

Elements of Literature and Creative Communication
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Lecture - 48
Types of Drama

Hi friends, I hope you are doing well. Remember we are in the Drama week; this is the 3rd lecture in the drama week. In the last two classes if you can quickly recall we discussed what we mean by drama and how distinct the sensibility of drama is for the reader or the audience and what are those features that distinguish drama from let us say other forms of literature such as fiction and poetry. And afterward, we went on to discuss the importance of the stage especially theatre.

Please remember that when a playwright writes the play an active understanding of the stage in which this play would be performed would invariably help the playwright craft the play in a better way. Therefore, we went on to discuss different stages and what kind of plays are generally performed in those stages and things like that. And afterward, we went on to discuss various elements of drama.

Please remember again, in order to understand the potential of the drama we need to understand the various components that constitute drama because an active understanding of various elements that constitute drama would invariably enhance our experience of watching a drama. Therefore, we went on to discuss various elements of drama. In this class we are going to take up different types of drama, of course, tangentially we had discussed various types of drama even in the last class or last to last class.

In this class we are going to take it up in a little more detailed manner and see how we can classify drama, what are the features, and things like that.

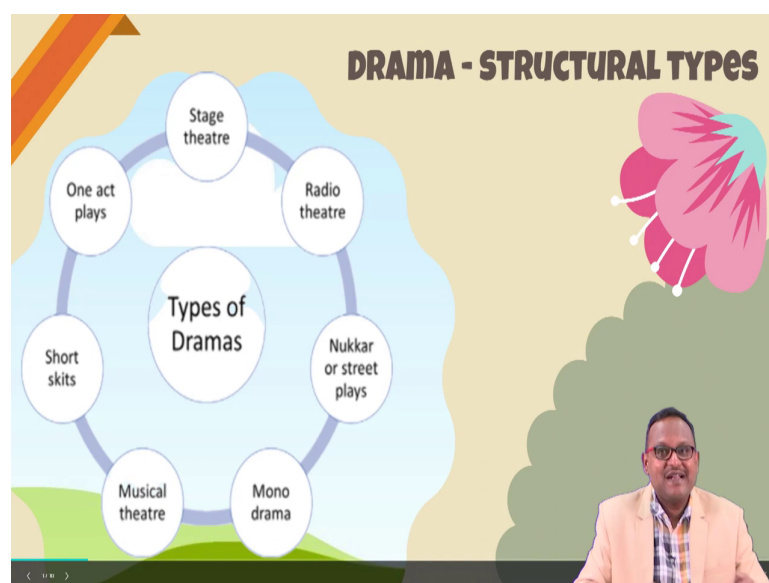
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In a nutshell, when somebody wishes to talk about different types of drama in a kind of random association of order these are some different types of epic theatre, farce, tragic comedy, comedy, masques, a Commedia dell Arte, absurd theatre, tragedy and all that.

But we need to learn it a little more systematically. This is some kind of a random order eye view about different types of drama. Now let us take a closer look at the varieties of drama, types of drama in a little more streamlined manner.

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Now, when we say types there are various types in which we can look at the drama of course, is it are we going to classify drama according to its structure, are we going to classify drama according to its content, are we going to classify drama according to the stage in which it is performed.

So, all these things have to be kept in mind because the taxonomy of drama varies according to these things. So, now, let us take a quick look at the different types of drama in terms of their structure because remember a drama is a work of art that is generally performed on stage.

And it has various components to it and it is divided by like you have chapters in fiction or prose you have acts and scenes in drama and things like that. So, again this is in the general structure of the drama. So, structurally you can classify drama into, let us say, one-act plays. The conventional drama always had let us say 5 Acts, these Acts are something like chapters they are equivalent to chapters and fiction.

So, generally and further each act is further subdivided into different scenes: scene 1, scene 2, scene 3, scene 4, scene 5, and all of them form a part of Act 1 and then in Act 2 again 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 scenes and things like that. So, generally speaking, drama is a 5 act play that is a conventional one. Whereas these days you have one-act plays of course, here the length of the drama is significantly reduced and generally, they revolve around one particular theme.

There is no scope for stretching it in terms of exposition rising action and all those things straightaway it discusses. These days there is a lot of like you have flash fiction you also have some kind of flash drama something that can be performed in about 10-15 minutes something like that for that you call it a one-act play. And then you have short skits.

