. The common ground was experimentation and innovation. The motives for writing plays and choice of subjects were different from the previous Elizabethan or Restoration drama. Conventional drama had accepted standards, formal rules and technical means in an acted performance. Development in conventions always exists as the audience is open-minded and therefore the dramatist may use any change in the performance of the play as there is a "latent willingness to accept them" (Williams. Raymond: 8).

The newer dramatist liked to be sensational, to surprise and shock; to be fantastic, and outrageous. Homosexuality, nymphomania, prostitution, abortion, violence, deaths, disfigurement and callow humour are all part of new drama. The writers choose popular, up-to-date, topical, obvious subjects. They use song, dance, soap-box oratory, pantomime and commercial techniques in their play adaptations.

Although the new British dramatists do not want to make statements or define their aims, they are creatively involved with society and seek a full revelation in their plays of what they find in the world around them and within them. They write for the theatre because this is the art form which allows them to show the complexity of those worlds: the permanent and frightening forces that lie behind each explosive crisis and each boring, dehumanizing routine; the limitations, dangers, and excitements of a personal, subjective view; the impossibility of judging any man except in relation to others; the strength of truth and permanence of idealism. They write youthful, topical, sensational, theatrical because the theatre can be a realistic, exploratory, complicated and, hence, responsible medium. They are promising and important dramatists (Russel Brown: 14).

A comparison with the Elizabethan theatre can help us understand the new drama better.

1. Marlowe, Jonson, Greene, Decker, Heywood, Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher all started writing for the theatre in their twenties. All of Jonson's best works were written by his mid thirties; Shakespeare started writing plays when he was twenty six and great tragedies like Hamlet were written by mid-thirties.
2. Elizabethans were sensational. Some of the title pages of printed editions proclaim "extreme cruelty", "lamentable tragedy", "odious death", "pitiful murder", "filthy best", etc. Plays dealt not only with violence, murder, grotesque deaths but also rape, sodomy, blasphemy, necrophilia sex.
3. The Elizabethans too were 'pop'.
4. The Elizabethans too worked in closest contact with theatre companies.

Modern theatre is a richly varied enterprise of realism on the one hand, and of numerous departures from it, on the other. Practical matters and commonplace interests stirred the creativity of the new dramatists. They not only accept their environment as a subject for study and improvement but derive from it a new, comparatively literal style and approach. Each dramatist brought a new and individual touch to the growth of theatre from the transitional age of twentieth century to the present times. There is a change in dramatic method. Each movement offered completion of the creative effort.

Drama in the world is no longer coexistent with theatre alone as the largest audience for drama is in cinema and on television. The liberating media and advanced technological inputs have released the drama from a closed form to a more open and wide frame work.

The twentieth century drama is "a record of difficulty and struggle... from Ibsen to Brecht, [it is] one of the great periods of dramatic history, a major creative achievement of our own civilization which gives us a continuing understanding, imagination and courage" (Williams Raymond: 401).

4.2 MODERN DRAMA

Modern Drama has partially been read in the Kinds of Drama unit as epic theatre, theatre of the absurd, poetic drama, etc. In this unit we need to read the important dramatists at some length. This will give you a view of specific creativities.

4.2.1 Ibsen (1828-1906)

Henrik Ibsen was born on 20th March 1828 in Skein (Norway) to middle class parents. He was unable to communicate his mental gropings with the few people he knew initially. Later he prepared for matriculation and it was at this time that he composed his first tragedy *Catiline*. When it appeared in 1850, it was the first Norwegian play to be published in seven years. This was followed by the one act play - *The Warriors Barrow*. Towards the end of 1851 he was made the official playwright of the theatre. Then came the comedy *St. John's Night* (1852), historical drama *Lady Inger of Ostrat*, *The Feast at Solhaug*, *The Vikings of Helgeland* and poetic-satiric *Love's Comedy*. The period of apprenticeship ended with *The Pretenders*. Then came the major non-theatrical plays *Brand*, *Peer Gynt*, *Emperor and Galilean*. The prose plays are also known as the domestic plays and thus Ibsenism established in *The League of Youth*, *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts* and *Hedda Gabler*. The fourth major period was that of visionary plays — *The Masterbuilder* and *When We Dead Awaken*. In the early years i.e. between 1851 to 1864 he worked as a dramatist, producer and stage manager. The most heroic and affirmative of his plays was *Brand*. The play is arranged not to study a character but to state a theme.

