Master of Arts (English)

(M.A. English)

Final Year

Victorian Literature (1832 - 1890)

(First Paper)

दूरवर्ती अध्ययन एवं सतत् शिक्षा केन्द्र
महात्मा गांधी चित्रकूट ग्रामोदय विश्वविद्यालय,
चित्रकूट [सतना] म.प्र. - ४८५३३४

Victorian Literature (1832-1890)

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प्राक्कथन...

मर्यादा पुरुषोत्तम श्रीराम की तपोस्थली, मंदाकिनी नदी के सुरम्य तट पर स्थापित महात्मा गांधी चित्रकूट ग्रामोदय विश्वविद्यालय भारतरत्न नानाजी देशमुख के शैक्षिक चिंतन और संकल्पों की जीवंत अभिव्यक्ति है, जो म.प्र.शासन द्वारा 12 फरवरी, 1991 को विशेष अधिनियम 09, 1991 द्वारा स्थापित हुआ।

विश्वविद्यालय का ध्येय वाक्य है–'विश्वं ग्रामे प्रतिष्ठितम्' अर्थात ग्राम विश्व का लघु रूप है। विश्वविद्यालय चित्रकूट में स्थित है, जो एक प्रसिद्ध तीर्थ स्थल है। नई पीढ़ी के लिये यह स्थान आदर्श एवं प्रेरणा का केन्द्र है।

विश्वविद्यालय में कृषि, प्रबंधन, अभियांत्रिकी, लोक विज्ञान, ग्रामीण विकास एवं स्थानीय स्वशासन, लोक शिक्षा, कला, संस्कृति एवं साहित्य सहित सभी अकादमिक धारायें प्रभावी रूप में उपस्थित हैं। विश्वविद्यालय, ग्राम को समाज जीवन की मूल इकाई मानकर शिक्षण, प्रशिक्षण, शोध और प्रसार कार्यों से सर्वांगीण विकास के लिए विगत 3 दशकों से अधिक समय से समर्पित प्रयास कर ग्रामोदय से राष्ट्रोदय के संकल्प में लगा हुआ है। विश्वविद्यालय ने अपनी गतिविधियों और कार्यक्रमों के माध्यम से कौशल विकास के उन्नयन एवं प्रमाणन तथा सतत विकास लक्ष्यों की प्राप्ति में महत्वपूर्ण योगदान कर रहा है तथा शासन के सहयोगी के रूप में उल्लेखनीय भूमिका का निर्वहन कर रहा है।

प्राचीन एवं सनातन भारतीय ज्ञान की परम्परा के आलोक में आई, राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति–2020 चिरवांछित जन आकांक्षाओं की सम्यक् अभिव्यक्ति है। राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति के युगान्तरकारी प्रावधानों को लागू करने में मध्यप्रदेश अग्रणी राज्य रहा है।

राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति ने नवाचारों के लिए सकारात्मक और अनुकूल वातावरण उपलब्ध कराया है। विद्यार्थियों की पठन–पाठन की स्वतंत्रता, कौशल विकास के समुचित अवसर तथा राष्ट्रीय प्राथमिकताओं के अनुसार आने वाले भविष्य के लिए तैयार करने की प्रतिबद्धता राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति के प्रावधानों में स्पष्टतः दिखाई देती है।

विश्वविद्यालय ने राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति के प्रावधानों को दूरवर्ती के विभिन्न पाठ्यक्रमों में अर्थपूर्ण रूप से जोड़कर इन्हें सत्र 2023–24 से पुनः संशोधित/परिवर्धित रूप में प्रारम्भ किया है। विश्वविद्यालय उच्च शिक्षा के प्रसार एवं रोजगार के अवसर बढ़ाने हेतु दूरवर्ती माध्यम से ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में विशेष प्रयास कर रहा है। दूरवर्ती पद्धति से संचालित विभिन्न पाठ्यक्रमों में नियमित संपर्क कक्षाओं के आयोजन, उच्च शिक्षा की स्व–अध्ययन सामग्री एवं नई शैक्षिक प्रौद्योगिकी का उपयोग करते हुए शिक्षार्थी को बेहतर शैक्षणिक अनुभव प्रदान करने की व्यवस्था सुनिश्चत की जा रही है।

विश्वविद्यालय के दूरवर्ती अध्ययन एवं सतत शिक्षा केन्द्र द्वारा सत्र 2024–25 में संचालित परास्नातक, स्नातक तथा डिप्लोमा स्तरीय दूरवर्ती पाठ्यक्रमों के शिक्षार्थियों हेतु ई–स्वनिर्देशित अध्ययन सामग्री प्रस्तुत करते हुये मुझे हर्ष का अनुभव हो रहा है।

पाठ्यक्रम से जुडे सभी शिक्षार्थियों, अभिभावकों, प्रशासकों, समन्वयकों और अन्य सभी को मेरी मंगलकामनायें

प्रो. भरत मिश्रा
कुलपति

VICTORIAN LITERATURE (1832-1890)

SECTION A : Authors/texts for Detailed Study

UNIT I

Tennyson	:	Ulysses; Epilogue to In Memoriam.
Browning	:	My Last Duchess; The Last Ride Together; Rabbi Ben Ezra

UNIT II

Matthew Arnold	:	Thyrsis, Dover Beach
Carlyle	:	The Hero as Poet.

UNIT III

D.G. Rossetti	:	The Blessed Damozel.

SECTION B: Authors/texts for Non-detailed Study:

UNIT IV

Dickens	:	Great Expectations
Thackeray	:	Vanity Fair

UNIT V

Thomas Hardy	:	The Return of the Native
John Ruskin	:	Unto This Last

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

In Unit I we shall discuss the two great Victorian poets Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning. We shall not only discuss the age in which they wrote but also some of their select poems for critical appreciation. In Tennyson we have chosen his 'Ulysses' and 'Epilogue to In Memoriam'. To study Browning we have chosen his 'My Last Duchess', 'The Last Ride Together' and 'Rabbi Ben Ezra'.

In Unit II our purpose is to tell you about the life and works of Matthew Arnold and Thomas Carlyle in general. For critical appreciation we have selected Arnold's 'Thyrsis' and 'Dover Beach' and Carlyle's *The Hero as Poet*.

In Unit III we shall discuss D. G. Rossetti's *The Blessed Damozel*. Besides giving the central theme of the poem we shall also do some critical analysis for a better evaluation of this work.

In Unit IV we have included William Thackeray and Charles Dickens for our study. For further consideration we have selected their masterpieces: Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and Dickens's *Great Expectations*.

In Unit V we have chosen Thomas Hardy and John Ruskin for our study. Besides discussing their life and works in general, we have chosen his novel *The Return of the Native* for further analysis. In addition to this we have brought to light Ruskin's views on social and economic problems.

UNIT-I : ALFRED TENNYSON, ROBERT BROWNING

NOTES

Structure

1.0 OBJECTIVES

NOTES

In Unit I our objective shall be to make you known about the two great Victorian poets Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning. We shall not only discuss the age in which they wrote but also some of their select poems for critical appreciation. In Tennyson we have chosen his 'Ulysses' and 'Epilogue to In Memoriam'. To study Browning we have chosen his 'My Last Duchess', 'The Last Ride Together' and 'Rabbi Ben Ezra'. You will be able to:

- Talk on the poets and their prescribed poems.
- Summarize the poems.
- Critically evaluate the poems.

1.1 ALFRED TENNYSON

Alfred Tennyson was born on August 6th, 1809, at Somersby, Lincolnshire. He was fourth of twelve children of George and Elizabeth (Fytche) Tennyson. The poet's grandfather had violated tradition by making his younger son, Charles, his heir, and arranging for the poet's father to enter the ministry. The contrast of his own family's relatively strained circumstances to the great wealth of his aunt Elizabeth Russell and uncle Charles Tennyson made Tennyson feel particularly impoverished and led him to worry about money all his life.

He also had a constant fear of mental illness, for several men in his family had a mild form of epilepsy, which was then thought a shameful disease. His father and brother Arthur made their cases worse by excessive drinking. His brother Edward had to be confined in a mental institution after 1833, and he himself spent a few weeks under doctors' care in 1843. In the late twenties his father's physical and mental condition worsened, and he became paranoid, abusive, and violent.

In 1827 Tennyson escaped the distressed atmosphere of his home when he followed his two older brothers to Trinity College, Cambridge, where his tutor was William Whewell. Because they had published Poems by Two Brothers in 1827 and each won university prizes for poetry (Alfred winning the Chancellor's

Gold Medal in 1828 for ÒTimbuctooÓ) the Tennyson brothers became well known at Cambridge. In 1829 The Apostles, an undergraduate club, whose members remained Tennyson's friends all his life, invited him to join. Among the group, which met to discuss major philosophical and other issues, included Arthur Henry Hallam, James Spedding, Edward Lushington and Richard Monckton Milnes — all eventually famous men who merited entries in the Dictionary of National Biography.

NOTES

Arthur Hallam was one of his most important friends. Hallam, another precociously brilliant Victorian young man like Robert Browning, John Stuart Mill, and Matthew Arnold, was uniformly recognized by his contemporaries (including William Gladstone, his best friend at Eton) as having unusual promise. He and Tennyson knew each other only four years, but their intense friendship had major influence on the poet. On a visit to Somersby, Hallam met and later became engaged to Emily Tennyson, and the two friends looked forward to a permanent companionship. Hallam's death from illness in 1833 (he was only 22) shocked Tennyson profoundly, and his grief lead to most of his best poetry, including In Memoriam , "The Passing of Arthur", "Ulysses," and "Tithonus."

As Tennyson was always sensitive to criticism, the mixed reception of his 1832 Poems hurt him very much. Critics in those days delighted in the harshness of their reviews: the Quarterly Review was known as the "Hang, draw, and quarterly." John Wilson Croker's harsh criticisms of some of the poems in our anthology kept Tennyson from publishing again for another nine years.

In 1830s Tennyson grew concerned about his mental health and visited a sanitarium run by Dr. Matthew Allen, with whom he later invested his inheritance (his grandfather had died in 1835) and some of his family's money. When Dr. Allen's scheme for mass-producing woodcarvings using steam power went bankrupt, Tennyson, who did not have sufficient money to marry, ended his engagement to Emily Sellwood, whom he had met at his brother Charles's wedding to her sister Louisa.

The success of his 1842 Poems made Tennyson a well-known poet, and in 1845 he received a Civil List (government) pension of £200 a year, which helped relieve his financial difficulties; the success of "The Princess" and In Memoriam

and his appointment in 1850 as Poet Laureate finally established him as the most popular poet of the Victorian era.

NOTES

Already 41, he had written some of his greatest poetry, but he continued to write and to gain in popularity. In 1853, as the Tennysons were moving into their new house on the Isle of Wight, Prince Albert dropped in unannounced. His admiration for Tennyson's poetry helped consolidate his position as the national poet, and Tennyson returned the favor by dedicating The Idylls of the King to his memory. Queen Victoria later summoned him to court several times, and at her insistence he accepted his title, having declined it when offered by both Disraeli and Gladstone.

Tennyson suffered from extreme short-sightedness — without a monocle he could not even see to eat — which gave him considerable difficulty while writing and reading, and this disability in part accounts for his manner of creating poetry — Tennyson composed much of his poetry in his head, occasionally working on individual poems for many years. During his undergraduate days at Cambridge he often did not bother to write down his compositions, although the Apostles continually prodded him to do so.

Unhealthy like most of his family Alfred Tennyson died on October 6, 1892, at the age of 83.

1.1.1 TENNYSON AS A REPRESENTATIVE POET

Tennyson's Poetry as a Mirror to the Age

Or

Tennyson as a Representative Poet

Tennyson's Poetry : An Epitome of His Age

Every age has a poet or the other who represents in his poetry the very spirit of that age. Thus Tennyson in his poetry expresses the very spirit of the Victorian age. He stands in the same relation to his times as does Chaucer to the 14th century and Pope to the early eighteenth century England. W.J. Long says, “For nearly half a century Tennyson was not only a man and a poet, he was a

voice, the voice of a whole people, expressing in exquisite melody their doubts and their faith, their grief and their triumphs. As a poet who expresses not so much a personal as a national spirit, he is probably the most representative literary man of the Victorian era".

NOTES

Horror of Extremes : The Victorian Compromise

The three important movements of the age were (a) Industrial revolution, (b) the rise of democracy, and (c) the rise of evolutionary science and its impact on religion. In all these matters Tennyson's views are characterised by the well-known Victorian compromise or the avoidance of extremes. With the excesses of the French Revolution still fresh in their memory, the Victorians had a natural horror of all revolutionary enthusiasm. He craved for law, for order, for peace and stability. The dominant element in Tennyson's thought is his sense of law and order. He calls the French Revolution, "the Red-fool fury of the Seine", and advocates slow progress, the freedom which,

Slowly broadens down

From precedent to precedent.

He believes in disciplined, ordered evolution, rather than in revolution.

Narrow Nationalism

The Victorian age was an age of intense patriotism. The Victorians were very proud of their Queen, they were proud of their country, and of their empire. This narrow nationalism of his age is reflected fully in Tennyson's poetry. "Love thou thy land", is his motto and not international love. Likewise, he believes in imperialism, that, "subject races preferred good British government to self-government". In other words, he shares the current belief in "white man's burden". And in keeping with this he believes in a strong navy for England and writes proper national and patriotic poems such as *Maud*, *Charge of the light Brigade*, and *Ode to the Duke of Wellington*. In his later years he shows more hardened conservatism than in the early years. This development may be seen by a comparison of *Locksley Hall* and *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*.

NOTES

The Democratic Spirit

It was an age in which the democratic spirit was rising and the people were clamouring for equal rights and political freedom. Tennyson's outlook is one of compromise between the claims of the masses and the continuation of the older landed aristocracy. While he is in full sympathy with all sound measures for the amelioration of the poor, there is always a touch of the aristocrat in his attitude. He has no sympathy with the demand for equality, and in poems like *The Lord of Burleigh* he supports the claims of the landed aristocracy. One aspect of the rise of democracy was the movement for the liberation of women. Tennyson deals with the question in *The Princess*. While he is in full sympathy for the cause of woman's education, his attitude towards the whole question in typically that of a Victorian. The proper place of women is within the home, and they should try to be good housewives and enjoy the blessed life at home.

Materialism of the Age

As a result of the industrial revolution, the country was enjoying an extraordinary economic prosperity. This Mammon worship of his age is reflected in his *Maud*, a Monodrama. It reflects the unprecedented commercial prosperity of England at a time when "Britain's sole God", was the millionaire. It also renders the revolt of a cultured mind against the corruption and hypocrisy of a society degraded by the worship of money.

Treatment of Love and Marriage

Tennyson symbolizes the Victorian prudery, hypocrisy, and the spirit of compromise in his treatment of love, sex and marriage. In these matters, his attitude is typically Victorian. Conjugal love rather than romantic love is his ideal; he has a horror of illicit passion. He cannot even contemplate the possibility of any relation between man and woman other than the conjugal. He emphasises the cultivation of domestic virtues of the home. He idealises married life. The sort of love that Tennyson upholds and likes is well exemplified in *The Miller's Daughter*. It is a simple story of true sweet-hearting and married love, but raised into a steady and grave emotion worthy of a love built to last for life betwixt a man and a woman. Tennyson concentrates very firmly upon the advantages of spiritual as opposed to physical love, and the age felt satisfaction in his delineation of love. The Victorian feeling is expressed by the poet when he says,

Arise and fly,

The reeling faun, the sensual beast,

Move upward, working out the beast,

And let the ape and tiger die.

Art and Morality

The Victorians believed that the aim of literature is fundamentally moral. They had a particular fascination for moralising and teaching lessons of morality to the younger generations. In this regard Tennyson is the mouthpiece of the Victorians. In his poetry there is a strong feeling for moral preaching and ethical edification.

In *The Place of Art* the poet describes and condemns that spirit of aestheticism whose sole religion is the worship of Beauty and Knowledge for their own sakes, and which ignores human responsibility and obligation to one's fellowmen.

The Scientific Spirit

Another important event of Victorian England was the rise of evolutionary science and its impact of religious faith. Hadow says, "His attitude towards the scientific progress of his day is more difficult to determine. Sometimes he speaks of it with a sort of impatience." Socrates once asked, "Have these men solved all the problems in human life, that they have leisure for abstract speculations?" Tennyson also asks, "Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the time, City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?" Sometimes, again, he seems to shrink back in dismay before the immensities that Science has revealed. He asks, "What is our life? What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a million, million of suns?"

However it would be unfair to estimate him by such passages as these alone. Like almost all poets, he feels Science as something alien and remote; he cannot scale its heights or breathe in the rarity of its atmosphere : but for all that he can honour its work and approve its singleness of purpose.

NOTES

Religion : Doubts and Anxieties

The rise of science resulted in religious scepticism, doubts, anxieties and uncertainties and Tennyson is a typical Victorian in his efforts to reach a compromise between science and religion. Thus in a famous passage of *In Memoriam* he says,

Let knowledge grow from more to more

And more of reverence in us dwell

That mind and soul, according well,

May make one music as before.

He would like to have science, but he would also have religion, and he would have the two work in harmony for the realisation of the Victorian dream of progress unlimited. *In Memoriam*, he puts forward the claims of science. He upholds the theory of Evolution propounded by Darwin, and supports the view that honest doubt is better than blind faith:

There remains more faith in honest doubt

Believe me, than in half the creeds.

In others, he emphasises the claims of religion, God and soul. He proudly declares his faith in God and the immorality of the soul and in a life beyond death. He gives an opinion to the people of his age to cling to faith beyond all forms of faith, to trust and hope, to look to,

One far-off divine event

To which the whole creation moves.

In the *Higher Pantheism* he declares the supremacy of God and regards Him as the supreme controller of the universe:

God is law, say the wise, O Soul, and let us rejoice,

For if He thunder by law, the thunder is yet his voice

In every object of nature, and also in the sun, moon and the starts, the poet sees the vision of God:

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains

Are not these a Soul ! the vision of him who reigns.

Conclusion

NOTES

Thus in all these respects, Tennyson represents the Victorian smugness, its narrowness, its hypocrisy, its prudery, its compromise, its doubts, anxieties and uncertainties. But finally, it is as an artist that we revere him, and it is as an artist that he will live. His longer narrative poems, which deal with political, moral, social, and economic questions of the day may suffer an eclipse, but his lyrics and his romantic tales, which do not reflect the age, shall be loved and admired as long as the English language and literature last.

1.1.2 TENNYSON AS A LYRIC POET

Tennyson as a Lyric Poet

His Lyrical Impulse : All Pervasive and Long-lasting

Tennyson's genius was really lyrical. He produced exquisite lyrics all through his long span of poetic activity, and he kept up his power of melody and song right upto the age of eighty. The lyric impulse never dried up in him. Not only was his lyric impulse long-lasting, it was also all-pervasive. It penetrates even his longer poems. Thus *In Memoriam* is essentially a collection of lyrics which voice the poet's loneliness, doubts, anxieties and fears; Maud also is a series of lyrics, in which the story is told largely through; the songs of *The Princess* constitute the most glorious lyric poetry ever written in the English language. The beautiful songs interspersed between the parts of *The Princess* belong to this period.

Passion and Force

The passionate fervour of which Tennyson's lyric strain was capable is best illustrated from *Maud*. In truth, the faults of this poem are more than redeemed by such lyrical outbursts as, "Come into the garden, Maud", and, "O that 'twere possible.". If an anthology of Tennyson's poetry was to be prepared today, it would include his songs as well as such deeply passionate and lovely

lyrics as Mariana ; Oriana; Fatima; Merman; The Lotus-eaters; Ulysses; Break, Break, Break; Locksley Hall; The Brooke; Tears, Idle Tears; and many others.

Pure Lyrics

NOTES

Harold Nicholson discussing the greatness of Tennyson as a lyric poet points out that the Lyric in the original Greek sense denoted a poem meant to be sung to the lyre, but in common usage it has come to signify a poem of personal emotion which can be sung, with or without accompaniment. In other words, the lyric may be more complex, mixed with reflection and thought. Tennyson writes both these kinds of lyrics. When the inspiration dawns on him, he writes "pure lyrics", lyrics of the highest order, lyrics which sing as if by some magic of their own. For they vibrate, these songs of Tennyson, with something vague and poignant wit:

I knew not what of wild and sweet,

Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing

While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

And they vibrate with more than this—vibrate with that, "divine excess", with that glimpse of the Dionysian, that unique sense of impulsive continuity falling haphazard upon the only word; they vibrate with that conviction of the inevitable and the inimitable, with that conviction of the inspired, which only the greatest lyric poets can attain in the moments when they feel the force and beauty of their own genius.

Their Musical Quality

Such lyrics are beyond criticism and even elucidation. The key notes of a lyric are music, melody and subjectivity. A lyric is musical, and it is an expression of the poet's personal emotions. Tennyson's lyrics are among the most musical in the English language. Words are carefully chosen both with reference to their sense and their sound. His skill in the manipulation of vowel sounds, in the use of alliteration and liquid consonants, and in the avoidance of harsher sounds.

The Personal Note

Tennyson's genius was basically subjective, he had the true temperament of a lyricist. Whatever may be the subject chosen, it is coloured by his own personal moods and emotions. Thus his *Ulysses*, a classical lyric, written after Hallam's death, expresses his own urge to move forward and face life regardless of the bereavement he has suffered. The *Idylls of the King* is similarly suffused with the poet's own moods and emotions. Thus the gloom of Sir Bedivere at the passing away of Arthur is Tennyson's own gloomy mood at the recent death of his friend. *Crossing the Bar* is expressive of the mood of the poet just on the eve of his death.

NOTES

Complex Lyrics : Thought and Reflection

This is more so the case with the lyrics of the *In Memoriam*. The pieces are the finest example of the lyrics in which personal emotion is interwoven with reflective matter resulting in complexity rather than simplicity, and as Elton aptly points out such complex lyrics are more characteristic of the poet. The lyrics of *In Memoriam* are a landmark in English poetry, combining, as they do, the poetry of ideas with the poetry of feeling. The lyrics of *In Memoriam* are remarkable as expressions of terror, loneliness. and the inner void that turns Nature and Life into nightmares. Some of the lyrics are of deep psychological interest ; the most striking illustration of it are the following stanzas that describe the chaotic images that pass through his mind as he lies awake at night:

Cloud-towers by ghostly masons wrought,

A gulf that ever shuts and gapes,

A hand that points, and palled shapes

In shadowy trough fares of thought;

And crowds that stream from yawning doors,

And shoals of pucker'd faces, drive;

Dark bulks that tumble half alive,

And lazy lengths on boundless shores.

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Variety of Moods

J.C. Grierson in his *Critical History of English Poetry* points out that Tennyson is a poet of, "not so much of passion and passionate thinking as of moods—moods, subtle, and luxurious and sombre, moods in which it is not always easy to discern the line that separates waking from dreaming..." The moods to which Tennyson has given poetic idiom are as varied as his metres, and include a rare feeling for the beauty of English scenery. This variety of moods is best illustrated by *Maud*, a Monodrama, in which the entire story of the wooing and winning of a girl has been told trough a series of exquisite lyrics which have no parallel in the English language. The moods in the poem range from melodramatic horror in the opening stanzas to loving and joyous melodies in the middle part, sinking into a dolorous wail, rising into frenzy and closing with the trumpet note of war. In the beautiful song of ecstatic expectation, "Come into the garden, Maud", the poet rises to the highest point of his lyrical verse. According to O. Elton, each of the lyrics, "introduces a new moment in the situation, with its special mood, which is embodied in the metre."

Some Limitations

Tennyson was a great lyric-poet, he had the temperament of a true lyricist, but the lyric impulse in him was not allowed free play by his other interests, narrative, dramatic, even epic. As Harold Nicolson aptly remarks, "Temperamentally he possessed all the qualities of a lyric poet. His genius was essentially subjective. His was a lonely soul, melancholy and afraid. The deepest note in his soul is one of frightened agony, as of some, wild creature caught in a trap at night." Spontaneity is an important quality of the true lyric. The lyric poet sings with strains of unpremeditated art, but Tennyson is too self-conscious, there is too much of after-thought, too much of revision and deletion for such spontaneity. The artist in him retards his lyrical-impulse and it is only occasionally that his lyrics acquire that spontaneity which we associate with Shelly and Burns.

Conclusion

Tennyson is a great lyric poet, but due to such shortcomings he cannot take his rank with the greatest lyric poets of the world. The Olympian radiance of a lyric by Sappho or Sophocles, the audible ring of Shelley's lyrics, the moving

quality of Shakespeare's songs, or the pinching pathos of the Scottish songs of Burns and Scott, is hard to find in Tennyson's lyrics. In fact, as Oliver Elton has pointed out, "Tennyson is more at home in classical lyrics.... ode-like or commemorative-carefully concerted pieces, be they short or long, with full rolling lines, than in the briefer spontaneous kind".

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1.1.3 A GENERAL ESTIMATE OF TENNYSON AS A POET

A General Estimate of Tennyson as a Poet.

Or

Tennyson's Poetry : Its Merits and Demerits

Or

Tennyson's Greatness as a Poet : His Place

In order to form a correct estimate of Tennyson as a poet, we must consider him as (a) a representative poet, (b) an artist, (c) a poet of nature, and (d) a thinker.

A Great Representative Poet

Tennyson is a representative poet, one who represents his age not in fragments but fully, in all its manifold variety and complexity. According to Hudson, he was to Victorian England what three centuries earlier Spenser was to the England of Elizabeth, and much that is most deeply characteristic of the Victorian spirit entered into the texture of his writings. As Stopford A. Brooke remarks: "For more than sixty years he lived close to the present life of England, as far as he was capable of comprehending and sympathising with its movements; and he inwove what he felt concerning it into his poetry." The extraordinary diversity of his work is itself typical of the immense complexity of his age. He further remarks, "He wrote on classical, romantic, and modern subjects; on subjects taken from humble and rustic life; on English history and Celtic legend; on the deepest problems of philosophy and religion; and the range of his method and style is scarcely less remarkable than that of his matter."

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But even more typical are the content and quality of his poems. His *Locksley Hall*, 1842, is full of the restless spirit of 'young England' and of its faith in science, commerce, and the progress of mankind; while its sequel, *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After*, 1886, shows the revulsion of feeling which had occurred in many minds when the fast development of science seemed to threaten the very foundations of religion, and commerce was filling the world with materialistic greed. In *The Princess* the poet grapples with one of the rising questions of the day—that of the higher education of women and their place in the fast-changing conditions of modern society; Maud quivers with the patriotic passion of the time of the Crimean War and with the general ferment which followed this war. It also reflects the Mammon worship of the day. In the *Idylls of the King*, while the medieval machinery is retained, the old story is turned into a parable the lessons of which have a direct bearing upon contemporary life. Hudson writes, "The change which Tennyson's thought underwent in regard to social and political questions itself reveals his curious sensitiveness to the tendencies of his time ; for the sanguine temper of his early manhood, the doubts, misgivings, and reactionary utterances of his middle age, and the chastened hopefulness of his last years, are alike reflections of the successive moods which were widely characteristic of his generation. But politically and socially he stands out as, on the whole, the poetic exponent of the cautious spirit of Victorian liberalism".

Tennyson was essentially the poet of law and order as well as of progress. He held resolutely to the great heritage of English tradition; and while he firmly believed that in the divine scheme of things,

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,

And God fulfils himself in many ways,

Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

He was very firmly opposed to, 'raw haste', rash experiments, and everything that savoured of revolution. Tennyson's poetry is often the vehicle of the spreading democratic sympathies of Victorian England. Recluse and aristocrat as he was, he was deeply interested in common people and common things. It is not the least significant feature of his work as a whole that along with *The Princess*, *Maud*, *The Idylls of the King*, it contains such things as *The Mab Queen*, *Enoch Arden* and *Dora*.

While Tennyson's poetry is thus historically interesting as reflecting the social and political trends of his age, it is even more important as a record of the intellectual and spiritual life of the time. Being a careful student of science and philosophy, he was intensely impressed by the far-reaching meaning of the new discoveries and speculations by which the edifice of the old thought was being undermined. More especially was he impressed by the wide implications of the doctrine of evolution. At once sceptical and mystical in his own temper, he was peculiarly fitted to become the mouth-piece of his century's doubts, difficulties, and craving for the certainties of religious faith. He represents the Victorian spirit of compromise when he writes:

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Let knowledge grow from more to more

But more of reverence in us dwell.

The 'two voices' --science and religion-- of that century are perpetually heard in his work. In *In Memoriam*, more than in any other contemporary piece or verse of prose, we may read of the great conflict of the age between doubt and faith; while in many later poems, as in *The Ancient Sage*, we may see how the poet challenged the current materialism and asserted the eternal verities of God and immortality.

Greatness as an Artist: Some Limitations

Tennyson is a great representative poet, but he is still greater as an artist. He was a very careful writer, revising what he had written again and again. Among the elements which make up his art, the following may be mentioned : (a) A minute observation of Nature, which furnished him with a store of poetic description and imagery; (b) a scholarly appreciation of all that is most picturesque in the literature of the past, (c) an exquisite precision in the use of words and phrases; (d) the picturesqueness and aptness of his similes, (e) an avoidance of the commonplace (f) his use of repetition and assonance, (g) the expressive harmonies of his rhythm, and (h) the subtle melody of his diction.

Praising Tennyson as a literary artist Albert says, "No one excels Tennyson in the deft application of sound to sense and in the subtle and pervading employment of alliteration and vowel-music". Such passages as this abound in his work:

Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,

And murmuring of innumerable bees

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This is perhaps not the highest poetry, but shows only a kind of manual, or rather aural dexterity; yet as Tennyson employs it, it is effective to a great degree. His excellent craftsmanship is also apparent in his handling of English metres, in which he is a untiring experimenter. In blank verse he is not so varied and powerful as Shakespeare, nor so majestic as Milton, but in the skill of his workmanship and in his wealth of diction he falls but little short of some of the great masters.

In his word-painting, Tennyson follows the example of Keats. Nearly all Tennyson's poems, even the simplest, abound in ornate description of natural and other scenes. His method is to seize upon suitable details, dress them in expressive and musical phrases, and thus present a glistening image before the reader's eye. Such ornate descriptions reveal Tennyson at his best; but once again the doubt arises as to whether they represent the highest poetry. They show accuracy of observation and a rare loveliness of epithet; but they lack the deep insight, the ringing, romantic note, of the best efforts of Keats.

Originality as a Nature Poet

Tennyson is a great and most original nature poet, and in his nature poetry the impact on him of contemporary science can best be studied. It is seen in the minuteness and accuracy of his observation. His attitude to Nature is not like that of Wordsworth. His view of Nature is that of science—that Nature is full of the brutal struggle for existence. He finds her, "red in tooth and claw". He does not paint her as a kindly mother. Looking at Nature the poet does not find any evidence to support the human faith in the immortality of the soul. This is what he says in his masterpiece, *In Memoriam*. But as an artist he makes excellent use of Nature as a background to human action. He knew how to relate the natural setting to the mood of a lyric or a longer poem. *The Lotus Eaters* is the best example of interior landscape-painting. The poem displays his unequalled powers of observation. Tennyson is simply superb in using nature to intensify human

moods. His skill in landscape painting is remarkable. The whole landscape is vivified through a few fitting touches.

A Great Lyric Poet: His Limitations

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Modern critics believe that the best of Tennyson is not to be found in his longer and more ambitious poems, but in his lyrics. The typical Tennysonian lyric is the lyric of mood—a poem in which what is expressed is not a simple feeling but a complex mood, which is rendered in terms of a natural setting. Tennyson wrote lyrics of many kinds. *In Memoriam* is a long elegy that consists many short lyrics. The elegy was peculiarly suited to Tennyson's melancholy and reflective temper. In *In Memoriam*, an elegy which was inspired by the death of his friend Henry Hallam, Tennyson deals with all the phases of his personal grief and sorrow, discusses the conflict between knowledge or science on the one side and faith on the other, and traces his gradual recovery of faith. Tennyson also wrote a number of lyrical poems dealing with classical subjects. *Tithonus* is an example. The poem is not quite dramatic—it reveals a feeling rather than a character. His patriotic lyrics also deserve mention, some of which are popular in England even today. Though some of his lyrics as *Break, Break, Break*; *Crossing the Bar*, and the songs in *The Princess*, are musical and attractive, and truly great. However says Albert, "On the whole his genius was too self-conscious and his life too regular and prosperous to provide a background for the true lyrical intensity of emotion."

Not Considered a Great Poet of Man

Though Tennyson is really great as a nature-poet, he has less power of dealing with men and women, or with the passions. He deals with types rather than with individuals. Hadow remarks, "He describes his own Lincolnshire country-folk with close sympathy, and with the humour that is born of sympathy; outside their limit he is little able to depict characters and tempers that are different from his own. All his best men are of one pattern—noble, courteous, chivalrous, a little deficient in force and passion, yet bold in adventure and temperate in success; the pattern, in short, of just such an English gentleman as Tennyson himself was. His women are hardly ever clearly seen—they are either mere sketches or pictures of which the features are incongruous". That is one of the reasons why he failed in drama. He is too self-centred, too lyric, to give his

dramatic personae a free hand; he makes them say not what they mean, but what he means.

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As a poet of man, he concentrates the noblest of English manhood into one best type. That a man should love truth, country and freedom, that he should serve God and his lady, that he should respect all womanhood and be tender to all weakness, that he should strike his blow for the right and care nothing for reward—these were the laws of his Round Table, these are his principles of government. No doubt, as Hadow writes, "There are depths of feeling that he has not sounded, there are whole tracts of human life which he has not sounded, there are whole tracts of human life which he has not explored; but within the boundaries of his own realm he has set up for ever the example of staunch and fearless loyalty to a high ideal." Thus he can be considered as the poet of Man, but not of men.

His Limitation as a Thinker

As a thinker, Tennyson lacks originality and depth. His thought is puerile, and it is this aspect of his poetry which has done the greatest harm to his reputation. Compton-Rickett aptly observes, "No poet was more exercised by religious problems than he; and no poet was more sensitive to scientific thought than he." His attitude is one of compromise between science and religion. From *In Memoriam* we can gather much about his views on God, the immortality of the Soul, and the governance of the universe. He has a strong faith in the supremacy of law and order which he finds at work throughout Nature. His poetry is fundamentally religious in temper, and he "has a faith in God and his love and goodness which shines, like a clear and quiet flame in his poetry." Occasionally, he does get beset with despair and doubts, but always, ultimately, he returns to his faith in, "one far off divine event, to which the whole creation moves." But there is little definition and little sound theorising, and often he is incoherent and unsure.

