

I. Issue of Gift, a Satire upon Renaissance Avarice for Wealth

The ultimate goal of this present research is to prove *Volpone* as a satirical comedy in the light of Satire and New Historicism which exposes the ill aspects of gift-giving tendency so as to find out the issue of undercutting the gift-giving rhetoric. A gift or present is the transfer of something, without the need for compensation that is involved in trade. A gift is a voluntary act which does not require anything in return. Even though it involves possibly a social expectation of reciprocity, or a return in the form of prestige or power, a gift is meant to be free. In many societies, the act of mutually exchanging money, goods etc may contribute to social cohesion. Economists have elaborated the economics of gift-giving into the notion of a gift economy. By extension the term gift can refer to anything that makes the other happier or less sad, especially as a favour including forgiveness and kindness.

Gift can be given in many occasion. Occasion may be expression of love or friendship, expression of gratitude for a gift received, expression of piety, in the form of charity, to share wealth etc. Ritual scarifies can be seen as return gifts to a diety. Sacrifice can also be seen as a gift from a deity. Lewis Hyde remarks in the gift that Christianity considers the incarnation and subsequent death of Jesus to be a 'gift' to humankind, and that the Jakata contains a tale of the Buddha in his incarnation as the Wise Hare giving the ultimate aims by offering himself up as a meal for Sakka. (Hyde, 1983, 58-60),

In gift giving a gift the primary matter at hand is the good will of the donor, and the thankfulness of the recipient, for which the gift is only a material symbol. But in the play *Volpone* the issue of gift is taken negatively. Since the then contemporary Renaissance people were hunger for wealth, it has taken as a means to gather wealth.

So Jonson becomes so critical about it and satirizes human greed and avarice for wealth.

Jonson's life spanned the year 1573 to 1637, a period of change in English society: from the latter year of reign of Queen Elizabeth I through to the eve of the English civil war in 1642. Jonson as a man of passionate and volatile saw with the clear eye the world around him. His plays are noted for their satirical view of the modern capitalist.

Bourgeois monetary relations were breaking down the old feudal ties that had existed in England and which had been based in a largely agricultural economy. London was experiencing an explosive expansion a process driven by the impact of trade and the early market economy. London was soon to become Europe's largest city. There was also a social inequality. Poor people from the country side used to move to London for their livelihood. As the playwright's economic condition was so bad he could not remain without evoking the social injustice.

The city became a place of business and of fashion for the rural based aristocracy, and Jonson parodies in some of his plays the tendency of young aristocrats to sell acres of their land to pay for city fineries. London was the heart of the royal court and the state bureaucracy. At anytime over a thousand gentlemen connected with parliament or the low courts could be found residing at the city's inns. London's economic expansion and the aggregation of so many and varied social elements. The social tension of that time became a point to satire for which Jonson was to become famous.

The Renaissance was drastically different from the middle ages. During the middle age the church held most of the power and its economy was agricultural based.

Exploration and learning was almost put to stop. But Renaissance society was transformed into a society dominated by political institutions with an urban commercial attitude. Many people started to explore. The Renaissance also had an effect on the general society. Many people become interested in politics and economic benefits. People became interested in the world outside of their towns. Many became explorers, merchants and mapmakers. In the middle ages people were primarily concerned with serving the church and getting to heaven but in Renaissance people look forward and gave priority to life, worth-living, money.

The relationship between economic prosperity and the achievements of the Renaissance is not direct. The 14th century, which is generally regarded as the beginning of the Italian Renaissance, was a time of economic contraction if it is compared to the Middle Ages. Political disorder interfered with commerce agriculture productivity appears to have declined. The 15th century probably saw some recovery. Although economic conditions had an effect on the development of the Renaissance, economic prosperity and the accumulation of wealth were not necessarily the most important factors in the achievement of the era. The pursuit of wealth and the opportunity for trader and bankers to interact with the world beyond their town walls created an atmosphere more open to new ideas and to innovation, experimentation and enterprise in all aspects of life.

The towns also developed a distinctive class structure, as urban areas grew in size and wealth their social and political organization became more complex. With increased size and prosperity, the population became more diverse, with different social classes that varied in back ground and power. Peasants migrated to the towns from the country side. They escaped from there to make their well status. Working

class people had not political rights. There was the another, nobility class which was distinct from peasants members of nobility were interested to gather wealth. As ruling class developed, the gulf between social groups widened. By the 14th century the tensions generated by great in equalities of wealth and power had reached the breaking point. In *Volpone*, the playwright, dig out the social economic injustice and shows the means of gathering wealth by upper class people.

Jonson as a teacher and reformer of the then Renaissance society brings the satirical moments in drama. Johnson attacks the legacy-hunting and the worship of gold. In the play *Vopone*, Jonson demystifies the then patronage system that emphasized on the gift-giving rhetoric. The sixteenth century Renaissance had a spirit of ambition for unlimited knowledge, fabulous wealth and endless power. Ben Jonson, who was a highly conscious and conscientious artist, could not have remained indifferent to this things thinking and rethinking about renaissance. In *Volpone*, particularly, he subjected the materialistic aspects of Renaissance to a close dramatic scrutiny and emphasized the dangers inherent in it.

In the play *Volpone*, the practice of offering rich presents to wealthy but childless old man with a view to inheriting his wealth is presented vividly. Jonson chose this practice as the central movement of the plot in *Volpone*. His reason for so doing seems to have been to use legacy-hunting as a kind of short hand to denote the general human greed for money. In order to provide a proper atmosphere and local colour, Johnson resorted to a Venetian setting where such stories had existed and been told and retold by several writers in the past.

Volpone, begins with the protagonist's, apostrophe to wealth. Its here, Volpone is discovered rising from his bed and saluting the morning as well as his gold. The

time of the morning not only provides Volpone a suitable occasion for offering his prayer to his new gold, but also suggests the time of the beginning of the plays action. Volpone's opening speech, is accompanied by appropriate gesture and stage. Spectacle sounds the keynote of the whole play. Elevating a gold coin, as the host is raised in the mass, Volpone initiates a ritual which is a profane a parody of religious worship. The ritual thus establishes wealth as the center of Volpone's dramatic world. In the word of Alvin kernan, "Having Completed his new cosmology Volpone hastens on to construct his new religion, his new history, his new society, and his new man. The high priest of the new cult, Volpone, kisses 'with adoration' the relics of the sacred treasure' and bursts into rapturous praise of his "dear saint". (I,I,21)

Volpone emerges here as the cunning duper who pretends to be sick and dying and thereby extracts money from the people who seek to inherit him after his death. The legacy hunters, Voltore, Corbaccio and Carvino, begin their visits with precious gift to please Volpone. By making please to Volpone the legacy-hunters want his wealth. Legacy-hunters have belief that if they won the heart of Volpone he would inherit them. But mean while, Volpone's acceptance of Mosca's flattery at its face-value also suggests that Volpone himself is not above deception. This will make his guiling by Mosca. Probable; immediately, however, it suggest that though Volpone succeeds in duping others, he himself is vulnerable to Mosca's sugary tongue.

Volpone, who is rich but childless pretends to be sick beyond hope. He holds out hopes of inheriting his estate, to several would be heirs. He seems to be loving vitality. His hunger receives presents from all the suitors and deludes them with assurances, Volpone then hatches other complicated plots. As these plots are carried out they are seen through. Volpone then looks for new schemes for safety, which

proves successful, they grow owner bold and try to entice each other with the result that they are all disappointed.

