

The Way of the The World as A Comedy of Manners=

The Way Of The World is considered to be one of the most remarkable work of Comedy of Manners. These Comedies of Manners were quite in vogue during the Restoration period. Sheridan and Oscar Wilde also this genre in their writings. Some of the distinguished personalities of the Comedy of Manners were Wycherley, Etherege , Congreve and Vanbrugh.

Special Characteristics of Comedy of Manners

Although Comedy of Manners became very popular because of its technical presentation, the chief speciality of this form was related to its technical aspects. The main target of the writers of the Comedy of Manners was the social follies prevalent in their time. Comedy of Manners is primarily satirical in its approach. The Way of The World contains satirical elements, including the elements of love, marriage, treacherous persons romantic dialogues , wit and humour ; which are essential ingredients of a Restoration Comedy.

The Way of The World is most suitable example of Comedy of Manners. Actually, this comedy contains almost all the qualities of a Restoration Comedy. It presents a vast vista of contemporary social morality and principles. This play maintains a satirical tone from the beginning to the end. It gives us valuable informations about the sophisticated class of society in England at that time. Hoe they were involved in their lifestyle; and how women of that period were crazy about fashion and love-affairs, such short of things have been brilliantly depicted in The Way of The World.

It is very clear after the study of The Comedy of Manners the Restoration period was devoid of moral values. When we go through The Way of The World we get a clear idea about the moral backwardness of the so. The characters of Mrs Fainall, Mirabell , Mrs Marwood, and Mr Fainall give a clear picture of moral Improvisement of their contemporary society. It looks very funny when Mirabell suggest Mrs. Fainall to marry Mr. Fainall in order to conceal her pregnancy, because she had an illicit love affair with him. It is very surprising to note that Fainall in spite of his awareness of Mrs. Fainall's extramarital love affair does not take it very seriously. Although when he speaks to Mrs. Marwood he reacts to his wife's behavior and calls himself a cuckold.

When we minutely observe the play The Way of The World, we notice that Mr. Fainall ignores the treachery of his wife because he is no way better than her. He has an extra-marital affair with Mrs. Marwood. But , when this immoral affair is exposed he faces it without any feeling of shame and puts his arguments in order to defend himself. We can judge the moral degradation of Mrs. Marwood that in spite of maintaining a love affair with Mr.Fainall she is also involved with Mirabell. Here we can Lough at Mr. Fainall's condition, because he thinks himself an over-intelligent fellow and fabricates intrigues for others but he is himself being deceived by his wife and Mrs. Marwood.

The Way of The World depicts a wonderful picture of the affections of the people particularly women, in fashionable society. The author is very clear minded when he portraits the inclination of women for fashion. He ridiculous them for their obsession for fashion. We get a

clear picture when we read the “Provisio-scene”. Mirabell presents a broad analysis about women’s habits which were in vogue in fashionable circle of that society. Apart from this, when Millamant puts some conditions before Mirabell for their marriage, one observes that she talks about her habits of sleeping late in the morning, receiving letters from her well-wishers, writing them replies even after her marriage, entertaining her visitor and she tells Mirabell that she doesn’t want any interference in the upper class of society.

Further we see that wearing tight dresses was very much in fashion in that period. So Mirabell warns Millamant that she can’t wear such type of dress during the time of pregnancy because it might cause harm to the forthcoming child.

Congreve was very successful when he describes the fashionable society of that period. He tells us about cabal nights , when women of the upper social assemble and gossip about various scandalous affairs. Anyone can imagine the craze for fashion in the Restoration Period when Lady Wishfort appears on the scene. In spite of being an old lady of fifty five , she is very serious about her makeup and chides her attendant because of inefficiency in the art of makeup.

The affectation for fashion was so acute in Restoration Period that everybody was under its grip , there was no age-factor for this obsession. Even an old lady like Lady Wishfort tries to keep herself maintained like a young girl.

Further the feeling of Vanity and jealousy was very much prevalent among the woman of Restoration society. In course of the study of the play we notice that Mrs. Marwood is very jealous of Millamant although it is justified, because she has a deep inclination for Mirabell. However, it has been mentioned as an inevitable fact of Restoration Comedy but truly speaking, it has been a weakness of women in every age.

So, an overall study of the play shows that as a Comedy of Manners, The Way of The World presents a vast-vista of contemporary Restoration society. It satirises the follies of the people of upper class of society. In a nutshell, it can be maintained that Congreve has proved his capability and presented a true picture of his contemporary society in The Way of The World.