

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSIONS

We set out<sup>on</sup> our study by appraising courtesy as so pervasive a quality of Shakespeare's plays that it becomes a distinctive mark of his dramatic art. His use of the courteous forms of behaviour is habitual and extensive, and a modern reader, unaccustomed to the dramatist's conception of gentility may find them strange. This is because human civilisation is a dynamic force and at each stage of its progress the idea of a gentleman has changed its implications. It has varied from continent to continent, and from country to country, despite the fact that certain ingredients of refinement are commonly contained in every definition of a gentleman.

The evolution of such an idea itself must everywhere have been a very long and arduous process. From Aristotle's Magnanimous Man to the Chinese ideal of the Continent Man, from Europe's Medieval knight and England's Elizabethan Courtier to modern America's Business Administrator and modern Russia's Proletarian Leader, human energy has been unceasingly striving to fashion an ideal of human perfection. The process still continues, and must do so, for, human beings, being what they are, perfection will exist only in the ideal.

Yet one very remarkable thing has happened in the progress of human civilisation. With the passage of time, society has been, making ever more increasing demands on the ideal of perfection. It is no longer possible for the Ideal Man to remain above or outside society. Perfection in the earlier stages of civilisation was conceived as being apart from, and unrelated to society. Aristotle's Magnanimous Man could stand aloof from the people and yet remain an ideal, just because he was magnanimous. But the medieval European knight was

called upon daily to perform a knightly deed to keep his qualities in trim, and so had to move among the people. The sixteenth century courtier had to pay his dues to the Court and the people with his courtly qualities before he could retire as a knight Hermit. Though these ideals were confined only to the higher social orders, society's claims on them were insisted upon, and the insistence increased as the courtier with the breaking down of the class distinctions in course of time became only a 'gentleman'. There has thus progressively taken place, however slowly, a socialisation of the Ideal Man and his individual excellence became relevant only in so far as it proved its social utility.

To appreciate the Shakespearian ideal of courtesy in this context we looked at it in the historical perspective. In England itself we considered how courtesy was delicated in literature in the Anglo-Saxon sagas. The Anglo-Saxon literature with its tone of sadness, produced a hero, who had in him, something more than prowess in arms. In the beer-hall, the warrior hero cultivated the social arts of life, and employed himself in something nobler and higher than blood-shed, in the greetings,

speeches and farewells and exchange of cordiality as the beer-mug went round the hall. Yet what the Anglo-saxon ways of life handed down by way of legacy to the later ages was not its courtesy but its idea of strength of arms and its practice of the hero gathering round him his warriors. The earlier feudal lords collected about them the sons of the nobility and the common people as retainers and servants. Importance, therefore, came to be given only to the way in which the liegeman behaved with the lord. This formed the only nurture for young men, whether of the nobility or the gentry. Courtesy was confined for a while to the conduct of the retainer to his lord and courtesy books were published detailing the rules of behaviour of a retainer, limited though for most part, to table manners.

The standard of human excellence, however, changed after the Norman conquerors settled in England. The new rulers brought with them not only a lore of romantic stories but a gay and bouyant temperament and a heart throbbing with feeling.

The Anglo-saxon melancholy gave way to the sunshine of their wit and gaiety and made popular the chivalric romances, with their adventures of valour, love, courtesy and tenderness. In the new Hero, therefore, physical prowess is blended with emotion. The Norman yearning for the fulfilment of their passion brought into vogue the ideal of love which for a considerable time seized the imagination of poets and story-tellers. Upon this free play of passion, however, medieval christianity was to exert a powerful influence. The warrior-hero, who had by now become conscious of the urge of emotions, was called upon to accord his actions to the necessity of man's relation to God. Religion made him assume humility and accept the worthlessness of human life. It reminded him of Original Sin and put the fear of God's wrath against indulgence in the physical passions. No standard of human excellence can now thought to be adequate without the sanctity of religious virtues. The Ideal Man now has besides his physical strength, skill in arms and a feeling heart, humility, piety, and other religious virtues. The medieval knight thus finds

favour with both the Church and the King, and in literature he is extolled as a standard par-excellence. His qualities, courage, good faith, courtesy, hospitability, liberality, sacrifice, respect for women, humility, piety, pity and sense of honour formed an elaborate code of conduct. His quality of respect for women was gradually to be identified with the entire conception of chivalry in course of time. The knight was to exhibit his qualities in action but the rigours of his code and its association with religion would require that his actions be performed with a truly ascetic detachment. He found, however, that not all his good actions in the service of humanity could obtain their true worth without the love of woman. His ascetic code, guided by the behests of christianity could not permit of a stirring of the passions, and, if he must perform his knightly duties, he must seek to sublimate his feelings. The Troubadours for him did exactly what was required. They sang of love for a woman but applied to it the form and rigour of a religious ceremony, that of a worshipper to a deity. Love was spiritualised to a degree that

would avoid any conflict with the demands of religion and at the same time offer an emotional consolation to the worshipper. This was evidently a compromise; in fact, it was a pagan God foisted on an unemotional ethical code of conduct. Medieval life and literature reveal two forces working at its core - one was to seek redemption of Man from Original Sin, the other was to reconcile amorous love with religion.

The knight therefore, with all his ethical qualities, now kneels before the altar of his Lady, and though the ideal had little relation to practical life, it paved for posterity the way to refinement, for the ideas of Love and reverence for woman were later to form the ground-work for the ideal of courtesy.

Another medieval idea, the theocratic idea of 'degree' influenced later ages, when it was sought to create an ideal of behaviour for the courtier. It was a dynamic idea, which, as Ulysses points out in his famous 'degree' speech in Troilus and Cressida, works as a pivot round which all human action moves. We have seen how Shakespeare dramatises the idea in

Coriolanus and how he bases on it his ideal of courtesy.

