

A COMPARISON OF THE COMEDY OF MANNERS AND THE COMEDY OF HUMOURS

Ben Jonson, is considered to be the pioneer of the art of writing 'Comedy of Humours'. This sort of comedy gained momentum in the hands of Ben Jonson. 'Comedy of Humour' is different from the 'Comedy of Manners' in so many aspect. It is quite true that in both types of comedies, there is a frequent use of satire and realism but inspite of all this, we see a great distinction between both sort of literary genre.

The 'Comedy of Humour' mainly deals with the oddities of characters. We see a shadow of whimsicality over the real life of character. In the 'Comedy of Manners', the playwrights highlight the social manners of the contemporary society. The Restoration playwrights deal with the vices and follies of sophisticated society in most amusing manners. However, the style of these dramatists is a little exaggerative but they are very successful in conveying their ideas. The characters of the 'Comedy of Manners' are the true representatives of their age. They are highly fashionable and perfect dandy. But as far as 'Comedy of Humour' is concerned; the playwright emphasises the representation of characters in action; without considering their whimsicality. In the 'Comedy of Manners', the main focus is on the presentation of a true picture of social life of the characters. It deals with their life-style, and exposes their vices and follies in its totality. Its chief purpose is not the exhibition of characters or their humour but it is mainly concerned with the manners of these characters.

Ben Jonson developed the use of humours in his comedies. The characters of Ben Jonsonian comedies exhibit excessive humour in their personality, but in the Restoration comedy, characters are devoid of such quality. However, we find some element of eccentricity, too in the characters of Restoration Comedy i.e. 'Comedy of Manners', but there is a great difference between the eccentricity of these characters. In the characters of 'Comedy of Manners', this eccentricity develops during their life-time but in 'Comedy of Humours' this oddity is the inherent qualities of the characters. The reason of unconven-

tional behaviour of the characters of Restoration Comedy is their society, in which they live but as far the unconventionality in the character of 'Comedy of Humour' is concerned, it is their born qualities. The 'Comedy of Humour' is chiefly influenced by English social pattern, and by its moralities, whereas, 'Comedy of Manners' is inspired by French comedy, propounded by Moliere. The 'Comedy of Humours' is very much related to moralities plays and the chief purpose of this comedy is to bring moral reform. In the 'Comedy of Manners', we don't find any such purpose. It only portrays a realistic and direct picture of contemporary society. It doesn't bother to bring a moral upgradation.

So the sole purpose of 'Comedy of Manners' is to highlight the oddities and vices of Restoration society. Ben Jonson was a refined satirist who gave a new dimension to the 'Comedy of Humour'.

In the 'Comedy of Manners' we find glimpses of satire but it is not the chief characteristics of this kind of comedy. It is only complimentary elements whereas in the Comedy of Humours, we get a wonderful amalgamation of emotion and passion. The emotional passion has outshined the intellectual brilliance. The chief characteristics of the 'Comedy of Humours' is its intellectuality. Frankly speaking, we can say that satire plays a pivotal role in 'Comedy of Humours', but in 'Comedy of Manners' one can find the dominance of wit. Both 'Comedy of Manners' and 'Comedy of Humours' are different from each other as far as the style is concerned. In the 'Comedy of Humours', we don't find bitter and penetrating satirical dialogues. The dialogues in such sort of comedies appear little dull; but the dialogues in the 'Comedy of Manners' are wonderfully witty, delicate sharp and penetrating.