In *Peer Gynt* Ibsen created a character that was the incarnation of everything that is vacillating and unstable in man. It is said that *Peer Gynt* was the most daring extravaganza of the modern theatre, as it was a “realistic critique couched in terms of mock-heroic fantasy” (Gassner: 366).

Ibsen is known for *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*. In *A Doll's House* he addressed to woman's place in the home and her limitations. Nora the heroine is never allowed to develop and grow as a woman either by her father or by her husband. The woman in the doll's house was not intrinsically a doll; she only pretended to be one, because this was expected of her when she was locked in a dolls house where she was expected to be pretty and playful, submissive and mindless.

The intensification of Ibsen's grappling with realities was witnessed in *Ghosts*. Ibsen created a taut human drama as it combined realism with protest against everything that shackles the individual in his pursuit of happiness and integrity. *Hedda Gilbler* is a powerful play too, as it is a psychological study of a child.

Ibsen did envision a new social order and created the consciousness of modern European drama. He created new attitudes of drama, and is credited with being the first major dramatist to write tragedy about ordinary people in prose.

4.2.2 August Strindberg (1849-1912)

Strindberg was a Swedish playwright born in Stockholm to a steamship agent. His first important play was *Master Olof*, a history play; followed by fairy play *Luckey Peters' Travel*; *The Father*, *Miss Julie* and *Creditors* which combine a

highly aggressive and original version of **naturalism** with a sense of the extreme and pathological. The later works are tense, symbolic, psychic dramas, marked by a sense of suffering and a longing for salvation and absolution. These are *To Damascus*, *The Dance of Death*, *A Dream Play* and *The Ghost Sonata*. Strindberg's genius as a dramatist was that his influence has been immense, both from the conflict plays and from the experiments in dramatic sequence and imagery in the later work. He is supposed to be the most restless and experimental playwright as he was "perpetually dissatisfied, perpetually reaching after shifting truths seeking the miracle of transmutation in the crucible of his tormented intellect". (Brustein in *Modern Drama*: 313).

Strindberg initiated an alternative anti-realistic theatre in opposition to Ibsen's realism. He has been regarded as Ibsen's antimasque. He was a master of both naturalism and symbolism, and a forerunner of the expression in of the post war theatre. His weakness was his deficiency in balance and consistent rationality. His rebellious discontent expressed through drama highlighted his dissatisfaction with the essence of life. He wrote in his last play *The Great Highway*:

Bless me, whose deepest suffering, deepest of human suffering was this – I could not be one I longed to be.

4.2.3 Anton Chekhov (1860-1904)

One name among the post-Ibsen dramatists is of Anton Chekhov, the Russian dramatist and short story writer. He was born in a family of serfs (peasants) in 1860 in the Crimea region of Southern Russia. Chekhov's father ran grocery shop, he had four brothers and one sister and the family lived in utter penury. Later, his father fled and Chekhov was left to fend for his family. He wrote to support himself. Chekhov's professional training was in medicine. In a life spanning 44 years, he wrote nearly 800 short stories and 17 plays. He was an "even-tempered soul"; his sense of humour never failed him and he retained a lovable simplicity and sweetness. He never lost his optimism and his faith in man. His major works are:

Short stories: *The Duel and Other Stories*, *Lady with Lapdog*, and other stories, *A Dreary Story*,

Ward No. Six, *My Life*, *The Man in a Case* and *The Horse Thieves*;

One Act Plays: *Swan Song*, *The Bear*, *The Proposal*, *The Wedding* and *The Anniversary*;

Full length plays: *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Three Sisters*.

His plays were staged by the Moscow Art Theatre.

Chekhov's plays are thought to be complex, soulful (as also since) vague they reflect the mood of dejection which permeates the anxieties of 20th century. For Chekhov, "life was an insoluble problem" and he wrote in *The Seagull*: "Tell me, what can I do?" This sentence, and feeling runs like a leit motive through his works. The central theme of all his plays is estrangement. He was aware of the fact that the very conditions of life doom man to failure. Despite this realization, he finds projects meaningful relationships and meaningful action in his writing.

In *Sea Gull* nobody succeeds in finding love; in *Uncle Vanya*, no one achieves the goal; in *Three Sisters*, the sisters do not go to Moscow and in *Cherry Orchard* the cherry orchard is not saved. His characters dream and rebel and try to reach out for what they want. Thus, defeat is transferred into spiritual triumph. His plays offer an alternate shade of despair and hope, tears and laughter.