Conclusion

Tennyson has expressed himself on various matters, political, social, religious and ethical, but his philosophy is neither great nor inspiring. Today, he is considered not as a thinker, but as a consummate literary artist. Hadow writes, "No poet ever understood more fully the 'glory of words' : none has sounded a

music more rich, more varied, more pure in style, more beautiful in colour and tone. To study him is to learn the possibilities of our native speech: to love him is an artistic education." He was a demigod to his contemporaries, but younger men strongly assailed his patent literary mannerisms, his complacent acceptance of the evils of his time, his flattery of the great, and his somewhat arrogant assumption of the airs of immortality. Consequently, for twenty years after his death is time in his favour, and his detractors have modified their attitude. His many merits are now being better appreciated. E. Albert rightly observes, "He is not a supreme poet; and whether he will maintain the primacy among the singers of his own generation, as he undoubtedly did during his lifetime, remains to be seen; but, after all deductions are made, his high place in the Temple of Fame is assured".

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1.1.4 ULYSSES

Ulysses

It Little profits that an idle king,

By this still hearth, among these barren crags,

Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole

Unequal laws unto a savage race,

That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

I cannot rest from travel; I will drink

Life to the lees. All times I have enjoy'd

Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those

That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when 10

Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades

Vext the dim sea. I am become a name;

For always roaming with a hungry heart

Much have I seen and known, cities of men

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And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honor'd of them all,-
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains; but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself.
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,-
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees

Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
  There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail;
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me, -
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads,-you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil.
Death closes all; but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;

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It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,

And see the great Achiles, whom we knew.

Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'

We are not now that strength which in old days

Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are-

Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Write the brief introduction of the Poem *Ulysses* and give its summary in your own words.

Introduction to the Poem.

Ulysses by Lord Tennyson, is a poem based on a hint in Homer's *Odyssey*. This poem has its origin in Homer's *Odyssey*. Ulysses, the great hero had gone to fight in the Trojan War. He had been out of his country for more than a period of ten years and after the conclusion of war he came back to rule over his people. Ulysses did not like to sit in the island and again wanted to set out in search of new lands leaving the administration and governance of the country to the charge and care of his son Telemachus. He did not like to waste his years of life in idly rotting in a land where there was little scope for his heroism and courage.

Ulysses actually stands for the spirit of adventure and bold explanation and the quest of new knowledge and new lands. Ulysses typifies not any one particular king who ruled in ancient times, but stands as the representative of all persons who believe in the gospel of work, and who are wedded to the principle of activity. It is better to die in action rather than waste one's youth and time in idle rotting and inaction.

In this poem Tennyson presents the philosophy of action and quest for knowledge and search for new lands. It is an inspiring poem of activity and action and stands in contrast to "*Lotus-Eaters*" where the poet had taught the lesson of inactivity and idleness. The spirit of the two poems *Ulysses* and the *Lotus-Eaters* is quite different. Whereas the *'Lotus-Eaters'* teaches us the lesson of rest and inactivity, the second poem *'Ulysses'* inspires and excites us to be active and

energetic in our life. The tone of *Ulysses* is that of a ruddy and vigorous optimist and a modern adventurer and conqueror of new world and the new lands.

The poem contains certain remarkable lines which should be learnt by heart and also followed in one's life. The poem is one of the best poems of Tennyson and ought to be read with great interest and attention by the readers.

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Summary of the Poem

1. Ulysses had returned from the Trojan War and came back to rule over his people. He did not like ruling over the people in the company of his aged wife, for that life of the ruler did not give him any scope for further adventure.

2. Ulysses was a man of adventure and heroism. All his life he had been a traveller. Still he wanted to be a traveller and adventurous in life.

3. The name of Ulysses had gone down among all the classes of people and almost in all countries. He had been known as a great warrior and as a great adventurer and explorer of new lands.

4. Although Ulysses had achieved much in his life yet there was much to be achieved by him. He did not like to waste and rot away passively. Ulysses thought that it was a sin to be inactive and rust unburnished and not shine in use.

5. His opinion was that life piled on life was not sufficient for the achievement of man's salvation. Every moment that could be saved from death should be utilized for the achievement of things. One should follow knowledge and pursue it to the utmost bound in the realm of human thought.

6. Ulysses wanted to give the reins of his kingdom to his son Telemachus. He was a good young man and in his absence would be possible for him to rule over the people and give them good laws. The work of Ulysses was to go out in search of new lands and make his mark in the world of adventure and travels.

7. Having so decided, Ulysses asked his fellow mariners to gather round him and once more start for the search of new lands. They all had

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become old. Yet there was no reason why they should feel any sense of despair. Old age had its honour and old men were expected to do their work. No doubt they would die but before their death they should do something noble and great in their lives.

8. Though much had been taken away from the lives, yet there was much to be done by them even in the state of their old age. Though they had been made weak by time and fate, but they were yet strong in their will. They should devote their time in finding out new lands rather than yield to their old age.

Write the critical appreciation of the poem *Ulysses*.

Introduction

Published in 1842, but written soon after Hallam's death (1833) which had been deeply felt by Tennyson. This poem expressed his deep sense of the need of going forward and having the struggle of life. The fundamental qualities of this poem are as follows:

A Dramatic Monologue

This poem is a dramatic monologue because a character is speaking aloud and expressing his thoughts to a silent audience of his followers. As in the dramatic monologues of Browning, the mind of the speaker is being dissected and analysed. While, there is usually some sort of movement in Browning's monologues, there is no such quality in *Ulysses*. We get the impression that a man is standing on the sea-shore and delivering a speech. However we get complete picture of the mind of Ulysses, particularly because Telemachus is drawn as a foil to him. The poem represents a type of character. It is not a mere narrative of action.

Its Philosophy

The poem advocates the philosophy of action, of struggle, and of endeavour. It urges the need for going forward and braving the struggle of life. Ulysses says, "How dull it is to pause, to make an end, to rust unburnished, not to shine in use". His grey spirit is yearning in desire to follow knowledge. This insatiable yearning for knowledge, this quenchless thirst for new discoveries, this

wild desire to know the unknown is typical of the 19th century and it is curious that Tennyson has given us a modern interpretation of a character from Greek Mythology. Ulysses is a well-known explorer who probably loved adventure for its own sake. Here however, the poem thus becomes a fine blend of ancient mythology and modern philosophy. We see Tennyson's tendency to Victorianize a mythological personage.

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Contrast with Lotus Eaters

This poem with its inherent philosophy of action may be contrasted with the Lotus-Eaters which also has Ulysses as its main character but which is marked by a dreamy atmosphere of languor and repose. It is apparent that a poem embodying such a philosophy of action will stimulate us to effort and urge us to shake off inaction and sloth. Ulysses goads us to make efforts and urges us to shake of sloth. Ulysses is an inspiring poem. The thought of the poem is psychologically true. The richer the mind, the greater is its capacity for more knowledge and experience. The poem is notable for its healthy tone and masculine vigour in opposition to the sleepy softness to the Lotus-Eaters. Tennyson's Ulysses is "a symbol of the modern passion for knowledge, exploration of limitless fields and conquest of new regions of science and thought".

Its Pictures

The poem is not written in that ornamental and embellished style which marks *The Lotus-Eaters*. That style would not have suited a poem with such a vigorous theme. But we have a couple of exquisite word pictures:

"There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail;

There gloom the dark, broad seas."

"The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks

The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep

Moons round with many voices."

The accumulation of vowel sounds which produce musical effect may also be marked in the above lines. The lines are an example of assonance or repetition

of vowel sounds. There are many other examples of assonance in this poem. We have a fine sound picture here:

"Push off, and sitting well in order smite

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The sounding furrows"

The scene is set on the shore of Ithaca. The time is evening. The moon is rising and the sea is darkened by the shadows of the coming night. There is no description of the landscape; yet when Tennyson touches Nature in this poem, it is done with great mastery. A whole world of ocean, weather and of the sea experience is in these two lines:

On shore, and when

Through shrouding drifts the rainy Hyades

Vext the dim sea"

All is in harmony—the waning day, the ship in port, the aged king with a strong spirit craving for a wider life, and restless to be gone.

Its Felicity of Diction

Tennyson, always a master in the choice of happy words and phrases, employs appropriate diction in this poem also. "I will drink life to the lees"; "I am become a name", "I am part of all I have met"; "To rust unburnished, not to shine in use"- these and several others are fine examples. This poem is written in an astonishingly compact style. The language employed is terse, and epigrammatic in vigour, as the expressions quoted above show. In other words, the ideas have been expressed through the fewest possible words. The maximum economy in the use of words has been exercised. The phrases and lines have been packed and loaded with meaning. The language put in the mouth of Ulysses makes him a man of action. The man is accustomed to rule and be obeyed. The severe and unadorned language is in contrast with the fine and ornamental diction of *The Lotus-Eaters*.

Its Meter

The poem is written in blank verse which has been very much admired by critics for its grandeur. The blank verse of this poem approaches Miltonic greatness by virtue of its movement and majesty. Hardly any other poem of the

same length can claim comparison with Ulysses as regards the grandeur of its blank verse and compact expression.

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1.1.5 IN MEMORIAM

Write a brief summary of Tennyson's "*In Memoriam*" indicating the main theme of the elegy."

Introduction

Alfred Tennyson wrote *In Memoriam* on the death of his friend, Arthur Hallam, in 1833 at the age of 22 years. It comprises 131 elegiac lyric series. All were written at irregular intervals between 1833 and 1850. He added to it a 'Prologue' and an 'Epilogue'. It is a voice of human race speaking through him.

Background of the Elegy

Arthur Hallam and Tennyson were fast friends at the Trinity college, Cambridge. Both used to move about the surrounding countryside. Both would compose poetry. Hallam had the occasion to visit the house of Tennyson wherein he became engaged to the poets sister Emily. But Arthur died suddenly at Vienna on September 15th, of a stroke of Apoplexy. Tennyson felt the shock of his friends death very seriously, and he wrote *In Memoriam* in a new style. The elegy contains reference to many of the events of their friendship, and shows the spiritual voice of the poet.

Summary of *In Memoriam*

In Memoriam is divided in four separate parts. (I) Part first-The part first upto the first Christmas consists of sections I-XXVII. The theme of these parts is that of absorption in grief and the poet gradually takes courage to rise above his grief to a clearer conviction. There are frequent reference to the continued existence of the dead friend. This part is subdivided into two groups (1) section IX-XVI. They give account to the coming of the ship and to the burial (2) Sections (XXII-XXIV) A review of the past friendship and the events associated with it.

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The prologue was added to the elegy in 1849, when the elegy was about to be published. It exhibits the sense of merriment of Tennyson in his victory over doubt, and his faith in God and His love and mercy. The different phases of his grief are portrayed here and the poet could not suppress his grief or love. He tries to seek relief through sleep. He finds no consolation from any source. He visits the home of his friend and finds the surroundings lonely and desolate. He also visits the Cleveden Church where Hallam was buried.

Poet's Grief and Despair

The poet finds a similarity between the excitement of his own heart and the tide of river Sever on whose bank Cleveden Church lies. The poet then realises the immortality of true love. Sections XXVIII up to XXX deal with the first Christmas after the death of Hallam. The emotions of the poet turn from the past to the future, and he feels that his friend is not really dead. In sections XXXI-XXXVI the poet finds hope for the immortality of the human soul and of a life after death in the Biblical story of Lazarus who was raised from the dead. The poet has doubts whether he is really worthy of his lofty theme.

Mood of Melancholy Declines

This part consists of sections XXVIII-XXVII. The idea of continued life of the dead is seen spreading, and it gives a philosophical touch. The poet addresses the Yew tree which blossoms in that spring like other trees. The poet imagines the chances of reunion with his dead friend, and the immortality of the soul is entertained. In section XVIII-XIX the poet analyses the nature of his elegy. He apologises to philosophy as previously he did to theology. In section-XI the poet prays his dead friend to help him; through faith in the ultimate triumph of good, which is frustrated by service. He discusses the possibility of communion between living and the dead.

Moral Attitude and Hope

Part third upto the third Christmas consists of sections XXVIII-CIII. The idea of the future life subsides. A sense of new and joyful life is doomed. Section XC-XCV show the possible contact of the living and the dead. Sections C-CII show the poets farewell to the home of childhood. He proceeds from the sorrowful past to the hopeful and joyful future. The poet compares his spirit to a

weak and humble wife, and Hallam's spirit to a wise and well-versed husband. He remembers their earlier friendship on earth, and believes that Hallam's spirit still loves him. In section C-CII the poet bids farewell to the Rectory at Somersby, his home. His thoughts turn away from the past to the future. He visits the garden of his home. He and the members of his family are to leave the Rectory.

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Spiritual Satisfaction

The part consists of sections CIV-CXXXI. The poet is thinking of the past, and hopes for the future. His old melancholy is vanished and this is replaced by love and wide optimistic outlook. His friend being dead is mingled with that love which is the soul of the entire universe. This celebrates the Christmas and new year in the new home. He forgets his private grief and looks to the future and has good hopes for mankind. He expects to be reunited with his friend. In section CIX-CXIV the character of Hallam as an ideal man is portrayed, while the dangers of human progress are also pointed out.

The poet is of the belief that man is not mere mechanical energy, but has a soul itself. He considers over the influence of science. Thus he has acquired the cheerful optimism.

Conclusion

The occasion of his friend's death has convinced the poet that finally good will come out of evil. Truth would get victory over wars and revolutions. He thinks that man would go forward spiritually. He imagines that his friend Hallam is made one with nature, like Keats in Shelley's *Adonais*. He hears the voice of his friend in the rolling air and the flowing water. It is divine spirit in man that purifies human deeds. He concludes the elegy with a marriage songs, which is symbolic of a new lease of life, of reunion and of joy.

1.1.6 TENNYSON'S VIEW ON GOD AND RELIGION

NOTES

'*In Memoriam*' is not merely an elegy on Arthur Hallam but also a poetic philosophy of life. Elucidate.

Or

Explain critically Tennyson's view on God and religion as expressed in '*In Memoriam*'.

Or

Write a note on Tennyson's idea about life and death as you find them in '*In Memoriam*'.

Or

'*In Memoriam*' is not monotonous, it has immense variety. Justify

Introduction

In Memoriam is a fine elegy which indicates elements of classical and medieval elegy, and does not follow the pastoral pattern. It tells the story of poet's sorrow along with expression of poet's views on God, religion and philosophy of life. Percival remarks, "Tennyson has kept up Hallam' connection by making his spirit to be his own particular guardian angel, and a seraph that serenely watches over his own country men, over all mankind."

Structure of Elegy

There is clearance and consistency in the time scheme which provides clarity and unity to the structure. There is a fine arrangement in groups and clusters. The separate clusters are ingeniously bound up, and the whole poem finally achieves unity. There seems a progression from the sorrow at the origin of the poem, and hope and optimism is available in the end.

Theme of the Elegy

The first part deals with grief and gloom of the poet along with recollection of friendship between the poet and Arthur; the second part is full of

hope and optimism, the third is charged with victory over despair and the peace, while the fourth part declares the joy of the poet. The poet then realises the divine spirit and aspires for the final union with his friend. It is a progressive and calm transition from grief to joy.

NOTES

One far of divine event

To which the whole creation moves.

The Philosophy of *In Memoriam*

The poem tells the story of the poet's grief, and parallel to the elegy there runs a theology. It is record of poet's religion and philosophy of life. He believes in the immortality of the soul. He does not believe in the immediate absorption, but in the final one, connecting into supreme soul and the eternity. He has a faith in divine love. He has made the soul immortal. His attitude towards nature is exhibited in the elegy. The message of nature is exemplified plainly and vividly. C.M. Young writes, "In his highest mood, Tennyson, sometimes, speaks like an arch angel assuring the universe that it will muddle through."

Conclusion

The genuine greatness of the poem lies in its being a great work of God, an exhibition of poets grief, a manifestation of his religious ideas and an expression of his optimism. Morton Luce says, "*In Memorial* holds a high position, it is best known and best loved."

1.1.7 SOME IMPORTANT EXPLANATIONS

Lines:

It Little profits that an idle king,

By this still hearth, among these barren crags,

Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole

Unequal laws unto a savage race,

That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

NOTES

Explanation: These lines are the opening lines of Alfred Tennyson's poem "Ulysses". Ulysses has returned to his native island, Ithaca in Greece from Troy. He has wandered for twenty years. His life has been full of action and adventure. On his return to Ithaca, he has taken up his kingly duties. The atmosphere of his family is joyful and calm. But being a man of action and adventure he feels bored with his life.

Here Ulysses, the king of Ithaca is speaking. He points out that he finds little delight and profit as an idle king to rule over his people and give unfair and imperfect laws to the uncivilized and barbarous people because he had been away from the kingdom for quiet some time from Ithaca. They had no higher ideas to govern and dominate their lives. They spent their time in material needs of their lives. The accumulated wealth, they ate and drank and spent their precious time in sleeping. They were a vegetative sort of people and had no spirit of adventure in them . Hence Ulysses did not like to rule over such backward people.

Lines:

I am become a name;

For always roaming with a hungry heart

Much have I seen and known,-cities of men

And manners, climates, councils, governments,

Myself not least, but honor'd of them all,-

And drunk delight of battle with my peers,

Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Alfred Tennyson's poem "Ulysses".

Ulysses points out that all through his life he has undertaken travels of distant countries and distant lands. He has seen much and has known lands generally unknown to the people. His name has become associated with the name of an adventure. He has undertaken adventures to distant countries and has come across person of different cultures and manners, climates and conditions of life. He has visited councils, lands, governments of different countries and wherever he went

he was honoured and warmly welcomed by the people. He has taken part on the battle fields and has fond delight and pleasure in fighting with his companion in the Trojan War for ten years on the battle fields where the wind swept the plains of Troy resounding with the din of war. Ulysses feels delight in recounting adventures of his life and his heroic part in the Trojan War.

NOTES

Lines:

Life piled on life

Were all too little, and of one to me

Little remains; but every hour is saved

From that eternal silence, something more,

A bringer of new things; and vile it were

For some three suns to store and hoard myself.

And this gray spirit yearning in desire

To follow knowledge like a sinking star,

Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Alfred Tennyson's poem "Ulysses".

Ulysses does not like the life of idleness and laziness that he is leading. He believes in action. He says that action should be the keynotes of his life. Men should not allow himself to rust by leading a lazy life. On the other hand, he should always keep his mind bright and fresh by constantly gathering fresh knowledge.

Ulysses points out that one life after another will prove insufficient for gathering all the experience and travels of all new lands in the world. Experience is so wide and so expensive that one life is very insufficient for acquiring experience of all activities in human life. Of his present life only few years remained behind because of his old age. He has completed most part of his life and is now on the last legs of time before coming to his grave. But he does not bother about death. Every hour that is saved from the jaws of death can be

NOTES

utilized in acquitting new things of life. Hence it would be very wrong on his part to stay for some three years among the people and spend his life like them in storing and hoarding the material things of life. He does not find any comfort in staying and hoarding because his spirit, though grown old in his old age, is yet very anxious to move after the acquisition of knowledge and pursue it to the farthest limits to which human thought and imagination can go.

Lines:

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail;

There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,

Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me, -

That ever with a frolic welcome took

The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed

Free hearts, free foreheads,-you and I are old;

Old age hath yet his honor and his toil.

Death closes all; but something ere the end,

Some work of noble note, may yet be done,

Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.

Explanation: These lines have been extracted from Alfred Tennyson's *Ulysses.* Ulysses talks about his own son Telemachus. He decides to transfer the duties of kingship to his son who would be able to perform all his duties well.

Ulysses and his mariners decide to go out in search of new lands and new adventures in life. He directs the attention of his mariners to the port where the ship stands on the dark water of the sea ready to set for the new lands. The mariners have been persons of daring courage and they have worked hard with him through all the toils and difficulties of their travels. They have all taken the thunder and the sunshine in a very cheerful spirit and in a cheerful manner and have opposed all kinds of difficulties that had come in their way. They have now become old, and Ulysses and his mariners have lost their youth and are now passing through their old age. Yet there is nothing to be afraid of. Old age has also

its good points. There is much in old age which deserves honour and respect. Even in the old age one can do work of goodness and nobility before death brings about the end of life. Ulysses therefore exhorts his mariners, though old they may be, to undertake the work of nobility quite befitting their dignity because in the past they had fought with gods on the battle-field of Troy. Since they had fought with gods, they were men of honour and dignity, and even in their old age they should perform deeds quite in harmony with their past records of magnificent achievements.

NOTES

1.2 ROBERT BROWNING

Robert Browning was born on May 7, 1812, in Camberwell (a suburb of London), the first child of Robert and Sarah Anna Browning. His mother was a zealous Evangelical and an accomplished pianist. Mr. Browning had angered his own father and forgone a fortune: the poet's grandfather had sent his son to oversee a West Indies sugar plantation, but the young man had found the institution of slavery so abhorrent that he gave up his prospects and returned home, to become a clerk in the Bank of England. On this meagre salary he was able to marry, raise a family, and to acquire a library of 6000 volumes. He was an exceedingly well-read man who could recreate the siege of Troy with the household chairs and tables for the benefit of his inquisitive son.

Without a doubt, most of the poet's education came at home. He was an extremely bright child and a voracious reader and learned Latin, Greek, French and Italian by the time he was fourteen. He attended the University of London in 1828, the first year it opened, but left in discontent to pursue his own reading at his own pace. His extensive education has led to difficulties for his readers: he did not always realize how obscure were his references and allusions.

In 1830 he met the actor William Macready and tried several times to write verse drama for the stage. At about the same time he began to discover that his real talents lay in taking a single character and allowing him to discover himself to us by revealing more of himself in his speeches than he suspects—the characteristics of the dramatic monologue. The reviews of Paracelsus (1835) had been mostly encouraging, but the difficulty and obscurity of his long poem

Sordello (1840) turned the critics against him, and for many years they constantly complained of obscurity even in his shorter, more accessible lyrics.

NOTES

In 1845 he saw Elizabeth Barrett's Poems and contrived to meet her. Although she was an invalid and very much under the control of a authoritarian father, the two finally married in September 1846 and a few days later eloped to Italy, where they lived until her death in 1861. The years in Florence were among the happiest for both of them. Her love for him is to be seen in the Sonnets from the Portugese, and to her he dedicated Men and Women, which contains his best poetry. Public sympathy for him after her death (she was a much more popular poet during their lifetimes) surely helped the critical reception of his Collected Poems (1862) and Dramatis Personae (1863). The Ring and the Book (1868-9), based on an "old yellow book" which told of a Roman murder and trial, finally won him considerable popularity. He and Tennyson were now mentioned together as the leading poets of the age. While he lived and wrote actively for another twenty years, the late '60s were the peak of his career. His influence continued to grow, however, and finally lead to the founding of the Browning Society in 1881. He died in 1889, on the same day that his final volume of verse, Asolando, was published. He is buried in Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey.

1.2.1 BROWNING WAS THE BEST VICTORIAN

Is it correct to hold that all the poet of his age Browning was the best Victorian?

Or

Write a short essay on the Victorian moral outlook in Browning's poetry.

Introduction

Browning is symbolic of the Victorian moral outlook. The formative years of his life were spent in the very beginning of the new era. The impulses he received at the beginning continued to inspire him all through. He was to some degree influenced by the political and social events of those years. His poetry shows no awareness of the contemporary social changes. While Tennyson

faithfully represents its age in his poetry, the contemporary social and economic trends and problems find a better place in his poetry. Hugh Walker says: "Browning's ultimate position in the hierarchy of English poets is more doubtful than that of any other English poet of nineteenth century."

NOTES

Reflection of Age

The age of Browning is not reflected in his poetry. He kept himself aloof from the problems of his age. His poetry failed to reflect the condition of his times. His main theme was soul dissection. He stood alone among his contemporaries. Hugh Walker aptly observes, "Browning did not much love to work on topics connected with his own generation. To him time was a matter almost of indifference, for the human soul in which his interest was concerned, has remained much the same since the days of Adams. If he had a preference, it was for the Italian Renaissance rather than for any other age of country." The contemporary social economic tendencies are not faithfully represented by Browning. He was an ardent admirer of Italian Renaissance. A critic said, "Perhaps no English poet ever knew any foreign country so well as Browning knew Italy, certainly none has dedicated more of his work to a land which was not his own." John Ruskin says, "Robert Browning is unerring in every sentence, he writes of the middle ages." He says in '*One Word More'*:

"Oh the crowd must have emphatic warrant!

Theirs the sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,

Right-aim's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat

Never dares the man put off the prophet.

The reputation of Browning suffered from a general reaction to Victorianism. The neo-classics criticised Browning for his lack of art, and his excessive emotionalism. Chesterton says: "The eminent Victorian poet, dead fourteen years, was sponsored by one of the loveliest, soon to be one of the famous of the Edwardians."

A Poet of Victorian Morality

Browning was not a man of his age but a man much in advance of his age. As a moralist and religious teacher he holds a distinct place among the writers of

the Victorian age. He is not touched by the social, political, or intellectual movements of Victorian Era. His new philosophy of love is expressed.

No indeed for good above

NOTES

Is great to grant or mighty to make

And creates the love to reward love.

Browning had faith in God, faith in amorality of the soul and faith in Victorian morality. He had firm faith in human life and human nature. He gave a distinct theory of the relation of man to the universe. Compton Rickett says : "Browning's writings are experimental studies in spiritual experience: Whether he deals with love, or patriotism, intellectual ambition or artistic passion, it is all brought to one common denominator—its effect upon character, its value in the making of the soul." He says:

"Therefore I summon age

To grant youth's heritage,

Life's struggle having so far reached its term

Thence shall I pass approved

A man far age removed.

Victorian Optimism

Browning is the chief exponent of Victorian optimism. He is placed firmly at the head of forces of the Victorian dogmatism. S.A. Brooke writes, "His poetry was not spread at first, but afterwards, the world having reached him, he became a favoured poet." Browning was placed firmly at the head of the forces of late Victorian dogmatism. His optimism is not blind and cheap, but based on the ground realities of life.

Chesterton says, "Browning's optimism is founded on imperfections of man, he derives hope from human deficiency." He says:

God is in His heaven.

All is right with the world

1.2.2 BROWNING'S DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

NOTES

Write a short note on Browning's dramatic Monologue.

Or

"It is not soliloquy of a soul that we suddenly come upon, it is rather a self-disclosure in which we have the collaboration of an analyst at work." Is this true of dramatic Monologues of Browning. Give your reasoned comment.

Or

Comment on the dramatic element in the poetry of Browning.

Definition of Monologue

A dramatic monologue is a fine blend of dramatic lyric. It is a speech by one outstanding character other than the poet himself, to a silent listener. Of course, the poet may put his own ideas and philosophy into the mouth of the speaker, who is in a dramatic situation under the circumstances, may reveal the inner traits of his character and the deepest motives for acting in a particular way.

Difference between a Soliloquy and Drama

A dramatic monologue differs from a soliloquy materially, whereas the former is addressed to a passive listener whose reaction to, what is being laid bare is hinted at, now and then, by the speaker himself, the latter expresses the private thoughts of the actor and is not supposed to be heard by anybody. A dramatic monologue is not "the spontaneous utterance of a living being, it is not the soliloquy of a soul that we suddenly come upon, it is rather a self disclosure. We do not feel that we have before us a human soul unwillingly revealing itself, but a psychologist who is dissecting and a moralist who is judging it." A dramatic monologue differs from drama in its complete lack of active and interchanged speech.

NOTES

Characteristics of Browning's Dramatic Monologues

Browning's dramatic monologues are known for their obscurity. He makes the hero speak without giving a reference to circumstances. Hence, we completely fail to understand his speech and his meaning. To illustrate the charge of obscurity against him we may cite *My Last Duchess*, in which the Duke of Ferrara is making a speech to the Ambassador who has brought an offer of marriage for the Duke. We cannot appreciate the intensity and strength of his jealousy without knowing at the very beginning that the Duke has an indulgent wife "who smiled no doubt, whenever I passed her, but passed without much the same smile."

The second characteristic of his dramatic monologues is that characters of his dramatic monologues have faith in God. They believe that their actions are the result of God's will. Accordingly, Bishop Blougram is certain that his life of pain-stricken and tottering compromises has been really justified by God's divine. Andrea Del Sarto says to his wife:

At the end

God, I conclude, compensates punishes and

All is as God over rules.

The third characteristic of his dramatic monologues is that they are mixtures of half truths and falsehood. In the monologue, we do not find uniformity in the statements of the characters. What they say at one place is contradicted by them at another place. For example Andrea Del Sarto says to his wife:

"Had the mouth there urged never for gain

God and the glory ! never gain

Up to God all there !

I might have done it for you.

And later on, he concludes the fault of his wife and makes a contradictory speech:

Why do I need you?

What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?

In this world, who can do a thing will not-

And who would it, cannot, I perceive.

NOTES

The fourth quality of his monologues is satires against those, who speak them. But G.K. Chesterton held a different view. He says that "they are not satires or attacks upon their subjects. They are not even harsh and unfeeling exposures of them. They say or are intended to say the best that can be said for the persons with them they deal." To illustrate in *The Last Ride Together*, the poet has defended the lover in every possible manner without commenting on his love or passion.

The fifth characteristic of his dramatic monologues is the coarse and brutal language.

The sixth characteristic is that they state Browning's philosophy of life. They are the best vehicle to express his philosophical ideas. The characters, as in *The Last Ride Together* serve the same purpose. The poet has defended the lover in every possible manner and express his views in a simple and elegant manner. In *The Last Ride Together* the philosophy is based on the glories of failure. For example :

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?

Why all men strive and who succeeds?

Look at the end of work, contrast

The petty Done the undone vast.

Browning's dramatic monologues are his best poetic pieces.

Browning's own Personality in his Dramatic Monologues

However soul-stirring and revealing these monologues may be, they are not sufficiently dramatic and objective. There is tendency of the poet's own personality to intrude itself into the action of his pieces. They are not impartial and dispassionate mirror of reality. There is always some moral preoccupation in his psychology. If he is describing souls that are steeped in vice and in crime, he cannot keep back his disgust for them.

NOTES

Only one Character in a Piece

Browning would take a character, get inside it and make it speak in such a way that it expresses its whole personal history and philosophy. Like Shakespeare, "Browning is incapable of creating many characters together in a piece, influencing each other's conduct and action."

The Last Ride Together

The Last Ride Together is one of the loveliest lyrics of Browning and has not being surpassed so far in the English literature. It has all the essentials of a dramatic monologue; a dramatic situation and a person under the stress of an experience delivering himself of his feelings. It is the request of a rejected lover to ride with his beloved. The rejected lover is no objective character—somebody other than the poet. In fact, he is the spokesman of Browning and believes after his own creator that one's failures on this earth are temporary and will very soon give way to access in heaven, where one is bound to be born once again after death.

Conclusion

The element and energies of life are tightly knit in microcosmic completeness. Such situations offered Browning different moods of confusion, sophistry, and self-deception; of every type of complication and aberration of thought. The typical apologies and self-justifications of his subjects give him the fullest opportunity of exhibiting his talent as leading counsel, one of whose art is to induce his victim to speak freely in self-defence; it is the occasion on which the people are apt to reveal most. The poet acquired such mastery of his method that he could use it to any degree of complexity.

1.2.3 BROWNING'S OPTIMISM

Browning's Optimism.

Or

Browning's Philosophy of Life.

Or

Write a note on Browning's Philosophy of life with particular reference to his optimism.

Or

In what way is Browning's all too confident optimism reflected in his poetic technique.

Introduction

Robert Browning was one of the greatest philosophic poets of England during the 19th century. The study of his poems reveals his philosophical view on spiritual and material things of life. Though he did not formulate a system of philosophy of life, yet his philosophical ideas bring closer to the philosophic thinkers of the world.

Taken Certain Things for Granted

In estimating Browning's philosophy of life we have to bear in mind that he took certain things for granted and never allowed doubts and confusions to rise regarding them. He was not ready to enter into any arguments about the veracity or certainty of his philosophical thoughts and ideas.

Existence of God

The first thing that Browning took for granted was the existence and supremacy of God as the creator and Governor of the universe. He was not prepared to question the existence of God even for a moment. In *Pauline*, Browning says "I saw God everywhere-I felt His presence."

In *Paracelsus*, Browning once again expressed his faith in the supreme being, pointing out:

God is seen

In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the cloud.

Browning did not conceive of God as a cruel and tyrannical being. His God was the God of sympathy and mercy, looking with kindness at his creation.

God made all the creatures and gave them

Our love and our fear

We and they are His children

NOTES

One family here.

Immortality of the Soul

The second principle that Browning took for granted is the immortality of the soul. He could never believe that death brings an end of the divine spark irradiating human life. God is the potter and the soul is the clay. Both of them endure for ever. This faith of the poet is well expressed in Rabbi Ben Ezra :

Food ! All that is at all,

Lasts ever, past recall,

Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure

Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

Salient Points of his Philosophical System

(a) The ultimate object of life :

Having understood the fundamental principles of Browning's philosophical system let us now examine the salient points of his Philosophical thoughts. Browning first of all, gave out the answer to the question of man's ultimate end and object in life. In *Paracelsus* Browning's conceived the purpose of human life in acquiring power. Since the power of knowledge was the supreme power the poet considered acquisition of knowledge as the objective of human life. But knowledge by itself was not enough for knowledge is dry and unless it is coloured by the thought of love, it cannot hold out any attraction. Hence, at a later stage Browning has brought about a change in his original conception and made knowledge combined with love as the main quest of human life. This conviction of the poet is expressed in the following lines:

Love preceding power,

And with much power, always much love."

"O world, as God has it! all is beauty

And knowing this is love and love is duty.

(b) World is a fit place for Action :

NOTES

Browning believed that the world was the fit place for action. He had no sympathy with those philosophers who sought to escape from the world into the forests to realise salvation or with these who considered the world as an evil place and a vale of sorrow. Browning accepted the world as it is and considered it good and noble. In *Soul* the poet says:

How good is man's life, the more living, how fit to employ

All the heart and the soul and the soul and the senses for ever in joy.

(c) Man can achieve success in the achievement of his Ideas :

Having clearly the aim and end of man's life Browning examined whether it was possible for man to achieve success in the achievement of his ideas. He was confronted directly with the problem of evil. Although man strove to realise perfection and complete success in his aspirations, he was baffled and discomfited by the over powering forces of evil in the world which retarded men's progress. Browning dealt with the problem of evil in the philosophical poems. Browning welcomed evil for it checked man from achieving perfection. Evil was necessary for balancing human life and saving him from reaching perfection because "what comes to perfection perishes." Evil was, in Browning's opinion, a condition of man's moral life and his moral progress. Further evil was not so powerful as to subdue good. The forces of evil, however, powerful were likely to be subdued and controlled by the forces of goodness in the world. In *Abt Vogler* Browning says:

There shall never be one last good,

What was will live as before

The evil is null, is naught, is silence implying sound

What was good shall be good, with evil so much

NOTES

Presence of Evil is no Check on Aspiring for Higher Ideals

The presence of evil should not check man from aspiring for higher ideals. A man should keep his eyes fixed on higher ideals which may not be gained by him in the course of his earthly life. In *Andrea Del Sarto*, Browning emphasised fighting against the odds and difficulties that come in the way of man's life. In *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, Browning gives us the advice of struggle and fighting against difficulties of life. He says :

Youth should strive through acts uncouth

Towards making.

Further in the same poem he gave the exhortation :

Then, welcome each rebuff

That turns earth's smoothness rough,

Each sting that bid nor sit nor stand but go !

