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**UNIT 1      DRAMA AND ITS ORIGIN**

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## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

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In your school, you must have studied plays. In junior classes, the plays are short and their primary objective is to introduce you to the world of drama, so the plays are short and easy to understand. But as you reach higher classes, there is a separate paper of drama wherein you study great literary dramas. The objective of these dramas is to make you able to study, analyze, and appreciate a play with your best possible skills.

In this unit, you will be introduced to Drama and how it originated and evolved into a magnificent genre of its own.

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## 1.2. OBJECTIVES

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After reading this Unit you will be able to

- Explain the origin of Drama and Theatre in different geographic regions.
- Explain Ritual Theatre.
- Explain the evolution of English Drama.
- Explain the *avant-garde* experiments in theatre.

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## 1.3. DEFINING DRAMA

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Drama comes from an ancient Greek word meaning ‘act’ or ‘deed’. Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, used this term in his very influential work called the *Poetics*. He used the term ‘drama’ to describe poetic compositions that were ‘acted’ in front of audiences in a *theatron*.

Drama is a performance art. It is acted on a story by a group of actors in a theatre space in front of an audience. This could be the basic definition of drama as all these elements, story, actors, theatre space, and audience together make up drama.

According to Oscar G. Brockett, “[there are] three basic elements of theatre [drama]: what is performed (script, scenario, or plan); the performance (including all the processes involved in preparation and presentation); and the audience (the perceivers). Each affects conceptions of the whole – the theatre [drama].”

Unlike other genres of literature, drama requires a two-dimensional approach for its proper understanding. One it is to be read and second its performance is to be viewed. Mere reading of the text of drama without watching its performance is not vital for the proper understanding of it.

### 1.3.1. Fallacy in Classroom Teachings of Drama

As you have now learned that drama is a two-way study, text-reading and performance-viewing, you must have realized the importance of watching the performance of drama. In most of the classrooms, drama is taught as a text and the value of its ‘actual’ performance is readily ignored. This has become an inherent fallacy in classroom teachings of drama.

Dramas are written to be performed and not to be read like a novel. The script (text) of a drama is surely its starting point but it is not a drama in itself, until it is performed in front of an audience. As N.S. Pradhan in his Introduction to *The Collected Plays of Arthur Miller* writes:

“A drama ought not to be looked at first and foremost from the literary perspectives merely because it uses words, verbal rhythm, and poetic image. These can be its most memorable parts, it is true, but they are not its inevitable accompaniments. Nor is it only convention which from Aristotle onward decreed that the play must be dramatic rather than narrative in concept and execution. A Greek’s seat was harder than an American’s and even he had to call a halt to a dramatic presentation after a couple of hours. The physiological limits of attention in a seated position enforce upon this art an interconnected group of laws, in turn expressed by aesthetic criteria, which no other writing art requires....”

If you want to understand and analyze a drama appropriately, you should analyse it thematically as well as theatrically. In thematic analysis, you will read the original text and the available critiques of the drama you want to study. It is here you use tools of thematic analysis common to novels, short stories etc. viz. theme, characterization, social milieu, language, imagery, symbolism, expressionism, impressionism, dialogues, purpose and style of writing.

Theatrical analysis of drama is what makes the study of drama different from the study of other genres of literature like novels, short stories, etc. Here you analyze lights, properties, costumes, masks and make-up, levels and distances, music, expressions, stage-design, stage-movement etc. And this could not be done without watching a performance of the play. Therefore you should try to find and watch live performance of plays but if it is not possible you can watch or download the respective videos from the internet and keenly analyze those.

More on Analyzing plays in Unit No.3.

**1. Self Assessment Questions: 1**

2. Define in your own words, what do you understand by the term drama?
3. How is drama different from novels?
4. What is the common fallacy in classroom teachings of drama?
5. After reading this section you must have understood how to study drama. What points should be taken care of while analyzing a drama?

**1.4. ORIGIN OF THEATRE AND DRAMA**

Though the exact time of the origin of drama is uncertain, the earliest records of human activities suggests that in those times people were performing rituals using all those elements which are essential for a fully developed theatre, viz. performance space, performers, masks and makeup, costumes, music, dance, and an audience.

**1.4.1. Ritual Theatres**

To understand what ritual theatre is, you will have to understand the meaning of the word ritual. Ritual is a term generally used for a customary practice or observance. For example, in Hindu religion, when a child takes birth he/she has to go through various *sanskaras* like *naamkaran*, *ann parashan*, etc. because these are rituals of the Hindu religion. Rituals are not universal and they may differ with caste, community, region, countries, and continents. Ritual theatre is mainly performances that began as rituals and eventually originated and developed from it.

The primary purpose of performing rituals was to please gods and other supernatural forces thought to dictate the return of spring, success in hunting or war, or the fertility of human beings and their environment.

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Theatre can be called an innate human inclination towards the art of performance and expressions. To understand the origin of theatre and drama, hence, one has to go back to the ritual theatres. Ritual Theatres simultaneously developed in different countries.

### India

Origin of ritual theatre in India is Folk Theatre, which can broadly be divided into— secular and religious. It was a collective activity generated by faith and religion. Most of the folk theatres are recitation and singing based on, *Raslila*, and *Nautanki*, without any complex components and gestures or movements of dance. There are ritual theatres peculiar to particular regions. These theatres differ from each other in staging, costume, make-up, masks, execution, and acting styles, like South Indians emphasize more on dance as in *Kathakali* and *Krishnattam* whereas North Indians focus on songs as in *Maach* of Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengali *Jatra* and Gujrati *Bhavai* lays stress on Dialogue and its execution.

The purpose of Ritual Theatre was not just entertainment; it was performed to please gods and spirits so that they protect the people, their cattle, and their crops, from disease, decay, and death.

One Example of Indian Ritual Theatre is *Theyyam* or *Theyyattam* Theatre of the South Indian state of Kerala. *Theyyam* is derived from a Sanskrit word *Daivam* meaning God. *Theyyams* are depictions of folk and tribal deities worshipped in various forms. It is a form of worship and is very unique as both, upper caste Brahmins and lower caste tribals share significant position in it. Any object that inspired awe, fear, and devotion was made into *Theyyam* by the tribal communities and were worshipped with proper rituals that included dance, drama, music, and poetry.

“There can be no doubt”, say Bridget and Raymond Alchin, “that a very large part of this modern folk religion is extremely ancient and contains traits which originated during the earliest periods of Neolithic, Chalcolithic settlement and expression”.

### Japan

Noh or Nogaku—derived from the Sino-Japanese word for "skill" or "talent"—is a major form of classical Japanese musical drama that has been performed since the 14th century. Many characters are masked, with men playing male and female roles. The field of Noh performance is extremely codified, and regulated by the *iemoto* (meaning family foundation) system, with an emphasis on tradition rather than innovation, some performers do compose new plays or revive historical ones that are not a part of the standard repertoire. Works blending Noh with other theatrical traditions have also been produced.

Kiyostugu Kanami (1333-84) was the creator of Noh theatre. He merged Zen Buddhist themes with a dancing style known as Sarugaku-no. This name was eventually shortened to Noh. The form was further developed by Kanami's son Zeami(1363-1443). He wrote around 200 plays in this genre. This aristocratic entertainment was patronized by the Shoguns and the performers were conferred with the status of Samurai warriors.

Buddhist scriptures, poems, novels, Japanese and Chinese mythology, and other sources form the material for the plays. Singing and dancing originate from ancient temple and folk dances.

Noh Theatre employs verse, prose, choral singing and dances to depict formal themes—such as life and death, drama and illusion, and Zen Buddhist spirituality—based on religious tales and folk myths. Zen Buddhism propagates the teaching that enlightenment can come through meditation and intuition rather than faith. The main characters are often military heroes and the ghosts of the

people they killed who haunt them and seek revenge. The Noh performed today is virtually the same as Noh performed in the middle Ages.

### Egypt

Though the Greeks are believed to be the inventors of theatre, there certainly was something in Ancient Egypt which could be considered the rudimentary Ritual Theatre. It comprised of public performances (mostly pageant-like) which were religious in character, ritualistic but to a considerable extent devoid of drama.

The events were mostly festival plays, religious performances, and those written on coronations of *pharaohs* (title used for king in Egypt). The *Ramesseum Dramatic Papyrus*, which was published by Kurt Sethe in 1928, was seemingly written by the master of the ceremonies and is an account of the coronation or a jubilee of *Senusret I*, a script of the ritual in which the king took part. It contains, among other things, illustrations of the scenes, the words spoken by the actors representing the various gods and explanatory remarks.

One of the texts accompanying temple reliefs at *Edfu* describes aspects of a New Kingdom religious drama performed during the Horus festival while the statue of *Hathor* was carried from her temple at *Denderah* to the festivities at *Edfu*.

This text contains what has been interpreted as staging instructions concerning the actors for a grandiose play where a great number of performers including supernumeraries, props such as statues, and backdrops were used. Symbolic dances which may have been holy rituals and ballet scenes formed part of the performance.

According to the available accounts, *Seth* (Egyptian god of chaos who killed his brother *Osiris*, represented by a live hippopotamus, was killed on stage by a priest or even by the king himself in the role of *Horus* (Son of *Osiris*). The final annihilation of *Seth* occurred when a hippopotamus cake was carved up and eaten.

### 1.4.2. Greek Drama

Rituals, mimicry, and the love of storytelling were certainly the beginning of theatre and were practised all over the globe. But theatre, as we know it today emerged first in ancient Greece.

The theatre of Ancient Greece, or ancient Greek drama, is a theatrical culture and it prospered in ancient Greece between 550 BC and 220 BC. The city-state of Athens, which became a significant cultural, political, and military power during this period, was its centre, where it was institutionalized as part of a festival called the *Dionysia*, which honoured the god *Dionysus* (the god of wine and fertility). *Dionysus* was killed, dismembered, and then resurrected. These myths were closely related to; the cycle of birth, growth, decay, death, and rebirth; and also to seasonal changes, spring, summer, fall, winter, and the return of spring. His worship was, therefore, intended to suggest the return of spring and fertility. By the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century, *dithyrambs* (hymns sung and danced by a chorus in honour of *Dionysus*) were being performed at festivals honouring him. According to Aristotle, Tragedy developed out of these choral presentations. The first definite record of drama in Greece is found in 534 B.C., when the city of *Dionysia* was restructured and a contest for best Tragedy was inaugurated.

*Thespis*, the only dramatist of that period whose name survived, won the first contest. Performers are often called *Thespians* after his name; as he is also the first known actor. The drama of Thespis was comparatively simple because it involved only one actor and a chorus. This does not mean that there was only one character in the play but all the characters were played by the same actor.

It was challenging on part of the actor as he had to play all the characters convincingly. Here the study of costumes, makeup, and timing etc. becomes indispensable for the students of drama. Masks were used to play different identities and when this single actor left the stage, to change for the roles, the chorus sang and danced. The chorus was the prominent unifying force in early drama.

Tragedy (late 6th century BC), comedy (486 BC), and the satyr play were the three dramatic genres to emerge in Greece. Athens sent abroad the festival to its numerous colonies and allies in order to endorse a common cultural identity. Western theatre originated in Athens and its drama has had a substantial and sustained impact on Western culture as a whole.

### 1.4.3. Roman Drama

The ancient Roman drama was a blooming and diverse art form, ranging from festival performances of street theatre, and acrobatics, to the staging of *Plautus's* broadly appealing situation comedies (sitcoms as we call it today), to the high-style, verbally elaborate tragedies of *Seneca*.

Due to the expansion of Roman republic into several Greek territories, Rome encountered Greek drama. Although Rome had a native tradition of performance, this Hellenization of Roman culture in the 3rd century BC created a profound impact on Roman theatre and encouraged the development of Latin literature of the loftiest quality for the stage.

While Greek drama continued to be performed throughout the Roman period, the year 240 BCE marks the beginning of regular Roman drama. From the beginning of the empire, however, interest in full-length drama declined in favour of a broader variety of theatrical entertainments.

The first significant works of Roman literature were the tragedies and comedies that *Livius Andronicus* wrote from 240 BCE. *Gnaeus Naevius* also began to write drama five years later. None of the plays from either writer have survived. While both dramatists composed in both genres (tragedy and comedy), *Andronicus* was most appreciated for his tragedies and *Naevius* for his comedies; their successors tended to specialize in one or the other, which led to a separation of the subsequent development of each type of drama.

The Roman comedies that have survived are all based on Greek subjects and are written by two dramatists: *Plautus* and *Terence*. None of the early Roman tragedies have survived. The ones we know today are written after the formation of Roman Empire. One of the well-known names of tragedy writers is that of *Seneca*. *Seneca*, advisor to the Roman emperor *Nero*, wrote many tragedies of which only nine survived. All these are adaptations of Greek originals.

### 1.4.4. English Drama

The Romans introduced drama to England. During the medieval period, Mummer's play had developed. Mummer's play was a kind of street theatre in which the actors travelled from town to town performing folk tales, re-telling old stories, for their audiences in return for money or hospitality. They were sometimes performed in the street but more usually as house-to-house visits and in public houses. Two of the usually performed tales were, *Saint George and the Dragon*, and *Robin Hood*.

Mystery Plays and Miracle Plays are among the earliest developed plays in medieval Europe. The English Church found drama as a new way to teach religion to ignorant masses. The Bible was written in Latin and therefore, a very few could read it. So the English drama began as a religious service rather than as entertainment. The clergies wrote drama from The Bible, life of Christ, and

life of Saints and Martyrs where Mystery plays were stories taken from The Bible and Miracle plays were those dealing with incidents in the lives of Saints and Martyrs.

Origin of drama was a complex process. There were two reasons for its development: a. Entertainment b. Improvement. Jugglers, jesters, clowns etc. was a cult of theatre whose sole purpose was to entertain. These clowns came down to the generation of Shakespeare, the Elizabethan era, and could be found in most of Shakespeare's plays.

Now coming towards improvement, what we here mean by improvement is the moral improvement of human being through religious teachings. Mystery and Miracle plays provided improvement as well as entertainment. They were performed on Holy Days— Christmas, Easter, etc. The performances were amusing and instructive. The plays that were performed inside Church became so popular, eventually, that they had to be moved out of the Church to the Churchyard at first, and then to market-places.

There were different festivals where these plays were performed and were mostly named according to the place they were performed in, viz.; York Cycle, comprising of 48 mystery plays performed in the city of York; Chester Cycle, 24 plays. These plays were performed around the festival of Corpus Christi.

Mystery and Miracle plays gave way to Morality plays and Interludes. In mystery and miracle plays serious and comic elements were interwoven but there came a serious division of serious and comic, with the coming of morality plays and interludes.

Morality plays were serious in nature; they were didactic, dealing in abstractions. The characters in these plays were representation of different abstractions, e.g. Sin, Greed, Love, Compassion etc. ; making the plays allegories. Moralities remained popular for very long, even in the days of Shakespeare.

Interludes were plays dealing with lighter side of life. Their principle aim was to entertain the audience. You must notice that whatever be the reason for the beginning of any kind of drama, it always evolve to a new genre. This will make things clearer for u:

- Clowning, juggling, interludes eventually evolved to farce and comedy.
- Pageants, which is an elaborate representation of scenes from history; usually involving a parade, grew into Historical Drama.

#### 1.4.5. Sanskrit Drama

Sanskrit was the language used in Ancient India for official works of the state and to compose literary art. It was the language of the elite and the educated. Sanskrit drama can be traced back to 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. *Patanjali's Mahabhasya* contains the first traces of the beginning of Sanskrit Drama in India. *Mahabhasya* is a treatise on grammar and was written in 140 BCE. Sanskrit dramas are ornamented with poetic devices, allusion/references (literary, mythic, historical) and literary devices of all sorts. Sanskrit drama utilizes Stock characters, i.e. a fictional characters based on cultural or social stereotypes, like king, queen, clowns etc.

#### *Natya Sastra:*

*Natya Sastra* is a treatise on Theatre written by Bharat Muni. It is a great source of information on the art of Drama. It deals with acting, dance, music, dramatic construction, architecture, costuming, make-up, props, the organization of companies, the audience, competitions, and offers

a mythological account of the origin of theatre. It therefore provides valuable information about the nature of theatre practice of the time.

Sanskrit theatre was performed by Priests, hereditarily trained in music, dance, and recitation, on a sacred ground. The purpose of the theatre was to educate as well as entertain. *Natya Sastra* is very wide in its scope and it would not be wrong to say that it covers more fields than Aristotle's *Poetics*. It deals with stage design, music, dance, make up and possibly every aspect of stage craft. It also influences other art forms like, music, classical Indian dance, and literature.

In *Natya Sastra*, four kinds of *abhinaya* (acting) are described:

*Angika*— that by body part motion.

*Vachika*— that by speech

*Aharya*— that by costumes and make up

*Sattvika*— that by means of internal emotions, expressed through minute movements of the lips, eyebrows, ear, etc.

The *Sattvika* is the highest mode.

*Natya Sastra* also describes, in detail, about *Bhavas* i.e. imitations of emotions performed by the actors and emotional responses by the audiences *Rasas*.

According to *Natya Sastra*, there are eight principle *Rasas*: love, pity, serenity, anger, disgust, heroism, awe, terror and comedy, and that plays should mix different *Rasas* but be dominated by one.

Every *Bhava* portrayed by the actor arouses an associated *Rasa* i.e. an emotional response in the audience.

These *Rasas* are nine in count and are thus called *Navarasas*:

*Shringara*- love and beauty

*Hasya*- joy or mirth

*Bhibhatsya*- disgust

*Raudra*- anger and all its forms

*Shanta*- serenity and peace

*Veera*- heroism

*Bhaya*- fear

*Karuna*- grief and compassion

*Adbhuta*- wonder and curiosity

*Kalidasa*, is perhaps one of ancient India's greatest Sanskrit dramatist. Three famous romantic plays written by *Kalidasa* are the *Malavikagnimitram* (*Malavika* and *Agnimitra*),



*Vikramorvashiyam* (Pertaining to *Vikrama* and *Urvashi*), and *Abhijnanasakuntalam* (The Recognition of Shakuntala).

The next great Indian dramatist was *Bhavabhuti*. He is said to have written the following three plays: *Malati-Madhava*, *Mahaviracharita* and *Uttar Ramacharita*. Among these three, the last two cover between them the entire epic of Ramayana.

The powerful Indian emperor *Harsha* (606-648) is credited with having written three plays: the comedy *Ratnavali*, *Priyadarsika*, and the Buddhist drama *Nagananda*.

Other famous Sanskrit dramatists include *Shudraka*, *Bhasa*, and *Asvaghosa*. Though numerous plays written by these playwrights are still available, little is known about the authors themselves.

### Self Assessment Questions II

1. Write a brief note on the Origin of Drama.
2. Write some of the common features of ancient ritual theatres of India and Egypt.
3. Write a note on *Natya Sastra*.

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## 1.5. EVOLUTION OF THEATRE AND DRAMA

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In the above section you read a brief history of the origin of theatre and drama with reference to the Ancient ritual theatres, Greek, Roman, English, and Classical Indian Sanskrit drama. You must have understood how theatres originating in different geographical regions contributed in building the foundation of drama as a whole. In this section we will explore the process of development of theatre and drama.

### 1.5.1. Greek Drama

In the previous section about ancient Greek drama, you read how theatre originated there with festival of Dionysia, how tragedies developed from dithyrambs, and why actors are also called *Thespians*. We will now trace the development of Greek theatre with reference to some masterpieces.

*Aeschylus*, *Sophocles*, *Euripides*, *Aristophanes*, and *Menander* are the only five writers of Greek drama whose works exist now. Though drama was performed for many centuries in Greece, only forty-five plays out of a vast number survive today. Of these, thirty-two are tragedies, twelve are comedies, and only one is a satire-play.

*Aeschylus* is the earliest dramatist whose plays have survived. The titles of seventy-nine of his plays have come down to us but only seven of those works remain:

*The Persians*

*Seven against Thebes*

*The Oresteia*— a trilogy made up of *Agamemnon*, *Choephoroe*, and *Eumenides*

*The Suppliants*

*Prometheus Bound*

*Aeschylus*' most important innovation was the introduction of the second actor. You must remember that *Thespis* performed plays that comprised of a single actor and a chorus. There the single actor had to play all the characters. So it becomes clear that till now there were no scenes with face-to-face conflicts between characters. This innovation by *Aeschylus* allowed the same and also reduced, just a little, the importance of the chorus.

About the execution of the play, how did a single actor perform a drama all by himself? How did he manage to play so many different characters? Why did the audience felt amused, even though the main and the only actor was frequently entering and exiting the stage? How did the chorus keep the people entertained while the actor was offstage? These are only a few of the aspects one overlooks when one rests his/her analysis on text alone.

*Sophocles* is believed to be the greatest of the Greek tragedians. He is accepted as the author of over a hundred plays, of which only six exist now:

*Ajax*

*Antigone*

*Oedipus Rex*

*Philoctetes*

*Electra and Trachiniae*

*Oedipus at Colonus*

In addition, a considerable part of *The Trackers*, a satire-play, is surviving which makes a total of seven plays credited to *Sophocles*.

According to The Essential Theatre, "Sophocles' introduction of a third actor encouraged greater dramatic complexity than had been possible with two actors. He was much more concerned with human relationships than with the religious and philosophical issues which had interested Aeschylus. Furthermore, Sophocles' dramas place more emphasis upon building skilful climaxes and well-developed episodes than those of Aeschylus."

*Euripides* was the last of the great Greek tragedians. The most famous of the tragedies written by him that survive today are:

*Alcestis*

*Medea*

*Hippolytus*

*Ion and Electra*

*The Trojan Women*

*The Bacchae*

In addition to these, *The Cyclops* which is the only complete satire-play that now exists is credited to him.

*Euripides* was not much appreciated in his own times. This may be because he was a skeptic. He examined the Athenian ideals. In his plays the gods were often made to appear petty and ineffectual. He also turned toward melodrama i.e. exaggerated characters as well as emotions and resorted to unnatural/unrealistic endings. He was later admired for his ideas but criticized for his faulty dramatic structure.

### **Aristotle's *Poetics***

*Poetics* is the fragment of a treatise by Aristotle. In Greek "Poetry" literally means "making". Aristotle's *Poetics* covers drama—comedy, tragedy, and the satire play—as well as lyric poetry, epic poetry, and the dithyramb. *Poetics* is the earliest surviving-work of Dramatic Theory. It is the source of principles elaborated by later critics as the Unities. Aristotle states that a play should have the unity of a living organism, and that the action it represents should last, if possible, no longer than a single revolution of the sun. It was from these suggestions that later critics developed the rule of the three unities: action, time, and place.

**Definition of Tragedy by Aristotle:** "Tragedy is the imitation of an action, serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude, in a language beautiful in different parts with different kinds of embellishment, through action and not narration, and through scenes of pity and fear bringing about the catharsis of these (or such like) emotions."

Some core terms from *The Poetics*:

*Mimesis* - imitation, representation

*Catharsis*- variously, purgation, purification, clarification

*Peripeteia*- reversal

*Anagnorisis*- recognition, identification

*Hamartia*- miscalculation (understood in Romanticism as "tragic flaw")

*Mythos*- plot

*Ethos*- character

*Dianoia*- thought, theme

*Lexis*- diction, speech

*Melos*- melody

*Opsis*- spectacle

Oedipus Rex:

*Oedipus Rex* is a Greek Tragedy written by Sophocles. The play is divided into a prologue and five episodes separated by choral passages. The prologue reveals to the audience: a plague is destroying the city of Thebes; Creon returns from Delphi with a command from the Oracle to find and punish the murderer of Laius; Oedipus promises to obey the command.

The play is set in Thebes after Oedipus has become the king and wed Jocasta, wife of his murdered predecessor, Laius. Oedipus swears to avenge the murder of Laius. Tiresias, the blind prophet enters and accuses the Oedipus. Oedipus becomes furious and accuses Tiresias and Creon

(Jocasta's brother) of conspiracy against him. Jocasta tells Oedipus that he could not be the murderer of Laius since the Oracle said that Laius would be murdered by his own son. But she also reveals that Laius was killed at the junction of three roads, reminding Oedipus that he once killed a man at such a place.

In the third episode, a messenger from Corinth brings the news of the death of Polybus, Oedipus' supposed father. This message is greeted with rejoicing, for it seems to contradict the Oracle which had predicted that Oedipus would kill his father, though Oedipus still fears returning to Corinth because the oracle also has prophesied that Oedipus will marry his own mother. Assuming that he will set Oedipus' mind at ease, the messenger reveals that he himself brought Oedipus as an infant to Polybus. The conditions under which the messenger acquired the child exposes the truth to Jocasta that Oedipus is her own son. He goes to the palace never to be seen in the play.

In the climax, the dark truth is revealed that Oedipus is the son of Laius and Jocasta and the prediction of the Oracle, Oedipus will kill his father and marry his own mother, has turned out to be true. Oedipus is shattered and disgusted. Jocasta commits suicide and Oedipus blinds himself leaving Thebes to be ruled by Creon.

*Oedipus Rex* is the finest tragedy by Sophocles. It is used as a paradigm of the genre by Aristotle in his *Poetics*.

### 1.5.2. Drama in England after Renaissance

People were gradually becoming secular and were devoting greater than before attention to problems of daily life. This greatly helped in the development of renaissance. Scholars turned towards the classical world for guidance, especially to Rome. Some of the playwrights began to write plays in English duplicating the techniques and forms of Roman drama.

**Ralph Roister Doister (1534):** is the first English comedy on classical lines, written by Oxford Scholar Nicolas Udall. It was the custom at large public schools to act Latin plays on special occasions. Nicholas Udall being the headmaster of Eton probably wrote it to be performed as a substitute for usual comedies of Plautus and Terence.

**Gorboduc:** the earliest known English tragedy and the first to be written in blank verse, written by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton. Its alternative title is *The Tragedy of Ferrex and Porrex*.

### Elizabethan Drama

English Drama during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603). A significant impact on Elizabethan drama was the suppression of religious plays after Elizabeth came to the throne in 1558. The plays now became much more secular and professional. Acting was legalized as a profession in England in the 1570s.

**University Wits:** Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Kyd, John Lyly, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Nashe, and Robert Greene were writers collectively called University Wits.

**Thomas Kyd** after studying Roman drama as a student won exceptional fame with *The Spanish Tragedy*. It was written around 1587 and was inspired by the Senecan tragedy of Rome. The use of the ghost, the motive of revenge, it was an excellent example of "revenge tragedy". It was the prototype of the English revenge tragedy genre.

**Christopher Marlowe** is one of the most important of Shakespeare's predecessors. He wrote the following plays:

*Dido, Queen of Carthage* (possibly co-written with Thomas Nashe)

*Tamburlaine, part 1*

*Tamburlaine, part 2*

*The Jew of Malta*

*Doctor Faustus*

*Edward II*

*The Massacre at Paris*

Marlowe raised the subject matter of drama to a higher level, providing heroic subjects that appealed to the imagination. The characters were no longer puppets; he gave them life and made them realistic. His use of the blank verse is exceptional. He used it to express wit as well as fancy. Shakespeare was heavily influenced by Marlowe in his work.

**John Lyly** work consists of eight comedies. Lyly contributed to the genre by giving an intelligent tone to comedy. His wordplay, clever remarks, vanities, etc. used in the language anticipated Shakespeare. His best known plays are *Endymion*, *Gallanthea*, and *Compaspe*.

### Shakespearean Drama

Now we have reached the most important part of the study of drama. You all must have read at least one of Shakespeare's plays. Shakespeare wrote in many different genres, tragedy, comedy, tragi-comedy, historical plays, romantic plays, revenge plays, and Chronicle plays etc. There is a very long list of his works. He became a world-renowned playwright making Elizabethan era a glorious period for English drama. Every phase of the life of that time is mirrored in his plays. In his hands English drama reached a new and never-seen-before height. Almost all of his plays were successful, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *As you Like it*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *King Lear*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Troilus and Cressida* and many more.

Ben Johnson was a contemporary of William Shakespeare, best known for his satirical plays, mainly *Volpone*, *The Alchemist*, and *Bartholomew Fair*, which are considered his best. His plays are called Comedy of Humours.

### Restoration Drama:

In 1642 Puritans under Oliver Cromwell closed all the theatres in England. When Charles II restored to the throne in 1660 theatre was revived. The dominant genres of the time were Comedy of manners and Heroic Drama. John Dryden's *All for Love* is an Example of Heroic drama. New kinds of plays were written focusing on the materialistic lives of the people of that time. William Congreve's *Way of The World* is an example of restoration drama. It is called Comedy of manners. Restoration comedy is infamous for its sexual explicitness. Restoration comedy was strongly influenced by the introduction of the first professional actresses; before the closing of the theatres, all female roles had been played by boys.

#### 1.5.3. Avant Garde Theatre

The dictionary meaning of the term Avant Garde is "Any creative group active in the innovation and application of new concepts and techniques in a given field (especially in the arts)".

Avant Garde theatre is also called experimental theatre at times. It tries to introduce a diverse use of language and the body to change the mode of perception and to create a new, more active relation with the audience. Theatre persons like Bertolt Brecht, Constantin Stanislavski, Antonin Artaud, Eugenio Barba, Jerzy Grotowski, Richard Schechner, Vsevolod Meyerhold, and Samuel Beckett experimented greatly with conventional theatre practises.

Eugenio Barba's *Theatre Anthropology*, Stanislavski's *An Actor Prepares*, Grotowski's *Poor Theatre* are the concepts that have developed theatre to what it is now. (We will further explore this theatre in the following units)

Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is a fine example of Avant Garde theatre. This play rather than focusing on script, background story-telling, and characterization focuses on something deep and eternal; The condition of human being in a world full of uncertainty. The way in which it is presented is unconventional thus making the play an Avant Garde play.

**Self Assessment Questions III**

1. What changes, do you think, came with the gradual addition of actors in Greek theatre?
2. Why was the Chorus so important for Greek Theatre?
3. Write a short summary, in your own words, of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*.
4. Write a short note on William Shakespeare as a dramatist.

**1.6. SUMMING UP**

In this unit you have learned

- What is Drama?
- How has it originated from ancient rituals?
- Evolution of Drama from Ritual Theatre to Avant Garde Theatre

Till now you have traced the journey of theatre and drama from ancient times to the present. You have understood that drama is not a mere script to be performed. It is a grand genre circling the entire universe. Now you have a clear idea that if drama is to be studied to its fullest then it should first be analyzed theatrically as well as thematically. In the following units you will be taught the techniques for such analysis, elaborately.

**1.7. ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

**I**

1. Refer to the section 1.3.
2. Refer to sections 1.3. and 1.3.1.
3. Refer to section 1.3.1.
4. Refer to section 1.3.1.

**II**

1. Refer to section 1.4.
2. Refer to section 1.4.1.

3. Refer to section 1.4.5.

### III

1. Refer to section 1.5.1.
2. Refer to section 1.4.2.
3. Refer to section 1.5.1.
4. Wikipedia has a very detailed write up on William Shakespeare.

