CHAPTER II

NATURE OF THE DOMESTIC DRAMA
The Domestic drama, *sui generis*, emerged towards the close of the sixteenth century. For, by this time the new rising middle-class became prominent enough to demand literary representation. Moreover, the changes in the economic, political and religious conditions and the literary tastes favoured the evolution of this new form. Hence, a drama mainly dealing with middle-class life, its humour and morality, became possible.

The term, Domestic drama, is often misleading as it is used to mean a wide variety of things. In the first place it denotes a phase of family life. In this sense of the term, a host of plays from *Agamemnon* to *Hamlet* may be called domestic plays. Secondly, it means familiar 'native, home grown and home made' material. It is mainly in this sense that the term, Domestic drama, is used to designate a class of plays presenting the family affairs and the domestic problems of the middle-class

1. Oxford English Dictionary gives as many as five meanings of which two are relevant to the present context. (a) "Pertaining to one's place of residence or family affairs, household, home, family". (b) "Indigenous, made at home or in the country itself, native, home grown, home made".

2. Heywood himself used the term in the latter sense. "To omit all farre-fetcht instances, we will prove it by a domestike and home-borne truth, which within these few years happened". *An Apology for Actors*, Shakespeare Society, p.57. As examples of this "Domestike and home-borne truth" he mentions two instances of unfaithful wives who had murdered their husbands and confessed their crimes after witnessing similar deeds enacted on the stage. Both are domestic crimes of the kind dramatised in *Arden of Feversham*. "At Lin, in Norfolke, the then Earl of sussex players acting the old History of Feyer Francis, and presenting a woman who, insatiately doting on a young gentleman, (the more securely to enjoy his affection) mischievously and secretly murdered her husband, whose ghost haunted her..." Ibid., p.57. See also pp.58-59.
people against the background of everyday life. Further, the term is commonly applied to both the comedies and the tragedies of the middle-class life and its common problems. This is mainly because both the tragedy and the comedy of domestic life have much in common in their material, ideology and purpose. For the sake of emphasis it may be hazarded, without much error, that, but for the final denouement and the usual difference of tone between comedy and tragedy, there is little difference between the domestic tragedy and the domestic comedy. The main emphasis in both the forms is on the usual domestic rifts of a middle-class family. Mostly these problems arise in a clash between partners or members of the same family: the faithful wife and the wayward husband or the arbitrary parent or guardian and the prodigal son or an ideal husband and an unfaithful wife and so on. Thus these are the straightforward and unadorned plays presenting the domestic life of the middle-class, the sort of life which the common people can easily understand and therefore readily respond to. The themes represent the sorrows, experiences, pleasures and consolations familiar to the middle-class since these plays portray their own homes. As the emphasis is on the sphere of family and household life, the Domestic drama is usually limited to personal relationships and family affairs. "The faithful observance of the marriage tie and the shameful neglect of it, parental love and the pangs inflicted by filial ingratitude" - such are the themes

of the Domestic drama.

A comprehensive idea of this genre can be had from what the dramatists themselves have said about their plays in their critical prefaces, inductions, dedications, prologues, epilogues and addresses to the reader. To some extent, these prefaces reflect the anxiety of the authors about the reception of their 'naked' plays by an audience accustomed to the Senecan tragedies dealing with mythical Kings and Queens. But, it is evident from these apologies that the authors are completely aware of their innovations and fully conscious of the simplicity of the means by which they are trying to achieve the desired dramatic effect. Therefore, they emphasise the fact that their tragedies are different from the conventional Senecan plays. They know that the local English themes cannot rise to the level of dignified tragedies. Hence, we find very often an apologetic tone in their prefaces. But, the purpose of these apologies is not to offer an excuse or to shield the defects of the plays and the shallowness of the authors. Their function is to point out the inherent limitations of the themes and prepare the audience to 'beare' with the novelty of the plays. It is one of the ways to acclimatise them to the new form. So, in all these prologues we find a rare unanimity of purpose and similarity of themes and scope of these plays. For example, the author of A Warning for Fair Women asks:

Beare with this true and home-borne Tragedy,
Yeelding so slender argument and scope
To build a matter of importance on,
And in such forme as, happily, you expected.4

Similarly Heywood says:

Look for no glorious state; our Muse is bent
Upon a barren subject, a bare scene.5