Again in skits generally a skit can either be generally it is a piece of comedy and again it depends on the length of it in terms of the number of characters it does not have the scope to have a complete ensemble of characters that we generally have in conventional drama. So, therefore, they make use of minimum a minimalistic approach they have a minimalistic approach to drama and all that.

You have musical drama it can also be called musical theatre generally operas are also considered dance dramas when we say musical drama. Of course, you can further distinguish it as a purely musical one and then dance drama, but generally, operas which are musical

dramas make use of elements of drama and music. In fact, here unlike the dialogue in the traditional drama here in a musical drama melody plays a very important role.

In fact, whatever the function the dialogue has or the dialogue can perform here music performs, and therefore, you can call it a musical or a dance drama or music come dance drama or operas and things like that. You have a monodrama that is a very interesting development in fact, when the drama begins it begins as one-character show, in fact, more of the origins of drama will be discussed in the coming classes.

But generally, drama has its origins in one character plays, and later Aeschylus adds the second character and Sophocles comes and he adds many more characters and something like that. There are some exemplary masters of drama we are going to discuss in the subsequent classes, but even now. In fact, monodrama the concept of monodrama has been revived.

Now, imagine hamlet a full-fledged drama a conventional drama a single person enacts an entire set of characters here a beautiful performance of one person doing the diverse roles. Of course, it has certain limitations, but this particular type of drama is born out of the constraints right constraints are there on stage constraints that are there on resources to produce a full-fledged drama, therefore, monodrama is a single character drama you can call it a single actor drama.

Then you have street plays are Nukkar these are very popular types of plays especially performed in colleges especially performed in universities, colleges. And generally the theme of Nukkar's, street plays is transformation. So, societal transformation, therefore, they are the core reform. So, societies reform at their core they are street plays again.

They make use of no extensive-stage properties, no extensive costume, no grandiloquent diction, and all that. The purpose is of course, how to enable drama as a mode of social transformation. So, towards that endeavor street plays can be considered, in that category you can consider the street plays. And you have radio theatre another very interesting type of drama radio drama it can also be called an audio drama.

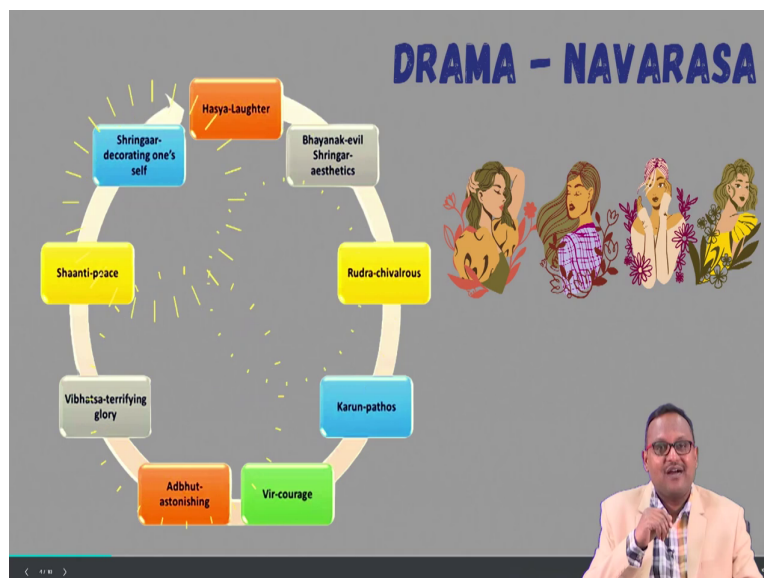
Now, remember a drama is a feast to both the eye and the ear because you have actors performing it in a full-fledged way emoting, expressions, gestures, dance, and all that then you have that is a treat to the eye. Then it also makes use of dialogues, music and other things therefore, it is a treat to the ear. So, it is a; it is a; it is a complete audiovisual entertainer.

But in radio drama what happens because of course, the constraint there in the very form of radio is basically it makes use of the audio component, the auditory component, therefore, purely here whatever the role the actors perform through their gestures, movements, and expressions on their face and things like that all of them have to be carried through the voice component.