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## 1.9. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Write a brief note on the Origin of Drama.
2. Write a short note on Noh Theatre of Japan.
3. Draw some basic parallels between Aristotle's *Poetics* and Bharat Muni's *Natya Sastra*.
4. Trace the development of drama and theatre from Elizabethan times to present day.

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**UNIT 2      ANATOMY OF THEATRE AND DRAMA**

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- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Objectives
- 2.3. Performative Context of Drama
- 2.4. Elements of Drama
  - 2.4.1. Script
  - 2.4.2. Stage
  - 2.4.3. Costume, masks, and make up
    - 2.4.3.1. Noh Theatre
    - 2.4.3.2. Kathakali
  - 2.4.4. Sound and Light devices
  - 2.4.5. Actor-audience relationship
- 2.5. Exceptional theatres
  - 2.5.1. Mime theatre
  - 2.5.2. Avant-garde theatre
  - 2.5.3. Street theatre
- 2.6. Actors and the discipline they follow
- 2.7. Summing Up
- 2.8. Answers to Self-Assessment-Questions
- 2.9. References
- 2.10. Terminal and Model Questions



## 2.1. INTRODUCTION

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In the previous unit you were introduced to drama and its origin. You must now be familiar with the evolution of theatre and drama; how it originated in different geographical regions in the form of ritual theatre, how it was spread from place to place and how different forms of drama evolved.

Now you are ready to get an inside view of theatre and drama. This unit is named 'Anatomy of Drama'. It is named so because here we will study different parts of Drama individually and see how these work as a whole. Theatre and drama is like an organism and here we will study the anatomy of this organism.

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## 2.2. OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit you will be able to

- Explain different elements of Theatre and Drama
  - Analyze the basic function of drama that is performance
  - Understand some exceptional forms of theatre
  - Understand discipline followed by actors
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## 2.3. PERFORMATIVE CONTEXT OF DRAMA

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In the previous unit, you must have understood that drama originated from ritual performances and was not written down for a considerable period of time. Drama, even today, is not written to be merely read but to be performed. Performance is the ultimate aim of a dramatic work.

To study drama keeping this in mind is vital for the understanding of this genre. For example, when you study William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, you will notice that there are many scenes where magic, supernatural elements, supernatural characters are involved. On paper one can write anything because imagination is limitless. When you read *The Tempest* you will imagine each and every element in your mind without any difficulty. But *The Tempest* is a play and was written to be performed, and the stage, unlike imagination, is bound by some limits. Scenes filled with magical and supernatural elements are difficult to represent and also at the same time they should look believable. This makes the techniques, stage directions, costumes, make up, sound, and lights used in the performance of the play very important for the complete understanding of the play.

This example must have made it clear why so much emphasis is given on the performative context of drama. Drama study without the study of the important elements used for accomplishing its performance is incomplete.

In this unit, we will analyze each and every component of theatre and drama so as to make you able to analyze any play after understanding the importance and usage of the elements that make up a drama.

### Self Assessment Questions 1

1. What is your point of view on the performative context of drama?
  2. If you have ever seen a performance of any drama you have read, how helpful was the performance in your understanding of that drama?
  3. Why do you think so much stress is given on the performative context of drama in its analysis?
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## 2.4. ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

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Now you will study, in detail, elements that make up drama and theatre. This will help you understand the grandiosity of this genre. Also, you will find out what do you miss while analyzing a theatrical piece.

### 2.4.1. Script

Oscar G. Brockett in *The Essential Theatre* writes:

The play script is the typical starting point for the theatrical production. It is also the most common residue of production, since the script usually remains intact after its performance ends. Because the same script may serve as a basis for many different productions, it has greater permanence than its theatrical representations and therefore comes to be considered a literary work. Consequently, drama is often taught quite apart from theatre, and many people who read plays have never seen a live dramatic performance. Probably the majority of students get their first glimpse of theatre through reading plays in literature classes. But the script itself may seem unsatisfactory or puzzling, for it is essentially a blueprint that demands from both reader and performer the imaginative recreation of how much that is only implied on the printed page. Therefore, learning how to read, understand, and fill out the script (either in the mind or on the stage) is essential if the power of a play is to be fully realized.

By reading this you must have understood that script is really important to drama. Most of the plays develop from a script. Scripts are on paper and so it is mostly responsible for survival of a play year after year. Scripts are the foundation for drama. In short, a script is a written version of a play or other dramatic composition that is used in the preparation of a performance.

Here are some types of scripts:

- Play script book, dramatic composition, dramatic work - a play for performance on the stage or television or in a movie etc.
- Prompt copy, promptbook - the copy of the play script used by the prompter.
- Continuity - a detailed script used in making a film in order to avoid discontinuities from shot to shot
- Dialog, dialogue - the lines spoken by characters in drama or fiction
- Libretto - the words of an opera or musical play
- Scenario - an outline or synopsis of a play (or, by extension, of a literary work)
- Screenplay - a script for a film including dialogue and descriptions of characters and sets
- Shooting script - the final detailed script for making a movie or TV program

These terms have been mentioned here to enhance your knowledge about the different terms used for scripts of different usage, but in general these are all scripts.

### 2.4.2. Stage

In theatre and drama, the stage is a chosen space for the performances. The stage serves as a space for actors or performers and a central point for the members of the audience. As an architectural feature, the stage may consist of a platform (mostly raised) or series of platforms. In some cases, these may be temporary but in theatres and buildings devoted to such productions, the stage is often a permanent feature.

There are several types of stages that vary with their usage and the relation of the audience to them:

**Proscenium stage:** It is the most common form of stage found in the West, it is also called a picture frame stage. As the name suggests, the main feature of a proscenium stage is the proscenium arch. The proscenium arch is a large opening through which the audience views the performance. The performance area (stage) is raised several feet above the front row audience level. In this type of stage the audience is located on one side of the stage with the remaining sides veiled and used by the performers and technicians. With time these stages developed and new techniques were adopted for heightening the dramatic effect of the performances. Paintings were framed in the backdrops to produce optical illusions. Pulleys with ropes were used to change backgrounds and also to raise or lower platforms on the stage.

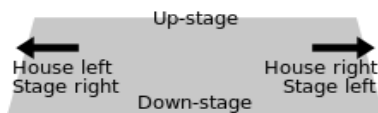
**Thrust stages:** thrust stages are somewhat similar to proscenium stages but with a platform or performance area that extends into the audience space so that the audience is located on three sides. The extended stage is connected to the backstage area by its upstage (side away from audience) end. A thrust has the benefit of greater connectivity between the audience and performers than a proscenium, while preserving the utility of a backstage area. Entrances onto a thrust are very easily made from backstage, although some theatres provide for performers to enter through the audience using vomitory entrances. A vomitory entrance is made through a vomitorium, which according to Wikipedia, "...is a passage situated below or behind a tier of seats in an amphitheatre or a stadium, through which big crowds can exit rapidly at the end of a performance."

**Theatre in the round:** In this type of stage, the audience is located on all four sides of the stage. Since the audience is placed quite close to the action, it provokes a feeling of closeness and involvement. In this type of stage, scenery that does not confuse actors and the rest of the stage from parts of the audience is used. Since backdrops and curtains cannot be used, the director finds other ways to set the scene. Lighting design is more challenging than for a Proscenium stage, since the actor is to be lit from all sides without blinding nearby audience. Entrances and exits are made either through the audience, making surprise entrances very difficult, or via closed-off walkways, which must be unnoticeable. Therefore, stage entrances are generally in the corners of the theatre. The actors need to make sure that they do not have their backs turned to any part of the audience for long periods of time, in order to be seen and heard clearly.

**Created and found spaces:** These types of stages are often constructed particularly for a performance or may involve a space that is adapted as a stage. A stage can also be improvised where ever inappropriate space can be found, for example, staging a performance in an unconventional space such as a building's basement, a hillside or the street. Similarly, a makeshift stage can be created by modifying an environment, for example, marking out the boundaries of a stage in an open space by laying a carpet and arranging seats before it.

**Stage Terminology:** to facilitate precise positioning and movement on the stage, it is divided into different named areas. As we can observe that when an actor faces the audience, the actor's right is the audience's left and vice-versa. This can create a lot of confusion for the actor as well as the director. As a solution to this problem, the actor's right and left sides are termed *stage right* and *stage left* respectively, while audience's right and left sides are termed *house right* and *house left* respectively.

Likewise, front and back are not used, and instead *upstage* is the term used to denote the part furthest from the audience and *downstage* is part of the stage closest to the audience. Here is a picture to enhance your understanding:



### 2.4.3. Costumes, Masks, and Make Up

As we are studying the anatomy of theatre and drama, the study of costumes, masks, and make up becomes very important. These are significant elements of drama and theatre as these have the role of defining a character before the audience. Costumes, make up, and masks create a first impression in the minds of the audience as soon as the character appears on the stage. Some costumes define the status of the character, for example, you will easily recognize whether a certain character is king or a beggar, just by seeing his attire.

This is a basic usage of costumes, make up, and mask but as we study further about different theatres like Japanese theatres: Noh and Kabuki and Indian dance drama like: Chhau and Kathakali, we realize that costumes, masks, and make up are as important as script or actor for drama and theatre.

To make this point of view clearer for you to understand, we will now study some specific theater and drama genres and the importance of costumes, masks, and make up in them.

#### 2.4.3.1. Noh Theatre:

Noh or Nogakuis a major form of Classical Japanese musical drama that is being performed since the 14th century. It was created by Kiyostsugu Kanami and later developed by his son Zeami. Most of the characters are masked, with men playing male and female roles.

**Costumes:** The clothing worn by actors is decorated quite richly and have symbolic meaning for the type of role for example, thunder gods will have hexagons on their clothes while serpents have triangles to convey scales.

Costumes for the *shite* (main performer) is particularly extravagant, shimmering silk brocades, but less extravagant for the *tsure* (companion of shite), *wakizure* (companion of *Waki* who is the counterpart of *Shite*), and the *aikyogen* (interludes between Noh Plays). For centuries, in accordance with the vision of Zeami, Noh costumes were modeled on the clothing that the characters would genuinely wear, whether that is the formal robes of a courtier or the street clothing of a peasant or commoner. But from the late sixteenth century stylized Noh costumes following certain symbolic and stylistic conventions became the norm. The musicians and chorus characteristically wear formal *montsuki kimono* (black and adorned with five family crests) accompanied by *hakama* (a skirt-like garment) or *kami-shimo*, a combination of *hakama* and a waist-coat with exaggerated shoulders. Lastly, the stage attendants are dressed up in almost plain black garments, much in the same way as stagehands in contemporary Western theatre.

**Masks:** All Noh masks have names. These are wooden masks carved out from blocks of Japanese cypress tree and painted with natural pigments on a neutral base of glue and crunched seashell.

Usually only the *shite* wears a mask. However, in some cases, the *tsure* may also wear a mask, especially while playing female roles. Noh masks portray female, youngsters or old men, nonhuman (divine, demonic, or animal) characters. On the other hand, a Noh actor who does not wear mask plays a role of an adult man in his twenties, thirties, or forties. The side player, the *waki*, does not wear a mask either.

Designing masks for Noh plays requires skilled craftsmanship. The masks are delicately designed, especially those for female roles. A single mask is capable of expressing various emotions like fear, sadness, or surprise with the some simple adjustments in lighting and tilt in the angle of the mask shown to the audience. However, with some of the more elaborate masks for deities and monsters; it is not always possible to convey emotions. But that is not an obstruction because these

characters are not frequently called to change emotional expression during the course of the scene, or show emotion through larger body language.

#### 2.4.3.2. Kathakali:

Kathakali is a classical Indian dance drama. It originated in the present day state of Kerala around 17<sup>th</sup> century. Kathakali is noted for the eye-catching make-up of characters, elaborate costumes, detailed gestures and well-defined body movements presented in tune with playback music and percussion.

Make up: Two of the most eye-catching features of Kathakali dance drama characters are the elaborate makeup that looks like a mask and the colourful large costumes. Each character has a unique costume and make-up as well, depending on the role played by the artist.

The roles are characterized by that of a noble hearted hero, or *Satvik*, that of a villain, or *Tamsik*, that of a king, or *rajsik*, and gentle or female roles, or *Minukku*. The make-up consists of homemade face colours that are designed to intensify the powerful facial expressions that form an essential part of this dance form.

These colours are obtained by grinding certain stones and mixing them in the correct proportion to water or coconut oil. Black paint is made from soot, yellow from turmeric, white from rice flour. Actors portraying divine or heroic characters use slightly understated colours. Green paint signifies Godliness- the role of a hero (satvik), the role of king that signifies ambition and violence is characterised by painting the face red. Yellow paint is used by characters with a combination of noble and demonic qualities. Black paint usually symbolizes the evil intentions of demonic characters. White represents spiritualism. Chunda or Chundapoo is placed inside the actors' lower eyelid to redden their eye. It is a bit dangerous because if it accidentally touches the inside of the upper lid it can cause damage. Though the details of costume of each character is unique, the basic costume of a male dancer includes a long rigid ankle length skirt, a bulging full-sleeved jacket, several yards of white fabric placed on the shoulders, a wooden headgear, and decorative wooden ornaments. What is incredible is that the headgear can weigh up to twenty kg, and the outfit up to forty. A female artist's costume consists of a white sari worn over a waist length form-fitting red blouse. The hair is tied up in a bun and is decorated with colourful scarves.

The final preparations for a Kathakali performance, such as the putting on of the makeup and costume can take several hours. The performer uses this time to quietly meditate lying on the floor on a mat while the artiste carefully paints the face.

By now you must have understood, how important make up, costumes, and masks in theatre and drama are. This makes their study indispensable for a complete understanding of a performance.

#### 2.4.4. Sound and Light Device

Sound and lighting are very essential elements of theatre and drama. These are used to give special effects, heighten dramatic intensity, and sometimes used symbolically.

**Lighting:** Stage lighting has various functions:

- **Selective Visibility:** The simple ability to see what is occurring on stage. Any lighting design will be ineffectual if the viewers are unable to see the characters, unless this is the intention of the director.
- **Revelation of form:** Changing the perception of shapes onstage, particularly three-dimensional stage elements.

- **Focus:** Focusing the audience's attention to an area of the stage or distracting them from another.
- **Mood:** Setting the tone of a scene. For example, harsh red light has a totally different effect from soft violet light.
- **Location and time of day:** Establishing or altering position in time and space. Blues can suggest night time while orange and red can suggest a sunrise or sunset.
- **Projection/stage elements:** Lighting may be used to project scenery.
- **Plot (script):** A lighting event may prompt or advance the action onstage.
- **Composition:** Lighting may be used to show only the areas of the stage which the designer wants the audience to see.

While Lighting Design is an art form, and thus no one way is the only way. Lighting can be used to suit the respective purpose of different performances.

**Sound:**

Music has been a part of performances since ancient times. Sound designing is an equally important element of stagecraft. Like lighting, sound is used to carry out different functions in a performance. You must have experienced the difference that sound and music brings to the dramatic effect of a play. It enhances the moods and effects, thus making theatre and drama different from real life.

According to Wikipedia, “The use of sound to evoke emotion, reflect mood and underscore actions in plays and dances began in prehistoric times. At its earliest, it was used in religious practices for healing or just for fun. In ancient Japan, theatrical events called *kagura* were performed in Shinto shrines with music and dance.”

Plays were performed in medieval times in a form of theatre called *Commedia dell'arte*, which used music and sound effects to enhance performances. The use of music and sound in the Elizabethan Theatre followed, in which music and sound effects were produced off stage using devices such as bells, whistles, and horns. Cues would be written in the script for music and sound effects to be played at the appropriate time.”

**2.4.5. Actor-Audience Relationship**

This term may not appear like an element of theatre and drama but it too is a very important part of performance. This feature of theatre is unique because actors and audience get together at the same time and place for a specific purpose. Actors act for an audience; there is a disguised agreement under which the person in the audience willingly suspends her/his disbelief in the playing on stage. She/he knows that the actor playing Hamlet does not really die and the blood used on stage is not real. She/he knows these things but agrees to pretend that she/he does NOT know them so that she/he can identify with the actors on stage. The audience for a theatrical production is not an onlooker. It is a participant, part of a functioning relationship. Each side brings something to the event, and they pretend together.

In the poetic play *Murder in the Cathedral* by T.S. Eliot, you can see the functioning of actor-audience relationship clearly. In the last scene of the play, the actors communicate directly with the audience and ask the audience rights and wrongs.

In theatre and drama, sometimes the actor-audience relationship is direct and unhidden like that in *Murder in the Cathedral* and sometimes it is implied i.e. willing suspension of disbelief. Therefore, in whatever light we view it, the actor-audience relationship is an essential theatre and drama element. In a nutshell, if it were not for the audience, plays would not exist.

### Self Assessment Questions II

1. Write down, as many as you have learned names of the types of scripts.
2. Write in brief about the different types of stages.
3. Write a short note on Noh Theatre of Japan.
4. What is your opinion on the importance of light and sound devices in a performance?
5. Write a short note on Actor-audience relationship.

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## 2.5. EXCEPTIONAL THEATRES

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In this section, you will learn about some genres of theatre that are different from the conventional theatre. As you have learned about the essential elements of theatre and drama, the purpose of this section is to let your mind exercise on how these elements are incorporated in theatre genres mentioned below.

### 2.5.1. Mime Theatre

Performing mime or miming is the acting out of a story through body motions and gestures but without the use of speech. A fine example of the influence of mime theatre in motion pictures or to use the popular term films is Charlie Chaplin's work. Traditionally, these types of performances involve the actors wearing tight black & white clothing with white facial makeup.

But contemporary mimes are often performed without whiteface. Likewise, while traditional mimes have been completely silent, contemporary mimes, though refraining from speaking, occasionally use vocal sounds when they perform. Mime acts are often comical, but some can be very serious.

### 2.5.2. Avant Garde Theatre

Avant-garde theatre is not exactly a genre, it is but a group of theatre works that involve experimentations with conventional theatre practices. Grotowski's "poor theatre" is a fine example of avant-garde theatre. As explained in his book *Towards a Poor Theatre* (1968), "By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc." According to him the essential element of drama is the actor-audience relationship. In his plays the audiences are asked to participate in the play.

### 2.5.3. Street Theatre

Street theatre is a type of theatrical performance and presentation in open-air public spaces without an exclusive paying audience. These areas can be anywhere, like amusement parks, shopping centres, car parks, city streets and street corners.

Sometimes the performances are for festivals or some special event. In Indian villages and cities, street plays are a fine medium to spread a message or awareness, or for mere entertainment.

So, as you may have observed, the above mentioned theatres are unconventional and innovative. These too use elements of theatre and drama but different proportions of certain elements have produced new theatre genres.

### **Self Assessment Questions III**

1. What is Mime?
2. What is avant-garde theatre?
3. Why do you think street plays still survive?

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## **2.6. ACTORS AND THE DISCIPLINE THEY FOLLOW**

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In this unit, we are exploring the essential elements of theatre and drama and so we cannot rule out the rigorous training and discipline followed by the actors. Actors are the most important element of theatre; success or failure of a performance relies mostly on the actors.

Some the plays are simple and just need a few days of practice but some plays ask for complete devotion on the part of the actor. Plays like Noh and Kathakali require years of dedication and hard work from the actor. The actors practise gestures, movements, and expressions, etc. for years. We can also say that they, through their dedication, transform their bodies into an art itself. Their body becomes different from a normal human being, not in appearance, but in execution.

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## **2.7. SUMMING UP**

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In this unit you have learned

- The essential elements of drama
- The importance of these elements of a complete understanding of the play
- How experiments in theatre and drama are carried out by altering the usage of one or more elements.

In Units 1 and 2 you have traced the journey of theatre and drama from ancient times to the present and have also learned about the essential elements of theatre. You, by now, have understood that though script is an important element of drama it is not the only one. Therefore, to analyze a drama completely will have to analyze all these elements. In the following unit you will be given an idea of how to analyze a drama completely and correctly.

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## **2.8. ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

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**I**

1. Refer to section 2.3.
2. Write according to your experience. It may also be a film adaptation if not a live performance.
3. Refer section 2.3 and combine it with your experience of live theatre/ film adaptation.



**II**

1. Refer to section 2.4.1.
2. Refer to section 2.4.2.
3. Refer to section 2.4.3.1.
4. Refer to section 2.4.4.
5. Refer to section 2.4.5.

**III**

1. Refer to section 2.5.1.
2. Refer to section 2.5.2.
3. Refer to section 2.5.3.

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Noh Theatre. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noh#Costumes>

Sound Devices. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sound\\_design](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sound_design)

Stage (theatre). [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stage\\_\(theatre\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stage_(theatre))

Stage. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vomitorium>

Stage. <http://www.ia470.com/primer/theatres.htm>

Street Theatre. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Street\\_theatre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Street_theatre)

**2.10. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS**

1. Write a note on the importance of costumes, masks, and make up in Noh Theatre.
2. Write short notes on all the elements of drama and theatre.
3. Write an essay on Kathakali.
4. Write, in your own words, on the importance of the performative context of drama.

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**UNIT 3****ANALYSIS OF DRAMA**

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- 3.1. Introduction
- 3.2. Objectives
- 3.3. Story outline of the play
- 3.4. About the Author
- 3.5. Critical Analysis: Thematic
  - 3.5.1. Background Study
  - 3.5.2. Character Sketches
  - 3.5.3. Themes, Motifs, and Symbols
- 3.6. Critical Analysis: Theatrical
  - 3.6.1. Set, Properties, and costumes
  - 3.6.2. Light and Sound Devices
  - 3.6.3. Actor-Audience relationship
- 3.7. Summing Up
- 3.8. Answers to Self-Assessment-Questions
- 3.9. References
- 3.10. Terminal and Model Questions

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

Preceding two units that you have read in this block so far have made you well-versed-at a foundation level-with theatre and drama. Now that you are introduced to all the elements of theatre and drama, it's time to use these for the complete analysis of a popular drama.

The drama that we are about to explore in this unit is an American Classic Death of a Salesman by playwright Arthur Miller. It was the winner of the 1949 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and Tony Award for Best Play.

The play is a tragedy that depicts the dark reality of materialistic American life of that time. It is the story of a family struggling between reality and ambition. The play stages the psychological impact that the concept of "American Dream" leaves on all the characters of the play, particularly the main character— the salesman Willy Loman— who eventually meets death in the end.

### 3.2. OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand how to critically appreciate a drama on the basis of thematic as well as theatrical analysis
- Understand the importance of all the elements of drama for its analysis.
- Undertake critical analysis of drama.
- Understand how to analyze the performance of a drama

### 3.3. STORY OUTLINE OF THE PLAY

This is a brief outline of the plot of this play. Since this play is not in your syllabus and here in this unit it is used as a sample to make you understand the process of analysis; the detailed summary is not given.

[Note: flashbacks and hallucinations are separated by –; making them easier to be distinguished from present day scenes of the play]

As a flute melody plays, Willy Loman comes back to his home in Brooklyn one night, tired from a failed sales trip. His wife, Linda, tries to convince him to ask his boss, Howard Wagner, to let him work in New York so that he won't have to travel. Willy says that he will speak with Howard the next day. Willy complains that Biff, his older son who has returned home, has yet to make something of him. Linda scolds Willy for being so fault-finding, and Willy goes to the kitchen for a snack.

Willy starts talking to himself in the kitchen. In the other bedroom, Biff and his younger brother, Happy, reminisce about their teenage years and talk about their father's smuttering, which often includes criticism of Biff's failure to live up to Willy's expectations. As Biff and Happy are dissatisfied with their lives and they fantasize about buying a ranch out in the West. In the Kitchen, Willy becomes absorbed in a daydream— He admires his sons, now younger, who are washing his car. The young Biff, a high school football star, and the young Happy make an appearance. They interact lovingly with their father, who has just returned from a business trip. Willy reveals to Biff and Happy that he is going to open his own business one day, bigger than

that possessed by his neighbour, Charley. Charley's son, Bernard enters looking for Biff and tells Biff that he must study for math class in order to avoid failing. Willy points out to his sons that although Bernard is intelligent, he is not "well liked," which will not earn him much success in the long run.

A younger Linda enters, and the boys leave to do some tasks. Willy boasts of a remarkably successful sales trip, but Linda persuades him into revealing that his trip was actually only a little successful. Willy complains that he soon won't be able to make all of the payments on their appliances and car. He complains that people dislike him and that he is not good at his job. As Linda comforts him, he hears the laughter of his mistress. He approaches "The Woman", who is still laughing, and becomes immersed in another reminiscent daydream— Willy and "The Woman" flirt, and she thanks him for giving her stockings.

The Woman disappears, and Willy fades back into his prior daydream, in the kitchen— Linda, now mending her stockings, encourages him. He scolds her mending and orders her to throw the stockings out. Bernard re-enters looking for Biff. Linda reminds Willy that Biff has to return a football that he stole, and she adds that Biff is too harsh with the neighbourhood girls. Willy again hears "The Woman" laugh and bursts out at Bernard and Linda. Both leave, and though the daydream ends, Willy continues to mutter to himself.

The older Happy comes downstairs and tries to calm down Willy. Irritated, Willy shouts his regret about not going to Alaska with his brother, Ben, who ultimately found a diamond mine in Africa and became rich. Charley, having heard the noises, enters. Happy goes off to bed, and Willy and Charley begin to play cards. Charley offers Willy a job, but Willy feels insulted and refuses it. As they argue, Willy hallucinates about Ben. Willy by chance calls Charley Ben. Ben looks over Willy's house and tells him that he has to catch a train soon to look at properties in Alaska. As Willy talks to Ben about the possibility of going to Alaska, Charley, seeing no one there, gets confused and questions Willy. Willy shouts at Charley, who leaves. Willy continues to hallucinate— the younger Linda enters and meets Ben. Willy asks Ben about his life. Ben describes his travels and talks about their father. As Ben is about to leave, Willy daydreams further— and Charley and Bernard rush in to tell him that Biff and Happy are stealing lumber. Although Ben eventually leaves, Willy continues to talk to him.

Back in the present, the older Linda enters and finds Willy outside. Biff and Happy come downstairs and discuss Willy's mental condition with their mother. Linda rebukes Biff for judging Willy callously. Biff tells her that he knows Willy is a fake, but decides not to elaborate. Linda mentions that Willy tried to commit suicide. Happy grows angry and scolds Biff for his failure in the business world. Willy enters and yells at Biff. Happy mediates and eventually proposes that he and Biff go into the sporting goods business together. Willy instantly brightens and gives him a host of tips about asking for a loan from one of Biff's old employers, Bill Oliver. After more arguing and reconciliation, everyone finally goes to bed.

Act II opens with Willy enjoying the breakfast that Linda has prepared for him. Willy wonders about the bright-seeming future before getting angry again about his expensive appliances. Linda informs Willy that Biff and Happy are taking him out to dinner that night. He gets excited and announces that he is going to make Howard Wagner give him a New York job. The phone rings, and Linda talks to Biff, reminding him to be nice to his father at the restaurant and the lights fade on Linda

Scene shifts, Howard Wagner is shown playing with a wire recorder in his office. Willy tries to bring up the subject of working in New York, but Howard interrupts him and makes him listen to his kids and wife on the wire recorder. When Willy finally gets speak, Howard rejects his plea. Willy starts speaking of a lengthy recalling of how a legendary salesman named Dave Singleman

inspired him to go into sales. Howard leaves and Willy gets angry. Howard soon re-enters and tells Willy to take some time off. Howard leaves and Ben enters— inviting Willy to join him in Alaska. The younger Linda enters and reminds Willy of his sons and job. The young Biff enters, and Willy praises Biff's prospects and the fact that he is popular. Ben leaves and Bernard rushes in, eagerly awaiting Biff's big football game. Willy speaks cheerfully to Biff about the game. Charley enters and teases Willy about the game. As Willy chases Charley off, the lights rise on a different part of the stage, Willy continues yelling from offstage, hallucination ends.

Scene in Bernard's office, Jenny, Charley's secretary, asks a grown-up Bernard to quiet him down. Willy enters and babbles on about a "very big deal" that Biff is working on. Awed by Bernard's success (he mentions to Willy that he is going to Washington to fight a case), Willy asks Bernard why Biff turned out to be such a failure. Bernard asks Willy what happened in Boston that made Biff decide not to go to summer school. Willy defensively tells Bernard not to blame him.

Charley enters and Bernard exits. When Willy asks for more money than Charley usually loans him, Charley again offers Willy a job. Willy again refuses and in the end tells Charley that he was fired. Charley scolds Willy for always needing to be liked and angrily gives him the money. Calling Charley his only friend, Willy exits with tears in his eyes.

At the restaurant Frank's Chop House, Biff tells Happy that he waited six hours for Bill Oliver and Oliver didn't even recognize him. Upset at his father's stubborn misconception that he, Biff, was a salesman for Oliver, Biff plans to relieve Willy of his illusions. Willy enters, and Biff tries gently to tell him what happened at Oliver's office. Willy blurts out that he was fired. Shocked, Biff again tries to let Willy down easily. Happy interferes giving remarks suggesting Biff's success, and Willy impatiently awaits the good news.

Biff finally bursts out at Willy for being unwilling to listen. Willy hallucinates— the young Bernard rushes in shouting for Linda. Biff, Happy, and Willy start to argue. As Biff explains what happened, their conversation recedes into the background— the young Bernard tells Linda that Biff failed math. The restaurant conversation comes back into focus and Willy chides Biff for failing math. Willy then hears the voice of the hotel operator in Boston— shouts that he is not in his room. Biff tries to quiet Willy and claims that Oliver is talking to his partner about giving Biff the money. Willy's renewed interest and probing questions annoy Biff more, and he screams at Willy. Willy hears "The Woman" laugh and he shouts back at Biff, hitting him and staggering. Miss Forsythe (a prostitute) enters with another call girl, Letta. Biff helps Willy to the washroom and, finding Happy flirting with the girls, argues with him about Willy. Biff storms out, and Happy follows with the girls.

Willy and The Woman enter— dressing themselves and flirting. The door knocks and Willy hurries The Woman into the bathroom. Willy answers the door; the young Biff enters and tells Willy that he failed math. Willy tries to lead him out of the room, but Biff mimics his math teacher's lisp, which produces laughter from Willy and The Woman. Willy tries to cover up his misdeed, but Biff refuses to believe his stories and storms out, heart-broken, calling Willy a "phony little fake." Back in the restaurant, waiter Stanley helps Willy up. Willy asks him where he can find a seed store. Stanley gives him directions to one, and Willy hurries off.