The Domestic drama is realistic, 'home-borne' and unassisted by any foreign advantage. The dramatists have sufficiently stressed its nativity in its genesis and growth. Hence, the Domestic drama is rightly acclaimed by Allardyce Nicoll as the "unquestioned contribution of the English stage to the dramatic form in general."6 Being essentially English, Domestic drama is free from all borrowed flourishes:

A Strange play you are like to have, for know,
We use no drum, nor trumpet, nor dumb show;
No combat, marriage, not so much to-day
As song, dance, masque, to bombast out a play;
Yet these all good, and still in frequent use
With our best poets; nor is this excuse
Made by our author, as if want of skill
Caused this defect; it's rather his self will,
Will you the reason know? There have so many
Been in that kind, that he desires not any
At this time in his scene, no help, no strain,
Or flash that's borrowed from another's brain;

As contrasted with the 'stately written tragedy' a domestic tragedy presents the familiar tragic occurrences in the annals of

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the English middle-class homes. As such, it is usually devoid of the common Senecan paraphernalia "no drum, nor trumpet nor dumb show". Moreover, many of the domestic tragedies are based upon the real murders in the homes of ordinary families. These incidents were well-known to everyone through the broadside ballads, prose pamphlets and the popular chronicles of the time. These works were usually recommended as warning pieces and these incidents were cited as the concrete instances of the operation of divine justice. So, there is little scope and hardly any necessity for the authors to modify the original sources. Therefore, it is no wonder if the authors of Arden of Feversham and A Warning for the Fair Women followed the prose narratives with a scrupulous fidelity. The author of A Warning explains that:

The reason is, that now of truth I sing,
And should I adde, or else diminish aught,
Many of these spectators then could say,
I have committed error in my play.9

The plain and unadorned poetry and the commonplace imagery used in these plays are quite apt and in keeping with the nature of their subjects. These themes do not lend themselves to a high poetic treatment. An elevated and dignified style not merely looks inappropriate, it may even make the plays appear so burlesque as to create the very opposite of the desired effect.


So, we are not justified in expecting a high 'poetic vision' and 'evocative' imagery in these plays, or in condemning them for want of the usual poetic flights of the Elizabethan drama. Heywood, who was fully aware of the different tastes of his audience and the utter impossibility of satisfying all of them, anticipated these troubles. Hence he made it very plain:

We could afford this twig a timber tree,
Whose strength might boldly on your favours build;
Our russet, tissue; drone, a honey-bee;
Our barren plot, a large and spacious field;
Our coarse fare, banquets; our thin water, wine;
Our brook, a sea; our bat's eyes, eagle's sight;
Our poet's dull and earthly Muse, divine;
Our ravens, doves; our crows black feathers, white:
But gentle thoughts, when they may give the foil,
Save them that yield, and spare where they may spoil. 10

Certainly it is praiseworthy that these authors have shown a high sense of decorum and exercised a remarkable self-restraint at a time when the declamatory verse of Kyd, 'the mighty line' of Marlowe and the sublime muse of Shakespeare were in vogue. The authors of the Domestic drama seem to have positively believed that all the common literary flourishes of the time were unnecessary and out of place as far as their plays were concerned. They were sure that the native strength of their subjects was sufficient to create the required dramatic effect. Therefore, the author of Arden of Feversham suggests:

Gentlemen, we hope, you'll pardon this naked tragedy,
Wherein no filed points are foisted in
To make it gratious to the eare or eye;

For simple truth is gracious enough,  
And needs no other points of glossing stuffe.11

When we come to the domestic comedies we find only a few  
perfunctory prefaces. Perhaps, the authors believed that the  
domestic comedy is such "household stuff"12 meant to "tickle  
the shallow unjudicial ears"13 as not to require a careful  
apology. This idea of comedy in general was common among the  
elite and the university wits.14

The writers of the Domestic drama are very modest in their  
expectations. They are satisfied if the audience find in their  
plays:

Some mirth, some matter, and, perhaps some wit15

However, the seriousness of the purpose of the Domestic drama is

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11. Epilogue, Arden of Feversham, The Shakespeare Apocrypha,  

12. Induction to Shakespeare's The Taming of the Shrew, Works  
ed. Peter Alexander, p.287, 137.

13. Induction to A Warning for Fair Women, School of Shakespeare,  

14. cf. Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy, Dramatic Works of Thomas  
Kyd. ed., F.S. Boas,

"Fie! comedies are for common wits;
**     *     **      **     **
Give me a stately written tragedy
Tragedia cothurnata, fitting kings
Containing matter, and not common things".