Be our joys three parts pain,

Strive and hold cheap the strain

Learn nor account the pang, dare, never grudge the thorn.

Browning admonished the readers of his poetry to be warriors and fighters, strong and indomitable strugglers, never allowing thoughts of cowardice and craveness to distract them from their chosen path of heroism and bravery. In the poem *The State and the Bust*, he condemned cowardice and reproached the two lovers for their lack of courage and enthusiasm in their love.

Struggling May not End in Success

Browning was ready to answer the question as to what use was of this struggle if at the end man has to fail and suffer miseries. It is not necessary that struggling should end in success. Bitter struggles end in failures. In the face of failures what is the use of a struggling life? To such doubts Browning gave suitable answers. In the opinion of the poet man was not judged by this aspirations, his noble ideals and his success in only his life. Success was not the yard-stick by which a man's actions were judged by God. In the eyes of God a

man was judged not by what he actually attained and by all his hopes and aspirations. The faith of the poet in *Rabbi Ben Ezra* is expressed when he says:

Not on the vulgar mass

Called 'work' must sentence pass

Things done, that took eyes and had the prize

But all the world's coarse thumb

And finger failed to plumb

So passed in making up the main account,

All instincts immature

All purposes unsure

That weighed not as his work, yet welled the man's account.

NOTES

Failure on the Earth has no Importance

Secondly, failure on the earth was not in any way an object of dismay, for what we fail to achieve in the world, we might succeed in getting later on in heaven after the end of our journey on the earth:

And what is our failure but a triumph's evidence

For the fulness of the days.

Browning followed that on earth we have the 'Broken arc'; but in heaven there is 'the perfect round'. Failure need not dishearten or depress us. The lover in *The Last Ride Together*, gives a spirited defence of failure in life:

Fail I alone in words and deeds?

Why, all men strive and who succeeds?

Look at the end of work contrast

The petty done, the undone vast.

NOTES

Life Follows Life

Life is a probation. Man's soul is immortal. Death need not scare us. What man fails to achieve in this world would be attained by him in the next life. Browning's faith and hope is expressed in *Grammarian's Funeral* he says:

"Leave now for dogs and apes! Man has Forever."

Conclusion

Such is the optimistic philosophy of Browning. His optimism, as G.K. Chesterton aptly opines, "was not founded on only argument for optimism, nor on opinions, but on life which was the work of God. Unlike some spiritual voyagers in our literature, he never hugged the shore, but sailed for the open, loving the salt sting of the buffeting waves. A courageous soul, vigorous and vital comrade for those suffering from spiritual anaemia."

1.2.4 MY LAST DUCHESS

My Last Duchess

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,

Looking as if she were alive. I call

That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf's hands

Worked busily a day, and there she stand.

Will't please you sit and look at her? I said

"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read

Strangers like you that pictured countenance,

The depth and passion of its earnest glance,

But to myself they turned (since none puts by

The curtain I have drawn for you, but I) 10

And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,

How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask this, Sir 'twas not
Her Husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much;" or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat;" such stuff
We courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart-how shall I say?-too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, "twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The Dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace-all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,-good! but thanked
Somehow-I know not how-as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Wo'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill

NOTES

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In speech-(which I have not)-to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"-and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
He wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
-E'en that would be some stooping; and I chuse
Never to stoop. Oh Sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew, I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? we'll meet
The company below, then, I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though is fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go.
Together down, Sir! Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

INTRODUCTION AND APPRECIATION

The Date of Publication : The Setting

My Last Duchess was first published in the volume of poems called, *Dramatic Lyrics*, in 1842. It was republished in the *Dramatic Romances* of 1863. It is a dramatic monologue and Phelps regards it as one of the finest dramatic monologues, not only of Browning, but in the whole range of English literature. The speaker is the Duke of Ferrarra, an important city in Italy. It was an important cultural centre during the Renaissance. Whether the character of the Duke in the Monologue is based on some real historical figure or not, there is no denying the fact that in the Monologue, the poet has captured the very spirit of Renaissance Italy, its intrigues, its sensuality, its greed, and its cultural and artistic activity as well.

NOTES

As a Dramatic Monologue

Browning's monologues grow out of some crisis or critical situation in the life of the main figure, and embody the reaction of that figure to that particular situation. Placed in such a situation, the chief figure, the speaker of the monologue, indulges in self-analysis and self-introspection and in this way his soul is laid bare before us. In his monologues, generally, the speaker refers to other character or characters, and in this way reveals not only his character but that of others also. The presence of some listener or interlocutor is also implied. Thus the monologue is a remarkable piece of character study not only of the Duke but also of his last Duchess, and the messenger of the neighbouring Count forms the listener and the interlocutor.

Critical Summary of the Monologue

The Duke of Ferrara, a powerful, proud, and hard-hearted Italian Duke of the 16th century, has been widowed recently. He intends to marry a second time. The messenger of a powerful Count, who has his estate in the neighbourhood, comes to the Duke's palace to negotiate with him the marriage of the Count's daughter. The Duke takes him round his picture gallery and shows him the portrait of his last Duchess. The portrait is life-like and realistic, and the Duke, who is a great lover of the fine arts, is justifiably proud of it.

NOTES

The Duke points out the portrait to the messenger and tells him that he alone uncovers the picture and nobody else is allowed to do so. At this point, the Duke notices an inquiring look in the eyes of the messenger and immediately understands that he wants to know the cause of the deep, passionate look in the eyes of the Duchess, and proceeds to satisfy his curiosity. In this way Browning turns the monologue into a colloquy. The inquiring looks, particular gestures and movements of the listener, here the messenger, serve as big question-marks, and provide the speaker with an occasion for explanation and self-analysis. In this way, much valuable light is thrown on character, and much that is past and dead is brought to life.

In response to the inquiring look of the messenger, the Duke tells him that the deep passion in the eyes of the Duchess does not result from any sex-intrigue or guilty love. He never gave her any occasion to be unfaithful to him. Even the portrait on the wall is done not by an ordinary artist, but by a monk, and he was allowed only one day to complete it. He did not allow the Monk any longer time, for he did not want to provide them any occasion for intimacy. This shows that the Duke is a jealous tyrant and the poor Duchess could never enjoy any freedom of movement as the wife of such a man.

The Duke continues with his explanation. The Duke tells the envoy that his last Duchess had very childish and foolish nature. She was pleased with trifles, would thank others for even the slightest service they happened to render to her, and had no sense of dignity and decorum. For example the faint blush of joy on her cheek and neck was not caused by the presence of her husband. If the painter happened to mention that her cloak covered her wrist too much, or that paint could never hope to capture the light pink glow on her throat, she would take such chance remarks as compliments and blush with pleasure. She had a childish nature, and was pleased too easily by such trifles as the gift of a branch laden with cherries, the beautiful sunset, or the mule presented to her by someone for her rides round the terrace. She would blush with pleasure at such trifles, just as much as she would blush at some costly ornament presented by him. She was the wife of a Duke who belonged to an ancient family, nine hundred year old. But she regards even this gift of his at par with the trifling services rendered to her by others.

As a matter of fact, she had no discrimination, and no sense of dignity and decorum. She smiled at everybody without any distinction; she thanked everybody in the same way. He expected better sense from his wife. He did not try to correct or reform her, for even to notice such frivolity would have meant loss of dignity, and he did not like to suffer this loss. Besides, she would have argued and discussed with him instead of listening to his advice. Her habit of smiling continued to grow till it became intolerable to him. At last he gave orders, and, "Then all smiles stopped together". The line has been left intentionally mysterious. We cannot say for certain how the smiling stopped. But, most probably, the poor, innocent Duchess was murdered at the command of her brutal and hard-hearted husband.

NOTES

The Duke then asks the messenger to come down, where the other guests are waiting. In passing, he tells the messenger that he would expect a rich dowry from his master, the Count, though, of course, he adds very cleverly, his primary concern is the daughter, and not the dowry. The Duke is not only hard-hearted, proud and tyrannical, but also greedy and cunning. He is a great hypocrite . The only good point about him is his love of art. As they go down the stairs, he asks the messenger to have a good look at the bronze statue of Neptune, the sea-god. In this statue, the god is shown riding and controlling a sea-horse. It was done specially for him by the great sculptor, Claus of Innsbruck. It is the name of an imaginary artist invented to impress the messenger, just as earlier he had invented the name of the painter, Fra Pandolf.

Characterisation

The present monologue is an admirable piece of character-study. It is a poem merely of fifty lines, but within its brief compass the poet has rendered a vivid and moving description of both the Duke and the Duchess. The tyranny, the pride and self-conceit, the hard-heartedness, and the dictatorial attitude of the Duke have been thrown into sharp relief by contrast with the genial and cheerful good nature of the Duchess. As Phelps tells us, she was a frank-hearted, charming girl with a genial disposition and zest for life. But all her expressions of delight, and her innocence, not corrupted by the ways of the world, received only a cold response at the hands of her husband. The result was she pined away, or was murdered at the order of the tyrant husband. Critics have read into the portrait an autobiographical significance. They have likened her life in the home of her

husband to that of Elizabeth Barret, the poet's wife, in the home of her father. Just as Elizabeth suffered from the tyranny of her insensitive father, so did the Duchess suffers from the tyranny of her proud and arrogant husband.

NOTES

An Epitome of Renaissance Italy

The monologue is not only an admirable piece of character-study, but also the epitome of the Italian Renaissance. The very spirit of the age has been captured in this short piece. Its intrigue, its greed, its cunning, and hypocrisy, as well as its love of the fine arts, have all been brought out.

Style and Versification

The style of the Monologue is dense and epigrammatic. The line, "And all smiles stopped together", is a concentrated expression of a whole life's tragedy. But despite this density and concentration, the poem is lucid and clear. It is entirely free from the usual faults of Browning. No doubt, there are a few parentheses, but they do not come in the way of our understanding. The poem is written in Heroic couplet, but as the sense runs on from one line to another, the readers are almost not conscious of the rhyme.

1.2.5 THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

The Last Ride Together

I SAID--Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seem'd meant for, fails,
Since this was written and needs must be--
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,--I claim
Only a memory of the same,
--And this beside, if you will not blame;
Your leave for one more last ride with me.

My mistress bent that brow of hers,
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fix'd me a breathing-while or two
With life or death in the balance: right!
The blood replenish'd me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night?

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosom'd, over-bow'd
By many benedictions--sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once--
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!--
Thus leant she and linger'd--joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smooth'd itself out, a long-cramp'd scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

NOTES

NOTES

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
We rode; it seem'd my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
As the world rush'd by on either side.
I thought,--All labour, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever pair'd?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There 's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you express'd
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
Have you yourself what 's best for men?
Are you--poor, sick, old ere your time--
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turn'd a rhyme?

Sing, riding 's a joy! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor--so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that 's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown gray
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
'Greatly his opera's strains intend,
But in music we know how fashions end!'
I gave my youth: but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what 's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being--had I sign'd the bond--
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

And yet--she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturn'd
Whither life's flower is first discern'd,
We, fix'd so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,--

NOTES

And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

NOTES

INTRODUCTION AND APPRECIATION

Date of Publication

The poem *The Last Ride Together* is regarded as one of the finest love poems of Browning. It is a rather long poem of ten stanzas, each of eleven lines. It was first published in 1855 in Vol. I of the Collection of Browning's poems entitled *Men and Women*. Later, it was included in *Dramatic Romances* published in 1868.

As a Dramatic Monologue : The Critical Situation

The Last Ride Together is a dramatic monologue and it shows Browning at his best in the handling of this poetic form. It has also been called a dramatic lyric because it is not an expression of his own personal emotions, but that of the imaginary character. It is spoken by a lover who loved his lady over a long period of time, and who, after making him wait for so long, finally rejected him, and turned to another lover. The lover then prayed to her to grant two requests of his. First, that she should remember his love of her, and secondly, that she should come with him for a last ride together. To his great joy the lady consented.

Critical Summary of the Monologue

It is out of this love-situation that the monologue grows. It is spoken by the lover as he rides by the side of his beloved for the last time. As they commence their ride, the beloved for a moment bends over him and places her head over his shoulders. It seems to him as if heaven itself had descended over him, so great is the bliss he experiences at the moment.

As they ride along, the lover experiences a heavenly bliss. His soul which had lost its happiness and on which grief had left its ugly marks and wrinkles, now smoothens itself out like a crumpled sheet of paper does, which opens out and flutters in the wind. All hopes of a happy life with his beloved, were now dead and gone. His love was now a matter of the past. But the lover does not love hope. He shares Browning's optimism and says that it is no use to regret or to feel

sorry for a life which has been ruined. What is ended cannot be mended. It is no use speculating over his possible success, if he had acted and spoken differently. It is just possible that had he acted differently, instead of loving him, she might have hated him. Now she is only indifferent to him. Now at least she rides beside him. Instead of brooding sadly over the dead past he derives consolation from this fact.

NOTES

The lover then reflects over the lot of humanity in general, and derives further consolation from the fact that he is not the only one who has failed in life. Such is the lot of man that they all try, but none succeeds. All labour, but all fail at last to achieve their ends. How little of success and achievement, and how much of failure does the whole world show! He is lucky in the sense that, at least, he rides by the side of his beloved. Others do not get even that much of success. There is always a wide disparity between conception and execution, between ambition and achievement. Human will is seldom transformed into action; human limitations always hamper action and the achievement of one's desires. Hardly anyone gets an adequate reward for his achievements. The only reward, even of the most successful statesman, is a short obituary notice, and that of a heroic warrior only an epitaph over his grave in the Westminster Abbey. The poet, certainly, achieves much. He expresses human thoughts and emotions in a sweet, melodious language, but he does not get any of the good things of life. He lives and dies in poverty. The great sculptor and musician, too, are failures. From even the most beautiful piece of sculpture, say a statue of the Goddess Venus, one turns to an ordinary, but a living, breathing girl; and fashions in music are quick to change. Comparatively, he is more successful for he has, at least, been rewarded with the company of his beloved. At least, he has the pleasure of riding with her by his side.

It is difficult to say what is good and what is not good for man in this world. Achievement of perfect happiness in this world means that one would have no hopes left for life in the other world. Failure in this world is essential for success and achievement in the life to come. He has failed in this life, but this is a blessing in disguise, which means that he would be successful in the life to come. He can now hope for happiness in the other world. Because he did not get his beloved here, he is sure to enjoy the bliss of her love in the life after death. Now for him, “both Heaven and she are beyond this ride.” Failure in this world is best.

Further, so hopes the lover, "the instant become eternity" and they may ride together for ever and ever. Who knows that the world may end that very moment? In that case, they will be together in the other world if it ends that very moment? In that case, they will be together in the other world, and will be together for ever.

NOTES

Soul-Study : A Study in Optimism

The monologue lays bare before us the lover's soul. As he muses over his past failure in love, his bliss in the present, and his hopes for the future, we get a peep into his soul. He is a heroic soul who is not discouraged by his failure in love. He derives consolation from failure itself. He shares the poet's cheerful optimism, his faith in the immortality of the soul, and believes, like him, that, "God creates the love to grant the love." It is better to die, "without a glory garland round one's neck," for there is a life beyond and one should have some opening left for it, "dim-descried".

An Excellent Love Poem

As a love-poem, the monologue has been widely praised. W.H. Phelps calls it, "one of the greatest love-poems in all literature", as an aspiration which was not to be realised in this life at all, but must have its completion in the other life. Herford regards its passion as of a rarer and more difficult kind than that of *Evelyn Hope*. It is a poem of unrequited love in which there is nothing but the noblest resignation. There is no despair, no wounded pride, and no anger. The poem illustrates the truth of Herford's view that in Browning's poetry the tragedy of love is only for the woman; while his lovers have his own, "Supple optimism, his analytic, dissipating fancy, infused into his portrayal of the grief-pangs of his own sex." The poem conveys a message of cheer and optimism to despairing humanity, as well as, "glows with pure poetic fervour." According to Raleigh, while in other poems the poet is entirely pre-occupied with the, "glory of failure," the present poem, "flushes with the human glory of possession," though the possession is brief and fleeting. While all other critics are one in praising the poem, S.A. Brooke is the only one who points out its inherent shortcomings. He writes, "The lover in the poem thinks more of his own thoughts than of the woman by his side, who must have been somewhat wearied by so silent a companion." Intellectual analysis and argumentation come in the way of emotional intensity.

Its Style and Versification

The poem is entirely free from the usual faults of Browning. There is no obscurity. The language is clear, simple and lucid. There is no display of learning, no unusual, and far-fetched comparisons, and no excessive use of parentheses. The poem contains a number of memorable phrases. To quote only two examples: "The petty done, and the vast undone," and, "the instant made eternity". The images of the, "Billowy bosomed cloud", and of the poet's soul opening out like a crumpled piece of paper are exquisite. The poem brings out Browning's skill as a metrist also. In the long-drawn rhythm of its verse, the poet has succeeded in capturing the steady stride of the horses as they carry along the lover and the lady. As we read the poem, we seem to hear the very gallop of the two horses: "The rhythmic beat of the verses accords well with the thought, mood and movement of the poem."

1.2.6 RABBI BEN EZRA

Rabbi Ben Ezra

I

GROW old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith "A whole I planned,
"Youth shows but half; trust God: see all nor be afraid!"

II

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed "Which rose make ours,
"Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
"Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

III

NOTES

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark

IV

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

V

Rejoice we are allied
To That which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

VI

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

VII

For thence,—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:

What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

VIII

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh has soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

IX

Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and learn?"

X

Not once beat "Praise be Thine!
"I see the whole design,
"I, who saw power, see now love perfect too:
"Perfect I call Thy plan:
"Thanks that I was a man!
"Maker, remake; complete,—I trust what Thou shalt do!"

XI

For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest;
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute,—gain most, as we did best!

NOTES

NOTES

XII

Let us not always say
"Spite of this flesh to-day
"I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry "All good things
"Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

XIII

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a god though in the germ.

XIV

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new:
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

XV

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

XVI

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts

The deed off, calls the glory from the grey:
A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
"Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."

NOTES

XVII

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
"This rage was right i' the main,
"That acquiescence vain:
"The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

XVIII

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

XIX

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedest age: wait death nor be afraid!

XX

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,

Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

XXI

NOTES

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

XXII

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me: we all surmise,
They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul believe?

XXIII

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:

XXIV

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

XXV

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

XXVI

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!"

XXVII

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

XXVIII

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

XXIX

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?

NOTES

What though, about thy rim,
Scull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

XXX

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st thou with earth's wheel?

XXXI

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who mouldest men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

XXXII

So, take and use Thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

INTRODUCTION AND APPRECIATION

The Date of Publication: The Central Character

Rabbi Ben Ezra was first published in the volume of Browning's poems entitled Dramatis Personae, in 1864. Rabbi in the Hebrew tongue means one learned in theology and religious philosophy. 'Ben' is a corruption of the Arabic word 'Ibn' which means 'son'. Ezra was such a Jewish scholar of the Middle

Ages. He was born in Spain in 1092, and died in Rome in 1167, leaving behind him a number of works on religious philosophy, and a rich collection of poems. I.A. Campbell, a critic, is of the view that the philosophy of the poem is indeed the philosophy of Rabbi Ben Ezra. But we cannot agree with this view. Though there is little doubt that Browning was familiar with works of the great Jewish philosopher of the Middle Ages, the philosophy expressed in the poem is that of Browning himself. The apparent resemblance between the views expressed in the poem and those held by the great Rabbi may be accounted for by the fact that both of them were well-read in the Bible, and the work was the familiar source of their inspiration.

NOTES

The Rabbi: A Spokesman of Browning's Philosophy

The poem is a dramatic monologue and the great Rabbi is the speaker. But, as a matter of fact, he is the mouthpiece of Browning, and it is not his views but the views of the poet which he utters. The poem is chiefly valuable as a complete and lucid expression of Browning's cheerful optimism. Incidentally, in the poem he gives a convincing reply to Epicurean, philosophers, like Omar Khayyam, whose poems had recently been translated into English by Edward Fitzgerald. The mood in the poem is reflective, a mood of calm contemplation and spiritual serenity, and the speaker, as he surveys life from the vantage point of old age, expresses proudly his faith in the value of significance of human life. The four important aspects of Browning's philosophy are (I) faith in the organic wholeness of human life, i.e., youth is consummated in old age, and hence the value and significance of old age (2) the value of struggle which alone can lead to achievement and spiritual development (3) Faith in death which is a gateway to the life in the other world, and which is the end and the consummation of life in this world, and (4) Faith in God and in the immortality of the human soul in the continuous flux of circumstance. All these four aspects of the poet's philosophy find a detailed logical presentation.

Development of Thought

W.L. Phelps gives a lucid account of the development of thought in the poem. The shortcomings and sufferings of life are part of the divine machinery employed by Him in His infinite wisdom to further human development, to make man ultimately fit to see His face. no real progress is possible without

overcoming obstacles: no enjoyment without sorrow and suffering: no vacation without duties, and no virtue without sin.

NOTES

The Monologue opens in an abrupt, conversational style. The second line of the poem startles us by its direct contradiction of the language and lamentations of conventional poetry. Regret for lost youth and terror at the approach of old age are stock ideas in poetry, and in human meditation; but here we are invited to look forward to old age, as the best time of life. Not to grow old merrily gracefully and in resignation, but to grow old eagerly, in triumph. There is no doubt that he is right, provided on lives a mental, rather than an animal existence. "God loveth whom He chasteneth. Our doubts and fears, our sorrows and pains, are spurs, stimulates to spiritual progress, rejoice that we have them, for they are proofs that we are alive and moving." They differentiate man from the animals.

In the seventh stanza there's a bold but cheering thought. Many thinkers regard the deepest sorrow of life as rising from the disparity between our ideals and our achievement. Browning says boldly,

What I aspired to be,

And was not, comforts me;

This paradox, which comforts while it mocks, means, "My achievements are ridiculously small in comparison with my hopes, my ambitions, my dreams: 'thank God for all this! Thank God I was not content with low aims, thank God I had my aspirations and have them still: they point to future development."

In the twenty-third, twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth stanzas, we see that Browning suddenly returns to this idea: efforts, which, if unsuccessful, count for nothing in worldly estimation, estimation, are of enormous good for the life to come and must, therefore, be rated high. The reason why the world counts only things done and not things attempted, is because the world's standards are too coarse. The world is capable of judge only gross and obvious results. As Phelps says, "You cannot weight diamonds on hay scales; the indicator would show precisely nothing. And yet one diamond, too fine for these huge scales, might be of more value than thousands of tons of hay".

From the twenty-sixth stanza to the end, Browning takes up the figure of the Potter, the wheel and the clay. In Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam much is made

of the Potter, meaning blind destiny; and the moral is, "Drink! the Past is one, seize today." "Browning explicitly rejects and scorns this teaching, it is propounded by fools for the benefit of other fools." In Browning's metaphor, the Potter is God: the wheel is the whirling course of life's experiences: the Clay is man. God holds us on the wheel to turn us into the proper shape. "Owing to our flaws, the strain is sometimes too great, and some of us are warped and twisted by this stern discipline: other characters, made of better material, constantly grow more beautiful and more serviceable under the treatment." Browning had undergone the greatest sorrow of his life (the death of Mrs. Browning) when he wrote this poem, and nonetheless he had faith enough to say in the thirty-first stanza, that not even while the whirl was worst, did he, bound, dizzily to the terrible wheel of life, once lose his belief that he was in God's hands, and that the deep cuttings were for his eventual benefit.

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Phelps remarks that “In the making of a cup, the Potter engraves around the base lovely images of youth and pleasure, and near the rim skulls and signs of death: but what is a cup for? It is meant for the Master's lips. The nearer, therefore, we approach death, the nearer we are to God's presence, who is making us fit to slake his thirst! Finished at last, we have done forever with life's wheel: we come to the banquet, the festal board, lamps, flash and trumpet's peal, the glorious appearance of the Master”.

A Great Religious Poem

The poem has had plenty of praise on the part of critics. It has been called the finest meditative and reflective poem in the English language. It has been called a great religious poem. Arthur Symons holds the opinion that in Rabbi Ben Ezra, "Browning has crystallized his religious philosophy into a shape of abiding beauty. It has been called, not rashly, the noblest of modern religious poems. Alike in substance and in form, it belongs to the highest order of meditative poetry, and it has in Browning's work an almost unique quality of grave beauty, of severe restraint, of earnest and measured enthusiasm. What the Psalm of Life is to the people who do not think, Rabbi Ben Ezra might and should be to those who do; a light through the darkness, a lantern of guidance and a beacon of hope, to the wanderers lost and weary".

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The Note of Optimism

Rabbi Ben Ezra is one of the poems that shape character. Certainly, Browning's message in the poem is an optimistic one. It is not a cheap optimism, an optimism which is blind to the presence of Evil or the misery of mankind. The poem shows that the poet is aware of the sorrow and suffering of man, of the pangs and agonies, failures and disappointments that he has to undergo. He derives hope from this very imperfection of human life. Having an unshakable faith in God and the immortality of the soul, he teaches us that failure in this life means success in the life to come, and sincere struggle and effort is sure to be rewarded, if not in this life, them in life to come. To Browning, the worst of sin is passive acceptance, sloth and indifference, for who struggles and works can always hope. It is better to strive and to fail, than not to make any effort at all. We are in the hands of God, and He will certainly give us our due:

All I could never be,

All men ignored in me,

This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

In the poem he, again and again, reaffirms to nobility and superiority of Man.

Rejoice, we are allied

To that which doth provide,

And not partake, effect and not receive.

Thus Man has the divine in him; he is more akin to God than to "Dogs and apes". And Man's soul is immortal:

Earth, changes, but they soul and God stand sure;

What entered into thee

That was, is, and shall be;

Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.

Browning's optimism is not a cheap optimism. The poem forcefully brings out that he is aware of, "the skull things", that crowd round old age, and of, "the

rebuffs", which "turn earth's smoothness rough". Browning is not blind to this fact, only he asks us to look beyond life, regard this life as a period of training, and have faith in the immortality of the soul and the kindness of God. It is because of this robust and cheerful optimism that Hugh Walker writes of the poem, "No more confident and triumphant poem was ever written, it has the magnificent faith of certain of the Psalms."

NOTES

Its Style

The style of the poem, no doubt, presents some difficulties for the readers. It is not completely free from the grotesqueries and eccentricities of the poet. There are a number of inverted constructions and omissions which make stanzas like the 9th, 12th, 22nd, 29th, and many others, rather difficult to follow without an exhaustive commentary. At least one line in the poem has been disapproved of by all critics as being ugly and revolting:

Irks Care the Crop-fully bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast.

The poem may be a little difficult, but there is definitely no obscurity in it. Every line can be understood after a little sincere effort. And the imagery of the poem is exquisite. It is also symbolic. Such is the image of the potter and this wheel.

Its Versification

The poem consists of thirty-two stanzas of six lines each. The measure used is iambic. In each stanza, there are four short lines of six syllables, one line, the third, of ten syllables, and the last, sixth, is an Alexandrine i.e. a line of twelve syllables. The use of the Alexandrine creates and effect of slow movement, of repose and serenity. The rhyme scheme is a a b c c b.

1.2.8 SOME IMPORTANT EXPLANATIONS

Lines:

What is he but a brute

Whose flesh hath soul to suit,

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Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?

To man, repose this test-

Thy body at its best,

How far can that project thy soul on its long way.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from the poem *Rabbi Ben Ezra* by Robert Browning. In these lines the poet compares the life of a man that of an animal and points out the difference between them.

In the opinion of Rabbi Ben Ezra that man cannot be considered better than an animal who adopts his soul to the needs of the body, and cares only for the play and action of the body rather than the soul . The man who neglects his soul at the cost of the body. The soul will ultimately depart from the body and travel all alone in the dis-bodied from its spiritual voyage. In that state the body will not help the soul and the non-cultivated soul shall have to bear great difficulties in its spiritual journey. Hence the test before man is not to neglect the soul and keep the cultivations of the soul and then alone the soul would march ahead on its way to spiritual progress after it has shuffled off the mortal coils.

Lines:

For pleasant in this flesh;

Our soul in its rose-mesh

Pulled over to the earth, still yearns for rest;

Would we some prize might hold

To match those manifold

Possessions of the brute—gain most, as we die best.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from the poem *Rabbi Ben Ezra* by Robert Browning. Here the poet means to say that bodily pleasures for pleasures of the sense are tempting. In his eyes the pleasures of the bodily sense are quite sweet.

The Rabbi praises God for his perfect plan and thanks him making him into perfection. This is possible by making the soul strive hard to ennoble itself. But the aspirations of the soul are apt to be damped under the influence of the flesh. The physical experience are indeed pleasant, and we are likely to content ourselves with sheer physical existence unmindful of the ennobling of the soul. The earthy pleasures are as a sweet-scented rose mesh trying to pull the soul ever down making it desire for rest from struggle. The Rabbi desires that those might be some reward for the struggling and aspiring soul which would compensate for the various pleasures of the flesh, so that there would be an incentive for the soul to struggle upwards.

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Lines:

Thoughts hardly to be packed

Into a narrow act,

Fancies that broke through language and escaped;

All I cold never be,

This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from the poem *Rabbi Ben Ezra* by Robert Browning. Browning complains that the world judged his worth only by a material standard; and that is why, it never took any notice of his inner longings and aspirations which cannot be properly translated into either words or actions.

Rabbi Ben Ezra points out that many thoughts and ideas which could not be translated into practice, many fancies and imaginative thoughts which could not be adequately expressed in words, many aspirations and ambitions of life which could not be realized and of which the world took no notice Would be taken into account by God in making final judgement on his worth as a man. God the creator of man, would certainly consider all these unfulfilled aspirations when judging man's work and worth in this world.

Lines:

Oh Sir, she smiled, no doubt,

Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without

Much the same smile? This grew, I gave commands;

Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands

As if alive. Will't please you rise?

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Explanation: These lines have been taken from Robert Browning's poem "My Last Duchess". The Duke tells the envoy that the Last Duchess was very free with her smiles. She smiled when her husband showed her a favour. She had the smile same for the beauty of the sunset, for a fellow who brought a worthless branch of cherries or the mule on which she rode. She could not make a distinction between the honour shown by a common man and that conferred on her by the Duke who belonged to a family of reputation nine hundred years old.

Lines:

The company below, then, I repeat,

The Count your master's known munificence

Is ample warrant that no just pretence

Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;

Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed

At starting, is my object.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Robert Browning's poem "My Last Duchess". When the Duke told the envoy of the Count why he had to pass orderes for the death of the Duchess, he asked him to leave his seat and accompany him down to meet the people who were waiting for them.

The Duke was greedy man. He did not like to loose the dowry. So he said to the envoy: "I may tell you again that the renowned generosity of your master, the Count, is quite a god guarantee that the dowry for which, I have just claims will not be refused. Nevertheless I may assure you as I told you in the beginning when our talks about the marriage began that my chief aim is to procure your master's beautiful daughter in marriage, and not the dowry.

Lines:

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?

Why, all men strive and who succeeds?

We rode, it seemed my spirit flew,

Saw other regions, cities new.

As the world rushed by on either side.

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Explanation: These lines have been taken from Robert Browning's "The Last Ride Together." Here the poet tells us that actual achievement of every person is far short of his hopes. We hope very high but actually achieve very little.

The lover consoles himself with the thought that he is not the only one to have failed in life. Failure is very common in this world both in words and in deeds. All men exert themselves to achieve their object but few succeed. The attainment of ambition is very rare. Then the actual achievement of people always fails short of their expectations. People aim big but achieve little. The lover says that he aimed at winning his mistress's is love and has attained only the pleasure of a last ride with her. His achievement, though far below his aim, was however, no small one. As he rode side by side with his beloved, he felt that his soul was breathing a new air. In other words, experience a delightful feeling of exhilaration.

Lines:

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate

Proposed bliss have should sublimate

My being; and I signed the bond-

Still one must lead some life beyond

Have a bliss to die with-dim descried.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from the famous poem *The Last Ride Together.* Here the lover thinks that if all our ideals were achieved in perfection, we would have nothing to look forward to in the next life after death.

The lover says that a man cannot positively say what is good for him and what is not. If his love had achieved its fulfilment in this life there would have been nothing for him to look forward to in his next life. Man always turns to

something noble to achieve in his future life beyond the success he attains in this world. Of course, the bliss of the next life is only dimly perceived by man yet it is something which makes him. One should not die without some sort of hope for one's next life. Therefore one's all desires and aspirations ought not to be satisfied here.

NOTES

1.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Describe Tennyson's Poetry as a Mirror to the Age.
2. Discuss Tennyson as a Representative Poet.
3. Write a note on the Merits and Demerits of Tennyson's Poetry .
4. Discuss Tennyson's Greatness as a Poet.
5. Write the critical appreciation of the poem *Ulysses*.
6. Is it correct to hold that all the poet of his age Browning was the best Victorian?
7. Write a short note on Browning's dramatic Monologue.
8. Write a brief note on Browning's Optimism.

1.4 LET US SUM UP

Unit I makes you familiar with the two great Victorian poets Alfred Tennyson and Robert Browning. You are now capable enough not only to discuss the age in which they wrote but also discuss some of their select poems for critical appreciation.

UNIT-II : MATTHEW ARNOLD, THOMAS CARLYLE

NOTES

Structure

NOTES

2.0 OBJECTIVES

In Unit II our objective is to tell you about the life and works of Matthew Arnold and Thomas Carlyle in general. For critical appreciation we have selected Arnold's 'Thyrsis' and 'Dover Beach' and Carlyle's *The Hero as Poet*. You will be able to:

- Discuss the life and works in general.
- Summarize their works.
- Offer a critique on the works.

2.1 MATTHEW ARNOLD

Matthew Arnold was born in Laleham, Surrey. His father was Dr Thomas Arnold, Headmaster of Rugby School. He was educated at Winchester, Rugby, and Balliol College, Oxford where he met another renowned poet of the age, A.H.Clough, and won the Newdigate prize with a poem on Cromwell (1843). In 1845 he was elected a fellow of Oriel, another Oxford college.

After working as private secretary to Lord Landsdowne (1847-51), he became an inspector of schools (1851) and travelled widely in England and the Continent observing how schools were organised and suggesting means for their improvement.

In 1851 he married Fanny Lucy Wightman and part of his famous poem 'Dover Beach' (1867) dates from his honeymoon on the Continent. He was to have six children, only three of whom survived him.

His critical work had a deep influence on many writers after his death, including the poet T.S.Eliot. In Essays and Criticism (1865) Arnold widened the limits of literary criticism by using it to attack the state of English culture. The focus of this attack was 'provinciality', or the narrowness of mind caused by people's preoccupation with local affairs.

His enthusiasm to escape the limits of 'provinciality' formed the basis of his

work as an inspector of schools. He is now seen as a great contributor to the improvement of education in England.