The light comes up on the Loman kitchen, where Happy enters looking for Willy. He moves into the living room and sees Linda. Biff comes inside and Linda rebukes the boys and slaps away the flowers in Happy's hand. She shouts at them for abandoning Willy. Happy tries to pacify her, and Biff goes in search of Willy. He finds Willy planting seeds in the garden with a flashlight. Willy is consulting Ben about a \$20,000 proposition. Biff approaches him to say goodbye and tries to bring him inside. Willy moves into the house, followed by Biff, and becomes angry again about Biff's failure. Happy tries to calm Biff, but Biff and Willy explode in anger at each other. Biff starts to

sob, which touches Willy. Everyone goes to bed except Willy, who renews his conversation with Ben, delighted at how great Biff will be with \$20,000 of insurance money. Linda soon calls out for Willy but gets no response. Biff and Happy listen as well. They hear Willy's car drive away.

In the requiem, Linda and Happy stand in shock after Willy's poorly attended funeral. Biff says that Willy had the wrong dreams. Charley defends Willy as a victim of his profession. Ready to leave, Biff invites Happy to go back out West with him. Happy declares, "I'm staying right in this city, and I'm gonna beat this racket!" and thus he proclaims to fulfill his father's dreams. Linda, in a soliloquy, asks Willy for forgiveness for being unable to cry. She says that it seems to her that he has gone on just another business trip. She also tells him that she has paid off the last payment on the house. She begins to sob, repeating "We're free. . . ." All exit, and the flute melody is heard as the curtain falls.

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### 3.4. ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Reading an author's biography seems, at first, irrelevant to the study of her/ his work. We all wonder what the writer's life events have to do with their work which is a work of fiction. You all must have observed that whatever we, as an individual, think, believe, or act, is greatly influenced by many factors. Our family background, our companies, our culture, our geographic location, our education, all helps shape our thought process to a great extent. Therefore, when we study a writer's biographic details we are helped in understanding the writer's mind-set. We are able to explain many things about her/his work based on the understanding we achieve after analyzing their biography.

Arthur Miller was born in Harlem, New York on October 17, 1915. He was raised in a moderately wealthy household until his family lost almost everything in the Wall Street Crash of 1929. They consequently fired the chauffeur and moved from the Upper East Side in Manhattan to Gravesend, Brooklyn. After graduating high school, Arthur worked a few odd jobs to save adequate money to attend the University of Michigan. While in college, he wrote for the student paper and finished his first play, *No Villain*. He also took courses with the admired playwright professor Kenneth Rowe, a man who taught his students how to create a play in order to achieve an intended effect. Motivated by Rowe's approach, Miller moved back east to begin his career.

Things did not start smoothly: His 1940 play, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, closed after just four performances and a pile of unpleasant reviews. Six years later *All My Sons* achieved success on Broadway, New York, and earned him his first Tony Award (best author). Working in the small studio that he built in Roxbury, Connecticut, Miller wrote the first act of *Death of a Salesman* in less than one day. It opened on February 10, 1949 at the Morosco Theatre, Broadway, New York, and was much-loved by nearly everyone. This play won him three very prestigious awards for theatrical artistry: the Pulitzer Prize, the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award and Tony award.

Miller married three times. His first wife was Mary Slattery. In 1956, Miller left his first wife, Mary Slattery. Shortly after that, he married famous actress Marilyn Monroe. His play *After the Fall* (1964) is a deeply personal view of Miller's experiences during his marriage to Monroe. Later in 1956, the House of Un-American Activities Committee refused to renew Miller's passport, and summoned him in to appear before the committee— his play, *The Crucible*, a dramatic representation of the Salem witch trials of 1692— a series of hearings and prosecutions of people accused of witchcraft in colonial Massachusetts, between February 1692 and May 1693— and an allegory of McCarthyism (unscrupulously accusing people of disloyalty), was the primary reason

for their forced summons. Miller refused to fulfill the committee's demands to uncover people who had been active in certain political activities.

Miller's third marriage was to Austrian-born photographer Inge Morath. She gave him two children, daughter Rebecca and son Daniel. Daniel was born with Down syndrome, due to which Miller insisted his wife that their son be absolutely excluded from the family's personal life. Nevertheless, Miller's son-in-law, actor Daniel Day-Lewis, visited his wife's brother frequently, and ultimately persuaded Miller to reunite with his son.

In his final years, Miller's work continued to deal with the heaviest of societal and personal matters. His last noteworthy play was *The Price* (1968), a piece about family dynamics. In 2002, Miller's third wife Inge died. The celebrated playwright without delay took a fourth wife, 34-year-old modest painter Agnes Barley. The two planned marriage, but on February 10, 2005 (the 56th anniversary of *Death of a Salesman's* Broadway debut) Arthur Miller, surrounded by Barley, family and friends, died of heart failure at the age of 89 years.

### Self Assessment Questions I

1. Write in brief, the story outline of *Death of a Salesman*
2. Write a short note on Arthur Miller.

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## 3.5. CRITICAL ANALYSIS: THEMATIC

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Now that you have got some fundamental information about the plot of the play and its author, it is time to start analyzing the play with all the knowledge you gained by the first and second units. The topics that were the subject of units one and two will be used as tools for analysis in this unit.

### 3.5.1. Background Study

The play *Death of a Salesman* was produced in the America of 1949. To many viewers the play appeared the most expressive and touching statement made about American life. *Death of a Salesman* is a drama of a man's struggle between reality and the "American dream". As per the definition of the American Dream by James Truslow Adams in 1931, "life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement" regardless of social class or circumstances of birth.

In the play the main character Willy Loman has a desire to be rich and successful. He has the habit of overestimating himself and his son Biff. He thinks of himself as a great salesman who is not as appreciated as he truly deserves. When Biff was very young, Willy started believing that Biff, in future, will have no match when it comes to success and popularity. He also said that a day will come when Biff will be remarkably successful.

This unrealistic attitude towards life shaped the future of this family because reality is very different from dreams. And the Lomans were nurturing their dreams without making the required effort. They, thus, failed in the real world. Willy in many scenes hallucinates about his brother Ben, the self-made man who went into the jungle and came out rich. Willy idealizes Ben and, while growing up, taught his sons what Ben's ways and mottos.

"Never fight fair with a stranger" was Ben's motto, and Willy taught this to Biff. The thought behind this simple motto very aptly represents the American pursuit of materialism at the cost of

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all ethics. The play and each of its characters contribute in painting the picture of the boggles American society of its time.

### 3.5.2. Character Sketches

**Willy Loman:** Full name William Loman. He is 63 years old salesman and very volatile presence of mind, having a tendency to imagine events from the past as if they are real. He vacillates between different views of his life. Willy appears childlike and relies on others' support. His first name, Willy, reflects this childlike characteristic as well as sounding like the question "Will he?" His last name gives the feel of Willy's being a "low man," someone low on the social hierarchy and unlikely to succeed; however, this popular interpretation of his last name has been dismissed by Miller.

**Linda Loman:** Willy's wife. Linda is supportive and unassuming when Willy talks unrealistically about hopes for the future, although she seems to have a good knowledge of what is really going on. She scolds her sons, particularly Biff, for not helping Willy more, and supports Willy unconditionally, despite the fact that Willy sometimes treats her poorly, ignoring her views over those of others. She is the first to realize Willy is planning suicide at the beginning of the play, and urges Biff to make something of him, while expecting Happy to help Biff do so.

**Biff Loman:** Willy's older son. Biff was a football star with lots of potential in high school, but failed math in his senior year and dropped out of summer school due to his catching Willy with another woman while visiting him in Boston. He struggles between going home to try to fulfill Willy's dream for him to be a businessman or ignoring his father and going out West to be a farmhand where he is happiest. Biff steals because he wants some, be it irrelevant, evidence of success. But in general Biff remains a realist, and at last informs Willy that he is just a normal guy, and will not be a great man.

**Harold "Happy" Loman:** Willy's younger son and Biff's younger brother. He, for most of his life, has lived in the shadow of his older brother and seems to be almost unnoticed, but he still tries to be supportive towards his family. He has a very active lifestyle as a womanizer and dreams of moving beyond his existing job as an assistant to the assistant buyer at the local store, and he is willing to cheat a little in order to do so, by taking bribes. He is always looking for appreciation from his parents, but rarely gets any. He tries often to keep his family's perceptions of each other positive by defending each of them during their arguments, but still has somewhat stormy relationship with Linda, who looks down on him for his lifestyle and seeming cheapness, despite him giving them money.

**Charley:** Willy's understanding and caring neighbour. He pities Willy and frequently lends him money and comes over to play cards with Willy, although Willy often treats him badly. Willy is jealous of him because his son is more successful than Willy's. Charley offers Willy a job many times, yet Willy declines every time, even after he loses his job as a salesman.

**Bernard:** Charley's son. In Willy's flashbacks, he is a geek, and Willy forces him to give Biff test answers. He worships Biff and does everything to please him. Later, he becomes a very successful lawyer, married, and expecting a second son. These successes are of the very kind that Willy wants for his sons, in particular, Biff. Bernard's success makes him ponder where he had gone wrong as a father.

**Uncle Ben:** Willy's older brother who became a diamond tycoon after a roundabout route to Africa. He is dead but Willy often speaks to him in his hallucinations of the past. Ben frequently boasts, "When I was seventeen I walked into the jungle, and when I was twenty-one I walked out. And by God I was rich." He is a role model for Willy, although he is much older and has no real



relationship with Willy. He represents Willy's idea of the American Dream success story, and is shown coming by the Lomans' house while on business trips to share stories.

### 3.5.3. Themes, Motifs, and Symbols

**Themes:** Themes are the primary and often universal ideas discovered in a literary work.

**The American Dream:** Willy passionately believes in what he considers the assurance of the American Dream—that a popular and attractive man in business will undoubtedly and deservedly acquire the material luxury offered by modern American life. Strangely, his obsession with the seeming qualities of attractiveness is worthless without a more realistic, more rewarding understanding of the American Dream that identifies true hard work without complaint as the key to success. Willy's interpretation of attractiveness is shallow—he dislikes young Bernard because he considers Bernard a geek. Willy's blind faith in his version of the American Dream leads to his speedy psychological decline when he is unable to accept the gap between the Dream and his own life.

**Abandonment:** Willy's life follows one abandonment to the other, leaving him in greater hopelessness each time. Willy's father leaves him and Ben when Willy is very young. Ben in due course departs for Alaska, leaving Willy to lose himself in a confused vision of the American Dream. Probably as result of these early experiences, Willy develops a fear of abandonment, which makes him want his family to follow the American Dream. His efforts to raise perfect sons, however, reflect his inability to understand reality. The young Biff, whom Willy considers the personification of promise drops Willy's zealous ambitions for him when he discovers his father cheating on his mother with another woman. Biff's inability to succeed in business broadens his alienation from Willy. At the restaurant, Willy finally believes that Biff is on the verge of greatness; Biff shatters Willy's illusions and, along with Happy, abandons the gibbering Willy in the restroom.

**Betrayal:** Willy's primary fixation throughout the play is what he considers to be Biff's betrayal of his ambitions for him. Willy believes that he has every right to expect Biff to reach his potential. When Biff is unable to fulfill Willy's ambitions for him, Willy takes this as a personal insult. Willy, after all, is a salesman. Willy thinks that Biff's betrayal grew out from Biff's discovery of Willy's affair with The Woman—a betrayal of Linda's love. Whereas Willy feels that Biff has betrayed him, Biff feels that Willy, a "phony little fake," has betrayed him with his never-ending stream of ego boosting lies.

**Motifs:** Unifying ideas that are recurrent elements and can help develop the major themes in a literary work.

**The American West, Alaska and the African Jungle:** These regions characterize the potential instinct to Biff and Willy. Willy's father found success in Alaska and his brother, Ben, became rich in Africa; these exotic places, particularly when compared to Willy's ordinary Brooklyn neighbourhood, manifest how Willy's obsession with the commercial world of the city has trapped him in an unpleasant reality. Alaska and the African jungle symbolize Willy's failure, and the American West symbolizes Biff's potential. Biff realizes that he has been content only when working on farms, out in the open. His westward diversion from both Willy's disbeliefs and the commercial world of the eastern United States suggests a nineteenth-century creator mentality—Biff, unlike Willy, recognizes the importance of the individual.

**Mythic Figure:** Willy has a tendency to mythologize people and this contributes to his misleading understanding of the world. He speaks of Dave Singleman as a legend and imagines that his death must have been magnificently noble. Willy compares Biff and Happy to the mythic Greek figures

Adonis and Hercules because he believes that his sons are epitome of “personal attractiveness” and power through “well liked”-ness; to him, they seem the very incarnation of the American Dream. However, Willy’s mythologizing proves somewhat near-sighted. Willy fails to realize the futility of Singleman’s lonely, on-the-job, on-the-road death. Trying to achieve what he believes being Singleman’s heroic status, Willy commits himself to a tragic death and meaningless legacy because even if Willy’s life insurance policy ends up paying off, Biff wants nothing to do with Willy’s ambition for him. Similarly, neither Biff nor Happy ends up leading an ideal, godlike life; while Happy does believe in the American Dream, it seems likely that he will end up no better off than the decidedly ungodly Willy.

**Symbols:** Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colours used to represent abstract ideas or concepts in a literary work.

**Seeds:** Seeds symbolize, for Willy, the opportunity to prove the worth of his labour, both as a salesman and a father. His impatient, attempt to grow vegetables at night signifies his shame about hardly being able to put food on the table and having nothing to leave his children when he dies. Willy knows that he has worked hard but fears that he will not be able to help his offspring any more than his own abandoning father helped him. The seeds also represent Willy’s sense of failure with Biff. Despite the American Dream’s formula for success, which Willy considers unfailing, Willy’s efforts to cultivate and nurture Biff went wrong. Realizing that his all-American football star son Biff has turned into a lazy man, Willy takes Biff’s failure and lack of ambition as a sign of his inabilities as a father.

**Diamonds:** Willy always craved for two things, tangible fruit of his labour and wealth that one can leave as a legacy. Diamond is a symbol of this substantial wealth. The discovery of diamonds made Ben a fortune; symbolize Willy’s failure as a salesman. In spite of Willy’s belief in the American Dream, a belief firm to the extent that he passed up the opportunity to go with Ben to Alaska, the Dream’s promise of financial security has escaped Willy. At the end of the play, Ben encourages Willy to enter the “jungle” finally and regain this abstract diamond—that is, to kill himself for insurance money in order to make his life meaningful.

**Linda’s and The Woman’s Stockings:**

Willy’s weird obsession with the condition of Linda’s stockings symbolizes his later flashback to Biff’s finding of him and The Woman in their Boston hotel room. The teenage Biff accuses Willy of giving away Linda’s stockings to The Woman. Stockings here are the symbol of betrayal and sexual infidelity. New stockings are important for both Willy’s pride in being financially successful and thus able to provide for his family and for Willy’s ability to ease his guilt, and suppress the memory of his betrayal of Linda and Biff.

**Self Assessment Questions II**

1. Write a note on the American dream.
2. Describe Willy Loman’s character.
3. Write a short note on the Importance of symbols in this play.

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**3.6. CRITICAL ANALYSIS: THEATRICAL**

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Till now the analysis of this play is pretty much like the way you must be doing in your curriculum of drama analysis. But this unit will explain it to you why so much stress is being given on theatrical analysis of drama. In unit 2 of this block you learned about the important

elements of drama, in this section you will learn about the practicality of these elements in a theatrical performance. You will be able to find this play in 15 parts from the following URLs:

Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman: Warren Abel theatrical production by Xaverian Dramatic Society

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtA-BIQm-hs>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAUJFS851mA>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bs3BkV8F7cQ>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lta\\_bWdGuAI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lta_bWdGuAI)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbUoWMduDOI>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jPxl6sdUrmU>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVOLIwermnk>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfdMVg\\_GnVw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfdMVg_GnVw)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wGblxRBkEtQ>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TXHTxAiZhM4>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7hw1Vfl3yA>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sdk\\_zQ6JHHQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sdk_zQ6JHHQ)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5LALilina0>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGguDc6bqr8>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWszGMmZ3AA>

You may also analyze “Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman: A Roxbury and Punch production” film, starring Dustin Hoffman as Willy Loman and directed by Volker Schlöndorff.

### 3.6.1. Set, Properties, and Costumes

The set of Death of a Salesman is designed to be see-through; the lack of walls allows the characters of Willy Loman’s memories to walk in and out of the house without regards to their location on the stage. The film set is comprised of a “real” house, but one that is not complete. The walls do not always connect, allowing the audience to see straight through to the other buildings, or when the camera is positioned outside, to see the characters on the inside of the house. Even the ceiling and roof is completely missing in one shot. The background for the entire movie is set against a backdrop. These gaps are utilized, by the director, to give an essence of the film’s theatre roots. In addition, props, colour schemes, and costume are used so as to aid in character development.

The set itself is not completely put together. Gaps occur, generally, at the corners of the walls. Similarly, it is the stories of Willy’s life, the stories he tells to make himself seem important, that never quite match up to his real life. The backyard, which is nothing but dirt, evidence of the lack of growth in Willy’s life, is enclosed with an incomplete fence. During Willy’s first memory he

sits down at the table outside to talk to Biff and Happy. The camera is positioned directly in front of Willy. The audience sees Willy sitting in front of the only gap in the boarded fence line – the gap that looks over the graveyard. This positioning is a foretelling of Willy’s life. Recalling on his past, longing for a bright future for his sons, particularly Biff, will lead him to an early death.

The colour schemes of the set are also important to Willy’s life. The Woman of Willy’s past is connected with the colour red. The hotel room walls are red, and the floor is red and black. The red in this scene connects to the sexual nature of the relationship between Willy and the Woman. The colour of the room connects to the red of the restaurant as well. The restaurant has the same shade of red for the walls and the floor is the same red and black checker pattern. Because the audience is already aware of the sexual quality of red in the movie, the audience is cued for something sexual in nature to occur. Happy picks up the prostitute that has come into the restaurant and has her call in a friend for Biff. (Happy’s over eager sexual drive is marked in the very first scene by his discussion of his sexual conquests while he is wearing a red house robe.) The laughter of the prostitutes eventually merge into the laughter of the Woman from Willy’s past and it is in this scene, the merging of all the red, which the audience is given the reason for Biff and Willy’s falling out – Biff finds the Woman in Willy’s hotel room.

White is also an important colour in the movie. The kitchen of his house, a symbol of his home life, is almost completely white. The only colour coming from the dark wood chairs and the black and white checker floor. But, the white that generally symbolizes purity or wholesomeness is faded and old. Like his hope to gain the American dream of material success, the kitchen, as well as the rest of the house, has long ago faded. The colour white is used several more times as either set/lighting or as costume colours on a character to symbolize a combination of regret and loss of hope. The Woman and Ben both wear all white. Ben is in a near constant state of enshrined in light. In Harold’s office, Ben’s face is framed with the soft white windows which mimic the other-worldly light. Willy regrets not going with Ben to Alaska and so always remembers Ben as just about to leave, asking Willy to go with him. Willy realizes, either consciously or unconsciously, that he will never have another opportunity to succeed in the way he could have had he gone with Ben. Willy’s conscience is nagged by the Woman not only because he betrayed Linda, but also because due to Biff finding out about the affair, he has lost the respect of his eldest son.

To conclude, let’s look at Dustin Hoffman’s portrayal of Willy at the end of the movie and its connection with colour. Willy seemingly finally decides to take his life in order to give Biff a financial chance at achieving success. Hoffman portrays Willy as excited and hopeful about the prospect of his son succeeding, but the director chooses to fade the screen to white as the sound of the car crash is heard, accompanied by distraught screams from Willy’s family. With Willy finally following Ben into the white light, a giving into the regret of not following Ben, and the audience being blinded by the colour that for Willy is connected to despair and regret, one has to ask was Hoffman’s portrayal accurate? Does Willy feel a sense of hope or was his suicide really an act of despair, a final realization that the only help he can be to his family is by causing his own death?

(source [www.youmakemehappy.wordpress.com](http://www.youmakemehappy.wordpress.com))

### 3.6.2. Light and Sound Devices

**Lighting:** Lighting in *Death of a Salesman* often illustrates atmosphere and mood. In most of Willy’s memories, leaves (presumably lighting) cover the stage, creating an idyllic, nature-oriented and seemingly happy atmosphere. In stark contrast, the scenes in the restaurant and the hotel room are characterized by a red glow, red symbolizing passion and anger. Throughout the play, lighting

is used in this way, defining the atmosphere in which the characters exist, in the absence of settings and props to do so.

Lighting is also used to indicate the location on the stage in which relevant action is occurring. When Willy moves into his memories, a different type of light or location of light indicates the difference between his locations in the timeline of the play as different from that of those around him. For example, light is used to express Willy's memories about the woman while Linda remains sitting in the kitchen of the house. We are not confused about Linda's involvement or lack thereof in the scene, because light indicates that the action occurs where she is not.

Characterization is also brought about to a certain extent through lighting, though in a subtle manner that serves more to accentuate certain character traits that are expressed elsewhere. In the film version, the character Happy is nearly always half-lit, implying that his life revolves about the half of his life that is splendour of his past success, instead of the stagnation and discontent that is his present.

**Sound:** From the beginning of the play, music is used to set atmosphere and tone. While it may be thought of as pastoral, one can also see that the haunting flute which both opens and closes the production might be imagined as sounding forlorn and gently tragic, in the beginning setting the stage for the Loman family's tragedy, and in the end mourning for Willy Loman. Sound is a central part of the scenes set in the Lomans' past; here it suggests happier times by its cheerfulness, and Ben's theme music reinforces both his position as Willy's idol and the aura of success that surrounds him.

Sound in *Death of a Salesman* is used to promote understanding of the characters and events in the play, to set atmosphere and tone of scenes (particularly of memories), to characterise –especially in the case of Ben— and to create pathos.

**Sound & Lighting Used Together:** Miller often uses sound and light together to indicate transitions between Willy's mind and reality, as in the case of the woman's laugh becoming Linda's, as Willy travels from daydream to reality. Other transitions between times and places are indicated similarly. Atmospheric music, presence and absence of light and incidental sounds create movement between past and present. For example, as Willy is lost in remembering Biff's visit to Boston, persistent knocking pulls him entirely into the memory and away from the current physical scene, the restaurant. Slightly later "the light follows him" from the hotel room to the hallway, making clear to the audience his movement from one surrounding to another without change of set elements.

(source <http://saflyear13.wikispaces.com/Staging+++Setting+and+Music>)

### 3.6.3. Actor Audience Relationship

Actor-audience relationship in *Death of a salesman* is like that of a patient and his Psychiatrist. Willy Loman is like an open book, psychologically, for the audience. The audiences are presented with the past, present, fancy of Willy Loman. From the first scene to the requiem, audience is aware of everything going on in Willy's mind. His hallucinations, his depression, his shallow perceptions, everything is bare open in front of the audience, making the audience sympathize with him in his failures and at the same time hating him for his misdeeds. In the play Arthur Miller avoids mentioning Willy Loman's sales product. The audience never knows what this poor salesman sells. Possibly Willy Loman represents "Everyman." By not specifying the product, audiences are free to imagine Willy as a seller of kitchen appliances, building supplies, paper products, or electrical equipments. Any audience member might imagine a career linked with his/her own, and Miller then succeeds in connecting with the viewer. The audience watch the play through Willy and he is the link between audience and all the other actors.

**Self Assessment Questions III**

1. Relevance of stage settings in this play.
2. Relevance of light and sound devices in the play.
3. Based on your understanding of this play through this unit, describe your relation to Willy Loman as an audience.

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**3.7. SUMMING UP**

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In this unit you learned

- How to analyze a drama with the inclusion of its theatrical analysis
- Importance of theatrical elements to understand the meaning of a drama.

Now we have reached the end of this theatrical journey. You have learned about the historical context of drama, the anatomy of drama, and finally how to analyze a drama. Units 1 and 2 were to enhance your understanding of drama and highlight the importance of theatrical elements of drama. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and final unit of this block was solely dedicated to show you how to execute the knowledge gained by you in Units 1 and 2. It is important to note that the play “death of a salesman” is not in your syllabus and it is here used just as a sample to make you understand the process of complete Drama analysis.

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**3.8. ANSWERS TO SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

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**I**

1. Refer to section 3.3.
2. Refer to section 3.4.

**II**

1. Refer to section 3.5.1.
2. Refer to section 3.5.2.
3. Refer to section 3.5.3. Symbols

**III**

1. Refer to section 3.6.1.
2. Refer to section 3.6.2.
3. Refer to section 3.6.3

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**3.9. REFERENCES**

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### **3.10. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS**

1. Write an essay on theatrical analysis of *Death of a Salesman*.
2. Did you find the analysis of done in this unit different from how drama is conventionally analyzed? Write about it.
3. After studying these units, do you think theatrical analysis is vital to the understanding of drama?
4. What changes should be made to classroom teaching of drama to make it more accurate?

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**UNIT 4 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH* PART 1**

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4.1. Introduction

4.2. Objectives

4.3. A Biographical Account of William Shakespeare

4.4. Drama

4.5. Outline of *Macbeth*

4.6. Summary

4.7. Answers to Self Assessment Questions

4.8. References

4.9. Terminal and Model questions



## 4.1. INTRODUCTION

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Drama is a piece of literary work written in dialogue to be performed before an audience by actors on a stage. The essential elements in a drama are story and action to develop a story and characters to impersonate it. Drama had its origins in Greece in the Dionysian fertility rites in the case of comedy and rites associated with life and death in tragedy. The early drama was poetic while prose was introduced in the sixteenth century. The basic elements of drama are theme, plot and character. You have read about the intricacies of drama in the first three units. The next three units that follow will deal with *Macbeth*, which is Shakespeare's finest tragedy of ambition.

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## 4.2. OBJECTIVE

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To acquaint yourself with the life of Shakespeare

- Understanding drama
- Understanding tragedy
- To know the outline of the play

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## 4.3. A BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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Known throughout the world, the works of William Shakespeare have been performed in countless hamlets, villages, cities and metropolises for more than 400 years. And yet, the personal history of William Shakespeare is somewhat a mystery. There are two primary sources that provide historians with a basic outline of his life. One source is his work—the plays, poems and sonnets—and the other is official documentation such as church and court records. However, these only provide brief sketches of specific events in his life and provide little on the person who experienced those events.

Though no birth records exist, church records indicate that a William Shakespeare was baptized at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564. From this, it is believed he was born on or near April 23, 1564, and this is the date scholars acknowledge as William Shakespeare's birthday.

Located 103 miles west of London, during Shakespeare's time Stratford-upon-Avon was a market town bisected with a country road and the River Avon. William was the third child of John Shakespeare, a leather merchant, and Mary Arden, a local landed heiress. William had two older sisters, Joan and Judith, and three younger brothers, Gilbert, Richard and Edmund. Before William's birth, his father became a successful merchant and held official positions as alderman and bailiff, an office resembling a mayor. However, records indicate John's fortunes declined sometime in the late 1570s.

Scant records exist of William's childhood, and virtually none regarding his education. Scholars have surmised that he most likely attended the King's New School, in Stratford, which taught reading, writing and the classics. Being a public official's child, William would have undoubtedly qualified for free tuition. But this uncertainty regarding his education has led some to raise questions about the authorship of his work and even about whether or not William Shakespeare ever existed

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William Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway on November 28, 1582, in Worcester, in Canterbury Province. Hathaway was from Shottery, a small village a mile west of Stratford. William was 18 and Anne was 26, and, as it turns out, expecting a baby, their first child, a daughter they named Susanna, was born on May 26, 1583. Two years later, on February 2, 1585, twins Hamnet and Judith were born. Hamnet later died of unknown causes at age 11.

After the birth of the twins, there are seven years of William Shakespeare's life where no records exist. Scholars call this period the "lost years," and there is wide speculation on what he was doing during this period. One theory is that he might have gone into hiding for poaching game from the local landlord, Sir Thomas Lucy. Another possibility is that he might have been working as an assistant schoolmaster in Lancashire. It is generally believed he arrived in London in the mid- to late 1580s and may have found work as a horse attendant at some of London's finer theaters scenario updated centuries later by the countless aspiring actors and playwrights in Hollywood and Broadway.

By 1592, there is evidence William Shakespeare earned a living as an actor and a playwright in London and possibly had several plays produced. The September 20, 1592 edition of the Stationers' Register (a guild publication) includes an article by London playwright Robert Greene that takes a few jabs at William Shakespeare: "...There is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tiger's heart wrapped in a Player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Johannes factotum, is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country," Greene wrote of Shakespeare.

Scholars differ on the interpretation of this criticism, but most agree that it was Greene's way of saying Shakespeare was reaching above his rank, trying to match better known and educated playwrights like Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Nashe or Greene himself.

By the early 1590s, documents show William Shakespeare was a managing partner in the Lord Chamberlain's Men, an acting company in London. After the crowning of King James I, in 1603, the company changed its name to the King's Men. From all accounts, the King's Men Company was very popular, and records show that Shakespeare had works published and sold as popular literature. The theater culture in 16th century England was not highly admired by people of high rank. However, many of the nobility were good patrons of the performing arts and friends of the actors. Early in his career, Shakespeare was able to attract the attention of Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, to whom he dedicated his first- and second-published poems: "Venus and Adonis" (1593) and "The Rape of Lucrece." (1594).

By 1597, 15 of the 37 plays written by William Shakespeare were published. Civil records show that at this time he purchased the second largest house in Stratford, called New House, for his family. It was a four-day ride by horse from Stratford to London, so it is believed that Shakespeare spent most of his time in the city writing and acting and came home once a year during the 40-day Lenten period, when the theaters were closed.

By 1599, William Shakespeare and his business partners built their own theater on the south bank of the Thames River, which they called the Globe. In 1605, Shakespeare purchased leases of real estate near Stratford for 440 pounds, which doubled in value and earned him 60 pounds a year.

Scholars call this period the "lost years," and there is wide speculation on what he was doing during this period. One theory is that he might have gone into hiding for poaching game from the local landlord, Sir Thomas Lucy. Another possibility is that he might have been working as an assistant schoolmaster in Lancashire. It is generally believed he arrived in London in the mid- to late 1580s and may have found work as a horse attendant at some of London's finer theaters,

scenario updated centuries later by the countless aspiring actors and playwrights in Hollywood and Broadway.

#### 4.4. DRAMA

Drama is an art form in which fact or fiction is enacted before an audience. Unlike a novel it is not read in private but performed in public. The key element in drama is conflict—Conflict between good and evil, between individual and society or between individual himself. From the ancient times drama can be divided into tragedy and comedy. Tragedy deals with the darker side of life whereas comedy with the lighter side. In the Greek drama Tragedy dealt with the fate of characters from higher station in life—kings and princess while comedy dealt with the common mortals. However in literature we can have tragedies dealing with lowly life and comedies associated with high birth.

##### Points to consider about Tragedy:

- Tragedy is concerned with the dark side of life.
- The atmosphere of tragedy is somber and serious.
- Tragedy furnishes pleasure which is of lofty order. One goes through ennobling and exalting experience in tragedy.
- Tragedy has a purifying effect upon individuals.