When England began to carve out her ideal courtier, therefore, she had, as legacy from the past, the now hoary figure of the chivalrous knight with his list of ethical virtues, humility, piety, courtesy, liberality, sense of honour etc, the ideal of Love and reverence for woman, and the 'degree' concept of the Universe, implying on the social scale, the 'degree' order of the King, the nobles, the gentry and the lower classes. To this inheritance the new learning of the Renaissance brought a refining influence. It is significant that the Renaissance had already begun a hundred years before Queen Elizabeth, from the time of Erasmus and More, though in a consideration of cultural values, such arbitrary divisions into periods become irrelevant.<sup>1</sup> The Middle Ages did

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<sup>1</sup> "The field 'Medieval and Renaissance' is already far too wide for my powers. But you see how to me the appointed area must primarily appear as a specimen of something for larger, something which had already begun when the Iliad was composed and was still almost unimpaired when Waterloo was fought. Of course within that immense period there

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not suddenly die when the Renaissance began nor did the Renaissance completely obliterate every thing that was medieval. What is particularly remarkable is the fact that England had by the sixteenth century gained a nationhood and a strong self consciousness which stirred her to set up her own cultural ideal. The writings of Ascham and Bishop Hall reflect this consciousness in their censure of the travelled gentlemen, Shakespeare too, as we have seen, makes overt criticism of them whenever an opportunity occurs in the plays. The English have always had an institutional reverence for their own traditions, and are not prone to give up their past and their identity. This explains how they came to retain in their literature so many medieval elements while others lost so much of it.

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are all sorts of differences. There are lots of convenient differences between the area I am to deal with and other areas; there are important differences within the chosen area. And yet - despite all this - that whole thing, from its Greek or pre-Greek beginnings down to the day before yesterday, seen from the vast distance at which we stand today, reveals a homogeneity that is certainly important and perhaps more important than its interior diversities. That is why I shall be unable to talk to you about my particular region without constantly treating things which neither began with the Middle Ages nor ended with the end of the Renaissance."

C.S. Lewis : De Descriptione Temporum; p.18.

The impact of the new learning, however, with the freshness of its ideals, was too strong for any resistance. Medieval institutions were fast disintegrating and historical circumstances urgently clamoured for a change. Under the powerful Tudor monarchs, England, with her reverence for tradition, brought about a compromise in every sphere of life. In religion the Reformation was such a compromise; in architecture, the gothic and Renaissance styles were combined; in literature the old knightly ideals were blended with the vitality and refinement of the new learning. The fusion brought about a new code of conduct for the courtier, and courtesy became the ideal of his behaviour. Yet in the new ideal the essential ingredients of the chivalric knight except for his amorous adultery, do not completely disappear. Qualities such as courage, valour, honour, loyalty, mutual respect, refinement, reverence for women, remain as essentials for the new norm of behaviour. Even the religious qualities of humility, pity and piety are preserved, in substance, under the different name of 'virtue'.

Yet there came about a shift in the emphasis on these qualities, and new ones were added to them. The old knight was intellectual but that was a comparatively minor quality of his personality; the new courtier was to have wit, a sharp intellect with which he could win a wordy warfare. Scholarship was not an accountable merit of the old knight, but it became something of an indispensable accomplishment of the courtier.

The most significant change brought about by the Renaissance was the way in which the new courtly qualities were required to be translated into action. The medieval knight had to remain objective in his actions. He performed his duties while keeping his feeling detached from his actions. The new ideal of the Renaissance demanded that action must follow naturally from within, that is to say, each action must be felt by the doer. It is therefore that Shakespeare always insists on the harmony of the inward and the outward, and places in dramatic juxtaposition the dissemblers against those who feel what they do. The new courtier had his humanity so

enlarged that he could imaginatively feel the condition of others, and so sympathise with it. This does not mean that the old knight had no feelings, but that they were so subjected to the rigid scheme of his behaviour that they scarcely became prominent. The courtier is more introspective than the knight and his spirit, enlarged in feeling and action, finds a wider scope for the exercise of his finer qualities than the knight. He finds in the widened field an impetus for the enjoyment of the finer things of life, and shows even a yearning for aesthetic pleasure of the fine arts. Shakespeare's courtiers are scholars, poets and lovers of music. These are qualities to be noticed everywhere in Elizabethan literature. Spenser praises love of music as a quality indispensable for a gentleman. Sidney's knights in Arcadia are lovers of arts. The Renaissance ideal regards aesthetic pleasure as healthful to the soul. It is significant that Sidney's Arcadia and Spenser's Faerie Queene were written expressly with the intention of fashioning a gentleman.

Though values are shifted in the qualities of the old knight and new ones added in the moulding of the courtier, the moorings of the latter are to be found in the past and his lineage is to be derived from the medieval knight. He is still a soldier, of noble birth, with humility, pity, piety, courage, respect for women, generosity and a sense of honour but he is also a scholar, a lover of art, and a wit. Love is still his occupation but he is to find in it the felicity of marriage. The sum of all these qualities is 'grace' and the expression of this grace in speech and behaviour is courtesy. He will be able to fulfil his calling if he can combine physical agility with mental sprightliness, a careless abandon in his conduct, the sprezzatura, with an art which may conceal all art.

It is a lofty ideal, and to put it on the stage in the form of behaviour of men and women is a delicate business. To execute this Shakespeare pitches the status of his men and women as high as the ideal is lofty. The middle ages had deified woman and the tradition still lingered on. An astute

woman, besides, was ruling over England, who symbolised the nation's greatness and glory in her person, and in literature was everywhere eulogised as a deity. Shakespeare accordingly assigns to his heroines an almost angelic status : all the better of his women in the plays, as we have noticed, have a grace which is extra-human. If Imogen, Perdita, Portia, Desdemona, Paulina appear real, it is because they are called upon to bear this grace through the hard facts of life which are very real indeed. The male counterparts of these women, Shakespeare makes abundantly virtuous and accomplished. But if these men, so highly conceived, err in the business of life and act in a way derogatory to the ideal, the work of correcting and refining them is assigned to the women. This is so despite the fact that characters like Othello or Hamlet remain in the end uninfluenced by womanly grace. Women, as we have seen, exert a civilising influence in the plays. In a sense this was a continuation of the medieval tradition; in another, it was an act of obeisance to the power and prestige of the ruling monarch. But what concerns us is that

it is by means of this high concept of men and women that Shakespeare demonstrates the ideal of courtesy on the stage.

