

The Department of English
Raja N.L Khan women's college (Autonomous)

Offers

Course Material on *Life of Galileo*

For

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The Department of English,

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Life and Works of Bertolt Brecht:- (1898-1956)

Berthold Friedrich Brecht was a controversial pacifist who later dropped the first name and changed the spelling of the middle name. Bertolt Brecht is probably the greatest German playwright of the first half of the 20th century. He was born on Feb 10, 1898 in Augsburg. He studied medicine in Munich and briefly served at an army hospital in World War I. During the early 1920s, he developed an anti-bourgeois attitude and studied Marxism. Brecht lived in Berlin from 1924 to 1933 where he collaborated with composer Kurt Weill (1900-1950) and developed his theory of "Epic Theatre". In 1933 he went into exile, spending six years in the United States (1942-1947), where he did some film-work in Hollywood. During exile, Brecht wrote most of his great plays, essays and poems while his work was being burned in Nazi Germany. In 1949, he moved back to Berlin and despite the controversial communist ideals of his work, he enjoyed great success. Brecht died of a heart attack in East Berlin on August 14, 1956.

His major works are:-

Drums in the Night (1922)

The Three penny Opera (1928)

Fear and Misery of the Third Reich (1938)

The Good woman of Szechwan (1943)

Mother courage and her children (1949)

Epic Theatre:-

"Epic Theatre" is an extremely artistic affair hardly thinkable without artists of virtuosity, imagination, humor and fellow feeling". As a theatrical movement Epic theatre arises in the 20th century from the theories and practices of a number of theatre practitioners who responded to the practical climate of the time through the creation of a new practical theatre. Thus Epic theatre was a political theatre which raises the contemporary political issues. Bertolt says that "Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it." Erwin Piscator first

coined the term Epic theatre to encourage the playwrights to address issues related to the contemporary society or the contemporary according to Bertolt "The Epic theatre is chiefly interested in the attitude which people adopt towards one another, wherever they are socio historically significant. It works out scenes where people adopt attitudes of such a sort that the social laws under which they are acting spring into sight. The concern of the Epic theatre is thus eminently practical". It can be said that it is a kind of didactic drama, and this form is quite different from the Aristotelian concept of drama or the traditional "dramatic theatre". The main purpose or aim of Epic theatre is to make audience aware about the ongoing circumstances of the time. This movement does not aim at keeping the audience under any illusion but to see them the real world and make judgement on them. Thus the characteristics of Epic theatre are .The Alienation effect, didacticism, historification, narration, gestus, fragmentary costume or props, use of song, direct address to the audience, open white lightning and loosely connected scenes.

A compendium of the plot:-

Life of Galileo opens on Galileo Galilei, a professor of mathematics at Padua University. He's talking to Andrea (his housekeeper's young son), who has just brought him breakfast. They're discussing the solar system and how it works. Galileo shows Andrea a wooden model that illustrates the current, generally accepted understanding of the planets. In it, the Earth is in the middle of the universe and is surrounded by eight crystal spheres. These spheres represent the moon, the sun, and all the planets. People have believed this model for two-thousand years, Galileo says, but as mankind progresses in technology and knowledge, he suspects they won't believe it for much longer. He teaches the ideas of Nicolaus Copernicus to Andrea (who calls Copernicus "Copper Knickers"). The new ideas place the Sun at the center of the solar system, with the Earth and planets revolving around it. All the other stars in the night sky are at the center of their own systems. Galileo uses the wooden model as well as a series of common-sense demonstrations with an apple to show Andrea how Copernicus' theory could be true. Andrea believes him somewhat, but also questions Galileo whenever an argument seems weak. When Andrea's mother, Mrs. Sarti, arrives, she expresses serious concerns about what Galileo is teaching Andrea, since it goes against the Church's approved model and could therefore get Andrea into trouble at school.

Throughout all of this, another concern repeatedly appears: money. Galileo doesn't have any, but he needs it—not just to continue his research and buy books—but also to do simple tasks like pay the milkman. So when Ludovico arrives, hoping to hire Galileo on as a tutor, Mrs. Sarti insists that Galileo accept the offer. He does, though not happily. Shortly afterwards, Galileo's supervisor at Padua University (the Procurator) arrives to tell Galileo that his recent request for a raise has been denied. The Procurator suggests that, if the mathematician needs more money than his teaching job provides, he should invent something useful. He reminds Galileo that, while Padua (and more broadly, Venice) might not pay much, it at least offers freedom from persecution by the Church, which he might experience in other, better funded places (like Florence). Galileo responds that such freedom of thought may be nice, but it is meaningless if he spends all of his free time working to make ends meet instead of thinking.