Ben Jonson was a highly conscious and conscientious artist. Although he wrote for the popular stage and for making his living, he had a very high concept of his duty towards the society. The best way to perform this duty, he thought, was to work for the ‘amendment and instruction’ of the society of the time. This passion for reform often led him to trouble with the authorities and influential people. But nothing could deter him from pursuing his ideal of a satirist. Although his earlier comedies, which are known as “comical satires”, are full of personal references, he makes his satire quite general in his other comedies like - *The Alchemist*, *The Silent Women* and *Volpone*. In these comedies, Jonson emerges as a teacher and reformer of the society and as a literary artist simultaneously, the setting of *Volpone* in the romantic city state of Venice and the theme of legacy-hunting by focusing on gift-giving convention which had figured in ancient Roman Literature, would tend to suggest that *Volpone* has nothing to do with Johnson’s London. But a close examination of the play would reveal that there is a considerable element of satire on Johnson’s own society.

Similarly, many professions come under attack. When Mosca tells Voltore, the lawyer, why his master likes lawyers in general, we get a sharp attack on the legal profession:

I oft have heard him say how he admired
Men of your large profession that could speak
To every cause, and things mere contraries,
Till they were hoarse again, yet all be law etc. (I,iii,52-55).

The speech is quite in context, since Voltore is a lawyer of the kind satirized in Mosca's speech. But the harsh edge of the satire here is softened by the context. In the process what in a different situation could be harsh comment here becomes a delightful irony.

Medical profession is also satirized when Corbaccio, the oldest legacy hunter, says he has brought a potion for the "restoration" of volpone's health. To this Mosca's response is clear, and it brings out his attack on physicians who care more for this money than of their patients.

Furthermore, Jonson also satirizes the contemporary superstition and beliefs in quackery and wonder-curses. Before Sir Politics steps out of his house in the morning, he is careful to throw three beans over the threshold. Mountebanks are held in high esteem by people like Sir Pol, but they were also by the nobility and even the royalty. Queen Elizabeth I for example, patronized many quacks.

The Wound – Bes receive maximum attention of, Jonson, the satirist. The delineation of the character of Sir Pol was in fact so much based on ambitious but essentially stupid knights of the time that it is often believed that in the person of Sir Politics Jonson was in fact satirizing the English ambassador to Venice, Sir Henry Wotton whether or not the portrait of Sir Pol is modeled on this dignitary, it is certain that the foolish knight is a representative of many noblemen who claimed to have perfect knowledge of diplomacy and statesmanship. Secondly, Sir Pol is also the representative of a stereotypical traveler who went abroad to gain knowledge and experience, but managed only to advertise his own stupidity. In this respect, Jonson seems to be laughing at his contemporaries who made a mystique of the art of

traveling, Sir politics is obsessed with spy-complex, his plots and projects, all of which are examples only of his own folly.

Lady would be is obviously meant to stand for those ladies of the day who were infatuated with continental fashions. That is why the depiction of the lady's obsession with her dress and appearance is so elaborate. Although the events in the main plot seem to be remote from happenings in contemporary England, they are not without overtones of satire on contemporary life.

Despite the large infusion of satiric intent, *Volpone* does not lose contact with comedy. It conforms to the tradition of classical comedy which used traditional motifs, situation and characters to evoke laughter. Although the situation in *Volpone* seems at places to be too much for comedy, Jonson keeps the level of satire quite general. Secondly, as mentioned above, he creates interesting dramatic situations which rely more on irony, than on pure satire. For example - Volpone's worship of wealth is couched in biblical language. It amuses the readers and the theater goes to see Volpone participate in a solemn ritual which turns out to be a parody of prayer. Similarly, when Volpone and Mosca laugh at the cost of the avaricious legacy-hunters, the audience laugh at the folly of these star actors who are themselves engaged in the same game and in the same kind of follies, though, relatively, in a sophisticated way.

Ben Jonson's *Volpone* (1605) has been diversely interpreted both by male and female critics from the very out set of it's publication. In this regard, one of the critics Olivier Henney say views, *Volpone* is a story of a consumer. He further writes.

Volpone's list of potential sources of income distances him from those whose social position is defined by what they do. He is not merchant-

ventures, an agriculturalist and industrialist, a trade man or a financier. The implications is that aristocrats do nothing. They are concerned with consumption and display not production. But Volpone, of course, does produce income and the stark irony is that the nature of his work should rank him at the bottom of his taxonomy of labor, with the cozeners and thieves. (98)

In the same line critic William J. Long interprets the play as a keen and merciless analysis of a man governed by an overwhelming love of money for its own sake. He further asserts:

Volpone's method of increasing his wealth is to play upon the avarice of men. He pretends to be at the point of death. And his "suitors", who know his love of gain and that he has no heirs, endeavor hypocritically to sweeten his last moments by giving him rich presents, so that he will leave them all his wealth. The intrigues of these suitors furnish the story of the play, and show to what infamous depths avarice will lead a man. (161)

Critic Ronald Brodwin finds *Volpone* as a play which suffers from legacy of influence; there are various antecedents of the previous play in the main plot of *Volpone*. He further writes: In *Volpone*, not only have the elements of the beast fable and the legacy hunting traditions been adroitly combined but the situation which they share has been made the starting point of a carefully constructed and lively plot. (230)

Commenting on the play *Volpone* C.N. Manlove finds "the double view" which are united to give a single dramatic effect. (239)

The present thesis examines the contemporary society of sixteenth and seventeenth century where the playwright evokes the backdrops of those people. People of that time were so greedy to collect wealth by violating other's standard. People who were engaged in different fields attracted others for the accumulation of money and were sick to get power. Different gifts used to tempt people. Advocate, merchant, different gentlemen were also greedy for wealth. For the personal benefits even the well standard people used to destroy other's relation. Gold, jewels and other precious things were given as gift but it was all in the expectation of multiplied return. Though people were not enough able to explore anything it had become a trend of going abroad and boast their knowledge, all these things are satirized by Jonson so keenly, evoking laughter, as he was the moral teacher and reformer of the then society.

II. Satire, a Critique towards Renaissance Social Follies

Satire is a literary work used to ridicule or make fun of human vice or follies often with the intent of correcting or changing the subject of the satiric attack. Satire holds up human vices and weakness to ridicule or scorn. A satire, generally speaking, is an attack on foolish or wicked behavior of making fun of it often by using sarcasm and parody. The word 'satire' comes from Latin word 'satura' which means primarily 'full', and then comes to mean 'a mixture full of different things.'

Almost all the western literary forms have originated from Greek literature, but not satire. Although, one can find satirical spirit in Greek literature as even in the Bible, "No doubt ye are the people, and wisdom will die with you", it did not exist as a distinct literary genre form. It is accepted or justified fact that the Romans invented satire.

Satire has the corrective purpose of human vice and follies. Satires are the jokes about serious things. Satirists, like ironists, say one thing and mean other. Satire uses laughter as a weapon but it is differing from the comics. Satire has usually been justified by those who practice it as a corrective of human vices and follies.

Alexander Pope in *Glossary of literature Terms* remarked that "Those who are ashamed of nothing else are so of being ridiculous" (276). An attempt to diminish a subject by ridicule is the primary principle of satire.

Satire always has a target such as pretense, falsity, deception, arrogance which is held up to ridicule by the satirist's unmaking of it. Because the usually cannot speak openly or does not wish to do as he chooses means that allow him to utter the unspeakable with impunity, with regard to a satirist, C. High Holman comments:

His view point is ultimately that of the cold eyed reality, why penetrates shame and pretense for a didactics purpose. The portrayals

generally are at variance with outward appearances, but they contain recognizable truth, and it is truth that gives the satirist his license to attack (293)

Thus, satire is commenting on others' weakness in a humorous way to correct human follies. It is belly laughing weapon in literature.

