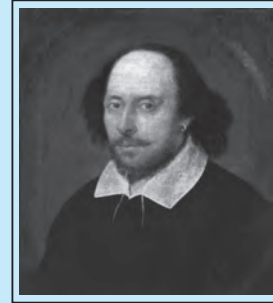


4.3.(A) A Midsummer Night's Dream

William Shakespeare: *There has never been as great a name in English literature as that of William Shakespeare (23 April 1564-23 April 1616 – 52 years) – a playwright, poet and actor nicknamed Bard of Avon, considered to be England's National poet, contributed 38 plays, 154 sonnets and two epic poems in a short span of 25 years. His plays are categorized into (i) Histories (ii) Comedies and (iii) Tragedies. His great comedies. Merry wives of Windsor, Merchant of Venice, Comedy of Errors, Much Ado About Nothing, Midsummer Night's Dream, As you Like It should be read as a group because of their shared theme.*



A Midsummer Night's Dream was written around 1595 as an entertainment / entertainer at the marriage of some great nobleman, and was later performed in a public theatre. It embodies the Elizabethan era, which believed in witches and spirits, an inevitable part of this drama. These elements and dramatic material are used here along with songs, dances, clever ideas, mistaken identities etc. The play forces the reader to land in to the beautiful land of imagination where all adventures seem possible in its fictitious fairy world. By the end of the play, Shakespeare makes us think about the way human beings think act and love, once again underlining his deeper awareness of human nature.

Theme

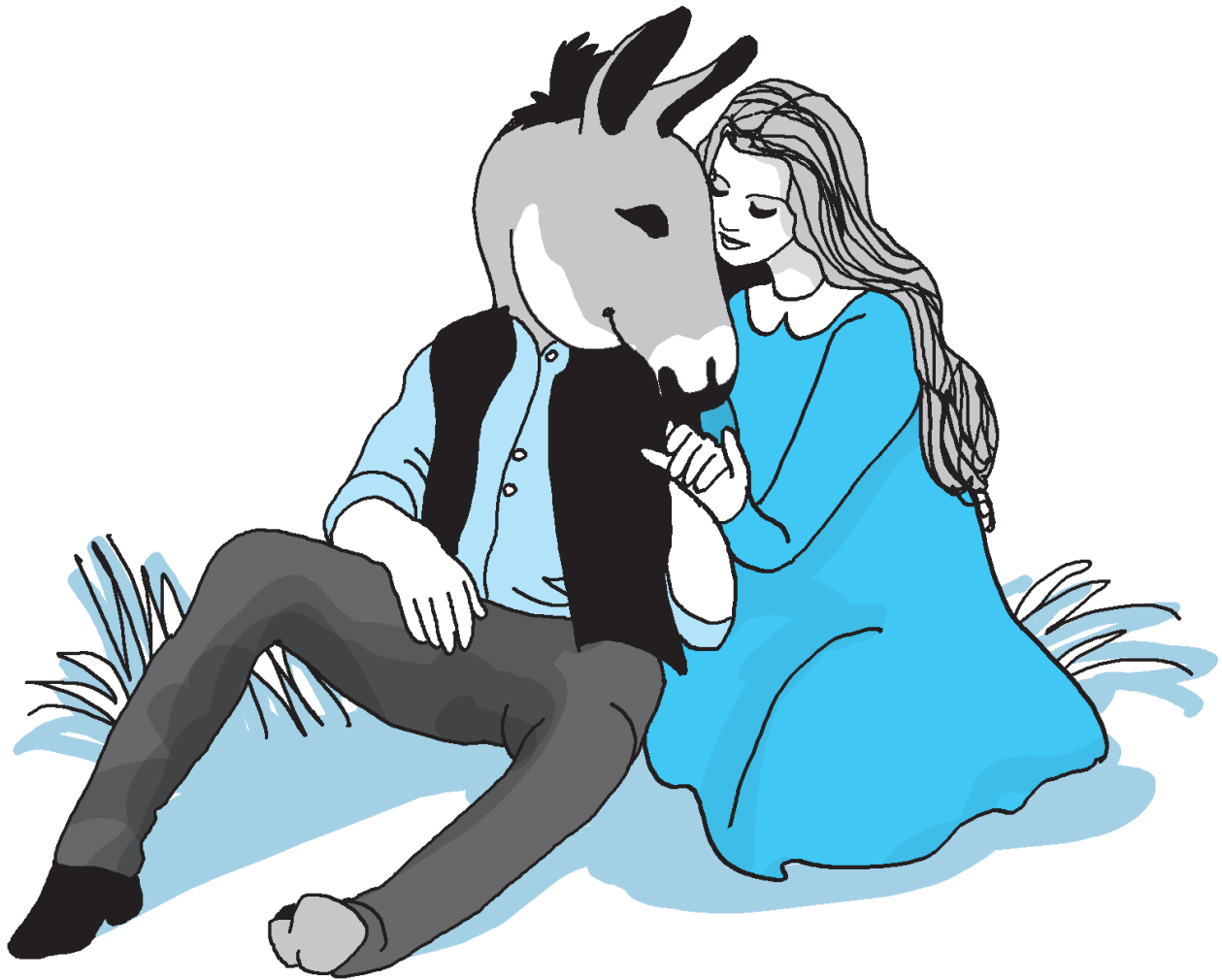
The dominant theme in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is love. Shakespeare tries to portray how people tend to fall in love with those who appear beautiful to them. Though attraction towards beauty might appear to be love, real love is much more than mere physical attraction.