2.1.1 ARNOLD AS A POET OF THE VICTORIAN UNREST

NOTES

Arnold As a Poet of the Victorian Unrest

Tennyson is often called the representative poet of the Victorian age. Stopford Brooke writes, "For more than sixty years he lived to the present life of England, as far as he was capable of comprehending and sympathising with its movements ; and he inwove what he felt concerning it into his poetry. That Tennyson's poetry was an epitome of his time, that it exhibited the society, and art, the philosophy, the religion of his day, was proved by the welcome which all classes gave it." Browning showed a remarkable fondness for the remote and strange historical settings, particularly of the Italian Renaissance. Arnold though not a representative poet of his age, certainly reacted more violently than anybody else to the spiritual suffering of his age. His letter to his mother is an eloquent commentary on his poetry.

Arnold once said of himself, "It might be fairly urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigour and abundance than Browning, yet because I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn."

Arnold felt that he was a crusader—a David among Goliaths. In a letter to Clough, he wrote: "Reflect too, as I cannot but do here more and more, inspite of all the nonsense some people talk, how deeply unpoetical the age and all one's surrounding are. Not unprofound, not ungrand, not unmoving – but unpoetical."

Yet again he wrote to Clough: "These are damned times--everything is against one--the height to which knowledge is come the spread of luxury, our physical enervation, the absence of great natures, the unavoidable contact with millions of small ones, newspapers, cities, light profligate friends, moral desperadoes like Carlyle, our own selves and the sickening consciousness of our difficulties."

He turned to Clough again. “Only let us pray all the time—God keep us both from aridity! Arid—that is what the times are.”

He wrote to Clough yet another time: “As for my poems they have weight, I think, but little or no charm.... But woe was upon me if I analysed not my situation and Werter, Rene, and such like, none of them analyse the modern situation in its true blankness and barrenness, and unpoetrylessness.”

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These extracts from letters prove how Arnold was representing the Victorian age. He was greatly extolled by most of his contemporaries. Material prosperity, the expansion of democracy, and the growth of science had hardly any appeal to him. He found life to be a veritable nightmare, which

Hath really neither joy nor love nor light,

Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;

And we are here as on darkling plain

Swept with confused, alarms of struggle and fights,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.

To him, the contemporary life had no meaning or direction. Christianity also could barely offer him any consolation. He, therefore, could not help being a poet of sceptical reaction. He could not share with Tennyson his genial faith or the robust and buoyant optimism of Browning. The conflict between science and religion, between matter and spirit was predominant, and Arnold had lost all his moorings. He complained :

The sea of faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd

But now I only hear

It long, melancholy, withdrawing roar.

He could not cast his anchor anywhere. He found himself in a hostile, Godless, chaotic world.

"Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days, my mind?"

Arnold answered the question himself that Homer, Sophocles, and Epictetus could sustain him amidst the encircling gloom. More sensitive than any of his contemporaries, Arnold could not feel well at ease in "These..... damned times". He felt and mirrored the malady of the age. In *The Buried Life*, he complained:

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I feel a nameless o'er roll.

His Philomela struck the characteristic note of his age.

Eternal passion!

Eternal pain!

Empedocles escaped from the world and jumped into the crater of Etna. Arnold is Empedocles. And this idea has been ably expressed by Lionel Trilling: "Though the misery of Empedocles is chiefly the misery of a man facing a cosmic fact he cannot endure, there is another cause for his despair: he cannot endure, the social world; not only has he lost community with nature, he has lost community with his fellowmen. Arnold chose his hero aptly to embody his own social feeling.... The loneliness which Arnold represents in the person of Empedocles is no small part of the burden of his own age."

Like an infant he was crying in the night, crying for light. His intense intellectualism did not enable him to find rest anywhere. He thus represented the spirit of Victorian unrest. In his *Scholar Gipsy* he sought to have an outlet of his native melancholy. The Victorian age, for him, as for the Gipsy was full of 'Sick hurry' and 'divided aims'. The life of the Victorians had its "heads o'er-taxed, its palsied hearts".

In *The Memorial Verses*, the Victorian age is described as "the iron age". It was

Europe's dying hour,

Of fitful dream and feverish power.

He looked below and found to his horror:

The lurid flow

Of terror, and insane distress.

NOTES

The Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse is vivid account of Arnold's spiritual distress. Duffin writes: "He (Arnold) feels that he is out of place, yet there he shares with the monks the world's mockery though, as he admits, it is his melancholy, not his scepticism that is condemned. With force he declares that the scorn of Byron, the lonely wail of Shelley, the sad stern page of Obermann have left the world unredeemed. He says he cannot fully accept the outlook of the times, which he exposes as materialistic and scientific and concludes the poem with an analogy of children living near an old-world abbey."

In his youth Arnold came in contact with a number of enlightened people who,

Purged its faith, and trimm'd its fire,

Show'd me the high white star of truth,

There bade me gaze, and there aspire.

Weighed in the balance, all the so-called enlightened men were found wanting. He asked,

For what avail'd it all the noise

And outcry of the former men?

Say, have their sons obtain'd more joys?

Say, is life lighter now than then?

The answer is a big 'No'.

Arnold tried, and was not successful to cling to the faith of the Carthusians. But nevertheless he felt more akin to them emotionally, although he had hardly any intellectual affinity with them.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,

The other powerless to be born,

With nowhere yet to rest my head,

Like those on earth I wait forlorn.

I came to shed them at their side.

2.1.2 ARNOLD'S THEORY OF POETRY

Arnold's Theory Of Poetry

NOTES

Arnold is a poet and a critic as well. Like most great poets he had a theory of poetry. His preface to the 1853 volume of poems is a monumental work, and is an important utterance at a critical moment of English literary history. The Preface was the manifesto of classicism in an age of subjectivism and individualism in poetry. Long before the publication of even the first volume of poems, Arnold felt the necessity of bringing about certain radical reforms. Arnold learnt from the masters of antiquity the cardinal doctrine that fine bits of thought, however melodious, must be subordinated to the total impression. Byron was blazing trails of glory, but in the fifties he was a spent force. Both Shelley and Keats had become greatly popular, and people had a very high opinion of their works. Phrase-mongering became the order of the day. In a letter to Jane, Arnold expressed: "At Oxford particularly many complain that the subjects treated (in *The Strayed Reveller* and Other Poems) do not interest them. But as I feel rather as a reformer in poetical matters, I am glad of this opposition. If I have health and opportunity to go on, I will shake the present methods until they go down, see if I don't. More and more I bent against the modern English habit (too much encouraged by Wordsworth) of using poetry as a channel for thinking aloud, instead of making anything."

Arnold had the intellectual honesty to withdraw his *Empedocles on Etna*, for it was not consistent with his poetic theory. It is a poem in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. In such circumstances there is unavoidably something morbid, in the description of them something monotonous.

Arnold's views on the Elizabethan and the nineteenth century romantics, against whom the Preface is a challenge, are expressed in his letter to Clough: "Those … 'Elizabethan poets', were the trouble-shooters. Keats was a mere 'style and form seeker'. Keats and Shelley had 'exuberance of expression, the charm, the richness of images, and the felicity, of the Elizabethan poets'. And yet they

had done incalculable harm to English poetry. True poetry does not consist in 'exquisite bits and images'. Poetry 'can only subsist by its contents; by becoming complete magister vitae as the poetry of the ancients did."

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The preface affirms the 'all-depends-upon-the-subject' theory. "It must not lose itself in parts and episodes, and ornamental work, but must press forwards to the whole."

The Victorian age appeared to him "not unprofound, not ungrand, not unmoving but unpoetical." Again the age sprawled before him "in its true blankness and barrenness, and unpoetrylessness ."

He, therefore, sought asylum in ancient Greece, and wished to "retire more and more from the modern world and modern literature, which is all only what has been before and what will be again, and not bracing or edifying in the least."

The preface was also a challenge to the Spasmodic school of poetry. Dobell, Bailey, Marston, Ebenezer Jones, Biggs and Alexander Smith were the Spasmodists, who, as Buckley writes, "Inflamed by borrowed passions and their own ranting emotion … yielded to a Titanic egotism, vigorous enough at times to shake a susceptible public into the conviction that these were the new Elizabethans, young men of gusto, of spontaneous feeling, of amazing verbal fluency.... uncertain of their ultimate design, they neglected over-all theme and action to magnify isolated emotions, to embroider random sentiments often quite irrelevant to the given mood."

From time to time Arnold recorded his protest against the romantic vagaries and extravagances. He was always conscious of the noble function of poetry. Poetry has immense possibility. The time is not far off when poetry would replace even science and religion. The strongest part of religion is unconscious poetry. Poetry is not the idle songs of an empty day. Its function is not mere diversion or entertainment. It rather has the power to interpret life for us. Science and poetry are complementary to each other. Like Wordsworth, Arnold sincerely believes that poetry is the emotional expression which is in the countenance of all science. Science and religion have a limited appeal, while poetry appeals as much to our emotion and imagination as to our intellect.

According to Arnold, poetry is the criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty. This definition has given rise to a good deal of speculation. What Arnold really means by criticism is that poetry is not a photographic picture of life. It will present an ideal life, which one should seek to realise. The ideas expressed in poetry will be integrated with life. Poetry will follow the principles of poetic truth and poetic beauty. By poetic truth Arnold means truth and high seriousness. In other words, poetry must be rich in matter. By poetic beauty Arnold means expression. Matter and expression, form and content should go hand in hand. Like this poetry becomes a source of consolation and delight.

The expression 'criticism of life' has given rise to a good deal of speculation. J.D. Jump aptly writes, "There can be no excuse for not knowing what Arnold means by criticism: a disinterested attempt to see things as they are, in the course of which value-judgments naturally and almost insensibly form themselves". Garrod interprets it by quoting Edward Caird who said that "literature is a criticism of life exactly in the sense that a good man is a criticism of a bad one." Arnold himself has explained criticism of life as "the noble and profound application of ideas to life". It is, in fact a moral approach to poetry, in the sense that it conforms to the ideal of truth and beauty.

Arnold further said that poetry should be written in the grand style. The expression 'grand style' was used first by Reynolds in his *Discourses on Art*. In the Preface to the 1853 volume, Arnold, while speaking of the superiority of the Greek poets, said: "Not that they failed in expression, or were inattentive to it; on the contrary, they are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the grand style." Again in his *On Translating Homer : Last Words*, he said, "The Grand style arises in poetry, when a noble nature, poetically gifted treats with simplicity or with severity a serious subject." The grand style remains the prerogative of a select few poets whose language has rapidity, nobility, plainness and direction.

It must be accepted that Arnold, in spite of his moral approach to poetry, was not blind to the natural magic of expression. But along with expression, their must be moral depth. That is why he wrote in his essay on Wordsworth: "A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against life; a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards life."

2.1.3 ARNOLD'S POETRY AS THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

NOTES

Arnold's Poetry As The Criticism Of Life

Arnold has defined poetry as the criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic beauty. And this definition has raised a hornets' nest. Arnold in his essay writes: "There are the famous men of literature—the Homers, Dantes, Shakespeares, of them we need not speak; their praise is for ever and ever. Then there are the famous men of ability in literature. Their praise is in their own generation. And what makes this difference? The work of the two orders of men is at the bottom the same—a criticism of life. The end and aim of all literature, if one considers it attentively, is, in truth, nothing but that. But the criticism which the men of genius pass upon human life is permanently acceptable to mankind; the criticism which the men of ability pass upon human life is transitorily acceptable."

So as to stress his point Arnold has spoken of poetry as the criticism of life in his Study of Poetry, The *Homeric Lectures*, and the essays on Wordsworth and Byron. In his essay on Wordsworth, he says that "Poetry is at bottom a criticism of life". In the essay of Byron, Arnold is more explicit: "I have seen it said that I allege poetry to have for its characteristic this: that it is a criticism of life; and that I make it to be there by distinguishing it from prose, which is something else. So far from it, that when I first used this expression, a criticism of life, now many years ago, it was to literature in general that I applied it, and not to poetry in special. The end and aim of all literature, I said, is…. nothing but that; a criticism of life. And so surely is; the main end and aim of all our literature, whether in prose or in verse, is surely criticism of life. We are not brought much on our way, I admit, towards an adequate definition of poetry as distinguished from prose by the truth; still a truth it is, and poetry can never prosper if it is forgotten. In poetry, however , the criticism of life has to be made conformably to the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty."

Lest there be some ambiguity left even in this explanation, Arnold himself has further elucidated 'criticism of life' as "the noble and profound application of ideas to life". Poetry, according to Arnold, is not for mere entertainment. It is,

therefore, a fundamentally moral approach to poetry. It must conform to the ideals of truth and beauty.

There are critics who have found fault with Arnold's definition and pointed out that poetry is not a mere criticism of life, but an idealised reconstruction of life. Arnold, in fact, is Aristotelian in his approach to poetry, for Aristotle maintains that poetry is an imitation of life, by which he means that poetry is an idealised re-creation of life. Moral edification as the supreme object of poetry has consequently been emphasised. Worsfold writes: "The poet or novelist by creating ideal pictures of life, provides an ideal standard with which the facts of real life can be contrasted."

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Garrod interprets by quoting Edward Caird who says that "literature is a criticism of life exactly in the sense that a good man is a criticism of a bad one". T.S. Eliot feels that the definition of poetry as a criticism of life is inadequate, and appears "frigid to any one who has felt the full surprise and elevation of a new experience of poetry". J.D. Jump opines, "There can be no excuse for not knowing what Arnold means by criticism a disinterested attempt to see things as they are, in the course of which value-judgments naturally and almost insensibly form themselves." Middleton Murry believes that poetry is a criticism of life, "just as the beautiful is a criticism of the ugly." Oliver Elton says that criticism of life implies "something that would illumine and inspire us for the business of living." The life that we live is dull and drab, colourless and monotonous. Poetry casts a glow upon life and heightens it. Poets always seek to idealise life. That explains why Shelley's Skylark ceases to be a bird of flesh and blood, born to die. It becomes a symbol of supreme ecstasy that knows no change or decay. The nightingale of Keats is a heightened portrait of the bird that represents unattainable beauty. Life is crude, raw and often vulgar. And it undergoes a sea change in the hands of a poet. He makes it a thing of beauty and joy for ever. Moral ideas must be added to beauty. Arnold once quoted Voltaire to prove that the excellence of the English poets consists in the preponderance of moral ideas in their verse. 'Moral ideas' are not used in the conventional sense by Arnold. In his essay on Wordsworth, Arnold elucidated this point: "Voltaire does not mean, by 'treating in poetry moral ideas', the composing moral and didactic poems;—that brings us but a very little way in poetry. He means just the same thing as was meant when I spoke above 'of the noble and profound application of ideas to life';

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and he means the application of these ideas under the conditions fixed for us by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth. If it is said that to call these ideas moral ideas is to introduce a strong and injurious limitation. I answer that it is to do nothing of the kind, because moral ideas are really so main a part of human life. The question, how to live, is itself a moral idea; and it is the question which most interests every man, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied. A large sense is of course to be given to the term moral. Whatever bears upon the question, 'how to live', comes under it.

'Nor live thy life, nor hate ; but, what thou liv'st,

Live well, how long or short, permit to heaven.'

In those lines Milton utters, as everyone at once perceives, a moral idea. Yes, but so too, when Keats consoles the forward-bounding lover on the Grecian Urn, the lover arrested and presented in immortal relief by the sculptor's hand before he can kiss, with the line,

'For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair'

He utters a moral idea. When Shakespeare says that

We are such stuff

As dreams are made on and our little life

Is rounded with a sleep,

He utters a moral idea. Arnold, therefore, concluded: "A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against life; a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards life."

Arnold obviously did not find criticism of life in much of his contemporary poetry, which got swamped "in parts and episodes and ornamental work". Trilling, therefore, concludes: "The achievement of an aesthetic wholeness depends upon the achievement of a philosophic wholeness—and when Arnold wrote his famous sonnet to his spiritual masters and said of Sophocles that he saw life whole, he did not mean that Sophocles saw all life, every part of it, but that what he did see he saw as a whole, an infinitely difficult task for the poet of the multitudinous 19th century, whose life was reflected in poetry and in exquisite bits and images."

Arnold was the most critical of the malady of the Victorian age. In most of his poems we notice his criticism of contemporary manners and morals. Hugh Walker comments on this aspect: "Arnold's much-condemned definition of poetry as 'a criticism of life' is atleast true of his own poetry. Even in the criticism in his essays on Goethe, Byron, and Wordsworth there is a surprising quantity of wise criticism. In his verse, Goethe, Byron, Wordsworth, and Senancour are all examined with wonderful insight (*Memorial Verses*): and in the *Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoon* we have a discussion of the principles of the arts of music, painting and poetry. But Arnold's verse is critical in a far deeper sense than this. In all his deepest poem, in *Thyrsis* and *The Scholar Gipsy*, in *Resignation*, in the Obermann poems, in *A Southern Night*, Arnold is passing judgment on life and his age, the life of his country, the lives of individual men... In all this Arnold is quite consistent with himself. Holding that what Europe in his generation principally needed was criticism, he gave this criticism in verse as well as in prose. And it may be remarked that the principle underlying his literary verdicts in prose is the same as that which underlies his poetic view of life. He treats his author not as an isolated fact, and judges him not by any abstract canons. He tries to put him back in his social setting to look from his point of view to judge him as a part of the life in which he mingles." Like Browning, Arnold could not say,

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God's in his Heaven

And all's right with the world.

He found his age barren and sterile. Materially advanced, people were spiritually degenerate. Poetry and culture alone could deliver the goods. Poetry would teach us how to live. Poetry is always referring the actual life to the ideal and illustrating the one by the other. Though a remote and almost an unattainable ideal, people should seek to "see life steadily and see it whole". The Scholar Gipsy, for example, chooses to live far away from the sick hurry and divided aims of his age. He has no hankering after the passions and pleasures. He seeks spiritual illumination. He has "one aim, one business, one desire".

But Arnold's criticism of life has not been accepted universally. The Scholar Gipsy escaped from life, and escapism is never a virtue. "The life pictured in The Scholar Gipsy", says Eliot, "however pleasing and attractive, it may be made to look in poetry, can hardly be recommended as the ideal life, for

there is nothing in it inspiring or encouraging, nothing in it heroic." The bright side of the age eluded his notice. Stopford Brooke rightly says, "He had insight into the evils, the dullness, follies, the decay and death of the time which he wrote; but he had little insight into its good, into the hopes and ideas which were arising in its darkness: or the life which was collecting itself together under its decay. His temper, therefore, was not joyous, nor was it in sympathy with the temper of the whirling but formative time in which he began and continued poetry."

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2.1.4 ARNOLD'S PASTORAL ELEGIES

Arnold's Pastoral Elegies

The term 'Pastoral' is derived from Latin 'pastor', which means a shepherd. Pastoral poetry, therefore, deals with the pastoral life of shepherds. Theocritus, Virgil, Bion and Moschus are usually associated with pastoral poetry. "The formal or pastoral elegy", says Lemon, "is characterized by certain conventions. The poet and the deceased are shown as shepherds living in the midst of nature, which is personified and which joins in the mourning. The poem begins with an invocation to the muse and contains numerous classical allusions, continues by questioning the guardians of the deceased (usually natural beings—the flora and fauna of the pastoral scene) concerning their inability to protect the deceased effectively, moves to a procession or catalogue of mourners and a section in which the poet challenges human or divine justice, and concludes. With a reconciliation in which the poet realizes that death is a blessed reunion with God or nature (Milton's *Lycidas*). The elaborate form of the pastoral elegy is one of the most striking instances of the way poetry uses complex conventions to control and transcend raw emotion by ritualizing it."

Theocritus, the father of pastoral poetry, perfected three forms of the pastoral; (1) Singing match between two shepherds in which the contestants settled their differences. A third shepherd sits in judgment upon the contests. The theme of song is generally the joys and woes of lovers.

(2) A single shepherd at times describes in songs the chance of his Mistress and his own ill fate.

(3) In the third type of elegy, the setting for the song is laid as a goat-herd. Theocritus's *The Lament for Daphnis* is a pastoral elegy of this kind.

In Virgil's hand pastoral elegy became an art of imitation. Virgil in his *Eclogues* sought to console his friend who has lost his mistress. The Greek poet Bion in his *Lament for Moschus* presented himself and his friend as shepherds. The pastoral convention has been passed on through generations from Theocritus. Milton's *Lycidas*, Shelley's *Adonais* and Arnold's *Thyrsis* and *The Scholar Gipsy* are mentionable pastoral elegies. George Loane, in *Short Handbook of Literary Terms*, outlines the growth of pastoral poetry briefly: "Hence grew up the strange convention of writing about all sorts of persons as if they were shepherds and led a pastoral life. But the fact remains that some of the loveliest of English poems were written according to this convention and we must accept the convention or lose great pleasure. Milton's Lycidas, Shelley's Adonais and Arnold's Thyrsis more than justify it."

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Describing the irresistible appeal of the pastoral elegies Swinburne wrote, "There is grace ineffable, a sweet sound and sweet savour of things past, in the old beautiful use of language of shepherds, of flocks and pipes, the spirit is none the less sad and sincere, because the body of the poem has put on this dear familiar raimant of romance; because the crude and naked sorrow is veiled and chastened with soft shadows of a land that is very far off."

Arnold has two pastoral elegies *The Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis* deeply steeped in classical lore. Arnold naturally turned to the Greek and Latin convention in this respect. And yet Milton's *Lycidas*, Shelley's *Adonais* and Arnold's *The Scholar Gipsy* and *Thyrsis* are not of the same pattern. Milton mourns his friend in the character of a shepherd. Shelley also mourns Keats in the character of a shepherd. In *Lycidas* the mourner wears a 'mantle blue' and the shepherd in Adonais has 'magic mantles rent'. In both the elegies conventions are artistically interwoven.

The Scholar Gipsy is not a carbon copy of the traditional pastoral poems. The poet is asking the shepherds to

Go for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;

Go, shepherd and until the wattled cotes!

No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,

Not let thy bawling fellows rack their throats.

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Here the poet is not representing himself as a shepherd. Moreover the shepherd is dismissed by the poet as soon as the poem begins. The scenes described in the poem are not idyllic. They relate to urbanised Oxford, where one does not expect wild or rustic scenes, or even an idyllic atmosphere. Here Arnold has no scope to invest nature with the light that never was on sea or land, the consecration and the poet's dream. A person who has been to Oxford is easily capable of ascertaining the topography of the city. In a truly pastoral poem the rural setting must be idealised. Moreover there is no lament here for the death of a shepherd. It is the lament for vanished faith. Arnold "found in the elegy the outlet for his native melancholy of the Virgilian cry over the mournfulness of mortal destiny. It is the natural tone of an agnostic who is not jubilant but regretful of the vanished faith—regretful of its beauty regretful of its lost promise."

The tone of the poem has a modern touch. In structure the poem is, no doubt, pastoral, but the spirit breathed in it is characteristically Victorian—the spirit of unrest seeking spiritual illumination.

Thyrsis is a pastoral elegy, that commemorates Arnold's friend, Arthur Hugh Clough. *Thyrsis* as a companion piece, to *The Scholar Gipsy* is one of the finest poems inspired by Oxford. Almost unique in English literature, it can compare favourably with Milton's *Lycidas* or Shelley's *Adonais*. It has, as Swinburne points out, a quiet and tender undertone, similar to that of *Lycidas*. In respect of the beauty, the delicacy and colourfulness, fragrance and the freedom, *Thyrsis* is unrivalled. "No poem in any language", says Swinburne, "can be more perfect as a model of style, unsurpassable certainly, it may be unattainable".

Here Arnold represents himself as a shepherd named Corydon, and Clough as Thyrsis. Both the names have been taken from traditional pastoral poetry. Here Corydon mourns the death of a shepherd. Pagan mythology is artistically introduced here. The references to Pluto, Proserpine, Daphnis and Lityersis heighten the beauty of the poem and tend to give it a genuine pastoral tone. Modelled on Theocritus, Bion,and Moschus, *Thyrsis* does not, as does *The Scholar Gipsy*, give us a picture of urbanised Oxford. It is, in fact, scented of the

aroma of summer flowers. Moschus's *Lament for Bion* is the immediate model of *Thyrsis*. The following stanza is almost a translation from Moschus:

O easy access to the hearer's grace,

When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!

For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,

She knew each lily white which Enna yields,

Each rose with blushing face;

She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain.

The idea of the poetic contest between Thyrsis and Lityersis is borrowed from Moschus. Arnold drew upon Theocritus the names, e.g.—Thyrsis, Corydon and Daphnis.

The language of the poem is modelled on that of Theocritus. Arnold wrote to his mother: "The diction of the poem was modelled on that of Theocritus, whom I have been much reading during the two years this poem has been forming itself, and I meant the diction to be so artless as to be almost heedless."

Tinker and Lowry point out Arnold's debt to Theocritus: "The indebtedness of the poem to Theocritus, save for the name 'Thyrsis' and the references in the ninth, tenth and the nineteenth stanzas, is of a very general sort, quite probably meant to confess nothing more than the influence upon him of the straightforward, unadorned style of the rural idylls of Theocritus. His attitude to nature, particularly his love for flowers and of familiar hillsides, is certainly from the Sicilian. The images of the poem as he himself remarks, are English, 'all from actual observation'; and he is aware that his elegy as a whole is far different from such as Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine."

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2.1.5 THYRSIS

Thyrsis

How changed is here each spot man makes or fills!

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In the two Hinkseys nothing keeps the same;
The village street its haunted mansion lacks,
And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,
And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks--
Are ye too changed, ye hills?
See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men
To-night from Oxford up your pathway strays!
Here came I often, often, in old days--
Thyrsis and I; we still had Thyrsis then.

Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth Farm,
Past the high wood, to where the elm-tree crowns
The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames?
The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs,
The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful Thames?--
This winter-eve is warm,
Humid the air! leafless, yet soft as spring,
The tender purple spray on copse and briers!
And that sweet city with her dreaming spires,
She needs not June for beauty's heightening,

Lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night!--
Only, methinks, some loss of habit's power
Befalls me wandering through this upland dim.

Once pass'd I blindfold here, at any hour;
Now seldom come I, since I came with him.
That single elm-tree bright
Against the west--I miss it! is it goner?
We prized it dearly; while it stood, we said,
Our friend, the Gipsy-Scholar, was not dead;
While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here,
But once I knew each field, each flower, each stick;
And with the country-folk acquaintance made
By barn in threshing-time, by new-built rick.
Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd.
Ah me! this many a year
My pipe is lost, my shepherd's holiday!
Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart
Into the world and wave of men depart;
But Thyrsis of his own will went away.

It irk'd him to be here, he could not rest.
He loved each simple joy the country yields,
He loved his mates; but yet he could not keep,
For that a shadow lour'd on the fields,
Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep.

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Some life of men unblest
He knew, which made him droop, and fill'd his head.
He went; his piping took a troubled sound
Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;
He could not wait their passing, he is dead.

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,
When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,
Before the roses and the longest day--
When garden-walks and all the grassy floor
With blossoms red and white of fallen May
And chestnut-flowers are strewn--
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
Sweet-William with his homely cottage-smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow;
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,

And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,

And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,

And the full moon, and the white evening-star.

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He hearkens not! light comer, he is flown!

What matters it? next year he will return,

And we shall have him in the sweet spring-days,

With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,

And blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways,

And scent of hay new-mown.

But Thyrsis never more we swains shall see;

See him come back, and cut a smoother reed,

And blow a strain the world at last shall heed--

For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd thee!

Alack, for Corydon no rival now!--

But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,

Some good survivor with his flute would go,

Piping a ditty sad for Bion's fate;

And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow,

And relax Pluto's brow,

And make leap up with joy the beauteous head

Of Proserpine, among whose crowned hair

Are flowers first open'd on Sicilian air,

And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead.

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O easy access to the hearer's grace
When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!
For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,
She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,
She knew each lily white which Enna yields
Each rose with blushing face;
She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain.
But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard!
Her foot the Cumner cowslips never stirr'd;
And we should tease her with our plaint in vain!

Well! wind-dispersed and vain the words will be,
Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour
In the old haunt, and find our tree-topp'd hill!
Who, if not I, for questing here hath power?
I know the wood which hides the daffodil,
I know the Fyfield tree,
I know what white, what purple fritillaries
The grassy harvest of the river-fields,
Above by Ensham, down by Sandford, yields,
And what sedged brooks are Thames's tributaries;

I know these slopes; who knows them if not I?--

But many a tingle on the loved hillside,

With thorns once studded, old, white-blossom'd trees,

Where thick the cowslips grew, and far descried

High tower'd the spikes of purple orchises,

Hath since our day put by

The coronals of that forgotten time;

Down each green bank hath gone the ploughboy's team,

And only in the hidden brookside gleam

Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime.

Where is the girl, who by the boatman's door,

Above the locks, above the boating throng,

Unmoor'd our skiff when through the Wytham flats,

Red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet among

And darting swallows and light water-gnats,

We track'd the shy Thames shore?

Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny swell

Of our boat passing heaved the river-grass,

Stood with suspended scythe to see us pass?--

They all are gone, and thou art gone as well!

Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night

In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.

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I see her veil draw soft across the day,
I feel her slowly chilling breath invade
The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with grey;
I feel her finger light
Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train; --
The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,
The heart less bounding at emotion new,
And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again.

And long the way appears, which seem'd so short
To the less practised eye of sanguine youth;
And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,
The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth,
Tops in life's morning-sun so bright and bare!
Unbreachable the fort
Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall;
And strange and vain the earthly turmoil grows,
And near and real the charm of thy repose,
And night as welcome as a friend would fall.

But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss
Of quiet!--Look, adown the dusk hill-side,
A troop of Oxford hunters going home,
As in old days, jovial and talking, ride!

From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they come.

Quick! let me fly, and cross

Into yon farther field!--'Tis done; and see,

Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify

The orange and pale violet evening-sky,

Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree!

I take the omen! Eve lets down her veil,

The white fog creeps from bush to bush about,

The west unflushes, the high stars grow bright,

And in the scatter'd farms the lights come out.

I cannot reach the signal-tree to-night,

Yet, happy omen, hail!

Hear it from thy broad lucent Arno-vale

(For there thine earth forgetting eyelids keep

The morningless and unawakening sleep

Under the flowery oleanders pale),

Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our tree is there!--

Ah, vain! These English fields, this upland dim,

These brambles pale with mist engarlanded,

That lone, sky-pointing tree, are not for him;

To a boon southern country he is fled,

And now in happier air,

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Wandering with the great Mother's train divine
(And purer or more subtle soul than thee,
I trow, the mighty Mother doth not see)
Within a folding of the Apennine,

Thou hearest the immortal chants of old!--
Putting his sickle to the perilous grain
In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian king,
For thee the Lityerses-song again
Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing;
Sings his Sicilian fold,
His sheep, his hapless love, his blinded eyes--
And how a call celestial round him rang,
And heavenward from the fountain-brink he sprang,
And all the marvel of the golden skies.

There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here
Sole in these fields! yet will I not despair.
Despair I will not, while I yet descry
'Neath the mild canopy of English air
That lonely tree against the western sky.
Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,
Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!
Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay,

Woods with anemonies in flower till May,

Know him a wanderer still; then why not me?

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,

Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.

This does not come with houses or with gold,

With place, with honour, and a flattering crew;

'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold--

But the smooth-slipping weeks

Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired;

Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,

He wends unfollow'd, he must house alone;

Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired.

Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wast bound;

Thou wanderedst with me for a little hour!

Men gave thee nothing; but this happy quest,

If men esteem'd thee feeble, gave thee power,

If men procured thee trouble, gave thee rest.

And this rude Cumner ground,

Its fir-topped Hurst, its farms, its quiet fields,

Here cams't thou in thy jocund youthful time,

Here was thine height of strength, thy golden prime!

And still the haunt beloved a virtue yields.

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What though the music of thy rustic flute
Kept not for long its happy, country tone;
Lost it too soon, and learnt a stormy note
Of men contention-tost, of men who groan,
Which task'd thy pipe too sore, and tired thy throat--
It fail'd, and thou wage mute!
Yet hadst thou always visions of our light,
And long with men of care thou couldst not stay,
And soon thy foot resumed its wandering way,
Left human haunt, and on alone till night.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here!
'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,
Thyrsis! in reach of sheep-bells is my home.
--Then through the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar,
Let in thy voice a whisper often come,
To chase fatigue and fear:
Why faintest thou! I wander'd till I died.
Roam on! The light we sought is shining still.
Dost thou ask proof? Our tree yet crowns the hill,
Our Scholar travels yet the loved hill-side.

Critical Summary and Appreciation

NOTES

Thyrsis is a pastoral elegy written to mourn the death of Arnold's Oxford friend Arthur Clough, who died in 1861. Arnold took some two years to compose it, and it was first published in 1866 in Macmillan's Magazine. It is generally regarded as a companion piece to *The Scholar Gipsy*, and there are frequent references in the elegy to the Oxford Scholar who left the university and joined the gipsies. However, the present elegy is generally ranked much higher than the earlier one, and Arnold himself had a high opinion of it, and considered it to be, "a very quiet poem, solid and sincere". Carlton Stanley praises it highly and observes, "If Arnold had written nothing but *Thyrsis*, how great would be our debt to him." Much of Arnold is here; his rich learning, his love of natural beauty, his striving for perfection in life, his ardent desire for companionship in the great quest, his scorn of worldliness, pettiness and vulgar greed, and his abiding melancholy.

Some knowledge about the life and character of Arthur Hugh Clough is desirable for a proper understanding of the elegy. Clough was born at Liverpool in 1819 and was put to school at Chester and afterwards at Rugby, for his early education. He stayed at Rugby till 1837 and derived all the advantages of being a student of the famous Dr. Thomas Arnold. He made a mark at Rugby and won a Baliol Scholarship in 1836. Later in 1843 he was appointed as a Tutor and elected as a Fellow of the Oriel College, but he resigned both the jobs due to some differences with the principles of the Church of England. After that, in 1849, he worked for some time as Principal of the University Hall, London, and later he went on a tour to the United States. In 1854, he married and engaged himself in some useful educational work. He died in 1861, at a comparatively early age.

Clough was Arnold's contemporary at Rugby, though older than he by a few years. Both were fast friends and Arnold's letters reveal the degree of their friendship. But their friendship was a short-lived one and the two soon fell out. However, Clough was not unworthy of the tribute which Arnold pays to him by writing this elegy. He had many friends who loved him and believed in him, and if he had many friends who loved him and believed in him, and if he did not quite fulfil their expectations he did many excellent things in the time that was given to him. He was known as gentle and caring, with a high moral and religious sense. Arnold, in his first lecture after Clough's death, spoke of him as having no taint of

littleness. His single-minded love of truth gave him great influence as a Fellow of Oriel, and his constructive ideas came forth in a flow of magical talk. But he was not only an intellectual; he had also a love of life and outward things which contributes to the exhilaration of his poem *Bothie*. It is this poetic and personal aspect of Clough that got into *Thyrsis*. Arnold was apologetic about having left out the philosophic, Prophetic side, but his instinct was sound. As a consequence *Thyrsis* is, "a lament for a dead friend and also for a dead friendship."