Satirists present one thing or situations under the garb of another which may appear ridiculous at the surface. The combination of jest and earnest is a permanent mark of satiric writing the central method of device. A satirist, though, he jokes and makes readers laugh, tries to reveal human vices and follies which is the truth. Satirists declare that their truth is what people do not want to hear.

Satire differs from the "comic" though both use laughter in that comedy evokes laughter mainly as an end in itself, while satire derides, that is, it uses laughter as a "weapon and against a butt that exists outside the work itself" (qtd. In Abrams 275). That butt may be an individual, or a type of person, a class, an institution, a notion, or even the entire human race.

If we look at the history of satire back to the ancient time we get, there prevail two main conceptions of its purpose : one is not to cure but to wound, to punish, to destroy and the other is to cure and warn.

The first type of satirists are pessimistic and believe that the rascalities are triumphant in the world. Jonathan Swift says that though he loves individual, he detests humankind. These misanthropic satirists look at life and find it not tragic, nor comic, but ridiculously contemptible and nauseatingly hateful. The misanthropic satirist believes evil is rooted in man's nature and the structure of society. Nothing can eliminate or cure it. Man, or the particular gang of miserable manikins who are under his scrutiny, deserves only scorn and hatred The satirist is close to

tragedian. He believes that folly and evil are not innate in humanity, or, if they are, they are eradicable. They are diseases which can be cured. They are mistake which can be corrected . . . Sinners are her devils, fallen forever. They are men, self blinded and they can open their eyes.

Satire writing can be taken as an important sector of literary practice to show the upper classes voidness, hypocrisy and autocratic capitalistic behaviour. In seventeenth and Eighteenth century, many satiric essays, narratives and other literary arts can be adapted to the purpose of rebelling against political, social economical areas.

Generally, satires are of two types : direct and indirect. Direct satire has persona who speak out in the first person. This 'I' may address either the reader as in pope's moral essays or else a character with in the work itself. Horatian satire and Juvenile satire are the sub-divisions of satire. In Haratian satire, satire occurs through literary art which make audience laugh out of their vices and follies. Speaker manifests the character of an urban witty and tolerant man of the world, who is moved more often to war amusement than to indignation at the spectacle of human folly, pretentiousness and hypocrisy and who uses a relaxed and informal language to evoke from readers a wry smile at human failings and absurdities.

In juvenile satire the character of the speaker is serious moralist who uses a dignified public style of utterance of decry modes of vices and errors which are no less dangerous because they are ridiculous.

Indirect satire is often come through fictional narratives in which the objects of the satire are characters who make themselves and their opinions ridiculous by making their sayings, thinking and doing more ridiculous by the authors comments and narratives. A major feature of indirect satire is a series of extended dialogue and

debates in which a group of literary people serve to make ludicrous attitudes. They typify by the arguments. They urge in their support.

Satirists always aim at revealing the bitter truth; no matter whatever motives they may have behind their works. Early experiences of life make the people view the world differently. In this regard Highet says:

In fact, most satirists seem to belong to one of two main classes. Either they were bitterly disappointed early in life and see the world as a permanent structure of injustice; or they are happy men of overflowing energy and vitality, who see the rest of mankind as poor ridiculous puppets only half-dive, flimsy fakes and meager scoundrels. (241)

In this way, satirists wish to describe crime or ridicule folly, and thus to aid in diminishing or removing it. Dryden says he who draws his pen for one party must expect to make enemies of the other. According to him, the true end of satire is the amendment of vices by correction.

A satire, at the surface, appears to be full of aesthetic feelings or like a romance, but its underlying intentions are attacking a particular target in a disguise. Satire, according to Abrams, is "the literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking towards its attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn, or indignation (187). *New Encyclopedia Britannica* defines it as:

"artistic form, chiefly literary and dramatic in which human or individual vices, follies or shortcomings are hold up to ensure by means of ridicule, derision, bursleque, irony or other method, sometimes with an intent to bring about improvement". (467)

The satire therefore is mainly literary. It is fluent, witty and diverting: sometime stinging but rarely bitter. But all ironies are not satires. However satires are often stable ironies.

Morton Gurewitch, in his P.H.D. dissertation on European Romantic irony, describes irony as only corrosive:

Irony, unlike satire, does not work in the interests of stability. Irony entails hypersensitivity to a universe permanently out of joint and unfailingly grotesque. The ironist does not pretend to cure such a universe or to solve its mysteries. It is satire that solves. The images of vanity, for example that world's satires are always satisfactorily deflated in the end, but the vanity of vanities that informs the world's irony is behind liquidation. (qtd. in Booth 92)

Thus, all satires are ironies and all ironies are not satires.

Irony, as dictionaries tell us, is saying one thing and meaning the opposite. For its clarification, quoting both, we have: Irony is usually seen as something that undermines certainties, opens up vistas of chaos, and either liberates by destroying all dogma or destroys by revealing the inescapable canker of negation at the heart of every affirmation. It is thus a subject that arouses passions. (Preface IX)

Northrop Frye, in "Anatomy of Criticism," says the ironic fiction-writer, deprecates himself and, like Socrates, pretends to know nothing, even that he is ironic. Highet says: "Any author, therefore who often and powerfully uses a number of typical weapons of satire-irony paradox, antithesis, parody, colloquialism, anticlimax, topicality, obscenity, violence, vividness, exaggeration is likely to be writing satire" (18).

Pretense is an important part of Satire. Satire like Sarcasm, share the quality of derisive and unlike it, satire typically comments on society rather than an individual. Like irony of fate, the goal of satire is to comment on a state of the world. Irony of fate is an explicit satire, however, accomplishes this commentary implicitly. Likewise, parody also differs from satire because it relies on echoic mention and not pretense.

As Holman described “parody can be taught as imitation intended to ridicule or to criticize” (102). Highet considers that “Burlesque is a form of parody” (Highet 1962). Therefore, it may be helpful to evaluate parody in terms of ironic features-like satire. Parody does not expose ignorance rather it flatters or criticizes. Unlike ironic of fate, and like satire, parody is an implicit commentary. Both parody and satire require the reader to construct multiple mental representations. In parody, the audience does not need to go beyond the boundaries of the original work to consider societal implications as they do in satire.

In short, satire is a form of humours where the writer or the speaker tries to make the reader or listener have a negative opinion about someone, by laughing at them, making them seem ridiculous or foolish, etc. if someone is being satirical, their aim is not to amuse but to affect the person that they dislike; to hurt them, ruin them etc. The satire is mainly literary. It is fluent, witty, diverting: sometimes stinging, but rarely bitter.

New Historicism as a Tendency for Revisiting the Renaissance Society

New Historicism is a complete postmodern theory that opens up the new avenues for cultural criticism and cultural studies by reexamining and redrawing the boundaries of power and ideology and by revisiting the text at the presence of socio-political cultural context. New historicism is a term which emerged in the 1980s, primarily through the work of the critic Stephen Greenblatt, and gained widespread

influence in the 1990s. New historicism is a school of literary theory and criticism based on the premise that a literary work should be considered a product of the time, place and circumstances of its composition rather than as an isolated creation. New historicism focus on the 'historical' nature of literary texts and at the sametime the textual nature of histories. New historicism came as the reaction to the 'New criticism' of formal analysis of works of literature which was seen by a new generation of professional readers as taking place in a vacuum. New historicism has turned towards history, culture, society, politics, institutions class and gender condition, the social context etc, in interpreting any given text. For New historicist both literary texts and non-literary texts bear equal importance. They have given equal importance both good and bad, high and low.