It is therefore that Shakespeare uses courtesy in the very process of revealing his characters in the plays. His first care in unfolding his characters is to see that grace, which, as we have seen, is the sum of many ethical virtues, flows spontaneously into their speech and behaviour. This is why the speech and manners of the characters are so gentle and refined. Shakespeare is always deliberate in revealing his characters and skillfully produces the desired effect. It is as a result of this that Quiller-Couch<sup>1</sup> once doubted if any one except an actress of high blood could act the parts of these women and reveal their unconscious grace. In fact this is a dramatic effect which Shakespeare intentionally produced and the fact indicates how conscious he was of the ideal of courtesy when he wrote the plays.

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<sup>1</sup> Preface to The Winter's Tale in New Cambridge Shakespeare. (xxvi)

This is one way in which the dramatist uses courtesy - to reveal character. Lest we miss his intention, he deftly separates the dissemblers in courtesy, and for us to know them better, puts the genuine and the dissembler, the courteous and the discourteous opposite each other in sharp contrast. We have studied this method with illustrations from the plays. It is a method not uncommonly employed and it gives us hints about the characters. For example, we may think of Roderigo in Othello as only a gull, but the fact that he has a certain amount of culture while Iago has none is revealed in their conversation with Brabantio in Act I, Sc. i, (78-117). Roderigo's courteous address and polite speech to Brabantio is an intended foil to Iago's rude address and almost vulgar insinuation. And Brabantio's 'profane wretch' and 'thou art a villain' to Iago are an index to the latter's character throughout the play.

This is another use Shakespeare makes of courtesy to bring about dramatic contrast between characters so that both types may be distinctly

outlined and the spectator given correct guidance to understand them. Courtesy is still further used in the way he employs the formalities of behaviour, greetings and farewells. Their use becomes a potent weapon with the dramatist to produce a variety of artistic effects.

Shakespeare's use of these formalities of refined behaviour is so effective and apposite that people often carry them in their minds and remember them in the context of their own experience. André Gide recalls Coriolanus' greeting to Virgilia in relation to his wife on one occasion.<sup>1</sup>

These greetings and farewells are so tuned to both the character and the situation that they cannot

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<sup>1</sup> André Gide : Et Nunc Manet in Te : Translated by Justin O'Brien. "Even when I would return from a voyage and the other members of my family would greet me on the stone-steps of Cuverville, I knew that she would be standing, somewhat withdrawn in the shadow of the entrance-hall, and I would think of Coriolanus' return, of the "My gracious silence, hail!" that he addresses to his Virgilia". p.34.

" My gracious silence, hail;  
 Would'st those have laughed, had I come  
   coffin'd home,  
 That weepst to see me triumph ?"

( Coriolanus : II,i,177-179)

be torn from either. We have seen how the short, pithy, almost abrupt greetings and farewells of Richard are of a piece with his character. Shakespeare accords these formalities so aptly to the situation and character that every time they are used they appear new and fresh. As a result there are as many varieties of them as there are characters using them and the situations in which they are used in the plays. Every time they are used we have a new tone, a new context and a new variety. Shakespeare culls out of these formalities the maximum dramatic effect. We have seen in our study how the dramatist can deepen the tragedy of a situation as he does in Richard III (IV,i); when the old Queen bids farewell to a number of woe-begone royal ladies and finally to the dark historical tower. It is one of the most sentimental farewells, yet Shakespeare has so rendered it that it accentuates the effect of a tragic situation and incites in us the pity due to it. Again our study of the greetings and farewells in Antony and Cleopatra showed how a greeting can be used with a political purpose (Caesar's to Antony

and later to Cleopatra), how a sentimental parting can become ironical if viewed obliquely as done by Enobarbus; how by the use of a single welcome, that by Caesar to Octavia, Shakespeare can produce a three-fold effect, to advance the plot by marking Octavia's withdrawal from Antony, to reveal the astuteness of Caesar's character and to make Octavia survive in our memory as a creature to be pitied. Similarly Antony's farewell and that of Cleopatra at the end of the play are used to bring out these characters in their true tragic dignity, so much so that they live in our minds more by these last acts of grace than by anything they have done earlier in the play. We feel that they would have been lesser man and woman, king and queen and lovers without these last farewells. Shakespeare thus uses these formalities of behaviour in a variety of ways, to reveal a character, to accentuate the effect of a given situation, with such dexterity that they become inseparable parts of the characters and the situations.

In Troilus and Cressida, again, we obtained further varieties of effects drawn from the use of

greetings and farewells. Pandarus' greeting is of a piece with his being : but Achilles, by means of a deliberate avoidance of greeting is exposed as an elephant with 'joints but none for courtesy', It is a novel use that Shakespeare makes of this gesture of courtesy. Besides, later when Achilles complains to Ulysses of his discourteous treatment by the Greek nobles, Shakespeare makes Ulysses construct a simile out of greetings and farewells. In the same play the Greek nobles greet Hector in truly chivalric style. Hector's response to the several Greek greetings reveals his character in new colours. We have seen how important dramatically it is to present Hector in the new light and how Shakespeare has done so with a specific dramatic purpose. The greeting reveals Hector's character to suit the importance he is to gain in the following part of the play. Again, Aeneas elsewhere in the play uses greeting as a vehicle to carry scorn. He flings insult at the Greeks in the guise of greeting them. Later Aeneas gives to Diomedes 'the most despiteful gentle greeting, the noblest hateful love'. Troilus condenses all his feeling at the moment of the breaking up

of his love in a sonnet-like farewell to Cressida. To add to his already long range of variety, Shakespeare gives us an unusual greeting - a 'kissful' greeting when Cressida arrives at the Grecian camp. The greeting completely unveils Cressida's wantonness. Our purpose in studying the greetings and farewells in a single play has been to show how - and yet how artistically - Shakespeare has used these formalities as a weapon continually at his service to produce different dramatic effects on different occasions.

