

Page - 011 B.A. Part II (English Honours)

Date :- 20.01.22 "The Rivals"

Question: Discuss 'The Rivals' as an artificial comedy of manners.

Answer: The comedy of manners is a term given to the play which deals with the manners, habits, conventions and follies of the people of the society. This name was given to the comedy which emerged after Restoration. It aimed at satirizing the superficial habits and manners of the people who lived the most superficial life. This type of comedy grew out of Ben Jonson's Comedy of Humours as well as of the French Comedy. In the Restoration period it was a natural product of the social reaction to the extreme form of austerity. The reaction resulted in the rise of sentimental comedy. But this too indulged in too much tears and emotional outbursts killing the comic muse and the spirit of laughter.

'The Rivals' is a satiric picture

of a reaction against puritan austerity. It represents the superficial habits and manners of only the fashionable society of aristocratic and middle classes. It does not deal with life in general but particular life of a particular social epoch. It is artificial in plot construction and in the depiction of a limited section of the society of the age. This artificiality is the result of Sheridan's method of depicting human character. Lastly another factor that makes his plays artificial is the dialogues which are witty, sharp, keen, ~~common~~ humorous, sparkling in brilliant exchange of words and repartees. Both the language and behaviour of the characters are highly stylized and artificial. The dialogues of 'The Rivals' are witty, humorous and artificial. All this proves that 'The Rivals' is

tness as a moralist is specially apparent. This greatness results largely from his firm hold upon the central facts of conduct and duty, and his abiding sense of the supremacy of the moral law. His emphasis is everywhere thrown upon those spiritual forces within us which give us power over ourselves and the ability, if we exercise them aright, to lift ourselves through conscious and patient effort, above the reach of circumstance and the flux of external things. The limitations of Wordsworth's genius are very obvious. He had no humour and little passion, and was singularly deficient in dramatic power. Even those who reverence him most are bound to acknowledge that he wrote more uninspired and unpoetic verse than any other poet of equal rank. In his stately philosophical poetry particularly and notable

in 'The Excursion', he often indulges for hundreds of lines together in prolix moralisings of the dullest and most prosaic kind. There is indeed an immense amount of perishable matter in his collected works, and beyond most great poets, therefore, he gains by judicious selection. But if what is best and really vital in his voluminous output is relatively to the total bulk of it small in amount, it comprises some of the finest treasures in English poetry and suffices to give him a high place among those of whom he himself writes:

' Blessings be with them,
and eternal praise,
who gave us nobler loves,
and nobler cares -
The poets, who on earth
have made us heirs
of truth and pure delight
by heavenly lays!'

The end. //

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