NOTES

Critical Summary

The poem begins with the visit of Arnold to the Oxford countryside which he and his friend had known intimately in the past. He notices the changes that have taken place. Men-made things have all changed but nature continues to be the same, as lovely at the moment, as it was in the past. The two Hinsky (villages near Oxford) have changed, the ale-house which they used to regularly visit has changed, the name of Sibylla has gone from its signboard, and the twisted chimney-stack is also no longer to be seen. But the hills are still the same, as they were when he used to come to the place with Thyrsis, the pastoral name for Clough. Thus the theme of contrast between the permanence of nature and the temporary nature of things human is thus suggested.

The second stanza reveals Arnold's familiarity with and love of the countryside round Oxford. Arnold mentions such places as 'Childsworth farm', the 'elm-tree', 'Ilsley Downs', 'the three dams' and 'the youthful narrow Thames'. It is beautiful at all times, and does not need June to enhance its beauty. The poet regrets that is why he has lost his former power of recognising things round oxford. He seems to miss the elm-tree, the signal-tree, which was dear to them, for they felt that as long as the tree was there, the scholar-gipsy could not die. Thus the scholar-gipsy of the earlier elegy is brought in, and the elm-tree the poet misses could be the Fyfield Elm mentioned in Stanza XI of the elegy.

The poet is regretful of the fact that his visits to the place grow 'too rare'. It is only rarely that he now visits the place. Once he was closely familiar with every field, flower or stick of that place. It was here that they together began writing poetry. But now he can no longer write because he is busy with the affairs of the world, and as to mix up with crowds of busy men. He does so most

unwillingly, but Thyrsis (Clough) left the place of his own free will and went away from Oxford. He loved Oxford - its students, the countryside and the innocent pleasures of the rustic folk. But when a bitter religious controversy raged over the place, his mind was clouded by doubts and fears. So he left Oxford in disgust and ultimately died. Just as the cuckoo departs from a garden at the end of spring without waiting for the glory of the mid-summer flowers, so also Thyrsis departed from the world. Arnold gives us a richly sensuous description of the natural glory of mid-summer. The cuckoo, however, will return next year but Thyrsis will never return. Thyrsis will never come back to compose poems which the world will heed. There is a delicate pathos in these lines, and the comparison of Clough with the cuckoo is most appropriate. But the poet is also critical of his friend. He despaired too quickly; he should have waited for the storm of religious controversy to blow over.

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The poet is sad, because he Corydon (another conventional name in pastoral poetry) has no one now to compete with and in this way to provide stimulus for better poetic efforts. The poet has lost his friend and poetic rival. When the pastoral poets of Sicily lost a companion, some kindly poet would lament his death, and go to the underworld to appeal to Pluto and his Queen to bring him back to life. Since Proserpine, the Queen of the underworld, herself belonged to Sicily, she favoured Sicilian poets, listened to their lament, and restored to life their dead companion. But she totally unfamiliar with England, and, therefore, will show no favour to English poets. Thus Arnold cannot restore his friend to life by appealing to Proserpine. He is helpless, and must mourn forever the death of his friend.

The poet mourns the death of his friend as he passes through their old haunts, and searches for the Fyfield tree. He is fully qualified for the search because of his familiarity with the place. He knows every flower that blooms there and every stream that flows. Every path and every hill is well-known to him. But a change has come over the entire countryside. Fields on both sides of the river Thames have been brought under cultivation, only primrose flowers still bloom here and there, hidden from the view of man. The poet recalls the day when he and his friend were out on a boat trip on the Thames. The Boatman's daughter had loosened the boat for them from its moorings. When the boat was

towed along the bank of the Thames, the mowers in the field stopped their work to see them pass. Like Thyrsis, they are now all dead and gone.

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His friend, Thyrsis, is dead, and the poet feels that his own death, too, is drawing near. The vital flow of his life will soon be stopped as the cold finger of death will close in upon him. All his vital energies have been damped and the heart scarcely responds to new emotions. The path of Truth which seemed to him so short in his hopeful youth, now appears long and dull. In his youth when his mind was not assailed by doubt and scepticism, truth appeared to him to be enthroned on the top of a hill. But now the top appears to him to be dusky and dark and he has lost all hope of attaining Truth. The dark prison of the world is encircling him. He would now welcome death as one welcomes a friend. The lines express the poet's characteristic melancholy and despair. The turmoil and agitation of the world is too much for him, and he would prefer death to life in such a materialistic age. Suddenly, the quiet of the countryside is disturbed, and looking up he sees a group of Oxford hunters returning home after hunting with their Berkshire hounds. He is not in a mood to talk to anyone, and so he crosses over to the other bank of the river. And suddenly, standing against the beautiful, colourful evening sky, he sees the Elm-tree, the symbol of their quest for truth.

In the conventional manner a note of hope and consolation is now struck. There is a transition from grief and despair to joy and hope. The poet regards the discovery of the tree as a good omen, as it indicates that the scholar-gipsy is yet alive, still searching for truth. He calls upon his friend Thyrsis to listen to his shouts of joy at the discovery of the tree, but he soon remembers that he is dead and buried in Italy in the bright Arno vale. He can no longer hear him, or enjoy the assorted beauties of the Oxford countryside. But the poet consoles himself with the fact that in some beautiful Apennine Vale in Italy, he must be wandering about, a purer soul, in the company of Mother Nature, as a part of her retinue. He is not dead; rather as part of nature he has become immortal, and now enjoys the ‘immortal chants of old’.

Though his friend is dead, the poet does not despair. The signal-elm still stands there. The scholar-gipsy must still be searching for truth, and since he still haunts the place, there is every possibility that he would meet him some day.. His friend Thyrsis also searched for Truth. He searched it in his company only for a short while, and then disillusioned left Oxford, for he received no hope,

encouragement or reward from man. But he found peace and consolation in his quest for Truth. It was this ideal which soothed, comforted and strengthened him. Nature also gave him strength, and the haunts which they loved, are still a source of strength for the poet. He could not keep his youthful cheerfulness and zest for life for long, was soon torn and troubled by religious doubts and controversies, but even then he persisted in his quest for truth. He left Oxford to continue his quest in a different land, where he must still be wandering in that unending quest.

The poet now hardly ever visits their former haunts. He is too busy with his work as Inspector of Schools. But now and then, amidst 'urban murk and roar', he still hears his friend's voice inspiring him and encouraging him. His voice seems to whisper to him when he grows dejected and pessimistic, "Why do you lose hope? I continued my search for Truth till I died. You also wander on. The lights of Truth, we sought is still there. Do you want a proof? Our elm-tree still stands on the hill and the Scholar-Gipsy still haunts the place in search for Truth." The elegy thus ends on a positive note.

Appreciation

Thyrsis is an elegy in the pastoral convention. The names Thyrsis and Corydon are conventional names in pastoral poetry. The poet, in the guise of a shepherd, mourns the death of another shepherd, his friend. He remembers the time when together they would wander about the Oxford countryside where they first essayed their 'shepherd pipes'. But now that Thyrsis is dead his 'pipe is lost', and he enjoys him 'shepherd's holidays' no more. In the conventional manner, the note of grief soon changes into one of hope and joy, and the transition occurs in Stanza XVI when the poet suddenly discovers their elm-tree standing against the evening sky. Like Keats in Shelley's Elegy (*Adonais*), Thyrsis too, is said to have become a part of Nature, and the poet imagines that he still wanders about in search of truth as one of the numerous attendants of Mother Nature. He seems to hear voice urging him to continue their quest of truth, and thereby derives encouragement and hope. According to the usual pastoral convention, the elegy also has a rural setting and there are a number of vivid word-pictures of the beauty of Nature and of the idyllic life lived in the countryside. Country-occupations receive frequent attention. However, its language does not have the

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simplicity which characterises the language of pastoral poetry. As H.C. Duffin writes, "The poem was supposed to be modelled on Theocritus, but apart from the names Corydon and Thyrsis there are few signs of Theocritus other than in the pastoral tone Arnold claimed that the style was so artless as to be almost 'heed less', but this is generally wide of the mark." 'Heedless' is the last word to be applied to style and diction in such a passage as:

Humid the air; leafless, yet soft as spring,

The tender purple spray on copse and briers!

And that sweet city with her dreaming spires,

She needs not June for beauty's heightening.

The poem is largely remarkable for its minute pen-pictures of the country round Oxford. Watts writes, "To lovers of Oxford this poem and the Scholar Gipsy are specially dear as having caught and handed on so much of the genus loci i.e., the genius of the place)- the colleges, the studies, the sports, festivities, the rivers, the flowers and peasants folk and place names of the surrounding country. The country dear to Arnold was a very quiet country. Hinksey and Cumner, the haunts of his youth and mine, to which he always returned on his visits to Oxford, were not what are called beauty-spots. They were merely uplands of ancient pasture, down some of which, by the time of Thyrsis, the ploughboy's team had already gone; with a bit of woodland, a wide outlook over Oxford itself and the surrounding villages, and little footpaths running from farm to farm beneath high hedges. You may taste such quietness in any part of England still, if you care to leave the roadways."

Hugh Walker writes, "The poet has given a new life to the localities such as Cumner, Wychwoo, Hinksey, Bentley Wood, Godstow and Bablock Hythe which he has described in the poem with accuracy. The foundation of his accuracy is seen in the loving minuteness with which in his letters Arnold notes the facts of nature. 'The river Thames bends northwards, and turns to the south shortly afterwards. The loop is caused by the intervention of a line of low hills running nearby, north and south of a distance of about six miles, round which the river makes its course, being the beautifully wooded ill of Wytham, to the south of which after sinking almost to the level of the plain, the ground rise again to the

heights of Cumner Hurst and Boars Hill, whence it slopes down again to Abindon. This is the Cumner range. Hills never quite rising to a height of 550 feet and cultivated upto the summit of the ridge. The top of Boars Hill from which there are fine views of the river valley and of the Berkshire Downs to the south is a favourite object of walk from Oxford."

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The elegy also reveals the poet's love of Nature and his attitude towards nature. Graphic and vivid word-pictures of the beauty of Nature are scattered all over the poem. We have lovely pictures of the cowslips growing thick on the hilly slopes. The sunset flaming the tender purple spray on copse and briars. The wood which hides the daffodils, the white and purple fritillaries, many a dingle on the hillside studded with white-blossomed trees, the spikes of purple orchises, the primroses ("orphans of the flowery prime") gleaming in the brook-side. Here is one of the most graphic of his pictures:

Roses that down the alleys shine afar,

And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,

And brooks under the dreaming garden-trees,

And the full moon, and the white evening star.

Arnold dwells chiefly upon the calm and tranquil aspects of Nature. He draws consolation and comfort from his contact with Nature. He refers to the contrast between the calm of Nature and the noise of human life. Referring to his loss of his pipe and his shepherd's holiday, he says:

'Mid city-noise, not as with thee of yore,

Thyrsis ! in reach of sheep-bells is my home.

Then through the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar,

Let in thy voice a whisper often come...

Thyrsis is, "a treasure-house of picturesque and poetical memories." It is strong in the autobiographical element. The poet recalls the days when he used to wander about the country in the company of his friend:

Here came I often, often, in old days,

Memories crowd in upon him; he recalls the elm-tree which was so dear to both of them, the elm-tree which crowned the hill:

The signal-elm, that looks on Isley Downs—

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He recalls the Gipsy-Scholar who will continue to live on in the fields as long as the elm-tree stood there. He remembers the girl who unmoored their boat, and the reapers who used to stand up in order to see them rowing a boat on the 'shy Thames'. His pictures of Oxford show his deep love for that place of learning :

And that sweet city with her dreaming spires,

She needs not June for beauty's heightening,

Lovely all times she lies, lovely tonight—

He pours out his grief in the poem, for Thyrsis is no more in the world, and his visits to the place become rarer and he has to drudge along in the city as Inspector of Schools, and he is no longer able to play on his oaten pipe, as he used to do when he had Thyrsis with him.

Arnold believed that poetry is 'Criticism of life' and in this elegy, we do get his criticism of his age. The materialism of the age is denounced in the following stanza:

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,

Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.

This does not come with houses or with gold,

With place, with honour, and a flattering crew;

'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold.

The elegy also brings out Arnold's love and knowledge of Greek literature and mythology, and his felicity of diction. There are references to Pluto, Proserpine, Daphnis, Lityerses, etc. These mythological references enrich the poem by lending it a fanciful quality, and they enhance the beauty of the poem by taking us back to ancient Greece. The tragedy of Daphnis is once more enacted before us when the poet describes him singing of his sheep, his hapless love, his

blinded eyes. Arnold's diction in this poem is dignified and elevated. It has grace and simplicity. There is restraint and balance so characteristic of classical poetry. Some of the lines are memorable and possess a quotable quality:

And that sweet city with her dreaming spires,

She needs not June for beauty's heightening.

Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime,

And groups under the dreaming garden-trees.

A fugitive and gracious life he seeks,

Shy to illumine; and I seek it too

The poem consists of twenty-four stanzas and each stanza consists of ten lines. The rhyme-scheme is abcbac de ed. In each stanza, the sixth line is in iambic tri-metre, all other lines are in iambic penta-metre.

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2.1.6 DOVER BEACH

Dover Beach

The sea is calm to-night,

The tide is full, the moon lies fair

Upon the Straits ; - on the French coast, the light

Gleams, and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,

Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil day.

Come to the window, sweet is the night air!

Only, from the long line of spray

Where the ebb meets the moon-blanch'd land,

Of pebbles which the waves suck back, and fling,

At their return, up the high strand,

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Begin, and cease, and then again begin,

With tremulous cadence slow, and bring

The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago

Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought

Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow

Of human misery; we

Find also in the sound a thought,

Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The sea of faith

Was once, too at the full, and round earth's shore

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd;

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating, to the breath

Of the high-wind down the vast edges drear

And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true

To one another! for the world, which seems

To lie before us like a land of dream,

So various, so beautiful, so new,

Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,

Nor certitude nor peace, nor help for pain;

And we are here as on a darkling plain

Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Introduction—Critical Summary or Appreciation

This fine and well-known lyric was first published in 1867. It is not an elegy, in the sense that in it the poet does not mourn the loss of some close friend or relative. It is not a song of mourning, but it is elegiac in tone, for in it Arnold has poured all his melancholy and pessimism. The poet has expressed the view that this world is without joy or religious faith, and is full of sorrow and suffering. It is like a field enveloped in darkness, "where ignorant armies clash by night".

H.C. Duffin comments on the poem thus: "The tone throughout is highly passionate, mock-despairing, with philosophic comments too profound for the situation." Both in Calais Sands and Dover Beach there is a new note of seriousness and unqualified tenderness. The feverish excitement to which we have become accustomed is quite absent from Calais Sands, and Dover Beach provides a lovely picture of married love : the poet, looking out on the calm, moonlit straits, speaks over his shoulder to his wife—"Come to the window". He interprets for her, in this way, the sound of the waves upon the beach, hearing 'the eternal note of sadness'. He lets the mood oppress him, making him see life as a loveless, joyless confusion of struggle and flight, with but one refuge:

Ah, love, let us be true

To one another.

The Victorians were specialists (for good and ill) in the husband-wife relation.

It should also be noted that in this elegiac lyric Arnold had achieved supreme success in the use of free verse. However, as Duffin rightly points out, "It is as firmly bound by rhyme and inner tension as the *Immortality Ode* of

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Wordsworth. Almost half the lines in the measure that speaks from and to the profoundest depth of the English genius-iambic pentameter : note how we are led up to it at the beginning of the poem, with three feet, four feet, and then a block of decasyllabics. After this the metre swings from short to long in a pattern which is felt to be inevitable, until it closes in the heavy finality of the line-'Where ignorant armies clash by night.' It has been regarded as one of the finest passages in the whole of Arnold. The paragraph beginning with 'The Sea of Faith', I have commented elsewhere on what seems to me the discord between the lovely appeal, 'Ah love, let us be true to one another', and the sordid assertion that the world has 'neither joy nor love'. I observe that Mr. Jump, with gloating approval of the poem, concludes that this is Arnold's greatest poem, while from another angle Humphrey House felt there, 'an unbalanced exaggeration of domestic virtues'.

"But accepting this poet's desperate outlook, we must admit that the use of the 'eternal note of sadness' in the 'melancholy long withdrawing roar' of the sucking waves is a marvellous way of figuring the retreat of the sea of faith, and that the appearance of a world where conflict (tough in truth pleasantly varied with friendship and co-operation) is undoubtedly widespread, is again brilliantly presented in the image of,

a darkling plain

Swept with confused, alarms of struggle and flight

Where ignorant armies clash by night-

So brilliantly, indeed, that I am not sure that Arnold did not keep the image more for its brilliance than for its truth."

Saintsbury, Irving and J.D. Jump also regard it as a grand poem. J D Jump writes, "Dover Beach is, I believe, a great poem. As far as it is possible for a single short lyric to do so, it represents the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century: and it is the one work by Arnold which ought to appear in even the briefest anthology of great English poems." Saintsbury's praise is equally glowing, "The expression, the thing that is not the subject, the tendency, outside the subject, which makes for poesy, are here, almost of the very best." In this lyric we get that passionate interpretation of life, which is so different a thing from the

criticism of it; that marvellous pictorial effect to which the art of line and colour itself is commonplace; that almost more marvellous accompaniment of vowel and consonant music, independent of sense but reinforcing it.

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The poem begins with a scene of pure natural loveliness, the sea calm, the tide full, the moon lying far upon the straits. There is no sign of man except a single light which gleams for a moment and then is gone, and the great reassuring cliffs of England stand, glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.

Some critics are of the opinion that the imagery of the poem is not unified, that we have no sea in the last section of the poem and no darkling plain in the first. But the naked shingles are the darkling plain, and that we have no sea in the last section is the very point of the poem. The sea has retreated from the world and left us 'inland far'.

It would be difficult for any reader to comprehend the real greatness of Arnold if one were to go by that a few statements that he makes on the general conditions of the world: 'We are here as on a darkling plain'. One will have to go through the whole of his literature to comprehend the wholesomeness of it. No Romantic poet ever made such a statement, and no other Victorian prior to Hardy made it with such uncompromising severity. It is only the modern poet who has followed Arnold in his vision of the tragic and alienated condition of man. In this sense, Arnold may be called a modern poet, and it is sure that he would have accepted the designation. He considered that his poems, more than those of his contemporaries, were representative of 'the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century'.

2.1.7 SOME IMPORTANT EXPLANATIONS

Lines:

O easy access to the hearer's grace,

When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!

For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,

She knew each lily white which Enna yields,

Each rose with blushing face;

She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain.

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Explanation: These lines have been taken from Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis*.

Moschus, the poet of Sicily, could have an easy access to Proserpine, for the latter belonged to Sicily. She was familiar with the divine Dorian poetry. She knew each rose with a red colour and each white lily that flowered in the Enna garden. An English poet that Arnold is, he cannot, however, hope to have an access to Proserpine, who does not know English, nor does she have any knowledge of the Thames or the Cumner hill, bedecked with cowslips. Hence it would be futile to move her heart with English songs or poetry and induce her to send back Clough alive.

Lines:

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,

Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.

This does not come with houses or with gold,

With place, with honour, and a flattering crew;

'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis*. Thyrsis is also a seeker of Truth. At first, Truth seems to elude the seeker's grasp. But later Truth bestows bountifully all its blessings. The seeker waits long, and at last the heavenly light comes and radiates his mind. Truth is not an earthly commodity, to be bought and sold in the daily market. It cannot be found in worldly riches, rank, position or social eminence. The quest for Truth must be continued with indefatigable energy. The quest for Truth must be continued untiringly. The seeker of Truth has no followers. He has to plough a lonely furrow and has to be spiritually sustained by his own hope and inspiration. He must have singleness of devotion and tenacity of purpose. The Scholar Gipsy had these qualities, and so has the poet.

Lines:

It irk'd him to be here, he could not rest.

He loved each simple joy the country yields,

He loved his mates; but yet he could not keep,

For that a shadow lour'd on the fields,

Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep/ some life of men unblest

He knew, which made him droop, and fill'd his head.

He went; his piping took a troubled sound

Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;

He could not wait their passing, he is dead.

NOTES

Explanation: These lines have been taken from Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis*. Clough felt unhappy at oxford. But he left the assorted beauty of Oxford countryside. He leaves his fellow students. But he could not stay there long, as he was drawn into the whirlpool of a religious controversy, known as the Oxford movement. His simple faith was darkened by doubts and despair. His poetry, written during that hectic period, struck a note of despair and frustration. In sheer disgust he left the university never to return. He was not strong enough to endure the impetuosity of the religious controversy.

Lines:

Sophocles long ago

Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought

Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow

Of human misery; we

Find also in the sound a thought,

Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

Explanation: In these lines taken from *Dover Beach* Arnold says that his reaction to the sea is exactly similar to that of Sophocles, the great tragic playwright of

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ancient Greece. Sophocles listened to the sound of the waves of the Aegean Sea two thousand five hundred years ago and was filled with sadness. He recorded his feelings in his *Trichinae* and *Antigone*. Arnold heard the sound of the waves of the English Channel, and he also found a note of sorrow in the sound. Both of them regarded the sea as a vivid symbol of man's life—the rise and fall of human suffering. Arnold tends to interpret everything in terms of melancholy. Here also he interprets the sound of the waves of the English Channel in terms of melancholy.

Lines:

The sea of faith

Was once, too at the full, and round earth's shore

Lay like the fol'ds of a bride girdle furl'd;

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating, to the breath

Of the high-wind down the vast edges drear

And naked shingles of the world.

Explanation: In these lines taken from *Dover Beach* Arnold gives a symbolical meaning of the sea. He and his beloved wife are watching the waves of the English Channel on a moonlit night. The sea is in full tide. And that sight reminds them that once upon a time the sea of faith was full to the brim. That is to say, people had religious fervour, and materialism and scepticism could not distract their minds. In the wake of the expansion of science and technology, men were growing more and more materialistic, and sceptical. Some turned agnostics, i.e. they did not care to think whether or not God existed. As in ebb tide the waves recede, and the naked pebbles lie on the coast, so also with the withdrawal of the sea of faith, the ugly pebbles of scepticism and materialism are sprawling on the shore.

2.2 THOMAS CARLYLE

NOTES

Early Life

Thomas Carlyle was born on December 4, 1795 in the village of Ecclefechan. His father James Carlyle worked as a stone mason. He was a wise and honest gentleman. He wanted to impart good education to his son. He had judged the capacities and worth of his son. It was owing to the inspiration of his father that Thomas Carlyle developed great literary interest.

He was admitted to the village school where he outshined his companions. He displayed great worth as a student. He was a worthy son of a worthy father. At the age of ten years, he left the village school. For some time he remained idle, but after four years he joined the university of Edinburgh. He took great interest in his education and got great credit as a scholar. He completed his college education after a few years and won great success. He became a teacher of mathematics at their school. He had to pass a lovely life there for some time and devoted himself to literary work.

He came in touch with famous literary persons of his time. He got some literary inspiration from his talented friend, Edward Irving. He helped Thomas Carlyle in getting some private students who belonged to aristocratic families. In 1861, he came in contact with Jane Baille Welsh. He was ensnared by her beauty and wit. He discovered some talents in her which helped both to come closer to each other. They were married after some time. They spent two years of their married life at Edinburgh.

Literary Career

Thomas Carlyle formed good relations with Editor of Edinburgh Review, Mr. Jaffrey. He got opportunity in his company to study a few German writers. He gained plenty of knowledge in German Literature. He translated one of the novels of Goethe. He also wrote the 'Life of Schiller'. His financial condition was not satisfactory to maintain his standard. He persuaded his wife Jane Baille Welsh to shift to Craigenputtock. He spent a long period of six years there with his wife. His health was failing due to unsure circumstances. But he continued reading books in spite of his bad health. He got ample time to write about the French Revolution. He also completed his allegorical autobiography 'Sartor Resartus'. It

is a faithful account of German philosopher. This is also an autobiographical account of Carlyle. He expressed his feelings and gospel in this allegorical autobiography. He could not publish it in the book form. He published it in 'Fraser's Magazine'.

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He became so much hopeless that he decided to give up literature as his profession. Some of his admirers in America invited him to their country. In 1834 he visited London and made Chelcia his home. He gave voice to his sentiments in a booklet in 1837. This was known as "The French Revolution". He got great fame after the publication of this piece. His friend Miss Martinear suggested him to deliver some lectures. He produced 'Hero and Hero Worship' in a new spirit. He got a legacy of 250 a year after the death of his patron Mrs. Welsh. In 1841 he brought short pieces on Chartism. He published 'Past and Present' in 1843 in which he applied the historical method.

His next publication was 'Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell'. In 1850, he brought out another book 'Letter and Pamphlets'. In 1860, he published the biography of his friend John Sterling. After that the history of 'Frederick the Great' came out. It was held in high esteem. His old university friends and fellow students elected him Rector. Unfortunately his wife died suddenly in 1866. He was unable to use his right hand properly. He could not accept the honour of a Baronetcy due to certain obligations only known to him.

In February 1881, he died peacefully. He got his eternal abode in his village Ecclechan. Thus his literary career came to an end.

Thomas Carlyle was a very wise, hard working and grave gentleman. He possessed ample amount of literary talents. He was a genius and had limitless capacity for works. He had blind faith in God. He had a great courage to face difficulties. He was a generous and noble hearted man. He had unlimited amount of patience as well. He was also a literary artist. According to Prof. Nichol, "No writer of our generation in England has combined such abundance with such power".

He was a famous literary critic. His literary criticism consists of essay on German and English literature. He was a good historian also.

His Literary Vision

The literary artists of Victorian age were of two types (1) Some had special knowledge of fine arts. They tried to establish connection between art and life (2) The second type of literary artists tried to trace the relation between letters and life. He was considered as the foremost essayist of the age. He had a peculiar style of writing prose. He imparted a moral tone to literature.

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Prof. Roth says, "Carlyle has significance even for the modern times. His value is two fold; he helped to bring new order. Because he unsettled the people's conviction. He gave certain principles which have relevance even in the modern times. He cultivated the habit of thinking for ourself and manifested 'the spirit that denies'".

Carlyle: A Literary Critic

Thomas Carlyle was a great literary critic. His literary criticism contained essays on German and English literature. These include the life of Schiller, German playwrights, German literature of the 14th century, Goethe, essay on Burns, Walter Scott and his works on German literature. He has attempted subjects on different topics and concluded them to some moral dogma. He takes up the spiritual side of such subject and appreciates its moral significance. His manner of expression surpasses his matter. His critical works are not only critical pieces of literature but spiritual treatise. His manner of criticism is superb. He has drawn vivid pictures in his books. He has the capacity to turn even the slightest object as alive and significant.

His Grand Style

This is a lack of literary grace in his style. He could not display the beauty of Shelley or the grace of John Stuart Mill. He cared more for the ethical bias than for art. He credited Goethe for his spiritual conception and neglected his art.

2.2.1 THE HERO AS POET

The Hero As Poet

The Concept of Hero-worship

Thomas Carlyle advocated hero worship. He believed that man is the temple of God and hero must be representing the most sacred temple. A hero

stands face to face with the divine element. Thus hero worshipping is one of the sacred duties of man.

NOTES

Carlyle says that hero worship is transcendent admiration of a great man. There is no noble feeling than the worshipping of a hero. The essential principle of all the religions is hero worshipping. Society is founded on hero worshipping. The heroes are 'Bank notes' and they represent gold. There is hero worship for authority and it is necessary to check the state of political unrest. Carlyle believed that hero worship will never come to an end. This practice would never be source of nuisance at all. He says, "Here worshipping endures for ever while man endures".

The Poet Hero

The old concept was that of the hero as divinity or the hero as prophet. They presuppose a certain rudeness of conception. Such people were uncultured. The hero is less ambitious and less doubtful. The poet is a heroic figure which belonged to all ages. Carlyle says that let nature send a hero-soul. The hero is a great man who can be poet, prophet and king. Many different names have been given to great men at different times. They have been named according to the spheres of their activities. The different spheres constitute the grand origin of such distinction. All the types of heroes have been held in high esteem. A poet cannot sing about the heroic warrior unless he himself has the same trend. He has the necessary potentialities of being a hero of some worth.

The Type of Hero

The circumstances determine the type of hero. There are varieties of aptitude given by nature to great men. The vague capacity of a man tends to make him a professional expert. According to Carlyle a great man has the divine idea and nature and circumstances determine the sphere. A man possessing the capacity of a hero becomes the conqueror, king, philosopher and a poet. It is the relation between nature and him that determines his greatness.

The Divine Mystery

Carlyle dislikes science and heredity. These qualities have no consideration for him. Poet and prophet differ greatly in modern notions. Vates means both prophet and poet.

The divine mystery lies in all human beings. The divine idea is found at the bottom of appearances. In many places and most times it is greatly overlooked. The universe is regarded as the realised thought of God. It is practical shape of God's ideas. Moreover it is considered a trivial inert commonplace matter.

NOTES

A poet or a prophet may perform his role by his sincerity. No one can forget this divine mystery. The Vates have been assigned the duty to make the divine mystery more clear and impressively known to the people. They have to reveal that mystery which is known well to them. They have a direct insight into the mystery and belief in the divine power. It is for them a necessity of nature to live in the very fact of things.

There is a similarity and difference between prophet and poet. Carlyle believed that a great man serves a great cause which is judged by its impact on life. The Vates prophet has attained the moral aspect of the mystery, as good, evil, duty and prohibition; and the Vates prophet conceives them well. But the Vates poet have good sense for the appreciation of beauty. They appreciate the aesthetic aspect of the mystery of nature. The prophet is a great revealer of the mystery in nature and the poet expresses the facts in a dignified manner. The Christ's voice said, "Consider the lilies or the field, they toil not, neither do they spin; yet Solomon in all his glory was not arranged like one of these". Goethe says, "The beautiful is higher than God; the beautiful includes in it the good. The true beautiful; which however, I have said somewhere, differs from the false as Heaven does from Vauxhall".

A poet hero is immortal as he can never be forgotten. There were few poets who were accounted perfect. It is impossible to get perfection in poetry. A strain of poetry is found in the hearts of all men. No one is made altogether of poetry. An Italian poet Dante painted the picture of hell in *Divine Comedy*. The imagination that shudders at the well of Dante is not the same faculty, weaker in degree, as Dante's own. It was only Shakespeare who could embody out of Saxo Grammaticus, a Danish historian of 13th century, the story of Hamlet. A person with poetic faculty is called a poet. One who rises above the general level of poets will be regarded as a universal Poet. Most of the poets have a universal touch in them.

NOTES

Arbitrary Distinction

There is an arbitrary distinction between a universal poet and a general poet. All poets have some touches of the universal elements and no one is entirely made of that. Most poets have been forgotten, but poets like Shakespeare and Homer are still taken into remembered for their universal appeal.

True Poetry is True Speech

There exists a difference between poetry and true speech which is not poetical. A few German critics like Schlegel, Fichte have written a good deal about it. Their writings are not very intelligible at first. They declare that the poet has the infinitude in him. There is considerable meaning in the old vulgar distinction of poetry being metrical, having music in it, being a song.

A Musical Thought

A musical thought comes out of the inmost heart. According to Carlyle "A musical thought is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing; detected the inmost mystery of it, namely the melody that has been lying hidden in it the inward harmony of coherence which is his soul, whereby it exists and has a right to be here in this world". All inmost things are melodious and appeal to the mind.

The Spirit of Song

All innermost things naturally utter themselves in songs. The meaning of song goes very deep. An inexpressible and unfathomable speech leads us to the edge of the infinite. A poet has a divine inspiration and expresses certain secret things in his song. An ancient poet is metrical in his verse and fuses music in his song. The meaning and content of a song penetrate into the heart and its melody appeals to the mind.

A Musical Thought

Thus poetry is musical thought and it arises from the power of the intellect. Even the commonest speech has some element of song in it. A country clergymen has a peculiar mode of speech. There is some sort of rhythm or tune in Church prayers. Accent is a kind of singing religious songs. All people have their own accent. All passionate languages have some music in them. They display the

finer music than the mere accent. The speech of a rash person in great anger becomes a song. The primal element of human beings is also a song. Pythagoras theory of heavenly bodies as contained in sphere Harmonies is an expression of song. He showed the inner structure of nature. The soul of nature is also musical.

NOTES

Natural Views

The essence of natural voices and utterances is perfect music. Thus poetry is a musical thought contained in a refined manner. A poet thinks about the world in a musical manner. His verse affects power of intellect. It is his genuineness and depth of vision that makes him a poet.

The Hero—A Divine Force

A hero poet should be respected as a hero prophet. The Vates poet, with his melodies that appeal human soul, attains an inferior position than the Vates prophet. It includes the hero taken as divinity, the hero taken as prophet and hero taken as a poet. He may be first regarded as a god then for one god inspired, a beautiful verse maker and a man of genius. In human beings, there is the same altogether peculiar admiration for the heroic gift.

Heroic Gift

In a man there is a peculiar admiration for the heroic gift. A great man is literally divine. The ideas about God. The source of divine beauty, wisdom and heroism are always rising higher. The human respect for these qualities is getting lower. It is the study of arts of amusement. Our respect for great men; all injured, not clear, comes out in poor condition.

Lack of Faith

The people lack faith to recognise the dignity of natural values, Scepticism, and all those things that make us sorrowful. The people worship the shows of great men. The rustic with his black brows and flashing eyes, and strange words moving laughter and tears, is of a dignity far beyond others.

An Estimate of Dante

Shakespeare and Dante were saints of poetry. They dwell apart, in a kind of royal solitude, no record of them, a glory of complete perfection invests these two. They were canonised, though no Pope or Cardinals took hand in doing it.

Dante's Portrait reveals an ethereal soul and a sad face. The face of one wholly in protest and life long battle. his voice is mystic and full of heroism.

An Estimate of Shakespeare

NOTES

Dante embodies the inner life. Shakespeare the outer life. Shakespeare is the product of life itself. He sang of the practical life and was its product. Shakespeare is acknowledged as the greatest intellect. His intense insight helped him to paint variety of portraits. His power of discerning harmony as the heart of things makes him heroic.

2.2.2 CARLYLE'S CONCEPTION OF HERO POET

"The hero as divinity and the hero as prophet are the product of the ancient times". How far do you agree?

Or

"The hero as a poet is the Vates supreme and manifests all the characteristics which could be found in any other type of hero". Discuss the statement.

Or

Describe Carlyle's conception of hero poet.

Or

"Hero as a poet is very near to the common man". Discuss.

Introduction

Carlyle had a very inclusive conception of hero. He believed that God sends heroes, sometimes as priests or poets, sometimes as soldiers or statesmen to rule over us. According to him a great man is living light fountain.

Prof Jackson says, “His books extracts of himself; he writes as he feels and feels as he writes and the end is exhaustion as well as relief”.

A Great man is endowed with the gifts of God.

Hero as a Poet

A hero as a poet is an inspired soul. He has the native original insight and heroic nobleness. All the souls feel his radiance and darkness. The world is likely to be doomed if such a noble soul does not appear. Sincerity is another factor for the conception of a hero. Carlyle says, "I should say sincerity, a deep, great genuine sincerity is the first characteristic of all men, in any way heroic". The great man does not boast himself as being sincere, he can not help being sincere. A hero moves upon the path of truth and lights the path of others. He looks through the shows of things into things. He, like a Platonic believes that truth lies behind the outward show of things. A man having a sharp vision can go direct to the heart of life. This fact of existence makes a hero broad-minded.

