

'The way of the World' reflects the social life of the Restoration Age in England. Discuss.

Introduction — 'The way of the World' is a very beautiful comedy. In this comedy a famous dramatist William Congreve has tried his best to depict a true picture of the social life of the fashionable men and women of London society of the Restoration Age. It was a strange type of age in which the chief business of ladies and gentlemen of the upper strata of society in London was the pursuit of pleasure and intrigue for love.

Charles II, who was restored to the throne of England in 1660, was a brilliant gay in monarch. It's a historical fact that he had spent his years of his exile in France. Here, there was the luxurious life of pleasures and merriment. He had no moral code of conduct for him his courtiers. Marriage had no piety at that time. King and his all courtiers never ashamed of having mistress. It was a great reaction against the austerity that had been imposed by the puritans during the days of the commonwealth. Before Charles II all the pleasures had been banned. King Charles and his courtiers had borrowed sensuality from the French court. Soon the upper class society and the rising middle class of London caught the infection from the English court. The meritorious men and women in England had no voice in society and on the other hand, they were ridiculed.

The social life of the Restoration Age in England

in 'the way of the world'. —

It's a fact that luxurious fashionable and several lives of London have been successfully portrayed in 'the way of the world'. The plot of this comedy is concerned with the intrigues of Mirabell - the hero of the play targets to get the hand of Mrs. Millament, the heroine. He wants to grab all the property belonging his wife, her mother and Millament. It's perceived that the main characters are all persuing the woman. The women characters of this humorous comedy appreciate an enjoyment. This persuits that they are afraid of marriage. Mrs. Marwood is a widow, who is quite indignant because Mirabell doesn't give her a lift and then she starts enjoying sensual pleasures with Fainall. There is the description of Lady Wishfort an old lady having twice married daughters does her best to look beautiful, attractive and dangerous in her old age. She almost paints her face. The ideas of footman of Lady Wishfort are strange when she says, "Why truly, sir I am not safety swear to her face in a morning before she is dressed." It's a remarkable thing that she is most curious to marry again. Mirabell knows her nature. So, he befools her by sending his own servant impersonated as Sir Rowland to make love with her.

Free love in 'the way of the world' —

There is a beautiful description of an amorous atmosphere of free love in the play. Mirabell had a serious love affair with the daughter of Lady Wishfort yet this marriage couldn't be materialized. Then Mirabell arranged his marriage with Mrs. Fainall. Mrs. Fainall begins to admire her husband for this kind act of marriage. No

English gentleman commented on both men.

Cynicism and unkindness in 'the way of the world' —

The beauty and bells of the Restoration Age had no deep rooted feelings and sentiments most of the men of England in the Restoration Age were quite cynical and heartless. It's quite ridiculous to present here that even a good lady Mrs. Fainall tries her best and joins Mirabell's hands in the game of befooling and humiliating her own mother. We doesn't recognise his own brother on the way of the following Mrs. Millamant. It's more surprising to note that a virtuous lady like Mrs. Millamant who loves heartedly, loves to be adored by other gallants like Witwood and Petulant. Once Millamant says about Mirabell, "His constancy to me has quite destroyed his complaisance for all the world beside. I swear I never enjoyed it him to be so coy. If I had the vanity to think he would obey me. I would command him to show more gallantry. It's hardly well bred to be so particular on the hand and so incansille on the other."

Brilliant wit in the way of the World —

The vast study of the comedies of the Restoration Age displays that the people of this very age were extremely delightly in witty conversation. No English gentlemen liked to appreciate sincerity, devotion and emotion. Whenever we go throughout the entire plot of 'the way of the world' we conclude that Congreve's dialogue is full of weighty suggestion, gossip and scandle. But every thing is clothed in brilliant wit. The gallants and ladies of this age loved to meet in

the parlours, the coffee houses or the streets or the gardens of London and lived witty comments on each other. 'The way of the World' is full of such scenes and such dialogues.

Conditions of women depicted in 'the way of the world'

The beginning scene of 'the way of the World' throws an illuminating light on the ways of the upper class women of the Restoration Age. Millamant is a good lady herself but she has deep faith in the profession of coquetry. She feels always afraid of the fact that her own individuality and liberty would be crushed by marriage. Thus she wishes that Mirabell should agree to her proposal and she will be free to pay and receive visits and to write and receive love letters. It is her opinion that her privacy shouldn't be disturbed. She wants to keep lying in the bed as long as she likes in the morning. The condition proposed by Mirabell also shows a vivid picture of the condition of the contemporary society. He wants that Millamant must not be friendly with immoral women. She must not go to play in a mask in the company of a top. When she is pregnant she must not tie up her body with laces to keep her figure because that would ruin the child in the womb. She must appear before her husband in her original form and must not try to look attractive by painting her face. These demands of Mirabell show the condition of the men and women of the upper class society of the Restoration Age.

Conclusion — Of course, 'the way of the World' has been considered a finished piece of form, points of view, poisonancy of wit, delicacy of humour, regularity of

conduct, prosperity of manners and continuity picture of the character. It presents a realistic picture of the Restoration Age with all its foibles.