

21. The way of the world as a Restoration Comedy of Manners: —

The way of the world possessed all the significant features of the comedy of manners. Its motive is to display the manners of the upper class of the contemporary society in the times of William Congreve. Of course, this Restoration comedy satirically presents the aristocratic London society. The chief motive of this comedy is to highlight the follies and foibles of the public. Congreve's chief concern is the presentation of the high society of London. All the scenes in this play are laid in Lady Wishfort's house, a chocolate

house and St. James Park. All the characters of this play are overwhelmed with the spirit of contemporary London life. They are mainly ^{fashionable} inhabitants of London. They are fond of games of love-intrigue

and candidness in the comedy of manners. The lovers in 'The way of the world' love the game of love up to the ~~very~~ ^{very} end. Love is treated as all right but marriage is a terrible calamity. Villamour loves Mirabell but is not curious to get married. She can wed him if he agrees to give her full freedom even after marriage. Herein, Congreve has treated marriage as bargain.

The characters of the way of the world are types. In this very comedy, we find



fops and gallants in the company of gay women we happen to meet giddy dudes, lustful ladies, cheated, envious and impotent husbands. It is perceived in the way of the world that fops and ladies spend their time to plot against their opponents in love. The characters of the way of the world belong to the upper strata of the London society. Mirabell has an affair with a young widow. But he persuades her to marry Fainall. After her marriage, she has a soft noker for Mirabell. Fainall marries her only to get her property. He also flirts with Mrs. Harwood.

Millamant loves Mirabell but she has soft corner for petulant and widowed. Despite her decrepit age, Lady Wishfort wishes to marry some young man. She uses different cosmetics to conceal her faded beauty and her wrinkles. Love-intrigues occupy a significant position in the plot of the comedy of manners. It is the major central theme of the way of the world.

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The entire play The way of the world deals with the intrigues of Mirabell to gain the hand of Millamant. To achieve his motive, Mirabell pretends to make love to Lady Wishfort, an aged lady. Lady Wishfort wants to have a husband



thus, the way of the world is the best and finest comedy of manners. It all the significant characteristics of the upper class life of the day. Congreve is the greatest writer of the comedy of manners.

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