So, the vocal properties of the actors play a very very important role because these vocal properties have to double up the part of articulation and of course, gesticulations and of course, expressions and things like that. So, your voice is made to bear all the varieties of stage movements and all those things. Therefore, radio theatre is a very beautiful type, and here somebody with a good voice can perform these things therefore, vocal properties play a very very important role in radio drama.

Then you have stage theatre; stage theatre is a regular drama of course, where it is performed on a proper stage with proper costumes, with regular audience, and using rich props and all that. So, these are structural varieties that we can find in drama, of course, based on the structure. May be structurally based on the structure of the stage, based on the structure of the entire play. So, these types can discuss the structural types of drama.

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Now, generally speaking, we also have based on the content types of the drama of course, that we are going to discuss in the subsequent slides. Before that please remember drama is basically where we make use of all the 9 emotions *navarasa* what we call *navarasa* in the

Indian context, the Natya Shastra proposes generally 8 *rasas* and later Abhinavagupta adds the 9th *rasa* called *santrarasa*.

And today when we talk about any performative arts they have to appeal to one of these *navarasa* or a combination of *navarasas* and things like that. So, any play or any drama that we watch appeals to one of these emotions, they correspond with one of these emotions or a combination of the emotions. In other words, the objective of a drama is to evoke in the audience these emotions.

And what is the purpose of evoking these emotions? Of course, later when it comes to discussing Aristotle we are going to take it up the purpose is, of course, to come face to face with those emotions, and when we come face to face with those emotions that may purge off the similar emotions. So, therefore, it is basically evocative in nature. So, keeping that Indian contribution to the *rasa* theory and the performing arts.

- *Rati* (Love)
- *Hasya* (Mirth)
- ***Soka* (शोक)** (Sorrow)
- *Krodha* (Anger)
- *Utsaha* (Energy)
- *Bhaya* (Terror)
- *Jugupsa* (Disgust)
- *Vismaya*

We have the 9 *rasas* beginning with *rati* which means decorate, decorating some kind of amorous and you have *hasya* which stands for laughter. Then you have *soka*, you have *soka* which is capable of evoking the pathos, then you have *krodha* that is anger, you have *utsaha* that appeals to your sense of courage then you have *vismaya* something like astonishing awe and wonder then you have *jugupsa* a terrifying ghastly or something like that.

And finally, you have *santarasa* something that is supposed to put us in an equanimous state of mind equanimity a perfect balance state. This is these are the 9 *rasas* that we can keep in mind. Whatever be the type of the play that we discuss, whatever be the type of drama that we discuss, whether it is a structural division whether it is a contextual division whether it is a

content-driven division, or whether it is a thematic division, a drama has to appeal to these rasas. So, this is something that we can keep in mind while discussing a play and when you are analyzing a drama, of course, you can see which of these 9 rasas, 9 emotions it predominantly evokes. And therefore, you can even analyze the nature of the rasa that is evoked and why it is evoked and its impact on that and these days, of course, we also make use of rasa in affect theory, affect studies ;it is a new domain of critical studies: affect theory.

So, we also discussed all of them here. So, you can as well analyze a play from these points of view.

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Now, let us go and see how drama is divided thematically, it is a thematic division we discuss the structural types of drama now it is a thematic type. Generally, as we discussed in one of our previous classes there are two main types of drama you have: tragedy at the one end and you have comedy at the other end.

Now, rather than looking at them as some kind of polarities, some polar divisions, or dualities it is better to look at these things as occupying two ends of a spectrum, imagine this drama as a kind of a spectrum. So, at the one end, you have tragedy at the other end you have comedy, and all the other ones that come were somewhere in between depending on which shade is more prominent you can discuss it.

Now, the tragedy here generally speaking in tragedy what happens to the protagonist or the main character of the play drama fails in achieving the desired goal I mean he or she sets out a target.

Unfortunately, they are unable to meet the goals because they are defeated by either the opposing forces or the antagonist or they have something tragic flaw in them. Therefore, this tragic flaw prevents them from achieving their goal, most of the time it may even result in death, but if not in death it results in defeat.

So, therefore, some of the characteristic traits of a tragedy are suffering, grief, and death alright. And because of the gravity of the emotions involved here because of the magnitude of the emotions involved here they are capable of stirring very powerful emotions and when you look at language or diction, it's absolutely eloquent and very serious. This is a very general understanding of tragedy.