Louis Montrose describes the New historicism as “a reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history” (781). The major thesis of new historicism is that a particular text is actually a “representation” or an “ideological product” or cultural construct” of a particular age or time. And these texts work “to reproduce confirm and propagate the power-structure of domination and subordination which characterize the given society.” According to a new historicist a literary text is said to be 'embedded' in its context, as an interactive component with in the network of institution, belief and cultural products, in their ensemble constitute what call history. There is always an exchange negotiation, circulation in that historical network. New historicism holds up the belief that all texts are circumstance bounded.

As a response to the New critical and Formalist way of dealing upon a text, new historical model of the criticism is developed during 1980s. This school of criticism views a text through the eyes of history. There is an inseparable relationship

between literature and history, and literature is to be embedded within history. It is virtually different from what is called the historical criticism of 1930s. In a *Glossary of Literary Terms*, M.H. Abrams discusses New Historicism in this way:

New Historicism, since the early 1980s, has been the accepted name for a mode of literary study that its proponents oppose to the formalism. They attribute both to the new criticism and to the critical deconstruction that followed it. In place of dealing with a text in isolation from its historical context, new historicists attend primarily to the historical and cultural condition of its production, its meaning, its effects and also of its later critical interpretations and evaluations.

(182)

A text cannot be analyzed in isolation from its historical context. The historical, political and cultural condition when the writer was writing the text and the effect the text has created in the society should be brought into consideration. Not only are these, the later critical interpretation of the text and the interpreter the subjects to be analyzed by new historicist criticism.

Since the existing power relation always bound people into certain chain, a writer and his/her text could not be an independent entity. They could not be isolated from the social, political and cultural network. Even the interpreter of a text has her historicity. Therefore, the history and culture in the context of a text are the main things that help determining its meaning.

Traditional historians believed that history is a series of events that have linear, causal relationship and we are perfectly capable of uncovering the fact about particular historical events through objective analysis. But being different from traditional historian, new historicist posits:

Instead of body of indisputable, retrievable facts, history becomes textualized; that is, it becomes group of linguistic traces that can be recalled, but which are always mediated through the historian/interpreter. Objective history is therefore impossibility; every account is just that . . . another text, and like any novel, play or poem, it is open to the same kind of critical interpretive scrutiny . . . History itself is a large amorphous text consisting of various and often disparate accounts. (Childers and Hentzi, 207)

So, New historicists posit the view that history is neither linear nor progressive, neither gradual nor authentic. Instead, like any piece of literature it is a constructed body to meet some ideological purposes, embedded in complex web of socio-political networks. History itself is a text, an interpretation, and that there is no single history.

New Historicism frequently addresses the idea that the lowest common denominator for all human action is power, so the new historicist seeks to find examples of power and how it is dispersed within text. Power is means through which the marginalized are controlled, and the thing that the marginalized seek to gain. This relates back to the idea that because literature is written by those who have the most power, there must be details in it that show the views of the common people. New historicists seek to find "Sites of struggle" to identify just who is the group or entity with the most power.

New Historicism shares many of the same theories as with that is often called cultural materialism, but cultural materialist critics are even more likely to put emphasis on the present implications of their study and to posit themselves in disagreement to current power structures; cultural critics also downplay the distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture and often focus predominantly on the productions of

'Popular Culture'). New Historicism analyzes text with an eye to history with this in mind, new historicism is not 'new'. Many of the critiques that existed between the 1920s and the 1950s also focused on literature's historical content. These critics based their assumptions of literature on the connection between texts and their historical contexts.

Perhaps the theme of New Historicism is the introduction to Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-fashioning*. Even the title suggests the main focus of the movement. Within the ranks of the New Historicism, literature is considered to be one of the social forces that contributes to the making of individuals; it acts as a form of social control. Although most New Historicists are scrupulous to distinguish themselves from Marxist critics, the fact remains that the central task of the New historicism is the same as that of Marxist criticism: first to call into question the traditional view of literature as an autonomous realm of discourse with its own problems, forms, principles, activities, and then to dissolve the literary text into the social and political context from which it issued. In fact, the New Historicism tries to solve the theoretical difficulty in Marxist criticism of relating the cultural superstructure to the material base. Its claim to newness might be put in terms of its claim to having solved that problem.

New Historicist thinkers tend to take a more nuanced view of power, seeing it not exclusively as class-related but extending throughout society. This view derives primarily from Michael Foucault. In its tendency to see society as consisting of texts relating to other texts, with no fixed literary value above and beyond the way specific societies read them in specific situations. New Historicism also owes something to postmodernism. However, New Historicists tend to exhibit less skepticism than postmodernists, and show more willingness to perform the 'traditional' tasks of

literary criticism: i.e. explaining the text in its context, and trying to show what it 'meant' to its first readers.

Micheal Foucault refuses to see history as an evolutionary process, a continuous development. Neither does he views history as an abstraction, idea or ideal. No historical event or Foucault, has single cause, rather each event is tied into vast web of economic, socials and political factors. History is not set of fixed, objective facts but like the literature with which it interacts. In the introduction of *Foucault Reader* Paul Rabinow writes:

For Foucault, there is no external position of certainty no universal understanding that is beyond history and society. His strategy is to proceed as far as possible in his analyses without recourse to universals. His main tactic is to historicize such supposedly universal categories as human nature each time he encounters them. (4)

Foucault's opinion is that history has made human beings its subjects. People are the subject of a history for it records the activities of the people in the time. He argues that "in our culture, human being is made subject. In this process of social objectification and categorization, human beings are given both a social and a personal identity" (8).

'Power' as asserted by Foucault, always dominates other. It continues its domination through the network of discourse. The power, at the beginning scatters certain ideology that creates a discourse. The discourse runs on a horizontal line touching all. No one could escape from the grip of power. Truth is created by the power and also in linked in a circular relation with systems of power.

Foucault's conception of power is neither reductive nor synonymous with domination. Rather he understands power as continually articulated on knowledge and knowledge on power. Nevertheless, his work in the 1970s on prisons may have been influential on the New historicists. In these studies, Foucault examined shift in the mechanisms of power in these institutional settings. His discussion of techniques included panopticon, a theoretical prison system developed by English philosopher Jeremy Bentham, and particularly used for New Historicism. Bentham stated that the perfect prison system would be a cylindrical shaped room that held prison cells on the outside walls. In the middle at this spherical room would be a large guard tower with a light that would shine in all the cells the prisoners thus would never know for certain whether, they were being watched. So they would effectively police themselves, and be as actors on a stage, giving the appearance of submission, even when they are probably not being watched.

In the Foucauldian context, "power works through discourse and like ideology, gives the subject the impression that to comply with its dictates is the natural thing to do and thus a free autonomous decision" (*Literary Theory Basics*). The awareness of the role that the discourses have played in shaping us and the possibility of letting opposed and competing discourses collide and thereby implode, may make room for relatively independent thought and action which can then have emancipatory effects in that present. The assumption here is that the resistance that is thus made possible is not a product of power, but is genuinely subversive. However, as Montrose suggests although, the possibility of political and institutional agency can not be based upon the illusion of an escape from ideology: an awareness of the omnipresence and power of ideology may give us some breathing space:

the very process of subjectively living the confrontation or contradictions within or among ideologies makes it possible to experience facets of our own subjections at shifting internal distances - to read . . . one fragment of our ideological inscription by means of another. A reflexive knowledge so partial and unstable may nevertheless provide subjects with a means of empowerment as agents.

(Literary theory Basics 183)

New Historicists argue that 'Man' is the construct of social and historical circumstance and not an autonomous agent of historical change. There is nothing essential about the actions of human beings; there is no such things in human nature. Instead, individual undergo a process of 'subjectification' which on the one hand shapes them and on the other hand, places them in a social networks and cultural codes that succeeds their comprehension or controls.