In *The Three Sisters*, the three sisters and a brother are stranded in a provincial town after the death of their father and their only hope of escape from the tedium of exile is the brother Andrei who has prospects of professorship in the capital. However he marries a shallow woman who betrays him. Olga remains wedded to her school-teaching job; Masha is united to a fatuous pedagogue (a friend of her father); and Irina takes a job in telegraph office and later becomes a teacher. To the end, the sisters retain their vitality and vigour.

In *Cherry Orchard* the chief character Madame Ranevsky who represents the upper classes. She brings on her calamities by leading a spendthrift life abroad and converts her estate into a summer colony. Her adopted daughter Varya manages the household and finds the economy insufficient to save the situations. Madame Ranevsky is accustomed to a life of pleasure and liberty and possesses no pragmatic understanding of the world. The cherry orchard is a luxury that cannot be afforded and thus is auctioned off. The play is an attempt to come to terms with the past, to live without owning the orchard and its servants.

Chekhov wanted his plays to express the paradox and the contradictions of experience. Thus a Chekhovian play shows the inner lives of his characters.

4.2.4 J.M. Synge (1871-1909)

Irish playwright, Synge was born near Dublin. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin. Later he went to Paris where he met W.B. Yeats who suggested that he go to Aran Islands to write of Irish peasant life. He wrote *The Aran Islands* that documents his life among these rural people. His first play was *In the Shadow of the Glen* followed by famous elegiac one-act tragedy *Riders to the Sea* and his best known controversial play *The Playboy of the Western World*. His plays were produced by the Irish National Theatre Society and were presented by the Abbey players. His later works include *The Tinkers Wedding* and an unfinished tragedy *Deirdre of the Sorrows*. He uses rhythmic, lyrical prose to achieve effects of great power and resonance. He instilled poetry into the modern drama and romanticism was invigorated with reality. Synge was changed with satirizing Ireland and thus the Irish populace misunderstood him. He was an Irish nationalist and hoped that Ireland would get freedom through peaceful negotiations rather than armed rebellion. His most popular play is *The Playboy of the Western World*. In this play, Synge weaves a web of ironies through romantic illusion and reality. It's a perfect blend of a comedy and seriousness. His characters enjoy a sense of individuality Christy is a bragging tale-teller, Pegeen is a curious figure as she is mix of sharp tongue and romantic illusions, the Widow Quin is looking for a second husband and Old Mohan possesses incredible strength. In the Preface to this play, Synge writes:

On the stage one must have reality, and one must have joy; and that is why the intellectual modern drama has failed and people have grown sick of the false joy of the musical comedy, that has been given them in place of the rich joy found

only in what is superb and wild in reality. In a good play every speech should be fully flavoured...

4.2.5 George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

Shaw was born in Dublin but moved to London. He was a supporter of women's rights and an advocate of equality of income, abolition of private property and a radical change in the voting system. He campaigned for a **theatre of ideas**. Shaw wrote over 50 plays including *Man and Superman*, *Major Barbara*, *Pygmalion*, *Saint Joan*, *Back to Methuselah*, *The Apple Cart* and *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*. These plays were published in collections *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant* and *Three Plays for Puritans*. The plays had lengthy prefaces in which Shaw clearly expresses his views as a non-romantic and a champion of the thinking man. The dramatic conflict in his plays is the conflict of thought and belief. Discussion is the basis of the plays. He believed that war, disease and the present brevity of lifespan frustrate the **Life Force** and that "functional adaptation, a current of creative evolution activated by the power of human will, was essential to any real progress, and indeed to the survival of the species (Drabble:924). His *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* reveals his debt to Ibsen as a playwright. He died at the age of 94.

Man and Superman: A Comedy and a Philosophy is a paradoxical version of the Don Juan Story. The hero is John Tanner who is pursued by Ann Whitefield, who is interested in him as a potential husband than in his political theories. The most important Act is Act II which consists of a dream sequence set in hell in which Tanner captured by Brigand Mendoza becomes his ancestor Don Juan; and Ann becomes Ana. The play ends with the announcement of Ann and Tanner's marriage and Tanner's submission to the life force.

Arms and the Man is a play that resorted to humour in stripping war of its glamour. The play critiques the 'romance of arms' and the 'romance of love'. The play ridicules pretentious rationalisms.

Major Barbara portrays the conflict between spiritual and worldly power embodied in Barbara, a major in the Salvation Army and her villainous father Andrew Undershaft, a millionaire armament manufacturer. Barbara suffers a crisis of faith as she glimpses the possibility that all salvation and philanthropy are tainted at the source. By the end she recovers her spirits and embraces the possibility of hope for future.