So, here the protagonist as I said fails to achieve the intended goal or maybe because of the opposing forces or because they have some kind of a flaw within them. Again there are depending on what kind of tragedy we are discussing the nature of tragedy varies of course, which we would discuss in the subsequent slide.

Then the other end I said comedy here as opposed to tragedy you have the protagonist or the main character who absolutely superb in all the aspects and because of the virtues that are inherent in them or because luck favors them.

Because luck favors them or the forces are very they are not inimical to the progress of the character they are absolutely harmonious, they are absolutely friendly to the progress of the character. Therefore, with the help of all that the protagonist succeeds in attaining the set goals, and as a result of that, he or she may even attain glory. So, generally, here some of the characteristic traits are humor and a happy ending.

Now, remember if something is happy it lacks variety right please recall what Leo Tolstoy says in the very opening lines of Anna Karenina all happy families are alike each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. Therefore, in order for us to be happy, it should be a perfect combination of everything that is when we are happy, but in order for us to be unhappy well there is a lacuna.

Maybe what I may not have, something you may not have, something someone else may not have something, something is missing that can vary. In order for us to be happy everything should be there, but in order for us to be not happy something must be missing that is the reason why of course, you have a lot of varieties of reasons for the failure whereas, for success, everything gels well something like that. This is a general overview of comedy and tragedy.

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TRAGEDY

Let's begin with one of the earliest definitions of Tragedy.....

“Tragedy is an imitation [mimēsis] of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude...through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation [catharsis] of these emotions.”

- Aristotle

Now, let us take a quick look at tragedy and maybe different types of tragedy and some general understanding of tragedy and then we move on to comedy. Now Aristotle in his iconic book *Poetics*. In fact, that is one of the earliest works that deal with tragedy and comedy and drama and generally poetry too to a certain extent in a very detailed manner.

The first critical analysis, the first serious critical venture into the genre of drama by Aristotle. Of course, we are going to devote some time, some exclusive time with Aristotle because of the significance he occupies in understanding drama, but that is in the subsequent classes. To begin with, Aristotle defines tragedy as an imitation he uses the word mimesis, mimesis is basically an imitation.

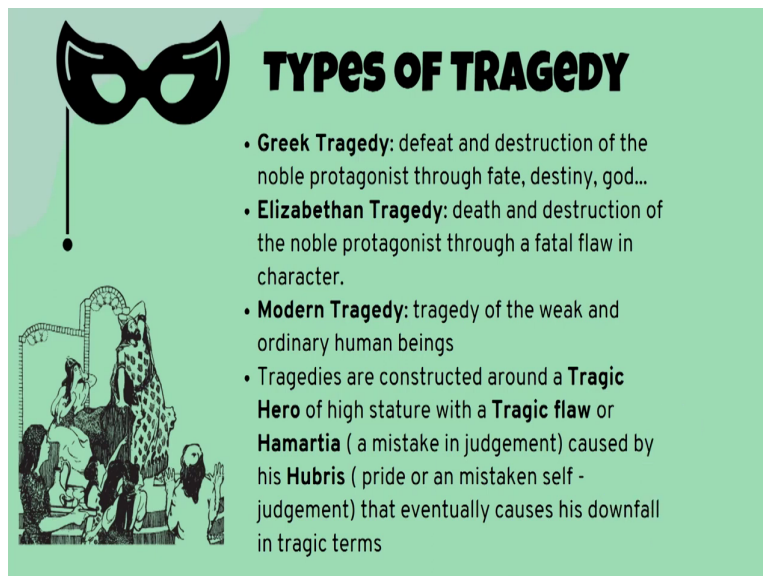
It is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude and through pity and fear, it affects the proper catharsis of these emotions right. So, pathos we call it pathos, pathos is the emotions that the play or the drama evokes or invokes in us through the element that results in the catharsis or the purgation purification of these kinds of

emotions. In other words, when we watch these emotions in play, in full-fledged play these emotions in us get burnished, they get polished, they get purged.

That is the definition of tragedy, of course, is an imitation of an action. We know that in a play see in life tragedy is not an imitation it is a failure of an action, an action. Because it is a play or a drama here what happens is only an imitation because it is not serious its only a make believable, therefore, it is an imitation that element Aristotle keeps firmly in mind.

