

Q : Discuss medievalism.

Ans : Introduction :

Medievalism is the system of belief and practice characteristic of the Middle Ages or devotion to elements of that period which has been expressed in areas such as architecture, literature, music, art and various vehicles of popular culture. It refers to the Middle Ages, i.e. the period between 5th to 15th centuries. During this unique period, English got maturity and widespread popularity among people belonging to every stratum¹ of society. In the Middle Ages, men's minds and activities were greatly circumscribed by scholasticism², the church, and the feudal despotism³. In this age, gradually, the English literature got maturity and later on Chaucer's poetry made English as a perfect medium for literature. This was the beginning of English literature in the Middle Ages. Thus, the period generally known as the Middle English period falls between 1066 AD, the year of Norman conquest of England and 1500 AD, the beginning of the Renaissance in England. This period saw many ups and downs in almost all spheres of English life, i.e. political, social and cultural, religious, etc.

The Church :

The Church had a very important role during the Medieval period. In Medieval age, the Church had dominance over a lot of the affairs of the State and the people in general. Most of the people during the Middle Ages believed in the existence of God, heaven and hell. From the earliest times, people were taught that the only way to get to heaven was through the Church if the Church would let them. The Church also had control over the State and the people, regardless of status. So, the Church was the single most dominant institution in medieval life, its influence pervading almost every aspect of people's lives. Its religious observances gave shape to the calendar; its sacramental⁴ rituals marked important moments in an individual's life and teachings. So, the Church plays a great role during the Middle Ages.

The Feudal System :

The emergence of Feudal system of the Middle Ages affected all spheres of medieval society, i.e. a land-based economy, the judicial system and the rights of feudal lords under the feudal system and the lack of rights for the peasants. Feudalism had a dramatic effect on England and Europe during the Middle Ages. It is the economic system of much of the Middle Ages. Under the feudal system, land was granted to people for service. It started at the top with the king granting his land to a baron⁵ for soldiers all the way down to a peasant getting land to grow crops. In return, peasants were taxed and had to surrender a portion of

¹ **stratum** - (Pl. 'strata') a class in a society.

² **scholasticism** - a medieval theological and philosophical system of learning based on the authority of St. Augustine and other leaders of the early Christian Church, and on the works of Aristotle. It sought to bridge the gap between religion and reason.

³ **despotism** - tyranny.

⁴ **sacramental** - of or relating to religious ceremony.

⁵ **baron** - a lord.

their crops to the lord. Feudalism is important as it created ties of obedience and fostered a sense of loyalty between the peasants and their lords.

The Chivalry :

Chivalry⁶ was a special phenomenon in the Middle Ages of Europe. In the Middle Ages, it was a moral, religious and social code of knightly and courtly conduct. It also referred to an idealized life and a knight's manners while among his courtiers. The first appearance of chivalry in the Middle Ages was seen in military activities against non-Christian states. There were three types of chivalry in the Middle Ages. These included duties to country-men, duties to God, and duties to women. It was first developed as a code of honour that emphasized bravery, loyalty, and generosity for knights at war. By the later Middle Ages, illuminated manuscripts had helped establish chivalry as a system of values that permeated⁷ almost every aspect of aristocratic culture. Chivalry was an idealized system of manners and morals. The medieval knight was bound to the chivalric code to be loyal to God, his lord and his lady.

The Drama :

Drama came back to life during the Middle Ages. During medieval times, most plays were religious and were used to teach people about the Bible, the lives of saints or how to live your life the right way. There were three different types of plays performed during medieval times, i.e. the mystery play, the miracle play, and the morality play. Mystery plays were stories taken from the Bible. In these plays, the priests and monks were the actors. The earliest known mystery play is Adam. The miracle plays were about the life or actions of a saint, usually about the actions that made that person a saint. One popular miracle play was about Saint George and the Dragon. Morality plays were designed to teach people a lesson in how to live their life according to the rules of the church. So, the Middle Ages marked the rebirth of drama.

Romances, ballads, and allegories came into existence in the Middle Ages.

⁶ **chivalry** - qualities of ideal knight; the combination of qualities expected of the ideal medieval knight, especially courage, honour, loyalty, and consideration for others, especially women.

⁷ **permeate** - /'ps:meɪt/ spread through; to enter sth and spread throughout it, so that every part or aspect of it is affected.