From the two farewells in Romeo and Juliet we gleaned how the dramatist poeticised farewells, and while giving deliberate hints of the final doom of the lovers, tuned up the farewells to the theme of the play. He thus makes use of these tokens of courtesy for any purpose dramatically useful. He can draw laughter from a Pandar's greeting, or tears from a Romeo's farewell. He can sentimentalise or peeticise at he wishes. He can reveal a character or deepen a situation, he can lengthen a farewell as long as he finds need or condense it to

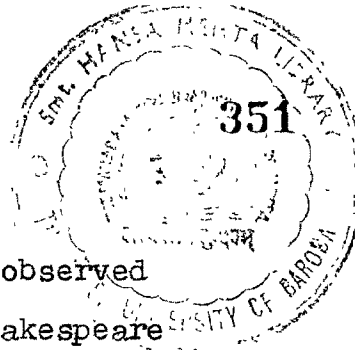
the brevity of a sonnet, if necessary. He can use an adieu like a refrain in a song and time it to a situation. He can deepen the impact of a situation, or mark the advance in plot by means of a greeting or farewell. They are a ready weapon with him to achieve ~~any~~ any desired effect. Yet in all the wide variety, every time he uses it, a farewell or a greeting becomes an inseparable part of the situation and flows always spontaneously from the character using it. Every time it has a dramatic function to perform, and every time it yields an aesthetic satisfaction of its own.

This habitual and purposeful use of the courteous forms of intercourse only confirmed our reading that the ideal of courtesy must have always been alive in the mind of the dramatist as he created the plays. We obtained a further confirmation of it when we compared some of the plays with their originals. We observed from the comparison how Shakespeare, though he follows the plot generally, brings about certain alterations in the events that make up the story, how he lifts up the original

characters to make them more graceful and how he introduces new characters, deliberately and intentionally, to accord his own creation with the ideal of courtesy and thus to endow it with an atmosphere of grace and refinement.

We purposely selected As You Like It for our study in this respect; for, Lodge wrote in the same tradition as Shakespeare, and himself aspired to depict gentle life as an ideal. We found how Shakespeare's Orlando and Rosalind are different people from Lodge's Rosader and Rosalyne and that certain alterations in the play were introduced deliberately to fit the story into the dramatist's ideal of courtesy. Instead of making filial partiality and money the causes of the quarrel between the brothers as Lodge does, Shakespeare makes the want of breeding of a gentleman's son the cause for the quarrel. Orlando's grievance against the brother is that he is denied by the latter the nurture of a gentleman; and Ferdinand's hatred for Orlando is that the younger brother is endowed by Nature with all qualities of grace. In other words, courtesy itself

is the cause of the quarrel in Shakespeare's play. The difference between their characters is that between courtesy and discourtesy. Again, as the plot advances, Orlando's innate, unnurtured grace, which has been the cause of the brother's jealousy, becomes, when mingled with self-pity, a cause for Rosalind's attraction to him. Much of the rowdy behaviour of Lodge's Rosader is eschewed on purpose by Shakespeare and his Orlando is revealed by his unconscious grace. Further, the characters of Rosalind and Celia are brought out by their gentle speech and manners. All the important events leading up to Arden are made to depend upon the hero's 'grace'. The cause of the quarrel between the brother's is grace; the ostensible reason for the Duke's displeasure is that he is a son of a renowned gentleman; it is for his noble bearing and gentle manners that Rosalind falls in love with him, and finally he leaves his house because there an enemy of grace is waiting to burn him to death. We noticed also in our study how there is a tendency in Shakespeare's art, which, by a process of demarcation, separates the good characters from the evil, the



graceful from the graceless. We further observed how Le Beau's character is invented by Shakespeare to serve as a link between the isolated good and evil, necessary for dramatic movement. Some of the changes made by Shakespeare, while adapting Lodge's story, are thus a direct result of the dramatist's concept of courtesy, and he uses courtesy as an instrument both to unfold the characters and shape the cause of events in the play.

Shakespeare's prime concern in the play, however, is Arden. And we took an opportunity to examine Shakespeare's attitude to pastoral life in the play. In the pastoral romances, country life was eulogised beyond reasonableness and writers of the Elizabethan age followed the tradition, giving it their approbation and unstinted praise. Shakespeare corrects this practice and gives the shepherd his due. His treatment of the pastoral in As You Like It is sometimes called a satire, sometimes a criticism. In fact it is just a place of rest for the jaded nerves of a courtier, a holiday resort where he may find a haven from the vices of the court. Shakespeare was shaping an ideal for the

courtier and a shepherd living a life of contentment in natural simplicity had nothing to teach him beyond reminding him of a few homely truths. The courtly and the pastoral are set off against each other ; but a wood is not a school for a courtier, where he may learn his craft. The fact very often, as in As You Like It, that the good courtiers find their way there and their habitation away from court by itself forms a commentary on court life. That these courtiers ultimately return to court, after it has been cleansed of evil, is proof not that the wood has improved them but rather that the court has been made a fit place for them to live in. It happens the same way in other plays. Prospero raises a storm to bring the evil-doers to the enchanted island, (though there are no shepherds on it), reforms them and himself returns with them to court. Florizel and Perdita similarly leave the shepherd's world and return to court. This seems to be Shakespeare's stand in As You Like It and he accordingly gives the shepherds their due place in relation to the courtiers, thus correcting the eulogising attitude of writers of the pastoral. The business of thus

correcting the traditional attitude and of setting to pastoral its right values is given in the play to Touchstone; it is for this purpose that he is there. He goes about in Arden beating the pastoral pea-cod with his Fool's wit and wisdom and turns out grains which mean nothing more than that the shepherds live a life of simple contentment.

The pastoral convention came down from the romantic love poetry of the Troubadours. Its proper tone, as William Empson points out is humility and the lover's melancholy the proper moment to dramatise it.<sup>1</sup> But the convention was often stretched to absurd lengths and writers, by the association of the patron with the shepherd, in an attempt at flattery were prone to exaggerate the convention to a ridiculous degree. Shakespeare appears to have attempted to correct this exaggerated, almost monopolistic talent of the shepherd at love-making. Lodge's shepherd, we have seen, claims to be a better lover than the courtier. Shakespeare treats the shepherd's prerogative light heartedly and through Touchstone criticises it and places the shepherd in his correct position.

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<sup>1</sup> William Empson : Some Versions of Pastoral, p.13.