15. Heywood: Prologue to The English Traveller, Mermaid Edition,  
p.155. cf. Also letter to the Reader. The Fair Maid of  
the West., Ibid., p.78.

"Peruse it through, and thou mayst find in it
Some mirth, some matter, and, perhaps, some wit".
unmistakably evident from the way in which the domestic problems are presented and the frequent overt moralisation in these plays is given.

It has been repeated ad nauseum that the protagonist of a domestic play usually comes 'from the humbler ranks of society'. But, occasionally, men of gentle origin also, like Lacy in The Shoemakers' Holiday and Spencer in The Fair Maid of the West, are introduced as heroes. These two may be called willing proselytes to the middle-class ideology. In such instances, the high birth of the hero is not in itself very important to claim exclusive attention. The presence of Lacy or Spencer does not dwarf the significance of his lady love and others. The dominating milieu and ethos are those of the middle-class.

Since the domestic tragedy is a reaction against the alien Senecan tragedy there is a significant ideological opposition between the two species. The main difference lies in the concept of revenge and its execution. Despite some doubts as regards the ethical and moral justification of his action, the hero of a revenge tragedy considers it his duty - his inalienable right - to avenge the murder of his son or father or kinsman. It is no surprise if the murderer himself turns out to be the avenger as in the case of Bosola in The Duchess of Malfi. The hero takes the law into his hands, impersonates to himself the role of a justicer and sometimes considers himself to be an instrument in the hands of a powerful Fate in executing revenge.
So, the theme of revenge in a Senecan play is not controlled by any just divine law and sometimes it may continue in a chain reaction of revenge and counter-revenge till all the characters involved in the affair, including the hero, get killed. Usually the play opens with or after a murder and ends with one or sometimes more corpses on the stage. The motive which governs this scheme of revenge is pagan and therefore the very opposite of the spirit of orthodox christianity. In spite of its appeal to the natural instinct of honour, it does not have its roots in the native tradition and has absolutely no religious sanction. Hence, "the ethics of revenge were felt to be a real problem, therefore, likely to send a conscientious man half mad".16  So much so, the heroes themselves questioned the ethical validity and moral justification of revenge. For example, not to mention the case of Hamlet, Clermont queries:

Shall we revenge a villainy with a villainy17

William Empson gives a convincing explanation of the reconciliation of the audience to this kind of wild revenge: "Actually, I take it, the clergy regularly said that revenge was very wicked, but the soldiers tended to say that a man's honour might require


it; an audience would not have only one opinion, but broadly agree on feeling that, while revenge was nearly always very wicked, a point might come where it was almost inevitable".\textsuperscript{18} This half hearted reconciliation and hesitant acceptance for the moment, even if they feel the inevitability of revenge while witnessing the play, is not enough to convince some, at least the orthodox and the scrupulous groups among the audience, about this wild justice, especially when they ponder over it after the play. "It was a church-going and sermon-reading age, one in which reflection upon the ultimate issues of life and death were encouraged not merely by preachers and moralists but by popular pamphleteers and ballad writers, and this seriousness impregnates the drama even when it seems to a superficial view predominantly secular".\textsuperscript{19} Obviously, it would be difficult, particularly for the conventional people among the audience, with the Christian outlook and theological background, and for such a religious age in general, to accept the Senecan mode of taking revenge which is almost anti-Christian in spirit.

Therefore in a domestic tragedy, as against the pagan concept of revenge, vengeance is often left to God, in conformity with the scripture.\textsuperscript{20} This might have looked 'strange'.

\textsuperscript{19} F.P. Wilson: \textit{Elizabethan and Jacobean}, p.8.
\textsuperscript{20} "To me belongeth Vengeance and Recompense. Deuteronomy. cf. also Psalms, 94:1; Romans 12:19, 12:20; Hebrew 10:30; Mathew 5:38; Proverbs 25:21; 25:22."
to the audience at a time when the Senecan tragedy was popular. The author of *A Warning for Fair Women* anticipated this reaction of the spectators:

Perhaps it may seem strange unto you all, That one hath not reveng'd another's death After the observation of such course:21