Ludovico, however, provides a possible solution to Galileo's problem: a new invention by the Dutch called the telescope. It's still unheard of in Italy, but Ludovico has seen it put to wondrous uses abroad. Galileo instantly understands the mechanics behind the device and quickly replicates one, pawning it off as his own original invention. The Procurator, seeing the great many uses that the telescope could be put to, guarantees Galileo his raise. Shortly thereafter, however, a Dutch merchant arrives in Venice with a boatload of telescopes and Galileo's deception is revealed. It doesn't matter, though. He's already used the telescope to empirically prove Copernicus' theory (which he'd previously only been able to prove theoretically using mathematics). He excitedly tries to show this proof to his friend Sagredo, but Sagredo only reminds him that a man was burned at the stake for quoting Copernicus only a few months before. Undeterred, Galileo remains confident that the Church will be unable to avoid the truth when it's right before their eyes. This confidence causes him to move to Florence where, despite being under strict religious censure, he believes he will have the time and money to explore his new findings.

With Galileo newly settled in, Cosimo Medici, the Grand Duke of Florence (who is still just a child), is brought by his counsellors to see the telescope at work. Among Cosimo's party are a theologian, a mathematician, and a philosopher. All of them are wholly skeptical of Galileo's latest findings and, after some heated debate with him, they decide that he's a waste of

time at best if not an outright lunatic. In the end, they won't even look through the telescope to see the simple, observable evidence that Galileo presents as proof, though they do agree (in a way that seems less than sincere) to present Galileo's information to the Church's chief scientist, Clavius. Shortly thereafter, a deadly plague rips through Florence. Galileo, his daughter Virginia, Mrs. Sarti, and Andrea are given the chance to flee, but Galileo declines it, citing his need to work. Mrs. Sarti decides to stay behind with him, but they send Virginia and Andrea away. Andrea, however, opts to return despite the danger so that he can continue assisting Galileo.

All manage to avoid the plague and Galileo soon finds himself at the Vatican awaiting Clavius' review of his work. The scene plays out in much the same way that the confrontation in Florence did: the Church's scholars are simply too dedicated to the Church's existing understanding of the universe to entertain alternatives. They all feel that Galileo's telescope is a dangerous object and that his questioning of age-old wisdom is even more dangerous. A kind of fever overtakes the discussion and at one point an older cardinal faints while berating Galileo. Nevertheless, the scene ends with Clavius confirming that Galileo is correct. His words are followed up by "deadly silence."

Though Galileo understandably feels that his work has been vindicated by Clavius, he soon discovers that the Inquisition has other ideas. They've decided that Copernicus remains heretical and cannot be taught. Paradoxically, though, they've accepted Galileo's findings. What this means is that the Church has decided to allow Galileo to continue his research but not to publish it to the outside world. Galileo is upset by this, but also slightly overwhelmed—he is, after all, a devout Catholic who doesn't wish to go against his Church, and these orders come from the highest levels of authority.

In the following scene, the Little Monk visits Galileo. He has looked through a telescope and observed the same things Galileo has. The discovery has shaken his faith, and in order to recover that faith, he has decided to abandon astronomy. He visits Galileo to explain why—perhaps in an effort to convince Galileo to do the same. Their long conversation doesn't go quite as planned, however, and Galileo ends up converting the Little Monk into one of his students by offering him his manuscripts. Galileo compares these to "an apple from the tree of knowledge," something he knows the Little Monk won't be able to resist. Kept from publishing, Galileo has

instead spread his knowledge to his students, who now include the Little Monk, Andrea, and Galileo's telescope lens manufacturer, Federzoni.

Meanwhile, the Pope is dying and it seems likely that his successor will be Cardinal Barberini, a mathematician with whom Galileo has had favorable interactions in the past. Assuming that Barberini will be far more receptive to his work than the previous Pope, Galileo resumes publication. His ideas spread far and wide, seemingly overnight: he even becomes the subject of ballads sung at public fairs and carnivals. Naturally, this catches the eye of the Inquisition, who summon Galileo to the Vatican. While Barberini does indeed agree with Galileo, the politics behind supporting him are just too risky and complicated. Therefore, the new Pope has given the Inquisition the right to imprison Galileo, and even to threaten him with torture, in order to force him to renounce his work. Their plan succeeds, and Galileo recants his doctrine. His students can hardly believe it, and they turn their backs on him. They feel that Galileo has abandoned their hard and important work to save his own skin.