Shakespeare thus assigns to Touchstone, in his own right as the Fool, the work of gay criticism of pastoral. Jaques, another of his creations, is a commentary on the unhealthy degenerate courtier and is a humorous antithesis to every one in Arden and to Arden itself. Our comparison of the play with its source has thus revealed how the courtly ideal was alive in the consciousness of the dramatist and how by means of courtesy he unfolds his characters, shapes the incidents and associates it with the central motif of the play,

In comparing The Winter's Tale with its source, Greene's Pandosto, we considered the two major alterations effected by Shakespeare. Greene gives sufficient excuse for Pandasto (Leontes) to be jealous; Leontes is already jealous when the play opens. The other change is Hermione's resurrection. The queen dies in the original; Shakespeare resurrects her in the play. We considered how by rejecting the 'honest familiarity' between the Queen and the royal guest in the original, and eschewing much of the dress about their bed-chamber meetings,

Shakespeare elevates Hermione's character over the original. In the play Hermione, with her dignity, grace and innocence, which Shakespeare is careful to emphasise, acts according to the bidding of the king. The two queens are thus radically different persons. Woman's purity is of pivotal importance to the dramatist's conception of courtesy, and by thus stressing the queen's innocence and raising her over her original, Shakespeare works in accordance with his ideal of courtesy. Her death, as in the story, would have damaged the ideal; and her resurrection, while it helps to bring about the happy end, maintains the grace imparted by the three women of the play, Hermione, Paulina and Perdita, which hangs like an atmosphere over the whole play and lends a kind of unity to its disparate parts.

Such a delineation of grace and innocence of the queen would leave the king without a good excuse to suspect her fidelity. Critics have regarded this as a fault in the play. Yet we have seen how Shakespeare has deliberately brought about this situation by making Leontes naturally jealous. His concept of

courtesy is based on the universal order of 'degree'; but it does not necessarily follow that the highest born has the highest amount of grace conferred upon him. Grace is given to each according to desert, and the highest-born may have a 'defect' given him by Nature; the only reason for its existence would be that it so exists there. In the tragedies such defects bring about the doom of the heroes. We do not look for excuses there. There is no excuse for Macbeth's vaulting ambition, or Hamlet's want of will to act, or Lear's filial weakness. Nor is there one, for Leontes' jealousy, which, again, is sex-jealousy, more wicked than the ordinary variety. The purer the queen is, the more unsuspecting and unwary she will be of the husband's dark jealousy, and, therefore, more free with the guest in her behaviour. The result would be a greater scope given to the operation of the husband's dark imaginings. For the dramatist, therefore, the question of an excuse for the king's jealousy has little relevance. His concern would be to reveal this jealousy to the audience. This is precisely what Shakespeare does.

In revealing Leontes' jealousy, as we have seen, Shakespeare makes use of courtesy. The occasion that the dramatist chooses is itself one for the expression of the most genuine courtesy. The two courtiers open the play to indicate the occasion, the parting of the royal guest, with an effusion of mutual courtesy. This raises in us an anticipation of free bounty of regal courtesy when the royalties meet in the next scene. Instead we find Leontes miserly in his courtesy, insincerely uttering the formalities in forced, half-sentences. Shakespeare sets this off against the sincere and bountiful expression of the royal guest. Courtesy again becomes the yard-stick by which to measure the characters. As his dark thoughts possess his mind, Leontes cannot utter even the inadequate, insincere formalities and leaves the business to be handled by the queen. This miserly courtesy is our index to his character and by it his jealousy is revealed. Even the unsuspecting queen finds his courtesy cold. It is his discourtesy again which rouses suspicion in Polixenes, from which stems the action of the play. The occasion calls forth all the grace and

innocence of the queen. Our study reveals how  
 courtesy goes into the very shaping of the characters  
 and becomes a means to unfold them to the audience.

It may perhaps be objected that As You Like It  
 and The Winter's Tale are works of the period of  
 Shakespeare's maturity. To show that Shakespeare  
 was conscious of the ideal of courtesy from his  
 early career and used his source material in  
 accordance with it, we selected for our study an  
 early comedy, The Comedy of Errors, and observed  
 how he brings about alterations in the characters and  
 incidents to suit his ideal of courtesy. The very  
 nature of the theme of the play leaves little scope  
 for characterisation, and the Plautine comedy has  
 indeed very little of it. Yet Shakespeare gives  
 distinguishing marks even to the twin brothers,  
 whose confusion of identity is about all that is  
 necessary for the plot of the play.

In the first place, Shakespeare lifts up Plautus's  
 merchants from just being members of the middle  
 class mercantile society by connecting them with  
 the court, and, for this purpose, invents a Duke,

who opens and rounds off the play. The introduction of the play brings with it the courtly mode of speech and behaviour, and an atmosphere of gentility. The Duke's character, of necessity, is thinly drawn; yet his courteous and dignified speech and his pity and sympathy for the Syracusan merchant show that Shakespeare deliberately draws the thin lines of his character with a pen dipped in courtesy. His relation with his subject, Antipholus of Ephesus, elevates the latter's status from that of a mere merchant in the original. Shakespeare gives him an individuality, a 'reverend reputation', an 'infinite credit' and the Duke himself takes a hand in getting him married to a woman of wealth. He is a soldier, too, who has 'taken deep scars' in war to save the Duke's life and thus has earned for himself a claim on the Duke. His affiliation to the Duke thus raises him almost to the status of a courtier. It is as if Shakespeare was creating out of a pre-possession with the courtly ideal. The merchant here is far away from the undistinguished and indistinguishable merchant of Plautus' comedy. This raised status

brings a relative rise in his speech and manners which are gentle and courteous, and without parallel in the source from which he is adapted.

Similarly Shakespeare paints his wife Adriana as a woman of dignity and individuality with a point of view of her own. Her original in the source is a veritable shrew, masterful and obdurate. This transformation is deliberate; for, without it, the gentle, near - court atmosphere would suffer. Adriana is jealous but her jealousy springs from her anxiety to guard her love for her husband. To correct her, Shakespeare invents a sister for her, Luciana. The latter introduces into the play the subject of love, of which there is nothing in the original. Luciana is given in the play the work of exerting a correcting and refining influence, as Shakespeare gives to women in other plays. In a comedy, however, we often find an inversion of functions and curiously, here, it is Antipholus of Syracuse who defines the chastising mission of women when he expresses his love to Luciana. We have seen how in this expression of love we find germs of

the angelic conception of womanhood, which is more fully expressed in later plays, and with which the dramatist's ideal of courtesy is so vitally associated. It is for the sake of this high concept of womanhood that Shakespeare minimizes the function of the courtesan in the play, and reduces her almost to insignificance. At the same time he cleanses Antipholus of Ephesus of 'the lewd dealings and vile thievery' of the original. While giving to these main characters a refinement to match them with his ideal of courtesy, Shakespeare extends the ideal of refined speech and behaviour to even the minor merchants in the play. The innominate First Merchant and Signor Balthazar act and speak with perfect grace and courtesy.

