

## Answers to the Questions of the Question Bank-1

Q.-1. Define Comedy and discuss its characteristics in length. [Nov.-2014]

OR  
What is Comedy ?

OR

Write a detailed essay on the essential characteristics of comedy. [Dec.-2012]

Ans. It is very difficult task to define comedy for its outward shape is variable; it can be narrative, dramatic, or descriptive. It can occur without words at all in sculpture, picture or ballet. To say in a sentence then comedy is a kind of literature that creates an atmosphere of joy, merriment and laughter.

Comedy is a word derived from the Greek. Aristophanes was the pioneer who developed this form that was later on followed by the Romans and gradually Elizabethans considered the Romans as their models for writing comedy.

A play that gives us pleasant moments about life, makes us laugh is generally labelled as comedy. In short, a play with a happy ending is a comedy. The expected effect of comedy is to relax human being from emotional tension. According to Meridith "The pure comedy is entirely free from the wrath or zeal of the reformes or the moralist..";

- (i) The function of comedy is neither to arouse the emotions nor to correct and reform.
- (ii) "Its function is merely to provide light hearted fun that should be thoughtful and impersonal.

SUBJECT :

Comedy is an idea, it is also a way of writing. Thus the subject matter is very much important for comedy. Comedy deals with the abnormal events as well as complicated characters. There should be realistic depiction of eccentric characters. If the aim of comedy is corrective then, according to Ben Jonson human follies may be the subject matter in comedy. For e.g. *Every Man In His Humour*.

Sometimes sex is also considered the favourite topic in comedy. e.g. *Tom Jones* by Fielding the reason is that comedy functions as a safety-valve for passions or erotic passions. Comedy is essentially related with men and not with fairies. Therefore social microcosm is depicted as a subject for comedy also. As Shakespeare modified Ariel, Caliban as social fellows.

STYLE :

If style is important then the writer of comedy has to be very much accurate about the style of presenting the comedy form variously. The comedy should be precise; all presented characters and situations should be clear. The writer must have an ability to be direct, simple and concise. As per situation the writer must be analytical with a view to expressing his motive. Sometimes irony can be an effective tool to convey the meaning to the readers for e.g. *Gulliver's Travels* by Swift. The effective dialogue with repartee can be necessary for good comedy. Thu

style covers dialogue, rhetoric, simplicity, directness, precise etc.

**CHARACTER :****[Dec.-2012]**

The characters for comedy are selected according to the life depicted in the play. They should be judged according to the manners of the psychology or science or the laws of morality. They should not be superman but should be common people of society. They must not be heroic as well as critical. They should not arouse a too strongly - antipathetic feeling also. They should be just like layman in speech, behaviour, action and life-style. They should not have too much goodness or wickedness; courage or cowardice. Thus it can be said that the hero of comedy is supposed to be a man of good sense; not a virtuous.

**PLOT :****[Dec.-2012]**

Plot means a logical sequence of significant events. The noted worthy thing for comedy is that the hero in comedy is free, not fated. Thus he can solve the complications as per his common sense. The plot of comedy is related to the contrast and balance of characters rather than a march of events. There should be harmonious design between character and incident also. Ofcourse there should not be logical sequence of events in a good comedy but there should be progressive revelation of sequences through contrast, interplay and mutual influence of characters.

In short, comedy is a wonderful literary - piece which observes aim, style, character and plot in

peculiar way. The main purpose of comedy is to entertain the audience and make them laugh. It has a funny and cheerful atmosphere where no evil is expected. To sum up, as critic aptly remarks;

*"Comedy is a short dramatic work in which the action is trivial and the sole purpose is to excite mirth; and thus the mirth is a means to end."*

**Q.-2. Trace the origin and development of comedy.**

**[Nov.-2014]**

**Ans.** The term comedy is basically a Greek word. The Athenians found that tragedy was inadequate to express their national life. They wanted to introduce another form in order to balance tragedy. Thus they had placed comedy by the side of tragedy. Aristophanes was the pioneer who developed this form that was followed by the Romans (Plautus and Terence). Later on the Elizabethans considered them as models and developed this form.

**OLD COMEDY :**

The plays of Aristophanes, based on prevailing problems, were categorised as old comedy. This comedy was lyrical in tone but vulgar in expression of thoughts. The aim of this comedy was mainly to criticise social evils of his time. For. e.g. *The Wasps* by Aristophanes.

**MIDDLE COMEDY :**

It is believed that the span of the middle comedy is very little. The middle comedy flourished in the period beginning with the first quarter of the fourth

century and ending with 330 B. C. Generally the major topics were domestic issues discussed in this comedy.

#### THE NEW COMEDY :

Menander was the first who developed this comedy. He introduced a comedy of the happy ending of united lovers. There is no fantasies, grotesque characters in this comedy. *Samia* by Menander is the best comedy.

#### ROMAN COMEDY :

The Roman comedy was influenced by the Greeks. The Romans adopted the Greek dramatists very tactfully. The Roman plays were mostly indoor plays pioneered by Plautus where the dialogues and the songs were given major part. For. e.g. *Amphitrus*.

Terence was another playwright who also wrote comedy based on the Greek models. The Roman comedy could not succeed because of its licentiousness.

#### MEDIEVAL COMEDY :

The rise of Christianity was a great blow to the Roman theatre. The Roman theatres were forcefully closed thus the comedy form was also opposed. During the same period, the medieval mystery and miracle plays were introduced. These plays were ofcourse religious in nature, related to the Bible or the lives of saints. But they contained element of comedy also.

#### RENAISSANCE COMEDY :

The comedy of this period was a reaction against the medieval comedy. The influence of renaissance and the spirit of renaissance can be observed in this comedy. This comedy is full of melody, love-theme, supernatural forces, vigour etc. Shakespeare introduced romantic comedy like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, tragic comedy like *The Winter's Tale*. Even the rise of the comedy of humours is also found in this period. Ben Jonson's *Everyman in His Humour* is the best example of it. The same period shows us realistic type of comedy also.

#### SEVENTEENTH - CENTURY COMEDY :

This period was a little bit dynamic for comedy. The writers were ofcourse interested in social criticism, but the laughter was meaningless and purposeless. It was Congreve who introduced the comedy of manners. For e.g. *The Way of the World*.

#### THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY COMEDY :

This age was considered as the age of Reason. Thus this period was not suitable for the spirit of comedy. During the same period sentimental comedy was practiced. Sheridan was the best writer of all whose one of the characters Mrs. Malaprop from *The Rivals* has been more popular even today also. Goldsmith was another foremost writer who wrote anti-sentimental comedy as *She Stoops to Conquer*. This period shows a decline of comedy because major writers of this age emphasized on self conscious and