Power circulates through discourses which both influence and are influenced by socio-historical realities. Citing Foucault, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith and Helen Tiffin in their book *Key concept in post colonial studies* explains that "a discourse is strongly bounded area of social knowledge, a system of statements within which the world can be known" (70). Discourse provide so called vantage point to know the world.

In the critical analysis and investigation of new historicism. 'discourse' and 'power' bear important position. 'Discourse and 'Power' give a certain stance to the critical practice of New Historicism. Indeed, New Historicism owes much to Foucault for the concept of 'discourse' and 'power' by which it has strengthened its own critical stance. For Foucault, "discourses are coherent self-referential bodies of

statements that produce an account of reality by generating ‘knowledge’ about particular objects or concepts” (Childs and Hentzi, 840).

In New Historicist interpretation, history is not viewed as the cause or the source of a work. Instead, the relationship between history and the work is seen as a dialectic: the literary text is interpreted as both product and producer, end and source, of history. One undeniable side benefit of such a view is that history is no longer conceived, as in some vulgar historical scholarship, as a thing wholly prior, a process which completes itself at the appearance of the work. At the same time, though, it must not be thought that the new historicism dispenses with the cognitive category of priority. For the New Historicist it is ideology, not history, which is prior. The literary text is said to be a constituent part of a culture’s ideology by virtue of passing it on : but the ideology nevertheless exists intact, intelligible, in a form separate from the work. If it did not, the critic could not discern a relationship between work and ideology: and if the ideology were not prior to the work, it wouldn’t be historical relationship.

Ideology is the beliefs, values, and ways of thinking and feeling in a particular context. It gives human beings a specific perception that they use to judge and explain what is taken to be reality. So it is a system of thought and reasoning and ultimately creating a/the truth. The ideology works through the representation constituting and imposing a system in our consciousness.

New Historicist reading of a text attempts to see the effect of different ideologies in the given society and the people. Since most of the dominant ideologies are in favour of the powerful class, new historicism problematises those ideologies and challenges them by taking side of marginalized groups.

***Volpone* as a Satirical Comedy: Undercutting the Gift-Giving Tradition**

. Ben Jonson's one of the best comedies *Volpone* set in Venice, was published in 1605 which reveals Jonson's dramatic power at its best. In his drama, his very concern is with human foibles, follies, his didacticism etc. Jonson's ability could be seen in capturing the social contradiction and present them in a captivating form continues to resonate. Through the play, Jonson portrays with a black humor a society in which the pursuit of wealth and individual self-interest have become primary. The play's setting Venice which was regarded as the epitome of a sophisticated commercial city and virtually all the characters are revealed as corrupt or compromised.

Ben Jonson, as a master of satire presents his sharp wit artfully. His works could not have detached from satire as he always intended to do best for the society. He is very much appreciated doing well for the reform of society. The predominant feature of Jonsonian comedy is its satire. Jonson being always in didactic concern could not have avoided a satirical approach towards his characters and their whims and follies. Jonson was not fully conscious of this necessary fall out of his concept of comedy but, more significantly, proud of his role as a reformer of his state and society through the instruments of satire. When he was directly concerned with the presentation of common follies and vices of his society, such as avarice, hypocrisy, affection, ignorance and stupidity, love of fashion and clothes his satire was at its best.

Volpone means 'fox' in Italian. Jonson based his story around medieval and Aesopian tales in which a fox pretends to be dead in order to catch the carrion birds that come to feed on its carcass. In the play, *Volpone* is single and aging venetian magnifico who has devised a trick to fleece his neighbors while simultaneously

nourishing his sense of superiority over his helpless victims. For some time he has pretended to be dying, so as to encourage legacy hunters to bring gifts in the hope of being named as his beneficiary with the aid of his servant Mosca.

In the play, *Volpone*, Ben Jonson satirizes those people who are in the pursuit of materialistic advantages, mainly focusing in Gift-giving. Gift-giving in true sense is the transfer of something of which one does not need to return back. It is a voluntary act. If one desires to give gift, he/she can offer it. But in the play, gift has been taken in the sense of bribe instead of pious things. Volpone, a cunning, character of the play pleases himself by gathering gift. Legacy hunters want to please Volpone by giving gift to Volpone. The legacy hunters want to inherit the Volpone's wealth by pleasing him. They want much more in return. Gathering the wealth and offering the gift to please Volpone is much more satirized by the playwright.

Ben Jonson explores the nature of the then Renaissance people who gives priority in wealth by depicting the character Volpone who is the dominant character of the play. He takes 'Gold' as 'Saint'. In this regard, in the very beginning of the play Jonson writes:

Good morning to the day; and next my gold

Open the shrine, that I may see my saint.

Hail, the world's soul, and mine/more glad than is.

The teeming earth to see the longed for sun

. . . o thous son of Sol

But brighter than thy father, let me kiss.

With adoration, thee, and every relic

of sacred treasure in this blessed room. (I, i, 1-13)

Volpone orders his servant Mosca to open the shrine. When he opens curtain he satisfies himself looking the piles of gold, plate, jewels etc. Volpone calls 'Gold' 'Saint', 'world soul', a 'dumb God', a relic worthy of adoration. He equips it with a divine things, "Thou son of Sol, but brighter than thy father" and declares that it surpasses Venus in beauty. He elevates his gold to the position of a divinity. He treats gold as any of the things he claims to be. He worships gold insofar as he worships anything. Volpone is a greedy man, and a blasphemer to boot. Volpone's gold-worship defies the most fundamental and from the point of view of Jonson and his audience- the most universal of religious premises. Here Jonson satirizes the tendency of taking the materialistic thing as the divinity.

Volpone is a man without children or relative but a man of having huge property. Volpone pretends to be mortally ill in order to attract attention from those who aspire to be his heir. Mosca deftly manages the visits of the supposed well-wishers, and sends them on their way full of deluded hopes. At the heart of their visits is what appears to be gift-giving a massive silver plate, a gigantic pearl, a diamond, a bag of gold coins, an embroidered cap. As the play continues, the gifts Volpone receives are not merely material objects, but include morally compromising behaviour as well. Carbaccio attempts to disinherit his son in Volpone's favor, Corvino offers to prostitute his to him, Voltore commits legal malpractice on Volpone's behalf, and a lady would be perjured herself for him in court.

Volpone's visitors do all this, of course, in hopes of recompense. Each expects that when Volpone dies, his or her gifts will return multiplied many times. Corvino, speaking to his wife Celia, calls his dealing with Volpone a "venture" or business enterprise. While Volpone has no intention what so ever of returning anything, Mosca, speaks on Volpone's behalf, pretends that his motives are equally high-

laughing matter at the same time. If one thinks from the side of Bonario it is enough to draw a tear because he is being away from the father and his legal property but one can not remain without laughing seeing the foolishness of Corbaccio.

In gift-giving the giving is technically free but that freedom has to be strongly asserted, since otherwise the gift cannot perform its symbolic function, testifying to love, alliance, or respect. The nature of the recipient's obligation, like the material value of the gift, must be deliberately left unspecified if the symbolic quality of the exchange is to be protected. But in the play *Volpone* gift is not gift of its true sense it has lost its Pious significance.

