

“Elizabethan Drama”

B A Part 1 , Section -

c

(English Honours)

The reign of queen Elizabeth 1 (1558-1603) ushered in an era of well being, new discoveries and artistic pursuits in England.

The theatre (as Elizabethan Drama) as entertainment flourished and become very popular.

1. Elizabethan Society
2. Elizabethan Theatre Facts
3. Forms of Drama
4. Elizabethan Drama Themes.
5. Dramatic Devices in Elizabethan Dram.

1. Elizabethan Society:-

In the Elizabethan Time, Drama became the national passion with a wide variety of people from merchants to peasant, vied for a place in the social order and stability in the Elizabethan.

The new Elizabethan introduced a hero who was not ascertained of his fate and was full of doubts and passions that catapulted drama as the favourite pass time for many.

The use of expansive metaphors in text and performances

were so successful lead to the opening of the first public theatre known as *The Theatre* by a carpenter James Burbage.

This was the spark that ignited the passion that led to Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare and his famous *The Globe* (a theatre) This age is also known for experiment station leading to new discoveries which provided rich content for drama, poetry and prose.

2. Elizabethan Theatre Facts:-

Renaissance period influenced many properties of the theatre like actors were attached to companies that performed throughout the country.

They enjoyed aristocratic patronage and survived the lean winter months easily on such appreciation.

Lord Admiral Men which had Christopher Marlowe on the ranks were the leading company of the time with **Lord Chamberlain” Men** had a budding Willian Shakespeare.

The performances were held in open like the public

courtyards, inns etc, with lavish entrances behind them and windows.

Spaces were craftily used to create the scene of heaven and hell etc.

There were many features of Elizabethan theatre that were violative of the ghost-like sanctity of godliness with Transvestism begin quite popular (men dressed up as women a stage, a Biblical sin)

3. Forms of Drama:-

The tragedy with spectacular and violent deaths of the protagonist.

Revenge became the ultimate pursuit in must tragedies with Romance as the main objective.

Historical Plays also ended in catastrophe or in triumph with the nation projected as the hero.

Histories vaporized patriotism, often of Jingoistic nature.

Comedy was the third form. The main aim was to make people laugh but they were not as prominent as the other

two genres.

E.g.- With Shakespeare” “*The comedy of Errors*” and “*Taming of the Shrew*” humour became farcical. The superficiality of court comedies like “*Midsummer Night’s Dream*” another highlight of the age.

4. Themes of Elizabethan Drama:-

- a) *Anti – Semitism*
- b) *Revenge Tragedy*
- c) *Supernatural Elements*
- d) *Comedy of Humours*

a) **Anti – Semitism:** - Among the various popular themes was Anti-Semitism as the Elizabethan society and is reflected in the plays of Christopher Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta* and William Shakespeare” *The Merchant of Venice*.

b) **Revenge Tragedy:** - Revenge was another popular theme. Be it a ghost-like in Thomas Kyd’s “*The Spanish Tragedy*” or a prince in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* The motive of revenge became the main counter-motive in drama especially tragedies.

c) **Supernatural Element:** - Another theme that was prominent was the supernatural as the society of the time was highly

superstitious with people believing in the supernatural forms. Ghosts became the prime moving force in many tragedies.

- d) **Comedy of humours:** - use of psychology was extensive and was founded on the theory of humours inside a human body, namely, blood, phlegm, black bile and yellow bile Ben Jon's Every man in his humour is the best example of comedy of humours.

5. Dramatic Devices in Elizabethan Drama:-

Asides or private conversations and soliloquy are used to engage with the audience and became quite popular.

Iambic Pentameter with five two-syllable units or 'feet' was the most popular construction of the age.

Blank verse with iambic pentameter was also used profusely in Elizabethan plays.

Use of abuses and insults is also extensive in the Elizabethan Drama with verbal dwelling, a strong suit of Shakespearean Plays.

Use of subterfuge like a disguise was used frequently as a

man to obtain secret information like in Shakespeare's "As you Like It".

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