##### Salient Features of Shakespearean Tragedy

- Shakespearean Tragedy focuses is on the single character- the hero.
- The hero is no ordinary man but comes from the royalty.
- The hero however has a weakness (flaw) which causes his downfall. For example Hamlet suffers from indecision, Othello from jealousy, King Lear violent temper and lack of judgment and Macbeth ambition.
- While in Greek tragedy characters are victims of their own fate and their destruction is inevitable but in Shakespearean tragedy it is the flaw in the hero's character which brings about their downfall. At the same time chance and supernatural events are also responsible for the fall of the hero (for example in Macbeth the witches are instrumental in the fall of the hero).
- Shakespearean tragedy violates classical unity (Unity of Action, Place and Time. Unity of Action means absence of sub -plot and no mixing of tragedy and comedy/Unity of Place means action takes place in one place only /Unity of time means action takes place at a definite period of time).
- The two genres (kinds) –comedy and tragedy are mixed in Shakespearean tragedy.
- A Shakespearean tragedy is made up of exposition, conflict, crisis and denouement.

#### 4.5. OUTLINE OF *MACBETH*

Macbeth is one of the darkest tragedies ever written by Shakespeare. Set in Scotland it is the story of Macbeth one of the generals who is been sent by Duncan the king of Scotland to crush a rebellion led by Thane of Cawdor (and supported by Macdonwald and the king of Norway) along with his companion general Banquo. Macbeth succeeds in suppressing the rebellion in which Macdonwald is killed, while thane of Cawdor and Norwegian king surrenders.

While the two generals were returning from the battlefield they come across three witches who prophesy Macbeth that he would become the Thane of Cawdor and the future king of Scotland. To Banquo they said that he would father a line of kings. In the meanwhile the generals are intercepted by a messenger from the king Duncan who announces that on account of Macbeth's valour the king has granted the title of thane of Cawdor to Macbeth. Further as a token of gratitude the king himself would come to Macbeth's castle at Inverness as a royal guest to honour him. This Macbeth writes to his wife and also informs her about the witches prophesy. She is swept by her ambition to become the queen and is determined to push Macbeth into the murder of Duncan as she knows that her husband is full of moral considerations.

Duncan the king comes to Macbeth's castle at Inverness to honour him. After a night of partying and merrymaking the king goes to sleep in his bedchamber. Lady has succeeded in instigating Macbeth to kill Duncan. In the meanwhile Macbeth sees the vision of an imaginary dagger before him. Later on Macbeth kills Duncan and the royal guards (to transfer the blame on them) and comes out of his bedchamber with bloodstained daggers. Lady Macbeth with her courage and extreme will power goes back to Duncan's bed chamber and smears the blood stained daggers on the bodies of the royal guards in order to show that the crime was committed by them and therefore were killed by Macbeth. Next day when the news of Duncan's murder breaks his sons Malcom and Donalbain flee Scotland to England and Ireland in order to save their life. This lands them into suspicion of murdering their father.

Macbeth now crowns himself the new king of Scotland with Lady Macbeth as the Queen. He however is not happy as according to witches' prophecy Banquo's sons would be the kings of Scotland. He hires murderers to get Banquo and his son killed. Banquo is murdered while his son Fleance escapes. Following this incident in the banquet when Macbeth express his regret for Banquo's absence, the ghost of Banquo appears (only seen by Macbeth) leaving Macbeth horrified. Lady Macbeth controls the situation and tells the guests to leave and not wait for their order as Macbeth is subjected to such seizures since youth. There is a general air of suspicion among the nobles that Macbeth is responsible for Duncan's murder. We are told that Macduff has joined Malcolm in England.

Feeling insecure and restless once again he goes to meet the weird sisters who call upon the apparitions which predict-a)Macbeth should be cautious of Macduff b)No man born of woman can harm Macbeth c)Macbeth shall never be defeated until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Hill. On been asked by Macbeth (whether Banquo's issue would rule over Scotland or not)the witches show him a line of twelve kings with Banquo's ghost following them(indicating that he is a father to a line of kings).Macbeth is infuriated by this sight. On reaching his palace he is been told that Macduff has fled to England.Out of frustration and anger Macbeth gets Macduff's wife and child brutally murdered.

In England Malcom and Macduff discuss about the poor state of affairs in Scotland under the rule of tyrant Macbeth. When Ross,another noble arrives with the tragic news that Macduff's family is cruelly killed Macduff resolves to kill Macbeth in the battlefield. In the meanwhile Lady Macbeth is going through pangs of inner torment and guilt over the killing of Duncan and is walking in her sleep. Her struggle reaches its peak when she commits suicide. However, for Macbeth life is meaningless and he knows and he has no time to lament over the death of the queen.

All is set for battle. To screen the strength of the army Malcom orders his troops to carry a branch and march forward towards Macbeth's castle. When Macbeth is told that Birnam Wood is moving to Dunsinane Hill he orders his troops to leave the castle and face the enemy(It is better to die fighting for Macbeth and his men).When Macbeth meets Macduff face to face he avoids fighting(as he is guilty of killing Lady Macduff and her child)and tells him that he cannot be touched by a man born under normal circumstances by a woman, to which Macduff retorts that he

is untimely ripped apart from his mother's womb. Though he realizes that he is doomed, Macbeth continues to fight until Macduff kills and beheads him. Malcolm, now the King of Scotland, declares his benevolent intentions for the country and invites all to see him crowned at Scone.

#### 4.6. SUMMARY

In this unit you were given an outline of drama. You also read a biographical account of Shakespeare and traced his growth as a dramatist. In this unit you also read the outline of the play *Macbeth* which is all about contradiction and ambition. It can be argued that *Macbeth* is Shakespeare's profound and mature vision of evil. It is a play depicting destruction, wrestling with creation. It is a study of the disintegration and damnation of a man. And yet Macbeth is a tragic hero. Therein lies Shakespeare's art, evolving from a deep understanding of the complexity of human nature.

#### Self Assessment Questions

1. What is drama?
2. Define Tragedy. What is Shakespearean tragedy?
3. Discuss *Macbeth* as a Shakespearean tragedy.
4. What is an aside? Give examples.

#### 4.7. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to the section 3.4.
2. Refer to the section 3.4.
3. Refer to the section 3.5.

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#### 4.9. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Write a short note on Drama.
2. Attempt a biographical account of Shakespeare in your own words.
3. What are the salient features of Shakespearean Tragedy?
4. Discuss *Macbeth* as a tragedy of ambition.

- 5.1. Introduction
- 5.2. Objectives
- 5.3. A General Critical Appreciation of *Macbeth*
- 5.4. Major themes in *Macbeth*
  - 5.4.1. Ambition
  - 5.4.2. Fate
  - 5.4.3. Violence
  - 5.4.4. Nature and the Unnatural
  - 5.4.5. Manhood
  - 5.4.6. The Fall of Man
  - 5.4.7. Fortune, Fate and Illwill
  - 5.4.8. Kingship and Natural Order
  - 5.4.9. Disruption of Nature
  - 5.4.10. Gender Roles
  - 5.4.11. Reason and Passion
- 5.5. Important Scenes
  - 5.5.1. The Opening Scene
  - 5.5.2. The Porter Scene
- 5.6. Characterization
- 5.7. Summary
- 5.8. Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 5.9. References
- 5.10. Terminal and Model Questions

## 5.1. INTRODUCTION

In literature, themes stand for central or dominating idea implicit in a work. The theme of a work is obliquely expressed through characters, symbols and actions. A theme differs from subject (or topic) in the sense that it is a comment, observation or insight into the subject. For example if the subject is a vulture then the theme is death.

Characters are persons in a literary work. The main character is called hero or protagonist. The person in conflict with the hero and less admirable is antagonist or simply villain. Characters who change are round while those who remain the same throughout the play are flat. A character may be totally evil(black) or good (white) but also grey(possessing both good and bad qualities).

## 5.2. OBJECTIVES

This unit aims at the following points:

- To make the students understanding the themes in the play
- To help the students appreciate the major scenes of the play
- To facilitate the students to understand the characters and to know their significance.

## 5.3. A GENERAL CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF *MACBETH*

The focus of extensive and enduring critical interest, Macbeth presents one of the most trenchant examinations of the nature of evil and the consequences of crimes against humanity in English literature. Motivated by complex desires and fears, and possibly by supernatural forces, Macbeth breaks the natural order of acceptable behavior when he commits murder, permanently altering his identity and his destiny. The play is essentially about the conversion of an otherwise "good" person to evil, and the erosion of his conscience and his humanity in the process.

Discussing Shakespeare's Macbeth, Frank Kermode commented: "In no other play does Shakespeare show a nation so cruelly occupied by the powers of darkness; and Macbeth is, for all its brevity, his most intensive study of evil at work in the individual and in the world at large." In the play, Shakespeare dramatizes not only the way in which evil enters Macbeth's world, but also the devastating effect it has after he yields to the temptation to sin. Some critics have argued that the tragedy concludes on a hopeful note, however, for the pervasive corruption is portrayed as temporary and highly unnatural occurrence, and there is the sense that a providential order is inevitably restored in time.

Shakespeare's primary source for Macbeth was Raphael Holinshed's account of Scottish history in Chronicles of England, Scotlande and Irelande (1577), although Shakespeare altered this version of the facts for dramatic purposes. For example, in Shakespeare's play, Macbeth reigns for a short and tyrannous period, while in Holinshed's account of history, Macbeth's reign lasted seventeen years, during ten of which he was considered a good ruler. Shakespeare also polarized and intensified the moral stance of certain characters. In Holinshed's history, for example, Duncan is described as a young, ineffectual leader rather than the aging and highly respected figure portrayed in Macbeth; Banquo is an accomplice in Duncan's murder rather than an innocent victim; and Macbeth has a legitimate claim to the throne, since Duncan broke the traditional Scottish pattern of kingly succession by naming his son as an heir. Additionally, Shakespeare may have derived some of the specific circumstances surrounding Duncan's murder, such as the influence of

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Macbeth's ambitious wife, from Holinshed's account of the murder of King Duff, an earlier monarch.

In part because the play's subject matter would have been of particular interest to King James, who was known to be interested in witchcraft, most scholars concur that Macbeth must have been written sometime after James's accession to the throne in 1603; possibly for a performance in August, 1606. This hypothesis is also supported by the play's relative brevity (it is the shortest of Shakespeare's tragedies), which, some critics believe, was in response to James's impatience with longer plays. There has been some controversy concerning the possible abridgement and interpolation of the text of Macbeth. While early critics occasionally argued that several scenes, such as the Porter scene, were not written by Shakespeare, most twentieth century scholars consider only the whole of Act II, Scene V, and certain lines in Act IV, Scene I, to be the interpolations of another author. All of these spurious lines involve Hecate and the witches, and are usually attributed to the dramatist Thomas Middleton, who might have been employed to revise Shakespeare's Macbeth to make the work more operatic. He may have introduced some of the songs, which were later incorporated into his play *The Witch*. Other critics, however, contend that Macbeth's Hecate is considerably different from the character in *The Witch*, suggesting that an anonymous author, rather than Middleton, was responsible for the interpolated lines. Another textual concern is the possible abridgement of the original text, with some critics proposing that Shakespeare originally composed a significantly longer work, which he revised in 1606 for a court performance.

The supernatural motif in Macbeth has been the source of controversy, with extensive discussion focusing on the nature of the witches, and the degree of their influence over events in the play. Many have interpreted the witches as agents of powerful evil forces that literally alter Macbeth's destiny, observing that notions of evil as an objective and independent force in the world, and of the reality of witchcraft, were common aspects of the Renaissance worldview. It has also been suggested that from the playwright's perspective, the presence of supernatural forces in the play contributes to a heightened sense of terror that would not otherwise be evoked. Other critics have viewed the Weird Sisters as frightening, but essentially powerless symbols, arguing that they simply "trick" Macbeth into believing that his fate is predetermined, which ironically entices him to choose a path that results in his own downfall. In other words, the tragedy of Macbeth is essentially the tragedy of a man's lack of faith in his own free will; the witches and apparitions are manifestations of his guilty and fearful mind.

Another focus of critical discussion surrounding Macbeth is Shakespeare's ambiguous treatment of sex roles. In several instances, the conventional gender identity of the characters is inverted, with Lady Macbeth's character being a prominent example of this reversal. In Act I, Scene V, for example, she resolves to "unsex" herself, to suppress any weakness associated with her feminine nature, in order to impel Macbeth to murder the king. After Duncan is killed, however, her feelings of guilt contribute to her eventual insanity and suicide. Macbeth, however, is arguably most profoundly affected by the question of gender in the tragedy. From the beginning of the play, he is plagued by feelings of doubt and insecurity which his wife attributes to "effeminate" weakness. Fearing that her husband does not have the resolve to murder Duncan, Lady Macbeth manipulates his lack of confidence by questioning his manhood. The more the protagonist pursues his warped concept of manliness; first by murdering Duncan, then Banquo, and finally Macduff's family; the more alienated and inhumane he becomes.

The sense of corruption and deterioration that pervades the play's action is also supported by its imagery. A dominant motif in the language of Macbeth, for example, is that of infants and breast-feeding: images of infants are commonly interpreted as symbolizing human compassion and pity, while breast-milk represents tenderness, sympathy, and natural human emotions; all of which have been debased by Macbeth's crimes. Another prominent motif is that of sickness and medicine,



including numerous references to spilled blood which emphasize Scotland's degeneration following Macbeth's usurpation of the crown. Blood imagery is also viewed as a symbol of the purifying process through which Malcolm and Macduff—the restorers of the proper order—purge the weakened country of the villainy introduced by Macbeth. Other important images include such oppositions as sleep and sleeplessness, order versus disorder, and the contrast between light and darkness; with such positive "life forces" as honor, imperial magnificence, sleeping, feasting, creation, and innocence opposed by forces of evil and death. Many critics have emphasized the fundamental opposition between forces of "unnatural" destruction with those of "natural" creation, noting that the positive forces of nature ultimately triumph over corruption and evil. Shakespeare's depiction of time is another central concern in *Macbeth*, as there is a sense that Macbeth dislocates his role in the passage of time when he succumbs to evil and murders Duncan. Shakespeare uses this displacement as a key symbol in dramatizing the steady disintegration of the hero's world. While Macbeth's evil actions initially seem to interrupt the normal flow of time, contributing to the dark, nightmarish atmosphere of the drama, order gradually regains its proper shape and overpowers the new king, as reflected by his increasing unease and sleeplessness. Proponents of Christian interpretations of the play maintain that the natural order at the end of the play is restored by the representatives of supernatural grace, Malcolm and Macduff.

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## 5.4. MAJOR THEMES IN *MACBETH*

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### 5.4.1. Ambition

*Macbeth* is a play about ambition run amok. The weird sisters' prophecies spur both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to try to fulfill their ambitions, but the witches never make Macbeth or his wife do anything. Macbeth and his wife act on their own to fulfill their deepest desires. Macbeth, a good general and, by all accounts before the action of the play, a good man, allows his ambition to overwhelm him and becomes a murdering, paranoid maniac. Lady Macbeth, once she begins to put into actions the once-hidden thoughts of her mind, is crushed by guilt.

Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth want to be great and powerful, and sacrifice their morals to achieve that goal. By contrasting these two characters with others in the play, such as Banquo, Duncan, and Macduff, who also want to be great leaders but refuse to allow ambition to come before honor, Macbeth shows how naked ambition, freed from any sort of moral or social conscience, ultimately takes over every other characteristic of a person. Unchecked ambition, Macbeth suggests, can never be fulfilled, and therefore quickly grows into a monster that will destroy anyone who gives into it.

### 5.4.2. Fate

From the moment the weird sisters tell Macbeth and Banquo their prophecies, both the characters and the audience are forced to wonder about fate. Is it real? Is action necessary to make it come to pass, or will the prophecy come true no matter what one does? Different characters answer these questions in different ways at different times and the final answer are ambiguous—as fate always is.

Unlike Banquo, Macbeth acts: he kills Duncan. Macbeth tries to master fate, to make fate conform to exactly what he wants. But, of course, fate doesn't work that way. By trying to master fate once, Macbeth puts himself in the position of having to master fate always. At every instant, he has to struggle against those parts of the witches' prophecies that don't favor him. Ultimately, Macbeth becomes so obsessed with his fate that he becomes delusional: he becomes unable to see the half-truths behind the witches' prophecies. By trying to master fate, he brings himself to ruin.

**5.4.3. Violence**

To call Macbeth a violent play is an understatement. It begins in battle, contains the murder of men, women, and children, and ends not just with a climactic siege but the suicide of Lady Macbeth and the beheading of its main character, Macbeth. In the process of all this bloodshed, Macbeth makes an important point about the nature of violence: every violent act, even those done for selfless reasons, seems to lead inevitably to the next. The violence through which Macbeth takes the throne, as Macbeth himself realizes, opens the way for others to try to take the throne for themselves through violence. So Macbeth must commit more violence, and more violence, until violence is all he has left. As Macbeth himself says after seeing Banquo's ghost, "blood will to blood." Violence leads to violence, a vicious cycle.

**5.4.4. Nature and the Unnatural**

In medieval times, it was believed that the health of a country was directly related to the goodness and moral legitimacy of its king. If the King was good and just, then the nation would have good harvests and good weather. If there was political order, then there would be natural order. Macbeth shows this connection between the political and natural world: when Macbeth disrupts the social and political order by murdering Duncan and usurping the throne, nature goes haywire. Incredible storms rage, the earth tremors, animals go insane and eat each other. The unnatural events of the physical world emphasize the horror of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth's acts, and mirror the warping of their souls by ambition.

Also note the way that different characters talk about nature in the play. Duncan and Malcolm use nature metaphors when they speak of kingship—they see themselves as gardeners and want to make their realm grow and flower. In contrast, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth either try to hide from nature (wishing the stars would disappear) or to use nature to hide their cruel designs (being the serpent hiding beneath the innocent flower). The implication is that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, once they've given themselves to the extreme selfishness of ambition, have themselves become unnatural.

**5.4.5. Manhood**

Over and over again in Macbeth, characters discuss or debate about manhood: Lady Macbeth challenges Macbeth when he decides not to kill Duncan, Banquo refuses to join Macbeth in his plot, Lady Macduff questions Macduff's decision to go to England, and on and on.

Through these challenges, Macbeth questions and examines manhood itself. Does a true man take what he wants no matter what it is, as Lady Macbeth believes? Or does a real man have the strength to restrain his desires, as Banquo believes? All of Macbeth can be seen as a struggle to answer this question about the nature and responsibilities of manhood.

**5.4.6. The Fall of Man**

The ancient Greek notion of tragedy concerned the fall of a great man, such as a king, from a position of superiority to a position of humility on account of his ambitious pride, or hubris. To the Greeks, such arrogance in human behavior was punishable by terrible vengeance. The tragic hero was to be pitied in his fallen plight but not necessarily forgiven: Greek tragedy frequently has a bleak outcome. Christian drama, on the other hand, always offers a ray of hope; hence, Macbeth ends with the coronation of Malcolm, a new leader who exhibits all the correct virtues for a king.

Macbeth exhibits elements that reflect the greatest Christian tragedy of all: the Fall of Man. In the Genesis story, it is the weakness of Adam, persuaded by his wife (who has in turn been seduced

by the devil) which leads him to the proud assumption that he can "play God." But both stories offer room for hope: Christ will come to save mankind precisely because mankind has made the wrong choice through his own free will. In Christian terms, although Macbeth has acted tyrannically, criminally, and sinfully, he is not entirely beyond redemption in heaven.

#### **5.4.7. Fortune, Fate, and Free Will**

Fortune is another word for chance. The ancient view of human affairs frequently referred to the "Wheel of Fortune," according to which human life was something of a lottery. One could rise to the top of the wheel and enjoy the benefits of superiority, but only for a while. With an unpredictable swing up or down, one could equally easily crash to the base of the wheel.

Fate, on the other hand, is fixed. In a fatalistic universe, the length and outcome of one's life (destiny) is predetermined by external forces. In *Macbeth*, the Witches represent this influence. The play makes an important distinction: Fate may dictate what will be, but how that destiny comes about is a matter of chance (and, in a Christian world such as *Macbeth's*) of man's own choice or free will.

Although *Macbeth* is told he will become king, he is not told how to achieve the position of king: that much is up to him. We cannot blame him for becoming king (it is his Destiny), but we can blame him for the way in which he chooses to get there (by his own free will).

#### **5.4.8. Kingship and Natural Order**

*Macbeth* is set in a society in which the notion of honor to one's word and loyalty to one's superiors is absolute. At the top of this hierarchy is the king, God's representative on Earth. Other relationships also depend on loyalty: comradeship in warfare, hospitality of host towards guest, and the loyalty between husband and wife. In this play, all these basic societal relationships are perverted or broken. Lady *Macbeth's* domination over her husband, *Macbeth's* treacherous act of regicide, and his destruction of comradeship and family bonds, all go against the natural order of things.

The medieval and renaissance view of the world saw a relationship between order on earth, the so-called microcosm, and order on the larger scale of the universe, or macrocosm. Thus, when Lennox and the Old Man talk of the terrifying alteration in the natural order of the universe — tempests, earthquakes, darkness at noon, and so on — these are all reflections of the breakage of the natural order that *Macbeth* has brought about in his own microcosmic world.

#### **5.4.9. Disruption of Nature**

Violent disruptions in nature — tempest, earthquakes, darkness at noon, and so on — parallel the unnatural and disruptive death of the monarch Duncan.

The medieval and renaissance view of the world saw a relationship between order on earth, the so-called microcosm, and order on the larger scale of the universe, or macrocosm. Thus, when Lennox and the Old Man talk of the terrifying alteration in the natural order of the universe (nature), these are all reflections of the breakage of the natural order that *Macbeth* has brought about in his own microcosmic world (society).

Many critics see the parallel between Duncan's death and disorder in nature as an affirmation of the divine right theory of kingship. As we witness in the play, *Macbeth's* murder of Duncan and his continued tyranny extends the disorder of the entire country.

**5.4.10. Gender Roles**

Lady Macbeth is the focus of much of the exploration of gender roles in the play. As Lady Macbeth propels her husband toward committing Duncan's murder, she indicates that she must take on masculine characteristics. Her most famous speech — located in Act I, Scene 5 — addresses this issue.

Clearly, gender is out of its traditional order. This disruption of gender roles is also presented through Lady Macbeth's usurpation of the dominate role in the Macbeth's marriage; on many occasions, she rules her husband and dictates his actions.

**5.4.11. Reason versus Passion**

During their debates over which course of action to take, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth use different persuasive strategies. Their differences can easily be seen as part of a thematic study of gender roles. However, in truth, the difference in ways Macbeth and Lady Macbeth rationalize their actions is essential to understanding the subtle nuances of the play as a whole.

Macbeth is very rational, contemplating the consequences and implications of his actions. He recognizes the political, ethical, and religious reason why he should not commit regicide. In addition to jeopardizing his afterlife, Macbeth notes that regicide is a violation of Duncan's "double trust" that stems from Macbeth's bonds as a kinsman and as a subject.

On the other hand, Lady Macbeth has a more passionate way of examining the pros and cons of killing Duncan. She is motivated by her feelings and uses emotional arguments to persuade her husband to commit the evil act.

**5.5 IMPORTANT SCENES**

**5.5.1. Opening Scene**

Amid thunder and lightening the three witches meet to encounter Macbeth in a withered, wild and barren land. Macbeth would be passing this way as the battle to crush the rebellion is now over. The witches strike the key note of the play. The expression 'hurly burly' not only indicates the battle but also the future murder of Duncan and the unnatural happenings in Scotland. Further the expression 'When the battle is lost and won' means that Macbeth may have won the battle against the rebels but he will lose the battle for his soul. Another expression 'Fair is Foul, and Foul is Fair' mean that everything is uncertain, ambiguous and unnaturally reversed in the world of witches, who are representative of evil. What is good for the human species is evil for them and what is evil for man is good for them. Again the witches are called by their pets, an abnormal fact as we call our pets and not them. Further 'fog and filthy air' speak about the atmosphere of confusion which prevails and in which the evil operates. The final words of the witches, 'Fair is Foul and Foul is Fair' also speak of the fact that Macbeth who is fair will soon become foul, evil would henceforth be his good.

**5.5.2. Porter Scene**

Act II Scene III is called the Porter Scene. The scene takes place in Macbeth's castle at Inverness. The Porter Scene immediately follows the murder of Duncan (Act II, Scene II). A drunken Porter opens the door of Macbeth's castle to Macduff and Lennox who have come to wake Duncan. The Porter's speech has many contemporary references in the play. These references are as follows:

- A reference is made to a farmer who hung himself in the expectation of plenty.
- An English tailor from a French hose stole.
- Gun Powder Plot

Besides this, the Porter Scene also has many important functions in the play:

It provides Dramatic Relief because the seriousness of the murder in the previous scene is lessened by the drunken talks of the porter. Furthermore, the porter supposes himself to be the keeper of Hell Gate and the visitors to be someone who have been condemned to hell for his sins. (Macbeth's castle is similar to Macbeth hell where murders are committed.) The grotesque humour of the scene actually makes us realize the horror of the previous scene. Lastly, it gives time to Macbeth and Lady Macbeth to dress and receive the visitors.

### 5.5.3. Sleep Walking Scene

Act V Scene I is called the sleep walking scene. This scene takes place in Macbeth's castle at Dunsinane. In this scene a doctor and a gentlewoman observes as Lady Macbeth walks in her sleep. Lady Macbeth is seen to wash her hands (only by action) in order to remove Duncan's blood stains. This is indicative of her guilt of the crime of being a part in Duncan's murder. Her crime is exposed when she says: "Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much of blood in him." "Wash your hands, put on your night gown; look not so pale -I tell buried you again, Banquo is buried; he cannot come out of his grave."

The gentlewoman is told by the doctor that Lady Macbeth's disease is beyond his healing power. He advises the attendant woman to keep away any sharp instrument from her lest she injures herself to commit suicide.

## 5.6. CHARACTERIZATION

Shakespeare is a master character artist. His characters grow, change and evolve before the very eyes of the readers. They are not wooden and live less beings but breathe the air of reality. What is remarkable in Shakespeare are his range and the sheer objectivity in the sketching of the characters. The good and evil is produced with the same care and attention from his hand. Edward Albert says, "Shakespeare is unrivalled in literature. From king to clown, from lunatic and semi-devil to saint and seer, from lover to misanthrope, all are revealed with the hand of a master. In the play Macbeth we have two groups of characters- Group I. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth representing evil and Group II. Banquo, Macduff, Malcolm and Duncan representing good. A general theme therefore emerges from Macbeth which is conflict between Good and Evil.

Let us now analyze some of the major characters of the play:

### 5.6.1. Macbeth

We first hear of Macbeth in the wounded captain's account of his battlefield valor, our initial impression is of a brave and capable warrior. This perspective is complicated, however, once we see Macbeth interact with the three witches. We realize that his physical courage is joined by a consuming ambition and a tendency to self-doubt—the prediction that he will be king brings him joy, but it also creates inner turmoil. These three attributes—bravery, ambition, and self-doubt—struggle for mastery of Macbeth throughout the play. Shakespeare uses Macbeth to show the terrible effects that ambition and guilt can have on a man who lacks strength of character. We may classify Macbeth as irrevocably evil, but his weak character separates him from Shakespeare's great villains—Iago in Othello, Richard III in Richard III, Edmund in King Lear—who are all

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strong enough to conquer guilt and self-doubt. Macbeth, great warrior though he is, is ill equipped for the psychic consequences of crime.

Before he kills Duncan, Macbeth is plagued by worry and almost aborts the crime. It takes Lady Macbeth's steely sense of purpose to push him into the deed. After the murder, however, her powerful personality begins to disintegrate, leaving Macbeth increasingly alone. He fluctuates between fits of fevered action, in which he plots a series of murders to secure his throne, and moments of terrible guilt (as when Banquo's ghost appears) and absolute pessimism (after his wife's death, when he seems to succumb to despair). These fluctuations reflect the tragic tension within Macbeth: he is at once too ambitious to allow his conscience to stop him from murdering his way to the top and too conscientious to be happy with himself as a murderer. As things fall apart for him at the end of the play, he seems almost relieved—with the English army at his gates, he can finally return to life as a warrior, and he displays a kind of reckless bravado as his enemies surround him and drag him down. In part, this stems from his fatal confidence in the witches' prophecies, but it also seems to derive from the fact that he has returned to the arena where he has been most successful and where his internal turmoil need not affect him—namely, the battlefield. Unlike many of Shakespeare's other tragic heroes, Macbeth never seems to contemplate suicide: "Why should I play the Roman fool," he asks, "and die / On mine own sword?" (5.10.1–2). Instead, he goes down fighting, bringing the play full circle: it begins with Macbeth winning on the battlefield and ends with him dying in combat.

### 5.6.2. Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth is one of Shakespeare's most famous and frightening female characters. When we first see her, she is already plotting Duncan's murder, and she is stronger, more ruthless, and more ambitious than her husband. She seems fully aware of this and knows that she will have to push Macbeth into committing murder. At one point, she wishes that she were not a woman so that she could do it herself. This theme of the relationship between gender and power is key to Lady Macbeth's character: her husband implies that she is a masculine soul inhabiting a female body, which seems to link masculinity to ambition and violence. Shakespeare, however, seems to use her, and the witches, to undercut Macbeth's idea that "undaunted mettle should compose / Nothing but males" (1.7.73–74). These crafty women use female methods of achieving power—that is, manipulation—to further their supposedly male ambitions. Women, the play implies, can be as ambitious and cruel as men, yet social constraints deny them the means to pursue these ambitions on their own.

Lady Macbeth manipulates her husband with remarkable effectiveness, overriding all his objections; when he hesitates to murder, she repeatedly questions his manhood until he feels that he must commit murder to prove himself. Lady Macbeth's remarkable strength of will persists through the murder of the king—it is she who steadies her husband's nerves immediately after the crime has been perpetrated. Afterward, however, she begins a slow slide into madness—just as ambition affects her more strongly than Macbeth before the crime, so does guilt plague her more strongly afterward. By the close of the play, she has been reduced to sleepwalking through the castle, desperately trying to wash away an invisible bloodstain. Once the sense of guilt comes home to roost, Lady Macbeth's sensitivity becomes a weakness, and she is unable to cope. Significantly, she (apparently) kills herself, signaling her total inability to deal with the legacy of their crimes.

### 5.6.3. The Three Witches

Throughout the play, the witches—referred to as the "weird sisters" by many of the characters—lurk like dark thoughts and unconscious temptations to evil. In part, the mischief they cause stems

from their supernatural powers, but mainly it is the result of their understanding of the weaknesses of their specific interlocutors—they play upon Macbeth’s ambition like puppeteers.