Volpone praises his way of gathering wealth. The convention of gathering property is so unnatural Volpone says to his servant Mosca:

True, my beloved Mosca, yet I glory
More in the cunning purchase of my wealth,
Than in the glad possession, since I gain
No common way: I use no trade, no venture
... No mills for iron, (I,i, 30-36)

Volpone regards the processes through which wealth is acquired as more glorious than its actual possession. He reveals that he gains wealth through uncommon ways. He does not earn money through cultivation or by raising cattle to supply than to slaughter-houses. Volpone does not have mills of iron, oil or corn, factories which are the dominant things to earn money. But Volpone earns wealth by accumulating the gift which is given to him by his suitors or legacy-hunters. Volpone deceives the people, pretends of being ill to death. He satisfies himself in this way of possessing wealth.

At the opening of the play, especially in Volpone's profane parody of religious worship and prayer, gold is transformed into a god. This is not the belief of Volpone

alone. For the three legacy-hunters also share Volpone's ideology. The result is that in order to secure gold they transform themselves into birds of prey. But their desire for gold is a part of another desire; namely the desire to transcend their present status. All the legacy hunters, who dehumanize themselves and become monsters, seek Volpone's wealth hoping for a transcend of their social status. As the desire becomes more irrational and the legacy hunters become more avaricious, the sought after transformation turns out to be a de-formation. Corbaccio behaves in a most unfather like manner and disowns and disinherits his son. Corvino becomes ready to prostitute his wife, the lawyer voltore, likewise prostitutes his learned profession, in order to win Volpone's favour and inherit his wealth.

Though Volpone has no need of money, he certainly wants to be something other than what he is. Hence his insatiable hunger for playing more and still more roles. In the play itself, he acts first as a sick and dying man, then as a mountebank next as a commandatore, before he is given the final role of a prisoners, the flast being a reality rather than pretension. Again in the famous seduction speech in Act III, he would like to enact the roles of many mythological figures. Underlying this desire of his, is basically the desire to transform himself into somebody other than himself. Ironically, however, what he finally achieves is a de-formation rather than transformation. The whole play is thus a satire on the Renaissance craving for transcendence.

Furthermore, all the major characters of the play, except Celia and Bonario, derive their names from animals. Volpone is the clever fox, Mosca, the fly, and the three legacy-hunters are birds of prey, namely- the vulture, the raven, and the crow. Even the characters in the subject are given semi-animal names; The Would Bee couples are the chattering parrots and Peregrine, a hawk. The beastly qualities of these

characters are clearly emphasized in the beginning of the play Volpone is described as a fox, pretending to be sick and dying but actually waiting for the unsuspecting birds of prey. As he prepares to receive the legacy- hunters, he appropriately describes their predatory qualities:

... Now, now my clients
Begin their visitation! Vulture, Kite,
Raven and Ggorcrow, all my birds of prey,
That think me turning carcass, now they come.
I am not for'em yet. (I, iii, 87-91)

Not only do these characters derive their names from animals but they also behave like them. The images they use are drawn from the animal world when Corbaccio refuses to speak with his son, he gives the following reason:

I will not hear thee,
Monster of men, swine, goat, wolf, partidel
Speak not, thou viper. (IV, v, 110-112)

Again when Corvino publicly accuses Celia, he describes her as 'a whore' 'hot exercise' 'neighs like a jennet'. From the description, we must think that throughout the play Jonson's emphasis is not on animals but on human beings who deliberately choose to behave like predatory animals and birds. Beast imagery as well as the nomenclature of the characters is thus a part of Jonson's conscious planning, not to write a play about animals who are enacted by human beings, but basically a play in which human beings behave as animals and thereby demonstrate their monstrosity and foolishness.

Ben Jonson Satirizes the tendency of the people to deceive other by making them ridiculous. In the main action, Volpone is the principle impostor, his downfall

being worked by Mosca when he changes his role from that of agent to antagonist.

The characters of the main action, the four legacy seekers-Voltore, Carvino, and Corbaccio and Lady Politics Would-Bee are also impostors.

In the action associated with Sir Politic Would-Bee, he himself is an impostor, and Peregrine is the ironical buffoon who exposes him, by verbal irony, as in peregrine's comments upon Sir Pol's diary, and then when Peregrine frightens Sir Pol into making himself ridiculous in the tortoise shell, and thus completely disposes of him.

It will be plain that Jonson, in his use of the relationship of Impostor and Ironical Buffon, has not so without adapting it. Though the lesser characters can be seen simply as impostors, Mosca and Volpone are more complex, especially Volpone. Mosca in his dual role of agent and antagonist is both managing servant and ironical Buffon. Further when at the opening of Act III he says. "Successes hath made me wanton, (III, i, 5) we see the beginning of an action that will lead to Mosca overreaching himself in the manner of an Imposter-seeing himself as the "fine, elegant, rascal, that can rise, /and stoop almost together like an arrow, (III, I, 23-26) the imagery itself suggests the dual function.

Just as there are two aspects to Mosca's character, so there are two aspects to Volpone's. Volpone and Mosca combine to deflate the lesser impostors in the main action, and in this capacity, Volpone acts as ironical Buffon. The buffoonery is particularly apparent when, in his desire to participate in the action, he disguises himself as a mountebank (II) and as a commandatore in V,v to V, Viii. The ironical Buffon aspect of Volpone's character is especially to be seen in V,vi to VI, viii where Corbaccio, Corvino, and Voltore are mocked. Corbaccio and Voltore especially refer to their being mocked by commandatore in the sixth and seventh scenes of the act

and V, viii. Volpone jeers at Corvino because he has “let the fox laugh at your emptiness”, (V, viii, 14) Volpone is the source of much of the play’s irony and in this the ironical aspect of the ironical Buffon is stressed. For example, in the perversion of religious imagery in praise of gold, an imagery which at once creates and passes a judgement on Volpone’s religious of gold creates an irony which is fundamental to the tone of the whole play.

In so far as Volpone brings about the down-fall of the lesser imposters, Volpone appears as an ironical Buffoon in speech and behavior. What must be taken into account is that, although Volpone is at one level the deflating ironical Buffoon, he is primarily an impostor, the most magnificent impostor of them all. He is so from first to last, but it is only in the fifth act, when he feigns death and his agent turns antagonist, that impostor gain dominance over ironical Buffoon.

It is significant that when Volpone attempts to seduce Celia, we have a temporary change in the tone of the play. At this point, irony and buffoonery are absent. Volpone’s imposture of the lover is unchecked. The result is melodramatic overstament. An impression most apparent in Bonario’s line when he becomes to Celia’s rescue: “Forebeare, foule ruisher, libidinous swine !/ Free the forc’d lady, or thou dy’st impostor”. (III, vii, 267-268) How apt is Bonario’s calling Volpone “imposter”! The melodramatic nature of this scene illustrates the dramatic effect of the situation in which an impostor is allowed free rein. It is only with the presence, actual or implied, of the ironical Buffoon, that comedy can be affected in a play dependent upon this relationship.

Volpone initiates his own destruction, becoming the victim of his own Ironical Buffoonery, In his pretense of death, he wins his final triumph over the four

inheritance seekers. But this final imposture, of death, is both the end of the ironical Buffoon in *Volpone* and the cause of his downfall. This he himself realizes:

To make a snare, for mine own, necke! and run
My head into it, witfully! with laughter,
When I had newly scap't was free, and cleare
out of mere wantonness! (V.xi, 1-4)

Ben Jonson as a moral teacher, has a greater concern for moral issue. One might see *Volpone* as a prophetic vision of the society which capitalism, was creating even in the days of Jonson. To satire upon the capitalistic tendency playwright takes technique of these imposture and ironical Buffoon in his play.

