

## B. A. (HONOURS) ENGLISH (BAEGH)

Term-End Examination DECEMBER

### BEGC-101: INDIAN CLASSICAL LITERATURE

#### Part 2

#### Address the issue of the question of "form" between the epic narrative and drama.

The **epic narrative** and **drama** are two important forms in classical literature, each with its distinct features.

- **Epic Narrative:** In Indian epics like the **Mahabharata** and **Ramayana**, the story is typically told in a long, continuous form, often through **verses**. The focus is on describing events, the feelings and thoughts of characters, and larger-than-life actions. The epic has an overarching theme that links individual stories, and its length allows for deep philosophical and moral reflections. The **Mahabharata** contains several subplots, philosophical discourses like the **Bhagavad Gita**, and lessons on **dharma** (duty) and **karma** (action).
- **Drama:** Drama, particularly in Sanskrit plays like those of **Kalidasa** and **Bhasa**, is focused on **live performance** and often uses both **verse** and **prose**. The characters speak directly to each other, and the audience sees the action unfold in real-time. Unlike the epic, which is a **narrative** form with external description, drama relies on **dialogue**, **stage action**, and **emotion** to tell the story. The **Mahabharata**, for instance, has inspired dramatic adaptations, but in traditional drama, the characters perform, and their emotions are directly conveyed through speech and action.

Thus, the **epic** is a written narrative of a grand story, while **drama** presents the action live, with dialogue and performance as its core.

#### Does Karna believe in Duryodhana's cause ? Elucidate.

Yes, **Karna** strongly believes in **Duryodhana's cause**, even though he is aware of the moral wrongs involved. His loyalty to Duryodhana comes from a deep sense of **gratitude**. Karna was born to **Kunti**, but his birth was kept secret, and he grew up as the son of a charioteer. Because of his low status, he was often mocked by society. Duryodhana, however, accepted him as an equal, made him a **king** of a small territory, and treated him as a true friend. This gesture gave Karna the sense of **belonging** and **self-worth**, which he didn't have before.

Because of this **loyalty** and **friendship**, Karna supports Duryodhana's cause, even when he knows it is wrong. Karna's tragic flaw is his inability to separate his **duty** to his friend from the **ethical dilemmas** he faces. His belief in Duryodhana's cause is driven more by his sense

of loyalty than by a belief that Duryodhana's actions are justified. He even sacrifices his **moral values** and goes against his own **mother, Kunti**, when he refuses to abandon the Kauravas.

Karna's belief in Duryodhana's cause ultimately leads to his tragic end, making him one of the most **tragic** and **complex** characters in the Mahabharata.

### **Attempt a critical analysis of Abhijnana Shakuntala from the point of view of gender.**

**Abhijnana Shakuntala** by **Kalidasa** is often seen as a beautiful love story, but when we examine it from a **gender** perspective, we see deeper themes related to **women's roles** and **agency** in ancient India.

- **Traditional Gender Roles:** Shakuntala is portrayed as the **ideal woman** — beautiful, pure, gentle, and devoted. She is a symbol of **idealized femininity**, whose life revolves around love and her relationship with King Dushyanta. In many ways, she represents the **submissive, obedient woman** expected in classical texts. Her character is designed to appeal to the societal idea of what a woman should be — nurturing, loving, and morally pure.
- **Agency and Empowerment:** Despite these traditional traits, Shakuntala shows moments of **agency**. For example, when Dushyanta forgets her due to a curse, Shakuntala doesn't simply wait for him to remember her. Instead, she stands firm, showing her **strength** and **self-respect**. She decides to live independently and waits for Dushyanta to come to her when he remembers. This is a sign of **empowerment** — she is not merely a passive character but someone who makes decisions about her life and her relationship.

Thus, while Shakuntala represents traditional gender roles, her character also reveals the **inner strength** and **dignity** of women, challenging the notion that women are only passive recipients of men's actions.

### **Attempt a character analysis of Sarvilaka in Mrichchhakatikam.**

In the Sanskrit play **Mrichchhakatikam** by **Shudraka**, **Sarvilaka** is the central character, and his journey reflects the tensions between **love, social status, and morality**.

