

Paper VIII – Shakespeare

Objectives :

1. To give the student a first hand knowledge of the plays of Shakespeare
2. To provide the student with a knowledge of the social and intellectual background to the author and his works and to help him understand Shakespeare as a product of his age and its socio-cultural conditions.
3. To help the student understand the distinctiveness of Shakespeare's play with special reference to the immortal characters he created his intuitive understanding of human nature and the greatness of his craftsmanship.
4. To help the student understand the plays of Shakespeare as drama, as plays written for the contemporary stage.
5. To draw the attention of the student to the language of Shakespeare's plays, his images, his word-play and his original and creative use of the language.
6. To create in the student an awareness of the high place Shakespeare has not only in the history of literature and theatre but also in the history of the language.

Course Description :

Political background – The age of Elizabeth and its unique achievement in the political, religious, social and cultural spheres. The intellectual temper of the Age – An age of exploration, discovery and action – The ideal of the golden mean and the keynote of Elizabeth's reign – the country's political success and its maritime victories, its successful handling of religious strifes, the creation of new colonies – beginnings of the British expansionism and colonization.

The intellectual temper of the age – The Renaissance and its impact – the new thirst for knowledge – paralleled by a thirst for exploration and adventure – the new learning and its gifts to the intellectual activities of the age – Beginnings of that intellectual curiosity which led to scientific discoveries.

The Rise of the drama in England and the growth of the theatre – The development of Tragedy and Comedy – The influence of the popular tastes and preferences on the contemporary stage – Elizabethan theatre and stage conditions.

The classification of Shakespeare plays both chronological and generic – Tragedies, comedies, problem plays and Romances.

Shakespeare criticism – The major trends from the beginnings – Eighteenth and Nineteenth century criticism – The Bradleyan approach – The trends set by critics like Raleigh, Dowden, Hudson, Granville, Barker, Dover Wilson, Wilson Knight, Wolfgang Clemen, Caroline Sturgeon Textual criticism – Current trends – involving the structuralist, existentialist and linguistic approaches.

The need to study Shakespeare's plays in an overall perspective as parts of a larger whole rather than as individual plays the sonnets and criticism relating the sonnets.

Syllabus for Shakespeare

Part A – Detailed :

Hamlet
Henry IV Part I
The Tempest

Part B – Non-Detailed

Measure for Measure
Twelfth Night
Antony and Cleopatra
Sonnets

General Shakespeare

The age of Shakespeare
Shakespeare's Theatre and Audience
Shakespeare Text
Shakespeare Criticism – The principal milestones in its history and growth
Shakespeare Imagery
Shakespeare's use of Language