

Paper - V Restoration to 1798
M.A. IInd Sem (English)

Topic - Restoration Theatre

Background

- ⇒ In 1649 Charles Ist of England removed from throne by Oliver Cromwell. England crowned by Cromwell and Parliament, this period known as the Commonwealth.
- ⇒ In 1642 the puritan revolution began led by Oliver Cromwell which resulted in Charles being overthrown and subsequently beheaded. Cromwell then took leadership of the country being known as the Lord Protector. This was the only time in history Britain was not run by a Monarch.
- ⇒ Between 1642 to 1660 Cromwell outlawed theatre because of its connections with the Monarchy and according to his puritan values was immoral.
- ⇒ In 1660 Cromwell dies 1658 and his son unable to keep control.
- ⇒ 1660 Charles-II, living in France, restored to the throne as a King, this is called restoration period. Theatres were reopened after an eighteen year ban.
- ⇒ Restoration theatre became a way to celebrate the end of puritan rule with its strict Moral Codes.

-E Characteristics of Restoration Theatre

- ⇒ The new theatres were indoor and smaller than the Elizabethan ones.
- ⇒ The old platform stage was eliminated: only the back and the front stages remained, and a scenery painted in perspective, began to be used.

⇒ Restoration theatre was the first genre in which women were widely accepted as actors in England. This is a huge for England - the country had reached with utter outrage at the appearance of French actresses in the 1620s.

↳ Restoration Plays / Drama

- ⇒ During the time of the Restoration, 17th Century drama was very critical. The drama of this period can be broken into two categories, Comedies and tragedies.
- ⇒ Restoration tragedy is classified as heroic tragedy. Heroic tragedy is very extraordinary and usually encompasses some extremely good deed done by a very willful, admirable character.
- ⇒ Restoration gave rise to the first female playwright of the English stage, Aphra Behn. It also marked the first instances of actresses appearing on stage in female (and sometimes male) roles.
- ⇒ Aphra Behn (1640-1689) was the author of eighteen plays, most of them highly successful. She was one of the first and most industrious of English women playwrights.
- ⇒ John Dryden: - Influential poet, critic, translator and playwright is primarily remembered for his neo-classic tragedies. He dominated the literary life of Restoration England and was made poet laureate of England in 1667.
- ⇒ Another important playwright was William Wycherley 1640-1716 most famous for his play: The Country Wife (1675).

Restoration Comedy:

- ⇒ Restoration Comedy was written and performed from about 1660 to 1700, flourishing in the period after the restoration of the Stuart Monarchy.
- ⇒ The Restoration Comedy also known as, The Comedy of Manners, reflects the life, ideals, and manners of upper class society. It presented the superficial habits and manners of only a section of the society - elegant aristocracy with their vices, intrigues and outward glamour of polished behaviour.
- ⇒ The playwrights who practised the Comedies of Manners in the restoration age were, William Wycherley, William Congreve, George Etherege and Thomas Shadwell.

Success of Restoration Theatre:-

- ⇒ One major factor in the success of restoration theatre was the support of Charles II, he took an active interest in restoration theatre from the start.
- ⇒ The lightheartedness of the plays reflected a society recovering from years of division and unrest. Although the audience enjoyed tragedies, Comedies were the hallmark of restoration plays.
- ⇒ Classics such as Romeo and Juliet were rewritten and given a happy ending. Restoration audiences enjoyed new characters and timeless plays re-vamped to celebrate the shifting of power from Puritan rule, back to Monarchical rule.