NOTES

It is believed that truth is multifaceted prism and each hero sees one facet of it. Dante discovers it in the thoughts and visions of Hell and Heaven. Shakespeare found this truth in the thoughts and passions of human beings. All the heroes and great men observe sacred mystery behind the universe. Carlyle also feels that the hero comes to us at first hand. He is mostly original in concept.

The Hero Worship

A hero is gifted with some divine powers which enables him to reveal the secrets of nature. The realisation of the thoughts of the great from the infinite unknown with tidings to us. A heavenly inspired hero thinks and feels in an original way. All heroes possess some qualities but they use them their own way. Carlyle says, Burns, a gifted writer, might have made a still better supreme poet. All the heroes are of the self-same mould. They worked in the different fields because there are aptitudes of nature too. The favourable or unfavourable circumstances determine the path of a hero.

Carlyle favours hero worship. His concept of hero worship is peculiar. According to him the highest duty of man is hero worshipping. The concept of hero worship is the foremost attitude of human life on Earth. A hero has some divine element in its wake. He represents the most sacred temple of God. He tries to discover the most secret things in the universe one of the sacred duties of man is hero worshipping.

Carlyle says that hero worshipping is transcendent admiration of great man. It is one of the noble feelings of man. He says admiration and submission are the essence of Christianity.

NOTES

Carlyle's Optimism

Carlyle's concept of hero worship is peculiar. He says that there is no noble feeling than the worshipping of a hero. Even religion depends upon hero worshipping. Thus paganism depends upon the worship of God who is an embodiment of Heroic qualities. The Muslims have full faith in their prophet. The Christian regard Christ as the son of God.

Carlyle is of the opinion that the society is founded on Hero worshipping and represents a graduated worship of heroes, who are called 'Bank Notes'. People always seek guidance from heroes and obey their superior. If people do not worship their leaders and have no respect for authority, then, there will be no progress in society. It will lead to political unrest and chaos in the society. Hero worship in society cannot be stopped altogether. People are accustomed to seeking guidance and obey their superior. Carlyle shows uneasiness to seek guidance and obey their superior. Carlyle shows uneasiness to find that in modern times hero worshipping has lost its glory. He expresses optimism in the belief that hero worshipping will never come to an end. He says, "Hero worshipping endures for ever while man endures. People love great men and obey them because they have the natural instinct to hero worship. But scientific people do not believe that there can be a man endowed with divide qualities. People regard themselves inferior to heroes and tend to worship them."

The Qualities of Hero

The hero as divinity and hero as prophet are the product of old days. A hero poet has a less ambitious character. He cannot become a poet by writing poems only. There are certain traits in a hero poet. He may have some character of being a politician, a thinker, legislator and a philosopher. He may have a clear deep-seeing eye and wide heart. These traits were found in the poets like Burns, Mirabeau and Shakespeare. They were to some extent hero poets.

The hero as poet is the Vates supreme and shares some qualities of other types of hero. The word 'vates' means both poet and prophet. A poet and a prophet may have some difference in moral notions. Both of them penetrate into the sacred mystery of the universe. Goethe calls this sacred mystery as 'open secret'. They try to reveal the divine mystery according to their own knowledge of the reality. They offer us the idea of the realities. A prophet knows the secret of

nature and takes the moral aspect out of it. He distinguishes between good and evil. But the poet thinks only the aesthetic thing. The prophet is the revealer of the secret nature. He examines mystery of the moral side.

Genuineness and Vision

NOTES

A hero-poet studies mystery on the moral side. The hero as a prophet gives emphasis on the good and evil. He is concerned with the aesthetic side. He is the revealer of the facts of nature. The hero as poet differs from her as prophet. A poet is identically man in his camp. Carlyle says, "We are all poets when we read a poem well. A person who possesses more of the poetic element as to have become noticeable will be called a poet. He makes a distinction between poetry and true speech". He says, "If poetry is authentically musical in heart and substance then it must be acknowledged."

A musical, thought goes directly into the deepest heart of the things. A hero as poet is a kin to common man. The vain of poetry is found in the hearts of common man. The speech of poetry is closed in melody. The writer imparts the hero with the power of intelligence. He is intellectually developed. A hero as poet must own the elements of genuineness and depth of vision. With the assistance of sincerity he unfolds the divine mystery. It is through the depth of vision that he can penetrate deep into the mystery of the universe. A hero-poet should be acknowledged as a saint.

2.2.3 DANTE AS A HERO POET

How does Carlyle proved that Dante was a hero poet.

Or

"Dante's portrait reveals an ethereal soul and a sad face". Discuss.

Or

Dante's misfortune resulted in the 'Divine Comedy'. Elaborate.

Or

"Dante's song was the heroic speech of a true poet". Discuss.

NOTES

Introduction

Carlyle holds a high conception of a hero-poet. He believed that the Hero embodies the Divine idea. He goes deep into the hidden mysteries of life and Nature. He held the view that the hero is the living light-fountain which it is good and pleasant to be near and he possess heroic nobleness. Prof. Roth says, "Carlyle has significance even for the modern times. His value is two fold; be helped to bring new order because he unsettled other people's conviction. Secondly he gave certain principles which gave certain principles which have relevance even the modern times".

Dante's Literary Trend

Dante and Shakespeare, both have glory of perfection. Dante's portrait reveals an ethereal soul and a sad face. Dante was born at Florence, in the upper class of society in 1265. He got the best education available at that time. He learnt more than was expected of him. He knew divinity, Aristotelian logic and Latin at school. He had a clear cultivated understanding. He managed to get the best fruits of education.

Dante spent some time as soldier in the state of Florence. He became one of the chief magistrates of Florence. He came in contact with a beautiful little girl Beatrice. His love with her is the most significant event of his life. Dante had mentioned her in this poem. His misfortune resulted in the divine comedy.

He expressed musically the religion of the middle ages. He also revealed the spiritual life of the middle age in his verse. The spiritual side of modern Europe is to be seen in his descriptions. His inferno, purgatory and paradise are the embodiments of Catholic faith. He laid bare the very spirit of religion as a spiritual leader. He suggested the way of salvation of the spirit. He calls it the soft ethereal soul with an insight into the life and nature of appearance. Thus circumstances made him the hero-poet. His sorrows helped a great deal in viewing the vision of Inferno. He became responsible to think about his lot and reminded the people of their responsibilities.

An Unfortunate Scholar

Dante was an unfortunate man. He was roughly treated by the people He looked into the ultimate reality. He got inspiration from the experiences he joined

and wrote the sweet song called 'Divine Comedy'. It was a very musical song, a melody and can be called inward harmony. Carlyle says that Divine Comedy is a sincere song and it is a sort of supernatural world cathedral. This poem has a sort of musical harmony and balance. It is the passion of Dante which makes him a hero. According to Carlyle, Dante is world great not because he is world wide, but because he is world deep.

NOTES

Dante had a great passion and force. His power of vision is due to this intensity. He uses exact words to convey his meaning. His silence is more eloquent than words. He was a sincere and sympathetic man. He had the capacity to remove the useless thing from the useful stock. He has been able to emerge as a high character in his 'Divine Comedy'. He was a thinker of truth.

Dante's moral greatness was acknowledged by many eminent writers. His love, hatred and grief are the outcome of his moral standard. He possessed the qualities of earnestness and intensity which served a great deal in mobilising his morality.

A Genuine Moral Thinker

Dante was a honest moral thinker. He gave a sort of moral tone to his vision of life. He also gave a sort of musical expression to the religion of the middle ages. He expressed in his poems the spiritual life of Modern Europe. The two aspects of his moral nature were intensity and earnestness. His *Divine Comedy* has the tinge of morality.

Carlyle says, “Dante's influence on the world was enormous. His effect on the world was smaller in comparison with the Divine hero. He spoke to the noble and pure masses. Dante burns as a pure star in the firmament at which the great and the high of all ages kindle themselves.” Dante was considered as a saint to the world to embody musically the religion of the middle ages.

Dante had faced moral dejection. His face in the painting shows pain, sorrow and victory, as a consequence of love. It shows tenderness and affection of his heart. His divine comedy is the product of the sufferings and sorrows of Dante. It embodies the vision of reality. He adopted Terza Rima measure in the divine comedy. It consists of five iambic feet with an extra syllable, in set of three lines. The middle line of each rhyming with the first and third lines of the next set.

NOTES

His Divine Comedy

The Divine Comedy has inner as well as outer harmony. The outward manifestation of this harmony is its division into three parts, inferno, purgatory and paradise.

Dante suffered misfortune to console his heart. He wandered from patron to patron; from place to place, providing in his own bitterwords. He was banished from his place. His proud earnest nature was gloomy. He sought some companions to gain their affection. Della thus remarked about Dante "Is it not strange, now that their poor fool should make himself so entertaining, while you, a wise man, sit there day after day, and have nothing to amuse us with at all?" Such a man with his proud silent ways, with his sarcarms and sorrows, was not made to succeed at court. "By degrees; it came to be evident to him that he had no longer any resting place, or hope of benefit, in this earth. Nobody cared for him."

Dante's exile inspired his mystic song. The great soul of Dante made his home more and more in that fearful hell. His heart long filled with songs, thinking over its thought and awe burst forth into a song. The result of his agony was the Divine Comedy, which is the most remarkable of all modern books.

His Dedication

Dante's dedication and toil produced the *Divine Comedy*. Dante says, "This book, which has made me lean for many years, Ah, yes, it was won, all of it, with plan and sore toil, not in sport but in great earnest. His book, as indeed most good books are, has been written, in many senses with his heart's blood."

His song is the heroic speech of a true poet. His divine comedy is a true song and its three parts are in harmony. This language is full of peculiar words. The thought and spirit of the song in rhythmic. Its depth and rapt passion and sincerity, makes it musical. There is wonderful harmony in it.

Conclusion

The passion of Dante pierces into the heart of being and renders passions truly. Dante did not come like a catholic mind rather a narrow and a sectarian mind. It is partly the fruit of his age and position and partly too of his own nature. Dante had a great power of vision. There is found a brevity, and abrupt position in

him. His silence was more eloquent than words. His sympathetic sincerity and morality gave him power of expression.

2.2.4 SHAKESPEARE AS A HERO POET

NOTES

How does Carlyle prove that Shakespeare was a hero poet?

Or

Which qualities did make Shakespeare a hero poet? How did he differ from Dante?

Or

"If I say, there fore, that Shakespeare is the greatest of the intellects, I have said all concerning him." Do you agree?

Or

Shakespeare's intellect covers mental and moral faculties. He possessed great power of vision and could discover the inner harmony of things." Discuss.

Introduction

Dante and Shakespeare are saints of poetry. They dwell apart in a kind of royal solitude. Dante embodies the inner life, while Shakespeare the outer life of Europe.

He represents the humours, ambitions and practical way of thinking of the people of that time. Carlyle read the past in the light of the present. Oliver Elton remarks, “History is usually invoked to instruct the present in the wisdom of the past but Carlyle likes to invert his process.”

Shakespeare and Dante

Dante and Shakespeare were prominent hero-poets. Dante gave us the faith or soul but Shakespeare has given us the practice or body. Dante was the deep, fierce and central figure of the world, and Shakespeare was wide, calm, farseeing

torch-bearer. Shakespeare is the product of life itself. His mirror was to embody the outer life of Europe as developed at that time. Shakespeare was born at a time when the chivalric way of life was about to end. His keen insight and sweet-singing voice determined for him an enviable place.

NOTES

Shakespeare sang about the practical aspect of life. The Elizabethan age and Shakespeare were brought together by accident. This was the product of Catholicism of the middle age. But Shakespeare was also the gift of Nature. He possessed the power of vision and this quality had made him the universal poet. He had the intellectual quality and the coolness of mind. He fathomed the depth of the ocean of knowledge. The impact of his intellect is evident in his characterisation. His vision helped him to go deeper into the regions of earthly things. He sought the secret of nature and life. His truthfulness and intellect helped him to overcome the difficulties. His characters like Falstaff, Othello and Juliet were very fascinating.

Shakespeare as a Hero Poet

Shakespeare did things in his young age that were expected of him. He had stolen a deer from the park of Thomas Lucky. According to Carlyle, Shakespeare had the Warwickshire squire not prosecuted him for deer stealing. The woods and sky, the rustic life of man in Stratford there, had been enough for this man. The tree 'Igdrosal', a mythological tree was a source of inspiration for him. It had its roots down in the Kingdoms of Hela and death and whose boughs overspread the highest Heaven. It is considered to be a refined tree.

Shakespeare sang of the practical life and was its product. The Christian faith which was the theme of Dante's song, had produced practical life which Shakespeare was to sing. Shakespeare was the free gift of nature. He was acknowledged as the greatest intellect. He had been the chief of all poets, who had left record of himself by way of literature. His power of vision, his faculty of thought, his calmness of mind, joyous strength contributed great deal in making him true poet.

Shakespeare: A Learned Poet

Shakespeare was a learned poet to some extent. His morality, valour, frankness, tolerance, truthfulness and strength which gave him victory over

difficulties were his mainstay, which provided him an atmosphere of relief. His characters were like watches with dial plates of transparent crystal. Shakespeare's power to discern harmony at the heart of things makes him heroic.

His Liberalism

NOTES

The result of his broad vision is obvious. His intellect manifested itself as imagination and fancy. His superiority of intellect was manifested in his plays. His intellect, imagination and fancy were based on his vision of life. His intellect was accompanied by morality. His morality would have been impossible without intellect. His virtues will be recorded in his knowledge. Nature was his guide and moral teacher as well. He had an informed intellect. His dramas are also the product of his intellect and broad outlook on life. His sorrows, his silent thoughts and struggles were very fascinating.

Shakespeare is greater than Dante, because he fought truly and conquered the World drama. His sincere devotion and mirth was peculiar.

Shakespeare's Intellectual Outlook

Shakespeare was a great intellectual poet. He constructed his story out of the material which is offered to him by life. He penetrates deeper into the heart of things.

He probed the deeper regions of the earthly things. He discovered the secret of Nature in life. He had the insight into the nature of things. He also traced the inner harmony of things. His vision penetrated deeper into the reality of things which is evident behind their outward show. His intellect connotes mental and moral faculties, which constitute two aspects of intellect, knowledge of things will cover virtues which lie dormant. Shakespeare's unconscious intellect was responsible for the detection of realities of life.

Shakespeare had the mental and moral faculties necessary for a great writer. A mental development displays this value, knowledge of things will cover virtues. His plays were as profound as nature itself can be. His artistic capacity was quite natural and real. There is new meaning and harmony in his plays. His ideas rise from unknown depth of his own intellect and his knowledge of the object in nature. Shakespeare possessed joyful tranquillity which became a

guiding force to him. His ideas and vision of life was a guiding principal to mould his nature in proper direction.

Conclusion

NOTES

Both Dante and Shakespeare tried to fight against the inverse factors. Shakespeare's misery and his sorrows found expression in his tragedies. His fascination for love and mirth was properly reflected in his comedies. His fun was well-controlled and his sorrow is very much disciplined. His plays do not give a proper view of his inner life. His prophetic tone was also very peculiar. He had a very detached outlook towards life.

2.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Discuss Arnold As a Poet of the Victorian Unrest.
2. Arnold's poetry as the Criticism of Life. Discuss.
3. *Give the critical appreciation of* Thyrsis *or* Dover Beach.
4. Write an essay on *The Hero As Poet.*
5. Describe Carlyle's conception of hero poet.
6. How does Carlyle prove that Dante was a hero poet.
7. Dante's misfortune resulted in the 'Divine Comedy'. Elaborate.

2.4 LET US SUM UP

Unit II tells you about the life and works of Matthew Arnold and Thomas Carlyle in general. You are now knowledgeable enough to critically analyze Arnold's 'Thyrsis' and 'Dover Beach' and also Carlyle's *The Hero as Poet*.

UNIT-III : D.G. ROSSETTI

NOTES

Structure

3.0 OBJECTIVES

In Unit III we shall discuss D. G. Rossetti's *The Blessed Damozel*. Besides giving the central theme of the poem we shall also do some critical analysis for a better evaluation of this work. You will be able to:

- Speak on the author and his masterpiece.
- Give the outline of the work.
- Critically appreciate the work.

3.1 D.G. ROSSETTI

Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti was born in London on 12 May, 1828. He was son of the Italian-born poet Gabriel Rossetti. He was educated at King's College and the Royal Academy. At the academy he met the painters Sir John Everett Millais and Holman Hunt, with whom he founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Rossetti was powerfully attracted to the dramatic and the

supernatural. Among his earliest paintings was a scene of the annunciation, Ecce Ancilla Domini. His art subsequently developed through other phases, in which the sense of human beauty, passion for abstract expression, and richness of colour were leading elements.

NOTES

Rossetti started writing poetry about the same time that he took definitely to the study of painting. Two of his best known poems, "The Portrait" and "The Blessed Damozel", were written in 1842. He made a number of translations from Dante and other Italian writers, published in 1861 as The Early Italian Poets.

Rossetti's later years were steeped in sorrow and mental depression, relieved occasionally by the creative play of his mind. In 1860 he had married a milliner, Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal, whose beauty he immortalised in many of his best-known paintings, such as Mary Magdalene at the House of Simon the Pharisee. Within two years the invalid Elizabeth died, and Rossetti was grief stricken by the tragedy. In addition he was distressed by a bitter attack that had been made on the morality of his poems in an article entitled "The Fleshy School of Poetry", published in The Contemporary Review in October 1871. Rossetti's rebuttal was published as "The Stealthy School of Criticism" in the Athenaeum in December 1871.

Rossetti continued to the last to produce paintings and poems. In 1881 he published Ballads and Sonnets, which contained some of his finest work, "Rose Mary", "The White Ship", "The King's Tragedy", and the sonnet sequence "The House of Life". Among his later paintings, which are murky and dreamlike, two of the best are Dante's Dream and Proserpina. He died in Berchington on 10 April, 1882.

3.1.1 THE BLESSED DAMOZEL

The Blessed Damozel

The poem, *The Blessed Damozel* was first published in 1850 in *The Germ*, the journal of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. When it was first composed Rossetti was less than nineteen. He revised the poem several times and painted two pictures of *The Blessed Damozel* afterwards. Hugh Walker remarks, “The subject as is well known, was suggested to Rossetti by Poe's *The Raven*.” He says,

"I saw that Poe had done the utmost it was possible to do with the grief of the lover on earth, and I determined to reverse the conditions, and give utterance to the yearning of the loved one in the heaven." It has been generally believed that Rossetti succeeded very well; and if this means that he wrote a fine poem, the praise is obviously due. But whatever he really reversed, the condition may be questioned. He has translated into the feminine what Poe left masculine; but his Damozel is as much on earth as the hero of *The Raven*. For heaven he substituted some place of boundless wealth and magnificence, and for God and Christ two great lords of transcendent might, beneficent and worthy of reverence; and the whole poem moves on with perfect smoothness.

In *The Blessed Damozel* Rossetti has presented a graphic and concrete picture of mediaeval haven where a young girl is in the company of the blessed. In spite of the company of the blessed she sadly longs for reunion with her lover left behind on earth. The manner in which she describes the feelings of her separation from her lover, is typically modern. The poet has also conveyed the feelings of the bereaved lover in a dramatic way. We further note Rossetti's extraordinary power of imagination in his rendering of Space and Time.

Central Theme Of The Poem

In the poem, *The Blessed Damozel*, D.G. Rossetti has described the story of young girl who pledged faithfulness in her love to some young man but died before she could marry him. When she died she went straight to heaven because she had been chaste and faithful in her love. Thus the lover was left on the earth. But there in the company of the blessed she longed for her lover. She expressed her desire to meet him again not on earth but in heaven where they would live together for ever dedicated to the service of God. She had complete faith in her future union with her lover in heaven. She was pretty sure that her lover too being genuine and sincerely devoted to her would be reborn in heaven after his death on earth so that they might be united forever. Their lives being perfectly chaste, they would be permitted to live together in heaven in the presence of God forever and would be free from the pangs of separation. The lover left on earth is described listening to her voice coming from heaven. He fancied that she was still reclining her head on his shoulders. He felt her auburn hair scattered all over her back and felt the warmth of her breath and bosom. The lover experienced her feeling and shared her emotions.

NOTES

Analysis Of The Poem

The Damsel was enjoying the company of the blessed. She leaned out from the gold bar of Heaven. There were three lilies in her hand and seven stars in her auburn hair, scattered all over her body. Although she had died ten years ago on earth, it seemed to her that she had scarcely lived there for a day. Her eyes were full of emotions and she pined for her lover left on earth. The lover too felt that she was reclining on his shoulder and her hair covered his face. The lover wondered that ten years, a sufficiently long period passed away so hastily like leaves fallen in the autumn season. She was standing on some mound in heaven which marked the beginning of space. The place where she stood was so high that if she looked down she could hardly see the sun. Space is like a bridge over the tide of ether. The earth hangs below it. As the earth revolves on its axis, day and night are born which come alternately like flames of fire and depth of darkness. She lives at such a high place that she could hardly hear the voices of maids, her companions on earth when they pronounced their names and claimed to have been chaste in their life on earth.

She also saw that the soul of such chaste maidens rose to heaven from earth like flames. She still leaned forward from the walls of heaven. The bar on which she rested her bosom must have become warm with warmth of her bosom. The lilies she bore on her hair and arm remained still there though they had faded because of the warmth of her bosom. While reclining on the enclosures of heaven, she was shaking all the heavenly bodies terribly. She continued to look into the space below heaven and uttered a few words which were as musical as the tune produced by heavenly bodies while moving along their orbits. In the meantime the sun had disappeared and the curled moon appeared like a feather fluttering in the sea of space. Now she uttered a few words. Her voice was as sweet as the music produced by the stars and other heavenly bodies. The lover of the Blessed Damozel feels that her sweet voice is echoing in the songs of birds which he is hearing. The midday air also gave the same tune. He also fancies that he is hearing her foot steps in the sounds of the heavenly bodies as she is coming down to him. The Blessed Damozel wishes to be united with her lover in heaven. She is certain of the fact that her lover will surely come to her because she has prayed in heaven for her union with the lover and he has done the same on earth. They have

prayed for their mutual union ever since they fell in love and their united prayers will create perfect strength.

She says that when he dies, he will be crowned with a hallo like a saint and will go to heaven. She says that when he dies on earth he will go to heaven and they will be united there forever. They will stand beside the mysterious, holy image of God and seek that their former prayers to God for their union have been granted. They will become invisible like the clouds of the sky. They will lie together in the shade of the mystic tree in the growth of which love, the symbol of the Holy Spirit (God) sits. The leaves of this tree will become purified by the touch of God and will utter His holy name. Thus lying in the shade of that music tree, she will teach him some of the songs she sings there in praise of God. Though in the beginning he will not be able to understand the significance of his songs yet in due course he will get used to them and will sing them and understand their significance. She appears to lose heart and doubts if God would really unite her with her lover in the ultimate end. She says that when she was alive, he used to say that they had one soul although they were two. They both will find out the cluster of tree where Mary, the mother of Christ lives along with her five disciples. The five disciples of Mary sit in a circle. The locks of their hair are fastened into knots and their foreheads are garlanded. They are busy weaving white garments with golden threads to clothe the human souls that have just arrived in heaven after their death on earth. Following his entrance in heaven, he will perhaps be afraid and remain speechless owing to his ignorance of the ways of life in heaven. Then she will place her cheek on his and will tell him that she still loves him as tenderly as she did on earth. When mother Mary will come to know of their pure love, she will approve of it. Mother Mary will take them hand in hand into the presence of God before whom all angels will bow humbly. When the angels meet them, they (angels) will sing the glories of true love.

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She will ask God or Christ to accede to her request of living with him forever as she lived on earth. The Blessed Damozel gazed and listened and then said in a gentle but sorrowful tone that she will do what she has said only when her lover comes to heaven after his death on earth. When she stopped speaking, the light of god tilted towards her and the angels too came near her. His eyes appeared to be praising and then she smiled. The lover saw her smile. But soon the Blessed Damozel began to reflect upon the remoteness of her prospects of

meeting her lover and became sad. She put her face between her hands and began to weep. Her lover left on earth saw her tears and heard her sob.

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3.1.2 CRITICAL NOTE ON BLESSED DAMOZEL

Critical note on the poem, *The Blessed Damozel*.

The Blessed Damozel first published in 1850 in *The Germ* the journal of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, was composed when Rossetti was less then nineteen. He revised it several times and painted two pictures of Blessed Damozel afterwards. It is a wonderful piece. Compton Rickett remarks, "The Blessed Damozel was wonderful, more wonderful considering he was quite a youth when he wrote it is full of fine subtle touches. It has a freshness and spaciousness of imagination that is lacking in some of his more ornate later pictures."

Regarding the source of its inspiration Hugh Walker says that the subject as it is well-known, was suggested to Rossetti by Poe's *The Raven*. "I saw", he says "that Poe had done the utmost it was possible to do with grief of the lover on earth, and determined to reverse the condition, and give utterance to the yearnings of the loved one in the heaven." It has been normally held that Rossetti succeeded very well; and if this means that he wrote a fine poem, the praise is clearly due. But whatever he really reversed, the condition may be questioned. He has translated into the feminine what Poe left masculine; but his Damozel is as much on earth as the hero of *The Raven*. For heaven he substituted some place of unlimited wealth and magnificence, and for God and Christ two great lords of transcendent might and the whole poem moves on with perfect smoothness.

In *The Blessed Damozel*, Rossetti has given a vivid and concrete picture of mediaeval heaven where a young girl is in the company of the blessed. In spite of the company of the blessed she poignantly longs for reunion with her lover left behind on earth. The manner in which she describes the feelings of her separation from her lover, is typically modern. The poet has also conveyed the feelings of the bereaved lover in an impressive way. We also note Rossetti's extraordinary power of imagination in his rendering of Space and Time.

3.1.3 SOME IMPORTANT EXPLANATIONS

NOTES

Lines:

The blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven:
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from D. G. Rossetti's *The Blessed Damozel*. In these opening lines the poet stresses on the chastity and devotion of the girl. He says she had been chaste and sincere in her love while she was on earth. So when she died, she was fortunate to have been blessed with a place in heaven, still she pined for her lover. Therefore, she inclined her body over the gold bar of the rampart of heaven, she had deep and thoughtful eyes which were dark like the deep and calm sea or evening. She had three lilies, the symbol of purity, in her hand and wore seven stars, the angels of the seven churches, on the locks of her hair. In short she was absolutely chaste and devoted in her love during her stay on earth and in her worship of God even after death.

Lines:

The sun was gone now, the curled moon
Was like a little feather,
Flutterings far down the gulf, and now
She spoke-through the still weather,
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from D. G. Rossetti's *The Blessed Damozel*. While the Blessed Damozel looked down at earth for her lover, the sun had departed and the new moon had come out. It was thin like a feather of a bird and seemed quivering or trembling in the vast ocean of the space. Probably she could not see the sun and the moon as she was sitting high above in heaven. The poet means to say that she looked through the space to have a glimpse of her lover on earth for a long time. The sun set and the moon came out but she kept on

looking. When the twilight approached, she spoke in the calm atmosphere. Her voice was sweet and faint like the music produced by the stars when they sang together in praise of God.

NOTES

Lines:

And I myself will teach to him,
I myself. Lying so,
The songs I sing here which his voice
Shall pause in , hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause
Or some new thing to know.

Explanation: These lines have been taken from D. G. Rossetti's *The Blessed Damozel*. The Blessed Damozel says that when God sanctions their union they(that of the Blessed Damozel and her lover) will live there together and will lie in the shade of the mystic tree of the eternal life. Dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit lives within the foliage of this holy tree. Its presence is occasionally felt by the devotees and the saintly souls when they are in the highest spiritual state. Every leaf of the tree of life represents the individual life of man and when it is touched by the holy feathers of the Dove or when it feels the presence of feathers of the dove or when it feels the presence of God, it sings the praise of God in clear voice.

3.2 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1. Write a critical note on the poem, *The Blessed Damozel*.

3.3 LET US SUM UP

Unit III familiarizes you with D. G. Rossetti's *The Blessed Damozel*. Besides summarizing the poem you are in a position to do some critical analysis of this work.

UNIT-IV : DICKENS, THACKERAY

NOTES

Structure

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In Unit IV we have included William Thackeray and Charles Dickens for our study. For further consideration we have selected their masterpieces: Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and Dickens's *Great Expectations.* You will be able to:

- Discuss their life and works.
- Present a summary of the works.
- Analyse the work.

NOTES

4.1 CHARLES DICKENS

His Life and Career

Charles Dickens was born on February 7, 1812 at Portsea. His father's name was John Dickens. He was a clerk in the Navy Post Office at Portsmouth. Dickens had to face many hardships in life. He could not get regular education. He had to work in a blacking factory on six shillings a week. Then he worked in a lawyer's office where he learnt shorthand. Then he became a reporter of a leading Newspaper in London in 1832. In 1835 he married Kate Hogarth. Mary was Kate's sister. Dickens was deeply attached to her. Mary suddenly died in 1837. It was a bolt from the blue for Dickens.

His important Publications are as follows :

1. *Oliver Twist* - 1837
2. *Nicholas Nickleby* - 1837.
3. *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby* - 1839 - 41.
4. *A Christmas Coral*, *Dombey and Son*, *David Copperfield* 1843-1849.
5. *Bleak House*, *Hard Times* and *Little Dorrit* - 1852-57.
6. New Journal "All the Year Round- 1859, serializing his following novels - *A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Uncommercial Traveller*.
7. *Great Expectations* 1860-61.
8. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*-1870.

Charles Dickens is one of the greatest and the most popular English novelists. The most striking qualities of his fiction are the variety of his characters, his rich humour and his humanitarian zeal. All the novels of Dickens give one message — Be good and love all. Believe that humanity, pity, forgiveness are the first of things in man ; believe in intimacy and tenderness, and tears are the finest things in the world. Cazamian says "Among the English Novelists Dickens is neither the most consummate artist, nor the finest

Psychologist, nor the most accomplished realist, nor most reductive writer; but he is probably the most national, the most typical and the greatest of them all."

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4.1.1 THE NOVEL IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

The Novel In English Literature

The word 'novel' is derived from the Italian "novella." The term was used for each of a collection of about one hundred narratives which appeared in the latter half of the 13th century. The novel, is actually a comparatively recent entrant into the field of English literature. Both of the English novels in fact came in 1740 with the publication of Richardson's *Pamela*. Then Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and Smollett's *Roderick Random* came before the public. In the second decade of the 19th century we find two prominent novelists—Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott. The names of these two figures will always be written in golden letters in the history of English.

About Novel

A novel is a fair combination of plot and character. The plot is the main plan of the story. The characters are the persons who take part in the story and around whom the story moves. In other words we can say that a novel is a long story in prose about imaginary people and imaginary events. W.L. Cross defines novel thus, "That prose fiction which deals realistically with actual life is called, in criticism and conversation pre-eminently the novel." (*The Development of the English Novel*, 1952, Introduction Page XV). Arnold Kettle remarks, "The impulse towards realism in Prose literature was part and parcel of the break down of feudalism and of the revolution that transformed the feudal world." (*An Introduction to the English Novel* Vol. I)

4.1.2 MAJOR CHARACTERS

Major Characters

PIP

Pip is one of the best heroes of Dickens. He is the hero of the novel *Great Expectations*. He was an orphan child brought up by his mother's sister Mrs. Joe Gargery. He could not develop himself under her cruel behaviour.

NOTES

In his early youth there came a change over his lot. He began to go to the house of Miss Havisham, a rich lady. There he was attracted to the beautiful Estella. He wanted to become rich for her sake. He was thus discontented with his present standing.

One day there came a change in his luck. Mr. Jaggers, a lawyer of London informed Pip that an unknown benefactor had expressed desire to make him a gentleman. Pip left for London for studies. Within a short time he was a changed man. He now had *Great Expectations* in life. But as ill-luck would have it, his expectations soon faded away. He came to know that Estella was marrying another man. He received another blow when he came to know that his real benefactor was Magwitch and not Havisham. The news of his sister's death also came to him like a bolt from the blue. Now life to him became a nightmare.

But sweet are the uses of adversity. Pip remained faithful to Magwitch, and sincere to Estella. He was also honest, hardworking and full of human sympathy. He was also successful in winning Mr. Joe and Biddy. This shows that Pip was the central figure in the novel *Great Expectations*. We can sum up the character of Pip in the following words of Herbert. "A good fellow, with impetuosity and hesitation, boldness, diffidence, action and dreaming curiously mixed up in."

JOE GARGERY

The most lovely character in the novel *Great Expectations* is that of Mr. Joe, the blacksmith. By his simplicity, industry, honesty, unselfishness, toleration etc, he has made a place for himself in our hearts. He is loving and generous to Pip. He is very gentle and kind.

Joe represents that class of men who bear everything very calmly and perform their duty cheerfully and dutifully without caring for the reward. He is very compassionate. He has every sympathy for those who are weak and unfortunate. This is clear from his behaviour with Pip. He loves Pip with all the tenderness of an elder brother.

Joe has a heart of gold, though he is only a blacksmith and has got no education. He has no enemy. He loves all. He is like a comrade for Pip. He brings joy to him in every possible way. He has this affection for him all through, though

Pip forgets him in the days of his prosperity. When he hears of Pip's illness, he goes there, serves him and also pays off his debts.

In short we can say that Joe is essentially a simple man ready to accept whatever life has to give him. But the milk of human kindness flows more freely in his heart than in that of any other character in the story.

NOTES

ESTELLA

Estella is a very good-looking and attractive character of Dickens. She is the heroine of the novel *Great Expectations*. She is also the heroine of Pip's *Great Expectations*. She is queen of his heart. In the words of Pip she is very, very pretty.

In first half of the novel she is presented as mystery. The reader is rather surprised to know the fact that she is daughter of Magwitch and Molly. Miss Havisham adopts her in order to avenge her own wrongs done to her by men. She used to say to Estella, "Break their mercy." This is the reason that she does not talk like a creature of flesh and blood but as a personified theory. When Miss Havisham calls her stock and stone, she bitterly replies, "All I posses is freely yours. All that you have given me is at your command to have again. Beyond that I have nothing."

Estella lacks farsightedness. She is without angelic virtues. Money, compassion and wisdom are foreign to her. She rejects the love of Pip and marries Drummle. She is a woman without heart because she has been trained by Miss Havisham in that way. Pip's love for her is nothing but a mere sentiment for her.

Misery and adversity teach her the correct path. Her pride goes off. Her character is chastened by adversity. She repents for her follies. She changes after she becomes a widow. Now she develops a feeling of love for Pip. Compton Rickett observes thus of her, "She is drilled into a hard cynical young woman who breaks hearts as a pastime."