Plot of the play

In the Palace

Theseus wins Hippolyta in war. They are to be married with great pomp in four days' time. He instructs Philostrate to arrange for the celebration with great revelry.

Egeus marches with Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius, to complain that Hermia disobeys him and stubbornly refuses to marry Demetrius and is in love with Lysander. The Duke Theseus urges her to obey her father but she refuses him. The Duke gives her three alternatives to marry Demetrius or become a nun or to suffer a death sentence. The Duke of Athens – Theseus – gives her time to think this over until the day of his own marriage.



Lysander and Hermia decide to elope to the Woods and get married. Demetrius who used to love Helena (Hermia's friend), has rejected her love and is now interested in Hermia. Hermia reveals her secret plan to her dear friend Helena in order to comfort her. Hermia has made a last ditch attempt to win back the love of Demetrius for Helena who reveals to Demetrius that Hermia plans an elopement with Lysander to the woods. Demetrius decides to follow Hermia, and Helena decides to follow Demetrius.

Quince's cottage : A group of workmen from Athens wish to perform, a play at the Duke's wedding. Quince is in charge of the direction, production and rehearsal of that play. Bottom one of the overenthusiastic, talkative, self-appointed active workers from the group wants to play every role of the play- 'Pyramus and Thisby'. They all plan to meet in the Woods for the rehearsal.

In the Woods : A different world unfolds in the Woods. The king of fairies Oberon and Queen of Fairies Titania are having a fight over the custody of an Indian boy as to who shall own him. In order to teach a lesson to Titania – Oberon hatches a plan with the help of Puck. Oberon orders Puck to bring the magic potion – 'Love in Idleness' the juice of which if poured on the eyelids of a sleeping person, makes him/her fall madly in love with the first person he/she sees after waking up. He thus plans to madden Titania and get the custody of the Indian boy. Now, you can very well imagine what tricks Puck – a mischief spirit is going to play with this magic potion in the forests.

As Demetrius enters the wood, followed by Helena Oberon notices his cold behavior with Helena and decides to develop feelings for her in the heart of Demetrius and orders Puck to apply the juice on his eyelids and marches into another part of the wood and applies the love potion on the eyelids of his sleeping wife. Soon arrives the eloping couple Tired, they too sleep in the same wood. Taking Lysander for Demetrius Puck squeezes the juice on his eyelids. Helena, who enters the wood following Demetrius, proves to be the first person Lysander sees after waking up and falls in love with her instantly.

Puck, who is appalled by the awful acting of Bottom, bewitches him by transforming his head into that of an ass. Titania sees assheaded Bottom and one can guess the result.

In another part of the wood : Puck wins praise by Oberon for his affair of Titania –Bottom. But as Oberon realizes Puck's mistake of using the love potion for Lysander instead of Demetrius, he himself squeezes it on the eyelids of Demetrius and sends Puck to fetch Helena which leads the fierce quarrel between Hermia and Helena as also between Lysander and Demetrius for Helena.

Oberon then gets the muddle sorted out by setting the wrong right in case of all Athenians by removing the spell of potion from Lysander, restoring his love for Hermia. Oberon also feels the need to release Titania from this spell as he feels sorry for her and his purpose of obtaining the Indian boy is also served .He orders Puck to restore Bottom's head.

Theseus, Hippolyta and Egeus enter and see the four Athenians. It is the day of declaration of Hermia about her decision. But the Duke relents to see the love between Demetrius and Helena and happily allows Hermia marry Lysander.

In the final scene the joyous lovers appear on the scene and Theseus decides it is time to plan the festivities and chooses to see hilarious play ‘Pyramus and Thisbe’ performed. At the end Oberon and Titania with their fairies and elves come to sing dance and bless the marriage. Thus the play ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’ ends on a happy note.