Nearly a decade passes. Galileo has been imprisoned in his home by the Inquisition and will remain so for the rest of his life. He's forced to write dissertations approving the Church's opinion on a number of banal matters, all of them below his abilities. These texts are carefully checked by a monk for any heresies they might contain, and any other writing is forbidden. Nevertheless, Galileo has, in secret, finished his magnum opus, *The Discourses and Mathematical Demonstrations Relating to Two New Sciences*. One day, Andrea comes to visit (the first of his old pupils to do so). At first, Andrea is cold towards his old mentor. Galileo reveals, however, that he did not recant his work in order to save his life. Rather, he recanted it so that he could continue it in secret. With Andrea's help, Galileo manages to sneak *The Discourse* out of the country and into Holland, where it is published without censure.

Characters Analysis

Galileo Galilei

The character of Galileo Galilei is based on the historical figure by the same name (1564–1642). Brecht's Galileo is characterized from the beginning of the play as a brilliant scientist who searches for truth while remaining self-interested and focused on maintaining his quality of life

by selling his designs and flattering potential patrons. Galileo is frustrated and even frightened by the church's censure of the Copernican-leaning aspects of his theories. Twice in the story, Galileo publicly acquiesces to the mandates of the church while privately continuing his research. Galileo and his assistants view his recantation as weak and as a betrayal of science, while his continued research offers a small redemption.

Virginia Galilei

Virginia Galileo, the daughter of Galileo Galilei, is loyal and caring to her father, regardless of the many ways that his actions negatively affect her throughout the play. Virginia is also loyal and faithful to the Catholic church, no matter how her father's theories challenge its principles. Virginia becomes engaged to Ludovico and looks forward to her impending nuptials. She has an emotional attachment to Ludovico and is disappointed by their broken engagement, which results in her continued role as a companion and caretaker for her father as he reaches old age.

Andrea Sarti

In the beginning of the play, Andrea Sarti is a small boy, the son of Mrs. Sarti, Galileo's housekeeper, whom Galileo has taken on as a kind of student and errand boy. As he grows up, Andrea takes on the role of an assistant and learns astronomy from Galileo. He is shocked by Galileo's recantation, and he leaves Galileo to pursue his studies elsewhere. Toward the end of the play, he returns to visit Galileo, who is under house arrest. Andrea regains his faith in Galileo when he discovers that the astronomer has finished another treatise in secret. Andrea is given the chance to carry on Galileo's legacy when he takes the book to another country for publication. He becomes the scientist who searches for truth and encourages others to do the same with their own observations. In stagings of the play, two actors (a young boy and a man) portray Andrea Sarti's character at different ages.

Sagredo

Sagredo observes astronomical phenomena with Galileo, serving as an assistant in his scientific research, and comprehends their implications for the Catholic church. Sagredo asks Galileo

whether he should proceed with his findings, knowing that the church will not receive them well. Sagredo remains a faithful assistant to Galileo throughout his research, until Galileo recants his teachings.

Federzoni

Federzoni becomes acquainted with Galileo because he is a lens grinder for the telescopes that Galileo designs. He eventually becomes an assistant in Galileo's research. Federzoni participates in the research with Galileo and the other assistants, but he is not educated in the university manner. His inability to speak Latin (and his ability to comprehend astronomy) is one of the reasons that Galileo chooses to write in the common language. Federzoni is shocked and disappointed by Galileo's recantation and feels betrayed by the astronomer's inability to defend his research.

Fulganzio, the Little Monk

Fulganzio, the Little Monk, is a clergyman and the son of peasants, and he is fascinated by Galileo's astronomical research. He assists Galileo on some of his projects. Even though he has observed the same phenomena as Galileo and agrees with his findings, the Little Monk argues that the decree against Copernican cosmology is beneficial for the common people, whose lives would lose meaning without religion.

Ludovico Marsili

Ludovico Marsili is a young member of a noble Italian family. His mother wishes him to broaden his education by studying science with Galileo, so Ludovico engages Galileo as a tutor. Ludovico is not interested in science and has little passion for it, but he maintains a relationship with Galileo and Virginia, with whom he eventually becomes engaged. Ludovico views the engagement as a mutually beneficial arrangement, which allows him to break the engagement when a relationship with Galileo becomes disadvantageous. Ludovico, as a nobleman loyal to the

church, disapproves of Galileo's teachings because of their challenges to church teachings about the Bible as well as to the social order.