The witches’ beards, bizarre potions, and rhymed speech make them seem slightly ridiculous, like caricatures of the supernatural. Shakespeare has them speak in rhyming couplets throughout (their most famous line is probably “Double, double, toil and trouble, / Fire burn and cauldron bubble” in 4.1.10–11), which separates them from the other characters, who mostly speak in blank verse. The witches’ words seem almost comical, like malevolent nursery rhymes. Despite the absurdity of their “eye of newt and toe of frog” recipes, however, they are clearly the most dangerous characters in the play, being both tremendously powerful and utterly wicked (4.1.14).

The audience is left to ask whether the witches are independent agents toying with human lives, or agents of fate, whose prophecies are only reports of the inevitable. The witches bear a striking and obviously intentional resemblance to the Fates, female characters in both Norse and Greek mythology who weave the fabric of human lives and then cut the threads to end them. Some of their prophecies seem self-fulfilling. For example, it is doubtful that Macbeth would have murdered his king without the push given by the witches’ predictions. In other cases, though, their prophecies are just remarkably accurate readings of the future—it is hard to see Birnam Wood coming to Dunsinane as being self-fulfilling in any way. The play offers no easy answers. Instead, Shakespeare keeps the witches well outside the limits of human comprehension.

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## 5.7. SUMMARY

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In this unit you were given a general critical appreciation of the play *Macbeth*. Some of the major themes of the play which included ambition, fate, violence, the fall of man, fortune, fate and free will, gender roles were also discussed in detail. Besides this unit also shed light on some of the important scenes such as the opening scene, the porter scene and the sleep walking scene. The major characters of the play were also discussed at length.

### Self Assessment Questions

1. Shed light on the theme of ambition in *Macbeth*.
2. What role does fate play in *Macbeth*?
3. Write a note on the characters of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.
4. What is the role of Banquo and Macduff in the play *Macbeth*.

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## 5.8. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

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1. Refer to the discussion at Section 5.4.1.
2. Refer to the discussion at Section 5.4.2.
3. Refer to the discussion at Sections 5.6.1. and 5.6.2.
4. Refer to the discussion at Section 5.3.

**5.9. REFERENCES**

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**5.10. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS**

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1. Highlight the role of witches in the play.
2. Describe the following scenes and bring out their importance.
  - Porter Scene
  - Sleep Walking Scene
  - Opening Scene
  - Macbeth's last meeting with the witches



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**UNIT 6 WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH* PART III**

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6.1. Introduction

6.2. Objectives

6.3. Views of William Hazlitt and Mary McCarthy on *Macbeth*

6.3.1.

6.3.2. William Hazlitt

6.4. Summary

6.5. Answers to Self-Assessment Questions

6.6. References

6.7. Terminal and Model Questions

### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

Reading the critics is important as critics highlight and evaluate a work of art, in this case play, in order to derive maximum pleasure and understanding the subtle nuances in it. It is perhaps impossible to know about Macbeth whether it is a scene or a character without the aid of a critic. However individual's opinions are a must but an answer should be supplemented by one or two critics on Shakespeare in order to gain marks.

### 6.2. OBJECTIVE

- To appreciate the finer aspects of the play
- To develop a general understanding of tragedy
- To sharpen critical faculties of the students

### 6.3. VIEWS OF WILLIAM HAZLITT AND MARY McCARTHY ON *MACBETH*

#### 6.3.1. William Hazlitt

Macbeth and Lear, Othello and Hamlet, are usually reckoned Shakespeare's four principal tragedies. Lear stands first for the profound intensity of the passion; Macbeth for the wildness of the imagination and the rapidity of the action; Othello for the progressive interest and powerful alternations of feeling; Hamlet for the refined development of thought and sentiment. If the force of genius shown in each of these works is astonishing, their variety is not less so. They are like different creations of the same mind, not one of which has the slightest reference to the rest. This distinctness and originality is indeed the necessary consequence of truth and nature. Shakespeare's genius alone appeared to possess the resources of nature. He is "your only tragedy-maker." His plays have the force of things upon the mind. What he represents is brought home to the bosom as a part of our experience, implanted in the memory as if we had known the places, persons, and things of which he treats. It has the rugged severity of an old chronicle with all that the imagination of the poet can engraft upon traditional belief. The castle of Macbeth, round which "the air smells woingly," and where "the temple-haunting mart let builds," has a real subsistence in the mind; the Weird Sisters meet us in person on "the blasted heath"; the "air-drawn dagger" moves slowly be-for our eyes; the "gracious Duncan," the "blood-boltered Banquo" stand before us; all that passed through the mind of Macbeth passes, without the loss of a title, through ours. All that could actually take place, and all that is only possible to be conceived, what was said and what was done, the workings of passion, the spells of magic, are brought before us with the same absolute truth and vividness.—Shakespeare excelled in the openings of his plays: that of Macbeth is the most striking of any. The wildness of the scenery, the sudden shifting of the situations and characters, the bustle, the expectations excited, are equally extraordinary. From the first entrance of the Witches and the description of them when they meet Macbeth,

—What are these  
 So wither'd and so wild in their attire,  
 That look not like the inhabitants of th' earth  
 And yet are on 't?"  
 the mind is prepared for all that follows.

This tragedy is alike distinguished for the lofty imagination it displays and for the tumultuous vehemence of the action; and the one is made the moving principle of the other. The overwhelming pressure of preternatural agency urges on the tide of human passion with redoubled force. Macbeth himself appears driven along by the violence of his fate like a vessel drifting before a storm: he reels on and fro like a drunken man; he staggers under the weight of his own purposes and the suggestions of others; he stands at bay with his situation; and from the superstitious awe and breathless suspense into which the communications of the Weird Sisters throw him, is hurried on with daring impatience to verify their predictions, and with impious and bloody hand to tear aside the veil which hides the uncertainty of the future. He is not equal to the struggle with fate and conscience. He now "bends up each corporal instrument to the terrible feat"; at other times his heart forgives him, and he is cowed and abashed by his success. "The deed, no less than the attempt, confounds him." His mind is assailed by the stings of remorse, and full of "preternatural soliciting." His speeches and soliloquies are dark riddles on human life, baffling solution, and entangling him in their labyrinths. In thought he is absent and perplexed, sudden and desperate in act, from a distrust of his own resolution. His energy springs from the anxiety and agitation of his mind. His blindly rushing forward on the objects of his ambition and revenge, or his recoiling from them, equally betrays the harassed state of his feelings.—This part of his character is admirably set off by being brought in connection with that of Lady Macbeth, whose obdurate strength of will and masculine firmness gave her the ascendancy over her husband's faltering virtue. She at once seizes on the opportunity that offers for the accomplishment of all their wished-for greatness, and never flinches from her object till all is over. The magnitude of her resolution almost covers the magnitude of her guilt. She is a great bad woman, whom we hate, but whom we fear more than we hate. She does not excite our loathing and abhorrence like Regan and Gonerill. She is only wicked to gain a great end; and is perhaps more distinguished by her commanding presence of mind and inexorable self-will, which do not suffer her to be diverted from a bad purpose, when once formed, by weak and womanly regrets, than by the hardness of her heart or want of natural affections. The impression which her lofty determination of character makes on the mind of Macbeth is well de-scribed where he exclaims,

— Bring forth men children only;  
 For thy undaunted mettle should compose  
 Nothing but males!

Nor do the pains she is apt to "screw his courage to the sticking-place," the reproach to him, not to be "lost so poorly in himself," the assurance that "a little water clears them of this deed," show anything but her greater consistency in depravity. Her strong-nerved ambition furnishes ribs of steel to "the sides of his intent"; and she is herself wound up to the execution of her baneful project with the same unshrinking fortitude in crime, that in other circumstances she would probably have shown patience in suffering. The deliberate sacrifice of all other considerations to the gaining "for their future days and nights sole sovereign sway and martyrdom," by the murder of Duncan, is gorgeously expressed in her invocation on hearing of "his fatal entrance under her battlements":

Come all you spirits  
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here:  
 And fill me, from the crown to th' toe, top-full  
 Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood,  
 Stop up the access and passage to remorse,  
 That no compunctious visitings of nature  
 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between  
 The effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts,  
 And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,  
 Wherever in your sightless substances

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You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night!  
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
 Nor heav'n peep through the blanket of the dark,  
 To cry, hold, hold!—

When she first hears that "Duncan comes there to sleep" she is so overcome by the news, which is beyond her utmost expectations, that she answers the messenger, "Thou'rt mad to say it": and on receiving her husband's account of the predictions of the Witches, conscious of his instability of purpose, and that her presence is necessary to goad him on to the consummation of his promised great-ness, she exclaims—

—Hie thee hither,  
 That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,  
 And chastise with the valour of my tongue  
 All that impedes thee from the golden round  
 Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem  
 To have thee crowned withal.

This swelling exultation and keen spirit of triumph, this uncontrollable eagerness of anticipation, which seems to dilate her form and take possession of all her faculties, this solid, substantial flesh and blood display of passion, exhibit a striking contrast to the cold, abstracted, gratuitous, servile malignity of the Witches, who are equally instrumental in urging Macbeth to his fate for the mere love of mischief, and from a disinterested delight in deformity and cruelty. They are hags of mischief, obscene panders to iniquity, malicious from their impotence of enjoyment, enamoured of destruction, because they are themselves unreal, abortive, half-existences—who become sublime from their exemption from all human sympathies and contempt for all human affairs, as Lady Macbeth does by the force of passion! Her fault seems to have been an excess of that strong principle of self-interest and family aggrandizement, not amenable to the common feelings of compassion and justice, which is so marked a feature in barbarous nations and times. A passing reflection of this kind, on the resemblance of the sleeping king to her father, alone prevents her from slaying Duncan with her own hand.

In speaking of the character of Lady Macbeth, we ought not to pass over Mrs. Siddons's manner of acting that part. We can conceive of nothing grander. It was something above nature. It seemed almost as if a being of a superior order had dropped from a higher sphere to awe the world with the majesty of her appearance. Power was seated on her brow, passion emanated from her breast as from a shrine; she was tragedy personified. In coming on in the sleeping-scene, her eyes were open, but their sense was shut. She was like a person bewildered and unconscious of what she did. Her lips moved involuntarily—all her gestures were involuntary and mechanical. She glided on and off the stage like an apparition. To have seen her in that character was an event in every one's life, not to be forgotten.

The dramatic beauty of the character of Duncan, which excites the respect and pity even of his murderers, has been often pointed out. It forms a picture of itself. An instance of the author's power of giving a striking effect to a common reflection, by the manner of introducing it, occurs in a speech of Duncan, complaining of his having been deceived in his opinion of the Thane of Cawdor, at the very moment that he is expressing the most unbounded confidence in the loyalty and services of Macbeth.

There is no art  
 To find the mind's construction in the face:  
 He was a gentleman, on whom I built  
 An absolute trust.

O worthiest cousin, (addressing himself to Macbeth.)  
 The sin of my Ingratitude e'en now  
 Was great upon me,

Another passage to show that Shakespeare lost sight of nothing that could in any way give relief or heightening to his subject, is the conversation which takes place between Banquo and Fleance immediately before the murder-scene of Duncan.

Banquo. How goes the night, boy?  
 Fleance. The moon is down: I have not heard the clock.  
 Banquo. And she goes down at twelve.  
 Fleance. I take 't, 'tis later, Sir.  
 Banquo. Hold, take my sword. There's husbandry in  
 heav'n,  
 Their candles are all out.—  
 A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,  
 And yet I would not sleep: Merciful Powers,  
 Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature  
 Gives way to in repose.

In like manner, a fine idea is given of the gloomy coming on of evening, just as Banquo is going to be assassinated.

"Light thickens and the crow  
 Makes wing to the rooky wood."  
 "Now spurs the lated traveller apace  
 To gain the timely inn."

Macbeth (generally speaking) is done upon a stronger and more systematic principle of contrast than any other of Shakespeare's plays. It moves upon the verge of an abyss, and is a constant struggle between life and death. The action is desperate and the reaction is dreadful. It is a huddling together of fierce extremes, a war of opposite natures which of them shall destroy the other. There is nothing but what has a violent end or violent beginnings. The lights and shades are laid on with a determined hand; the transitions from triumph to despair, from the height of terror to the repose of death, are sudden and startling; every passion brings in its fellow-contrary, and the thoughts pitch and jostle against each other as in the dark. The whole play is an unruly chaos of strange and forbidden things, where the ground rocks under our feet. Shakespeare's genius here took its full swing, and trod upon the farthest bounds of nature and passion. This circumstance will account for the abruptness and violent antitheses of the style, the throes and labour which run through the expression and from defects will turn them into beauties. "So fair and foul a day I have not seen," etc. "Such welcome and unwelcome news together." "Men's lives are like the flowers in their caps, dying or were they sicken." "Look like the innocent flower, but be the serpent under it." The scene before the castle-gate follows the appearance of the Witches on the heath, and is followed by a midnight murder. Duncan is cut off. Betimes by treason leagued with witchcraft and Macduff is ripped untimely from his mother's womb to avenge his death. Macbeth, after the death of Banquo, wishes for his presence in extravagant terms, "To him and all we thirst," and when his ghost appears, cries out, "A vaunt and quit my sight," and being gone, he is "himself again." Macbeth resolves to get rid of Macduff, that "he may sleep in spite of thunder"; and cheers his wife on the doubtful intelligence of Banquo's taking-off with the encouragement—"Then be thou jocund; ere the bat has flown his cloistered flight; ere to black Hecate's summons the shard-born beetle has rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done—a deed of dreadful note." In Lady Macbeth's speech, "Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had don't," there is murder and filial piety together; and in urging him to fulfill his vengeance against the defenseless king, her thoughts spare the blood neither of infants nor old age. The description of the Witches is full of the

same contradictory principle; they "rejoice when good kings bleed," they are neither of the earth nor the air, but both; they "should be women but their beards forbid it"; they take all the pains possible to lead Macbeth on to the height of his ambition, only to "betray him "in deeper consequence," and after showing him all the pomp of their art, discover their malignant delight in his disappointed hopes, by that bitter taunt, "Why stands Macbeth thus amazedly?" We might multiply such instances everywhere.

The leading features in the character of Macbeth are striking enough, and they form what may be thought at first only a bold, rude, Gothic outline. By comparing it with other characters of the same author we shall perceive the absolute truth and identity which is observed in the midst of the giddy whirl and rapid career of events. Macbeth in Shakespeare no more loses his identity of character in the fluctuations of fortune or the storm of passion, than Macbeth in him would have lost the identity of his person. Thus he is as distinct a being from Richard III. As it is possible to imagine, though these two characters in common hands, and indeed in the hands of any other poet, would have been a repetition of the same general idea, more or less exaggerated. For both are tyrants, usurpers, murderers, aspiring and ambitious, courageous, cruel, treacherous. But Richard is cruel from nature and constitution. Macbeth becomes so from accidental circumstances. Richard is from his birth deformed in body and mind, and naturally incapable of good. Macbeth is full of "the milk of human kindness," is frank, sociable, generous. He is tempted to the commission of guilt by golden opportunities, by the instigations of his wife, and by prophetic warnings. Fate and metaphysical aid conspire against his virtue and his loyalty. Richard on the contrary needs no prompter, but wades through a series of crimes to the height of his ambition from the ungovernable violence of his temper and a reckless love of mischief. He is never gay but in the prospect or in the success of his villainies: Macbeth is full of horror at the thoughts of the murder of Duncan, which he is with difficulty prevailed on to commit, and of remorse after its perpetration. Richard has no mixture of common humanity in his composition, no regard to kindred or posterity, he owns no fellowship with others, and he is "himself alone." Macbeth is not destitute of feelings of sympathy, is accessible to pity, is even made in some measure the dupe of his luxuriousness, ranks the loss of friends, of the cordial love of his followers, and of his good name, among the causes which have made him weary of life, and regrets that he has ever seized the crown by unjust means, since he cannot transmit it to his posterity-

For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind—  
For them the gracious Duncan have I murdered,  
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings.

In the agitation of his mind, he envies those whom he has sent to peace. "Duncan is in his grave; after life's fitful fever he sleeps well."—It is true, he becomes more callous as he plunges deeper in guilt, "direness is thus rendered familiar to his slaughterous thoughts," and he in the end anticipates his wife in the boldness and bloodiness of his enterprises, while she for want of the same stimulus of action, "is troubled with thick-coming fancies that rob her of her rest," goes mad and dies. Macbeth endeavours to escape from reflection on his crimes by repelling their consequences, and banishes remorse for the past by the meditation of future mischief. This is not the principle of Richard's cruelty, which displays the wanton malice of a fiend as much as the frailty of human passion. Macbeth is goaded on to acts of violence and retaliation by necessity; to Richard, blood is a pastime.—There are other decisive differences inherent in the two characters. Richard may be regarded as a man of the world, a plotting, hardened knave, wholly regardless of everything but his own ends, and the means to secure them.—Not so Macbeth. The superstitions of the age, the rude state of society, the local scenery and customs, all give a wildness and imaginary grandeur to his character. From the strangeness of the events that surround him, he is full of amazement and fear; and stands in doubt between the world of reality and the world of fancy. He sees sights not shown to mortal eye, and hears unearthly music. All is tumult and disorder within and without his mind; his purposes recoil upon himself, are broken and disjointed;

he is the double thrall of his passions and his evil destiny. Richard is not a character either of imagination or pathos, but of pure self-will. There is no conflict of opposite feelings in his breast. The apparitions which he sees only haunt him in his sleep; nor does he live like Macbeth in a waking dream. Macbeth has considerable energy and manliness of character; but then he is "subject to all the skies influences." He is sure of nothing but the present moment. Richard in the busy turbulence of his projects never loses his self-possession, and makes use of every circumstance that happens as an instrument of his long-reaching designs. In his last extremity we can only regard him as a wild beast taken in the toils: while we never entirely lose our concern for Macbeth; and he calls back all our sympathy by that fine close of thoughtful melancholy—

My way of life is fallen into the sea,  
The yellow leaf; and that which should accompany old age,  
As honour, troops of friends, I must not look to have;  
But in their stead, curses not loud but deep,  
Mouth-honour, breath, which the poor heart  
Would fain deny, and dare not.

We can conceive a common actor to play Richard tolerably well; we can conceive no one to play Macbeth properly, or to look like a man that had encountered the Weird Sisters. All the actors that we have ever seen appear as if they had encountered them on the boards of Covent-garden or Drury-lane, but not on the heath at Fortes, and as if they did not believe what they had seen. The Witches of Macbeth indeed are ridiculous on the modern stage, and we doubt if the Furies of Æschylus would be more respected. The progress of manners and knowledge has an influence on the stage, and will in time perhaps destroy both tragedy and comedy. Filch's picking pockets in the Beggar's Opera is not so good a jest as it used to be: by the force of the police and of philosophy, Lillo's murders and the ghosts in Shakespeare will become obsolete. At last, there will be nothing left, good nor bad, to be desired or dreaded, on the theatre or in real life.—A question has been started with respect to the originality of Shakespeare's Witches, which has been well answered by Mr. Lamb in his notes to the "Specimens of Early Dramatic Poetry."

Though some resemblance may be traced between the charms in *Macbeth*, and the incantations in this play (The Witch of Middleton), which is supposed to have preceded it, this coincidence will not detract much from the originality of Shakespeare. His Witches are distinguished from the Witches of Middleton by essential differences. These are creatures to whom man or woman plotting some dire mischief might resort for occasional consultation. Those originate deeds of blood, and begin bad impulses to men. From the moment that their eyes first meet with Macbeth's he is spell-bound. That meeting sways his destiny. He can never break the fascination. These Witches can hurt the body; those have power over the soul.—Hecate in Middleton has a son, a low buffoon: the hags of Shakespeare have neither child of their own, nor seem to be descended from any parent. They are foul anomalies, of whom we know neither whence they are sprung, nor whether they have beginning or ending. As they are without human passions, so they seem to be without human relations. They come with thunder and lightning, and vanish to airy music. This is all we know of them.—Except Hecate, they have no names, which heightens their mysteriousness. The names, and some of the properties which Middleton has given to his hags, excite smiles. The Weird Sisters are serious things. Their presence cannot co-exist with mirth. But, in a lesser degree, the Witches of Middleton are fine creations. Their power too is, in some measure, over the mind. They raise jars, jealousies, strifes, like a thick scurf o'er life.

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**6.3.2. Mary McCarthy**

He is a general and has just won a battle; he enters the scene making a remark about the weather. 'So foul and fair a day I have not seen' [I. iii. 38]. On this flat note Macbeth's character tone is set. 'Terrible weather we're having.' 'The sun can't seem to make up its mind.' 'Is it hot/cold/wet enough for you?' A commonplace man who talks in commonplaces, a golfer, one might guess, on the Scottish fairways, Macbeth is the only Shakespeare hero who corresponds to a bourgeois (member of the middle class, associated with conventional materialistic values) type: a murderous Babbitt (a narrow minded, self satisfied person with an attachment to materialism, the name of the character is taken from Sinclair Lewis' novel 'Babbit'), let us say.

You might argue just the opposite, that Macbeth is over-imaginative, the prey of visions. It is true that he is impressionable. Banquo, when they come upon the witches, amuses himself at their expense, like a man of parts idly chaffing (to make jokes about someone in a friendly way) a fortune-teller. Macbeth, though, is deeply impressed. 'Thane of Cawdor and King.' He thinks this over aloud. 'How can I be Thane of Cawdor when the Thane of Cawdor is alive?' [cf. I. iii. 72-5] When this mental stumbling-block has been cleared away for him (the Thane of Cawdor has received a death sentence), he turns his thoughts sotto voce (in a very quiet voice) to the next question. 'How can I be King when Duncan is alive?' The answer comes back, 'Kill him' [cf. I. iii. 137-42]. It does fleetingly occur to Macbeth, as it would to most people, to leave matters alone and let destiny work it out. 'If chance will have me King, why, chance may crown me, Without my stir' [I. iii. 143-44]. But this goes against his grain. A reflective man might wonder how fate would spin her plot, as the Virgin Mary must have wondered after the Angel Gabriel's visit. But Macbeth does not trust to fate, that is, to the unknown, the mystery of things; he trusts only to a known quantity--himself--to put the prophecy into action. In short, he has no faith, which requires imagination. He is literal-minded; that, in a word, is his tragedy.

It was not his idea; he could plead in self-defense, but the witches', that he should have the throne. They said it first. But the witches only voiced a thought that was already in his mind; after all, he was Duncan's cousin and close to the crown. And once the thought has been put into words, he is in a scrambling hurry. He cannot wait to get home to tell his wife about the promise; in his excitement, he puts it in a letter, which he sends on ahead, like a businessman briefing an associate on a piece of good news for the firm.

Lady Macbeth takes very little stock in the witches. She never pesters her husband, as most wives would, with questions about the Weird Sisters: 'What did they say, exactly?' 'How did they look?' 'Are you sure?' She is less interested in 'fate and metaphysical aid' [I. v. 29] than in the business at hand--how to nerve her husband to do what he wants to do. And later, when Macbeth announces that he is going out to consult the Weird Sisters again, she refrains from comment. As though she were keeping her opinion-'O proper stuff!' [III. iv. 59]-to herself. Lady Macbeth is not superstitious. Macbeth is. This makes her repeatedly impatient with him, for Macbeth, like many men of his sort, is an old story to his wife. A tale full of sound and fury signifying nothing. Her contempt for him perhaps extends even to his ambition. 'Wouldst not play false, And yet wouldst wrongly win' [I. v. 21-2]. As though to say, 'All right, if that's what you want, have the courage to get it.' Lady Macbeth does not so much give the impression of coveting the crown herself as of being weary of watching Macbeth covet it. Macbeth, by the way, is her second husband, and either her first husband was a better man than he, which galls her, or he was just another general, another superstitious golfer, which would gall her too.

Superstition here is the opposite of reason on the one hand and of imagination on the other. Macbeth is credulous, in contrast to Lady Macbeth, to Banquo, and, later, to Malcolm, who sets



the audience an example of the right way by mistrusting Macduff until he has submitted him to an empirical test. Believing and knowing are paired in Malcolm's mind; what he knows he believes. Macbeth's eagerness to believe is the companion of his lack of faith. If all works out right for him in this world, Macbeth says, he can take a chance on the next ('We'd jump the life to come' [I. vii. 7]). Superstition whispers when true religion has been silenced, and Macbeth becomes a ready client for the patent medicines brewed by the jeering witches on the heath.

As in his first interview with them he is too quick to act literally on a dark saying, in the second he is too easily reassured. He will not be conquered till 'great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill shall come against him.' 'Why, that can never happen!' [cf. IV. i. 92-4] he cries out in immediate relief, his brow clearing.

It never enters his mind to examine the saying more closely, test it, so to speak, for a double bottom, as was common in those days (Banquo even points this out to him) with prophetic utterances, which were known to be ambiguous and tricky. Any child knew that a prophecy often meant the reverse of what it seemed to say, and any man of imagination would ask himself how Birnam Wood might come to Dunsinane and take measures to prevent it, as King Laius took measures to prevent his own death by arranging to have the baby Oedipus killed [in Sophocles's Oedipus Rex]. If Macbeth had thought it out, he could have had Birnam Wood chopped down and burned on the spot and the ashes dumped into the sea. True, the prophecy might still have turned against him ..., but that would have been another story, another tragedy, the tragedy of a clever man not clever enough to circumvent fate. Macbeth is not clever; he is taken in by surfaces, by appearance. He cannot think beyond the usual course of things. 'None of woman born' [IV. i. 80]. All men, he says to himself, sagely, are born of women; Malcolm and Macduff are men; therefore I am safe. This logic leaves out of account the extraordinary: the man brought into the world by Caesarean section. In the same way, it leaves out of account the supernatural--the very forces he is trafficking (doing business in) with. He might be overcome by an angel or a demon, as well as by Macduff.

Yet this pedestrian general sees ghosts and imaginary daggers in the air. Lady Macbeth does not, and the tendency in her husband grates on her nerves; she is sick of his terrors and fancies. A practical woman, Lady Macbeth, more a partner than a wife, though Macbeth treats her with a trite domestic fondness--'Love,' 'Dearest love,' 'Dearest chuck,' 'Sweet remembrancer.' These middle-aged, middle-class endearments, as though he called her 'Honeybunch' or 'Sweetheart,' as well as the obligatory 'Dear,' are a master stroke of Shakespeare's and perfectly in keeping with the prosing about the weather, the heavy credulousness.

Naturally Macbeth is dominated by his wife. He is old Iron Pants in the field (as she bitterly reminds him), but at home she has to wear the pants; she has to unsex herself. No 'chucks' or 'dearests' escape her tightened lips, and yet she is more feeling, more human finally than Macbeth. She thinks of her father when she sees the old King asleep, and this natural thought will not let her kill him. Macbeth has to do it, just as the quailing husband of any modern virago is sent down to the basement to kill a rat or drown a set of kittens. An image of her father, irrelevant to her purpose, softens this monster woman; sleepwalking, she thinks of Lady Macduff. 'The Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now?' [cf. IV. i. 150-53]. Stronger than Macbeth, less suggestible, she is nevertheless imaginative, where he is not. She does not see ghosts and daggers; when she sleepwalks, it is simple reality that haunts her--the crime relived. 'Yet, who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?' [V. i. 39-40]. Over and over, the epiphenomena (a secondary effect or the by product) of the crime present themselves to her dormant consciousness. This nightly reliving is not penitence but more terrible--remorse, the agenbite (remorse or prick of conscience) of the restless deed. Lady Macbeth's uncontrollable imagination drives her to put herself in the place of others--the wife of the Thane of Fife--and to recognize a kinship between all human kind: the pathos of old age in Duncan has made her think, 'Why, he might be my father!'

This sense of a natural bond between men opens her to contrition--sorrowing with. To ask whether, waking, she is 'sorry' for what she has done is impertinent. She lives with it and it kills her.

Macbeth has no feeling for others, except envy, a common middle-class trait. He envies the murdered Duncan his rest, which is a strange way of looking at your victim. What he suffers on his own account after the crimes is simple panic. He is never contrite or remorseful; it is not the deed but a shadow of it, Banquo's spook (ghost) that appears to him. The 'scruples' that agitate him before Duncan's murder are mere echoes of conventional opinion, of what might be said about his deed: that Duncan was his king, his cousin, and a guest under his roof. 'I have bought golden opinions,' he says to himself (note the verb), 'from all sorts of people' [I. vii. 32-3]; now these people may ask for their opinions back--a refund--if they suspect him of the murder. It is like a business firm's being reluctant to part with its 'good will.' The fact that Duncan was such a good king bothers him, and why? Because there will be universal grief at his death. But his chief 'scruple' is even simpler. 'If we should fail?' he says timidly to Lady Macbeth [I. vii. 59]. Sweet chuck tells him that they will not. Yet once she has ceased to be effectual as a partner, Dearest love is an embarrassment. He has no time for her vapors. 'Cure her of that' [V. iii. 39], he orders the doctor on hearing that she is troubled by 'fancies.' Again the general is speaking.

The idea of Macbeth as a conscience-tormented man is a platitude (a statement with a moral content that is used too often to be thoughtful and interesting) as false as Macbeth himself. Macbeth has no conscience. His main concern throughout the play is that most selfish of all concerns: to get a good night's sleep. His invocation (the action of invoking someone or something) to sleep, while heartfelt, is perfectly conventional; sleep builds you up, enables you to start the day fresh. Thus the virtue of having a good conscience is seen by him in terms of bodily hygiene. Lady Macbeth shares these preoccupations. When he tells her he is going to see the witches, she remarks that he needs sleep.

Her wifely concern is mechanical and far from real solicitude (care or concern for someone or something). She is aware of Macbeth; she knows him (he does not know her at all, apparently), but she regards him coldly as a thing, a tool that must be oiled and polished. His soul-states do not interest her; her attention is narrowed on his morale, his public conduct, and the shifting expressions of his face. But in a sense she is right, for there is nothing to Macbeth but fear and ambition, both of which he tries to hide, except from her. This naturally gives her a poor opinion of the inner man.

Why is it, though, that Lady Macbeth seems to us a monster while Macbeth does not? Partly because she is a woman and has 'unsexed' herself, which makes her a monster by definition. Also because the very prospect of murder quickens an hysterical excitement in her, like the discovery of some object in a shop--a set of emeralds or a sable stole--which Macbeth can give her and which will be an 'outlet' for all the repressed desires he cannot satisfy. She behaves as though Macbeth, through his weakness, will deprive her of self-realization; the unimpeded exercise of her will is the voluptuous end she seeks. That is why she makes naught of scruples, as inner brakes on her throbbing engines. Unlike Macbeth, she does not pretend to harbor a conscience, though this, on her part, by a curious turn, is a pretense, as the sleepwalking scene reveals. After the first crime, her will subsides, spent; the devil has brought her to climax and left her.