Pygmalion was made into a film titled *My Fair Lady* in 1957. The flower seller Eliza Doolittle gets transformed into a duchess by the phonetician professor Henry Higgins who undertakes this task in order to win a bet and to prove his own point about English speech and the class system. He teaches her to speak standard English and introduces her to social life, thus winning the bet. The play ends with a truce between them. Shaw was not a man but a phenomenon. If some of his plays communicate personal feeling of great intensity, others embody powerful feelings which are not emotional; the parody is not confined to conventional form.

4.2.6 W.B. Yeats (1865-1939)

Yeats was born in Dublin, studied at the school of Art in Dublin and at 21 abandoned art as a profession in favour of literature. He helped in the founding

of an Irish Literary Society in London as well as Dublin. Better known as a poet Yeats applied himself to the creation of an Irish National Theatre. He died in France. His well known plays are *The Countess Cathleen*, fairy drama *The Land of Hearts Desire*, *The Shadowing Waters*, *On Baile's Strand* and *The Death of Cuchulain*.

4.2.7 Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936)

Pirandello the Italian dramatist, short story writer and novelist challenged the conventions of naturalism. Best known of his published plays are *Naked Masks*, *Right You Are, If You Think You Are* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. His major contribution is to the re-evaluation of the nature of man and his reassessment of conceptions of reality. According to the well-known critic Raymond Williams:

“The worlds of naturalism and expressionism cross and engender what is really a new form: one which has continued to be influential. Delusion, loss of identity, the reduction of personality to a role and of society to a collective impersonation: these are the elements of a new kind of theatre: a use of the theatre to expose itself, and then in the double exposure to question any discoverable reality. What began as a twist of romantic drama became a decisive twist of a whole dramatic tradition” (Williams Raymond: 184).

4.2.8 Garcia Lorca (1898-1936)

Lorca Spanish poet and dramatist was killed in the early days of Spanish civil war. He had been experimenting in drama since his earliest years. He drew on the life of Spanish country people, on the national literature and on the gipsy songs and dance. His popular plays are *Blood Wedding*, *Yerma* and *The House of Bernarda Alba*. *Blood Wedding* is about jealousy and revenge in which the unique notes are the creation of a dramatic poetry of intense desire. Lorca moves from realistic conversation through speeches which are lyrics, elegies, songs or chorus. The play begins with the mother talking to her only son about work and marriage. It ends with the lament of the mother and the bride at the death of the son the bridegroom, and the other man with whom the bride went away. Interestingly the characters are called, The Bride, Bridegroom, Mother, Wife, Father and Leonardo, for it is him who breaks the pattern. It's a poetics drama in which the imagery and action are fused. In *The House of Bernarda Alba*, the house of Bernarda Alba is occupied only by women, all unmarried and the mother who works against their marriage. The father has died, the largest portion of money has come to the eldest girl. The bitter jealousy breaks the whole situation open. Adela takes her life.

4.3 MID-CENTURY THEATRE

4.3.1 Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956)

Brecht, German dramatist and poet, settled in East Berlin in 1949. Brecht's early plays *Baal*, *Drums in the Night* and *Man is Man* anticipate later development of his 'alienation effect'. *The Three Penny Opera*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Mother Courage* and *He Who Said Yes/He Who Said No* made him an outstanding dramatist in modern Europe.

What Brecht created was a dramatic form in which men were shown in the process of producing themselves and their situation. This is a dialectical form drawing directly on Marxist theory. His methods of writing, producing and acting embodied a critical detachment. He used boards across the stage to indicate the time and place of the actor and situation. He presented characters that were alienated from themselves and from one another. His figures often moved in vacuum. Developments in which the most unexpected must be expected. Brecht's epic theatre is a legitimate offspring of the expressionist revolution of the twenties and of European theatrical history. Politzer writes: "His aesthetic theory is a mechanism, both of offence and defence, it may well be recognized for what it is: the intellectual mimicry behind which a creative mind hid from outward persecution and inward doubts."

In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* the prologue is set in Soviet Russia. Russian peasants who return to a village destroyed by the Germans are engaged in a discussion bordering on a quarrel: one group claims the valley as a homestead, the other plans to irrigate it arid to use it for vineyards and orchards. The latter group wins. To celebrate the reconciliation, the play of 'Chalk Circle' is performed. The play describes Grusha's rescue of the governor's deserted child, her flight before the revolution, her marriage to a peasant who is supposedly dying and finally the return of the Governor's wife and her claim for the child. Azdak tries the case of the child and awards the child to Grusha the foster mother who had saved him by sacrificing her personal happiness. Her sacrifice is recognized as superior.