Yet, the Christian mode of leaving the wrong doers to God would be acceptable to the audience as it is native and familiar to them. So we find the protagonist in Heywood's domestic tragedy, Frankford (*A Woman*) overcome his first impulse to stab Wendoll to death. Like an evangelist he merely opens the eyes of the sinner, Mrs. Frankford, to her fault, and reminds her of the justice and mercy of God. When the culprits are punished with death as in *Arden of Feversham* and *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, it is the magistrate, believed to be a representative of God's justice on earth,22 who executes it. The sinners receive the punishment with a penitent acceptance not with a defiant cynical indifference. While Othello kills Desdemona for an alleged fault in the name of family honour and justice, Frankford for a similar fault even when he found the guilty pair lying

Close in each other's arms, and fast asleep23

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22. 'For He saith: Leave the punishment to Me and I will revenge thee. But the magistrate is the ordinance of God appointed by Him with the sword of punishment'. Sir John Cheke's *The Hurt of Sedition* (1549) quoted from: H.M.V. Matthew's *p.13.*

leaves the sinners to God's judgment in the true Christian spirit. Frankford spares the guilty pair, for a reason which is exactly the opposite of Hamlet's:

But that I would not damn two precious souls, 
Bought with my Saviour's blood, and send them, laden 
With all their scarlet sins upon their backs, 
Unto a fearful judgement, their two lives 
Had met upon my rapier.

The sinners here are given a chance to atone for their sins. But in a revenge tragedy like Hamlet, where blood asks for more blood, Hamlet wants to kill Claudius only when all the sins are fresh on him. These two situations will illustrate the difference between the revenge motives and attitudes of the writers of domestic tragedy and Senecan tragedy.

As there is a difference between the Senecan tragedy and the domestic tragedy, there is a kind of rivalry between the writers of satirical comedy and those of the domestic comedy. But it is of great interest to know that the thematic material of the satirical comedy as well as the domestic comedy was the middle-class life of the times. The dramatists were mostly Londoners and their ultimate aim is to rehabilitate the old values in a rapidly changing society. There is some similarity between Heywood's cherished ideal 'Aut prodesse solent aut

delectare" and Jonson’s motive:

In all his poems still hath been this measure:
To mix profit with your pleasure; 26

And Jonson is as much concerned with the life of London as Dekker and Heywood, and is in no way less nationalistic in spirit than either of them. In The Alchemist he says:

Our scene is London, cause we would make known
No countrie’s mirth is better than our own; 27

But the main difference between the two groups, satirical and domestic, lies in their approach to and treatment of the life around them. Miss Bradbrook’s observation of Dekker’s The Shoemakers’ Holiday and Jonson’s Bartholomew Fair makes this point clear. "Both delight in a popular festival of the city; both catch the flavour of a proverb, the smell of a shop. Yet while Jonson’s judicial eye noted merely the follies and affections of his characters, Dekker shows only the happy, the faithful and the generous". 28

Jonson and his school approach the life around them with a saeva indignatio and a scornful air of critical superiority.

25. This is the title page motto of many of Heywood’s published works.


They exaggerate the evils to the point of loathing disgust. The hypocrisy, deceit, unscrupulous means to acquire wealth and the avaricious hunt for riches are the ruling motives of the gallery of rogues in their plays. Jonson's Corinna is ready to prostitute his wife to Volpone for the sake of riches. Quomodo in the Michaelmas Term remarks about the gallant's hunt for citizens' wives:

They're busy 'bout our wives, we 'bout their lands

The primary concern of the domestic comedy is not to 'sport with human follies' much less with humours. Both Dekker and Heywood never approved of the satirical approach of Jonson, and their plays are to a very large extent free from satire. The main emphasis in a domestic comedy is on the domestic and social aspects of the middle-class life, mostly governed by traditional values. It is the personal contact, sympathy, almost a kind of personal involvement in the life they portray which drives home the ideals of Dekker and Heywood. They show how happy the people are, and likely to remain so, and how easily they can encounter the usual problem in their everyday life as long as they follow the traditional values and uphold the old social order. Jonson and his school show what the times are likely to be if the new acquisitive people do not reform themselves before it is too late. Thus what was explicit in Dekker and Heywood is implicit in Jonson. Therefore Arthur Brown

rightly comments that the ultimate moral aim of Dekker and Heywood and Jonson is more or less the same, though Jonson used a different method altogether. "Here are almost all the principles upon which he (Heywood) worked in his own plays: the inculcation of civic pride, of nationalism and patriotism, the duty of the learned towards the unlearned, the domestic virtues of loyalty, civility, and good manners, the right use of entertainment, and the importance of balance in character and temperament. Jonson would have approved of most of these, sometimes perhaps with reservations; but he did not approve of the methods that Heywood used. Dekker, had he thought about it at all, would have sided with Heywood in both respects".  

