THE ALCHEMIST

BenJonson

**Introduction:**

Benjamin Jonson, now popularly known as BenJonson. BenJonson occupies a distinct and illustrations place among the literary figures of England. He achieved fame in 1598 when Queen Elizabeth was yet alive and lived through the reign of James I. Among his contemporaries he stood forth with singular distinctness. He was the master of unquestioned genius.Jonson was a profound scholar.He made a notable contribution to the drama of ‘humour’.

**Comedy of humours:**

Comedy of humours is the realistic comedy.It was developed by BenJonson,George Chapman and John Fletcher. Each of his character is taken from low life and represents some particular social vice or folly.

**Four Humours:**

Melancholy, Phelgm,blood, and choler are the four humours. The predominance of one of which determines a person’s temperament. Jonson based his comedies on the theory of humors and he has come to be known as the inventor of “the comedy of humours”.In his plays each character is represented as under the influence of a certain humour or peculiar habit, passion or affectation which distinguishes him from the other characters.

**The opening of the play:**

The opening of the play introduces the three conspirators. Subtle and face are thinking themselves to be more important. Actually each is indispensable. Their quarrel is brought to an end by the intervention of Dol Common. She explains that it is a tripartite venture and no one claims any priority. The quarrel reveals the background of the two male conspirators. It also indicates the nature of the enterprise which they have undertaken.

**Various Dupes:**

Next we are introduced the various dupes come out one after another. Each one comes with a different purpose and different ways are adopted by them.

**The Gulling of Dapper:**

The first to arrive is Dapper. He is a lawyer’s clerk.He gives up his profession and becomes a whole time gambler. He says that he wants an attendant spirit who could help him to win money at all kinds of gambling.He said that he is a nephew of the Queen of Fairies and she might leave a rich legacy to him.When Subtle hesitates on the ground that raising spirits is unlawful, Face urges Dapper to provide some money to Subtle as his fee. Again Subtle says that he would be facing danger if he invokes spirit.Then Face insists Dapper to give Subtle some more money and tells Subtle that Dapper is a special gentleman and he is the only hope of his grand mother.Face makes Dapper to promise to give Subtle a good share if he wins money in gambling.Dapper, the client of Subtle is possessed by a common passion, greed.He is motivated in varying degrees by greed and self interest.

**The Gulling of Drugger:**

He is tobacconist. He has brought the plan of the proposed shop he is going to build at the corner of street.He wants the alchemist’s advice as where to install the door and shelves and where to put the boxes and pots to achieve prosperity.Subtle gives instructions.He also advises to put a magnet beneath the threshold of the shop by saying that the magnet will bring the youngsters of the town to the shop to buy goods.To please Drugger, Subtle also says that soon Drugger would become a great chemist and might discover the philosophy’s stone to change base metals into gold. Finally Face extract money from Drugger.While leaving Drugger asks Subtle to mark his unlucky days in the calendar so that he should not do the needful to him.Then Drugger likes to marry Dame Pilant, but the priest is asked to perform a marriage between Lovewit and Dame pilant.He is also motivated in varying degrees by greed and self interest.

**The Gulling of Sir Epicure Mammon:**

He comes in order to get the philosopher’s stone.He has been talking to people about how he would use the philosopher’s stone to cure people of their diseases to make begger’s rich to make old whores young and so on as if already he had got it. A desire for gold has become an obsession with him. Mammon’s lust is beyond the power of words to describe .He says that after getting the philosopher’s stone he would acquire wives and concubines equal with Solomon who also had the philosopher’s stone in his possession. Mammon is completely blinded by his lust and greediness so Subtle cheated him.

**Character of Surly:**

Surly is the friend of Mammon. Surly had been skeptical. He expresses his doubts and disbeliefs openly. Mammon tells Surly that one part of the elixir which he is going to get from the alchemist will convert thousand parts of a base metals into gold. Surly says bluntly that he will believe it only when he sees it by his own eyes. In the guise of servant, Face tells Surly that he has been sent by Captain Face. The intention of Face is to trap him. Surly decides to meet Captain Face in the guise of a Spanish gentle man. He decides to carry out an investigation into real activities of Subtle.

**The Gulling of Ananias:**

He is an Anabaptist.He has been sent by the superior Anabaptist.He has been sent by the superior Anabatists in Amsterdam.Subtle asks Ananias to getout and informs him that if the Anabaptists do not pay him additional money, within an hour, he would wreck the whole equipment.They are also attracted by the lure of gold.They need money for holy purpose, that is to establish the supremacy of Puritanism in England.

**Complications:**

The swindlers have extracted more money from their clients.Surly in the guise of a Spanish Don, learns the truth and he reveals all to Dame Pilant.The various dupes arrive one after another. They have to be disposed off quickly with tact.Both Subtle and Face want to marry the rich young widow.

**The Crisis:**

Lovewit arrives unexpectedly. He is informed by his neighbours that lots of people are visiting his house daily.He asks Jeremy who were the persons visiting daily.Face emphatically refuses.By confessing the whole thing to Lovewit, Face has come to an understanding with him.According to it, the rich widow would be offered to Lovewit in marriage and in return Lovewit would forgive the butler.He tells Suble and Dol that he can help them to escape from arrest.They quit the house in hurry to save themselves.

**Conclusion:**

‘The Alchemist’ is a fine social satire on a flourishing species of knaves and fools .The play satirizes two social satire on a flourishing species of knaves and fools. The play satirizes two social pests of the age namely, Puritanism and the profession of an alchemist.