In *Mother Courage and Her Children*, Mother Courage is a canteen woman serving with the Swedish Army during the Thirty years War (1618-48). Despite an early warning that war can never be all take and no give, she intends to make a living off the war while keeping her children out of it. Her brave son Eilif is tempted into the infantry, kills a peasant and is executed. Her honest son Swiss Cheese defends the regimental cashbox. He is captured and executed by the enemy. Warm hearted daughter Katrin dies warning the sleeping town of Halle that the enemy is at the gates. Mother Courage's business prospers and then declines. Bowed and alone, she drags her battered wagon. Speaking on the performance of the play Brecht said that the show primarily highlighted that. "War is a continuation of business by other means, and makes human virtues fatal. No. sacrifice is too great for the struggle against war."

4.3.2 Samuel Beckett (1906-89)

Beckett who became known as a playwright of **Theatre of the Absurd**, was born in Dublin. He became popular with plays like *Finnegans Wake*, *Malone Dies*, *Waiting for Godot*, *End Game*, *Happy Days* and *Come and Go*. He used stage and dramatic narrative to revolutionize drama.

Waiting for Godot is essentially about uncertain waiting. Pozzo and Lucky are in a formal world and in an unorthodox social relationship: dominating and being dominated. They are tied to each other. Vladimir and Estragon have a different relationship: informal and outside society; at once loving, doubtful and resentful; wanting to break away and yet anxiously returning to each other. There is a major contrast in tone as well. Each pair is on the road. It is Vladimir who is waiting for Godot; Estragon is waiting for death. Beckett controls with extraordinary skill, his actions, speech, imagery uncertainty and revelation.

4.4 AMERICAN DRAMATISTS

4.4.1 Eugene O' Neill (1888-1953)

O'Neill was the son of a well-known romantic actor in America and had a varied career as a seaman, gold prospector, journalist and actor before associating himself with the experimental theatre group. His first big success was the full length naturalistic drama *Beyond the Horizon* followed by expressionistic tragedy *The Emperor Jones*. His other important plays were *The Hairy Ape*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *Ah! Wilderness*, *Days Without End*, *The Iceman Cometh* and *Long Days Journey into Night*. The plays give a powerful presentation of the struggle between self destruction, self deception and redemption.

O'Neill caught the reality of common people living on sea or land. His *Desire Under the Elms* is about the timelessness of the inner struggle between a son and a father. Eben and old Ephraim. Ephraim was a hard husband to his gentle first wife whom he worked to death and whose child Eben he hated for resembling her. *The Hairy Ape* tells the story of the super stoker Yank who discovers his shortcomings from a chance meeting with one of the passengers, cultured and wealthy Mildred. It is a symbolic play about a man who has lost his old harmony with nature and has not acquired a new spiritual way. *The Iceman Cometh* is a lengthy naturalistic tragedy set in Harry Hope's Bowery saloon, where a collection of down- and -out alcoholics nourish their 'pipe-dreams' with the aid of an extrovert, cheerful salesman Hickey.

Long Days Journey Into Night has been praised as his finest play. The play is the cultural expression of American - Irish-Catholicism.

4.4.2 Tennessee Williams (1911-83)

Tennessee Williams was born in Mississippi and brought up in St. Louis. His important plays are *American Blues*, *Battle of Angels*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *Suddenly Last Summer* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. The semi-autobiographical play *The Glass Menagerie* is a poignant and painful family drama set in St. Louis, in which a frigid and frustrated mother dreams of her glamorous past. The conflict is with the grimness of her reduced circumstances as she persuades her rebellious son Tom to provide a gentleman caller for her crippled daughter Laura. *A Streetcar Named Desire* is a study of sexual frustration, violence and aberration, set in New Orleans, in which Blanche Dubois's fantasies of refinement and grandeur are brutally destroyed by her brother-in-law Stanley whose animal nature fascinates and repels her.

