

### Paper III

## The Rivals as a Farcical Comedy of Manners

The comedy of Manners is a traditional form of play which satirizes the manners and artificial behaviour of a social class. Of course, R. B. Sheridan's *The Rivals* is a very farcical or artificial comedy of manners. It is true that the comedy of Manners had its origin in Ben Jonson's comedy of Humours. It was named so because it did not aim at displaying the human nature but the manners of the particular aristocratic society. It is perceived that the comedy of manners portrayed the manners of the contemporary aristocratic society of London with its fashion, vices, pomp and show, affectation, all kinds of intrigues, gallantry, wit and resplendent conversation.

In fact, the *Rivals* certainly ~~shows~~ shows the mirrors of the manners of contemporary 18th century English society, especially the fashionable upper class life of Bath. The ~~life~~ life lived at Bath of London was a gay life of gossips, flirtations and friendship. Sheridan makes us laugh at some of the contemporary fashions rampant in the entire city of Bath. It is observed that Sheridan is also indulgent in swearing and has developed a new way of swearing. The readers find him swearing 'by God's balls and barrels', 'by God's bullets and blades', 'by God's levels and aims' and so on. The manner in which



'Sir Lucius o' Trigger instigates Bob Acres to send a challenge to Beverley is most entertaining, he challenges Beverley, 'Can a man commit a more heinous offence against another than to fall in love with the same woman'

The Rivals is a typical comedy of manners because it contains a complex plot. There is an interesting description of three love-affairs in it - love affair between Captain Absolute and Lydia Languish, love-affair between Faulkland and Julia and love-affair between Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Lucius. The Rivals is a very witty comedy of manners.

The character portrayal of Lydia is a great satire on the romantic ideas which young and fashionable girls of the upper class families of the contemporary London society. She is addicted to reading romantic, vulgar and absurd novels for enjoyment and pleasure, she believes in not in a traditional marriage, but in a run away marriage.

The portrayal of Mrs. Malaprop, the aunt of Lydia Languish, is very satirical, we are bound to laugh at her contradictions who restricts her niece while herself falling



in love with a tall grish baronet, named  
 Sir Lucius and writing love-letters to him,  
 under the imagined name of Julia. Beverley's  
 naming of Mrs. Malaprop as an 'old weather-beaten'  
 she dragon is very entertaining.  
 doubt, the Faulkland-Julia love-affair is, no  
 the 18th century. Faulkland, the hero of the  
 subplot of the Rivals and lover of Julia is  
 very capricious and eccentric lover while his  
 sweet heart, Julia is extremely sentimental.  
 witty dialogue is a very significant characteristic  
 of the Restoration comedies. In the anti-  
 sentimental comedy the Rivals, we find a  
 very witty conversation between Sir Anthony  
 Absolute and his son, Captain Jack Absolute  
 the manner in which Captain Absolute befools  
 Mrs. Malaprop and Lydia Languish is another  
 illustration of wit.

we find fountains of laughter  
 right from the beginning to the end in  
 the Rivals. There is a true spirit of comed  
 in it. Humour, irony, and wit, fun and  
 frolics are supreme in this play.  
 = Dr. B.D. Shrivastava  
 Head  
 Dept. of English,  
 Sher Shah College, Sasara

CIN: U55101MH1995PTC091422  
 T: +91-22-4913 5000  
 F: +91-22-4913 5001  
 E: info@mcdonaldsindia.com  
 W: www.mcdonaldsindia.com  
 www.westlife.co.in

Hardcastle Restaurants Pvt. Ltd  
 Regd. Office: 1001-1002, Tower-3, 10th Fl  
 Indiabulls Finance Centre  
 Senapati Bapat Marg  
 Elphinstone Road  
 Mumbai - 400013  
 India.