Therefore, tragedy is basically a drama it is an imitation of an action that is seriously complete and has a certain magnitude and by evoking certain emotions it purges our own emotions within when we watch it something like that.

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TYPES OF TRAGEDY

- **Greek Tragedy:** defeat and destruction of the noble protagonist through fate, destiny, god...
- **Elizabethan Tragedy:** death and destruction of the noble protagonist through a fatal flaw in character.
- **Modern Tragedy:** tragedy of the weak and ordinary human beings
- Tragedies are constructed around a **Tragic Hero** of high stature with a **Tragic flaw** or **Hamartia** (a mistake in judgement) caused by his **Hubris** (pride or an mistaken self - judgement) that eventually causes his downfall in tragic terms

Now, what are the different types of tragedy? of course, tragedy also has certain types depending on, of course, this type of tragedy is based on a chronological division. Greek tragedy is in fact, the tragedy that the concept of tragedy as propounded in Greece, the Greek plays.

So, here is what happens, there is a noble protagonist, the protagonist is either a king or somebody who occupies an important position in public life. So, therefore, I mean the protagonist should always be of high birth which is one of the defining characteristic traits of Greek tragedy.

So, unfortunately, though noble this character is very noble, to begin with, but unfortunately, fate does not want this character to progress. So, because of the divine, intervention or destiny or fate, or karma whatever you call it unfortunately this character does not succeed. So, the failure behind the Greek tragedy or the failure behind the character in Greek tragedy is because the karma is not in his/her favor or fate does not want this guy to succeed, something like that.

Therefore, so, remember behind these conceptions of tragedy we also get a world view right probably Greeks believe that behind the success or behind the failure of human action there is divine intervention. Therefore, their comedies and tragedies reflected that attitude towards life that percept of life whatever happens because of either the grace of divine beings or because of we fall into their disgrace we invoke their wrath as a result of that the curse or something like that.

So, most of the Greek characters in Greek tragedy are at the other end, they are at the receiving end of fate they are at the receiving end of destiny therefore, they fail which is the concept of Greek tragedy. Now, remember when we say Greek tragedy we are discussing drama that was in the 5th century BC approximately 2500 years ago.

Now, from there when it comes to Elizabethan tragedy that is true of Roman tragedy too to a more or less extent. Now when it comes to Elizabethan tragedy remember there is a shift in the timeline, we are in the 16th century about 2000 years from the Greek tragedy. Now here again the concept of life has evolved. Now Elizabethans especially exemplified through Shakespeare they have realized that behind the success and failure of a character there is no divine intervention as such.

Maybe it is because of some kind of a flaw inherent in the character, inherent in the protagonist that he or she or such kind of characters undergo either tragedy or comedy. Therefore, one of the important or defining features of Elizabethan tragedy is the death and the defeat of the noble protagonist even here the protagonist should be of noble origin preferably a king or a queen, or if not that at least an important lineage. So, noble birth and because of a fatal flaw inherent in their character, they meet a tragic ending which may even result in death.

So, that is the Elizabethan concept of tragedy and then we come again to the modern concept of tragedy that you and I mean that you and I find in contemporary times something like 20th


century, late 19th century, 20th century, 20th 21st century. Now, here now, again our outlook towards life has evolved and here unlike Elizabethan tragedy and Greek tragedy here, tragedy can befall even ordinary characters like you and me.

So, you do not need for a tragic character to be there you do not need the character to be of high birth or high rank or noble birth, noble lineage, and all that. Now, of course, a tragedy I mean in modern times all of us are leading some kind of tragic life in some way or the other. So, keeping this ordinariness and banality of life that has come to define modern life. So, modern tragedy deals with ordinary human beings.

And again it is because of the inherent flaws in them again or because of certain situation surrounding them, a tragedy takes place and it again results in either a loss of life or loss of face loss of glory, loss of honor, and things like that that is a modern tragedy. In other words, if you can quickly sum up the concept of tragedy across ages and across these types there is a protagonist earlier it was of noble birth and later in the modern times of an ordinary human being too like you and me.



So, they have certain actions that either they may have performed or that may have happened to them, or because of some kind of tragic flaw that is inherent in them, they meet a tragic death. This is an understanding of the tragedy that cuts across the types this is something that we can keep in mind.

