

CHAPTER - II

CONCEPT OF PROBLEM PLAY AND NATURE OF COMPARATIVE
STUDY OF LITERATURE

- II.1 Concept of problem play.
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CHAPTER - IICONCEPT OF PROBLEM PLAY AND NATURE OF COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
LITERATURE.II.1 CONCEPT OF PROBLEM PLAY :

There is a basic difference between a play and other forms of literature. A play is not merely a piece of literature. A play is three dimensional and is meant for sights, sounds and actions.

Problem play is a useful term applied to the kind of play which treats of a particular social or moral problems so as to make people think intelligently about it. It is generally tragic in tone and deals with painful human dilemmas. It is the kind of the play that by implication asks a definite question and either supplies an answer or leaves it to us to find out. It was a popular mode of drama in the late 19th century.

Most of the plays of Ibsen and Shaw are problem plays. It is a type of play that appeals to vigorous and thoughtful minds. It can make some contribution to human progress. Drama at its best is an experience of the imagination not only for the writer, the producer and the actors but also for the audience. The writer of plays creates characters and places them in situations that are interesting and in some way relevant to general human experience. The actor tries to live for a short time as another person and enters in to the feelings and thoughts of character, that is

imagined.

One of the essentially pathetic facts about human life is that we have only one short life and the possibilities of experience in one life are very limited. The variations possible for one person are limited even when they become possible at all. None of us have much of an idea what it is like to be someone else. In acting or going to see plays we can live many lives by proxy and so have at least the illusion of widening our experience. The satisfaction of every kind of creation is deep and lasting. The drama offers the most intense satisfaction.

About the nature and function of a problem play William Brooke says, "Problem plays are plays that focus attention on some particular problem which especially concern the society of the time..... But the term problem play is used in a more special sense to denote a topical interest with further implication that the dramatist is using his play as a social and political instrument to direct the attention of the society to its problems and to stir it to adopt a solution".¹

A social problem is created due to social atmosphere, political situation, economic reasons, impact of an individual or impact of various incidents.

II.2 NATURE OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE :

The present century is pre-eminently suitable for studies in comparative literature. Purpose of such study is to discover the common areas among various literatures. This is a kind of co-ordination which seeks resemblance in some respects.

In fact all great writings look to their own times and also look forward and backward. The process of comparison is a natural function of the reason. Even in our everyday life, comparison is implicit in our response and behaviour. It thus seems to be a normal and inevitable mental process. Hence the study and appreciation of literature in a sense is always comparative.

It is the study of literature using comparison as the main instrument. Here literature is studied not in isolation but in comparison, it would be comparison of two or more similar or even dissimilar forms or trends within the literature. It would be the comparison of two or more works in the same language. It would be the comparison of similar or dissimilar forms or trends of two or more languages of the same country. It would also cut across the national boundaries and compare themes. Literary forms of authors from the various languages of the world to discover the underlying elements of unity in diversity for getting universal view of literature. All these are comparative studies in the realm of literature. But the term 'Comparative literature' can be strictly used only when taken into consideration items from two or more literatures representing separate languages and different national traditions. Some critics distinguish comparative literature from general literature. It is not confined to any particular method. It is related to history as well as to criticism. In such study not only comparison but other methods such as description, characterisation, interpretation, narration, evaluation are employed. It is independent of linguistic or political boundaries.

Of course, the basis of the comparative study was nationalism 'Schlegel'² became a pioneer in the study of Sanskrit literature. In comparative study, one can draw, parallels and similarities, but it is very difficult to show that a work of art was caused by another work of art. It is pointed out by 'R.Welleck' that the concept of comparative study is very often vitiated by narrow nationalism. It is his opinion that comparative lit. must overcome national prejudices and at the same time should not ignore the existence of different national traditions.

In Europe, especially in England, need for comparative study was greatly felt. Since Latin was no longer a universal language and it was necessary to restore the lost unity and so contacts with other literatures were felt to be beneficial and so comparatists looked beyond the Western literature. Of course comparative literary studies are pursued in a spirit of intellectual curiosity.

11.3 MOTIVES OF COMPARATIVE STUDY :

The motives of the study of comparative literature can be various. However it is done with a view to use it as the most useful technique of analysing work of art. One can recognise the qualities of a work more effectively by comparing it to other works in different languages. Secondly one can take a balanced view of literary merit. Thirdly literature can not be a separate entity and so it must be studied in relation to other literatures. Comparative literary study aims at studying different national traditions. A set of characteristics constitute national character

or spirit. This group of characteristics may not be found in a single individual in that country and in the study of comparative literature such ideal types can be taken in to consideration. Thus an attempt can be made to define the spirit of the nation reflected in the language and literature.

A comparative literary study considers the impact of translations. Rene Wellek has pointed out that a work of art is never caused by another work of art. The study of influence implies study of analogy and tradition. Analogy can be defined as resemblance in style, structure, mood or idea between works which have no other connection. Influence can be direct or indirect as well. In order to study the influence of one writer on another one must start from clear references. Comparatists can deal with the-matics or the thematology.

In different languages at different times, natural human phenomena have been the subject of literary works. In spite of common personages and or situations, each work can be an-independent work of art. Thematic study implies the study of literary style. Genre, movements and periods are also equally important field for comparative study. A study of form occupies an important place in studies in comparative literature. The modern forms are more or less related to the aesthetic elements and comparative study seeks to find out the relations between these elements.

Comparative study leads rediscovery and reevaluation of great literary figures of other cultures. The question of forms

leads one to the important question of the relation between literature and society. Certain forms thrive in particular social conditions, social morals, social ethics or social problems philosophical convictions etc. Comparative literature takes note of all such aspects because Social and Political movements undoubtedly influence literature. Widening of horizons, hopefulness and frustration, a certain purity and nobility of thought an urge for a social revolution and reforms may be taken as the result.

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-: REFERENCE :-

1. William Brooke - Understanding drama.
(Kalyani Publication, New Delhi)
P. No. 130.
2. Schlegel - A well known German Critic, who followed
the literary traditions of Kant. He
believed that Literature is the compre-
hensive essence of the intellectual life of
a nation.

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