These alterations in characters and incidents and the new inventions, the raised status of men and women, the insertion of the subject of love, the high concept of womanhood, the vicinity to the court, all together import into the play an atmosphere of refinement which we totally miss in the Plautine comedy. These innovations suggest how sensitively

aware the dramatist was of the ideal refinement even at this early stage of his career. Though his hand is yet uncertain in rendering the proper effect, we cannot miss the dramatist's awareness of the ideal of courtesy and his deliberate attempt to create an atmosphere of refinement in the play.

To study further Shakespeare's ideal of courtesy, we compared it with courtesy as found in the works of some of the contemporary dramatists. The ideal of courtly behaviour pervaded the whole range of Elizabethan literature, and in most dramatic works of the age gentle speech and behaviour were commonly employed. Even in the plays which dealt with middle class life, some courtly people appeared and played a significant role or stood round the corner and influenced the action of the plays. People of the middle and lower classes themselves betrayed a social self-consciousness and emulated the speech and behaviour of gentle society. Contemporary dramatists made their characters speak gentle language and adopt courteous manners. Of all the dramatists, Beaumont and

Fletcher, in this respect, come nearest Shakespeare. To find out how far these dramatists understood aright the ideal of courtesy, we undertook a scene by scene study of Philaster. We observed that due to their inability to appreciate correctly the ideal of courtesy, they let their characters swing between courteous and discourteous conduct. Even in point of speech some of the characters revealed a very unequal refinement. Philaster himself is described in the play as 'King of Courtesy', 'mirror of knighthood' and 'mars of man'; occasionally reminiscent of Hamlet or Othello, he impresses us with his gentle speech, courteous bearing and moral indignation. Weighed down by his adversity, he evinces an attitude of self abnegation. Yet he is not consistent in his courtesy. The way he picks up Bellario is a perfect act of courtesy but we are a little astonished when he accepts the false charge against Arethusa, his lady love, with barely a protest. Again, in the wood, this gallant strikes his lady, with every murderous intention, because the earth can't hold the two of them ! On one occasion, in Arethusa's chamber, when the Spanish prince comes on, he adopts

a posture of genuine fearlessness by refusing to hide himself; yet, on another occasion, during his fight with the country-fellow, particularly when in his despondency he is every bit willing to die, he contrives to run away. What is more, immediately afterwards, he seeks a cover from Bellario, whom, a little earlier, he had hated with all the vehemence his moral uprightness could awaken in him. These acts make his character incoherent in relation to courtesy. Other characters behave similarly. The courtiers believe in the scandal about their beloved princess almost as soon as Megra starts it, and are so easily trapped in the canard started by the courtesan. A seasoned courtier like Dion, apart from his indifference for the honour of a lady, has no scruples about swearing for the scandal to Philaster and commit an act of perjury. We have seen how Phiramond and Megra vitiate the serenity of the courtly atmosphere by their sensual speech and conduct. On two occasions, the dramatists let the whole action of the play remain in Megra's lascivious hands. The only conclusion we can draw from these observations is that the dramatists

lacked a correct understanding of the ideal of courtesy, despite their use of the language of refinement generally and acts of courtesy occasionally in the play. As a result of this unequal and inconsistent use of courtesy, we miss the atmosphere of grace and refinement which the plays of Shakespeare abundantly generate.

The theme of Webster's The Duchess of Malfi is the familiar one of persecution of virtue. The play would have been completely devoid of grace without the characters of the Duchess and her secret husband and lover, Antonio. This is because the action of the play lies in the hands of criminals, Ferdinand, the Cardinal, and their stooge Bosola. The two really courteous characters, the Duchess and Antonio, have only to suffer passively in the play the evils perpetrated by the brothers. The Duchess' character, reminiscent of Desdemona, has perfect grace but her grace has little power over the evil-doers. Grace, particularly womanly grace, in Shakespeare is a positive, active force which cleanses evil, refines, stimulates virtue and

generates an atmosphere. The Duchess' grace in the play only abjectly suffers and in so far as it fails to influence others, artistically wastes itself. Our experience with the dramatist's other play The White Devil is similar; it is Vittoria who dominates the action, and Isabella who could counter-act dies too early and too helplessly in the play. Even the motive for Francisco's revenge is mixed up.

Dekker faithfully reproduces on the stage the realism of London middle class life and though genteel people have their part to play in his The Shoemaker's Holiday, he concentrates on middle class characters, portraying their social self-consciousness and desire to be socially upgraded. Yet Sim Eyre is obviously uncomfortable in the mayoral and Lord mayoral robes. Dame Margery finds it hard to conceal her vanity as Lady Mayoress. Except for the portrayal of the social ambition of the lower classes, the play has little relevance to the ideal of courtesy. Dekker's delineation of women has a tenderness and grace, and he pays his tribute to virtue in women in the play, but this is due more to

the author's own personal tenderness to women than his understanding of the ideal of courtesy. Heywood similarly paints London citizens with a vividness in his prolific dramatic output, but evinces no genuine interest in the ideal of courtesy. His characters have a moral loftiness and their actions often bear a resemblance to acts of courtesy but it does not prove that their creator, like Shakespeare, had an ideal of courteous behaviour to follow. Rather these seeming acts of courtesy are committed to satisfy a moral vanity than to show genuine courtesy as an ideal of behaviour. The hero of his A Woman Killed With Kindness, Frankeford, in his moral loftiness refuses to kill his adulterous wife but separates her from himself and children and kindly provides a living for her. The wife is made to suffer an overwhelming repentance and so dies. This 'kind' murder has nothing to do with the ideal of courtesy, in spite of the fact that Frankeford sends his wife's favourite lute after her and accedes to her entreaty to meet her before her death and so die with her husband's kiss upon her lips. All this is the hero's moral vainglory rather than

courtesy and reflect only an absence of awareness in the author of the true ideal of courtesy.