The Domestic drama, though it is not directly concerned with the new economic changes of its times, presents the disastrous social consequences and domestic troubles caused by the new commercial values. It shows how the happy domestic life of the people is disrupted by the new social standards and values based on the commercial outlook. In the domestic plays like The Miseries of Enforced Marriage, and The Witch of Edmonton the heavy toll of domestic misery the children have to pay for the futile material advantage contemplated by a guardian or a father is depicted with all the necessary tragic intensity. Even in domestic plays like The Shoemakers' Holiday the characters

are endowed with practical common sense, acquire wealth and rise 
in social status but never by dishonest means and unscrupulous 
methods like Sir Giles Overreach in Massinger's *A New Way to Pay 
Old Debts*. People like Simon Eyre always advance by lawful 
steps* and they usually cling to their own class and social 
'order'. Even after becoming the Lord Mayor, Eyre not only 
identifies himself with his class but is also proud of his 
birth. Material prosperity and advancement in the social 
hierarchy is not the primary goal for him, as it is to Sir 
Giles. Thus in a domestic drama there is a happy combination 
of the new progressive outlook and traditional values.

Another distinctive feature of the Domestic drama is its 
permeation by the spirit of Christianity. In all the domestic 
problems like the shrewish or unfaithful wife, the wayward 
husband or the prodigal son, it is invariably the Christian 
spirit of love, forgiveness and patience and the code of con-
duct based on these Christian virtues which brings about the 
final reconciliation and establishes harmony. As the emphasis 
in any domestic play is on the middle-class home and its problems, 
in which respect for custom and family tradition will be the 
greatest, the problem of family honour, especially in the case 
of countryside families, and the question of citizen respect-
ability and honour in the case of London middle-class, are bound 
to arise. Here again in one form or other, in the conflicts 
where honour is involved, it is the Christian spirit of patience, 
love and forgiveness which resolves the tension and brings about
the happy reunion. Thus, the social morality depicted in the Domestic drama has its roots in the benevolent spirit of Christianity. It had been associated with the life of the people since the middle ages and had slowly evolved with the society. Hence, it is a morality not merely desirable but also practically possible, one which is easily acceptable to all and scrupulously followed by many. This is the moral pattern behind Frankford's forgiveness of his wife in *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, the Wife's forgiveness of her Husband in *A Yorkshire Tragedy* and Dekker's rehabilitation of Bellafront in his *The Honest Whore*. In some of its aspects it may deviate from the rigid social code of the times, especially in instances where the sinners are forgiven. But, even here it accommodates the conventional code in a way, though its spirit is entirely different. The sinners are forgiven by the offenders, yet, they have to pay for their sins.

This religious colouring is in part due to the religious outlook of the authors and partly due to the close connection between the Domestic drama and the Morality plays. "These dramas appealed to the same type of audience and to the same interests and prejudices as did the morality plays".31 Therefore like the Moralities the Domestic drama followed the usual theological pattern of the homilies "the sequence being - sin, discovery,

"Remorse, punishment, and expectation of divine mercy." The heavily moralized tales of murder, rebellion, seductions and infidelity as described in the pamphlets and ballads, which provided the source material for most of the domestic plays, easily lent themselves to this kind of treatment based on the Morality pattern. The popular dramatists have presented these plays as warning pieces. Hence, we have titles like A Warning for Fair Women. Nor is this homiletic pattern unfamiliar to the common people. "It was given precise and elaborate form in the official book of homilies prescribed for weekly reading in every church, and it was echoed everywhere in sermons and moralizing pamphlets, even in the broadside ballads commemorating striking crimes that served in that day in place of sensational journalism." Therefore, the dramatists no wonder, readily combined Christian morality and religious persuasion with their domestic plots.

It has been unanimously admitted by all critics that the domestic tragedy embodies the homiletic pattern. But there is some disagreement about the extent of its presence. Professor Hitch Adams believes that the domestic tragedy is "the dramatic equivalent of the homiletic tract and broadside ballad".

