



মহাশিক্ষা বিভাগ (মাম)

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (S)

Government of Manipur

NOTES:

UNIT: I (Prose-iv)

THE DEAR DEPARTED (A comedy in one Act)

- Stanley Houghton

About the dramatist: William Stanley Houghton (1881-1913) was a British playwright. Even during his school days, he used to write plays and these plays showed great talents. His plays usually depicted the Lancashire life that he knew so well. Later, Houghton settled in Paris and died there. 'The dear departed' (1908) and 'Hindle wakes' (1912) are two of his plays that achieved fame and success. 'The dear departed' is a comedy full of pleasant laughter.

Summary: Mr. Abel Merryweather was an old man. He was about 70 years of age. He loved to drink wine. He was living with her elder daughter Mrs. Amelia Slater. One day Mrs. Slater found Abel lying on his bed very cold and motionless. She assumed that he was dead. So, she was preparing for the formal mourning. Meanwhile, she also sent a telegram to Elizabeth Jordan, her younger sister and Ben Jordan, the latter's husband informing them about Abel's dead and also to talk over their father's affairs. The relation between Mrs. Slater and Mrs. Jordan were not in good terms. There was a bad quarrel some time ago between the two sisters on the question of who should keep their father. Mrs. Slater assures Henry that her sister was a greedy woman and would certainly come to claim her share of their father's property. Mrs. Slater and Henry Slater were poor. Whereas, Mrs. Jordan and Ben Jordan were rich. Mr. and Mrs. Slater quarreled almost every day as they were unemployed. So, most of the time Abel was not at home so as to avoid such a chaotic atmosphere. When Mrs. Slater found her father dead, she was thinking of taking Abel's little bit of property secretly before the arrival of her sister Elizabeth. Therefore, she asked Henry to lift the bureau from her father's bedroom and kept their shabby chest of drawer on its place. She also asked Henry to wear the new pair of carpet slippers as his was old and almost torn out. She also took the handsome clock from her father's bedroom. When Elizabeth and Ben arrived, they started talking about putting up of condolence message in the evening newspaper. Instead of doing the funeral ceremony, they were simply talking about little bit of properties that belonged to the old man. When they were not sure about whether Abel had paid the due insurance premium or not, Mrs. Slater told Victoria, her daughter to bring the bunch of keys from grandpa's bedroom which is in the upstairs for confirmation. Victoria reluctant in the beginning went upstairs obeying her strict mother's command. When she entered her grandpa's room, she found her grandpa Abel Merryweather waking up. Seeing it she exclaimed in surprise that she was so happy that grandpa was not dead. She came down shouting that Abel has woken up. Everyone present there were surprised as well as scared to hear it. When Abel came downstairs, they realized that he was not dead at all. Abel asked what happened to them to behave in such a strange manner. He was surprised to see

Elizabeth and Ben in his house after such a long time. Elizabeth knew now what really was happening in Slaters house. She got very angry and told everything to Abel about what really was happening in that house. In the meantime, Amelia Slater also got very angry and both of them quarreled over their acts. Abel no longer did not like to listen to such nonsensical talks. He also did not like such hypocritic nature of his two daughters. So, he told them to stop quarrelling at once. Abel then reveals that he has a will and but now he will change it. He says that the person with whom he shall be living at the time of his death shall receive all his properties. Each of the two daughters were anxious to know whom Abel would choose between the two. Now both of them wanted to posses Abel thinking about the properties which they are going to get after Abel's dead. But Abel with the surprise of everyone announced that on Monday next he is going to do three things. Firstly, he would go to the lawyer's place and change his will. Secondly, he would go to the insurance office and pay his due insurance premium. And finally, he would go to St. Philips church to get married. All of them filled with surprise and wonder thinking who should be marrying with him. He announced that he would marry Mrs. John Shorrocks (the widow), who owned the public pub 'Ring-O-Bell'. He invited them to the marriage. He then thanked Mrs. Slater for bringing the bureau down from his room as it would be easier to carry it to his new home from there. He bid them 'good-bye' and wished to see them on Monday. Then he went out.

Word notes:- the dear departed- a dear one who is dead; blinds- screen of a window; side board- a piece of furniture like a long table; passage- corridor; provincial town- a small town; chest of drawers- a piece of furniture with a number of drawers; mantelpiece- brick construction around and over the fire place; hearth- fire place; dandy- too colorfully done without any task; carpet slippers- kind of shoes worn indoor; plump- pleasantly fat; to get her own way- to get whatever she wants to get or do; straight talk- open and frank talking; precocious- prematurely developed intelligence; gallivanting about- to go around amusing oneself; outshine- to do better than; prying- to examine; speck of dirt- little bit of dirt; sliced tongue- tongue of ox cut into slices; worn out- old and about to be torn; money grabbing spirit- to have a mind ready to grab money shamelessly; trifles- little bit of things; bureau- table with drawers; ostentatiously- in a showy manner; merry as a sand boy- extremely happy and carefree; snug- comfortably; despised- hated; swindling- cheating; chuckles- make sounds expressing pity or sorrow; tomfoolery- foolish behavior; gingerly- carefully; lumps- cubes of sugar; handier- easier to handle.