As *Volpone* faces punitive sentencing by Venetian judges in the final act of Jonson's fable of deceit and material appropriation, he compelled to regret that he has pursued the wrong style of life over the past three years:

What a vile wretch was I, that could not bear
My fortune soberly! I must have my crochets
And my conundrums! (V, xi, 15-17)

His penitence at the point is in line with the movement if the play's donouncement toward the punishment of the duplicitous and the restoration of orthodox social order. The punishment must fit the position as well as the crime. *Volpone* thus reads his error as a social one, his inability to perform according to the normative behavioral requirement of his rank. Celia, the wife of Corvino believes in Christian moral value as she says: How ready is heaven those that pray! (V, xii, 7) Unlike Celia and Bonario other dominant character of the play are immoral, corrupt, avaricious, But Celia is the pious lady who is even ready to scarify herself rather than being adulterous. She

believes in god not in materialistic prosperity and sudden pleasure. Being a virtuous lady at the end of the play she becomes victorious.

Volpone acts the way he does because he is immoral, avaricious, sadistic. Volpone gets punishment by devaluing the pleasure he has gained from his illicit activity. The play tells about the individual's pursuit of happiness in a society increasingly concerned with commodification and the circulation of consumer goods. But ultimately to denounce his pursuit of joy as 'vile'.

The Venetian setting of the play also emphasizes the then contemporary Renaissance motif. For most of the Elizabethans thought that an English man was the devil incarnate. Venice was regarded as a place of crime, sensuality. All these vices which the English man often associated with Venice and Italy are present in *Volpone*. The Venetian crime was a kind of adventure in evil, and according to popular belief in England, crime there appeared to be glorified. Jonson has subscribed to this popular belief by making Volpone and Mosca grand even in their crime. Volpone is voluptuary and sensualist, a wanton seducer with something of the flamboyant reckless style.

Jonson, clearly saw the danger inherent in this European movement and thought it is the proper subject to the lash of his satire. In this respect he has successfully performed the two functions of the dramatist which he outlined in the prologue: to delight as well as to teach. The whole story is managed in such a way that first, one is made to examine the *Volpone* world from the viewpoint of its inhabitants, especially Volpone and Mosca, and feels amused by its strangeness and abnormality. Jonson invites his readers to examine this strange and amoral world from a critical and moral stand point and condemn with the Venetian judges all the wrong doers.

Volpone is not merely wealthy; he is also a votary of wealth. In his opining hymn to gold, he equates wealth with a saint and this own store-house with a shrine. He truly believes that gold, and not God is the center of the world which he inhabits. But Volpone is no mean miser. Wealth for him is only a means to an end. He wants to enjoy all the delights of the world with his wealth. When he is moved by a strong lustful passion for Celia, he is willing to sacrifice his wealth for her sake. In the well-known seduction speech also, he offers his wealth as a balm to Celia's virtue:

See here a rope of pearl, and each more orient
Than that the brave Egyptian Queen caroused;
Dissolve and drink 'em. See a carbuncle
May put out both the eyes of our St. Marks;
A diamond would have bought lollian paulina.
... And wear, and lose' em'. (III, vii, 191-198)

Here, he appears as a voluptuary. He would like to satisfy his immoral longing for Celia no matter what the price is. His poetry here is basically a poetry of deception and seduction. And in a sense Volpone is a poet. Whether he adores wealth with the passionate zeal of a worshiper or tries to seduce the unwilling Celia, his language acquires a seductive beauty of its own. There is a seductive charm in Volpone's verses, especially in his hymn to gold and in this apostrophe to Celia. Jonson's purpose here is to paint evil in its beauty, not to glorify it but to warn of its dangerous appeal and power.

As Jonson aims to satire on the vices and follies of the corrupt people, he creates uneasy laughter in his drama. Audience finds enough to laugh at during the corrupt scenes, one seems to have entered a dramatic world where the conspirators are

entirely evil, where the judges are easily deceived by appearances and where the Virtuous characters are too feeble to assert their own innocence.

The whole trial is a real mockery of justice. The judges act as weather-vanes, moving with the slightest change in the wind of the argument. At the beginning they are fully convinced that Bonairio and Celia are right, but when Voltore's forensic skill has turned the tables against the two innocent characters. The same judges sentence these to imprisonment. Volpone, who is brought on stage as a sick man, acts his role so superbly that no one bothers to verify whether he is really so. Bonario, who insists on verification, is described as a heartless creature. Corvino, who was jealous of his honour is later satisfied that by publicly proclaiming his wife as a whore "of the most hot exercise" he has avoided the dishonour of being called a cuckold.

Corvino's perverted obsession with sex and his inner feelings of insecurity and inadequacy are fully exposed when he tries to convince his wife that there is no sin in making herself available for Volpone. At first he had regarded her adulterous simply because she had allowed herself to be looked upon by a mountebank and the crowd of "lechers". Now ironically enough, Corvino is anxious that she should consent to lie with Volpone, who is of course the same mountebank. The action is justified, he says, because he is sure that Volpone is impotent Corvino's argument is in the same respect:

If I thought it were a sin
I would not urge you. Should I offer this
To some young Frenchman, or hot Tuscan blood
That had read Aretine, conned all his prints
Knew every quirk with in Lust's labyrinth,
And I were professed critic in lechery;

And I would look upon him, and applied him,
This were a sin, but here' tis contrary,
A pious work, mere charity, for physic
And honest policy to assure mine own. (III, vii, 157-166)

These lines of his recoil on Corvino. He was threatening Celia that he would slaughter her whole family because, in his opinion, she had compromised her honour. Now he threatens to prove her an adulteress if she refuses to be an adulteress in fact:

I will drag thee hence home by the hair;
Cry thee a strumpet through the streets; rip up
Thy mouth unto thine ears, and slit thynose,
Like a raw rochet!. (III, vii, 96-99)

Volpone's wooing and attempted seduction of Celia brings him before us in all his versatility as well as monstrosity. He reveals himself to be a lover of beauty, splendour and please in a typical Renaissance manner. But his action and speeches confirm only the negative side of the Renaissance, for through out the scene, he treats Celia as a mere toy to gratify his lust. He does not at all show any concern for her feelings.

Ben Jonson is concerned about humor in his comic art. In the play *Volpone* avarice is the predominant humour. It afflicts all the three legacy-hunters, Voltore, Corbaccio and Carvino. Although Volpone and Mosca are also avaricious, they are so with a purpose. They regard wealth as a means to an end. Secondly, even among the legacy-hunters avarice is the only common thing. For Corvino's subsidiary humor can be safely described as a fear of being cockolded, a fear which originates from his feeling of sexual inadequacy. But when he is motivated by his avarice, he can easily forget his jealousy, as for example, in his following speech to Celia:

Come, I am man not jealous . . .

Faith I am not, I, nor ever was.

It is a poor, unprofitable humour.

Do not I know, if women have a will

They'll do against all the watches of the world,

And that the fiercest spies are tamed with gold? (II, vii, 5-10)

It seems quite ridiculous that that power of gold is praised by Mosca when he speaks to Volpone. They take gold is the ultimate thing which can do everything. Mosca speaks to Volpone in fulsome praise of gold's miraculous powers:

[. . .] why, your gold

Is such another medi'cine, it dries up

All those offensive savours! It transforms

The most deformed, and restores them lovely

As 'twere the strange poetical girdle jove',

Could not invent himself a shroud more subtle

To pass Acrisisus guards. It is the thing

Makes all the world her grace, her youth, her beauty. (V, ii, 99-106)

This speech exhibits one of the characteristics that makes Mosca such a magnetic, accomplished deceiver, a man much more sophisticated than the foolish Sir Politic. Sir Politic Would Bee is also failure to perceive and adjust to Pregrine's skeptical intelligence. Both the speaker Mosca and Sir Politics Would Bee treat their subject as powerful and both speaker are fatally self-deceived. Sir Politics sees himself as an ingenious inventor. Mosca refers to gold in his and Volpone's hands as an invention more subtle than anything Jove could devise. The reader is prepared to read Mosca's speech on gold in a properly ironic light. Though vastly more sophisticated than Sir

Politics and more self-aware, Mosca and Volpone disastrously treat gold as a miraculous medicine to be exploited for pleasure and profit and thus make themselves ridiculous.