- **Character Traits:** Sarvilaka is a **young, poor**, but clever man who is deeply in love with the beautiful and noble **Vasantika**. He is often described as a **charismatic** and **romantic** figure who is willing to challenge social norms for love. Sarvilaka comes from a humble background but is not afraid to use his **intelligence** and **wit** to win over Vasantika. He faces various struggles due to his lower social status, yet his courage and cleverness allow him to navigate through the challenges.
- **Role in the Play:** Sarvilaka's character is complex — he is both an **ideal lover** and a **survivor**. While he dreams of rising in social status, he also remains true to his love. His romantic ideals are balanced by the **practical realities** he faces, such as the need to survive and fight for his love. Sarvilaka's journey is one of **self-discovery**, moving from being a lover to a man of **action** who takes control of his fate.

Sarvilaka represents the **struggles of the common man** against the constraints of society, and his character highlights themes of **love, ambition, and social mobility**.

### **Comment on the use of verse and prose in Mrichchhakatikam.**

**Mrichchhakatikam** blends **verse** and **prose** in a way that reflects the **emotional tone** of different scenes and the **realism** of the play.

- **Verse:** The **verse** sections of the play are typically used in more **formal, serious, or emotional** moments. These verses are lyrical, adding a sense of **grandeur** and **elevation** to important dialogues, especially when expressing love, heroism, or moral dilemmas. For example, when characters like Sarvilaka express their deep feelings, verse helps convey the **intensity** of the emotion.
- **Prose:** **Prose**, on the other hand, is used in the **lighter, more everyday dialogues**. It brings a sense of **naturalism** to the play, allowing characters to interact more casually. The use of prose helps create a more **realistic atmosphere** in the play, especially in moments of humor, conflict, or political intrigue. It also highlights the **social differences** between characters, as common people often speak in prose while royalty or scholars speak in verse.

This combination of **verse and prose** allows Shudraka to create a **dynamic and varied experience** for the audience, enhancing the **emotional range** and **realism** of the play.

### **Write about Bhasa the Sanskrit dramatist.**

**Bhasa** is one of the earliest and most important **Sanskrit dramatists**, known for his **bold experimentation** with dramatic forms. He is often credited with influencing later playwrights like **Kalidasa** and **Shudraka**.

- **Style:** Bhasa's plays are known for their **dynamic characters** and **vivid storytelling**. He often took **mythological** and **historical stories** and added his own dramatic touches, focusing on themes like **love, war, and betrayal**. His plays are generally **shorter**, and his **dialogue** is sharp and to the point.
- **Impact on Drama:** Bhasa's plays laid the groundwork for later Sanskrit drama. He was among the first to introduce **conflict and emotion** into his works, making his characters more **human** and relatable. Unlike earlier texts, where gods or kings were idealized, Bhasa's characters are more **realistic**, with **flaws** and **complex emotions**.

Some of his famous works include **Urubhanga, Karna's fall, and Pancharatra**. These plays are still studied for their **boldness, emotional depth, and innovative approach** to drama.

### **Discuss Mahabharata as a literary text.**

The **Mahabharata** is not only an **epic narrative** but also a **philosophical** and **moral** guide, making it a profound **literary text**.

- **Complex Structure:** The Mahabharata is an **immense** work that contains several **subplots, stories within stories, and poetic dialogues**. At its core, it tells the story of the Kurukshetra war between the Pandavas and Kauravas, but it also contains lessons on **duty (dharma), justice, family, and society**.
- **Philosophical Themes:** The **Bhagavad Gita**, part of the Mahabharata, is a philosophical dialogue between Lord Krishna and the warrior Arjuna, dealing with **moral dilemmas** and **spiritual wisdom**. It has influenced generations of thinkers and continues to be a major **spiritual text** in India.
- **Characterization and Human Nature:** The Mahabharata is famous for its **complex characters** who face difficult choices, representing a wide range of human emotions and flaws. Characters like **Karna, Duryodhana, and Arjuna** are not purely good or bad, making the text rich in **moral complexity**. The work explores human nature and the consequences of actions, making it a timeless text for understanding **life's dilemmas**.

Scholarly Minds