

The Rivals as a Drama of Intrigues

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Abstract- The Rivals is a comedy of situation and intrigue par excellence because the action of the play is developed through a number of striking situations, revealing character among the and because it seeks to rouse interests of the audience in secret amour for the love of a women among several sets of lovers who consider themselves as 'rivals' which is the central theme of the play. It is a comedy because its main business is to expose the follies of its characters and to hold them to ridicule.

Index Terms- intrigue, expose, secret amour, follies.

INTRODUCTION

The Rivals has often been termed as a play of situation and intrigue the restoration comedy of intrigues, evolved after the Spanish model, specialized in situations, arising out of infidelity in love and marriage, underhand plotting and secret amours. A mere story is a mere succession of incidents and situation if these do not embody and display character and human nature, only give you something of the nature of a raw melodrama. Sheridan's comedy, through modeled on the restoration comedy of manners which reached its perfection in Congreve, presents a faithful but somewhat cynical and imaginative rather than a realistic portraiture of the late eighteenth century society of the upper middle class gentry. It was fashionable society of men in periwigs and women in elaborate gowns of sedan chairs and coffee - houses pleasure haunts, fashionable groves and gardens , suggestive and witty, conversations, intrigues, etc, Scandal mongering, intrigue, secretamorous, senseless prattle, over triflers were the chief follies of the fashionable society. No literature of the age gives as a picture as a graphic and revealing as what Sheridan presents us in drama. The story and characters run on traditional lines. The subject-matters are very trivial; the superficial manners of fashionable society were incapable of

arousing higher emotions. So the profound realities of life are untouched. The life reflected here is in the life of intrigue and melodramatic situations which characterized middle class fashionable society of age. The action of his plays is developed through a number of striking situations .He seems to have an instinct for choosing those intriguing situations which throw light on the characters obeying 'humours, of their ' types, and which drive them along the narrow groove of actions .There is preplanned manipulation of characters who obey only their 'humours , under the dictation of the dramatist which the result that there is nothing like natural evaluation of the characters. They do have a sufficient vitality of their own as living individuals. but the fact is that represent specific 'humours , ' type , rather than the ' individuals, and are but variants of the stock characters of old comedies . It is that gives the plays of Sheridan an 'artificial, air about them. That Sheridan was good at inventing certain artificial but none the class dramatic situations which instinctively call forth laughter and create suspense in as will be clear. The 'exposition, in the opening scene strikes the sky note of the play. It lays bare the secretive and somewhat intriguing 'situation, in which captain Absolute under the assumed name of 'Ensign Beverley, is courting and carrying on an intrigue with the rich and waywardly romantic heiress, Lydia Languish, who prefers to be courted by a poor romantic lover. Rather than the son of a rich baronet such as the captain is. It also hints at another love-episode introduced by the subplot and introduces the typical dictatorial father of the old conservative school who is especially hard upon his son in the matter of the choice of a wife for him.

All these ticklish situations "complicate" the action. Another intriguing 'situation' is provided in the next scene in which a typically vain self important country woman an old husband hunting type who thinks

herself charming enough to attract men, is introduced. We are told, she is engaged in a secret love correspondence with an Irish baronet. We also learn about the arrival of a foolish squire aspiring to be a city beau, encouraged by Mrs.Malaprop to pay addresses to Lydia Languish. The most comical “situation” is presented in the first scene of the second act in which the self.

REFERENCE

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