Macbeth is not a monster, like Shakespeare's Richard III or Iago in Shakespeare's Othello or Iachimo [in Shakespeare's play Cymbeline], though in the catalogue he might go for one because of the blackness of his deeds. But at the outset his deeds are only the wishes and fears of the average, undistinguished man translated into halfhearted action. Pure evil is a kind of transcendence that he does not aspire to. He only wants to be king and sleep the sleep of the just, undisturbed. He could never have been a good man, even if he had not met the witches; hence we

cannot see him as a devil incarnate, for the devil is a fallen angel. Macbeth does not fall; if anything, he somewhat improves as the result of his career of crime. He throws off his dependency and thus achieves the 'greatness' he mistakenly sought in the crown and scepter. He swells to vast proportions, having sipped full with horrors.

The isolation of Macbeth, which is at once a punishment and a tragic dignity or honor, takes place by stages and by deliberate choice; it begins when he does not tell Lady Macbeth that he has decided to kill Banquo and reaches its peak at Dunsinane, in the final action. Up to this time, though he has cut himself off from all human contacts, he is counting on the witches as allies. When he first hears the news that Macduff is not 'of woman born' [V. viii. 12-15], he is unmanned; everything he trusted (the literal word) has betrayed him, and he screams in terror, 'I'll not fight with thee!' [V. viii. 22]. But Macduff's taunts make a hero of him; he cannot die like this, shamed. His death is his first true act of courage, though even here he has had to be pricked to it by mockery, Lady Macbeth's old spur. Nevertheless, weaned by his very crimes from a need for reassurance, nursed in a tyrant's solitude, he meets death on his own, without metaphysical aid. 'Lay on, Macduff' [V. viii. 33].

What is modern and bourgeois in Macbeth's character is his wholly social outlook. He has no feeling for others, and yet until the end he is a vicarious creature, existing in his own eyes through what others may say of him, through what they tell him or promise him. This paradox is typical of the social being--at once a wolf out for himself and a sheep. Macbeth, moreover, is an expert buck-passer; he sees how others can be used. It is he, not Lady Macbeth, who thinks of smearing the drunken chamberlains with blood (though it is she, in the end, who carries it out), so that they shall be caught 'red-handed' the next morning when Duncan's murder is discovered. At this idea he brightens; suddenly, he sees his way clear. It is the moment when at last he decides. The eternal executive, ready to fix responsibility on a subordinate, has seen the deed finally take a recognizable form. Now he can do it. And the crackerjack thought of killing the grooms afterward (dead men tell no tales--old adage) is again purely his own on-the-spot inspiration; no credit to Lady Macbeth.

It is the sort of thought that would have come to Hamlet's Uncle Claudius, another trepidant (someone going through great worry or fear as if something unfortunate will happen) executive. Indeed, Macbeth is more like Claudius than like any other character in Shakespeare. Both are doting husbands; both rose to power by betraying their superior's trust; both are easily frightened and have difficulty saying their prayers. Macbeth's 'Amen' sticks in his throat, he complains, and Claudius, on his knees, sighs that he cannot make what priests call a 'good act of contrition' (very sorry for something bad that one has done). The desire to say his prayers like any pew-holder (someone who sits on a pew i.e. large wooden chair in a church), quite regardless of his horrible crime, is merely a longing for respectability. Macbeth 'repents' killing the grooms, but this is for public consumption. 'O, yet I do repent me of my fury, That I did kill them' [II. iii. 106-07]. In fact, it is the one deed he does not repent (i.e., doubt the wisdom of) either before or after. This hypocritical self-accusation, which is his sidelong way of announcing the embarrassing fact that he has just done away with the grooms, and his simulated grief at Duncan's murder ('All is but toys. Renown and grace is dead, The wine of life is drawn' [II. iii. 94-5], etc.) are his basest moments in the play, as well as his boldest; here is nearly a magnificent monster.

The dramatic effect too is one of great boldness on Shakespeare's part. Macbeth is speaking pure Shakespearean poetry, but in his mouth, since we know he is lying, it turns into facile verse, Shakespearean poetry buskined. The same with 'Here lay Duncan, His silver skin lac'd with his golden blood ...' [II. iii. 111-12]. If the image were given to Macduff, it would be uncontaminated poetry; from Macbeth it is 'proper stuff'--fustian. This opens the perilous question of sincerity in the arts: is a line of verse altered for us by the sincerity of the one who speaks it? In short, is poetry relative to the circumstances or absolute? Or, more particularly, are Macbeth's soliloquies

poetry, which they sound like, or something else? Did Shakespeare intend to make Macbeth a poet, like Hamlet, Lear, and Othello? In that case, how can Macbeth be an unimaginative mediocrity? My opinion is that Macbeth's soliloquies are not poetry but rhetoric. They are tirades (a long and angry speech). That is, they do not trace any pensive motion of the soul or heart but are a volley of words discharged. Macbeth is neither thinking nor feeling aloud; he is declaiming (to say something in a loud and formal way, rhetorically). Like so many unfeeling men, he has a facile (obtained too easily but with little value) emotionalism, which he turns on and off. Not that his fear is insincere, but his loss of control provides him with an excuse for histrionics (an insincere or exaggerated behavior especially for effect).

These gibbering (to speak quickly, as if in fear) exasperate Lady Macbeth. 'What do you mean?' [II. ii. 37] she says coldly after she has listened to a short harangue (a lengthy and aggressive speech) on 'Me thought I heard a voice cry "Sleep no more!"' [II. ii. 32]. It is an allowable question--what does he mean? And his funeral oration on her, if she could have heard it, would have brought her back to life to protest. 'She should have died hereafter' [V. v. 17]--fine, that was the real Macbeth. But then, as if conscious of the proprieties, he at once begins on a series of bromides ('Tomorrow, and tomorrow ...' [V. v. 19ff.]) that he seems to have had ready to hand for the occasion like a black mourning suit. All Macbeth's soliloquies have that ready-to-hand, if not hand-me-down, air, which is perhaps why they are given to school children to memorize, often with the result of making them hate Shakespeare. What children resent in these soliloquies is precisely their sententiousness (trying to sound important especially because expressing moral judgment)--the sound they have of being already memorized from a copybook....

The play between poetry and rhetoric, the conversion of poetry to declamation, is subtle and horrible in Macbeth. The sincere pent-up poet in Macbeth flashes out not in the soliloquies but when he howls at a servant. 'The Devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon! Where got'st thou that goose look?' [V. iii. 11]. Elsewhere, the general's tropes are the gold braid of his dress uniform or the chasing of his armor. If an explanation is needed, you might say he learned to use words through long practice in haranguing his troops, whipping them and himself into battle frenzy. Up to recent times a fighting general, like a football coach, was an orator.

But it must be noted that it is not only Macbeth who rants. Nor is it only Macbeth who talks about the weather. The play is stormy with atmosphere--the screaming and shrieking of owls, the howling of winds. Nature herself is ranting, like the witches, and Night, black Hecate, is queen of the scene. Bats are flitting about; ravens and crows are hoarse; the house-martins' nests on the battlements of Macbeth's castle give a misleading promise of peace and gentle domesticity. 'It will be rain tonight,' says Banquo simply, looking at the sky (note the difference between this and Macbeth's pompous generality), and the First Murderer growls at him, striking, 'Let it come down' [III. iii. 16]. The disorder of Nature, as so often in Shakespeare, presages and reflects the disorder of the body politic. Guilty Macbeth cannot sleep, but the night of Duncan's murder, the whole house, as if guilty too, is restless; Malcolm and Donalbain talk and laugh in their sleep; the drunken porter, roused, plays that he is gatekeeper of hell.

Indeed, the whole action takes place in a kind of hell and is pitched to the demons' shriek of hyperbole. This would appear to be a peculiar setting for a study of the commonplace. But only at first sight. The fact that an ordinary philistine (a disapproving term for a person who does not understand art, literature and culture) like Macbeth goes on the rampage and commits a series of murders is a sign that human nature, like Nature, is capable of any mischief if left to its 'natural' self. The witches, unnatural beings, are Nature spirits, stirring their snake-filet and owl's wing, newt's eye and frog toe in a camp stew: earthy ingredients boil down to an unearthly broth. It is the same with the man Macbeth. Ordinary ambition, fear, and a kind of stupidity make a deadly combination. Macbeth, a self-made king, is not kingly, but just another Adam or Fall guy, with Eve at his elbow.

There is no play of Shakespeare's (I think) that contains the words 'Nature' and 'natural' so many times, and the 'Nature' within the same speech can mean first something good and then something evil, as though it were a pun. Nature is two-sided, double-talking, like the witches. 'Fair is foul and foul is fair,' they cry [I. i. 11], and Macbeth enters the play unconsciously echoing them, for he is never original but chock-full of the 'milk of human kindness' [I. v. 17], which does not mean kindness in the modern sense but simply human 'nature,' human kind. The play is about Nature, and its blind echo, human nature.

Macbeth, in short, shows life in the cave. Without religion, animism (belief in a power that organizes and controls the universe) rules the outer world, and without faith, the human soul is beset by hobgoblins (in stories, ugly creatures which trouble and pester humans). This at any rate was Shakespeare's opinion, to which modern history, with the return of the irrational in the Fascist nightmare and its fear of new specters in the form of Communism, Socialism, etc., lends support. It is a troubling thought that bloodstained Macbeth, of all Shakespeare's characters, should seem the most 'modern,' the only one you could transpose into contemporary battle dress or a sport shirt and slacks."

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#### 6.4. SUMMARY

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In this unit you were given the critical views on *Macbeth* by two eminent critics, William Hazlitt and Mary Mac Carthy.

William Hazlitt's views on Macbeth

William Hazlitt's in his famous essay 'Characters in Macbeth' (1817) says that Shakespeare is the 'only tragedy-maker' and this trait of his character culminates in *Macbeth*, one of Shakespeare's highest caliber tragedies. Hazlitt says that the play is a special blend of imagination and history.

Lady Macbeth epitomizes

Wickedness. Furthermore, she along with the witches represents women as the greatest manipulators who have wittingly sandwiched Macbeth. The play is nothing but a series of contrasts, ranging from triumph to despair, from the height of terror to the repose of death. Hazlitt draws an interesting analogy between Macbeth and Richard-III. He keenly observes that whereas Richard-III is cruel from nature and constitution, Macbeth becomes so from accidental circumstances. Richard-III is from birth deformed in body and mind and naturally incapable of good while Macbeth is full of milk of human kindness and is frank, sociable and generous.

Besides Hazlitt's views you also read the views of Mary Mac Carthy on Hamlet. Mac Carthy compares Macbeth to Sinclair Lewis' hero (Sinclair Lewis-American novelist, playwright and a short story writer) George Babbitt in his novel Babbitt where the hero is a narrow minded self satisfied person with an unthinking attachment to middle class values and materialism. According to McCarthy *Macbeth* is one such common place hero and his response to weather is like any other ordinary individual-'So foul and fair a day I have not seen'. This statement can be interpreted as Macbeth who is essentially foul pretends to be fair by his outward actions in the beginning but later on comes to his true colour. Or Macbeth is both a combination of foul and fair.

Macbeth is an impressionable character .When the two generals Macbeth and Banquo confront the witches Banquo is amused like a man of parts idly chafing a fortune-teller while Macbeth is 'deeply impressed' and he starts questioning in his mind and also answers it('kill him').Macbeth doesn't leave things to his fate. He decides to transform the prophecy into action.

Lady Macbeth is not superstition while Macbeth is. She is more interested in goading Macbeth towards Duncan's murder. She is aware of Macbeth's character which is full of hypocrisy, 'Wouldst not play false, and yet wouldst wrongly win'. She is a practical woman and does not see ghosts and imaginary daggers like Macbeth. Though in the battlefield Macbeth may wear 'old iron pants' but at home Lady Macbeth has to wear the pants. She unsexes herself in order to fuel Macbeth's courage.

Macbeth has no feelings. He even envies the peace of dead Duncan for the simple fact that he has lost his peace of mind. He has no conscience, so cannot be tortured by the same. Lady Macbeth's concern for Macbeth is almost mechanical. To her Macbeth is like a tool that must be oiled and polished. Further Mc Carthy compares Macbeth to Claudius in Shakespeare's Hamlet-both are dotting husbands, both rose to power by betraying their superior trust; both are easily frightened and have difficulty saying prayers.

**Self Assessment Questions**

1. Summarize Hazlitt's views on *Macbeth* in your own words.
2. Is Macbeth a middle class hero?
3. According to Hazlitt, in what way is Shakespeare a tragedy maker?
4. Compare Macbeth with Richard III.
5. Summarize the views of Mary Mc Carthy on *Macbeth* in your own words.

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**6.5. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

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Refer to section 6.3.1.

Refer to section 6.3.2.

Refer to section 6.3.1.

Refer to section 6.3.1.

Refer to section 6.3.2.

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**6.6. REFERENCES**

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**6.7. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS**

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1. Which all characters is Macbeth compared to by McCarthy?
2. What are the weaknesses in Macbeth's character? Give examples.
3. What are the strengths in Lady Macbeth's character? Give examples from the play.
4. Does Macbeth have conscience and feelings? Give reasons.
5. Comment on the statement-'Macbeth is a special blend of imagination and history'.
6. Write a short note on Duncan's character.

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**UNIT 7      GIRISH KARNAD'S *TUGHLAQ* PART-1**

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- 7.1. Introduction
- 7.2. Objectives
- 7.3. Girish Karnad: His Life and Works
  - 7.3.1. Theatrical Influences on Karnad
  - 7.3.2. Karnad's Views on Theatre
- 7.4. Parsi Theatre and its influence on Modern Indian Theatre
- 7.5. Modern Indian Drama
  - 7.5.1. Definition of the word "Modern"
  - 7.5.2. Influence of the West on Modern Indian Drama
  - 7.5.3. Characteristics of Modern Indian Drama
  - 7.5.4. Some Examples of Western Influence on Modern Indian Drama
  - 7.5.5. Tradition and Modernity in Modern Indian Drama
  - 7.5.6. Definition of the word "Indian" in the context of Modern Indian Drama
  - 7.5.7. Definition of the word "Drama"
- 7.6. Historical Background to *Tughlaq*
  - 7.6.1. Karnad's choice of theme
  - 7.6.2. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq as viewed in history
- 7.7. *Tughlaq* and its relevance to today's audience
- 7.8. Summary
- 7.9. Glossary
- 7.10. Answers to Self-Assessment Questions
- 7.11. References
- 7.12. Terminal and Model Questions

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## 7.1. INTRODUCTION

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In this unit you will be introduced to a brief account of Girish Karnad's life and works. The unit will then discuss the characteristics of Modern Indian Drama, Karnad's views on modern Indian theatre and the influence both these aspects had on the play *Tughlaq*.

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## 7.2. OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit you will be able to

- Understand the characteristics of modern Indian theatre
- Learn about Karnad's life and some of his important plays
- Learn about some of the important theatrical influences on his work
- Understand Girish Karnad's views on modern Indian theatre
- Understand the historical background of the play.

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## 7.3. GIRISH KARNAD: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

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Girish Karnad was born on 19th May, 1938. He is not only a famous playwright in Kannada, but also a writer, screenwriter, actor and movie director. He is considered to be one of the four major playwrights (along with Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and Mohan Rakesh) who dominated the scene of Modern Indian theatre in the 1970's and 1980's. Girish Karnad continues to write plays even today. Karnad is the recipient of the Jnanpith Award, one of the highest literary awards in India. In 1988 he was appointed as chair of the Sangeet Natak Akademi at New Delhi.

However, Girish Karnad's literary reputation is based on his plays. Nearly all his plays were written in Kannada and then translated into English and other Indian languages.

Here I will make a brief reference to some of his plays.

His first play *Yayati* was published in 1961 and was based on an episode from the Mahabharata. It was not an instant success.

This was followed by *Tughlaq* (1964). In this play, Karnad took a new look at the life and times of the 14th century Sultan ruler, Muhammad bin Tughlaq. *Tughlaq* was an instant success. It was translated into Hindi by the famous Kannada theatre director, B.V. Karanth. It was staged in Kannada in 1965 and in Urdu by the National School of Drama Repertory. One of the most famous productions of *Tughlaq* was directed by Ebrahim Alkazi, Director of National School of Drama, in the historic setting of Purana Qila, 1974. Other leading directors who have directed *Tughlaq* are Prasanna, Arvind Gaur, Dinesh Thakur and in Bengali Shyamanand Jalan. Karnad had now acquired a place in the forefront of Modern Indian Drama.

In 1971, he wrote *Hayavadana* based on a story in the *Kathasaritasagara*, (an ancient collection of stories in Sanskrit). He was also influenced by the German writer Thomas Mann's short novel, "The Transposed Heads." In this play Karnad used traditional folk elements like the ancient Kannada folk form, Yakshagana. This use of folk elements was to be an important characteristic of modern Indian drama.



In another important play of his, *Naga-Mandala* (1988), he once again used as his source an important folk legend. In 1990 he produced *Tale Danda* (in Hindi “Rakt Kalyan) or *The Beheading*, which was based on the life of the twelfth-century poet saint Basavanna and his followers who tried to demolish caste barriers. Like *Tughlaq*, the source of this play was history, and not based on folk legends.

In 1994, came *Agni Mattu Male* (The Fire and the Rain )1995 which was based on the myth of Yavakri, and which is narrated in the Mahabharata.

Girish Karnad continues to write and some of his other plays include *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, 2000, and *Bikhre Bimb* or *A Heap of Broken Images* (2006).

### 7.3.1. Theatrical Influences on Karnad

In an interesting article, “Acrobating between the traditional and the modern”, published in the journal “Indian Literature”, ( No.131, May-June 1989, pp. 85-99), Karnad speaks of his childhood days and his introduction to theatre in his formative years. His childhood was spent in a small town called Sirsi, where his parents would take him to see the touring Company *Natak* companies. The Company *Natak* flourished as a form of commercial entertainment, had a proscenium stage, and used a lot of music. These *Natak* companies moved from place to place, often with a large number of artists and backstage workers and were very popular as they were initially based on myths and legends and used rich costumes, elaborate background scenes and effective eye catching visual effects. Later the company *Natak* also started using social themes.

Karnad was also introduced to the traditional folk form of the Yakshagana as a child and was fascinated by the use of masks and the ritual atmosphere in this form.

Later as an adult, when he shifted to Bombay he was exposed to Western theatre and was deeply influenced by the naturalistic plays. Karnad however explains in this article that naturalism is quite different in modern Indian theatre as there are vast cultural differences between Indian and Western societies.

In Karnad’s own words, “...to me three kinds of theatre, the three kinds between which I swivelled and moved and written have been symbolized in a sense by these three, the Company *Natak* on one side, the Yakshagana..., and thirdly the kind of theatre which really is a naturalistic theatre, the Western theatre as one came to see it, hate it, dislike it but was impossible not to be possessed by it.” (*Acrobating Between...*p.89).

All these three aspects can be seen in Karnad’s plays. In order to understand Karnad’s play *Tughlaq*, we have to place it in the context of modern Indian drama.

### 7.3.2. Karnad’s Views on Theatre

In his introduction to his collection of three plays, translated by him, entitled *Three Plays*, Karnad further elaborates on the dilemma faced by the modern Indian dramatist while negotiating between tradition and modernity. According to Karnad, modern Indian theatre “originated in the second half of the nineteenth century in three cities, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras.” Karnad further argues that “none of these seaports ...had an Indian past of its own, a history independent of the British. These places had developed an Indian middle class.” According to Karnad, this middle class developed “social values” which were shaped by their English education, and the “need to work with the British in trade and administration” (Karnad,1994:4)

Karnad argues that Indian theatre at this time also imitated British theatre. According to him, two concepts altered the nature of Indian theatre. In Karnad’s words, one was the

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separation of the audience from the stage by the proscenium, “creating a distance between the audience and the actors and the second concept was the “idea of pure entertainment, whose success would be measured in terms of immediate financial returns and the run of the play.” (Karnad; 1994:4-5)

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#### **7.4. PARSİ THEATRE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON MODERN INDIAN THEATRE**

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Another outcome of this idea that theatre was a commercial venture was in Karnad’s words, that a “commercially viable secularism” was propagated. (Karnad: 5)The people involved in the theatre came from different religious and ethnic backgrounds.

This is the period when Parsi theatre played an important influence. Parsi theatre largely presented “secular musical dramas that drew on Hindu myths, as well as adaptations of foreign romances...they were presented in ...English, followed by Gujarati and finally Hindi.”(Brian Crow and Chris Banfield, 1993: 139-140) Karnad states that “myths and legends, emptied of meaning, were reshaped into tightly constructed melodramas with thundering curtain lines and a searing climax.”(Karnad:6) Plot and incident were all important.

According to Karnad, Parsi theatre absorbed “several features of traditional or folk performing arts, such as music, mime and comic interludes. In Maharashtra,... its greatest contribution was in the field of music, in the form of a rich and varied body of theatre songs.” (Karnad: 7) However Karnad felt its legacy of music and dance seemed irrelevant to dramatists like him.

It is important to be aware of the influences on Karnad’s work and his views on theatre as it will help us to understand *Tughlaq*.

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#### **7.5. MODERN INDIAN DRAMA**

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All three words in this title need explanation.

##### **7.5.1. Definition of the Word “Modern”**

“Modern” in the context of Indian drama would refer to the post –Independence/post-colonialism period, after the 1950’s. This period saw upsurges in Indian theatre in all spheres-i.e. new plays were being written, and new theatrical companies were being formed. However the word “modern” is complex and has several meanings attached to it.

A well known Marathi dramatist, Mahesh Elkunchwar, commenting on the works of the famous Marathi playwright, Vijay Tendulkar has stated that he (Tendulkar) was a modernist as he confronted “the problems of his time”, and gave “disturbing new insights into the human problems...” This suggests that a modern play gives us fresh insights into ourselves and into the world around us. Elkunchwar also makes the interesting point that Tendulkar was influenced by the West as shown by the emphasis on “liberalism, the catholicity of taste, the spirit of frank enquiry into human life, a stress on individuality rather than on a system of accepted social and moral values...”(Elkunchwar1995:22)

### 7.5.2. Influence of the West on Indian Drama

This quotation also highlights another important factor—the influence of the West on modern Indian drama. The characteristics of naturalism and existentialism deeply influenced many Indian dramatists like Vijay Tendulkar, (Marathi), Mohan Rakesh (Hindi), Girish Karnad (Kannada) and Badal Sircar (Bengali). Naturalism stressed the influence of environment and heredity on the individual. Existentialism, while it emphasizes choice also shows anguish and despair as central to the state of man. However man must create his own set of values and live by it. Realism was another important influence, focusing on literature being a mirror of society, though many writers also entered the inner world of their characters and presented them in a convincing manner. Both naturalism and realism showed how societal and economic influences were shown as moulding the life of man.

Modern Drama in the West grew out of the trauma of two World Wars, the breakdown of traditional value systems and the questioning of religion. Major philosophical trends like Existentialism and Freudian psychology made for a more problematic and ambivalent attitude emerging in literature.

### 7.5.3. Characteristics of Modern Indian Drama

These contexts did not exist in India during the 1950's. The political and societal influences on Indian drama were quite different.

But several of the characteristics mentioned in the above paragraph, influenced Indian playwrights, who after Independence were also questioning traditional religious, moral, cultural and social values. Like modern European theatre Indian modern theatre was largely urban. This led to the modern Indian dramatist also analyzing the isolation, the breakdown in communication and the breakup of the joint family system in the cities and small towns that grew rapidly after Independence. A major focus of these playwrights was on the individual and his relationship to family and society and the conflict and friction that these relationships brought about. Materialism and competition were central to urban life. The great Norwegian dramatist, Henrik Ibsen, had a deep influence on naturalistic theatre in India.

In terms of form also, modern Indian theatre was deeply influenced by Western theatre. Mainstream dramatists like Mohan Rakesh and Vijay Tendulkar used the proscenium theatre which dominated modern drama. However there was also emphasis on experimentation in form. The twentieth century German dramatist, Bertolt Brecht, deeply influenced dramatists like Badal Sircar with his use of epic theatre and alienation techniques. The well known Bengali director, Shombu Mitra once stated that the best examples of theatre were those that assimilated Western ideas and applied it to Indian conditions.

### 7.5.4. Some Examples of Western Influence on Modern Indian Theatre

Both Badal Sircar's *Evam Indrajit* and Girish Karnad's *Yayata* were deeply influenced by existentialist philosophy.

Naturalism also played an important part. In Mohan Rakesh's *Adhe Adhure* and several of Vijay Tendulkar plays like *Shantata! Court Challu Hai*, *Kamala* and *Baby*, the hypocrisy and barrenness of middle-class existence is depicted. Like the great masters of Western naturalism, Ibsen and Chekhov, it is the ordinary man/woman who is the central character in these plays.

These playwrights realized they had to search for a new form and new idiom to express the urban experiences of modern India.

Tendulkar wrote his plays within a two act structure while Mohan Rakesh realized the need for dispensing with scholarly Hindi and using a more direct, idiomatic language.

### 7.5.5. Tradition and Modernity in Modern Indian Drama

It is important to realize that the post-Independence Indian dramatists did not merely blindly imitate the West in their plays. One of the important debates that was taking place in the 1960's and 1970's was how the modern dramatist could negotiate between Western influences and the vast classical Sanskrit theatrical tradition as well as the rich and diverse folk forms of theatre that were part of India's tradition.

The use of folk forms and folk legends by modern Indian dramatists was a very important aspect of the drama of this period. Some dramatists like Mahesh *Elkunchwar* totally rejected the idea of experimenting with traditional forms and used only the Western forms of theatre. Others like Karnad and Tendulkar used a variety of forms both Western and traditional to express contemporary concerns. For e.g., as already mentioned, Girish Karnad in *Hayavadana* uses as his source not only a German novel, but also a story he had read in the *Kathasaritasagara*. He also uses masks, talking dolls, music and dance which were part of the Yakshagana folk form. However these aspects are used to discuss modern issues of identity and the nature of reality. *Hayavadana* is a good example of how the modern Indian dramatist uses folk forms to express modern concerns.

Another well-known example is Vijay Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal*(1972). Tendulkar's play was set in 18th century Poona, during the rule of the Peshwas and dealt with the theme of power and how it corrupts individuals and society. Tendulkar used an 18th century historical episode to present a theme which had relevance to modern times.

The forms that Tendulkar used were the folk forms of Dashavatar, Khela and Tamasha with the use of masks, music and dance.

Turning to the past did not only mean using folk forms. Many playwrights used sources from the Hindu epics or from Indian history for their plays. In Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*, uses a historical source and gives a radical interpretation of Muhammed bin Tughlaq.

In *Andha Yug* (1962), Dharam Vir Bharti takes the end of the Mahabharata war and redefines the last scene of the epic in a modern context. In his characterization of Gandhari, Dhritarashtra and Ashvatthama the playwright probes their inner complexities.

Through these examples it is clear that the word "modern" in the context of Indian drama has several characteristics. While the modern dramatist imbibed the Western tradition of proscenium theatre, self critical analysis, focusing on the isolation and fragmentation of urban life, he/she did not fully reject the traditional folk and classical traditions that had existed long before the birth of modern drama.

### 7.5.6. Definition of the word "Indian" in the context of Modern Indian Drama

Let us now look at the word "Indian" in the phrase "Modern Indian Drama." The word "Indian" does not have a single meaning in the context of drama. In 1988, in the Samvatsar lectures of the Sahitya Akademi, Uma Shankar Joshi spoke of the "idea of Indian literature as inherent in the peculiar multilingual situation that obtains in India." The concept of Indian literature, he continues "is an aggregate of all our writings in all our languages presenting itself as a pattern with common strands through all our ages." (Joshi1998:p.50) Joshi is highlighting the several languages that exist in India, most of whom have a rich literary history.

As I had mentioned earlier, Indian theatre in post Independence era was written in different languages like Hindi, Marathi, Kannada and Bengali to mention a few. The plays were translated into other languages and in English. This is how a play like *Tughlaq* was written in Kannada, but was translated into Hindi, Urdu and other languages and reached a wide audience.

Another aspect to remember is that Indian theatre consisted of various forms, all of whom came under the vast umbrella called “Indian theatre”. Sai Paranjpye, in a talk has, for e.g. said, that Marathi theatre consists of “the tamasha or the robust folk form, rural theatre, dalit theatre, street theatre, amateur theatre and the mainstream commercial or professional theatre.” (Paranjpye, 1995 p.31)

The word “Indian” therefore refers to the different forms of Indian Theatre written in different languages.

### 7.5.7. Definition of the Word ‘Drama’

Let us now look at the word “Drama”. The word “Drama” generally refers to the written text. The word “theatre” refers to the performance of the play or the performance text. However there is no hard and fast rule. In this lesson I will be using the word “drama” as referring to the written published text of *Tughlaq*.

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## 7.6. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO TUGHLAQ

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### 7.6.1. Karnad’s Choice of the Theme

Karnad’s decision to write a historical play based on the life of Muhammad bin Tughlaq was a response to the criticism of a major Kannada critic, Kirtinath Kurtkoti who said that “there is no Indian playwright who has been able to handle history. All we have produced are costume plays.” (Karnad; *Acrobating Between ...*,p.97)

It is worth recording Karnad’s own statement of how he stumbled on the character and reign of Tughlaq. He got the idea while reading a second standard book of Indian History!” But as I started reading about Tughlaq, I suddenly realized what a fantastic character I had hit upon... (I) suddenly felt possessed, felt this character was growing in front of me. Certainly Tughlaq was the most extraordinary character to come on the throne of Delhi in religion, in philosophy; even in calligraphy, in battle, war field ...he seemed to have outshone anyone who came before him or after him. After that writing the play was not difficult at all.” (Karnad: 97)

### 7.6.2. Muhammad bin Tughlaq – A Brief History

Muhammad bin Tughlaq was the Sultan of Delhi from 1325A.D. to 1351 A.D. He ascended the throne after the death of his father in 1325 A.D. The character and achievements of Tughlaq has evoked a large scale controversy. One of the most educated of Muslim rulers, he inherited a vast empire from his father. Tughlaq attempted to introduce several reforms but failed because he was not able to implement them properly.

He did not accept the power of the Ulema class who dominated the administration of justice. Thus he created powerful enemies. He also attempted to follow a secular policy and punished the guilty regardless of religion.

His handling of the Doab famine was another reason for his failure as he introduced taxation during a famine.

One of his most controversial policies was transferring the capital from Delhi to Devagiri, which he renamed Daulatabad. Tughlaq's aim was to protect the capital from Mangol invasion. He also wanted to consolidate his empire in the South. But he did not make adequate arrangements and by forcing the entire population to move from Delhi, he created widespread suffering among his citizens. The whole scheme failed disastrously.

His introduction of copper coins was another scheme which had potential, but failed miserably because it was not executed properly. His idea was to introduce copper coins which were equal in value to silver and gold. But he took no precaution against forgery. The result was that so many false copper coins were minted and Tughlaq had to withdraw the copper coins.