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A few examples of Tragedy..

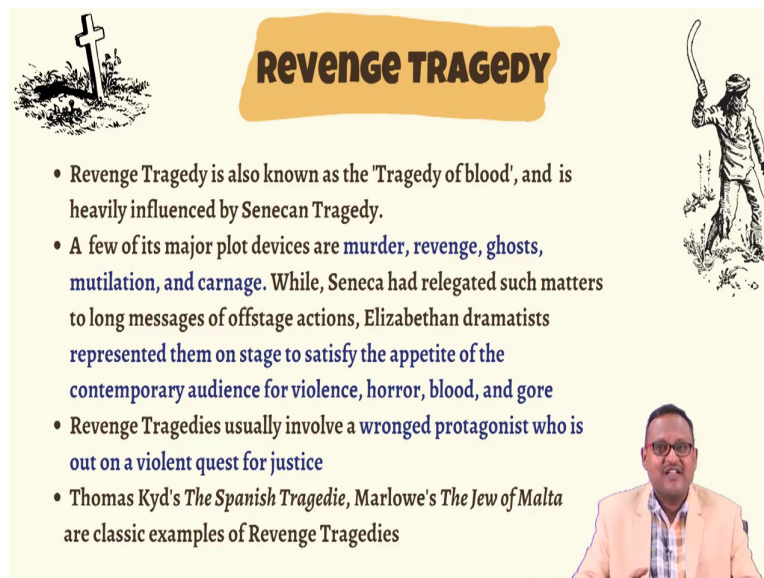
- **Greek Tragedies** - *Oedipus the King* and *Antigone* by Sophocles
- **Elizabethan Tragedy** : *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Othello* by Shakespeare and *Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe
- **Modern Tragedies** - The tragic vision in these texts are fundamentally different and more representative of the modern condition: Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*



And some of the well-known examples of Greek tragedies are *Antigone* by Sophocles or even *Oedipus Rex*. Oedipus the king these are some extraordinary Greek tragedies if time permits please read them. They are available in modern English translation as well. And when it comes to Elizabethan tragedy, of course, you have very well-known Shakespeare tragedies, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, there are some extraordinary tragedies.




Then you have Christopher Marlowe's contemporary of Shakespeare and his *Doctor Faustus* based on Goethe's *Faust*. So, these are some extraordinary tragedies that you can find in Elizabethan times. And when it comes to modern tragedies some of the well-known examples are you have Strindberg's *Miss Julie* and you have J. M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, a remarkable Irish play *Riders to the Sea*. And you also have a couple of plays by W. B. Yeats and you have Eliot's well-known play *Murder in the Cathedral*, these are some well-known examples of tragedy.

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REVENGE TRAGEDY

- Revenge Tragedy is also known as the 'Tragedy of blood', and is heavily influenced by Senecan Tragedy.
- A few of its major plot devices are **murder, revenge, ghosts, mutilation, and carnage**. While, Seneca had relegated such matters to long messages of offstage actions, Elizabethan dramatists represented them on stage to satisfy the appetite of the contemporary audience for violence, horror, blood, and gore
- Revenge Tragedies usually involve a **wronged protagonist who is out on a violent quest for justice**
- Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedie*, Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* are classic examples of Revenge Tragedies



So, this is in general about the tragedy we have we can even discuss another type of tragedy it is called sometimes it is called revenge tragedy it is also called occasionally Senecan tragedy because it's heavily influenced by Seneca. Of course, as the title suggests in revenge tragedy what happens is tragedy befalls the character because they take up revenge because they are obsessed with revenge.

Because they are obsessed with the feeling of avenging the wrong that has happened to them or that has happened to their near and dear ones they take up the one. And therefore, they

either resort to attempting to murder and mutation, or carnage. So, these are some of the things that can be kept in mind because they are obsessed with revenge and because they do not know how to forgive the wrongs that have happened to them and move on in life.

Tragedy befalls them. So, some of the well-known examples of revenge tragedy are Thomas Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* and again you have Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* these are some extraordinary examples of revenge tragedies alright. Now that we have discussed a tragedy, of course, in the next class we can take up comedy and varieties of comedy and let us see what are some of the themes that are evoked in comedy and what are the different types and all that alright. Until then take care.