Synopsis of the Extract

Act III Scene ii : Another Part of the Wood- Oberon enters wondering what Titania saw first when she waked. Puck comes to report what has happened, and is praised by Oberon for his part in the affair of Titania and Bottom. But when Demetrius and Hermia appear and quarrel, Oberon realizes that Puck has anointed the wrong Athenian. Demetrius lies down to sleep and Hermia goes away, so Oberon sends Puck to find Helena and bring her, while he himself re-anoints the eyes of Demetrius so that he will fall in love with the right girl, but when Helena arrives she is accompanied by Lysander, still protesting his love, and she is yet more provoked when Demetrius awakes and declares he adores her. The cross-purposes are worsened when Hermia comes on the scene: Lysander and Demetrius both loving Helena; she now believing neither; Lysander rudely shaking off his betrothed Hermia; Helena and Hermia quarrelling fiercely. The two young men go off to fight for Helena; the two young women continue their quarrel until Helena, saying ‘my legs are longer’, runs away. Oberon sends Puck to clear up the muddle and when all four of the bewildered mortals are again near one another and all asleep, he squeezes juice on Lysander’s eyes saying ‘When thou wak’st’, / Thou tak’st / True delight / In the sight / Of thy former lady’s eye’.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THESEUS, Duke of Athens	HIPPOLYTA, queen of the Amazons, betrothed to Theseus
EGEUS, father of Hermia	HERMIA, daughter to Egeus, in love with Lysander
LYSANDER, in love with Hermia	HELENA, in love with Demetrius
DEMETRIUS, in love with Hermia	OBERON, king of the fairies
PHILOSTRATE, master of the revels to Theseus	TITANIA, queen of the fairies
QUINCE, a carpenter	PUCK, or Robin Goodfellow
SNUG, a joiner	PEASEBLOSSOM, fairy
BOTTOM, a weaver	COBWEB, fairy
FLUTE, a bellows-mender	MOTH, fairy
SNOUT, a tinker	MUSTARDSEED, fairy
STARVELING, a tailor	

(Act III - SCENE II)

Other fairies attending their King and Queen. Attendants on Theseus and Hippolyta.

(Another part of the wood.)

Enter OBERON

OBERON : I wonder if Titania be awak'd;
Then, what it was, that next came in her eye,
Which she must dote on in extremity.
Here comes my messenger.

(Enter PUCK)

PUCK : How now, mad spirit?
What **night-rule** now about this haunted grove?
My mistress with a monster is in love.
Near to her close and **consecrated** bower,
While she was in her dull and sleeping hour,
A crew of **patches**, rude mechanicals,
That work for bread upon Athenian **stalls**,
Were met together to rehearse a play
Intended for great Theseus' nuptial-day.
The shallowest thick-skin of that **barren** sort,
Who Pyramus presented, in their sport,
Forsook his scene, and enter'd in a brake,
When I did him at this advantage take:
An ass's **nole** I fixed on his head.
Anon his Thisbe must be answered,
And forth my **mimic** comes. When they him spy,
As wild geese that **the creeping fowler eye**,
Or **russet-pated choughs**, many in sort,
(Rising and cawing at the gun's report)
Sever themselves, and madly sweep the sky,
So, at his sight, away his fellows fly;

- **night-rule:** This has been variously defined as 'revelry', 'frolic', 'noisy sport', etc. But Oberon may use the term half-playfully for 'dark deeds', as when we ask a friend 'Well, what dark deeds have you been up to?'
- **consecrated:** dedicated to her use only; sacred.
- **patches:** clowns; fools (Patch was then a frequent name for a domestic Fool, i.e. professional Jester. Cardinal Wolsey's Fool was called Patch, as a personal name.)
- **stalls:** work-benches
- **barren:** stupid; brainless
- **nole:** head; noddle
- **Anon:** quickly
- **mimic:** comic actor
- **the creeping fowler eye:** Wild geese keep a close watch on the hunter who is creeping up to shoot them; eye is used here as a verb (to eye = to watch; to look closely at).
- **russet-pated choughs:** birds of the crow family with reddish-brown (or grey) heads
- **sever:** separate from each other

And at our stamp, here o'er and o'er one falls;
 He murder cries, and help from Athens calls,
 Their sense thus weak, lost with their fears thus strong,
 Made senseless things begin to do them wrong.
 For briers and thorns at their apparel snatch:
 Some sleeves, some hats; from **yielders** all things catch.
 I led them on in this distracted fear,
 And left sweet Pyramus translated there:
 When in that moment, (so it came to pass)
 Titania wak'd, and straightway loved an ass.

OBERON : This falls out better than I could devise.
 But hast thou yet **latch'd** the Athenian's eyes
 With the love-juice, as I did bid thee do?

PUCK : I took him sleeping, (that is finish'd too)
 And the Athenian woman by his side;
 That, when he wak'd, **of force she must be ey'd**.

Enter DEMETRIUS and HERMIA

OBERON : Stand close: this is the same Athenian.

PUCK : This is the woman: but not this the man.

DEMETRIUS : O, why rebuke you him that loves you so?
Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe.

HERMIA : Now I but chide: but I should use thee worse,
 For thou, (I fear) hast given me cause to curse.
 If thou hast slain Lysander in his sleep,
 Being o'er shoes in blood, plunge in the deep,
 And kill me too.
 The sun was not so true unto the day
 As he to me; Would he have stolen away
 From sleeping Hermia? I'll believe as soon
 This whole earth may be bored, and that the moon

- **stamp:** Ordinarily this means a noise made by bringing a foot heavily on to the ground; but here it must mean some- thing like 'trick' (i.e. giving Bottom an ass's head).
- **yielders:** those who yield (i.e. give up, surrender) the articles mentioned.
- **latch' d:** leached (i.e. anointed, moistened).
- **of force she must be ey'd:** inevitably (perforce) she will be seen.
- **Lay breath so bitter on your bitter foe:** Speak so bitterly to no one but your bitter enemy.
- **may be bored:** may have a hole driven right through it.