Tughlaq faced rebellion from his own people, and was therefore seen as a failure, a mad man who floated all kinds of wild projects. However, Karnad sees him as an idealist who had brilliant ideas but could not implement them properly, a genius who suffered from deep inner conflict.

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### **7.7. TUGHLAQ AND ITS RELEVANCE TO TODAY'S AUDIENCE**

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In his introduction to the play *Tughlaq* (O.U. P), the well known Kannada writer U.R. Anantha Murthy states the reason for Tughlaq's appeal is that it reflects "the political mood of disillusionment which followed the Nehru era of idealism in the country..."(Anantha Murthy, 1971: viii)

In his "Author's Introduction", Karnad states, "In a sense, the play reflected the slow disillusionment my generation felt with the new policies of independent India: the gradual erosion of the ethical norms that had guided the movement for independence and the coming to terms with criticism and real politik."

Again in an interview given in the theatre magazine "Enact" in June 1971, Karnad further elaborates on what he said earlier:

What struck me absolutely about Tughlaq's history was that it was contemporary. The fact that here was the most idealistic, the most intelligent king ever to come on the throne of Delhi...and one of the greatest failures also. And within a span of twenty years this tremendously capable man had gone to pieces. This seemed to be both due to his idealism as well as the shortcomings within him, such as his impatience, his cruelty, his feeling that he has the only correct answer. And I felt in the early sixties India had also come very far in the same direction –the twenty-year period seemed to me very much a striking parallel.

(Quoted by Anantha Murthy : viii)

In fact many critics like Aparna Dharwardkar have seen the play meaning different things at different points in India history. Dharwardkar sees the play as expressing the growing disillusionment with Nehruvian policies in the sixties and later a reflection of Indira Gandhi's policies.

It is this ability of the play to be relevant to different periods in Indian History that makes it so popular even today.

## 7.8. SUMMARY

In this unit we have attempted to place Girish Karnad and his play *Tughlaq* in the context of modern Indian drama. The theatrical influences on Karnad have been highlighted.

His childhood experiences of Company Natak theatre and the Kannada folk forms, especially Yakshagana, are important in moulding his attitudes to drama. Parsi theatre was also playing an important role in its use of stagecraft and music. As an adult, he was deeply influenced by Western drama and the use of naturalism and realism. But he realized that Western drama did not fully fit into the Indian context. Karnad attempted to combine both Western and Indian influences. *Tughlaq* was a successful example of this.

We have also tried to analyze the chief characteristics of modern Indian drama, and shown the influence both of the West and of diverse traditional Indian forms on modern Indian drama.

This unit also defines the words “modern”, “Indian” and “drama”.

I have emphasized that no single meaning can be attached to these words.

We have to remember that we are using the word “drama” to mean the written text of *Tughlaq*.

I have also given a brief historical background to the play. I have given a few important highlights of Tughlaq’s life.

I have also given some important reasons why this play is relevant even today. Karnad himself saw a close parallel between Tughlaq’s political life and Nehru’s political career.

## 7.9. GLOSSARY

**Company Natak:** In Karnataka, professional theatre groups who moved from town to town, with a large group of actors and stage props and performed on stage with kerosene or gas lamps. They had rich costumes, music, impressive visual effects and themes largely based on myths and epics though later they also dealt with social issues.

**Existentialism:** Emphasized that man is defined by his choices, and needs to act and live up to his choices.

**Naturalism:** In literature it stressed the importance of environment and heredity in shaping character.

**Proscenium:** It is the arch in theatre which separates the stage from the audience.

**Ulema:** Professional Theologians who expounded the Mohammedan law.

(Sources for Glossary \_Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary; Collins Cobuild English Dictionary)

### Self Assessment Questions

1. What were the theatrical influences on Karnad in his early years?
2. What, according to Karnad, were the two important changes that occurred in Indian theatre because of Western/British influence?

3. Analyze the influence of Parsi theatre on Modern Indian Theatre.
4. How would you define the word “modern” in the context of modern Indian Theatre.
5. Explain the words “naturalism”, “existentialism” and “realism”.
6. Explain the influence of tradition on modern Indian theatre. Give a few examples.
7. Define the word “Indian” in the context of Modern Indian drama.
8. How would you define the word “drama”? How is it different from the word “theatre”?

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### 7.10. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

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1. Refer to 7.3.2. Refer to the influence of Company Natak, Yakshagana and Naturalistic Western Drama.
2. The two important changes were the introduction of the proscenium stage where the audience is separated from the stage and drama was seen as entertainment which had to give financial returns. Details given in 7.3.3.
3. Refer to 7.4.1.  
Details to be mentioned are that drama became more secular as Hindu myths were dramatized with no reference to their context and emphasis was more on plot, melodrama and music.
4. Refer to 7.5.1 and 7.5.3.

Points to emphasize:

the influence of Western drama especially Naturalism and Existentialism  
questioning of traditional values breakup of the joint family and the consequent isolation of the individual friction and conflict between the individual and society and conflict within the individual self analysis

5. See 7.5.2.

6. See 7.5.5.

Points to emphasize:

The debate between tradition and modernity is central to modern Indian drama  
Many dramatists criticised the move of “return to roots”, or going back to tradition and these critics felt that this did not reflect the concerns of the modern dramatist.

However dramatists like Girish Karnad experimented with traditional forms and presented them in a contemporary context.

Tradition or looking at the past did not only mean borrowing from folk forms.

In *Tughlaq*, Karnad looks at the historical past from the viewpoint of a modern dramatist.

7. Refer to 7.5.6.

The word “Indian” does not have a single meaning.

India has diverse cultures, different languages and different kinds of theatre.

8. Refer to 7.5.7.

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### 7.12. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS

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1. Explain with examples, the main characteristics of Modern Indian Drama.
2. What, according to Karnad, were the main theatrical influences on his plays?
3. Give the reasons why Karnad chose the theme of Muhammad bin Tughlaq for his play? How is the play even relevant today?

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**UNIT 8 GIRISH KARNAD'S *TUGHLAQ* Part II**

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- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Objective
- 8.3. Scene 1
  - 8.3.1 Summary of Scene One
  - 8.3.2. Critical Analysis of Scene One
- 8.4. Scene 2
  - 8.4.1 Summary of Scene Two
  - 8.4.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Two
- 8.5. Scene 3
  - 8.5.1. Summary of Scene Three
  - 8.5.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Three
- 8.6. Scene 4
  - 8.6.1. Summary of Scene Four
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- 8.8. Scene 6
  - 8.8.1. Summary of First Half of Scene Six
  - 8.8.2. Summary of Second Half of Scene Six
  - 8.8.3. Critical Analysis of Scene Six
- 8.9. Scene Seven
  - 8.9.1. Summary of Scene Seven
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- 8.10. Summing Up
- 8.11. Glossary
- 8.12. Answers to Self Assessment Questions
- 8.13. Reference
- 8.14. Terminal and Model Questions

## 8.1. INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will be given a summary and detailed critical analysis of Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*. The play consists of thirteen Scenes. In Scene One we are introduced to the common people. They are gathered in front of the Chief Court of Justice in Delhi. The stage instruction tells us that the crowd consists of mostly Muslims and a few Hindus.

## 8.2. OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you will be familiar with the text and should be able to give your own interpretation of the play.

## 8.3. SCENE ONE

### 8.3.1. Summary of Scene 1

An Old Man is worried as to how things are so different in the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq.

Another character who is called Young Man is more positive in his comments. He says that Tughlaq is not "afraid to be human."<sup>(1)</sup> He is impressed by the Sultan's, (Tughlaq) ability to rigorously impose laws."Can you mention one earlier Sultan in whose time people read the Koran in the streets like now?"<sup>(1)</sup>

A third character named simply Third Man is not too impressed by Tughlaq. He is worried that Tughlaq has gone against the Koran by abolishing the Jiziya tax.

The Hindu in the crowd is not happy. He cannot understand Tughlaq's actions and says "But the moment a man comes along and says, "I know you are a Hindu, but you are also a human being. Well, that makes me nervous."<sup>(2)</sup>

Even while they are discussing the Sultan's actions an announcer declares that the Sultan has accepted his mistake regarding the illegal appropriation of land from a Brahmin, Vishnu Prasad. The Sultan agrees to compensate the Brahmin by not only giving him five hundred silver dinars, but also a post in the Civil Service to "ensure him a regular and adequate income."<sup>(3)</sup> All the people who are gathered in the courtyard are shocked.

Just then the Sultan, Mohammad bin Tughlaq arrives and speaks to the audience. He refers to the case of Vishnu Prasad and says that this proof that justice works in his kingdom:"...seen for you how justice works in my kingdom without any consideration of might or weakness, religion or creed."<sup>(3)</sup> Even before the onlookers can take in what he says, he gives them another shock.

This is his decision to shift his empire from Delhi to Daulatabad. He gives his reasons for his decision. Firstly, he says his "empire is large and embraces the South and I need a capital which is at its heart." Secondly, he points out to his citizens that Delhi is too near the border and "as you well know its peace is never free from the fear of invaders."<sup>(3)</sup> Thirdly, the most important factor is that "Daulatabad is a city of Hindus and as the capital it will symbolize the bond between Muslims and Hindus which I wish to develop and strengthen in my kingdom."<sup>(4)</sup>

However, Tughlaq makes it clear that the citizens should move to Daulatabad out of their own free will and not out of any compulsion.

There is confusion amongst the onlookers after Tughlaq leaves the scene, The Old Man says this is a clear example of Tughlaq's madness. The third man says that this is tyranny and only confirms the rumour that Tughlaq had got his father's throne by force. The young man contradicts the Third man's statement and says Tughlaq's father died accidentally when an elephant went wild and dashed against the *pandal* which collapsed leading to the death of Tughlaq's father and brother when they were at prayer. Not everyone is convinced by this explanation.

The Third man argues that even a respected man like Sheikh Imam-ud-din had accused the Sultan publicly of killing his father and brother.

The third man also points out that Imam-ud-din has a certain resemblance to Tughlaq.

The scene now shifts to the Brahmin. It turns out that he is actually a Muslim dhobi named Aziz. He is recognized by his friend Aazam. Aziz tells Aazam he hit upon this idea of disguising as a Brahmin because he realized he could make money as Tughlaq was so keen to convince his citizens that he was an impartial ruler and would never discriminate on the basis of religion. Aziz is making cynical use of this aspect.

### 8.3.2. Critical Analysis of Scene One

The opening scene is important for several reasons.

Karnad makes dramatic use of the common people. Their comments on the Sultan give us some idea of what the ordinary people think of their ruler. The younger generation is attracted by Tughlaq's innovative way of thinking while the older generations are conservative and quite shocked by their ruler's actions. They also gossip about the widely held belief that Tughlaq had murdered his father and brother.

It is also important to note that the crowds are not described as individual characters. By giving them titles like Old Man, Third Man, Young Man and Hindu, Karnad is showing them as representative of their group and not as individual personalities

In contrast, he gives the central character an identity by naming him as Tughlaq. He also gives Aziz and Aazam individual names. They are going to play an important role in the play, especially Aziz. We see this in the first scene itself where Aziz pretends he is a Brahmin and cynically exploits Tughlaq's desire to be fair and just.

We are also introduced to Tughlaq. We learn that he believes in secularism. We also see that he wants to prove this by making it the main reason for his wanting to shift the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad.

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## 8.4. SCENE TWO

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### 8.4.1. Summary of Scene Two

In this scene we are introduced to Tughlaq's Step-Mother. She expresses her concern for Tughlaq's health as she feels he is not sleeping enough.

Tughlaq bursts into a long speech. He talks of how he wants to forget himself in the poetry of Ibn-ul-Mottazz. He wants to have a heart to heart talk with his people and ask them to frankly share their thoughts. He says:

Come my people, I am waiting for you. Confide in me your worries. Let me share your joys. Let's laugh and cry together and then, let's pray....I am waiting to embrace you all. (10)

He realizes he wants to do several things and does not have enough time."...but I have only one life, one body, and my hopes, my people, my God are all fighting for it...."(10)

The Step-Mother is not impressed and says Tughlaq is merely putting on an act: "I can't ask a simple question without your giving a royal performance."(10-11)

Tughlaq also informs his Step-Mother that his dear friend Ain-ul-Mulk seems to be getting ready to attack him as he is marching with an army of thirty thousand soldiers towards Delhi. She is surprised to hear the news. She also tells Tughlaq not to cut jokes on such sensitive matters as murder. This reminds us of the rumours in the first scene that Tughlaq was suspected of killing his father and brother.

We are now introduced to two very important characters in the play-Barani, the historian, and Najib, the politician. Both show their concern for the impending invasion of Ain-ul Mulk and the inflammatory speeches made by Sheikh Imam-ud –din. The Sheikh, according to Barani, has been saying to large crowds in Kanpur, that Tughlaq is a "disgrace to Islam" and does not have the right to rule as he murdered his father and brother at prayer time.

Tughlaq is horrified at the accusation."Do you really think parricide is a little thing? And fratricide? And the pollution of prayer? It's not what people say, Barani, it's their crooked minds that horrify me."(13)

Barani feels that Tughlaq should live up to his ideals and allow the people to criticize him openly as he had often told them to do so. Najib reminds Barani that they are dealing with a political problem and there is no space for idealism. Tughlaq is more inclined to take Najib's advice rather than Barani's. Najib reminds Tughlaq that Ain-ul-Mulk was successful in suppressing the rebellion in Avadh. Ain-ul Mulk was shocked when Tughlaq suddenly transferred him to the Deccan. He suspected the Sultan's motives and therefore decided to launch an attack on Delhi. Najib tells Tughlaq that "A traitor's a traitor, friend or saint, and he must be crushed."(15)Both Najib and Tughlaq seem to have a plan in mind keeping in mind that Sheikh Imam-ud-din has a close resemblance to the Sultan. Both Barani and the Step-Mother are not taken into confidence. Tughlaq tells Barani," Forgive me if I let you down, Barani, but I must play this game my own way."(16)

The Step-Mother expresses her concern for Tughlaq to Barani when she is alone with him. She expresses her reservations about Najib and makes Barani promise "not to leave him-ever-whatever he does."(17)

#### 8.4.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Two

Scene Two introduces us to three important characters-Step-Mother, Najib and Barani. Each of them is going to play an important role in the play.

The Step-Mother's has a very intense and possessive attitude towards Tughlaq. She also is bold enough to criticise him, as when she tells Tughlaq that he is merely acting. Tughlaq also takes her criticism. There does seem to be a close relationship between the two. She also seems to be jealous of Najib and tries to win over Barani.

Karnad's introduction of Najib and Barani is important. They represent two aspects of statecraft, Najib is the chief political advisor to Tughlaq and the Sultan seems to have great respect for his advice. But Najib is also very cunning and competitive and trusts no one. On the other hand,

Barani is gentle and has moral integrity. He is the historian who is expected to record the events of Tughlaq's reign. Tughlaq is anxious that he should have a worthy place in history. The relationship of Najib and Barani with each other and with Tughlaq is of great importance in the play.

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## 8.5. SCENE THREE

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### 8.5.1. Summary of Scene Three

The Announcer declares that Sheikh Imam-ud-din will address a meeting in front of the Big Mosque, where he will tell the gathering of the mistakes that Tughlaq has made, which according to the Sheikh have harmed the country and Islam.

Sheikh Imam-ud-Din is disappointed and surprised that no one has come to listen to him. He and Tughlaq argue about the role of the ruler. While the Sheikh argues that Tughlaq's central role is to spread the word of Islam. "You are one of the most powerful kings on earth today and you could spread the Kingdom of Heaven on earth." (20)

Tughlaq replies, "I have a long way to go. I can't afford to crawl-I have to gallop." (20) Tughlaq continues to elaborate by pointing out that the aesthetic and secular are two aspects of his character that he cannot ignore. His attraction to poetry made him experience a world that he had not found "in the Arabs or even the Koran." He had felt a thrill reading the works of Sukrat and Aflatoon. He regrets that he cannot fulfill the vision he has for his kingdom by unifying the people with the vision of peace and compassion.

"You are asking me to make myself complete by killing the Greek in me and you propose to unify my people by denying the visions which led Zarathustra or the Buddha. (21)"

Tughlaq then goes on to explain to a shocked Imam-ud-din the strategy he had planned so that the public meeting of the Sheikh would be a disaster. The moment the people learnt that the Sultan was organizing a meeting in which his severest critic, Sheikh Imam-ud-din was going to speak, the common people felt there was a trap and decided the safest thing would be to avoid going to the meeting. They feel that the Sheikh might be a spy. Tughlaq says, "Generations of devout Sultans have twisted their minds and I have to mend their minds before I can think of their souls." (22)

The Sheikh is shocked and decides to leave Delhi. But Tughlaq persuades him to go as his envoy and plead with Ain-ul-Mulk not to attack Delhi. He asks the Sheikh to meet Ain-ul Mulk near Kanauj. The Sheikh agrees reluctantly. Tughlaq makes him wear the royal robes so that it would be difficult to distinguish between him and the Sultan. Tughlaq's plan is now complete.

### 8.5.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Three

The scene highlights the different strands in Tughlaq's character which are complex and contradictory.

Tughlaq emerges as a superb and unscrupulous politician, who has no scruples in sacrificing others for his own political ends. This is shown in his handling of the Imam-ud-din episode. Imam-ud-din finds that he is outwitted at every point and agrees to dress in royal robes to meet Ain-ul-mulk, not realizing that he is going to meet his end.

Tughlaq also has the creative and poetic side to his character. He talks of having the Greek in him- he means he admires the culture and philosophy of a great culture, a “world I had not found in the Arabs or even the Koran.”(21)

He has also a different vision for his country, as he realizes that not only Muslims but Hindus and Jains also live there. He accuses Imam-ud-din of not letting him “unify my people by denying the visions which led Zaruthustra or the Buddha.”(21) But the same Tughlaq is cynical of his people. He says, “Generations of devout Sultans have twisted their minds and I have to mend their minds before I can think of their souls.”(22)

From these examples we can see that Tughlaq is not a one-dimensional character but has several complex strands to his character. He is not only an unscrupulous politician but also has a secular vision and wishes to bring his people together. He is also artistic and creative.

## 8.6. SCENE FOUR

### 8.6.1. Summary of Scene Four

The scene opens with the Step-Mother thanking Shihab-ud –din for looking after Delhi while Muhammad –bin –Tughlaq was away. Sadar Ratan Singh now enters and breaks the shocking news that Sheik-Imam-ud-din was killed in the battle.

Tughlaq appears and expresses his deep shock and grief at the death of the Sheikh. To the surprise of everyone present he says that not only did he let Ain-ul- Mulk,(who had killed the Sheikh thinking he was Tughlaq),walk free, but gave him back the kingdom of Awadh which he had taken from him. Najib, his political advisor is speechless as he feels Ain-ul-Mulk poses a danger to Tughlaq. He cannot understand the rationale behind such an action. Muhammad’s answer is also enigmatic. He says Ain-ul-Mulk is a better chess player than him. Only, Barani the historian appreciates his action.

After everyone leaves, Ratan Singh gives a detailed account to a horrified Shihab-ud-din of the death of Sheikh Imam-ud-din. Tughlaq actually laid a trap for him by hiding behind some hills. When Imam-ud –din comes dressed in royal robes, Ain-ul-mulk takes him to be the Sultan. Meanwhile, Tughlaq gets one of his trumpeters to sound the battle cry and Ain-ul-Mulk thinking he is being attacked, kills the Sheikh, Ain-ul-Mulk’s army also is massacred as they rush to attack Tughlaq’s army, thinking the Sultan is dead.

Ratan Singh now informs Sihab-ud-din that he is planning to attend a secret meeting of important citizens of Delhi.

### 8.6.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Four

This scene brings out the political acumen of Tughlaq, but it also shows his unscrupulous nature. This is shown in the way he manipulates two of his enemies, Ain-ul-Mulk and Imam-ud –din. He makes Ain-ul Mulk kill Imam-ud-din, by mistake. Thus he removes the Sheikh who was posing a serious threat to him. But he also destroys Ain-ul-Mulk’s army, thus rendering him powerless. In this way, he neutralizes both his enemies.

But in spite of all his manipulation, trouble is already brewing in Tughlaq’s state, and a secret conspiracy is being hatched.

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**8.7. SCENE FIVE**

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**8.7.1. Summary of Scene Five**

The scene shifts to a house in Delhi where a secret meeting is being held of Amirs, Sayyids and is also being attended by Shihab-ud-din and Ratan Singh.

The second Amir says that “the people in Delhi never trust each other. It’s the climate. They have to have an outsider to lead them!”(31)

The First Amir sees a hidden motive in Tughlaq wanting to shift the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad. He says that Tughlaq wants to weaken the Amirs. “You see, we are strong in Delhi. This is where we belong. But Daulatabad is a Hindu city and we’ll be helpless there. We’ll have to lick his feet.”(31)

The second Amir also voices his unhappiness over the manner in which Delhi is being governed. “You can’t take a step without paying some tax or another. There’s even a tax on gambling. How are we to live? You can’t even cheat without having to pay tax for it.”(31) He also feels that Tughlaq has to follow the tenets of the Koran which only sanctions four taxes.

Shihab-ud- din tries to defend the Sultan by stating that “he has done a lot of good work; built schools, roads, hospitals. He has made good use of the money.”(31)

The Sayyid shows his intolerance of Tughlaq’s secularism. “...he could tax the Hindus. The jiziya is sanctioned by the Koran. All infidels should pay it. Instead he says the infidels are our brothers.” (32)

Shihab-ud-din is disgusted by this attitude and decides to leave when he is accosted by an elderly man who identifies himself as Sheikh Shams-ud-din. Even though he is a holy man, he is willing to participate in overthrowing Tughlaq. “While tyranny crushes the faithful into dust, how can I continue to hide in my hole?”(32) He pleads with Shihab-ud-din to help them.

It is at this point that Sheikh Shams-ud-din tells Shihab-ud-din the true story behind Imam-ud-din’s failure to attract a crowd in Delhi. While Tughlaq invited the whole of Delhi to hear the Sheikh, his soldiers “went from door to door threatening dire consequences if anyone dared to attend the meeting.”(33) Tughlaq’s soldiers were hiding in the streets stopping anyone from going to the meeting. The Sheikh alleges that he was wounded by the soldiers when he tried to go to the Big Mosque.

It is the Hindu, Ratan Singh, who persuades Shihab-ud-din to join the conspirators and he even suggests a way of assassinating Tughlaq. He suggests that the best time to kill Tughlaq is during prayer time. Even the soldiers are not allowed to carry arms “Which means that at the time of prayers, the whole palace is unarmed.”(35) Ratan Singh says that the best time to assassinate Tughlaq is on the coming Tuesday when the Amirs will be seeing the Sultan.”The muezzin’s call to prayer will be the signal of attack.”(35)

The Amirs realize that this would be the best way to eliminate Tughlaq, but are uncomfortable with the idea of killing someone during prayer. Ratan Singh reminds them that Tughlaq had killed his own father during prayer time. Even Shihab-ud-din, though hesitant, feels that it is not sacrilegious to kill at prayer time. “I’m sure the Lord will not mind an interrupted prayer.”(36)



### 8.7.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Five

The scene has several important elements.

The first point to note is that Tughlaq is not popular with some sections of his state, especially the conservative elements like the Ulemas, Amirs and Sayyids.

Secondly, the scene shows that the atmosphere in the state is full of suspicion, mistrust and hatred. This is contradictory to Tughlaq's concept of the state. He, as already pointed out, believes that a state should be founded on justice, secularism and loyalty. But one can see that Tughlaq does not live up to his own ideals. In reality Tughlaq's actions show that he has several sides to his character. He is poetic and secular but he can be ruthless when dealing with his enemies and even with his own family. It is against this background that the conspiracy to eliminate him should be viewed. The conspirators show the same ruthlessness that Tughlaq shows towards his opponents.

Thirdly the motif of prayer is important in the play. Tughlaq is suspected of killing his father during prayer time. The conspirators also decide to use the time of prayer to arrange for the assassination of Tughlaq. They feel that Tughlaq will be most vulnerable at this time as he will not be carrying arms. Prayer is considered a sacred moment when the devotee is in communion with his Creator. The fact that they plan to assassinate at this sacred moment is a telling commentary on the moral corruption that has crept into the minds and hearts of the people.

## 8.8. SCENE SIX

### 8.8.1. Summary of the First Part of Scene Six

Scene Six can be divided into two parts. In the first part, Muhammad bin Tughlaq meets Amir I and Shihab-Ud-Din in his palace. His advisors Najib and Barani are also present. Tughlaq informs them that Abbasid Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad, a member of the hallowed family of the Abbasid Khalif's family is to visit India. Though Tughlaq tries to make it into an important event, it is obvious from the Amir's reaction that he is not considered so important. Is Tughlaq deliberating building up Ghiyas-ud-din? The scene is full of Tughlaq's dramatics. He questions Shihab-ud-din's use of the word "wisdom" (38) regarding the visit and sees a hidden motive behind the word. He asks Shihab-ud-din directly, "Do you think I am inviting him to placate the stupid priests?"(38)

Tughlaq seems to be in an aggressive but also in an introspective mood. He says in a rhetorical manner, "I wear the royal robes. I have honoured myself with the title of Sultan. But what gives me the right to call myself a king?"(38) He gives the answer himself. He decides to turn to tradition and history and "seek an answer there –in the blessings of the Abbasid Khalif."(38-39)

He then springs a surprise by stating that the Abbasid will be coming to Daulatabad, not Delhi. Shihab-ud-din intervenes and emphasizes that "the people of Delhi are very unhappy about the move."(39) But Tughlaq is unmoved. He insists that this is in the best interest of the people.

Tughlaq makes another startling announcement. He states that from next year he will "have copper currency in our empire along with the silver dinars." (39) A copper coin would have the same value as a silver dinar. The onlookers are shocked. One of the Amirs whispers to the others that he always knew that Tughlaq was mad.

Tughlaq now becomes emotional and to the embarrassment of the Amirs and others he kneels before them and asks them for their support. In a long speech he says, "I have hopes of building a new future for India and I need your support for that. If you don't understand me, ask me to explain myself and I'll do it. If you don't understand my explanations, bear with me in patience until I can show you the results. But please don't let me down, I beg you."(40)

Is Tughlaq sincere or is he just trying to test the Amirs and Shihab-ud-din? The fact that he asks them to take an oath on the Koran that they will support him in all his measures suggests the latter motive. Their hesitation in taking the oath reminds us that in the earlier scene they had plotted to kill Tughlaq. Their hesitation is therefore understandable. Does Tughlaq know of this? Events in the next part of the scene confirm our suspicion that he is in the know of this plot and is playing a war of nerves.

### 9.8.2. Summary of Second Half of Scene Six

The time for prayer is announced. Muhammad significantly decides to conduct the prayers in the palace itself. Half way through the prayer a commotion is heard and the Amirs and Shihab-ud-din surround Tughlaq with their swords drawn. But about twenty Hindu soldiers rush in and overpower the Amirs and take them away. A frightened Shihab-ud-din is left standing before Tughlaq and after finishing his prayers, Tughlaq confronts him. Interesting facts emerge. It turns out that Ratan Singh who had instigated Shihab-ud-din to participate in the treacherous plot to murder Tughlaq, had in fact told Tughlaq the whole story. Shihab-ud-din is shocked and has no defense to offer for his actions and is brutally killed by Tughlaq.

Tughlaq is now violent and brutal in his reactions. He asks Barani, "Are all those I trust condemned to go down in history as traitors? What is happening? Tell me Barani will my reign be nothing more than a tortured scream which will stab the night and melt away in the silence?" (43). In a gesture of great brutality he asks Najib that every "man involved in this is caught and beheaded." (43) Everyone in the kingdom should see them, so that they would not indulge in the same kind of treachery. In order to placate Shihab-ud-din's father, he would declare Shihab as a martyr who gave up his life saving Tughlaq!

Tughlaq declares he will no longer be soft, and orders that everyone should leave Delhi for Daulatabad.

They'll only understand the whip. Everyone must leave. ...Nothing but an empty graveyard of Delhi will satisfy me now. (44)

He explains to a horrified Barani:

I had wanted every act in my kingdom to become a prayer, every prayer to become a further step in knowledge, every step to lead us nearer to God. But our prayers too are ridden with disease and must be exiled. There will be no more praying in the kingdom, Najib. (44)

### 8.8.3. Critical Comments on Scene Six

Scene Six can be considered the turning point in the play as it shows a marked change in the character of Tughlaq.

This is the scene where the attempt to kill Tughlaq is carried out but fails as Ratan Singh warns Mohammad of this conspiracy. The intrigues and spying in the court speak volumes on the lack of trust and loyalty in Tughlaq's state.

The character of Tughlaq is brought out with its many shades of grey. Tughlaq becomes increasingly dictatorial and violent. Girish Karnad also gives a clear cut motive for this change in Tughlaq's character. While earlier he had made it clear that the shift from Delhi to Daulatabad would be voluntary he now decides it will be an order. This shift in strategy where he acts like a dictator rather than a democrat occurs after he wipes out the conspirators. But Karnad does not make it a simplistic equation He does not make us forget that Tughlaq always had streaks of violence and vindictiveness. There are repeated references to the suspicion that he had killed his own father and brother. Moreover, Shihab-ud-din reminds Tughlaq of his treatment of Ain-ul – Mulk. "I am not Ain-ul –Mulk to live crushed under your kindness."(42)

Tughlaq's calculating and sly character is also brought out. He waits for the conspirators to make a move and then crushes them. He is well prepared to face them. He also pretends that the dead Shihab-ud-din is shown as a martyr, as his father is a powerful figure and can create trouble for Tughlaq.

This reminds us of the earlier scene in Scene Four where Tughlaq plans out the death of Sheikh Imam-ud-din but makes him appear as a martyr.

The idealistic characteristics in Tughlaq's character are also brought out. He is self analytic when he asks the Amirs and Shihab-ud-din "...what gives me the right to call myself a king?"(38)

Later, as already quoted, he asks Barani what judgement history would pass on his reign: "...will my reign be nothing more than a tortured scream..." (43)

Tughlaq is also far-reaching in his ideas. His decision to introduce copper coins is viewed as madness by some, but could have been an important economic reform if it had been implemented properly.

Karnad shows the different strands in Tughlaq's character-his idealism, his violence, his dictatorial tendencies and yet he is also a man full of innovative ideas. He is not presented as a white or black character. By showing the different shades of grey, Karnad sees him as a modern character. He thus revises the popular interpretation of Tughlaq as a mad genius. Rather Karnad sees him as a man beyond his times in his views on secularism and economic reforms. But he is also a victim of circumstances and finally gives in to his negative qualities. This is what gains our sympathy to some extent. More of this will be seen in the next scenes.

