

Shakespeare's conception of tragedy

U.G. Semester III

MJC – 04

Unit -04

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A tragedy is essentially a tale of death or suffering. Shakespearean tragedies are also powerful tales of death and suffering. But the Shakespearean tragedy is something more than a mere story of death and suffering. In the words of Dowden "Tragedy as conceived by Shakespeare is concerned with the ruin or restoration of the soul and of the life of the man. In other words it is subject to struggle of good and evil in the world." Shakespeare's play is not a tragedy merely because it brings before us the moving pictures of the hero and the heroine entangled in the coils of death and suffering. Its characteristic motive is the exhibition of the man in unsuccessful conflict with circumstances."

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Shakespeare has left behind a number of tragedies such as Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth and King Lear. Among the Roman tragedies Carianus, Antony and Cleopatra and Timon of Athens are quite remarkable. Let us now examine the fundamental characteristics of the Shakespearean tragedy and the nature of the Shakespearean tragedy.

Shakespeare's tragedy is concerned with the fate of persons of 'high degree' often with kings and princes, and with leader in the state like Coriolanus, Brutus and Antony. The dramatist does not concentrate on the lives of ordinary persons nor does he recall the sufferings of the layman. In modern drama, tragedy is essentially the story of sufferings borne by the common man. But

Shakespeare was medieval in his conception of tragedy. In his tragedies he made conspicuous persons suffer so that tragedy may have powerful effect on the reader's mind.

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