

Attempt a critical appreciation of Shakespearean Comedy.

Introduction — William Shakespeare holds a significant position as a writer of comedies in the Elizabethan Age. Shakespearean Comedy is a romantic comedy. It doesn't care for any rules of literary creation. We don't find the three dramatic unities of time, place and action in it. There is a free blending of the comic and the tragic and the serious and the gay in it. It displays that life is a mingled yarn of joy and sorrows. It's motive is not corrective or satiric, but innocent, good natured laughter.

According to Goethe, "Human life is a tale told in tears with smile". It is true that our life is both a tragedy and a comedy. Horace Walpole says "Life is a comedy to those who think and a tragedy to those who feel." Aristotle defines comedy, "Comedy is an imitation of men worse than the average; worse however, not as regards any and every short of fault, but only as regards one particular kind, the ridiculous, which is a species of the ugly. The ridiculous may be defined as a mistake or deformity not productive of pain or harm to others."

Characteristics of Shakespearean Comedy: — Shakespeare has written several comedies of romantic type and the best of them are 'As you like it', Twelfth Nights, Much a do about nothing and A mid Summer night's dream. His romantic comedies are all conceived in an imaginative setting and are far away from the sick, hony and divided aims of modern life. There are only three chief industries on the land of Shakespearean comedies making love, making songs and making fest. We find a beautiful combination of fancy and realism in it.

Love in a Shakespearean comedy:- A Shakespearean comedy is a story of love ending with the ringing of marriage bells. Not only are the hero and the heroine in love, but all are in love and so in the end there is not a single marriage but a number of marriages. The lovers and the beloveds are all young people and they fall in love at first sight. We observe that Ferdinand and Miranda fall in love in the Tempest, Rosalind and Orlando in As you like it's etc, at first sight. Love is the central theme of Shakespearean comedies. We also see other forms of love - the love of two girls Rosalind and Celia for each other, of Adam for his master Sir Rowland De Boys and his love for Adam.

Role of Women:- Another significant feature of the Shakespearean comedies is that women play their significant roles. We observe that they are governed and dominated by heroines rather than by heroes. John Ruskin was very right. When he quoted, "Shakespeare has no heroes, he has only heroines." This is quite true in the case of Shakespearean comedies. The heroines of the Shakespearean comedies are superior to the heroes. They have been endowed with the gifts of inspiration and returning affection. George Gordon quotes; "All lectures on Shakespearean comedies tend to become lectures on women for in the comedies, they have the front of the stage." It is true that the Shakespearean comedy touches the head and the heart.

Element of Realism and humour:- The chief feature of the Shakespearean comedy is the nice combination of Realism and fancy. The forest of Arden is no conventional Arcadia. It can be said that Thebes, Arden, Illyria and Venice each one has been described in the light of strong and beautiful fancy. Shakespeare's romantic world is the a union of realism and fantasy.

A very attractive feature of Shakespeare's comedies is their humour. The Shakespearean comedy has a motive to arouse laughter at the foibles and follies of man for amendment. Shakespeare's humour is not sarcastic cynical and satirical. His comic humour is light hearted and it brings maturest wisdom and insight into one aspect of human life. His humour is dramatic.

— **Mingling of Pathos and Joy** :- Shakespeare's combines pathos and joy in his comedies. If some tragic element is introduced it ends on a note of joy. It is seen in the Merchant of Venice and in As you like it. When Antonio's life is saved from cruel Shylock, he feels happy at heart for his saved life. At last Bassanio and Portia and Horatio and Nerissa feel happy and joyful at the end of the play.

— **Characterisation in the Shakespearean Comedy** :- In the Shakespearean comedy characterisation is of high order. His art of characterisation is superb. He deftly deals with the various complex moods of Rosalind, Viola and Beatrice. The character portrayal has immortalised Shakespeare.

— **Didacticism in Shakespearean Comedy** :- Shakespearean comedy is somewhat paradoxical. It doesn't preach any moral and didactic lesson, yet indirectly and unconsciously it teaches a good deal of morality. In the Merchant of Venice, Shakespeare argues for toleration and in 'As you like it' he tells us that truth and righteousness will be victorious in the long run and the wicked and the guilty will get severe punishment that they deserve.

— **Conclusion** :- The Shakespearean comedy is universal. It has music and song. These are the breathe of Shakespearean comedy.