May through the centre creep and so displease
Her brother's noontide with the **Antipodes**.
It cannot be but thou hast murder'd him;
So should a murderer look, so **dead**, so grim.

DEMETRIUS : So should the murder'd look; and so should I,
Pierced through the heart with your stern cruelty.
Yet you, the murderer, look as bright, as clear,
As yonder **Venus** in her glimmering sphere.

HERMIA : What's this to my Lysander? where is he?
Ah, good Demetrius, wilt thou give him me?

DEMETRIUS : I had rather give his carcass to my hounds.

HERMIA : Out, dog! out, cur! thou driv'st me past the bounds
Of maiden's patience. Hast thou slain him then?
Henceforth be never number'd among men!
O, once tell true: tell true, even for my sake:
Durst thou have look'd upon him being awake?
And hast thou kill'd him sleeping? O brave **touch**!
Could not a worm, **an** adder, do so much?
An adder did it; for with doubler tongue
Than thine, (thou serpent) never adder stung.

DEMETRIUS : You spend your passion on a **mispris'd** mood:
I am not guilty of Lysander's blood;
Nor is he dead, for aught that I can tell.

HERMIA : I pray thee, tell me then that he is well.

DEMETRIUS : An if I could, what should I get therefore?

HERMIA : A privilege, never to see me more:
And from thy hated presence part I so:
See me no more, whether he be dead or no.

(Exit.)

DEMETRIUS : There is no following her in this fierce vein.
Here therefore for a while I will remain.
So sorrow's heaviness doth heavier grow

- **Antipodes:** the opposite side of the earth (where it is noon while it is night here)
- **dead:** pale and bloodless
- **Venus:** the evening star
- **touch:** feat
- **mispris'd:** mistaken
- **An:** and; (or) even

For **debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe**:
Which now in some slight measure it will pay,
If for his **tender** here I make some stay.
(Lies down and sleeps.)

OBERON : What hast thou done? Thou hast mistaken quite,
And laid the love-juice on some true-love's sight.
Of thy misprision must perforce ensue
Some true love turn'd, and not a false turn'd true.

PUCK : Then fate o'er-rules, that, one man holding troth,
A million fail, **confounding** oath on oath.

OBERON : About the wood go swifter than the wind,
And Helena of Athens look thou find,
All fancy-sick she is and pale of **cheer**,
With sighs of love, that costs the fresh blood dear,
By some illusion see thou bring her here:
I'll charm his eyes against she do appear.

PUCK : I go, I go, **look** how I go,
Swifter than arrow from **the Tartar's bow**.

(Exit.)

OBERON : Flower of this purple dye,
Hit with **Cupid's archery**,
(Squeezes the flower - juice on DEMETRIUS' eyelids)
Sink in apple of his eye.
When his love he doth espy,
Let her shine as gloriously
As the Venus of the sky.
When thou wak'st, if she be by,
Beg of her for remedy.

Enter PUCK

PUCK : Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand,

- **debt that bankrupt sleep doth sorrow owe**: sleeplessness due to sorrow
- **tender**: attention and care
- **confounding**: confusing and breaking
- **cheer**: countenance
- **look**: be sure
- **Tartar's bow**: weapon used by the Asian warriors who invaded Europe in the 13th century.
- **Cupid's archery**: the love shafts of the god of love (Cupid : Roman God of Love)

And the youth, mistook by me,
Pleading for **a lover's fee**.
Shall we their **fond pageant** see?
Lord, what fools these mortals be!

OBERON : Stand aside. The noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake.

PUCK : Then will two at once woo one;
That must needs be **sport alone**:
And those things do best please me
That befall prepost'rously.

Enter LYSANDER and HELENA

LYSANDER : Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
Scorn and derision never come in tears.
Look, when I vow, I weep; and vows so born.
In their nativity all truth appears.

How can these things in me seem scorn to you,
Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?

HELENA : You do advance your cunning more and more,
When truth kills truth, O **devilish-holy** fray!
These vows are Hermia's: will you give her o'er?
Weigh oath with oath, and you will nothing weigh:
Your vows to her and me (put in two scales)
Will even weigh; and both as light as **tales**.

LYSANDER : I had no judgement when to her I swore.

HELENA : Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er.

LYSANDER : Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you.

DEMETRIUS : (**Awakening**)

O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?

- **a lover's fee**: love required
- **fond pageant**: silly behaviour
- **sport alone**: fun by itself
- **devilish-holy**: a conflict between two truths (truth being holy) is devilish because it may destroy one or both
- **tales**: untrue stories

Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
That pure **congealed** white, high **Taurus'** snow,
Fann'd with the eastern wind, **turns to a crow**
When thou hold'st up thy hand: O, let me kiss
This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!

HELENA : O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent
To set against me for your merriment.
If you were civil, and knew courtesy,
You would not do me thus much injury.
Can you not hate me, as I know you do,
But you must **join in souls** to mock me too?
If you were men, as men you are in show,
You would not use a gentle lady so;
To vow, and swear, and **superpraise** my parts,
When I am sure you hate me with your hearts.
You both are rivals, and love Hermia;
And now both rivals, to mock Helena.
A **trim** exploit, a manly enterprise,
To **conjure** tears up in a poor maid's eyes
With your derision! none of noble sort
Would so offend a virgin, and extort
A poor soul's patience, all to make you sport.