MAGWITCH

Magwitch is a poor fellow. He earned his livelihood by petty thefts. Nobody had a sympathy for him in his childhood. The result is that he runs away from the prison ships. He meets Pip in the marshes. Pip describes him as "A

fearful man, all in coarse gray with a great iron on his leg". He is very hungry. He asks Pip to bring food and a file for him. Pip brings both the things for him. He is so hungry that he begins to eat like a dog.

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He goes to New South Wales to save himself from the clutches of law. There he becomes very rich. He is very grateful to Pip. In South Wales he changes his name also from Magwitch to Provis. Though wicked by profession, he is kind by heart. He is kind for those who are kind to him, and cruel to those who treat him in a cruel manner.

The good in Magwitch comes out when he determines that his sole purpose in life shall be to help the small boy, who through sheer terror, helped him in the marshes. He uses virtually ever penny of his wealth to make a gentleman of Pip. He even risks death by returning to England just to see Pip.

4.1.3 MORAL LESSONS

What moral lessons does this novel teach you?

Great Expectations is full of moral lessons. Though there is no direct preaching yet the story is so written and the characters so presented that the Christian virtues of love, charity and forgiveness are thrown into bold relief and are emphasized. For example. Mr. Joe is very modest, simple, unselfish and self-sacrificing. He helps Pip from the very beginning to the end without having any grudge against him at any time. This shows that story is full of moral lessons.

In this novel we meet several characters who either live in a world of their own or are a product of circumstances. Miss Havisham belongs to the first category and Estella, Orlick and Magwitch to the second; Miss Havisham is very proud of herself but in the end she realizes her folly and says, "What have I done? What have I done?" This shows that she feels sorry for what she did and begs forgiveness of Pip.

Estella, too, is very proud and rude. Her behaviour towards the male-sex is intolerable. But she, too, in the end feels sorry for her behaviour and seeks Pip's forgiveness.

In the beginning he runs after money because he wanted Estella. He is even lucky enough to get money but when he comes to know about the real benefactor, he refuses to accept the convict's money any more. This shows that Pip realizes that one should not use the money which has been earned by immoral means. Thus it is clear that the present story is full of moral lessons.

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The characters of Miss Havisham and Estella show that it should be the primary duty of every living being to realize his mistake whether at an early stage or at a later stage. Both these characters feel sorry at their behaviour in the end and thus this story teaches us that one should be considerate towards others.

The story is not deprived of justice. In this story we see that the writer tries to punish the evil and reward the good. This is clear from the tale of Arthur, Compeyson and Orlick. All of them are scoundrels and meet a tragic end. Magwitch is partly evil and that is why he dies a natural death. He is re-arrested and sentenced to death but he is rewarded not by hanging but by receiving a natural death. He does not want to disclose his name as the benefactor of Pip. This shows that good is done for good. Thus we see that in the novel virtue triumphs over vice in the end.

4.1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TITLE GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Explain the significance of the title *Great Expectations*.

Great Expectations is the appropriate title of the novel. The title itself is explanatory. The story in the novel is *Great Expectations*. It is story of an orphan's high ambitions. The hero of the novel is Pip. He is an orphan. He is unfortunate in having known any happiness in his boyhood. But he had great expectations in life.

His first expectation was of becoming a rich man. An opportunity came to him by chance by which he gets a handsome amount of money from an unknown benefactor. Pip feels that his benefactor is Miss Havisham. But when he comes to know about his real benefactor, his expectations get shattered.

Pip's another expectation is to marry Estella. She becomes a part and parcel of his life. She has been in every line he has ever read. But she is very cruel and a heart breaker of male sex. She rejects his sincere and true love and marries

another young man. Later on when she becomes a widow, she becomes Pip's life partner. So this expectation, though fulfilled in the end, is a broken one.

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Besides the great expectations of the hero, other characters also have great expectations in their hearts. For example, Mrs. Pocket is always in search of marrying a title, Miss Havisham's expectation is to break the hearts of men, Compeyson wants to be rich by fair or foul means, Wopsle to be an actor of great renown, and Wemick wants to have unlimited portable property and so on.

Thus we find that the story of the novel is full of great expectations. The title of the novel is both suitable and apt. There can be no better title than this one.

4.1.5 DICKENS AS A SOCIAL REFORMER

It has been said that the novels of Dickens while they contain many realistic details, seldom give the impression of reality. Discuss.

Or

Discuss Dickens as a social reformer.

Dickens holds an important place in the history of English fiction. With him we find a new departure from the past and a new trend towards the future. We do not find any of those characters and settings, the knights and ladies, battles and ancient castles and the romance of the past which we find in the novels of Scott. Instead there we find a realistic picture of contemporary life and manners of poverty and misery of the London slums and the dirty streets. The romance of the present hard reality has replaced the romance of the imaginary dreams of the past. Dickens wrote from his own experiences of childhood, his miseries and sufferings, his trials and tribulations. The world that he saw he depicts in his novels. In his works we find descriptions of many realistic details. It has been said that the novels of Dickens contain many realistic details but they seldom give the impression of reality. In order to answer his objection we must clearly understand what we understand by the term realism. Realism does not always mean a photographic representation of life. It is the business of art to make things look like real although they may not be real facts of life.

Dickens follows in his novels the second kind of realism. The life that he depicts certainly appears to be real by the magic of his art and we cannot agree that his novels seldom give the impression of reality. On the other hand, we think that realism is a predominant characteristic of the novels of Dickens. Total impression that the reader gets from his novels is that of a real picture of the world. The realistic details make the picture vivid and impressive. It is a fact that Dickens's realism is also combined with his idealism and herein lies the main difference between Dickens and Thackeray. Besides Dickens is a social reformer. He portrays the defects of society and through his novels he makes an appeal to the conscience of his readers to remove the cruelty and oppression, the wrong and injustice done by man to man. He is, therefore, a pioneer of the humanitarian novel. In *Oliver Twist* he draws our attention to the miserable plight of the workers and draws our sympathetic attention to their grievances. When Oliver asks for more gruel he strikes a new note in history of novel, "For when Oliver walks up to the master of the work house and asks for more gruel issues are at stake which make the whole world of Jane Austen tremble. We are involved not because it is Oliver and we are close to Oliver, but because every starved orphan in the world and indeed everyone who is poor and oppressed and hungry is involved, the master of the work house is not any one in particular but every agent of an oppressive system everywhere."

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Thus we find that we get a strong sense of realism in the novels of Dickens. It is not however, like the realism, in the novels of Austen. In the novels of Austen we get the realism of personal life. Jane Austen deals with personal relationship but Dickens deals with the incidents which happen in everyday life and Dickens deal with certain situations which have a broader application and a general significance. As Arnold Kettle says, "What we get from Oliver Twist is not a greater precision of sensitiveness about the day to day problems of human behaviour but a sharpened sense of the large movement of life within which particular problems arise." Thus we find that Dickens gives us a strong impression of reality in his novels. Arnold Kettle says, "The Oliver Twist's world is a world of a poverty, oppression and death." The poverty is complete, utterly degrading and utterly realistic.

What is true in the case of Oliver Twist is also true in the case of the other novels. In *Nicholus Nickleby* Dickens draws our attention to the appalling

conditions of private educational institutions of his time. In *Great Expectations* he draws our attention to the inhuman conditions under which the criminal convicts used to suffer in his time. Thus we find that the realism of Dickens is genuine and solid although it differs from that of Austen.

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Dickens is not just content with giving a realistic portrayal of life in his novels. He is a social reformer and a pioneer of humanitarian movement. His novels are always purposive. We have to understand this moral purpose before we can grasp the full significance of the art of the novelist. The fundamental point that Dickens emphasises in all his novels is the dignity and beauty of the natural good impulses and motives of the man as distinguished from the social institutions and time born prejudices. Simplicity of life is always advocated. In *Great Expectations*, Joe Gargery stands for simple and the natural human impulses of love and sympathy. At last he resolves his error and comes back to the life of simplicity. In *A Tale of Two Cities* he condemns the brutal and inhuman laws which cry for vengeance on all guilty and innocents alike. The tyranny of the crown in France is replaced by reckless violence on the part of the masses. Dickens holds forth virtues of innocence and self sacrifice against the background of cruel and senseless, slaughter of men and women. It is the spirit of self sacrifice that has made his novel a book of abiding interest. Joe Gargery in *Great Expectations* is another example of simplicity, service and self sacrifice. It is by giving us such examples of virtue and sacrifice, Dickens plays the role of social reformer in his novels. The emancipation from evil forms the theme of the novel of Dickens which has been worked out in precise details so as to give us a convincing impression of a real and living world.

4.2 W. M. THACKERAY

Birth and Parentage

William Makepeace Thackeray came of a good old Yorkshire family. He was born in Calcutta on July 8, 1811, where his father who held a key post under the East India Company, died in 1816. The boy was sent to England in 1817 in the company of a young cousin. In later life, he remembered very well being taken by a black servant to see the exiled Napoleon at St. Helena, and being told that, "he eats three sheep every day, and all the little children he can lay hands upon."

At School

He was never inclined towards studies. He was sent first to school at Chiswick, then to Charterhouse in 1822 under Dr. Russell, who denounced him as, "an idle, shuffling, profligate boy". A fellow-pupil, named Liddell, afterwards Dean of Christ Church College, Oxford, said, "He never attempted to learn".

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After leaving Charterhouse he went down to Devonshire. Here he made his first contribution to literature. He penned a parody of Moore's Minstrel Boy. It was printed in a local newspaper. He also sketched three humorous drawings in water-colour for a copy of the Birds of Aristophanes. These drawings are still in existence.

At the University

In 1829, he went to Trinity College, Cambridge. There he became the moving spirit of a brilliant group of scholars that included Alfred Tennyson, Monckton Milnes, and Edward Fitzgerald; he also won the Chancellor's prize for his poem *Timbuctoo*. Later it appeared in the University journal *The Snob*. Thackeray has said that he was, "licked into indolence", when a child, as a lad, "abused into sulkiness", and later, "bullied into despair", but nothing seems to have served as an incentive to study. The itch of travel was in his blood, and he left the university in 1830 without earning any degree.

Takes to Journalism

On coming of age, he inherited about £20,000. Of this amount he soon lost some in gambling, and a little more through the failure of a bank. Then he purchased a newspaper, the *National Standard*, that was published for less then five months, and which still further lessened his income. After this, with his stepfather, Major Carmichael Smyth, he focused his energies on a Radical newspaper named *The Constitutional*. In this Thackeray showed much promise as a journalist, but it required more than this to make it a success. It slowly failed, and with it was lost the remainder of Thackeray's fortune.

Marriage : Literary Career

While acting as Paris Correspondent for *The Constitutional* he added to his responsibilities in 1836 by his marriage with Miss Isabella Shawe, daughter of Colonel Shawe of Cork. On leaving Cambridge he had travelled on the Continent, studying French and German and also frequenting the art schools of Paris. Now that he was thrown upon his own resources for a living his ambition was to become an artist. Many ventures were made without success; at last, on Dickens'

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refusing his offer to illustrate the *Pickwick Papers*, Thackeray made a bid for literature. In this venture he was a bit more fortunate. In 1837 he became a member of the staff of, and a regular contributor to, Fraser's Magazine; for which he wrote the letters of Mrs. C.J. Yellow-plush (1837-38), Catherine (1839-40), The Great Hoggarty Diamond (1841), and the celebrated Memoirs of Barry Lyndon (1844). In 1842 he went on a tour to Ireland and met Charles Lever; the following year one of most humorous of his works *The Irish Sketch-Book*, was published.

Household Troubles

In 1840 he was in great trouble. First the health of his young wife gave way despite all his love and care, culminating in complete mental breakdown. Secondly, in 1844 he was left alone to take care of their two little daughters. Mrs. Thackeray died in this year.

***Vanity Fair* : Its Popularity**

On joining the staff of *Punch*, Thackeray made a wide appeal to the general public with *The Book of Snobs* (1846), but it was not till *Vanity Fair* appeared (1847-48) in monthly parts that he received full recognition; even the sale of this was so small at first that the publishers thought of suppressing it. However, with the sixth number and the account of Mrs. Perkins' Ball, the sale increased a great deal, and Vanity Fair became the talk of London.

'Pendennis' : Public Lectures

After *Vanity Fair* came Pendennis (1848-50). In 1851 he broke new ground and gave the first of a course of lectures on The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century. After the London lectures he crossed to America, where he gained great popularity.

Some Other Works

In 1853, he published *The Newcomers*, *Esmond* (1855), with its sequel *The Virginians* (1857-59) and 1860 started the Cornhill Magazine with *Lovel the Widower*, *The Adventures of Philip*, and the charming *Roundabout Papers*.

His Last Days : Death

For some years, Thackeray had been suffering from heart trouble, but he worked on steadily, and his health grew worse. He had just started on his new novel, *Denis Duval*, when the end came. He died suddenly in December 1863 of a heart attack.

Character and Personality

Like many big men Thackeray stood six feet four inches—he had the most gentle and lovable manner and was the idol of his children and all young people. "Few persons", says a contemporary, "would imagine his sterling qualities of solid mirth and faithfulness in friendship. With strangers reserved and uncommunicative, to those who knew him he was open-hearted, kindly disposed, and generous. To great sensibility and an innate love of all that is good and noble, he united sentiments of profound hate and contempt for falsehood, meanness, worldliness, and hypocrisy." These great qualities of his led him to wage a war on snobbery all his life.

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4.2.1 THACKERAY'S REALISM

Thackeray's Realism

Or

Thackeray's Rendering of Contemporary Life

Or

'Vanity Fair' as a Picture of Contemporary Life

Or

Contemporary Novel : Thackeray's Reaction

When Thackeray took to writing, he found that the English novel had strayed from the paths of realism towards which Fielding had led it. Scott had cast over it the glow of a by-gone age; the humanitarians like Dickens had cast over it an atmosphere of false sentiment about the suffering and distress of the poor classes, or in the hands of the Terror Novelists it had dealt with haunted and ruined gothic castles. It has romanticised even the life and careers of highwaymen and other criminals. Reacting against all this romanticism, Thackeray led it back once again to real life. In his hands, as Hugh Walker remarks, "the novel is not irradiated by the glow of romance, not brightened by the rose-spectacles of Sentiment".

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Thackeray's Realism

The setting of his novels may be in the past, but the life he depicts is of the upper middle-class Victorian life. Thus the action of *Vanity Fair* takes place around the year 1815, the year of the battle of Waterloo, but in reality it is contemporary London life of the upper middle-classes that has been portrayed.

A.E. Dyson says, "To an unusual degree we have the sense of a real world going on all around the main characters, full of diversity and colour, full of characters, who appear and disappear, enacting at the edge of our consciousness the same patterns of sin and anxiety which hold the centre of the stage." Thackeray has succeeded in capturing the restlessness of Victorian vanity fair, its hustle and bustle, its surface vivacity and glitter, its instinctive cruelty, its truthlessness and faithlessness.

Its Limitations

However, this life has not been depicted as a whole. Its rendering has been conditioned by the novelist's satiric motives. As Hugh Walker informs us, "Vanity Fair is not a picture of the world as a whole ; it represents a particular phase of society, a special type of men". He was fundamentally a moralist and a satirist, and a moralist does not deal with what is already good, but with what needs improvement ; and a satirist holds up to ridicule vices, human weaknesses and follies with a view to correcting them. Hugh Walker aptly remarks, "False as a picture of society, it reveals with penetrating truth the inner soul and character of certain items of society."

Aspects of Victorian life : Worship of Money

Vanity Fair is a novel of manners. It seeks to depict the social behaviour of the upper middle-class people. Money getting and money losing, and social climbing were the very hub of Victorian life. So, they are also the very core of Vanity Fair. These aspects of life, as Arnold Kettle points out, have been crystallised in the novel, as they were in Victorian life, through social relationships, and these social relationships centre round marriage and money. A few examples would be enough to illustrate the point. Becky is a social rebel and the achievement of wealth, rank and social status are the ambitions of her life. She

seeks to achieve these aims through marriage. She marries Rawdon not out of love, but for status and money.

The relationship of Becky with Steyne is founded on money. Sex has nothing to do with it as far as Rebecca is concerned. Later, it is for money that she poisons Jos Sedley.

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Social Climbing : Snobbery

It is a highly materialistic age and money-values prevail. Social climbing is the craze of the day, as it is with Becky Sharp. The rich have grown richer, and the newly rich, like old Osborne, now seek social recognition, prestige and status through their wealth. Old Osborne is callous and hard-hearted and money is everything for him. George Osborne is fleeced and robbed at cards by two Lords of Rawdon's acquaintance but old Osborne does not mind it because he wants his son to be seen in the company of lords. Young George himself is a snob. English ladies struggle, indulge in intrigues and act in all their efforts, as only Victorian ladies could do, to get an invitation to Lady Richmond's ball at Brussels. They are hateful snobs and social climbers as well.

Corrupt Institution

Social life is degenerate, and so are the social institutions like the Aristocracy, the Government and Parliament, the Church and the Army. Sir Pitt Crawley, a representative of the corrupt landed-gentry, represents, “the meanness of magnificence”, self-defeating greed and miserliness. He is uncivilized and has no morals. Lord Steyne, on the other hand, represents the corrupt Peerage of the day. He is always busy in seducing the wives and daughters of his acquaintances. Nepotism, corruption and favouritism are the order of the day. Rawdon Crawley becomes, at the recommendation of Lord Steyne, the Governor of Coventry Island, a post for which he is entirely incompetent, and Jos Sedley, foolish and ridiculous, is a highly placed colonial officer. Appointments and promotions are the result of favour and not of merit. Army officers are similarly inefficient. They are cowards, who fly on the eve of a battle to save their own skin. The Church is similarly degenerate. All the people are godless; a true Christian is rare in Thackeray's *Vantiy Fair*, as in real life.

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No Realistic Rendering

Thus the novelist has dealt with the seamy side of Victorian life to the entire exclusion of its healthier aspects. Another great limitation of Thackeray's realism is that sex is entirely missing from his novels and sex is an important part of life. In the Victorian vanity fair it is money that counts and not sex. Sex was taboo in the Victorian Age, and hence we do not find a free and frank mention of sex in the novel. For example, the question whether Becky was guilty or not has been left unambiguous; her relationship with Lord Steyne has not been clearly defined. The animal side of life has not been dealt with by the novelist.

Exaggeration of Character-traits

Such is the panorama of Victorian life we get in *Vanity Fair*. It is partial and one-sided, but it has been realistically and intimately presented. Similarly, characterisation in the novel is realistic. There are no heroes and no unredeemed villains. They are all human beings with common weaknesses and virtues. Many of them are so life-like that they were supposed to be portraits drawn from contemporary personalities. Thus it is said that Amelia has been drawn after the novelist's own wife or mother. Thus Becky is a social climber, Amelia is a hero-worshipper, Dobbin is a sentimental lover, and so on.

Thackeray's Morality : Its Limitations

Thackeray's morality is more realistic than that of Charles Dickens. There is no poetic justice, no sudden conversions and no artificial tying of the loose ends at the end. The wicked suffer, and their suffering comes quite naturally and convincingly. At the moment of their highest achievement, their success turns to dust and ashes in their mouths. At the end both the good and the wicked achieve only a limited success. Amelia's success and happiness is not much greater than that of Becky. The same is the case in life also where rewards and punishments are not justly distributed.

Conclusion

Thackeray is a novelist of manners, but his representation of the manners of his age is conditioned by his satiric purpose. He is a true representative of the passing customs and concerns of Victorian life. He has realistically represented the seamy side of his age. That age has passed away with the passage of time and

so Thackeray's realism cannot be fully appreciated today. This also explains the modern decline in his popularity.

4.2.2 THE THEME OF 'VANITY FAIR'

NOTES

The Theme of 'Vanity Fair'

Or

'Vanity Fair' : a Sermon on the theme of Vanity.

Or

Thackeray's views of life: "Vanitas Vanitatum : Vanity of Vanities; all is Vanity".

Or

The Title of the Novel : Its Aptness

A Complex Work of Art

Vanity Fair is a complex work of art and as such it can be interpreted in many ways, and its themes, too, are varied and manifold. Thus it has been said that its theme is transience of human relationships, the dissolution of the ties of family and friendship. Another critic is of the view that its theme is individual people and their relationships. Arnold Kettle observes, "Thackeray's vision of a bourgeois society and of the personal relationships engendered by that society", and Dorothy Van Ghent suggests that in the background of the study of human relationships there is what, "we may call the theme of the fathers", the study of father-son relationship, its jealousies and conflicts, in a fundamentally patricidal society.

The Main Theme : Vanity of Human Wishes

However, the main theme of the novel is indicated by its title, *Vanity Fair* itself. The title of the novel is apt and suggestive. Vanity Fair is the theme of all Thackeray's novels : Vanity Fair in the life of a young man, Vanity Fair in the life of a family and the same Vanity Fair is the life of the past as well. Though Vanity Fair is the theme of all his novels, it is only in this novel that he has presented a panorama of human life and frankly called it Vanity Fair. As Elizabeth Drew tells

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us the theme of the novel is, “the vanity of human wishes, and it is round that centre that he has organised the whole book”. It is the spectacle of Vanity Fair we survey from different windows, and different point of vantage. There is a multitude of characters in the novel, but they all unite to narrate the story of Vanity Fair.

Snobbery and Social Climbing

The materials of Vanity Fair are money, social position, rank and privilege. All these treasures are mere vanities, passing and futile, but in Vanity Fair there is a mad scramble for them. All the chief characters have money and privilege or are scrambling to get it, or are bemoaning the lack or the loss of it. It is the centre of their lives. It is a materialistic society from top to bottom, presenting a glittering surface, while below is a loveless void. We move from London to Queen's Crawley, to Brussels, to Pumpernickel, and wherever we go money values and social snobbery reign supreme. Miss Crawley has, “a balance at her bankers which would have made her beloved anywhere,” and the affections of all her relations are centred in it, not in her. Old Osborne has no pity for his old friend Sedley when he fails in business, though Sedley has given him his own start in life, and he is resolute to marry his son to the illiterate mulatto from the West Indies, Miss Swarts, solely because of the size of her dowry. Rawdon Crawley and Becky take all the saving of Raggles, the butler, and Miss Briggs, the "companion", without a concern for their future. Even when old Sedley has lost his fortune, and he and his wife and Amelia and little George are living on an allowance from Jos, he speculates with that allowance and reduces them to complete penury.

Self-Deceptions and Disillusionments

All the characters are eager after vanities, all are equally self-deceived and all are equally unhappy and dissatisfied at the end. Elizabeth Drew remarks, “All the characters are self-deceived pursuing phantom ambitions or clinging to phantom loyalties. No one reaches full self-fulfilment, and frustration in some measure is the common human fate”. The characters of the two girls, Amelia and Becky, whose stories the novel narrates, to use David Cecil’s words, “are designed to illustrate the laws controlling vanity fair as forcibly as possible. And

in order to illustrate how universally these laws work, they are of strongly contrasted types".

The male characters who have developed fascination for the two girls are equally self-deceived, equally crazy for the outward glitter and frivolities of vanity fair, and equally dissatisfied in the end. George Osborne, Amelia's husband, led by egotism and snobbery, first neglects her and is fascinated by the charms of Becky, and this results ultimately in the destruction of her genuine devotion. Dobbin is deceived by his love for Amelia, and sacrifices himself for what he finds in the end is not an object deserving his love and devotion.

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The Theme : Its Universal Significance

The book, in short, is full with the vanities of Vanity Fair, the duplicity of social climbers, and the weaknesses of human nature. Attention is throughout focused on human foibles and struggles to reach the highest strata of Vanity Fair. And the interest and fascination of the novel has proved to be universal because the vanity of man is universal and ever present. Women still berate and betray women, relatives still fight over money; mothers still sell their daughters for popularity, money, or position.

The Title: Its Significance

The novel ends with the words, "Vanitas Vanitatum : vanity of vanities, all is vanity". The use of the Biblical quotation would seem to imply that Thackeray, like a religious preacher, condemns all earthly life and earthly pleasure as sinful. He was a realist who observed the faults of men accurately, and a moral satirist whose aim was to correct and improve human society and human institutions. His aim was to correct the conduct and manners of men and not to merely condemn and denounce. As such he has exposed and ridiculed the outward glitter, the false appearances, the self-deceptions, the false money-values, the snobbery and social climbing, the vanities and frivolities of vanity fair. He has ridiculed the excessive and undue importance attached to money, but not money as such.

No Condemnation of all Earthly Life

In spite of Thackeray's closing words, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity", the novel is not a condemnation of all human nature, and all earthly life, but of certain foibles, follies and frivolities. Though the vanity of men is shown to be

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universal, yet there are people who do not bow down to the idols of vanity fair. Amelia and Dobbin, though they are self-deceived, are the two characters in the novel who remain unaffected by the laws of vanity fair, and they do achieve a certain happiness at the end. Thackeray's idea, then, is that although one may live in Vanity Fair, one need not be a slave to its values, which end up in uselessness and meaninglessness

Conclusion

The main theme of Vanity Fair is clear by its title which is apt and suggestive. The novel is an exposure of the vanity of human wishes, and the false values that prevail in Vanity Fair. But it is no a condemnation of human life and its pleasures as such. Thackeray is a moral satirist and not a religious preacher. His view of life is not expressed correctly by the Biblical quotation, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity".

4.2.3 BECKY SHARP: A POWERFUL INDICTMENT OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

"Vanity Fair" : an anatomy of society, and the epic of a great adventuress.

Or

Becky Sharp : a powerful indictment of contemporary society.

'Vanity Fair' a Novel of Social Criticism

Thackeray's great contribution to the English novel was that he made extensive use of it for the purpose of social criticism. Thus in *Vanity Fair* he has exposed, ridiculed, and condemned a number of shams and affectations, follies and frivolities of contemporary English society. It is the character of Becky Sharp, an adventuress, that has made Thackeray's powerful indictment of contemporary society possible. This makes the novel, to use E A Baker's words, "at once a great anatomy of society, and the epic of a great adventuress".

Becky Sharp as a Social Rebel

Becky Sharp, like Milton's Satan in *Paradise Lost*, is a social rebel. The daughter of an actress and a profligate artist, she is left to shift for herself early in life. The only prospect which she has in life is to become a governess, quietly and weakly to submit to insults and humiliations which society will heap, on her head. But she does not submit; like Milton's Satan she rebels and decides to make her own way in life. She is active, energetic, dynamic. She has extraordinary resources of wit and intellect, as well as her feminine charms, and she decides to make use of all her talents in he fight with society. She has no mother to shelter or support her in the world, she has no advantages of birth and rank, but still she hits back at society and succeeds in carving out her own destiny. Entirely, heartless and conscienceless, a bad character, a wolf rather than a lamb, she dazzles the genteel world by her brilliance and achieves one success after another. She becomes the wife of a baronet's son. She is invited to Gaunt House, served in plates of gold, and is presented at court.

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A Charming Adventuress : The Epical Setting

Becky Sharp may be an adventuress but she is a brilliant charming adventuress, and the novelist has provided a worldwide backdrop to her adventures. *Vanity Fair* may precisely be called the epic of an adventuress. The world across which she moves and in which she has her adventures is drawn on an epic scale. The action moves from London to Queen's Crawley in Hampshire, from Hampshire to Brighton, and from Brighton to Paris, Brussels, and a number of other European cities. It is in this world drawn on an epical scale that Becky moves to and fro like Milton's Satan, travelling from Hell to Earth and back again.

Epical Amplitude of the Novel

Thackeray's cosmic canvas is over-crowded with characters and incidents. It has an epical amplitude. During the course of her adventures, through the many ups and downs of life, Becky enters into personal relationships with a host of characters and in this way a complete and comprehensive picture of contemporary society is built up. Each of the characters whom she comes in contact with represents one or the other section of society. The characters are drawn from different professions and walks of life. For example, Sir Pitt Crawley represents the landed gentry, Lord Steyne the aristocracy, Bute Crawley the Church, Rawdon

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Crawley and George Osborne, the military, old John Sedley the older merchant class being pushed out by the new, the rising class of merchants is represented by old George Osborne. The world of cheats, sharpers, gamblers, and card players is also brought in as Rawdon and Becky live on nothing, and as Becky falls and is lost in the under-world of Europe. The roar of the guns of the Battle of Waterloo is heard, and such international figures as Napoleon and Duke of Wellington are there in the backdrop. Even the royalty is brought in as Becky is presented at court.

Becky: A Satire on Society

The picture of contemporary society presented by Thackeray has the completeness and amplitude of an epic. And he has not just rendered that society, he has also anatomised it. *Vanity Fair* is a terrible indictment of contemporary society, a pointed criticism of its values and ideals. Just as Becky Sharp enables the novelist to present contemporary society in all its diversity, so also she is the instrument through which that society is criticised and censured. This is so because Becky Sharp is both an image or reflection of that society, and a satire on that society. She embodies and represents the values of society through which she moves, as well as provides a scathing criticism of its manners and morals and of its corrupt and degenerate institutions.

Becky Sharp is a potent condemnation of the follies and frivolities, hypocrisy and affectations, snobbery and false money values, and corruption and degeneracy that characterise the life of the times. It is a vanity fair, and everybody in it is deceived and carried away by fake appearances. Money, rank, social status and power are the petty bubble on which everybody has set his or her heart. Everybody is a social climber and a snob. Everybody worships the rising sun, and those who fall from power are kicked and rejected even by their friends. Society is thus anatomised as we follow the career and fortune of Becky Sharp. Being a poor, not-provided-for girl, the only prospect in life she has is to become a governess. While at the Sedleys in the very beginning of the novel, Mrs. John Sedley does not want that her son should marry a mere governess, and George, a snob even at school, would not like to have a governess as his sister-in-law. However later in the novel, he himself is ready to elope with that very governess. When that governess rises in life and is presented at court, everybody of the genteel society fawns and flatters her, despite her shady life and character. In

Vanity Fair, it is money which counts and no humane considerations. Rawdon is angry with Becky not because she might have been unfaithful to him, but because she has held back money from him, and thus has been 'guilty' of cold-hearted treachery towards him. When she falls from grace, even her servants those who had passively submitted to her cheating for so long, now turn against her and insult her.

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A Satire on Corrupt Institutions

Like the social manners, the social institutions too are corrupt and degenerate. The characters who Becky meets represent some institution or the other. Thus Sir Pitt Crawley represents the corruption and degeneracy of the landed gentry and Bute Crawley, the degeneracy of the church. Lord Steyne gives us an idea of the frivolity and degeneracy in the army. The ball also brings out the intrigues and counter-intrigues, the craze for social prestige, etc. which characterise the genteel society of the day. Rawdon Crawley's appointment as governor brings out the favouritism and nepotism through which public appointments are secured. Thackeray's anatomy of society is thoroughly penetrating and all-embracing. The royalty too has been brought in through the well-known satiric portrait of King George.

This incisive indictment of society has been made possible by the character and career of Becky Sharp. Baker aptly observes, "It is an epic of an adventuress, and the Amelia story has been brought in to serve as a foil and throw into relief the career and character of Becky. The Amelia story serves to fill in the picture and universalise it."

4.2.4 VANITY FAIR

The Academy

Two young girls Rebecca Sharp and Amelia Sedley get education in Miss Pinkerton's Academy at Chiswick Mall. Amelia Sedley belongs to rich merchant's family of London and Rebecca is a poor orphan. Amelia was much favoured by Miss Pinkerton, and Rebecca ignored by her. After completing the education, the two girls leave the Academy. Miss Pinkerton recommends Sir Pitt Crawley to give some service to Rebecca.

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Early life of Amelia and Becky

Becky's father had been an artist and gave lessons at Miss Pinkerton's academy. He drank too much and was constantly in debt. He married a French woman who was an opera girl. After the death of his wife, the father of Becky requested Miss Pinkerton to take her daughter into the school. She becomes a good musician. Amelia takes her girl friend Rebecca at her house in Russell square of London, and introduces her brother Joseph Sedley, who is still unmarried. He is a collector of Boggley Wallah in Bengal and gets a sick leave. Joseph wishes to take Becky and Amelia to Vauxhall. A party was arranged and Mr. Sedley's godson George Osborne, is also invited on the occasion. The evening was fixed for the party, but there was a sudden thunder storm. Rebecca welcomes the opportunity to entrap Joseph. Becky is knitting a green silk purse. Joseph is moved by Becky and kisses her.

George Osborne also invites William Dobbin to the picnic. Both were educated at the school of Dr. Swishtail.

A Party at Vauxhall

The party arrives at Vauxhall and splits up into two groups. Rebecca does not get the marriage proposal from Joseph Sedley. Joseph drinks, sings and calls her his dearest darling. George Osborne did not like that a governess should become his sister-in-law. He takes the two girls away and leaves Dobbin to talk with Joseph. Next day Joseph does come and Rebecca is greatly disappointed.

Rebecca as a Household

Rebecca is appointed as a governess to Sir Pitt Crawley, Baronet of Queen's Crawley in Hampshire. She writes letters to Amelia from Queen's Crawley. Sir Pitt's brother, Bute Crawley lives at the rectors. Both the brothers were interested in the fortune of Miss Crawley, Sir Pitt's half sister. Rebecca takes interest in the household of Sir Pitt and helps the old man in his lawsuits. He seeks her humble advice in his work. Miss Crawley decides to go at Queen's Crawley. The Bute Crawley do not show their rivalry before her. Miss Crawley do not get impressed by the wit and pleasing ways of Becky. Becky wants to flirt with Rawdon and win his heart in her favour.

Becky's Cunning Role

Amelia is fond of George Osborne and tries to please her. But his two sisters and proud father helped a great deal to spoil him. Miss Crawley becomes ill and Becky looks after her. A companion to Miss Crawley does not appreciate

the presence of Becky in the house of old lady. Captain Rawdon visits his Aunt a number of times and his purpose is to meet Becky. The old lady recovers from illness as a result of excellent nursing of Becky. Sir Pitt recalls Becky, but the old lady is not willing to part with her. After some time Lady Crawley dies and nobody weeps for her.

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Sir Pitt and Becky

Sir Pitt is fascinated by Becky and even makes a proposal to marry her. He falls on the knees of Becky, and tears come out in her eyes. She says to Sir Pitt, "Oh, Sir Pitt, I am married already." Miss Crawley comes on the occasion and the two separate. Becky did not like to mention the name of Rawdon Crawley, his nephew, as her life partner, because she was afraid lest he should lose his share in wealth. She gives a letter to Miss Briggs and goes away from the house of Sir Pitt.

Amelia and Becky become Jealous

Now Sedley's family suffers heavy loss in business. The Sedley house at Russell Square was sold to pay off the debts. Dobbin purchases the house and presents it to Amelia. The old Osborne orders his son not to marry Amelia but George promises to marry her. Mrs Bute Crawley tells about the malice of Rawdon to the old lady. George's father is not pleased with his son's engagement to Amelia and disinherits him from the property. Amelia and George were quietly married with the help of Dobbin and went to Brighton. But Beckey keeps flirting with George and arouses the jealousy of Amelia. The two girlfriends become each other's rivals.

