

II B.A

She Stoops to Conquer

Goldsmith

Delineate *She Stoops to Conquer* as an Anti – Sentimental Comedy.

Introduction

To know how ‘She stoops to Conquer’ is an anti – sentimental comedy, we must know what is sentimental and anti – sentimental comedy. **Sentimental comedy**

This form becomes popular in 18th century. Sentimental comedy is related to our emotions. It appeals especially to our feelings of sorrow, pity, and compassionate sympathy. It reflected contemporary philosophical conceptions of human as inherent good but capable of being led astray through bad examples. By an appeal to his noble to his sentiments, a man could be reform and set back on the path of virtue.

Richard Steele was pioneer of sentimental comedy and the best known sentimental comedy is ‘The Conscious Lover’. In contrast ‘anti-sentimental’ comedy returns to comedy of manners.

Anti – Sentimental Comedy:

Anti-Sentimental comedy is reaction against sentimental comedy. The pioneer of anti-sentimental comedy is Oliver Goldsmith, who criticized the sentimental comedy in his essay- ‘Essay on the theatre’ or ‘A comparison between Laughing and sentimental comedy’.

Oliver Goldsmith writes that the true function of a comedy was to give a humorous exhibition of the follies and vices of men and women and to rectify them by exciting laughter. Goldsmith opposed sentimental comedy because in place of laughter and humour, it provided tears and distressing situations, pathetic lovers, serious heroines and honest servants.

He argued that sentimental comedy was more like tragedy than a comedy. If comedy was to trespass upon tragedy where humour will have right to express itself. On two occasions and with unequal success, Goldsmith tried to revive sincere laughter on stage.

Richard Sheridan also reacted against sentimental comedy. He ridiculed the sententious moralising of weeping sentimental comedy in his plays 'The Rivals' and 'The Critic'. Anti-sentimental comedy is kind of comedy representing complex and sophisticated code of behaviour current in fashion circles of society where appearance count more than true moral character. Its plot usually revolves around intrigues of lust and greed the self interested cynicism of the character. Being masked by decorous pretence in these two dramatists' comedies.

As a result of the reaction of Goldsmith and Sheridan, the comedy of sentiment was driven out, gone were the pathos and morality, preaching and meddling sentimentality. Their place was taken by humour and mirth, pleasant dialogues and wit. The writers who brought about the revival of true comedy in 18th century were Henry Fielding, Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Sheridan.

Anti-sentimental comedy takes us from old form of comedy, Comedy of manners, which is also called, generally for anti-sentimental comedy.

Characteristics of Anti-Sentimental Comedy:

It is also called comedy of manners. Anti-sentimental comedy is going to old forms. It is a low farce, situational humour. It is high polished in Restoration comedy.

Generally, it deals with the relations and intrigues of men and women living in sophisticated upper class society. So, it is called comedy of manners. There is also violation of social standards and decorum immortality of situation.

Comedy of humours or anti-sentimental comedy is a pure comedy which generate laughter and not tragic with our emotions. Verbal and situational irony is also characteristic of anti-sentimental comedy.

Oliver Goldsmith's 'She Stoops to Conquer' is one of the best examples of anti-sentimental comedy, and follows all the characteristics of anti-sentimental comedy.

'She Stoops to Conquer' as an Anti – Sentimental Comedy:

We very well know that Goldsmith is pioneer of anti-sentimental comedy. 'She Stoops to Conquer' is second play of Goldsmith, produced in 1771. It is also known under the title 'The Mistakes of a Night'. The play practically introduces the reign of humour in comedy.

The entire play with its fun and humour, its intrigues and sparkling dialogues, its mischievous tricks and roguish attempts by Tony Lumpkin is a direct blow on the sentimental comedy. A piquant observation, elements of ingenious and

new realism, a welling forth of pleasantry that never dries up, and baths even the rare moments when emotion could rise – all go to make this charming comedy an unalloyed source of amusement.

The principal characters of this comedy are Hardcastle, who loves ‘everything that is old’; old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine, Mrs. Hardcastle and Miss. Hardcastle, Their daughter, Mrs. Hardcastle’s son by former marriage, Tony Lumpkin, young Marlow are the chief characters.

Tony Lumpkin, a frequenter of the ‘Three Jolly Pigeons’ is idle and ignorant, but cunning and mischievous, and doted on by his mother; and young Marlow, is one of the most bashful and reserved young fellows in the world, except with barmaids and servant-girls. His father Charles Marlow has proposed a match between young Marlow and Miss Hardcastle. And the young man and his friend, Hastings, accordingly travel down to pay the Hardcastles a visit.