LYSANDER : You are unkind, Demetrius; be not so;
For you love Hermia; this you know I know:
And here, with all good will, with all my heart,
In Hermia's love I yield you up my part:
And yours of Helena to me bequeath,
Whom I do love, and will do till my death.

HELENA : Never did mockers waste more idle breath.

DEMETRIUS : Lysander, keep thy Hermia: I will none,

- **Crystal is muddy:** i.e. though crystal is brilliantly clear, Helena's eyes are (figuratively) so much more brilliant that, in comparison, crystal seems muddy.
- **congealed:** frozen solid.
- **Taurus:** a mountain range in Turkey
- **turns to a crow:** turns as black as a crow.
- **join in souls:** Several suggestions have been made for altering this phrase, but it means 'joining with other persons'. Souls as a synonym for persons is familiar in dialect.
- **superpraise:** praise excessively
- **trim:** fine (Helena uses the word ironically and scornfully.)
- **conjure:** summon

If e'er I lov'd her, all that love is gone.
My heart to her but as **guest-wise** sojourn'd,
And now to Helen is it home return'd,
There to remain.

LYSANDER : Helen, it is not so.

DEMETRIUS : Disparage not the faith thou dost not know,
Lest to thy peril thou **aby** it dear.
Look where thy love comes: yonder is thy dear.

Enter HERMIA

HERMIA : **Dark night**, that from the eye his function takes,
The ear more quick of apprehension makes.
Wherein it doth impair the seeing sense,
It pays the hearing double recompense.
Thou art not by mine eye, Lysander, found;
Mine ear, I thank it, brought me to thy sound.
But why, unkindly, didst thou leave me so?

LYSANDER : Why should he stay, whom love doth press to go?

HERMIA : What love could press Lysander from my side?

LYSANDER : Lysander's love, that would not let him bide,
Fair Helena, who more **engilds** the night
Than all yon **fiery oes and eyes of light**.
Why seek'st thou me? could not this make thee know
The hate I bear thee made me leave thee so?

HERMIA : You speak not as you think: it cannot be.

HELENA : Lo, she is one of this **confederacy**!
Now I perceive they have conjoin'd all three
To fashion this false sport, in spite of me.
Injurious Hermia! most ungrateful maid!
Have you conspired, have you with these contriv'd

- **as guest-wise**: in the manner of a guest; temporarily
- **aby** : pay a heavy penalty for
- **Dark night... makes** : darkness, which makes eyes useless, quickens the sense of hearing.
- **engilds**: brightens
- **fiery oes and eyes of light**: The stars and planets in the sky; oes means round objects. There is perhaps an intentional pun here on oes and is.
- **confederacy**: plot

To bait me with this foul derision?
 Is all the counsel that we two have shar'd,
 The sisters' vows, the hours that we have spent,
 When we have **chid the hasty-footed time**
 For parting us—O, is all forgot?
 All schooldays' friendship, childhood innocence?
 We, Hermia, like two **artificial gods**,
 Have with our needles created both one flower,
 Both on one **sampler**, sitting on one cushion,
 Both warbling of one song, both in one key;
 As if our hands, our sides, voices, and minds,
 Had been **incorporate**. So we grew together,
 Like to a double cherry, seeming parted;
 But yet an **union in partition**:
 Two lovely berries moulded on one stem:
 So, with two seeming bodies, but one heart;
Two of the first, like coats in heraldry,
 Due but to one, and crowned with one crest.
 And will you **rent** our ancient love asunder,
 To join with men in scorning your poor friend?
 It is not friendly, 'tis not maidenly:
 Our sex, as well as I, may chide you for it,
 Though I alone do feel the injury.

HERMIA : I am amazed at your passionate words.
 I scorn you not: it seems that you scorn me.

HELENA : Have you not set Lysander, as in scorn,
 To follow me and praise my eyes and face?
 And made your other love, Demetrius,
 (Who e'en but now did spurn me with his foot)
 To call me goddess, nymph, divine, and rare,
 Precious, celestial? Wherefore speaks he this

- **chid**: chidden; rebuked
- **the hasty-footed time**: Time seemed to go fast when they were together so that parting came too soon.
- **artificial gods**: creators of works of art.
- **sampler**: A piece of cloth on which coloured designs, verses, etc. are made in needlework.
- **incorporate**: united; all one
- **union in partition**: two in one (i.e. two persons, but one in affection)
- **Two of the first... heraldry**: an heraldic term, meaning two uses of the colour first mentioned in the description of the design on a coat of arms.
- **rent**: tear; rend.

To her he hates? and wherefore doth Lysander
 Deny your love (so rich within his soul)
 And tender me (forsooth) affection,
 But by your setting on, by your consent?
 What though I be not **so in grace** as you,
 So hung upon with love, so fortunate,
 But miserable most, to love unloved?
 This you should pity rather than despise.

HERMIA : I understand not what you mean by this.