4.4.3 Arthur Miller (1915-2005)

Arthur Miller became famous with the play *All My Sons*, an Ibsenesque drama about a manufacturer of defective aeroplane parts, and established himself as a leading dramatist with *Death of a Salesman* in which a travelling salesman, Willy Loman is brought to disaster by accepting the false values of contemporary society. This was followed by *The Crucible* in which the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692 are used as a parable for McCarthyism in America in the 1950s. *A View from the Bridge* is a tragedy of family honour and revenge; *The Misfits* is a screenplay for his wife Marilyn Monroe; *After the Fall* presents the semi-

autobiographical figure of Quentin and *The Price* contrasts the lives and opinions of two estranged brothers. Miller himself wrote:

It is the everlastingly sought balance between order and the need of our soul for freedom; the relatedness between our vaguest longings our inner questions, and private lives and the life of the generality of men which is our Society and our world.

Miller's plays deal with questions of social status, honour and freedom from constraints.

4.5 RECENT DRAMA

The recent European drama is unusually serious, vital and responsive. The emergence of working class drama presented disorganized life. This movement with common aims and methods created the new drama. The prominent new dramatists are Arden, Wesker, Pinter, Osborne Edward Bond and Caryl Churchill.

4.5.1 John Arden (1930 -)

Arden was educated at Cambridge and Edinburgh University where he studied architecture. His popular plays are *The Waters of Babylon*, a grotesque satirical, sprawling play about a corrupt municipal lottery organized by a slum landlord, *Live Like Pigs* dealing with social conflict and violence, *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance* and *The Happy Haven*. In *The Waters of Babylon* the central character is a Polish emigre who leads a double life, working in an architect's office by day, while out of office he runs a lodging house. The characters are likeable, amiable and good-natured. His plays are fragments selected, isolated and shaped into a whole.

It was with *Sergeant Musgrave's Dance* that Arden made a break with realism. It is a complex play with confusing characters who appear as concepts. About this play, Gilman said, "it is not a political play except in the sense that Arden writes to test certain modes of political action ... it is not real, it is an artefact of the dramatic imagination, and it leaves the problem of violence to those agencies, outside art, whose province it is' (Gilman in *Modern Drama*, 1 14).

Arden is unclassifiable and cannot be put into a category. His drama is between didacticism and impressionism. Arden is one of the few complete originals.

4.5.2 Arnold Wesker (1932-)

Wesker was educated in Hackney. He worked at various jobs before making a name as a playwright. He is known for his **kitchen sink drama** and his popular plays are *The Kitchen*, *Chicken Soup with Barley*, *Chips with Everything*, *The Four Seasons*, *Their very Own* and *Golden City*. Wesker was recognized as a social dramatist whose plays need a large cast. In *Chips With Everything*, Wesker studies a class of attitudes in the RAF during National service on the parade ground. Audiences are gripped by the savage precision of military training and the rebellious dancing and singing at a canteen party. The plays are an attack on the British ruling class. The individual and group reaction both is portrayed.

The Four Seasons has only two characters and tells the story of a love affair that I was private, intimate and finally in-conclusive.

Wesker uses theatre to explore and demonstrate significant themes in more comprehensive and subtle ways. His most notable qualities are emotional maturity and his command of action in depth.

4.5.3 Harold Pinter (1930 - 2008)

Pinter is the most consistent of new British dramatists as his settings remain simple. They come from the world he lives in and the plot progresses by a revelation of inner tensions. His interests belong to the everyday ritual, from a birthday party to a homecoming from taking possession to taking care of a room, from breakfast or lunch to fulfilling routines are subjects of dramatic focus. Pinter was born in East London to a Jewish tailor and educated at Hackney. His first play *The Room* was followed by *The Birthday Party* and then came *The Homecoming*, *No Man's Land*, *Betrayal*, *Party Time* and *Ashes to Ashes* to list a few. Drabble writes. "Pinter's gift for portraying, by means of dialogue which realistically produces the nuances of colloquial speech, the difficulties of communication and the many layers of meaning in language, pause and silence, have created a style labelled by the popular imagination as 'Pinteresque' and his themes - nameless menace, erotic fantasy, obsession and jealousy, family hatreds and mental disturbance - are equally recognizable" (Drabble: 793). He is the inventor of **comedy of menace**. Pinter wrote for radio and television also.

The Room and *The Birthday Party* present seven or eight people, each carefully introduced. *The Room* dramatises the fact that every room has a door and the very existence of a door suggests the unknown. In *The Birthday Party*, Stanley the hero has found cosy home in a seaside boarding house. The heralds of the outside world appear to drive Stanley from the warmth of his security for reasons not explained. The play merely conveys the image nameless menace.

Pinter's plays do away with lengthy exposition. Further, they leave the action unexplained and the characters unmotivated. Further, they reach no solution and force the audience to find their own interpretations. The plays provide observations of ordinary human behaviour.

