



# **NARAJOLE RAJ COLLEGE**

**(NAAC Accredited B Grade Govt. – Aided College)**

*NARAJOLE: PASCHIM MEDINIPUR: PIN-721211*

**Department of English**

Semester – VI

Paper – DSE-3

Name of Teacher – Tanmay Kumar Goswami

## **PLOT DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEL THE WOMAN IN WHITE BY WILKIE COLLINS IN DETAIL**

The novel 'The Woman in White' was first serialized in the magazine **All The Year Round** established by Charles Dickens in 1859. It is considered to be the first formulated sensational novel which was a new genre in those days. It is an interesting novel having the enormous literary value even today. Among the many novels particularly 'The woman in White' and 'The Moonstone' established the literary career of Willkie Collins as a novelist and at the same time it earned him a worldwide reputation.

The novel begins with narrative of Walter Hartright who is also the main character of this novel. Walter was in financial trouble as he had the responsibility of his mother and sister. Once upon a time he helped friend Pesca who was an Italian language teacher. This man informed that there have a job of an art teacher at Limmeridge House at Cumberland and it would be a better option for earning to Walter. So Walter decided to accept opportunity and prepared himself to go there. One summer when he was going to Cumberland on the way he met a lady who was mysterious to him and she wore white dress which was very much impressive also. The lady told him that she has lost her way to London and requested for help. Walter did as usual. After a while two policemen came there in search of a lady in white who has escaped from Asylum. Walter could understand immediately that he has helped that very woman just few minutes ago. Then at last in the evening he reached Limmeridge House. There he was received by Marian. The girl was smart and intelligent. She show the room and accommodation of the house where Walter was to stay. Then Walter has been introduced to Laura Fairlie who was half sister of Marian Halcombe. Actually Walter was appointed as a drawing teacher to these sisters. When Walter met Fredrick Fairlie he did not like the man very much. Next morning Walter shared the fact which he had faced on his way about the mysterious woman whom he met. Now Marian and Walter began to investigate about the identity of the woman.



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Soon Marian found an old letter from Mrs. Fairlie and they came to know that the woman in white might be Anne Catherick, daughter of Mrs. Catherick who was a teacher in their school. The girl always loved to wear white dresses which was very much appreciated by Mrs. Fairlie. In this way a few months passed.

Then in the next few months Walter was very much impressed with the beauty and strong personality of Laura. On the other hand Laura was also attracted to Walter. There was a love affair between these two. But Marian told Walter to stop or to break the relation as Laura was already betrothed to Sir Percival Glyde who is an aristocratic young man and lived in Blackwater Park house at Hampshire. Laura did not like this man at all and there have no love between them. But this marriage was fixed by Laura's father that is why she could not break this engagement. Walter tried hard but in vain as Laura had great reverence for her father. So Walter decided to leave Limmeridge house. He then went to Central America and stayed there for future. In the Limmeridge house on the other hand Sir Percival created a continuous pressure on Laura to marry him. But Laura actually was not interested in this proposed marriage that is why she was taking time or delaying the issue. But at last anyhow the marriage was done. Sir Percival Glyde actually wanted possess all fortune of Laura Fairlie including this Limmeridge house. This man was badly in need of money and his condition was not well at that time. So he compelled Laura to marry him immediately. After their marriage this couple went Italy to spend their honeymoon. Then all the characters disappeared for long six months.

After this long gap the couple came back to London and began to live in Blackwater Park house. They came back with another couple Count Fosco and Eleanor who is Laura's aunt also. All of them lived in this house. Here certainly Laura felt that something is wrong there in this house. But she could not understand what it is. Before there marriage her half sister Marian already started to feel it. They could feel very well that Sir Percival Glyde was not actually what he presents. There have something wrong