Volpone's fundamental act of self-deception is to believe that he can create a new world on his own terms by elevating gold to the place rightfully belonging to God. Volpone's disguises also ironically reveals the truth: by playing a dying man who is losing his senses, he reveals his true spiritual condition. Jonson gathers up the themes of folly, self-deception, and disease and focuses them with telling satiric point on the ultimate fools of the play Mosca and Volpone.

The world of *Volpone* is gold centred. What Volpone does—the worship of gold—is something in which many human beings are involved in a more sophisticated way. The Renaissance culture encouraged adventurism and capitalism. What one sees in *Volpone* is basically a capitalistic society whose chief adventure is to make money by hook or by crook. Volpone himself has found a marvelous way of amassing wealth by fooling the avaricious wretches who hope to enrich themselves by securing his wealth. Although Volpone says that he enjoys the cunning purchases of wealth more than the glad possession, he is no less a fool than the stupid legacy-hunters—Voltore, Corbaccio, and Corvino. Nevertheless, by making Volpone different from them in his approach, Jonson universalizes the theme of avarice by letting Volpone condemn all those who resort to inhuman but traditional capitalistic methods of making money:

. . . I use no trade, no venture;

I would no earth with ploughshares, fat no beasts

To feed the shambles; have no mills of iron,

Oil, corn, or men, to grind 'em into power;

I blow no subtle glass, expose no ship
To threat'nings of the furrow faced sea:
I trund no monies in the public bank,
Nor usure pivate. (I, i, 33-40)

Mosca supports him by saying:

No, sir, nor devour
Soft prodigals, you shall ha' come will swallow
A metting heir as glibly as your Dutch
Will pills of butter, and ne'er purge for't:
Tear forth the fathers of poor families
Out of their beds, and coffin them, alive. (I, i, 41-46)

What is emphasized here in these and many similar speeches in Volpone is the universal aspect of human avarice. The central plot-device of legacy-hunting is a means to illustrate this aspect. For as the three birds of prey fool themselves, they demonstrate to what evil avarice can lead a man. Voltore changes his speech twice in the court so as to remain in Volpones good side Corbacco, who is already deaf due to old age, disinherits his son with a view to inheriting the magnifico's wealth. The jealous husband Corvino forgets about his honour and becomes ready to prostitute his wife. The values of the materialistic society of Venice are so rotten that even the judges are infected by them. As soon as they learn that the mean and low-born Mosca has become the heir of Volpone, their attitude towards the parasite changes all of a sudden one of the judges even thinks of marrying his daughter to this villain simply because he has become a man of huge wealth and rank. It is this aspect of human avarice which Jonson satirizes so keenly.

In *Volpone*, Jonson uses a familiar dramatic formula to express a familiar idea that truth, no matter how cleverly it may be concealed or how long it may remain hidden, will eventually be brought to light. After reading Jonson's work we come to know the fact that, like many other satirists, he observes the folly and vice which he ridicules in the intention of correction of these vices and follies. In *Volpone's* Venice truth and justice are threatened by the compulsive pursuit of wealth. This unholy preoccupation with the acquisition of worldly goods upsets the machinery of state, saps the personal and professional integrity of the citizens, and undermines even such fundamental social bonds as the love of husband for wife and father for son. The events of the play suggest, however, that regardless of the depths to which Venice may sink, the universe still function in obedience to the old, familiar laws- even if it is peopled by fools whose hope of easy riches leads them to forget this fact, and by knaves who, in order to exploit the fools, feed their obsessions.

The moral purpose of the play is stated at many places. At the end of the drama, good characters are rewarded and the vicious are punished. *Volpone's* remarks to the legacy-hunters bring out the element of punishment which they justly deserve. *Celia* and *Bonario* are the virtuous and good in their nature. They do not have intention of doing wrongs and to destroy other's bond. So ultimately they are rewarded. At first they were in minority but it does not last long until the truth reveal. The men who were in power and majority exploited them in various ways. Jonson's aim to say that those who are true in spirit can be victorious.

Conclusion

Ben Jonson's work *Volpone* has the satiric bite towards the materialistic tendency and individual self-interest. In *Volpone*, especially, raising the issue of gift, Jonson insists how to reciprocate it. Unlike Volpone, a representative of aristocrats, Jonson tries to say acquiring wealth through uncommon ways leads men to destruction. Jonson, through his work ridicules the trend of people taking gift –giving system as a means of accumulating wealth.

The then Renaissance tendency of materialistic gain through the way of deceiving people is much more satirized in the work of Ben Jonson. Volpone satisfies himself receiving the precious gift from the legacy hunters and worship of gold replacing the god. Legacy hunters also are hunger for wealth and they offer gift to Volpone in the hope of multiplied return. But Jonson creating the character like Celia wants to say that only worshipping the materialistic thing is not the ultimate pleasure. As the satirist and moral teacher, playwright, Jonson gives the lesson that man should be true in spirit. Does Volpone satisfy himself in the way he chooses for materialistic profit? Of course not. Final sentence of punishment and the cunning, self-centered Mosca's, way of treating Volpone really leads to plight. Jonson, shows the Renaissance avarice for wealth by depicting the characters –Corvino, Voltore and Corbaccio. All these legacy-hunters do everything for wealth. Jonson mocks these characters using sharp satiric bite.

The then contemporary Renaissance tendency of exploration is also not away from the satiric bite of Jonson. Boasting the knowledge by going abroad is also shown in the play by using the character like Sir Politics Would-Bee. Ultimately he compels to return back to his own land.

Volpone, a cunning character, creates certain beliefs and takes material prosperity as the ultimate reality. Legacy-hunters who accompanied him in his ideology as they are under the grip of power which creates truth. Moreover the judges are also not away from the same grip of power there by they blame two innocent characters- Bonario and Celia. As New historicism takes the side of marginalized groups and problematizes the certain ideology, Ben Jonson takes the side of moral characters who are marginalized and then when every thing is revealed those people who were in power are sentenced. They have been given punishment respectively to their deserved crime.

Likewise, New historicists believe that power scatters certain ideology that creates a discourse. Truth is created by the power and also is linked in a circular relation with system of power. Regarding the issue, in *Volpone* too, people who are in power creates certain ideology. Volpone pretends to be ill to death to deceive legacy-hunters which is accepted by the majority of the people and then becomes truth for them. They construct this truth but which does not last long when Volpone compels to tell about the conspiracy of all. He is also deceived from his own servant Mosca.

Greed for power of Volpone is ridiculed. Volpone's obsession with power becomes increasingly an obsession with the mere sexual enjoyment of inflicting pain on others. Volpone believes in power and expects everything that he can do. He torments other people just to take enjoyment. But ultimately when everything is revealed he no longer remains in his earlier position.

Hence, Jonson's purpose to correct the human vices and follies is clear in his work. He attacks every people who take wealth as the ultimate goal. Like other satirists Jonson jokes and makes reader laugh, tires to reveal human vices and wicked behaviour. He seems to suggest the people that gold is not everything, men should

work for the welfare of the people instead of deceiving and tormenting others. Gift has its own significance. It should not be taken as the means to gather wealth. Man cannot be rich and powerful permanently if he takes wrong way. Hence human avarice for wealth is ridiculed in his play *Volpone*.

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