4.5.4 John Osborne (1929- 1994)

Osborne was born in London to a commercial artist. He made his name with *Look Back in Anger*, and for his outbursts of rage against contemporary society and this anger made him known as the Angry Young Man. His other known plays are *Epitaph for George Dillon*, *Luther*, *Inadmissible Evidence* and *a Patriot for Me*. His first plays were structurally conventional, but mirrored Osborne's world and its idealistic pretensions.

In *Luther*, the hero driven by his moral, sexual and physical tensions brings terror and pain to himself and others. The play proves the ability of Osborne to grasp dramatic ideas and the language to convey them on a poetical level.

Inadmissible Evidence is about the frankly apologetic presentation of Maitland who is struggling with the same adversary all the time Osborne is no longer angry and defiant and asks for compassion and understanding.

4.5.5 Edward Bond (1934-)

Bond was born in North London to an East Anglian Labourer. His popular plays are *The Pope's Wedding*, *Saved*, *Early Morning*, *The Sea*, *The Fool Summer* and

The War Plays. “Bond’s theatre is an out-spoken indictment of capitalist society; his belief that violence occurs in ‘situations of injustice’ and that it therefore flourishes as ‘a cheap consumer commodity’ under capitalism, continues to arouse extreme responses from critics and audiences (Drabble 118).

4.5.6 Caryl Churchill (1938-)

Churchill was educated at Montreal and Oxford. Most of her plays are radical and feminist in tone. Her well known plays are: *Owners* is a satire on property and capitalism; *Cloud Nine* explores contemporary sexual identity; *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* exhibits sexual repression in Victorian Africa.

4.6 SOME OTHER DRAMATISTS

Other dramatists who are equally important and made landmark presentations and wrote plays in the contemporary period of turmoil, experiment, innovation and adjustment need to be studied at a glance, if not in detail. ‘These are the French and German dramatists.

4.6.1 Jean Paul Sartre (1905-80)

Sartre, the French philosopher, novelist, playwright, literary critic and political activist was the principal exponent of existentialism in France and exercised a considerable influence on French intellectual life. His dramas *The Flies*, *In Camera*, *No Exit*, *Dirty Hands* and *Loser Wins* are well known. Sartre’s plays are marked by clarity of attitude. He tried to mediate between man’s despairing sense of a void in the world and his need to recover some justification for remaining alive and respecting himself. He offered a new idea of courage and integrity.

4.6.2 Jean Giraudoux (1882-1944)

Giraudoux became popular because of his plays *Amphitryon 38*; *Judith*; *Tiger at the Gates* and *Duel of Angels*. His gifts of irony and paradox and modernized versions of biblical or classical legend made him stand apart from the rest. He used simple individual conflicts as metaphors, simplified the terms of conflict and then played freely with the element of surprise in unexpected reversals. Almost all works of this French dramatist are organized around analogous debates: war and peace; love of a young man and the love of an old man, etc. His is the ‘**theatre of language**’ as the magic of words and power of combination of words was fundamental to his universe.

4.6.3 Jean Anouilh (1910-87)

Anouilh was the most popular French dramatist with nearly 50 dramatic works. The most popular of these are *Thieves Carnival*, *Ring Round*, *Que Moon*, *The Lark* and *The Waltz of The Toreadors*. Anouilh’s works do not reflect reality as everyday experience. They do not attempt an explanation of the human individual in term of realism. Thus his drama was essentially a-social. He implies no faith in social relations as such. His bitter satirical portraits of aristocracy are moral rather than social.

4.6.4 Gerhart Hauptmann (1862-1946)

The first German **naturalistic** play to be produced was *Before Sunrise* by Hauptmann in 1889. His other important plays were *The Weavers*, *Signalman*, *Thief* and *Shrovetide*. He combined naturalist observations with social democratic sympathies and this made *The Weavers* epoch-making. He cemented a new bond between realistic theatre and the masses. Joyce called *The Weavers* a “masterpiece; a little immortal thing”. For him a pessimistic conclusion was peculiarly relevant. He created timeless work.

4.6.5 Freidrich Duerrenmatt (1921-90)

Swiss dramatist Durrenmatt was a writer of grotesque black comedy and he thought that after the Second World War tragedy was a form no longer applicable to our modern upside-down world. His best plays are *The Visit* and *The Physicists*. Both deal with power and responsibility, the first with reference to money, the second on the theme of criminality of atomic physics. Certain tendencies typical to his drama are the grotesque setting with emphasis on bizarre and macabre.