34. H.H. Adams: English Domestic or Homiletic Tragedy, p.185.
Admitting the 'ethical pattern' Miss Madeline Doran questions Hitch Adams's conclusion that the domestic plays are dramatised sermons. She argues that the "tendency to exploitation of brutality and sentiment in at least the poorer ones suggests quite as much that the stories were designed as stage thrillers." It is very difficult to discover the exact 'intentions' of the authors of these plays. However, when all the domestic plays are taken into consideration what we find is that they were primarily meant for the stage and are not without some thrilling theatrical flashes. We cannot deny a tendency to exploit 'brutality and sentiment' in crude plays like The Two Lamentable Tragedies. But, it must be said that the homiletic scheme however prominent it may appear to us, is always subordinated to the dramatic interest, the aim of the authors being instruction through delight.

Enough has been said to the effect that the Domestic drama concentrates on family affairs and private virtues. Yet, it is not completely isolated from the social and national issues. It gives required importance to social relationships between man and man, good neighbourhood, the corporate spirit, the relationship between tradesmen and apprentices, the master and his servants. At the national level it celebrates patriotism and obedience to the king and law, and inculcates in the audience national pride and honesty.

The Domestic drama is English to the core in characters, situations, motives and setting. The country gentlemen, honest tradesmen, the devoted wives and virtuous maids, the faithful servants and apprentices are the best of their kind. The themes are essentially native, either actual crimes committed in middle-class homes or familiar domestic incidents from everyday life. The setting of the play will be the bounteous countryside with fresh air, curds and cream, early morning hunt, hawking, country dance and homely pastimes like a game of cards after dinner. Or it may be the congenial work-a-day side of London with its brisk activity of jovial workers. This congenial background adds colour and vitality to the plays and provides proper atmosphere to the action. It also creates an effect of homeliness and intimacy.

As has already been indicated, the Elizabethan middle-class despite the fact that it anticipates many qualities of its Eighteenth century counterpart, is different from it. This difference can be seen in the domestic plays of the two ages. No doubt, the Elizabethan and the Jacobean domestic plays served as models for the Eighteenth century domestic plays. "The author of Arden of Feversham, Dekker, and Heywood were to become the ancestors of the authors of The Orphan and of The London Merchant. Simply because of 'certain interesting similarities' between the plays of the two periods, the Domestic drama cannot be

called a 'middle-class drama' or 'bourgeois drama', in the same sense in which the eighteenth century drama is called. 'It should be observed, however, that the attitude indicated by Ward,37 was but incidental in the Elizabethan age, whereas it purported and proved to be a typical expression of eighteenth century drama. Furthermore, there were later factors, undeveloped in Elizabethan times, that definitely contributed to distinctive qualities of the middle-class drama as it ultimately evolved - namely, the spread of sentimentalism, the rise of journalism, and dissemination of popular propaganda. The Elizabethan drama was first and foremost a robustly independent form of art, immediately conceived in terms of the theatre and composed primarily to be acted; in the eighteenth century the stage, to almost disastrous proportions, was considered, together with periodicals, novels, and encyclopaedias, a medium for the propagation of edifying doctrines".38

An inadequate critical recognition given to this difference between the domestic plays of the two ages with a proportionate emphasis upon the similarity that the characters in both are drawn from the 'ordinary walks of life' might be mainly responsible

37. Sir A.W. Ward: Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. VI, pp.94-95. Dr. Ward says: "In a period of national history when the middle classes were beginning to assert themselves in the social system of the country - a movement which it would be a mistake to regard as altogether identical with the striving of puritanism for ascendency - it could hardly be but that room would have been found in the drama for exposition of the middle class point of view, middle class morality and middle class humanity, as distinct from the historic pretensions of kings, nobles and prelates..."

38. Nolte: The Early Middle-Class Drama, pp.93-94.
for the oft repeated opinion that the Domestic drama is senti-
mental. It may be also due to "the fairly widespread scholarly
view that tragedy must be domestic to be sentimental".39 Some-
thing akin to sentimentalism is inherent in the themes of domes-
tic woe. In fact, the Eighteenth century dramatists deliberately
exploited it. Miss Madeline Doran sees essential sentimentalism
in typical Elizabethan and Jacobean domestic plays also. She
points out three dramatic situations where it becomes conspic-
cuous: while showing the 'innocence of the victims', 'the
Christian forbearance of one of the characters', and 'the
repentance of the guilty hero'.40 A close examination of these
incidents reveals that there is hardly anything that could be
called sentimental. When the children and wife in A Yorkshire
Tragedy and Susan in The Witch of Edmonton and other innocent
victims in the domestic tragedies are presented, the resulting
appeal is not sentimentalism for these situations have a basis
in reality and serve a definite moral purpose. These incidents
show the disastrous effects of the unwise decision taken by
an arbitrary father or guardian with nothing but the material
advantage in his view. The result of this is a forced and
loveless marriage which finally leads to a tragic death of
the couple. As for the Christian forbearance of characters
like Frankford and Geraldine, the stress is on the tragic
rather than the pathetic. There is nothing sentimental about