HELENA : Ay, do, persevere, counterfeit sad looks:
Make mouths upon me when I turn my back:
 Wink each at other; hold the sweet jest up.
 This sport, **well carried**, shall be **chronic'd**.
 If you have any pity, grace, or manners,
 You would not make me **such an argument**.
 But fare ye well: 'tis partly my own fault:
 Which death or absence soon shall remedy.

LYSANDER : Stay, gentle Helena; hear my excuse,
 My love, my life, my soul, fair Helena!

HELENA : O excellent!

HERMIA : Sweet, do not scorn her so.

DEMETRIUS : If she cannot entreat, I can compel.

LYSANDER : Thou canst compel no more than she entreat.
 Thy threats have no more strength than her weak prayers.
 Helen, I love thee, by my life, I do:
 I swear by that which I will lose for thee,
 To prove him false that says I love thee not.

DEMETRIUS : I say I love thee more than he can do.

LYSANDER : If thou say so, withdraw, and prove it too.

DEMETRIUS : Quick, come!

HERMIA : Lysander, whereto tends all this?

- **so in grace**: so much in favour; so well-liked
- **Make mouths upon me**: make rude grimaces
- **well carried**: cleverly carried out
- **chronic'd**: recorded; written down
- **such an argument**: the subject of such scorn

LYSANDER : Away, you **Ethiope**!

DEMETRIUS : No, no; he'll . . .
Seem to break loose: take on as you would follow,
But yet come not. You are a tame man, go!

LYSANDER : Hang off, thou cat, thou **burr**! vile thing, let loose,
Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!

HERMIA : Why are you grown so rude? what change is this,
Sweet love—

LYSANDER : Thy love! out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathed med'cine! hated potion, hence!

HERMIA : Do you not jest?

HELENA : Yes, sooth; and so do you.

LYSANDER : Demetrius, I will keep my word with thee.

DEMETRIUS : I would I had your bond, for I perceive
A weak **bond** holds you: I'll not trust your word.

LYSANDER : What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill her dead?
Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.

HERMIA : What? can you do me greater harm than hate?
Hate me! wherefore? O me! what news, my love?
Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?
I am as fair now as I was **erewhile**.
Since night you lov'd me; yet since night you left me:
Why then, you left me (O, the gods forbid)
In earnest, shall I say?

LYSANDER : Ay, by my life;
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt:
Be certain: nothing truer: 'tis no jest
That I do hate thee, and love Helena.

- **Ethiope**: black face, but actually a scornful reference to her dark hair
- **burr**: a clinging thing (from the seeds of certain plants which are surrounded by spiky hairs which attach themselves to suitable surfaces)
- **bond... bond**: pledge... fetter
- **erewhile**: before

HERMIA : O me! you juggler! you **canker-blossom**!
You thief of love! what, have you come by night
And stol'n my love's heart from him?

HELENA : Fine, i'faith!
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! you counterfeit, you puppet, you!

HERMIA : Puppet? why so? ay, that way goes the game.
Now I perceive that she hath made compare
Between our statures; she hath urged her height;
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevail'd with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted **maypole**? speak:
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

HELENA : I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me: I was never curst:
I have no gift at all in shrewishness:
I am a **right maid** for my cowardice:
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,
Because she is something **lower** than myself,
That I can match Hermia

HERMIA : Lower! hark, again.

HELENA : Good Hermia, do not be so bitter with me
I evermore did love you, Hermia,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wrong'd you;
Save that, in love unto Demetrius,
I told him of your **stealth** unto this wood.

- **canker-blossom**: a flower blighted by a worm lodged in the bud
- **maypole**: lanky and skinny creature (figuratively, from the wooden maypole, which is tall and thin)
- **a right maid**: just like a girl
- **lower**: shorter
- **stealth**: stealing away

He follow'd you: for love I follow'd him;
 But he hath chid me hence, and threaten'd me
 To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too.
 And now, so you will let me quiet go,
 To Athens will I bear my folly back,
 And follow you no further, let me go.
 You see how simple and how **fond** I am.

HERMIA : Why, get you gone: who is't that hinders you?

HELENA : A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

HERMIA : What, with Lysander?

HELENA : With Demetrius.

LYSANDER : Be not afraid: she shall not harm thee, Helena.

DEMETRIUS : No, sir, she shall not, though you take her part.

HELENA : O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd!
 She was a vixen when she went to school:
 And though she be but little, she is fierce.

HERMIA : 'Little' again? Nothing but 'low' and 'little'!
 Why will you **suffer her to flout** me thus?
 Let me come to Hermia:

LYSANDER : Get you gone, you dwarf;
 You **minimus**, of hind'ring **knot-grass** made;
 You bead, you acorn.

DEMETRIUS : You are too **officious**
 In her behalf that scorns your services.
 Let her alone: speak not of Helena,
 Take not her part. For, if thou dost intend
 Never so little show of love to her,
 Thou shalt **aby** it.

LYSANDER : Now she holds me not;
 Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right,
 Of thine or mine, is most in Helena.