Ben Jonson's preoccupation with the classical tenet that exposure of vice can breed virtue perhaps renders him incapable of producing creatively a positive well-defined ideal of behaviour. He is satirizing the social order of his day but the satirical preoccupation leaves no room for him to enunciate an alternative order. Jonson picks up and hits at a single vice, by exaggerating it and caricaturing it. His characters consequently become persons obsessed by single humours and it becomes difficult to find a full and complete human being in the plays. On the other hand, Shakespeare, while creating full-blooded men and women set about in the plays to create an ideal of excellence with the concept of courtesy ever present before him. And we get a perception of the ideal in the plays large as life itself.

Our study of courtesy in the plays of these contemporary dramatists thus leads us to the **conclusion** that, while these dramatists adopt gentle

speech and conduct in their plays as courtesy was in vogue on the stage, and delineate some ingredients of the ideal in the plays, yet their use of courtesy is different from the ideal shaped by writers like Sidney and Spenser in their works or by Shakespeare in his plays. The contemporary dramatists work on the surface and betray an ignorance of true nature of courtesy.

It is in the works of Sidney and Spenser that we may find a close parallel to Shakespeare's ideal of courtesy. The three were nurtured in the same traditions, worked under the same impulses and aspired to formulate a standard of courtly behaviour, Spenser and Sidney avowedly, the one in The Faerie Queene, the other in the Arcadia. Both the works contain a mixture of three distinct influences, the chivalric romances, the Italian courtesy books, and the pastoral romances. Spenser and Sidney adopt the chivalric ideal and reshape it in terms of the Renaissance and thus form a new ideal of courtly conduct and link it up with the pastoral tradition.

Spenser, however, has given a well-defined, articulate account of the new ideal in The Faerie Queene. His concepts of courtesy, again, closely resembles that of Shakespeare as delineated in the plays. What Spenser formally allegorised in his poem, Shakespeare dramatised and put on the stage. Spenser's allegory has a moral scheme, yet his concept of courtesy is not just morality. It is a concept which can contain in itself a code of moral behaviour, and yet transcend it and stand as an ideal of conduct irrespective of place or time. This is also true of Shakespeare's ideal, and the two writers seem to have been inspired by an identical aim, that of establishing the worth and dignity of Man.

As they inherit the same traditions, they draw upon the same material for shaping their ideal. They both seek to establish a code of conduct for the courtier and therefore insist on noble birth as an essential condition of refinement. They both base their ideal on the theocratic concept of 'degree' in the Universe. When they come to fuse these two ideas with the Renaissance idea of a

beautiful soul in a beautiful body and the natural simplicity of a shepherd in his pastoral environment they encounter some difficulty and both have to make certain concessions in their insistence on noble birth. Spenser's vision of the Graces in The Faerie queene Book VI, resolves for him the difficulty of harmonising these disparate ideas into a compact ideal of behaviour. Grace is a gift of the Gods, bestowed on each according to his 'degree'. The expression of this grace into outward behaviour is courtesy. It is self-realisation and the fruit of self-realisation is joy. This is what Spenser's Calidore experiences when he sees the vision.

But the practical experience of courtly life for both Spenser and Shakespeare was one of utter disillusionment. Spenser complains bitterly of his court experiences in his poems, e.g. in 'Colin Cloute's Come Home Againe'. Courtesy which ought to dwell in the court is conspicuous only by its absence; the true has degenerated into the false and courtliness has become an antithesis to courtesy. Shakespeare, likewise, makes the evil of courtlife

his theme in some of the plays and sharply places the dissemblers in contrast to the genuine in courtesy in the plays. This actual state of courtliness gives them scope to connect it with the pastoral condition. Some of Shakespeare's characters, like Spenser's Calidore, go into the pastoral asylum when driven away from court or when disgusted with the evils of court life. They make, not courtesy but degenerated courtliness, the antithesis to pastoral virtue and simplicity. It is because courtliness has so fallen into an evil state that a courtly ideal is sought and Calidore, is given the 'vision' to understand what grace and courtesy mean.

But, if courtesy is the expression of inner grace in outward speech and behaviour, how far is nurture necessary to the process? If grace is Nature's gift to man, it may spontaneously flow out into speech and behaviour. In the case of some of Shakespeare's characters it does so flow out naturally. Perdita, Miranda, the two princess in Cymbeline are instances in point. In Spenser's vision we find the answer: if Nature bestows grace

on man, it confers also upon him the means to express it. The art of expression, i.e. courtesy, is also Nature's gift and nurture becomes relevant to it in as much as the gift has to be properly cultivated and perfected. As we have seen, Shakespeare too holds a similar view. Through Polixenes in The Winter's Tale he expresses it, when the former tells Perdita of 'an art, which does mend nature, change it rather, but the art itself is nature'. This is Shakespeare's vision of 'the great creating Nature', the vision with which he created the great plays and poetry. This is why he uses courtesy in the very process of revealing his characters. Nature manifests itself in innumerable varieties and in all degrees. There may be people, as there are in Shakespeare's plays, whose god-given grace may find spontaneous expression in beautiful speech and behaviour. But nurture is not therefore to be ruled out of court. Orlando's uncultivated grace does find natural expression in his speech and conduct, but he is made extremely sensitive to his want of nurture and the **Senior** Duke on one occasion even corrects him. Similarly if

there is an art which may be cultivated; the ungracious may learn it to serve their own evil ends as they do in Shakespeare's plays. What the dramatist does for us is to separate distinctly the dissemblers from the genuine in courtesy, which as we have seen, he always does. For this reason also he always insists on the harmony of the inward and the outward in the plays.

Thus Shakespeare and Spenser have almost identical concepts of courtesy. Their ideals can still further be likened to each other in the way both artists base them on the beauty and virtue in women and the sentiment of love. They both deify woman. We have noticed how women exert a refining and purifying influence in the plays of Shakespeare. It is the dramatist's art that he can at the same time invest his women with a deep humanity, particularly in the comedies. Spenser also finds in woman a symbol of the divine and in her beauty an inspiration to Love. The deification of woman and the insistence on her chastity are in continuation of the chivalric tradition but both ideas are easily

adaptable to the Renaissance ideal of a fair soul in a fair body.