Cardinal Barberini (Pope Urban VIII)

Cardinal Barberini (1568–1644) is one of the two cardinals who is tasked with delivering the pope's decree against Copernican cosmology to Galileo. Cardinal Barberini sparks a friendly scientific debate with Galileo before Cardinal Bellarmine communicates the warning to Galileo. Cardinal Barberini trained as a mathematician and is interested in science. He supports Galileo's research, even in the first years after he is elected Pope Urban VIII. After Galileo's 1632 publication of a treatise that promotes Copernican cosmology, however, the now Pope Urban VIII acquiesces to the demands of his office. The pope reluctantly allows the Inquisitor, who is responsible for investigating heresies, to interrogate Galileo and convince him to recant his theories.

Brecht's Dramatic Technique in Life of Galileo:-

Brecht's theory of theatre known as 'Epic Theatre' is an anti-illusionist theatre that runs counter to the Aristotelian 'Theatre of Illusion'. It is in the light of this 'Epic Theatre' that we need to understand his dramatic technique. By using long pauses, harsh lightening, empty stages, episodic plot, placards announcing the change of scenes, concept of anti-hero, alienation effect or estrangement, narrative form and violation imposed by traditional dramatic form.

Brecht's dramatic technique is intended to create an effect of estrangement among the audience by making the characters declare boldly that whatever the audience is watching is only play-an illusion not reality. The audience is urged to remain intellectually vigilant and not identify with the characters of the play. The audience will have to maintain a critical stance. The long pauses in the play obstruct the smooth flow of the plot. Use of harsh lighting won't allow anything to be hidden so that the façade of illusion is dismantled. Empty stage makes the audience stop and think curiously about what is to follow. Unity of plot is not emphasized. The play cannot be seen as a whole where the parts serve to create an organic whole. Parts can stand on their own self. Their significance is judged in isolation and their existence doesn't depend on

their contribution to the whole. This idea of the episodic plot gives against the Aristotelian idea of unity of plot. Use of placards to announce the change of scene helps to remind the audience of the illusion of theatrical performance. Galileo is an anti-hero because he acts like a coward fearing the instruments of torture. He doesn't fulfill our expectations from a hero as we have traditionally understood him. He doesn't have the courage and the power to prove himself as a great figure. Rather, he acts like a person who runs away from the threats and dangers. He, in short, is very anti-heroic. Aristotelian theory of theatre laid a great emphasis on the adherence to the unities of time, place and action. In Galileo, there is a violation of these unities. The events of the plot cover decades and are shown to have taken place in places that are far away from one another. The hero is not a person pursuing a single action with commitment. The play talks about many actions that do not coalesce into a single uniform action. Galileo uses narrative form in that it takes past events as a material for dramatization. The play is a dramatization of past events and thus carries a sense of historical facts being narrated. It is opposed to the idea of imaginary present of drama which unfolds before us as if it were happening in front of us for the first time. The play Galileo demands the special relationship between the characters and the audience. The audience is not demanded to show empathy towards the characters and be lost in sentimentality. They are urged to maintain a distance between themselves and what happens on the stage. A greater sense of detachment and critical response is demanded of them.

Is Galileo considered a “hero” or “anti-hero”?

Galileo Galilei, the central character of Brecht's play, is known as one of the most famous scientists of all the times. He was one of the first to study in depth the universe and is known as the Father of Modern Science. I consider a “hero” a person noted for his acts of courage or noble purpose, especially one who has risked or sacrificed his/her life for the advantages of the human society. Galileo is shown as a “hero” on the first nine scenes of the play, for his courage to stand up the church and also for his passion and enthusiasm towards his aims. On the other hand, on the following scenes he is exposed with some characteristics of an “anti-hero” for his irreverence towards the church showing no respects whatsoever towards it's

privileged leaders and also for his coolness towards his daughter Virginia. Nevertheless, should Galileo be considered a “hero” or “anti-hero” for his actions?

One of the most important characteristics that make Galileo a “hero” is his great determination and self-confidence in proving and demonstrating his ideas. He dedicated almost his entire life proving that his discoveries about the universe were right. Although, he knew that it would cost him a lot, he did not give up the discoveries that he made. This is shown when he says: “The sum of the angles in a triangle cannot be varied to suit the Vatican’s convenience.”

