

L.N. Mithila University, Darbhanga

B.A (Part-II) - Eng. Composition
50 MARKS

Topic: A work of Art (Short story)

By- Anton P. Chekhov

17.04.2020

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A work of Art is a proto-type of modern short story written by Anton P. Chekhov, who is remembered in the history of modern short story for his technical innovations. It is he who ushered an 'era of plotlessness' which is very much congenial to the taste of the novelists of the stream of consciousness school. Chekhov, in his stories, makes an abundant use of suggestion, implicit action, indirect narration and symbolism not to point a moral but to evoke a mood to create an atmosphere or record a passing thought.

The story in discussion unfolds with the description of the mood of Sasha who is the only son of his mother. He has been presented standing nervously in the office of Doctor Keshelkov. Under his arm there is an object wrapped in newspaper. It is a token of gratitude for the doctor who treated him while he was at death bed. As the author describes, it was a low candelabrum, a wonderful masterpiece in antique bronze, a work of art representing a group. On a pedestal stood two figures of women clad in the costume of mother Eve. In other words, they were absolutely naked. They were smiling coquettishly and giving the impression that they would lean down from their pedestal and exhibit performance. The doctor is not in the mood to accept the present as it is obscene and vulgar. But compelling

request of Sasha makes him accept it. He at once decides to lend it to the lawyer, Ukhorov whom he was indebted for legal services. But the lawyer is also horrified to see the statue. Due to pressure of his friend, he accepts it. The next moment, the lawyer decides to give it to the comedian, Shoshki who is his close friend. The comedian also hesitates to have it. But soon the wig-maker advises him to sell it in the hands of Sorokin who collects rare statues. The comedian follows the advice. After a couple of days, Sasha again comes to the doctor and says that he has procured the mate of the statue for him. Sasha gets delighted in conveying this news to the doctor. But the doctor is dumbfounded. He becomes mute because he has sold what Sasha gave him earlier.

The story is important because Chekhov presents the atmosphere of the mind of the characters. The states of mind of Sasha and Doctor Keshelkov have been psychologically depicted. The story is typical of the 'era of plodlessness' because there is no stress on character or situation. What is important here is the study of the mental working of the characters in the prevailing situation.

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