Losing their way, they arrive at night at the ‘Three Jolly Pigeons’, where Tony Lumpkin directs them to a neighbouring inn, which is in reality Hardcastle’s house.

The fun of the play arises largely from the resulting misunderstanding. Marlow treating Hardcastle as the landlord of the supposed inn, and making violent love to Miss Hardcastle, whom he takes for one of his servants. This contrast with his bashful attitude when presented to her in real character. The arrival of Sir Charles Marlow clear up the misconception and all ends well. All ends well, including subsidiary love affair between Hastings and Miss Neville, whom Mrs. Hardcastle destines for Tony Lumpkin. At the end when truth coming to light, everyone happy. Sir Charles and Hastings laugh together over the confusion young Marlow in. Marlow arrives to apologise and in the discussion over Miss Hardcastle claims he barely talked to her. Marlow reveals his truly good character, and after some discussion, everyone agrees to match as per above. All are happy and the ‘Mistakes of a Night’ have been corrected.

All characters are drawn very well and plot is constructed very well that generate laughter in our mind.

The confusion and mentality or the portrait of all characters are very humorous and has many element of laughter in the play. It is a true form of comedy. We can also evaluate it. We love its characters because it is like real and we laugh with them, not laugh at them.

The play is charming one, in which the rough edges of the world are ground smooth, in which fouls turn out to be virtues and mistakes to be blessings. Its characters are particularly delightful. Tony Lumpkin is a genuine child of the soil and is said to be a monitor. Tony is loved by the readers of the comedy for his pleasant fun and nice jokes. Mr. Hardcastle is another character whom we all like because he loves everything that is old.

In 'She Stoops to Conquer' or 'The Mistakes of a Night' Goldsmith succeeds in introducing humour of the finest type. The plot is well-knitted and the characters have everything of comedy about them. The old mawkish sentimentality is driven out, and the sense of pathos is sub-planted by mirth and delight.

It seen as comedy of manners, because in that play comedy arises from gap between the characters' attempts to preserve standards of polite behaviour, that contrasts to their true behaviour and set in a polite society.

'She Stoops to Conquer' is also a good satire and farce because it is based on multiple misunderstandings. Like Marlow and Hastings believing Hardcastle's house as an inn.

Sometimes, 'She Stoops to Conquer' is compared with the great dramatist Shakespeare's comedies. There is also unity of time, place and action- the concept also show in Shakespeare, is also very well described.

Like Shakespeare's Romantic comedy, this comedy depicts how seriously young people take love, and how foolishly it takes them behave. In 'She stoops to Conquer' Kate's- daughter of Hardcastle stooping and Marlow's nervousness are good example of Romantic comedy. Peculiar union of intellect and emotion which colours the figures and words of Hardcastle and Tony Lumpkin and of Diggory alike makes the play Romantic comedy, similar to Shakespearian comedies.

The prologue of the play gives the conception of comedy of Goldsmith. It is also a direct satire on sentimental comedy. Moreover, he explained his ideas about the comic art in the dedication to Samuel Johnson. In the play, he has ironically attacked through the mouth of his character. As Miss Hardcastle observes in act 2nd:

"Indeed I have often been surprise how a man of sentiment could ever admire those light air pleasures, where nothing reaches the heart."

Again Tony Lumpkin says in the same act:

"I have often seen her and sister cry over a book for an hour together; and they said they linked the book the better the more it made them cry."

That way he attacked, criticized sentimental comedy.

Conclusion

‘She Stoops to Conquer’ by Oliver Goldsmith has element of anti-sentimentalism. Goldsmith wanted to criticise sentimental comedy of Richard Steele in his contemporary era. So, he wrote ‘She Stoops to Conquer’ his second play better than the first, as an example of pure comedy, comedy of humours, comedy of manners, anti-sentimental comedy.

Thus, ‘She Stoops to Conquer’ is the best example of anti-sentimental comedy not only because it has characteristics and element of anti-sentimentalism but also it has spirit of “anti-sentimentalism” which we can easily find in Goldsmith. It is a very intellectual with emotional comedy where Goldsmith shows his spirit of anti-sentimentalism. And make it the best anti-sentimental comedy – a pure form of comedy.