

# *Revival of Poetic Drama*

**Degree 1 (English Honours)**

**Paper 1, Unit 3**

**By, Arshad Khan**

**Dept. of English**

**J N College Madhubani**

Poetry is one of the earliest aesthetic activities of human mind. The earliest plays and the greatest epics of the world, the *Divine Comedy*, *The Bible*, *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata*, *The Gita* and *The Quran* etc. have been written in verse. Verse has been the medium of world's greatest playwrights such as Shakespeare and Kalidas. The earliest miracle and morality plays of England, notably *Everyman*, Grammar Gurton's *Needle* and *Ralph Roister and Doister* are in verse. 18th century was primarily an age of prose; hence drama had to suffer in this century. 19<sup>th</sup> Attempts were made to revive poetic drama in 19<sup>th</sup> century by Byron. Shelley, Keats, Tennyson and so on tried their best, but they fail because they were poets and not playwrights. The leaders of Irish Literacy Revival, W.B Yeats Lady Gregory and J.M Synge establish the Abbey Theatre in Dublin to encourage the poet playwrights. Later on, the plays of W.H. Auden, Eliot and Fry. In early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, dramatists, such as Barker, Galsworthy and Shaw, were more interested in presentation of the social and economic problems of their times in a

Fry's development as a dramatist is gradual and he has realistic manner. wide experience of the theatre. He served as an actor, director, and a staff dramatist before he started writing plays. He has been influenced by the ancient Greeks, the Elizabethans, the Restoration dramatists, Oscar Wilde, Eliot, even Shaw and the contemporary French dramatists such as Anouilh and Giraudoux. Thus, his plays contain several features of the Medieval, the Renaissance and the Restoration drama. He has a keen interest in history, religion, theology, poetry and philosophy. His comedies may best be termed "*comedies of climate*" or "*comedies of sessions*." Fry's imagery is function and is drawn from the contradictory clusters such as dark and light, cold and heat, death and life and so on. Thus, his plays mark the beginning of a new attitude to world, to religion and new belief about its place in modern life. He preserves and interprets than observes and dissects. He has peeped us anew into eternity and spirituality. Such things lead to us to see Fry as a successful poetic dramatist in the twentieth century.

The English poetic drama had its heyday during the Elizabethan age. The University Wits, in general, and Marlowe and Shakespeare, in particular, contributed their mite line to the growth and development of poetic drama. With the tremendous influence of the Renaissance, Marlowe poetised the Elizabethan drama. He breathed into English drama the life spirit of poetry through his "Mighty line". Shakespeare, the master dramatist, gave a touch of perfection to the poetic drama especially through his tragedies like Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth

and King Lear and Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale his tragic-comedies like and The Tempest which are notable for their poetic excellence. Under various modern influences such as the Noah drama of Japan, the plays Maeterlinck, the symbolist poet dramatists, the Russian ballet drama took a turn towards to the imaginative and symbolic tendency. It again became poetic. The leaders of Irish Literacy Revival, W.B Yeats, Lady Gregory and J.M Synge establish the Abbey Theatre in Dublin to encourage the poet playwrights. Later on, the plays of W.H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, Stephen Spender, John Masefield, Dr. Bottomley, W.B. Yeats, Lady Gregory and J.M. Synge, Drinkwater, Eliot and Fry. The last poetic dramatist is Christopher Fry, a master of eloquence. He is inspired by the noble aim of exploring the mystery of human life where God is not merely a sleeping partner, by means of comedy which he believed to be a good handmaiden of serious spiritual drama.

Poetry is the chief motive force sound, colour and pomp of verse. His most successful play, A Phoenix Too Frequent has simplicity and spark of liveliness. As a true poetic drama, it is as successful as Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral.

In early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, dramatists, such as Barker, Galsworthy Shaw, were more interested in presentation of the social and economic problems of their times in a realistic manner. Another factor responsible for the emergence of poetic was the large scope of themes offered by poetic drama. The conception such as Hell and Heaven could be conceived in poetic drama. Again characters

like Ariel and Caliban could be portrayed only through poetry. Here, poetry proved to be superior expression to poetic drama. Poetry can communicate the incommunicable. In its tower passion can be best realized and expressed. Poetry has a flexible scope. It extends the range of expression over that available to prose.