

Degree 2 (English Honours)

Paper 3

She Stoops to Conquer as a comedy of Intrigue

She Stoops to Conquer is a nice, funny, humorous and interesting comedy, written by an excellent Irish novelist, playwright and poet Oliver Goldsmith. He is best known for his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) his pastoral poem *The Deserted Village*, (1770), and his plays *The Good-Natured Man* (1768), and *She Stoops to Conquer* (1771). Oliver Goldsmith has got the tremendous skill to describe the culture, tradition and living style of the upper-class people. The present comedy *She Stoops to Conquer* is also called a comedy of *intrigue* and a *laughing comedy*. The drama ends with the tone of happiness after receiving so much humour, confusion, satiric comments and misconceptions which have been created by the characters of the play. When we talk about this comedy in terms of intrigue then we often consider the most humorous and notorious character of the play Tony Lumpkin who plays a very vital role to bring the twist and turn in the play. It is basically a story of two upper class family Mr. Hardcastle's family and Sir Charles' family. The heroine of the play is Kate Hardcastle who is

beautiful, young, and intelligent daughter of Mr and Mrs Hardcastle and the hero of the play is the son of Sir Charles, Charles Marlow who is very handsome, decent, modest and quite intelligent according to the statement of the father of the Kate Hardcastle. The main story of the play basically revolves around Kate Hardcastle and Charles Marlow. But there are other characters who play their tremendous role to make this comedy as a comedy of intrigue.

According to the statement of R. F. Patterson *She Stoops to Conquer*, a splendid comedy of intrigue. A comedy of intrigue is a comedy in which there are plots, designs, contrivances, even conspiracies of one character or group of characters, against the others, so that characters may be divided into intriguers and the victims of those intrigues or the deceivers and the deceived. A comedy of intrigue is largely situational and the situations, more often than not are farcical, causing much exaggerated, loud, boisterous laughter. As some characters are in the know of the truth, and the others are not, there are different levels of awareness. The audience knows the truth which the characters on the stage do not, and this results in dramatic irony, a source of much delightful comedy. Often the characters talk and act at

cross purposes with each other to the great delight of the audience and the readers. All these remarks apply to *She Stoops to Conquer*.

Intrigues of the play

There are a number of intrigues in the play, and practically all the characters are intriguers, as well as the victims of some intrigue or the other.

These intrigues may be described as follows:

- Tony's trick played upon Marlow and Hastings in creating confusion with the landlord of the three pigeon. In the end he also plays a trick upon his own mother.
- The intrigue of Kate who stoops to the level of a barmaid in order to conquer the heart of her love Marlow.
- Constance Neville- Tony intrigue to delude Mrs Hardcastle into thinking that they are in love, so that she may be made to part with the fortune of her niece, Constance.
- Constance- Hastings intrigue against Marlow who is not told that the house to which they have come in actually not an inn, but the house of Hardcastle, and that Hardcastle is not an inn keeper at all.

- Hardcastle- Mrs Hardcastle intrigue to keep Tony under the illusion that he has not yet come of age. He is still immature in terms of his age, though in fact attained majority much earlier.

So, we can say that each character of the play has played either a role of victim of the intrigue or the master mind of the intrigue. The character play intrigue against one another not for the purpose of giving trouble to anyone but they play intrigue only for the sake of amusement and laughter.

In short, she Stoops to conquer is a great comedy of the deceivers and the deceived, of intrigues and counter- intrigues. There are various levels of awareness, and this enhances a lot the entertainment value of the comedy.

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