

Page (01) B.A. Part II (English Honors)

Date: 24.01.22

"The Rivals"

Question: Write a short note on the eighteenth century drama.

Answer: One may find it difficult to believe that sixty or seventy years which did not produce any notable play, were the years when the theatre was vigorously alive. The English theatre from 1730 to 1790 shows the struggle of the new forms in which sentiment is animating force of inspiration, against the authority of regular comedy and tragedy, such as the 'Restoration' had handed them down to classicism. The most brilliant talents were on the side of classicism. On two occasions the successes of George Colman, then of Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan seem definitely to eclipse all rival attempts. They reinstalled the spirit of comedy.

The moral transformation is stronger than the tested simplicity of literary dogma. The

inner movement of minds irresistibly favours the realistic drama or the mixed and semi-pathetic type of comedy. The instinct of the majority remains in ascendant and the theatre drifts past to the new forms and to mediocrity. These are in complete control by the end of the century. The tragedies of this period were deficient in both novelty and freshness. As in the first fifty years of the century there were attempts to use native historical stories for tragic plot. But this was done without any great success.

The end.

Munir Bhushan Sinha  
Deptt. of English  
S.S. College, Jehanabad