

## THE SATIRE

### Origin:

The satire is of classical origin. Its chief exponents in Latin Literature were Horace, Perseus and Juvenal. They were initiated in Europe. They set the model for Elizabethan and Augustan Satire in England.

In English literature a satire is unpolished verse. It may be defined as a literary composition whose principal aim is to ridicule folly or vice. It is a light form of composition, intended to keep the reader in good humour even when it is most bitter. Dryden says, 'The true end of satire is the amendment of vices by correction'. Some notable examples of satire in English poetry are Dryden's 'Absalom and Achitophel' and Macfle Butler's 'Hudibras', Pope's 'Dunciad', and Byron's 'Vision of Judgment'.

### Features of Good Satire:

The Satire may be inspired by a personal grievance or a passion for reform. It is an attack on a person or group of persons or on a social evil or folly. It is intended to ridicule, not to abuse, though it may be often bitter. It hates the sin and not the sinner. It is more playful than hurtful.

But Pope did not follow this line. His work was waspish, venomous, and malignant. This does not mean that the satirist should speak roundabout. It should be forceful and outspoken. Byron and Dryden were the hardest satirist. The satire should be terse and concise. Detailed writing will destroy the effect. The

‘Heroic Couplet’ proved to be most perfect medium for writing satire because, it gives forceful expression and swift strokes of wit.

### Subject of the Satire:

The aim of the satirist’s is to censure. He condemns whatever he does not approve. Each age has had its own set of vices to ridicule. The satire holds the mirror and brings forward the contemporary follies and foibles.

Chaucer and Langland attacked the corruption in the church. The Elizabethans wrote on the courtier, the puritan, the woman, the affected traveller, the dishonest tailor, etc. Dryden and Pope wrote personal satires. Pope’s ‘Rape of the Lock’ reflected the age in which he lived. The essays of Swift and Addison reflected privilege, ceremony artificiality, political rivalry, and **controversy**.

Now-a-days lengthy poems are rare and so we find satire in the form of novel and drama. Personal attacks have gone out of fashion, but social conditions and problems give countless subject to the satirist. The plays of George Bernard Shaw are good examples of such satires.