4.7 LET US SUM UP

The twentieth century drama was a naturalistic, realistic, existential, epic, absurd and impressionistic drama. It was experimental and each dramatist made a mark with his kind of observations, amendments and innovations. It varied far and wide between countries and techniques. It was no more a bastion of the aristocrats or specialists; amateurs and middle class, or even low class drama emerged in this century. We are indebted to the 20th century for the growth and development of drama.

4.8 QUESTIONS

1. Write a critical note on Epic Theatre.
2. Ibsen influenced the modern drama. How?
3. Recent drama is the drama of ‘angry young man’ or ‘kitchen-sink’ or in other words of the middle class. Elucidate the statement.
4. Summarise the different movements that emerged in the development of drama in 20th century.
5. Contemporary drama is a mix of tragedy, comedy, music, philosophy, etc. Where the effect is heightened by technological devices. Explain.

4.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

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4.10 GLOSSARY

- Angry Young Men** : Since 1950 a host of playwrights came upon the English literary scene protesting violently, sometimes even very noisily against a society. They criticized the traditions, standard and manners of the Establishment. They aimed at exposing the oppressiveness, hypocrisy and stultifying values in the social, commercial or industrial world. Their protest was mainly directed against a world for which they did not feel responsible and which seemed to them almost intolerable on account of its stupidity and cruelty. These writers were labelled as “angry young men” and the eminent playwright was Osborne.
- Didacticism** : Didacticism is the quality of writing that manifest’s the author’s desire to instruct and improve the reader.
- Epic Theatre** : Erwin Piscator is regarded as the founder of this movement but Brecht gave it a new shape and meaning. Epic theatre does not restrict itself to the unity of time and uses a number of episodes in a simple and direct way. This theatre is known for its use of chorus, a narrator, slide projection, film, placards and music.
- Existentialism** : Existentialism was a philosophy that began as the attempt of French writers as Sartre and comes to face reality of World War II, argues that the universe is meaningless, and that consequently all choice is without reason yet paradoxically that the individual is the product of the choices he makes. The existential drama attempts to depict the universal meaninglessness.
- Expressionism** : Expressionism is a revolt against realism. It’s an artistic movement that originated in Germany during the first three decades of the 20th century. Its exponent was the Swedish playwright Strindberg. It emphasized the primacy or symbolic or stylistic expression of the artists’ inner experience and as such realism was of subsidiary importance. The writer tends not to represent the world as it is from an objective point of view but describes it as it

appears to him from the point of view of his inner experience. It used stylized dialogue, masked characters and distorted stage setting. Eugene O'Neil and Miller were expressionists.

- Impressionism** : A highly personal manner of writing in which characters and scenes are portrayed as they appear to the writer rather than as they actually are. The term is borrowed from art.
- Kitchen - sink drama** : The very title of the drama suggests that the action of these plays is centred mainly on the kitchen sink. The term was used derogatorily. This kind of drama was in vogue in 1950s and it was highly realistic as it portrayed the life of the working class. Plays of Osborne, Wesker and Owen are examples.
- Meta-theatre** : The term was used first by Lionel Abel in 1963 to describe serious plays which do not have the qualities as found in tragedies. Such plays as Miller's *Death of Salesman*; William's *A Street Car Named Desire* and Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* are meta theatre.
- Musical Comedy** : It refers to a form of theatrical entertainment developed in the United States during the 19th century but was implemented in 20th Century also. It takes use of a light thread of plot, jokes, comic situations, songs, music and spoken dialogue. The comic play *My Fair Lady* which is an adaptation of Shaw's *Pygmalion* a fine illustration of this.
- Theatre of the Absurd** : This term refers to the works of such dramatists of the 1950s as Adamov, Beckett, Genet, Ionesco and Pinter. Their plays did not use formal logic and conventional structure. Both form and content support the absurd predicament. In such plays, human beings are represented as individuals struggling hard with the irrationality of experience in a state described as meta physical anguish. Becket's *Waiting for Godot*. Pinter's *The Birthday Party* and Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* are the finest examples.
- Theatre of the Cruelty** : This term is derived from the theories of the French dramatist Antonin Artraud. In 1938, he expressed clearly that the theatre is intended to disturb the spectators and aims at changing their minds greatly. This theatre attached greater importance to mime, gesture and scenery than to words; and much depends on spectacle and lighting. *The Persecution and Assassination of Marat* is a splendid example.