40. Madeleine Doran: Endeavors of Art, p.146.
the repentance of Jane Shore, Mrs. Frankford and Lady Geraldine. For, they themselves are responsible for their undoing however understandable and inevitable their faults may be. The final forgiveness granted to them is not an 'easily achieved divine mercy'\footnote{Madeline Doran: \textit{Endeavors of Art}, p.146.} \footnote{H.H. Adams: \textit{English Domestic or Homiletic Tragedy}, p.11.} \footnote{Madeleine Doran: \textit{Endeavors of Art}, p.146.} for in each case it costs nothing less than the heroine's life. Moreover 'the view reflected in the dramas of the time, as well as the general impression to be gathered from the authorised sermons, was that earnest repentance would bring with it forgiveness of sins and admissions into heaven'.\footnote{Madeleine Doran: \textit{Endeavors of Art}, p.146.} Therefore, what prevents these situations from degenerating into mere sentimentalism is the deep moral and theological fabric which governs these actions. And, it is not the 'tendency to the sentimental'\footnote{Madeleine Doran: \textit{Endeavors of Art}, p.146.} as Mandeline Doran supposes, which leads to 'the happy ending'. It is the final step of forgiveness and mercy shown to the repentant sinners according to the homiletic pattern that brings about a happy reconciliation or ending as the case may be. Professor Bernbaum in his \textit{Drama of Sensibility} brilliantly illustrates this subtle difference between the Domestic drama and the Sentimental drama. He compares Heywood's \textit{A Woman Killed with Kindness} with Benjamin Victor's \textit{The Fatal Error}. In Victor's play Mrs. Frankford becomes Lady Frankford. Now, Lady Frankford does not yield to her seducer
as Mrs. Frankford did in a puzzled state of mind. The seducer bribes her chamber maid, enters her bed chamber and rapes her. So, she is not responsible for her sin. Her 'fateful error' lies in not informing her husband about this. "Such was the process of exculpation that was necessary to convert Elizabethan 'domestic tragedies' into dramas of sensibility".44

It has been constantly emphasised by the poets as well as the critics that the Domestic drama is of pure, native origin. But it was indirectly influenced by some contemporary dramatic forms. Professor Schelling points out that as "the Domestic drama developed, too, it was affected by the other kinds of drama that flourished about it. The romantic drama lent it greater dignity and delicacy, where such graces could consort with a realistic theme, while the classical spirit, especially as reflected in the comedy of humours or manners, exercised a much needed pruning and regulation influence".45 This influence explains the romantic tinge in plays like The Shoemakers' Holiday and the similarity in organisation between The Alchemist and Heywood's The Wise Woman of Hogsdon. In these two plays the central figure on whom the entire plot of each play hinges is a clever dupe with a reputation of possessing a deep knowledge in magic, astrology, alchemy and medicine. And the final

44. R. Bernbaum: Drama of Sensibility, p.36. Also see Hallett D. Smith's essay, A Woman Killed with Kindness, P.M.L.A. Vol. LIII, 1938, p.147, where he shows that there is no sentimentalism in Heywood's play.
effect of each play lies in the way in which the entire game is exposed.

In brief, the Domestic drama dramatises the common household problems, experiences and troubles familiar to the country squires and town merchants. The protagonist is usually taken from the middle-class and the action is usually limited to the sphere of his family and home. As Sir A.W. Ward says it is a drama "which, on the background of ordinary family life, presents an action of deep and commanding moral interest". So, the domestic tragedy, though it does not involve by its very nature the wider aspects of the state, has deep cosmic and theological implications like the shattering of 'degree', the violation of 'order' and the common belief in the conflict between virtue and vice, freewill and predestination. It is essentially native, 'home-borne' and closely connected with the Moralities and native traditions. As such, it is essentially didactic and the ethical code it inculcates is Christian in spirit. It continues the moral instruction and homiletic tradition characteristic of the dramatic and the non-dramatic didactic literature of the Elizabethan and the Jacobean ages.