

Discuss the plot constructions of 'The Rivals'

Introduction - 'The Rivals' of Sheridan gives a beautiful satiric portrait of the contemporary society of London. It is a great farcical comedy dealing with rivalry, intrigues and humour. It is observed that the name, Comedy of manner, was given to the comedy which was written by after Restoration Age. In fact, 'The Rivals' is the best artificial Comedy of Manners. Indeed, anti-sentimentalism, is the soul of this comedy.

Sources of the plot of 'The Rivals' —

Sheridan used a beautiful plot to elaborate the story of 'The Rivals'. He admits his indebtedness to his predecessors. Sheridan's genius in plot-construction lay in fusing his source-material into an organic and artistic whole and in the reality and vitality of his different characters. He derived his materials from different sources. In fact, he is efficient to arrange his materials by artistic synthesis.

The material of the main plot —

It is a matter of remarkable

Observation that certain aspects of the main-plot run parallel to the life of Sheridan and his personal experience. Thus, his personal experience is the base of this drama 'the Rivals'. The Romantic love between Lydia Languish and Captain Absolute is derived from the love affair of Sheridan and Elizabeth Linley, the beautiful daughter of the musician. He rescues his beloved from the attention of an unwelcome admirer and rival. Sheridan eloped with her and subsequently married her after fighting two duels on her behalf.

Here, in this drama we find that the heroine of the play, Lydia has a frenzy for elopement. She also dreamt a secret marriage far from Bath. She has a desire to elope with ensign Beverely. In the second duel with his rival Matthew Sheridan was severely wounded.

Characters, situations and incidents —

Sheridan was free from draw upon the characters of the types which were already drawn and introduced by Ben Jonson and other masters of the Restoration comedy of Manners. In 'the Rivals' we are chiefly concerned with the contemporary social affectations and conventions of an artificial society. The chief purpose of 'the Rivals' is to make a satirical display of the fashionable life of the contemporary society. Captain Absolute shows his influence before his father, Sir Anthony Absolute who is a dictatorial and uncompromising father of Absolute temperament.

On the other hand, Lydia is a romance reading, spoiled child of fortune. Faulkland is the hero of sub-plot. Bob Acres and Sir Lucius 'O' Trigger are great rivals of Captain Absolute. Captain Absolute disguises himself as a half paid ensign Beverely. Mrs. Malaprop is a typical aunt of Lydia. She is a husband hunting woman.

In the manipulations of situations, Sheridan follows conventions and traditions. It is true that he is never good at inventing plots. The severe plot of this play is to focus the rebellious nature of the children against their parents and to carry their love affairs against their parents will. Sir Anthony Absolute is an attractive father of old conservative school who forces his son to marry the girl of his choice. The old widow Mrs. Malaprop tries his best to live at a great standard by the misuse of learned words.

It is observed that the situations of Julia - Faulkland episode many situations which have been already described in his other books.

The incidents which have been narrated in 'The Rivals' are true pictures of the contemporary London fashionable society. The incidents of duel of Bob Acres and Sir Lucius 'O' Trigger against Captain Absolute are similar to the life Sheridan's lovers and duels. The most comical situations is produced in the second scene of Act IV in which Absolute meets Lydia in the presence of his father. Now, Absolute is compelled to divulge his real identity with

ensign Beresely. Lydia seems to be frustrated in her romantic plan of elopement.

Conclusion — Whenever we examine the plot of 'the Rivals' carefully, we don't find anything unusual and extra ordinary about this play.

A famous literary critic Balsation says about 'the Rivals'.

"The Rivals a work of art isn't any more than human being or a visible a spontaneous growth, unconditional by the time, place and circumstances of creation."

Thus, the plot of the Rivals is superb.