- **fond**: foolish
- **suffer her to flout**: allow her to mock
- **minimus** : (Latin) smallest of all
- **knot-grass**: a weed which creeps and makes entangling roots.
- **officious**: meddlesome; interfering
- **aby**: pay a heavy penalty for

DEMETRIUS : Follow? nay, I'll go with thee, **cheek by jowl**.
(**Exeunt** **LYSANDER** and **DEMETRIUS**.)

HERMIA : You, mistress, all **this coil is 'long of you**:
Nay, go not back.

HELENA : I will not trust you, I,
Nor longer stay in your curst company.
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray:
My legs are longer though, to run away. (Exit.)

HERMIA : I am amaz'd, and know not what to say. (Exit.)

OBERON (To PUCK) : This is thy negligence: still thou mistak'st,
Or else committ'st thy knaveries wilfully.

PUCK : Believe me, **king of shadows**, I mistook.
Did not you tell me I should know the man
By the Athenian garments he had on?
And so far blameless proves my enterprise
That I have 'nointed an Athenian's eyes:
And so far am I glad it so did **sort**,
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

OBERON : Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight:
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night;
The starry **welkin** cover thou anon
With drooping fog as black as **Acheron**,
And lead these **testy** rivals so astray
As one come not within another's way.
Like to Lysander **sometime frame thy tongue**,
Then stir Demetrius up with bitter wrong:
And sometime **rail thou** like Demetrius:
And from each other look thou lead them thus,
Till o'er their brows death-counterfeiting sleep

- **cheek by jowl**: closely, side by side, as one's cheek is by one's jaw.
- **this coil is 'long of you**: This trouble is because of you.
- **king of shadows**: fairy king, fairies being non-human and therefore spirits or shadows with no physical substance
- **sort**: come about; occur
- **welkin**: sky
- **Acheron**: In ancient mythology a name for Hades, the dark underworld of the dead
- **testy**: bad-tempered
- **sometime frame thy tongue**: sometimes imitate his voice
- **rail thou**: use violent language.

With leaden legs and **batty** wings doth creep:
 Then crush this herb into Lysander's eye;
 Whose liquor hath this virtuous property,
 To take from thence all error with his might,
 And make his eyeballs roll with wonted sight.
 When they next wake, all this derision
 Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision,
 And back to Athens shall the lovers wend,
With league whose date till death shall never end.
 Whiles I in this affair do thee employ,
 I'll to my queen and beg her Indian boy:
 And then I will her charmed eye release
 From monster's view, and all things shall be peace.

PUCK : My Fairy Lord, this must be done with haste,
 For **night's swift dragons** cut the clouds full fast,
 And yonder shines **Aurora's harbinger**:
 At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
 Troop home to churchyards: damned spirits all,
 That in **crossways** and floods have burial,
 Already to their **wormy beds** are gone:
 For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
 They wilfully themselves exile from light,
 And must for aye **consort with** black-brow'd night.

OBERON : But we are spirits of another sort.
 I with the morning's love have oft made sport.
 And like a forester the groves may tread
 Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
 Opening on **Neptune** with fair blessed beams,
 Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.
 But, notwithstanding, haste; make no delay:
 We may effect this business yet ere day. **(Exit.)**

- **batty**: bat-like
- **With league... never end**: united for life
- **night's swift dragons**: In ancient mythology, the chariot of night was drawn by dragons.
- **Aurora's harbinger**: the forerunner of the dawn (called Aurora in Roman mythology) i.e. the morning star
- **crossways**: In 'earlier times, criminals were buried at crossroads.
- **wormy beds**: graves
- **consort with**: keep company with
- **Neptune**: the ocean (of which Neptune was the god in ancient mythology).

PUCK : Up and down, up and down,
I will lead them up and down:
I am fear'd in field and town:
Goblin, lead them up and down.
Here comes one.

Enter LYSANDER

LYSANDER : Where art thou, proud Demetrius? Speak thou now.

PUCK : Here, villain, drawn and ready. Where art thou?

LYSANDER : I will be with thee straight.

PUCK : Follow me, then,
To plainer ground. (Exit Lysander, as following the voice.)

Enter DEMETRIUS

DEMETRIUS : Lysander! speak again:
Thou runaway, thou coward, art thou fled?
Speak! In some bush? Where dost thou hide thy head?

PUCK : (imitating LYSANDER'S voice)
Thou coward, art thou bragging to the stars,
Telling the bushes that thou look'st for wars,
And wilt not come? Come, **recreant**; come, thou child;
I'll whip thee with a rod. **He is defil'd**
That draws a sword on thee.

DEMETRIUS : Yea, art thou there?

PUCK : Follow my voice: we'll try no manhood here. (Exeunt.)

Re-enter LYSANDER

LYSANDER : He goes before me and still dares me on:
When I come where he calls, then he is gone.

- **recreant:** turncoat
- **He is defil'd That draws a sword on thee:** A sword was regarded as a weapon of honour used only against brave opponents; it would therefore be disgraceful (defiling) to draw it to chastise a coward.

The villain is much lighter-heel'd than I:
I follow'd fast, but faster he did fly;
That fallen am I in dark uneven way,
And here will rest me. (**Lies down.**)
Come, thou gentle day!
For if but once thou show me thy grey light,
I'll find Demetrius, and revenge this spite. (**Sleeps.**)

Re-enter PUCK and DEMETRIUS.