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among these three. In the meantime Anne Ctherick told Laura that she knew the truth. As Anne prepared to tell Laura about Sir Percival Glyde and his inauspicious purpose Sir Percival Glyde came there and the meeting was interrupted. Then Sir Percival Glyde thought that Laura could know the truth and all his secret. So he thought of a plan with his advisor Count Fosco. He made a will at first with the help of their family lawyer. According to this will if Laura is dead all the properties will be transferred to Sir Percival immediately. In the meantime Laura got nervous in this house. She called in her half sister Marian to stay there with her. Marian now could know that Sir Percival Glyde had done intrigue with Count Fosco to cast away Laura from their way to get all the properties. Marian could get the chance to tell her sister about the conspiracy she fell seriously ill. In this house Count Fosco and Eleanor were also the part of this conspiracy. They all convinced Laura that Marian is not in this house. She has gone to London. They all are going to London to meet her there in London. So Laura became agree to go to meet her sister. Sir Percival Glyde and other two made the plan. On the way back they made a story that in London Laura fell seriously ill and died of. So they all went to London and Laura became seriously ill there . At last Sir Percival Glyde came back to Blackwater Park house with Fosco and Eleanor. He told Marian that Laura became ill and died of this illness there in London. Marian hardly believed this story. She decided to investigate the actual incident. Then the idea of talking to Anne Catherick who was still in asylum came to her mind. Marian went to the asylum. When she met, she became shocked to know that this is Laura who is in the asylum with the Identity of Anne Catherick who resembled Laura. In the asylum the nurse again and again told Laura as Anne. Seeing this they gave some money to this nurse and took her in confidence and escaped from the asylum. On their way of escaping they met Walter who in the meantime came to London from Central America. These three came together and Laura explained the story in detail to Walter. It was a problem to them that Laura has now lost her identity. She is now Anne Catherick. Walter concentrated to the task of restoring the



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actual identity. For this purpose firstly he decided to know what happened with Anne Catherick. Then it would be possible for him to restore the identity of Laura. Now Walter at first decided to know about Sir Percival and mystery which he committed. Actually Sir Percival Glyde was an illegitimate child of his father. So he made false marriage document of his mother and his false birth certificate also. In this fraud Mrs. Catherick helped him and Sir Percival Glyde could be able to get his father's property by establishing himself as heir of his father. He became the owner of Blackwater Park house in Hampshire. But all this was well known to Mrs. Catherick. So he used to think that any moment his truth might be disclosed. The situation is far different now as Mrs. Catherick is dead now. But Sir Percival Glyde is now in badly need of money. That is why he has done all this criminal activities. He plans to get the property of Laura anyway. Anne Ctherick also knew all this truth so once she attempted to tell Laura about the actual identity of Sir Percival Glyde but she could not give much information before her death. Now Walter could know that this Sir Percival had nothing in hand that is why he insisted to marry Laura for her possession. In the meantime Sir Percival felt well that every details of his crime of making false documents is now disclosed. So he went to the Church to destroy the false documents. He set fire to this papers which accidentally took larger form and Sir Percival Glyde died in this fire accident. As Sir Percival Glyde was dead there Walter Hartright married Laura. They were happy to marry because they loved each other very much still then. But before Walter there was the problem of restoring Laura's actual identity. None was ready to accept her as Laura. So Walter faced a challenge of restoring it. He went to Pesca, his old friend and Italian language teacher who helped him once to get the job at Limmeridge house. They thought of a plan to capture Count Fosco who knew everything. This man was always the partner of Sir Percival Glyde in every crime so he should know all. They wanted to know the exact date when Laura went to London with Sir Percival and others. There she became the victim of their intrigue. They got Fosco and threatened him to confess everything if he wanted to



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escape. Actually Count Fosco was a secret member of the Italian society in which Pesca was also a member. So all those illegal activities of Fosco was revealed. Being nervous before Walter and Pesca, Fosco confessed everything by a written letter which was the evidence of Laura's actual identity. He described all their conspiracy of murdering and putting her name to Laura and sending Laura to the asylum in the name of Anne Catherick. In this way Walter could restore the Identity of Laura with the help of Pesca.

Few months later Laura gave birth a child. During this period this couple was very happy. They got the news that Count Fosco has been murdered by the members of the secret Italian society as he betrayed them many times. In Limmeridge house Laura's uncle Fredrick Fairlie also died already. On the other hand the couple decided to burry Anne Catherick just at the grave of Mrs. Fairlie, Laura's mother who loved this girl very much for the white dress. They also declared that their son will be the master of this Limmeridge house in future. In this way the novel ends.