

Discuss the prose style of Congreve with special reference to 'the way of the world'.

Introduction — William Congreve is assumed to be one of the greatest ~~known~~ satirist of the 18th century. His age is known as the Augustan Age of English literature.

The Augustan Age of Latin literature was the age of Virgil, Horace and the other poets as well as eminent scholars. The first play of Congreve 'the old Bachelor' was brought out in 1693. Then he was 23 years old.

It's remarkable as the first play and achievement for so young author. It was a great success on the stage and its reception encouraged Congreve to write 'The double dealer' which first appeared in the Autumn of the same year 1693. His next play 'Love for Love' appeared in 1695. This play is considered by some critics and Congreve's masterpiece. The characters of the play are more natural and more interesting than those of the first two plays. Congreve's next play was his tragedy, 'The mourning Bride'. A passage in this drama has received extravagant admiration from Johnson.

His last play 'The way of the world' was published in 1700. He wrote it to please himself rather than the public. Many critics consider 'The way of the world' is the best work and the best comedy of one-party in England.

Prose style of William Congreve —

William Congreve is a master of dialogues, clever, ingenious, brilliant and lastly revealing the finer shadow of character. A famous critic George Meredith quotes, "Where Congreve excels all his English rivals in his literary force and a succinctness of style peculiar to him; He had a correct judgement, a correct ear, readiness of illustration with in a narrow range in snapshots of the obvious, at the obvious and capious language. He hits the mean of fine style and natural in dialogue. He is at once, precise and valuable. If you have ever thought upon style, you will acknowledge it to be a single achievement."

In this way, he is a classic and is worthy of treading a measure with Malherbe.

William Congreve lived in an age when prose was developed to perfection. It was his right action in choosing prose for the medium of his comedy writing. He found his best self expression in his prose. His universal, unrivalled, unparalled and exquisite wit is dominant in his prose style. His greatest literary achievement is in his dialogue. We don't find any sense of strain and expression. There is an affluence of his wit in his prose.

Some other traits of his prose style —

William Congreve as a social satirist is a great artist in the field of expression. There is no loose end. His sentences appear to be unmatched in points and brevity. He uses appropriate words at proper places elegantly. He has never used even a style superfluous epithet. A critic has said, "And this rightly chastened prose with its haunting memories of Shakespeare and Johnson and Milton, its flashing irony and its quick allusiveness is a dear mirror of Congreve's mind." Congreve wrote a language that appeals more to the ears than to the eyes with its varied rhythm and cadence.

We can analyse the qualities of Congreve's prose with the help of one or two passages. Mirabell says, "I have something more. None thank to you! To think of a whirl wind though I were in a whirlwind, were a case of more steady contemplation a case of more steady contemplation, a very tranquillity of mind and mansion. A fellow that lives in wind mill hasn't a

more whimsical dwelling than the heart of a man that its lodge in a woman.

We find many balanced and anti-
thetical sentences. The similitude of the windmill
and the heart of a man is very suggestive, combined
with the idea of whirlwind. Then the idea of whirlwind
is further elaborated in reference to the heart of
a man that is lodged in a woman.

Conclusion — The dialogue between Lady Wishfort
and Waitwell is interesting in another reason.
Lady Wishfort is a quite valuable in speech. There is
the attempt of a half revealing and half concealing
her passion with a view to doing Sir Rowland.
In fact, Congreve uses English prose in all its variety,
richness and amplitude to adopt it the character
and temperament of each speaker in the play.
The plays of Congreve are not indecent or immoral
to tone.