- PUCK** : Ho, ho, ho! Coward, why comest thou not?
- DEMETRIUS** : Abide me, if thou darest; for well I wot
Thou runn'st before me, shifting every place,
And darest not stand, nor look me in the face.
Where art thou now?
- PUCK** : Come **hither**: I am here.
- DEMETRIUS** : Nay, then, thou mock'st me. Thou shalt buy this dear,
If ever I thy face by daylight see:
Now, go thy way. Faintness **constraineth** me
To measure out my length on this cold bed.
By day's approach look to be visited.
(**Lies down and sleeps.**)

Re-enter HELENA.

- HELENA** : O weary night, O long and tedious night,
Abate thy hours! Shine comforts from the east,
That I may back to Athens by daylight,
From these that my poor company detest:
And sleep, that sometimes shuts up sorrow's eye,
Steal me awhile from mine own company.
(**Lies down and sleeps.**)
- PUCK** : Yet but three? Come one more;

- **hither** (archaic word) : to or towards this place
- **constraineth** (archaic word) : constrains, restricts

Two of both kinds makes up four.
Here she comes, **curst** and sad:
Cupid is **a knavish lad**,
Thus to make poor females mad.

Re-enter HERMIA.

HERMIA : Never so weary, never so in **woe**;
Bedabbled with the dew, and torn with **briers**;
I can no further crawl, no further go;
My legs can keep no pace with my desires.
Here will I rest me till the break of day.
Heavens shield Lysander, if they mean a fray!
(Lies down and sleeps.)

PUCK : On the ground
Sleep sound:
I'll apply
To your eye,
Gentle lover, remedy. [Squeezing the juice on Lysander's eyes.
When thou wakest,
Thou takest
True delight
In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye:
And the country proverb known,
That every man should take his own,
In your waking shall be shown:
Jack shall have Jill;
Nought shall go ill;
The man shall have his **mare** again, and all shall be well.
(Exit.)

- **curst** (archaic word): to curse
- **a knavish lad** : a mischievous boy
- **woe** : great sorrow
- **Bedabbled**: sensuous
- **briers**: wild shrubs
- **mare**: an adult female horse

BRAINSTORMING

Characters

(1) Choose the odd one out :

- (i) Bottom, Moth, Mustardseed, Cobweb
 - (ii) Flute, Snug, Quince, Cobweb
- (You can create many such combinations.)

(2) Match the columns :

A	B
(1) Theseus	(1) Robin Goodfellow
(2) Titania	(2) Queen of the Amazons
(3) Puck	(3) Duke of Athens
(4) Hippolyta	(4) Fairies
(5) Cobweb, Moth	(5) Queen of the Fairies

- (3) Draw a character sketch of Oberon as an enemy of his wife but a friend of the lovers.**
- (4) Comment on the loving pair of Lysander and Helena from the point of view of developing their character sketch.**

Setting

(1) Correct the given sentences with justification.

- (i) The play is restricted to only a part of the woods.
 - (ii) Since there is a reference to the Indian boy, there are some scenes from India too.
- (2) The characters are a part of the stage setting. How does this reflect when the characters of the play range from the Duke and the Indian boy to the faeries?**
- (3) What changes in the stage setting would you suggest?**
- (4) Comment on the versatility and the aptness of the stage settings, as per the requirement of the play 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.**

Plot

(1) State whether the following statements are True or False:

- (i) Lysander and Demetrius fall in love with Helena as a result of the love potion.
- (ii) Oberon transforms Bottom's head into that of an ass.
- (iii) Titania falls in love with an ass.
- (iv) Both Demetrius and Lysander fight for Hermia.

(2) **Give reasons :**

Oberon and Titania fight for the custody of the Indian boy because -

- (i) Oberon wants
- (ii) Titania wants

- (3) **The consequences of Oberon's jealousy for Titania are comic rather than tragic. Comment.**
- (4) **There were some reasons why Theseus was initially against but later gave consent to the marriage of Helena with Lysander. Explain.**

Form

(1) **Select the correct options :**

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a _____

- (a) poetic drama
- (b) comedy of errors
- (c) comedy based on fantasy
- (d) a character play
- (e) a revenge tragedy
- (f) a play that belongs to realm of dreams

- (2) **Find 2/4 expressions of humour from the extract.**
- (3) **'A Midsummer Night's Dream' is one of the best examples of Shakespeare's comedy of errors. Comment.**

Theme

- (1) Shakespeare is acknowledged as the greatest writer because he understood human nature better than anyone else. Explain the statement in context of the play.
- (2) Prove with the theme of the play / extract that the deeper human emotion which profoundly interested Shakespeare was **jealousy**.

Language

- (1) Interpret the following lines in simple English.

Puck : I'll follow you.

Bottom : The Finch, the sparrow.

- (2) Comment on the literary device, used in the following lines:

Titania : Be kind and courteous to this gentleman....

Titania : Come wait upon him : lead him to my bower.

- (3) Shakespeare's poetry has come to be valued for its own sake on the stage. Comment with reference to the play 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.'