Galileo is presented as a brave and courageous person who, in order to fulfill his aims went against the authority of the churches. Galileo had a great courage shown by the fact that he was not afraid to put up with the opposition. While the Italian church, scientists and the whole population of that time still held their beliefs strongly on the Ptolemaic system (which placed the earth in the center of the universe), Galileo explored and found out that the Copernican system of heliocentrism was the real one. The church did not accept his findings because they would look very stupid and according to them it is better to be wrong than to question what they called it the “Gods creation.” They blindly believed that the earth was in the center of the universe and changing this would mean that people would no longer be in the center of god’s eyes. The courage he showed to have had grew weaker when the Inquisition forced him to recant publicly his support of Copernicus. He gets arrested and recants his theories, an act that shows some negative qualities because he refuses to sacrifice himself for the sake of scientific truth. Andrea furious when he finds out claims: “Unhappy is the land, that has no heroes.” Andrea feels betrayed by this renounce of Galileo who in this scene has a sound change in appearance, giving the impression of having an indecisive and weak character.

Galileo is shown as a sensible and reasonable person because he understands that knowledge and particularly scientific discoveries take always time to be accepted. On one of the dialogues Galileo had with the Little Monk, where he blames the church on spending money on wars and not on the well being of the peasant and therefore showing no respect and fairness for these poor and unfortunate people. He says that “otherwise they could live in plenty” and “develop the virtues of happiness and prosperity.” This noble character he shows towards the society, is sometimes counteracted by some weaknesses of his like the fact that he himself wasn’t

very sensible when he took the idea of the telescope from a Dutch scientist. Although, this was a smart and cunning way to earn money he is shown as a dishonest person behaving very hideously for stealing credit for other's discoveries.

In his personal relations with others, Galileo is shown affectionate and sympathetic towards both Andrea and Mrs. Sarti. However, he alienates and doesn't give any attention to his daughter, Virginia treating her (from the start of the play) in a very careless way. When Virginia asks him if she "can have a look" at the telescope, Galileo answers in a very unkind way saying "What for? It's not a toy," leaving Virginia without words. Here, he behaves in a very unfair and biased way towards Virginia because while he got Andrea out of the bed to show him his discoveries, he treats his daughter in very humiliating and cold manner by making it clear to her that he thinks she is not a clever person. Also, on the third scene Virginia tries to comfort her father who is worried "weather the court will have" him or not, by telling him "Of course they'll have you, Father, with your new stars and all that." Galileo to this affectionate and caring encouragement answers in a very revolting and unpleasantly cold manner saying to her "Run along to your mass." These acts show how unfair and unpleasantly cold he was to his daughter showing no attention and kindness whatsoever towards her. Here, Galileo is shown very self-centered and irrational because his request is very absurd in that circumstance.

He is presented as a very passionate and dedicated person who spent almost his entire life proving that his ideas about the universe were right. He had a great desire for scientific research, a thing that makes him even more a 'hero'. His enthusiasm towards science is also shown on the conversation he has with the Little Monk who suggests to Galileo that "the truth will get through without" their help and Galileo responds "the only truth that gets through will be what we force through" and he later concludes "And the worst thing is that what I know I have to tell people, like a lover, like a drunken, like a traitor," even knowing that "it is an absolute vice and leads to disaster." At last, Galileo says "I enjoy doing my stuff" showing once more his great satisfaction and determination towards the scientific research.

Galileo has the ability to communicate and explain the most complex ideas with clarity and precision, things these that makes him a very comprehensive teacher. He is shown as a patient teacher and especially with Andrea to whom he teaches and explains all his discoveries in

great details. He is also an enthusiastic teacher and this is shown when he praises Andrea for his comprehension saying “Very well” and also giving Andrea good advices like “you must learn to think cautiously.” He was a great influence to Andrea and this is shown when Andrea quotes Galileo’s doctrine “Someone who doesn’t know the truth is just thick-headed. But someone who does knows it and calls it a lie is a crook.”

He lives the discovering of these scientific researches in a very optimistic and joyful way saying: “A new time has begun, a time it’s a pleasure to live in.” He understands however that knowledge takes always time to be accepted and this is shown when he says “I believe in Humanity, which means to say I believe in human reason. Here, Galileo shows his faith inhuman reason. Both of these show him as a combatant of truth and progressivism.

In conclusion it can be said that in my opinion Galileo Galilei has shown qualities, merits, talent and contributions that make him a real “hero.” His outstanding abilities, his great courage, his faith in universal truth, his comprehension and reasoning of some complex ideas, his great social concerns of the time and his fighting for the progress in science make Galileo with no doubts a heroic character. His feeble points and weaknesses of his personality, which all humans have, are for the most part minor taking into account his merits. He has remained for the last four centuries as a great hero, which symbolizes that the conviction and confidence towards the truth is stronger than any obstacle.

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