It is as poets that Spenser and Shakespeare have visualised the ideal of courtesy. It is an ideal of the perfect human being and is based on Nature and her workings. Nature has conferred grace upon human beings and created the rules whereby this grace can be expressed into beautiful speech and action. For Spenser and Shakespeare this grace is a compound of chivalric virtues, the beauty and purity of woman, the ideals of the Renaissance courtier and the pastoral romances. The process of compounding these elements into a harmonious whole is entirely English and for that matter entirely Elizabethan. It is an ideal for the Elizabethan English gentleman to follow, which combines in itself the adherence to tradition and a readiness to imbibe the new and make it its own. The great creative age could, with its tremendous artistic vitality harmonise and fuse all diversities and proudly claim the product as a national asset.

A very relevant question naturally occurs : if Shakespeare so deliberately constructed the ideal of excellence and so faithfully revealed his characters in accordance with it, has he anywhere given us, in a simple character, a complete portrait of his ideal courtier ? Guesses have been made. William Empson thinks<sup>1</sup> that A.H. of the sonnets is Shakespeare's perfect courtier. Among the plays, E.M.W. Tillyard finds<sup>2</sup> many qualities in Henry V, both as prince and king, of the cortegiano, Castiglione's fully developed man. Particularly impressive is the prince's quality, *sprezzatura*, the careless abandon with which he fits himself into the diverse conditions of life in peace and war, in the tavern and on the battle-field, as a gay prince, a valiant soldier and an ideal king. If *sprezzatura* is the perfect expression of courtesy, let us call him the king of courtesy, as he himself tells *Pointz*, though

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<sup>1</sup> William Empson : Some Versions of Pastoral. p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> E.M.W. Tillyard : Shakespeare's History Plays, pp. 276-280.

I be but Prince of Wales yet I am the king of courtesy'(I Henry IV : II, iv, 10-11). The fact is that the Shakespearian ideal is composed of diverse qualities and in a play it is impossible to reproduce all of them in a single character. A dramatic character, even a fully developed one, is conditioned by the part it has to play in situations confined to the action. The character has to be revealed only under these conditions, and it is hard to bring forth all the qualities in a single person. Even so, besides Prince Henry, we have other rightful claimants to perfect courtly grace in the plays. Hamlet, without his inaction, would have been the ideal, with his soldier's, poet's, scholar's, qualities and with the grace which easily sits on him on all occasions. Brutus approximates to the ideal with his expansive personality, philosophy, nobility, virtue, generalship, love of music and consideration for servants. On the lower level, Camillo in The Winter's Tale would easily fit into the portrait of an ideal courtier. But these are only approximations; to complete the picture for ourselves, we would have to sum up the qualities of

grace revealed by different people on different occasions. Most of the basic virtues that form the ideal are of course always present in the courteous characters.

What attracts us to this ideal of excellence, so many ages after it was formed, is the synthesis in it of the physical, intellectual, emotional, ethical and aesthetic qualities. It is sufficiently broad-based to cover in itself any given pattern of social manners, without relevance to time or space. It is constituted to establish the worth and dignity of Man. It contains the beauty of feeling and intellect and body; it possesses moral and artistic value. We do not have the same social conditions today. Human civilisation has taken such enormous strides that the entire environment of human life has changed. Yet, despite our varied political experience since the sixteenth century, the change in our spiritual needs and aesthetic attitudes, the increase in our scientific knowledge and our social and economic conditions, all of which have metamorphosised our cultural denominations, the one very

remarkable thing that has happened to us is that our social conscience has come to be cleansed and strengthened. Whatever the political set-up, the image of society has expanded beyond the frontiers of any one country to include the entire human society, in spite of diversities in its component units. It is a transcendental phenomenon and has signally pushed social attitudes into the forefront. It has conferred on us an acute social awareness and made our social conscience sensitive. We noticed earlier that the ideal of human excellence has been gradually socialised. If we have such an ideal today, it has to be fitted into the frame-work of this new acute social sensibility. The Elizabethan ideal was framed for the courtiers of the age. Courtiers have now become people of history, but in those who have taken their place today, the leaders of the people, we expect, in essence, more or less the same attributes that went into the making of the ideal courtier. The qualities of head and heart are a pre-requisite of the modern idea of excellence; we have become more sensitive than before

to the cultural value of our aesthetic experiences; we do not deify woman, but we do recognise her as a refining agent who compels decorum : we still value physical prowess, though in a different way : we prize the implications of ethical virtues of pity, generosity, consideration for others, truth, honour, in the standard of social excellence. So do we admire sprezzatura, the care-free translation of good qualities into action. Essentially, this is the Elizabethan courtier, despite some shifting of values. Sometimes in the turmoil of the modern world, we miss him and are glad when we meet someone like him. Here is how a modern novelist, for example, refers regretfully to the ideal while describing his hero :

" Rutherford smiled. 'He (Conway, the hero) was certainly clever. He had a most exciting university career - until war broke out. Rowing Blue and a leading light at the Union, and prizeman for this, that, and the other - also I reckon him the best amateur pianist I ever heard. Amazingly many-sided fellow - the kind one feels that Jowett

would have tipped for a future Premier. Yet in point of fact, one never heard much about him after those Oxford days. Of course the War cut into his career. He was full young and I gather he went through mist of it'. .....

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And then there was a somewhat odd silence, during which it was evident that we were both thinking of someone who had mattered to us far more than might have been judged from such casual contacts..... He (Conway) was a remarkable youth..... There was something rather Elizabethan about him - his casual versatility, his good looks, that effervescent combination of mental with physical activities. Something a bit Philip-Sidneyish. Our civilisation doesn't so often breed people like that nowadays. I made a remark of this kind to Rutherford, and he replied : 'Yes, that's true, and we have a special word of disparagement for them - We call them dilettanti. I suppose some people must have called Conway that -"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James Hilton : Lost Horizon : Prologue. pp. 6 and 8.

The reference indicates our need for the Sidney ideal today. However, our major concern with the ideal has been to study the way in which Shakespeare unfolded it on the stage. The varied use, as we have noticed, to which he put the ideal in his creative process, in revealing characters, in setting up a contrast between characters, in shaping the incidents, in producing various dramatic effects by the employment of the formalities of behaviour like greetings and farewells, reflects how deeply the ideal was imbedded in the consciousness of the dramatist when he created the plays. The atmosphere of grace and refinement which the artistic use of the ideal yields in the plays, becomes for us, one of the most vital and enjoyable experiences of Shakespeare's dramatic art.