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## 8.9. SCENE SEVEN

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### 8.9.1. Summary of Scene Seven

The scene shifts to a camp on the Delhi-Daulatabad route. The scene focuses on the sub-plot and the characters of Aziz, disguised as a Brahmin and his friend Aazam. People are dying on the way as the journey is long and there are no facilities. A Hindu woman loses her child as there is no medical aid. A man describes how he was delayed reaching the camp as he had to bury two corpses lying on the road. He also gives a graphic account of how he had to guard the dead bodies that were executed by the Sultan in Delhi. The relatives of the dead do not want to pay a fine to recover the bodies. Instead they come at night and steal them.

While Aazam is shocked by all that is happening and feels "We'll be ruined anyway ultimately. If not today, then tomorrow. What other future's there for us?"(49) Aziz, on the other hand, is enjoying the situation and is exploiting it to the maximum. He says,

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Only a few months in Delhi and I have discovered a whole new world –politics! My dear fellow, that’s where our future is –politics! It’s a beautiful world-wealth, success, position, power-and yet its full of brainless people, people with not an idea in their head. When I think of all the tricks I used in our village to pinch a few torn clothes from people-if one uses half that intelligence here, one can get robes of power...(50)

**8.9.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Seven**

This scene shifts the focus to the suffering of the common people because of Tughlaq’s insistence on shifting the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad. People are dying on the way. Evidence of Tughlaq’s cruelty is further brought out in the reference by the Man to people being executed in Delhi.

The scene is also important for further developing Aziz’s and Aazam’s characters. While both are crooks, Aazam seems to still have compassion and sensitivity. Aziz is unscrupulous and tries to exploit the situation for his financial benefit. He tells Aazam that they can make money by minting counterfeit copper coins. Aziz is now going to play an important role in the second half of the play.

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**8.10. SUMMING UP**

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This unit gives a detailed summary and critical analysis of Scenes 1-7. It also highlights the central issues of the play and analyses the characteristics of the major characters.

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**8.11. GLOSSARY**

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**Amir-** Title of high-ranking Sheikhs, chieftains or commanders.

**Greek-**In the play it refers to the civilization of ancient Greece .The philosophy and culture of ancient Greece had a far reaching influence and was considered to be the basis of modern Western culture.

**Sayyid-**Title for males accepted as descendents of the Holy Prophet

**Jiziya-**special tax on non-Muslim subjects

**Zarathustra-**founder of Zoroastrianism-an ancient Iranian religion found in the Zend-Avesta and adhered to by the Parsees in India.

(Source for Glossary is Twentieth Century Chamber’s Dictionary and en.wikipedia.org)

**Self-Assessment Questions**

1. Explain the importance of the comments of the common people on Tughlaq’s reign?
2. Discuss the importance of the introduction of Barani and Najib in Scene 2.
3. How does Scene3 highlight Tughlaq’s complex character?
4. Describe Tughlaq’s handling of Sheikh Imam-ud din. How does Tughlaq eliminate him?
5. What are the reasons given by the Amirs and the Sheikh for planning to assassinate Tughlaq?

6. Give in detail the plot to kill Tughlaq.
7. Why does Tughlaq want to introduce copper currency?
8. What aspect of Tughlaq's character is highlighted in his killing of Shihab-ud-din?
9. Describe the scene of the meeting of the Hindu woman with Aziz? What light does it throw on Aziz's character?
10. What are the differences between Aziz and Azam?

### 8.12. ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Refer to summary and critical analysis of 8.3.1. and 8.3.2.
2. Refer to 8.4.1. to the discussion on Najib and Barani and to critical comments on them in 8.4.2.
3. Refer to the critical comments on Tughlaq's character in 8.5.2. in critical analysis of Scene 3.
4. Refer to Ratan Singh's narration of events in 8.6.1. and critical comments in 8.6.2.
5. Refer to the discussion between Amirs and Sheikhs in 8.7.1.
6. Details given in last paragraph of 8.7.1 and last paragraph of 8.7.2.
7. Tughlaq wants to make copper currency to be of the same value as silver coins and considers it to be an important economic reform. However the scheme failed as people started minting counterfeit copper coins.
8. Refer to 8.8.2. and 8.8.3. Where discussion and critical comments on Tughlaq's character are made.
9. Refer to the discussion on the episode in 8.9.1.
10. Refer to discussion of Aziz and Aazam in 8.9.1 and 8.9.2.

### 8.13. REFERENCES

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Dass, Veena Noble. "Experiment and Innovation in Modern Indian Drama in Translation: The Plays of Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad" in *Contemporary Indian Drama*, edited by Sudhakar Pandey and Freya Taraporewala, New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1990.

Dharwadkar, Aparna Bhargava. *Theatres of Independence: Drama, Theory and Urban Performances in India Since 1947*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

### 8.14. TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the many dimensions to Tughlaq's character as revealed from Scene One to Scene Seven.
2. What is the importance of Najib and Barani in the first half of the play. Give examples from the text.
3. Discuss the role of Aziz and Azam in the scenes discussed in this unit.
4. How important are the crowd scenes in the play?
5. Discuss the motif of prayer used from Scene one to seven.

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**UNIT 9      GIRISH KARNAD'S    *TUGHLAQ* PART III**

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- 9.1. Introduction
- 9.2. Objective
- 9.3. Scene Eight
  - 9.3.1 Summary of Scene Eight
  - 9.3.2 Critical analysis of Scene Eight
- 9.4. Scene Nine
  - 9.4.1. Summary of Scene Nine
  - 9.4.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Nine
- 9.5. Scene Ten
  - 9.5.1. Summary of Scene Ten
  - 9.5.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Ten
- 9.6. Scene Eleven
  - 9.6.1. Summary of Scene Eleven
  - 9.6.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Eleven
- 9.7. Scene Twelve
  - 9.7.1. Summary of Scene Twelve
  - 9.7.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Twelve
- 9.8. Scene Thirteen
  - 9.8.1. Summary of Scene Thirteen
  - 9.8.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Thirteen
- 9.9. Contemporary relevance of *Tughlaq*
- 9.10. Summary
- 9.11. Glossary
- 9.12. Reference
- 9.13. Terminal and Model Questions

## 9.1. INTRODUCTION

In this unit you will be given a summary and detailed critical analysis of Scenes eight to thirteen. The central issues of the play and character analysis will also be highlighted.

## 9.2. OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be familiar with the text and should be able to give your own interpretation of the play. Units eight and nine should be read together so that you get a total perspective of the play.

## 9.3. SCENE EIGHT

### 9.3.1. Summary of Scene Eight

The scene shifts to the fort at Daulatabad. Five years have passed. It is nighttime and the fort is being guarded by two watchmen-one young and the other old. The young man is enthusiastic and full of admiration for the fort. The older man is critical of the fort as he lost his whole family four years back on the journey from Delhi to Daulatabad. "And four years ago that snake bit a whole city to death."(51) The 'snake' here refers to the road leading from Delhi to Daulatabad which became a death trap to so many people as described in Scene Seven of the play.

Tughlaq appears on the ramparts of the fort, much to the surprise of the young watchman. Tughlaq expresses his innermost thoughts and tells the watchmen that he was only 21 when he first came to Daulatabad and built this fort."I supervised the placing of every brick in it and I said to myself, one day I shall build my own history like this, brick by brick."(53) He relates an unusual experience he had when he was standing on the ramparts of the old fort one night and felt he had become one with the universe.

Suddenly something happened –as though someone had cast a spell. The torch, the gate, the fort and the sky –all melted and merged and flowed in my blood-stream with the darkness of the night. The moment shed its symbols, its questions and answers, and stood naked and calm where the stars throbbed in my veins. I was the earth, was the grass, was the smoke, was the sky. (53)

The experience was never repeated. Now, he only experiences the destructive elements around him. "But in the last four years, I have seen only the woods clinging to the earth, heard only the howl of wild wolves and the answering bay of street dogs."(54)

Barani appears and the watchmen leave. Tughlaq confesses that he can't sleep or read. He informs Barani that his kingdom is surrounded by rebellion. There is also a drought in Doab. He complains that only one industry is flourishing and that is the making of counterfeit copper coins.

He appeals to Barani, "What should I do, Barani? What would you prescribe for this honeycomb of diseases? I have tried everything. But what cures one disease just worsens another."(55).Barani suggests that maybe Tughlaq would be happier being in the "company of learned men. Not in the market of corpses." He feels that Tughlaq is known "the world over for your knowledge of philosophy and poetry."(55)

Tughlaq disagrees as he does not believe that a sick patient can be left because there is no cure for his disease .Moreover, he does not see himself as separate from his state. "Don't you see that the only way I can abdicate is by killing myself?"(56) Tughlaq tells Barani that his subjects call him Mad Muhammad. He asks Barani, "How can I become wise again, Barani?" Barani reminds him

that he is torturing his subjects and he should go back to his earlier ideals of love, peace and belief in God.

Your Majesty, there was a time when you believed in love, in peace, in God. What has happened to those ideals? You won't let your subjects pray. You torture them for the smallest offence. Hang them on suspicion. Why this bloodshed? Please stop it, and I promise Your Majesty something better will emerge out of it. (56)

Tughlaq however refuses to accept Barani's advice. He does not want to admit that he was in the wrong. He feels he still has something to give to his people. "I have something to give, something to teach, which may open the eyes of history, but I have to do it within this life. (56) It is at this point that the startling news of Najib's murder is announced.

### 9.3.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Eight

This scene has three important aspects to it. The exchange of views between the young and old watchmen shows how the older generation has suffered from the shifting from Delhi to Daulatabad.

The scene highlights important aspects of Tughlaq's character. His outburst before the young man shows his awareness that his idealism and dreams as a young man are shattered and he only sees destruction and violence around him. This speech of Tughlaq is full of metaphors and symbols. The images of nature which make him feel one with the universe give way to wild wolves and street dogs,(54) indicating the violence and aggression within him.

In his exchanges with the historian Barani, Tughlaq expresses his anguish at not being able to deliver what he had promised to his people. He is not willing to accept Barani's view that he is fit for the company of learned men than to statecraft. Tughlaq is also not willing to accept that he has made mistakes and moved far away from the ideals of love and peace that he believed in. Scene 8 is important as it shows us the inner workings of Tughlaq's mind as he moves between distress and self questioning of his actions. Karnad thus questions the popular interpretation of Tughlaq as a mad man. Tughlaq is here seen as a modern hero who is full of doubt and contradictions.

## 9.4. SCENE NINE

### 9.4.1. Summary of Scene Nine

The scene now moves to the sub-plot of Aziz and Aazam, who are earning a living as thieves Ghiyas -ud-din, the descendant of the Khalif is on his way to Daulatabad on Tughlaq's invitation when Aziz and Aazam try to rob him thinking he is someone else. When Aziz comes to know Ghiyas-ud-din's real identity he decides to take advantage of the situation. With the help of Aazam he murders Ghiyas-ud-din and decides to pose as Ghiyas-ud-din before Tughlaq.

### 9.4.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Nine

This scene shows the greed and corruption that exists among the common people. However there is a difference between Aziz and Aazam. Aziz is unscrupulous and willing to resort to murder to fulfill his ends. Aazam, though a thief, also has some scruples.

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## 9.5. SCENE TEN

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### 9.5.1. Summary of Scene Ten

The scene focuses on Tughlaq and his Step-Mother. She is worried at Tughlaq's decision to withdraw all copper coins and compensate those who hand over the coins with silver coins. The Step-Mother reminds him that most of the copper coins are counterfeit and will further ruin the



economy. But Tughlaq defends himself by saying that if he does not withdraw the coins now the whole economy will be ruined.

He also says that he will dump these coins in the rose garden. His step-mother reminds him that the rose garden had been planned by Tughlaq for several years. Tughlaq says he is no longer interested in the rose garden."I wanted every rose in it to be a poem .I wanted every thorn in it to prick and quicken the senses. But I don't need those airy trappings now; a funeral has no need for a separate symbol."(64)

The Step-Mother reminds Tughlaq that he is fully responsible for the deteriorating state of affairs in the kingdom. In a straightforward criticism she says, "Then why don't you stop the funeral?"(64) She pleads with Tughlaq not to hound the Amirs and Khans in order to find out the murderer of Najib.

She then makes the shocking revelation that she killed Najib. She says she did it for Tughlaq as she felt Najib was responsible for Tughlaq' policies. "It's only seven years ago that you came to the throne. How glorious you were then, how idealistic, how full of hopes. Look at your kingdom now. It's become a kitchen of death-all because of him. I couldn't bear it any longer."(65)

She reminds Tughlaq that he had killed his father and brother and Sheikh Imam-ud-din. Tughlaq for the first time accepts this charge but defends himself.

I killed them-yes-but I killed them for an ideal. Don't I know its results? Don't you think I've suffered from the curse? My mother won't speak to me-I can't even look into a mirror for fear of seeing their faces in it. . had only three friends in the world-you, Najib and Barani. And now you want me to believe you killed Najib. Why are you doing this to me? (65)

Tughlaq defend his killings and says, "They gave me what I wanted-power, strength to shape my thoughts , strength to act ,strength to recognize myself." (66)

He accuses his Step-Mother of taking advantage of his feelings for her. "You thought I wouldn't punish you, didn't you? Because I love you more than I have loved anyone in my life."(66)

Tughlaq orders his Step- mother to be stoned to death.

Left alone, Tughlaq in a soliloquy reveals his innermost thoughts. He pleads to God for mercy and accepts the fact that he is responsible for several deaths.

God, God in Heaven, please help me. Please don't let go of my hand. My skin drips with blood and I don't know how much of it is mine and how much of others. I started in your path, Lord, Why am I wandering naked in this desert now? ...Raise me. Clean me. Cover me with your Infinite Mercy....I can only beg-have pity on me.... (67)

Barani enters and Tughlaq confesses to him that he was praying, though he has banned praying in his state. Tughlaq confesses that he is "teetering on the brink of madness, Barani, but the madness of God still eludes me."(68)Barani tries to calm him by telling him that Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid is soon arriving and the ban on prayer can be lifted.

### 9.5.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Ten

In this scene the intimate relationship between Tughlaq and the Step-Mother is revealed. She confesses that her love for Tughlaq made her arrange for the murder of Najib.

This scene is important for bringing out the contradictions and ambiguities in Tughlaq's character. Tughlaq does not trust anyone and with the death of Najib and his decision to sentence his Step-mother to be stoned to death, he is left only with Barani as a confidante. This underlines Tughlaq's loneliness.

Tughlaq, for the first time confesses to the killing of his father, brother and Sheikh Imam-ud-din. But he expresses no regret for his action and the several murders he is involved in. He claims that his gruesome actions gave him power and strength.

It is only in the soliloquy where he addresses God directly and to Barani that he expresses his sense of guilt and remorse.

The disillusionment and the collapse of the administration reflect Karnad's statement that Tughlaq's history is contemporary. In the Enact issue of June 1971, Karnad had stated,

What struck me absolutely about Tughlaq's history was that it was contemporary. The fact that here was the most idealistic, the most intelligent king ever to come on the throne of Delhi...and one of the greatest failures also. And within a span of twenty years this tremendously capable man had gone to pieces. This seemed to be both due to his idealism as well as the shortcomings within him, such as his impatience, his cruelty, his feeling that he has the only correct answer. And I felt in the early sixties India had also come very far in the same direction-the twenty -year period seemed to me very much a striking parallel. (Karnad 1971: Enact)

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## 9.6. SCENE ELEVEN

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### 9.6.1. Summary of Scene Eleven

In this scene the common people are starving and are rebelling against the reign of Tughlaq. The third man says his brother has seen horrible sights on the way from his village to Daulatabad. He says, "The roads are lined with skeletons. A man starved to death right in front of his eyes. In Doab, people are eating barks off the trees, he says. Yes, and women have to make do with skins of dead horse." (70)The people feel there is no need for prayer now. This is in response to the public announcement that with the arrival of Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad, the ban on prayer will be lifted and all Muslims will pray five times a day. As the First Man says, "We starve and they want us to pray. They want to save our souls."(70).

Aziz disguised as Ghiyas-ud-din enters and is greeted by Tughlaq. Tughlaq falls at his feet much to the amazement of the crowd.

The Hindu Woman, who had appeared in Act Seven, recognizes Aziz as the man who had not helped her when her baby was dying.

The crowd becomes restless and riots begin.

### 9.6.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Eleven

This scene is important for bringing out the suffering of the common people. They are starving and cannot tolerate it any more. Riots break out suggesting that law and order is an issue now.

The disguised Aziz enters as Ghiyas-ud-din and the main plot and sub-plot merge.

Karnad's linkage of the main plot and sub-plot is innovative.

In his Introduction to the Oxford University Press edition of his plays entitled *Three Plays*, Karnad explains the roots of this innovation. He was influenced by the stagecraft of the Parsi model of alternating shallow and deep scenes.

The shallow scenes were played in the foreground of the stage with a painted curtain-normally depicting a street-as the backdrop. These scenes were reserved for the 'lower class' characters with prominence given to comedy. They served as link scenes in the development of the plot, but the main purpose was to keep the audience engaged while the deep scenes...were being changed or decorated. (Karnad1994:7-8)

Karnad made several modifications. The shallow scenes in “Tughlaq” would relate specifically to the scenes of Aziz and Aazam. As the play progresses, Aziz’s role is not entirely comic. He becomes increasingly sinister especially in the ruthless manner he murders Ghiyas-ud-din and impersonates him. Karnad creates a link between the shallow and deep scenes by making Aziz a reflection of Tughlaq in terms of his ruthlessness and violence. The link between the shallow and deep scenes is not only in terms of plot but also in terms of theme. In fact in the final act of the play Aziz enters and influences the main action of the play. This is a major contribution of Girish Karnad to the concept of shallow and deep scenes.

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## 9.7. SCENE TWELVE

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### 9.7.1. Summary of Scene Twelve

Aazam tells Aziz that he is tired of playing roles and has decided to leave the palace. He is unhappy with Aziz pretending to be Ghiyas-ud-din.

Aazam is also worried by the riots and the complete lack of order in the streets of Daulatabad. He describes in detail the situation. “The people are like mad dogs. They have been screaming, burning houses, killing people for a whole week now.” A little later he says that the streets are full of dead bodies with flies hovering over them. He recounts how he saw the Sultan come out in the night to the rose garden and dig his fists into the heap of counterfeit coins and let them trickle through. He concludes that the Sultan is mad. He insists that he will leave Daulatabad and bids Aazam goodbye.

### 9.7.2. Critical Analysis of Scene Twelve

The scene between Aazam and Aziz, though brief is significant. Aazam shows the disastrous consequences of Tughlaq’s policies especially shifting the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad and issuing copper coins.

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## 9.8. SCENE THIRTEEN

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### 9.8.1. Summary of Scene Thirteen

This is the final scene of the play. First Barani enters and tells Tughlaq that his mother has died and wants to go to the cremation. Tughlaq suspects that Barani won’t come back. He tells Barani that he is aware that Barani’s mother died in the riots when his soldiers mercilessly killed everyone. Meanwhile the soldiers inform him that Aazam has been murdered. They think that he is a friend of Ghiyas-ud-din. Meanwhile Aziz enters and Tughlaq confronts him by asking him, “Who are you?” (79) Aziz confesses that he is a dhobi from Shiknar. He justifies his act of killing Ghiyas-ud-din by saying he was not a saint though he was a descendent of the Khalif. Aziz argues that Tughlaq cannot punish him as he had publicly acknowledged him as Ghiyas-ud-din. He says he is Tughlaq’s true disciple as “I have studied every order, followed every instruction, considered every measure of Your Majesty’s with the greatest attention.” (80) Aziz explains to a fascinated Tughlaq how he used every policy of Tughlaq to his own personal advantage. This, according to him, was the lesson that he learnt from Tughlaq, who also often used his policies for his own advantage.

He reminds Tughlaq that the Sultan’s declaration of brotherhood of all religions was used by him to his advantage. He pretended he was a Brahmin, fought a case against Tughlaq and won it, because Tughlaq was so keen to prove he was secular. (Details of this are given in Act One) Aziz explains how he made use of Tughlaq’s introduction of copper coins and started a counterfeit

trade.(Refer to last lines of Scene Seven) But it was not profitable enough and he bought land at very cheap rates in Doab where there was a famine and collected the State subsidy for farmers.

Then when they were in danger of being caught they went into the hills, and became robbers. To escape being caught, they became servants of the soldiers.

We had to shift the corpses of all the rebels executed by the state and hang them up for exhibition. Such famous kings, warriors and leaders of men passed through our hands then! Beautiful strong bodies and bodies eaten-up by corruption-all, all were stuffed with straw and went to the top of the poles.

One day suddenly I had a revelation. This was all human life was worth, I said. This was the real meaning of the mystery of death-straw and skin! With that enlightenment I found peace. (81-82)

Aziz explains, "I ask you, Your Majesty, which other man in India has spent five years of his life fitting every act, deed and thought to Your Majesty words." (82)

Tughlaq realizes that Aziz might be intelligent but is cynical, ruthless and insolent. He would have liked to send Aziz to his death, but Aziz's statement,

When it comes to washing away filth no saint is a match for a dhobi" makes Tughlaq decide to use Aziz for his own ends. Tughlaq decides to make him an officer in Khusrau Malik's army in the Deccan. The final act also sees the parting of ways of Tughlaq and Barani. Barani tells Tughlaq he feels privileged to have spent seven years with him."...the greatest historians of the world would have given half their lives to see a year in it."(78-79)

Barani realizes he is being influenced by the violent atmosphere in Tughlaq's court when he suggests different methods of torture for punishing Aziz. Tughlaq exclaims, "I doubt if even the dhobi could have thought of so many tortures" (84) Barani realizes that if he wants to save his soul he has to move away from him." Your Majesty warned me when I slipped and I am grateful for that."(85),

Tughlaq is now left completely alone. Even as Barani decides to leave, an insomniac Tughlaq reconciles to it, and says,

If justice was as simple as you think or logic as beautiful as I had hoped ,life would have been so much clearer. I have been chasing these words now for five years and now I don't know if I am pursuing a mirage or fleeing a shadow...Sweep your logic away into a corner, Barani, all I need now is myself and my madness-madness to prance in a field eaten bare by the scarecrow violence. But I am not alone, Barani....I have a companion to share my madness now-the Omnipotent God!...When you pass your final judgment on me, don't forget Him.(84-85)

Tughlaq decides that now it is best for him to move back to Delhi.

### 9.8.2. Critical Comments on Scene Thirteen

Three different strands appear in the final Act and Karnad ties up the knots to a neat closure.

The first strand deals with Aziz and Tughlaq's handling of him. As Karnad says the distinction between the deep scenes and the shallow scenes

show the gulf between the ruler and the ruled...But as I wrote Tughlaq, I found the shallow scenes bulging with an energy hard to control. The deep scenes became emptier

as the play progressed, and in the last scene, the 'comic lead' did the unconventional-he appeared in the deep scene on par with the protagonist himself. This violation of traditionally sacred spatial hierarchy, I decided was the result of the anarchy which climaxed Tughlaq's times and seemed poised to engulf my own. (Karnad:8)

The important point to be noted here is that in the final scene there is a face to face confrontation between Aziz and Tughlaq.

As GJV Prasad rightly points out while Tughlaq, Najib and Barani are historical characters, Aziz and Aazam are fictional characters. In the meeting between Aziz and Tughlaq, Tughlaq sees his idea of ideal kingship exploited by Aziz for his "personal advancement." (Prasad2008:167) Both end up as murderers but Tughlaq convinces himself that he is doing it for the good of the state while Aziz has no qualms in saying he is doing it for himself.

In Barani's exit from Tughlaq's court, we have another example how survival was difficult for a good man in Tughlaq's court. "Barani is ... a seemingly naïve observer and an Islamic historian who is a humanist and cannot accept the inherent violence of human beings or the inherent cynicism of statecraft." (Prasad: 154)

The final act also brings together the various strands of Tughlaq's character. Karnad notes that Tughlaq was the most

brilliant individual ever to ascend the throne of Delhi and also one of the biggest failures. After a reign distinguished for policies that seem far-sighted to the point of genius, but which in their day earned him the title 'Muhammed the Mad', the sultan ended his career in bloodshed and political chaos. (Karnad: 7)

Karnad points out both the positive and negative elements in his character. Along with his idealism, his shortcomings were "his impatience, his cruelty, his feeling that he had the only correct answer". (Rajinder Paul, 1971: Enact)

Tughlaq's agony in this scene reflects his sense of frustration that he is not able to establish a secular, just and equitable state. A poet and philosopher who loved playing chess Tughlaq also reveals a cruel and tyrannical nature. At the end it seems as if the negative qualities dominate him. Aziz shows this aspect when he takes up one by one the policies of Tughlaq and inverts them to his selfish purpose

However, Tughlaq is not blind to his failures. He realizes the anarchy he has created in his last speech to Barani.

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## 9.9. CONTEMPORARY APPEAL OF *TUGHLAQ*

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There is no doubt that Karnad was able to give the play a contemporary relevance.

We have already discussed this aspect briefly in the first section of the units on "Tughlaq". Please refer to the quotations of Ananthamurthy and Karnad.

As UR Anantha Murthy in his Introduction to the Oxford University Press edition of the play stated, "that it is a play of the sixties, and reflects as no other play perhaps does the political mood of disillusionment which followed the Nehru era of idealism in the country." (URAnanthamurthy1971:V11-V111)

Karnad himself stated this in an interview to Enact that "the twenty-year period seemed to me a very much a striking parallel." (Karnad: VIII)- I.e. the parallels between Tughlaq's reign and the Nehruvian era.

In fact, the enduring appeal of Tughlaq is that it can be convincingly read in several different political contexts.

Tughlaq, as Angelie Multani points out, can be read as a “text which interrogates the past (whether pre or postcolonial),and, simultaneously evokes more general political and social issues pertaining to our current situation as subjects in a postcolonial(in the temporal and ideological sense),milieu...”(Multani2008:143) Aparna Dharwadker has shown how the play can be interpreted in different ways.

First Tughlaq retrieves and makes current the relatively unfamiliar phase of Islamic imperialism in India known as the sultanate period (twelfth to early sixteenth century)...” (Dharwadker2006:247-248)

Dharwadker also points out that the interpretation of the Sultanate period varied depending on the political context. The court historian Barani felt that Tughlaq had disregarded the tenets of the Quran and therefore saw him as a man who had ruined “his empire by pursuing the wrong beliefs and following the wrong advice.”(Dharwadker: 248)

Colonial British historians saw him as despotic and mad. In the Post Colonial period, Indian historians like Romila Thapar and others saw the Sultanate period as important in evolving key institutes of the state. For example, K.N. Chaudhuri “describes Tughlaq’s experiment with token currency as a serious monetary innovation, anticipating by half a century the introduction of paper currency in China.”(Quoted in Dharwadker: 249)

Dharwadker rightly states that “Karnad revives the paradoxical Tughlaq of history...and presents an explanatory psychological profile of its enigmatic hero...” (Dharwadker:250)

The play evokes different interpretations depending on the nature of the audience and the political context.

For the audience of the 1960s, Karnad’s play expressed the disenchantment and cynicism that attended the end of the Nehru era (1907-64) to Indian politics. A decade later the play appeared to be an uncannily accurate portrayal of the brilliant but authoritarian and opportunistic political style of Nehru’s daughter and successor, Indira Gandhi. Now (yet another thirty later) Tughlaq seems concerned less with specific figures than with two general political issues that have become in the public sphere. The first is the untenability of the idealistic and visionary politics that Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi practiced as national leaders ....The second is the politics of power relations between groups that are separated by religious or racial difference, in a society that is poised between secular and fundamentalist ideologies.

(Dharwadker: 250-251)

It is these different perspectives that make the play so appealing even today.

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## 9.10. SUMMARY

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The play has been summarised and analysed with detailed critical comments. It is important that Units Nine and Ten are read together with the text. Further insights can be got by reading the critical texts given in the references.

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## 9.11. GLOSSARY

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**Metaphor:** A figure of speech that describes something by referring to something else that it resembles. A popular example is describing the camel as the ship of the desert.

**Soliloquy:** talking to oneself

**Sub-plot:** a subordinate plot in a play

**Symbol:** that which by custom or convention represents something else

**Self Assessment Questions**

1. What aspects of Tughlaq’s character are highlighted in Scene Eight?
2. How does Aziz manage to disguise as Ghiyas-ud-din?
3. In Scene Ten, how does Tughlaq justify the several murders he has committed?
4. Describe the relationship between Tughlaq and his stepmother.
5. Give a summary of Tughlaq’s soliloquy in Scene Ten.
6. Explain the concept of deep and shallow scenes. How does it apply to the scene of Aziz and Aazam in Scenes Nine and Eleven?
7. What is the significance of presenting the crowd scene in Scene Eleven?
8. Describe the meeting in Scene between Aziz and Tughlaq, after Tughlaq comes to know that he is not Ghiyas-ud-din?
9. Why does Tughlaq forgive Aziz? How does he reward Aziz?
10. Why does Barani finally decide to leave Tughlaq’s court?
11. Analyze and sum up in detail the final speech of Tughlaq at the end of Scene thirteen.

**ANSWERS TO SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

1. Stress the ambiguity and self-doubt in Tughlaq’s character. Refer to 10.3.1 and 10.3.2. Highlight his speech where he talks of having once felt one with the universe. He now feels only helplessness and despair. Even now he is not ready to give up his powers as a Sultan.
2. Refer to Summary of Scene Nine in 10.4.1
3. Refer to 10.5.1 and 10.5.2. Tughlaq says that the killings he has done have given him strength and power, he also feels guilty to some extent.
4. Relationship between Step-Mother and Tughlaq is discussed in 10.5.1 and 10.5.2.
5. Summary of Tughlaq’s soliloquy is given in 10.5.1.
6. Refer to critical analysis of Scene 11 in 10.6.2. and critical analysis of Scene 13 in 10.8.2. which give details of the concept of deep and shallow scenes and Karnad’s modification of this concept. These sections also highlight how these concepts can be applied to the Aziz and Aazam scenes.
7. Refer to summary of Scene 11 in 10.6.1.
8. Refer to details given in 10.7.1. According to Aziz, Tughlaq has taught him how to be cunning and cruel.
9. Refer to 10.7.1. Tughlaq feels he can make use of Aziz’s intelligence for his own unscrupulous ends.
10. Barani leaves because he feels Tughlaq has forgotten his idealism and given in to his baser instincts. He also feels he is being corrupted by the violent atmosphere prevailing in Tughlaq’s court. Refer for details to 10.7.1.

11. The final speech of Tughlaq highlights his inner torture and limited self realization. Refer to detailed summary of the speech to 10.8.1.

### **9.12. REFERENCES**

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### **9.13. TERMINAL AND MODEL QUESTIONS**

1. Discuss the character of Tughlaq with close reference to the text.
2. Analyse the importance of the Aziz and Aazam sub-plot to the play.
3. Why does Karnad introduce Najib and Barani in the play? What contribution do they make to the main plot of the play.