Dobbin's Nobility

Dobbin tells George that the news of his marriage to Amelia is known to his father. The army has been ordered to go to Belgium to face the attack of Napoleon. They go to Brussels with Joseph in their company. The battle of Waterloo was carried out and George Osborne was killed along with other soldiers.

Amelia-George Relationships

Amelia gives birth to a child and her sorrow over the death of George lessens. Becky was in part with Rawdon Crawley and gave birth to a son. She

returns with her husband to London to a little house at Curzon Street. The news of Miss Crawley's death reach them, and they were surprised to know that major portion of the lady's wealth went to Rawdon's brother Mr Pitt.

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Sir Pitt drinks in the company of Miss Horrocks, the butler's daughter. He dies suddenly one night and his son Pitt breathed a sigh of relief. Lord Steyne a rich man begins to gamble with Rawdon at his house. Becky holds illicit relations with the Lord, and makes fool of her husband. One day Rawdon finds George Steyne in a compromising position with Becky, and strikes the Lord on the face. Becky takes out the jewels from her neck and flings them on the floor. Becky marries Lord Steyne and Rawdon goes to tropics to die in exile.

Amelia's son William grows up and becomes a matter of joy to his mother. Now Amelia marries Dobbin to his great astonishment. Becky marries Joseph Sedley, but her fate laughs at her. Joseph dies and his property goes to Dobbin.

4.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1 Give a brief note on Thackeray's Realism.

1. How will you evaluate Thackeray's Rendering of Contemporary Life.
2. Discuss 'Vanity Fair' as a Picture of Contemporary Life.
3. Explain the significance of the title *Great Expectations*.
4. Discuss Dickens as a social reformer.

4.4 LET US SUM UP

Unit IV enlightens you about William Thackeray and Charles Dickens and their more popular work. You are competent enough to summarize and critically analyze the masterpieces —Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* and Dickens's *Great Expectations*.

UNIT-V : THOMAS HARDY, JOHN RUSKIN

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Structure

5.0 OBJECTIVES

In Unit V we have chosen Thomas Hardy and John Ruskin for our study. Besides discussing their life and works in general, we have chosen his novel *The Return of the Native* for further analysis. In addition to this we have brought to light Ruskin's views on social and economic problems. You will be able to:

- Discuss their life and works.
- Describe the outline of the works.
- Appreciate the works.

5.1 THOMAS HARDY

NOTES

Parentage

Thomas Hardy was born at Upper Bockhampton, near Stainsford in Dorset, on 2nd June 1840. His father was a master-mason. His mother came of a family long established in Dorset. Hardy owed much to his parents and their rural background, inheriting from his father a love of music, from his mother a love of reading, and from both strength of personality as well as the stability which connected him in an age of change with a world already vanishing.

Apprenticed to an Architect

Thomas Hardy went first to the village school, and then to a school in Dorchester. He studied Greek by himself. In 1856, he was made an apprentice to John Hicks, an ecclesiastical architect in Dorchester. He continued his own reading, encouraged by William Barnes, the Dorset poet, who kept a school next door to Hick's office. He was also encouraged by Horace Moule, the brilliant son of a vicar, to whose friendship he owed much intellectual stimulus. He continued to live at home and, in the life of the small rural community, he found the refreshment and strength which were always necessary to him.

Wavering between Architecture and Literature

In 1857, Hardy began to write verse and essays but, advised by Moule, decided not to give up architecture. After spending some time sketching and measuring many old Dorset churches with a view to restoring them, he went in 1862 to look for work in London. He became assistant to Arthur Bloomfield, and worked hard at his profession, although uncertain whether literature or architecture should be his life's work. He went to art galleries and concerts, and attended evening classes.

His Illness

In March 1865, his first prose work, a humorous sketch, was published in a journal, but he was more interested in poetry. Feeling often lonely and depressed, he became ill, and in 1867 he returned to Dorset, working again for John Hicks, and, at Weymouth, for the architect who took over business when Hicks died. During 1867 and 1868 he wrote a 'purpose' story, *The Poor Man and*

the Lady. It was read by George Meredith who asked Hardy to call on him, and asked him not to publish it but to write another story with more plot. The manuscript was re-written, but never published.

Novels

In 1870, Hardy took Meredith's advice too literally, and wrote a novel which was all plot and which was published in 1871 under the title *Desperate Remedies*. In 1872 appeared his next novel, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, in which Hardy found himself, and which he never surpassed in the delicate perfection of art. *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, in which tragedy and irony come into his work together, was published in 1873.

His Marriage

In 1874, Hardy married Emma Lavinia Gifford. His first popular success was *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), which is a great masterpiece. For some time after his marriage, Hardy and his wife wandered about Europe and England "like tramps", with nothing but boxes of books and a book-case, besides their clothes. At length they settled at Sturminster Newton, in a villa with a wide view of water-meadows, and in this serene and lovely setting they lived for two years amid a profusion of bird-song and garden-fruit in summer, and surrounded by floods in winter. However, Hardy decided to return to London in 1878, after *The Return of the Native* had been published. Years later he looked back at his journal and referred to the period spent at Sturminster Newton "as our happiest time". He and his wife had wanted children but none came, and now they entered London society after the disappointment of that hope.

Achievements and Honours

Between 1878 and 1912, Hardy wrote nine more novels, three volumes of short stories, published three collections of poems, and completed the most massive, unique, and characteristic achievement of his life, the five hundred and twenty pages of mingled prose, dramatic lyric, and philosophic verse which he called *The Dynasts*. He came gradually to be recognized, and indisputably, as the greatest English writer of his time. The Order of Merit was conferred upon him in 1910, and honorary doctorates were awarded by the universities.

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Unhappiness in Married Life

Apparently Hardy seemed to live a tranquil and successful life. But there was disturbance beneath the peaceful surface. His personal life was overshadowed by what at last became his wife's virtual insanity. In her later years, she became a victim of delusions, among them the conviction that she had married much beneath her parental status, and that she herself had actually written, or at least suggested, much of Hardy's work. Her public behaviour towards Hardy became insulting. She openly prided herself more upon being an archdeacon's niece than upon being married to the greatest living English writer. Hardy was modest enough, but he had his pride. His wife even tried to stop the publication of *Jude the Obscure*, which she thought to be immoral. Hardy did not repent of his marriage and did not try to get rid of his wife, but the scars are to be visibly seen in his works.

Wife's Death and his Remorse

Mrs Hardy died, unexpectedly, in 1912. Though Hardy was with her at the time of her death, she could never regain consciousness after a quarrel which, by mischance, had occurred earlier. A feeling of remorse and grief led Hardy to write some of the most moving love-poems of any period, recapturing those moods of joy and desire which he and his wife had experienced in their first years together.

Second Marriage

In 1914, Hardy married Florence Emily Dugdale, a charming and sympathetic woman much younger than he, and with her his domestic life became peaceful and orderly. He wrote some more lyrical poetry and worked on his memoirs. His home became a place of pilgrimage for young writers like Edmund Blunden, Robert Graves, T.E. Lawrence, and Siegfried Sassoon. He liked to tell stories about himself.

The Effect of the War

The first World War had disturbed Hardy's new-found tranquillity. His visits to the German and the English wounded soldiers, lying a few hundred yards apart in two Dorcester hospitals, affected him intensely. Still he stoutly denied that he was a pessimist. Alert and courteous, interested in everything around him, a vigorous campaigner against cruelty to animals, and now, to his great delight, a

Freeman of Dorchester, he became himself a beloved part of the Wessex he had so lovingly delineated. His old age brought forth a harvest of poetry, and his life amid the quiet countryside ended as silently, after he had listened to his wife reading poems including Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra* and Walter de la Mare's *The Listeners*.

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Death

Hardy died on 11th January 1928. It was felt as a loss, not only of a figure unique in literature because of his great age and of his eminence, but also as a snapping of the last link with the nineteenth century, and he was mourned as "the last of the great Victorians". His ashes were buried in Westminster Abbey, but in consideration of his deep affection for his native Wessex and the peculiar inspiration it gave him, his heart was buried in his parish church-yard.

The Period of the Novels

Thomas Hardy's career can be divided into three periods. The first of these contains his work as a novelist, and ends with *Jude the Obscure*. Throughout the series of the novels there gradually became more and more insistent a characteristic metaphysic, in which the strivings and passions of individuals are in futile conflict with the relentless process of the world. *Jude the Obscure*, despite its splendid qualities, made it clear that such a theme could not be adequately developed in the form of a novel. Therefore a form was needed in which the author could speak out his own convictions without violating aesthetic propriety.

The Period of a Great Epic-Drama

Similarly the second period consists of *The Dynasts*, the greatest single achievement of his career. This great poem was written to give full utterance, in artistic form, to his peculiar metaphysic. That, however, was not its originating intention, which was simply to celebrate in a chronicle play England's part in the Napoleonic Wars. But as the conception grew and deepened, and as to the human action was added the superhuman comment of "Phantom intelligences", the poem became the summation of Hardy's vision of life. In its inherent grandeur and in its perfect command over immense wealth of matter, but not in its diction, this work

can only be compared with such monuments of man's destiny as Goethe's *Faust* and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

The Period of Lyrical Poetry

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The third period is said to begin with Time's Laughing Stocks in 1909, and is devoted to lyric poetry. It is not that an artist's life can be divided so sharply into separate stages, each stage being characterised by the use of a different mode of expression; and this three-fold division is possibly the most remarkable feature of Hardy's career as a whole. The lyrical period, however, does not give us a completely new development of his genius. While he was writing novels he had irregularly experimented with poetry. After 1909, Hardy wrote little besides lyrical poetry, and this may therefore be truly called his lyrical period. It is representative of a new concentration of his power, but surely no decline in it. It is actually the same Hardy in the lyrics as in the novels and *The Dynasts* ; and a Hardy who, if his lyrics were all we had of him, would surely, by virtue of them alone, hold a secure, indeed a unique, position of modern English literature.

Principal Works

The Novels

Desperate Remedies	1871
Under The Greenwood Tree	1872
A Pair of Blue Eyes	1873
Far from the Madding Crowd	1874
The Hand of Ethelberta	1876
The Return of the Native	1878
The Trumpet Major	1880
A Laodicean	1881
Two on a Tower	1882
The Mayor of Casterbridge	1886
The Woodlanders	1887
Tess of the D 'urbervilles	1891
The Well-Beloved	1892
Jude The Obscure	1895

Hardy classified the Wessex Novels (as they are called) in the following manner :

1. Novels of Character and Environment

Under the Greenwood Tree ; *Far from the Madding Crowd* ; *The Return* of *the Native* ; *The Mayor of Casterbridge* ; *The Woodlanders* ; *Tess of the D 'Urbervilles* ; and *Jude the Obscure.*

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2. Romances and Fantasies

A Pair of Blue Eyes ; *The Trumpet Major* ; *Two on a Tower* ; and *The Well-Beloved*.

B. Volumes of Short Stories

Wessex Tales	1888
A Group of Noble Dames	1891
Life's Little Ironies	1894

C. Poetry.

Time's Laughing Stocks	1909
Satires of Circumstance	1914
Moments of Vision	1917
Human Shows, Far Fantasies	1925

D. *The Dynasts* (1903-1908) : an epic poem representing in dramatic form the course of the Napoleonic Wars from 1805 to 1815.

5.1.1 HARDY'S ART OF CHARACTERISATION

Write a note on Hardy's art of characterisation.

Hardy's Art of Characterisation

Characterisation is as difficult an art as plot-construction. Hardy is master of both. But his field of action and workmanship is countryside. His characters, are Wessex characters. Undoubtedly the choice of rustic characters, limits the

scope of Hardy's characterisation, but within this range Hardy gives us a gallery of characters "that is truly Shakespearean in its richness and variety."

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Hardy, for the first time in English literature, intentionally chooses English peasant types for his heroes and heroines in a series of literary masterpieces. Hardy lacks sympathy for the theorists or moral prigs that civilization produces. Therefore, as a result of this reaction of his against the modern civilization he chooses to play his game with the rustic folk in whom the elemental aspects of nature are scarcely screened by the decorative veneer of modern civilization.

Hardy's figure are elemental forces; they are the natural expressions of sleepy, woodland places, gaunt austere hills, purling streams, lonely open spaces. They are fundamentally the children of the soil and carry with them aroma of the soil. In this respect, Hardy is a true follower of Wordsworth whose Michaels and Margarets seem dim anticipation of Henchard, Oak and Marry Souths, and of Tess, Bathsheba and Eustacia.

Hardy's characters are far from the madding crowd of modern civilized towns. All his characters move in a world which is untouched by the faintest sprinkle of modernism and are bound by the same ideals , the same sympathies and antipathies.

The rationale of the novel is not to bring sudden upheavings of the moral nature, but rather to inspire processes of grave reflection, meditative not purgative, less divine but more human. The novelist places before us significant specimens of humanity passing through turbulent or otherwise revealing phases of life and exhibits the wheeling and whirling, the swirl and the surge of their soul under the stress of circumstances and before the problem of existence.

Hardy is a typical modern writer as he laid stress on character. Plot with him is secondary to character. In fact, it develops out of the action of his characters, whose study is his main aim.

Hardy's study of human nature and behaviour is deep and profound. His command of human personality is perfect. Hardy is more concerned in his novels with the diagnosis of the soul. We should consider Tess, Bathsheba, Eustacia Vye in the light of this remark. In a vain struggle to be a splendid wife, Eustacia commits suicide. She prefers suicide to elopement with Wildeve.

Hardy achieved greatest success in his simple, primitive characters. He had drawn fine and subtle characters but his simple men and women are more vividly drawn than these "rustics, such as Poorgrass and Dewey Sturdy, young countrymen like Winter Bourne; passionate wayward women, like Eustacia Vye". Henchard himself, simple in his contrapuntist, is the greatest example of masculine characterization.

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Thomas Hardy is the master of his art. His critical observation of details and great power of description give us unforgettable impression of his chief male and female characters. The descriptions of Gabriel Oak in the opening chapter of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and of Michael Henchard in that of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, and Clym Yeobright and Diggory Venn in *The Return of the Native* and of Eustacia Vye, Sue, Tess and Bathsheba are all memorable and unforgettable. He has described them with rich colours and great details.

Hardy's characters live as individuals as they differ as individuals; but they also live as types. His men and women are creatures to him of an infinite attraction.

Single-minded concentration is the one quality which is common to all Hardy's characters. Grand, passionate and simple are the themes which inspire him. Grand, passionate and simple are the characters in which his creative power shines brightest. They are as endless and timeless as the earth is, by which they live. And their prosaicness anchors the story to reality.

5.1.2 HARDY'S WOMEN

Write a short essay on Hardy's women.

Hardy's Women Characters

Hardy's women are clay in the beginning but soul-force in the end. In happy moments they are simple and innocent, but in tragic moments they are great and grand, magnificent and majestic. For the women, he shows a more tender solitude, softness and consideration than for the men, and, in them, perhaps, he has a keener interest. Their beauty might be vain, and terrible their fate, but while the glow of life is in them, their step is free; their laughter is sweet

and theirs is the power to sink into the breast of nature and become part of her silence and solemnity or to rise and put on them the movement of the clouds and the wilderness of the flowering woodland.

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Duffin has classified Hardy's women characters into three groups. The first group consists of full-length portraits of women. They are of a higher order or personality. To this group belong Tess, Sue, Eustacia, Bathsheba and Elizabeth Jane. The second group again is of full-length study of women but of less personal significance. To this belong Elfride, Ethelberta, Grace, Viviette and Anne. The third group comprises of women of much less significance and they are Paula, Fancy, Marry, Arabella, Tamsie, Lucetta and Pigotee.

Then there is yet another group of women of no particular significance but of intense individual interest. The women belonging to this class are Fanny, Charlotte Matilda, Tabitha, the three milk-maids, and elder ladies like Mrs. Yeobright, Mrs, Goodman, the second Mrs. Swancourt, Mrs. Melbury; and poor Susan Henchard.

Tess in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is the most lovable of Hardy's heroines. She is a women of character, and so she is unbroken, unspoilt, unadulterated, flawless and perfect. She is the very symbol of the purity of spirit. Her behaviour, her thoughts, her desires on all critical occasions are irreproachable. Her shame and remorse are infinite. Her conscience is amazing. Mentally and morally she is stainless blameless.

Hardy is above all a painter of women, and his pictures of women are vastly superior to those of men. Abercrombie has aptly observed, "Hardy's psychological imagination is more suited in the main to the creation of feminine than masculine mind". Its secret is that women in Hardy is more elemental than men; is swayed far more by the instinctive life than man; this is why at the hands of Hardy, who insisted on the instinctive life of his characters, pictures of women have been superior to those of men. Not only Hardy's perception of women is responsible for fine and beautiful description of women's characters but also a feminine nature in him, which, coupled with his early experience as secretary and friend to the girls of his village, has contributed remarkably to the success of his feminine creations.

Hardy's heroines play a more dominant part in his novels than his heroes because of this sway of instinct in them. They are the centre, the very core or seed of the story. Bathsheba, Eustacia, Elfride are each the mainspring of there stories, though the strength of the stories lies in the masculine characters. *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, is an exception, being pre-eminently a man's novel. Henchard and Farfrae completely overshadow Susan, Lucetta and Elizabeth.

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Hardy's women have a delicate freshness and glow, an animation like the tremulous spirit of life itself which are all Shakespearean. They are both weak and strong; we see them always in terms of helplessness or power but under quivering balance rather than a law. Bathsheba Everdene, 'the Skittish Bathsheba, most spirited and freakish of his heroines, has a strong mind and self-reliance, yet she scarcely knows herself or the world.

The character Sue in *Jude, The Obscure*; Eustacia Vye and Thomasin in *The Return of the Native* : Elizabeth Jane in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*; Bathsheba in *Far from the Madding Crowd* and Tess in *Tess of The D' Urbervilles* are Hardy's finest women studies.

Like his male characters, his women are of two types: one capricious, passionate and self-conscious, interested chiefly in their vanity, and fine ladyism; the other, patient, simple and humble. To the former type belongs Lucetta, while in the latter may be included Elizabeth Jane. But both these types suffer from one defect: “an error of judgement or weakness of resolution”, which brings in their tragedy. Thus, Lucetta brings her tragic doom by her short-sightedness and secretive nature which did not take husband into confidence.

5.1.3 HARDY'S MEN

What do you know of Hardy's men? Illustrate from his novels.

Hardy's Male Characters

Hardy's men, as a rule, are inferior to his women. They are types rather than individuals. They seem to be arranged in two distinct groups. Abercrombie observes thus: “Gabriel Oak, Diggory Venn, and Giles Winterbourne are clearly brothers; indeed a family so identical in feature physical, mental and spiritual.”

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They are the instances of one conception—namely, "the steadfast lover, so faithful that personal disappointment is of no account match with the welfare of the beloved, who is the natural flowering of 'heroic magnitude of mind', of a life whose whole conduct is simple unquestioning patience, a tolerant fortitude deeply rooted in the earth and directly nourished by the imperceptible vigours of impersonal nature. Set off against Oak, Venn and Winterbourne are three instances of one kin of contrast—Troy, Wildeve and Fitzpiers : Sharp intellects, genteel manners; inflammable faithless passions, shallow good nature and flashy disdain for 'Rusticity'. Henchard and Farfrae in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* at first sight seemed to be arranged in these distinct groups. But the fact is that each character has individuality as well. Gabriel Oak is cold and shrewd while Giles Winterbourne is hasty: the former lacked the fatal obstinacies of the latter, nor his delays and untimely abstractions. The Mayor of Casterbridge is quite different from these. He is a countryman in bone and fibre, like Oak or Winterbourne; but there are forces in him of much greater depth and richer variety than in any of them; the strength of nature that gave stability to them was reversed in them and became a storm instead of calm. Thus, it would be more correct to say that Hardy's men are types as well as individuals, like Shakespeare's characters.

We can sum up the entire matter thus: "The men of Hardy are a complex of strength and weakness, passions and volitions. They are astonishing, alive and vital and there is something sublime in the dynamic force of some of his masculine characters. If tragedy overtakes them, their vitality dies hard, and they do not leave us with a view of life. There is something of the strength of fate in them. They are real creatures of flesh and blood having sentiment and thoughts like ourselves. Hardly draws them with insight and sympathy, because not a little in them is part of him".

5.1.4 HARDY'S RUSTICS

Describe Hardy's rustics and their function in his novels.

Hardy's Rustics or Minor Characters

Hardy's rustics are very interesting and very impressive in their surroundings, customs, rites and rituals. His rustics have force in them—a force

of love or hate. Thomasin has a force of love, Susan has a force of hatred. Susan hates Eustacia and calls her a witch. Thomasin suffers in love for Wildeve.

Hardy has drawn his characters mostly from the Wessex life. He finds great delight in portraying the country-side life — the life of village folk and peasants, people belonging to the humbler walks of life.

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The rustics of Hardy are a class by themselves. They are inseparable parts of his novels. They provide the humour in the novel, give a kind of running commentary on the doings of main characters, thus fulfilling the role of the Greek chorus, present comic relief and by contrast intensify the tragic power of the main plot as Susan does. These rustics are, to use Baker's words, "among the artist's triumphs".

Duffin writes, "They have their varied castings of the coloured glass of individual, but the light at the centre of each is white".

Thomas Hardy belonged to Wessex and was very much acquainted with rustic life. And, therefore, he excels in drawing rustic characters leaving by their side having their fibre in himself, he knows the ways and whims of these people.

Hardy humorously calls them 'the Philosophic party' because they play the part of philosophic observers on life, thus obviating the necessity of his own comments. Their function corresponds to that of Chorus in Greek Tragedy.

Hardy's rustic characters are the children of the soil, fresh and elemental and untouched by the corruption and vice of modern civilization. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, we find a motley crowd of these Solomon Longways, Christopher Coney, Abel whittle, Mother Cuxsom, Nancy Mockridge, each of them has been individualised by being given a peculiar trait.

Hardy's rustics make a running commentary on the incidents, situations and action of main characters. They, like chorus in Greek dramas, proclaim and forecast the coming events. They serve as a contrast to the aspiring and emotional heroes and heroines. They look upon the gospel as the best principle for peaceful living. They never curse their fate or protest against it.

In *The Return of the Native* the group of rustics form almost the chorus of the novel. They are Fairway, Christian, Grandfer Cantle and others. In *Under The Greenwood Tree*, Tranter leads the choir of rustics. They serve the same

function in this novel. In *The Major of Casterbridge*, the Casterbridge folk are the rustics. They drink, dance and make-merry and are full of humour and telling comments.

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Hardy's rustics barely appear separately excepting a few exceptions. They always appear in a group. They are ignorant, superstitious, unreasoning and prone, yet a large simplicity of nature is inhere. They are part of the countryside landscape. They are thoroughly at ease in their world, leading un-speculative life and never rebelling against circumstances. They are great believers in fate. They are by nature and tradition fatalist and afraid of black magic and witchcraft. They are humorous; but not so much authentically humorous as they are the cause of humour in Hardy's novels. In other words they rouse laughter. Their humour consists largely in their comment upon the broad general experiences of humanity; birth, courtship, marriage and death, and success on failure in enterprise.

The rustics in Hardy are the symbol of continuity of human life. Clym and Eustacia and Wildeve may love and suffer but the rustics go on living and laughing. It is they who bring children to birth, dance at the wedding, mourn at the graveyard and speak the epitaph over the tomb. They show strange love for life and things of life. Their philosophy seems to be "why should death rob life of four pence? I say there was no reason in it."

5.1.5 HARDY'S VIEWS ON LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Thomas Hardy's views on Love and Marriage

Hardy on Love

R P Kamthan observes thus on Hardy's views on love and marriage: "Love is the pivot of human life. Love is the axle on which the fan of human affairs oscillates giving out cool or hot breeze to refresh or ruin according to situation and atmosphere, according to harmony or disharmony between women and men. Idealistic love may lead to life's comedy and infidel love to its tragedy".

Hardy, like Plato and Shelley, admired and advocated idealistic love. He is again at the conception of romantic love. His philosophy of love is juxtaposed to that of Ruskin.

Hardy is a rationalist so far as his views on love are concerned. He is a realist and not a romanticist. Like so many he does not believe in love at first sight. His view is also shared by G.B. Shaw. He is against those who consider love as a means to satisfy sexual appetite and nothing more. According to him it should be more than this. It should be a means to spiritual end. The only fault that Hardy commits in his novels is to tell and assert that marriage is a social contract, pure and simple and not a sacred and sacramental rite.

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Love plays a wider role in the life of Hardy's women than in that of his men because 'Love is the whole history of a woman's life and in the life of man it is a mere episode.' But this love is not always a strength to them and often proves fatal. In the heat of their physical love they surrender to the master of their heart and end up in tragedy.

Hardy has given expression to his notion of morality. He disregards physical chastity and believes in mental purity. Tess is, for that reason, called a pure woman. It is a funny idea for him. What is the meaning of mental chastity without the purity of character. For Hardy physical impurity arises from mental impurity.

An eminent critic writes, "Hardy was far advanced of his time in regard to the concept of sex relation and chastity. The conventional physical purity and orthodox chastity were unnatural and repugnant to him. If they could be had, he was not angry but the loss of physical chastity was no loss of character". Despite this he does not preach animal pleasure between man and woman through love and marriage. Henchard's repentance for his silly folly for selling his wife contradicts this view of his critics.

5.1.6 CHARACTER SKETCH OF MRS. YEOBRIGHT

Give a character sketch of Mrs. Yeobright, mother of Clym Yeobright

and show what part does she play in the novel.

Mrs. Yeobright is the centre of interest in *The Return of the Native*. Hardy introduces her in the novel as a middle-aged widow. She possesses strong marked qualities. Hardy compares her to the planets that carry their atmosphere along

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with them in the orbits. Mrs. Yeobright's role in the novel is that of an experienced and institutional elder of her family. She does not give her consent to Thomasin in the Church on her wedding day; because she has no high opinion of Wildeve's character. This act of hers is taken by Wildeve as his personal disgrace and he resolves to take his revenge on her: this part of hers leads to complication in the life of Thomasin. This role of hers leads to many tragic happenings in the novel.

Again, she warns Clym against marrying Eustacia as she will never prove true and faithful to him because of her shady activities with Wildeve. And we see that all her prophecies turn out true. Thus she was endowed with great intuitional power. So far she is shown as a wise, prudent and experienced woman. She had a quick eye to discern through affairs. She knew what love is and what lovers do. She knew about Eustacia-Wildeve relations. Therefore, her conscience never allowed her to permit Thomasin and Wildeve marriage nor Clym and Eustacia wedding. And Thomasin, her niece, and Clym Yeobright her son did not listen to her and ultimately suffered. Some critics say that they tragically suffered because of Mrs. Yeobright's obstinate views. Thus she acted like a planet.

Mrs. Yeobright had well-formed features of the type usually found where perspicacity is the chief quality enthroned within. The air with which she looked at the heath-men betokened a certain unconcern at their presence. Thus indirectly implying that in some respect or other, they were not up to her level. She had thus a consciousness of her superiority, and the reason thereof is not very difficult to seek. Though her husband had been a small farmer she herself was a curate's daughter, who had once dreamt of doing better things.

Mrs. Yeobright's consciousness of superiority and family pride had given her a sense to rectitude. Her sense of family pride asserted itself upon her in many ways. It prompted her to turn down Venn's proposal of his marriage with Thomasin and of Clym with Eustacia. When pride comes, destruction also comes along. Her pride precedes destruction of her son Clym, Eustacia and Thomasin. Thomasin, being a meek and submissive woman regains her happiness by marrying Venn after Wildeve's tragic death by drowning. Her social pride becomes more evident in the novel when her anxiety mounted after Wildeve did not marry Thomasin. She then desired that Wildeve must marry Thomasin so that her family's honour could be saved.

Mrs. Yeobright was a woman of great determination, sensibility and judgement. She was gifted with a keen insight to judge men and women and situations. She was neither impulsive nor hasty but she considered her authority inviolable. And whoever ignored or by-passed it was bound to be offended by her sooner or later. Clym had to leave his home for the same reason. He married Eustacia against her wish and he had to live separately. She cared more for the social opinion about herself than for her own opinion of herself. She lived more by what she thought others might think of her than by what she thought of herself.

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By presenting Mrs. Yeobright, Hardy takes up a recurring theme of the Wessex novels—the women of a higher social strata marrying a husband of a comparatively lower social status. As a daughter of a curate, she had the dreams of making something of life, but Fate united her to a small farmer. Being so set in the frame of life she could not find opportunities to develop, cultivate and refine inherent traits of her character.

Her inherent traits had a majestic foundation, though they were far from being majestic. They had a groundwork of assurance, but they were not assured. The malignant destiny, operating through chance, not only prevents the growth of these qualities, but at each step of her life, baffles, confounds, shatters and ultimately vanquishes her, making all the while the most of her what is her weakness.

The only tragic weakness in Mrs. Yeobright's character is her profound desire to ensure her son's and niece's happiness in life and keep up the banner of family honour flying high. Some critics point out to her immense love of her son as her tragic weakness. She regarded Clym as part of her own half. He was her only issue, the image of her husband, glory of her widowhood, pride of motherhood and the hope of future. She had great love for him. She had sacrificed everything for his sake. She became worried when she found Clym falling into the snares of Eustacia; but she did realise that Clym won't be happy with such proud, wilful and impulsive wife. She tried her best to prevent this union but here also she was perplexed. Clym married Eustacia against the wishes of his mother. Even this disobedience on the part of her son was forgiven by Mrs. Yeobright. And she, on the advice of the reddleman and Thomasin, decided to reconcile with her son to thwart Wildeve's design to elope with Eustacia. She was a woman of quick decisions and actions. But chance again intervened to dispose what she had

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proposed. Twice she knocked at his door. She was a woman and a man in the house. She had been to Clym's house, but none opened the door to show her in. She thought that his son had refused even to see his mother. So the poor old woman returned almost broken hearted. That was her last journey. The difficult journey both ways had exhausted her. From here and now Mrs. crawled her way back to her house and fainted because of scorching sun and exhaustion. She wished to arise from this earth to which she had been bowed.

Mrs. Yeobright's tragedy is the tragedy of well-meaning intentions. She was a good and caring mother. A mother's heart still throbbed for both Clym and Thomasin, whom she had brought up. She was an honest woman. In spite of their disobedience she sends their share of money. But her motherly love proved to be her weakness, but in the last moment of her life it lent tragic grandeur to her character.

5.1.7 CHARACTER SKETCH OF CLYM YEOBRIGHT

Give a character sketch of Clym Yeobright and show how it is Egdon Heath that ruins him and not Eustacia.

Clym Yeobright is the tragic hero of the novel *The Return of the Native*; but he is not so much the hero as the Egdon Heath is. In fact Egdon Heath is the hero of the novel because all the characters are governed and ruined by Egdon Heath. We may call Egdon Heath as the Fate of all characters.

Hardy's tragic novels follow the Greek pattern. Hardy's characters suffer for their inherent weaknesses and adverse fate. Clym Yeobright is as tragic a character as Hardy's other characters are.

Clym was the native of Egdon Heath. He returned from Paris as a well-polished man. Hence the title of the novel is after him. He is the returned native. Therefore, the title of the novel is *The Return of The Native*. Clym's return leads to so many events in the novel—both happy and tragic. In Paris he was the manager of a 'Diamond Concern'. There he had imbibed culture and a fair outlook

which made totally against his job which catered to frivolity and female fashion. Finally he realised that his managerial post made him meek and effeminate.

When Susan scratched Eustacia's arm to ward off the evil effect of her witchcraft, Clym resolved to become a school teacher to educate the superstitious and backward peasants of Egdon Heath. He had already made up his mind for doing that.

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Clym was the product of Egdon Health and wanted to live and die there. Critics call the last days of Clym as anti-climax. But this anti-climax serves Hardy's philosophy of life—his pessimism. Hardy had a great heart for such people who never aspired to outshine their fellow beings, but always sacrificed to serve them, to help and uplift them. After his return from the most fashionable city of the world, Clym preferred to remain in a humble position silently working for the good of mankind.

Clym Yeobright: Hardy's Conception of an Elevated Character

Clym had a strong personality and a noteworthy face, handsome, winning, thoughtful and reflecting experience of life. His bright face reflected his inner thoughts. Eustacia was attracted by his winning face, manners and Paris cultures. "Had heaven preserved him from a wearying habit of meditation, people would have said, a handsome man. Had his brain unfolded under sharper contour, they would have said, a thoughtful man, but an inner strenuousness was preying upon an outer symmetry and they rated his look so singular". Mental luminousness and intellectual looks constituted Clym's principal attraction. There was a cheerfulness in his looks which forever strove against his apparent depression.

Clym's cheerfulness was eclipsed by Eustacia's insistence on going to Paris, by her shady activities with Wildeve and her unyielding indifference to his mother and his continued devotion to his mother in sharp conflict to Eustacia. His separation with his mother and his love for Eustacia, coming into conflict with his devotion to Mrs. Yeobright, made him a complete wreck. Circumstances conspired against him viz. his vision went down, Eustacia deceived him, his mother refused him. The novel is full of accidents, incidents and chance. His letter did not reach Eustacia in time. He didn't wake up when his old mother called on him for reconciliation—all these chances completely ruined him. He became a maniac in the memory of his dead mother. His love for his mother was

great. Her death tore his heart. He was awfully angry with his wife Eustacia for not admitting her into the house and then not telling him the name of the man who was present in their house that moment.

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"Clym's passion for Eustacia had a sort of conserve of his whole life". But he couldn't place her above his mother after her death. He told Eustacia to remember the nobleness and gentleness of his mother whom she did not receive. He tells her: "Call her to mind, think of her. What goodness there was in her, it showed in every line of her face."

Clym's tragedy was caused by his profound love for his mother and Eustacia, his wife. He pined all the time to have both and was sorry to lose both. He tells Venn pathetically: "She is the second woman I have killed this year. I was a great cause of my mother's death; and I am the chief cause of her."

Clym is a pathetic figure after Eustacia's death. He could however, recover the shock of his mother's death, when Diggory Venn asks him how he killed the second woman, he says: "I spoke cruel words to her (Eustacia) and she left my house. I didn't invite her back till it was too late. It is I who ought to have drowned myself. But I cannot die. Those who ought to have lived, lie dead; and here am I alive!"

Clym in reality was very good at heart. He was gentle and noble. Nothing in life could agonise and torment his soul as much as his mother's tragic death and suicide of Eustacia. He resolved henceforth to dedicate his life for the good of others. He was sincerely repentant for his mistakes in not accepting his mother's advice and for speaking harsh words to Eustacia. He says to Venn: "If it had pleased God to put an end to me it would have been a good thing for all. But I am getting used to the horror of existence. They say that a time comes when men laugh at misery through long acquaintance with it. Surely that time will soon come to me."

And that time did come soon to him, when Thomasin's determination to marry Diggory Venn wrote the last chapter of his life's tragedy. Clym then became a total stoic. Now pleasure and pain made no difference to him. Like Maurya of *The Riders to The Sea* or Henchard of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* he calmly and stoically bore and braved life's tragedy.

Clym's love for Eustacia was deep. He was prepared to pardon her provided she gave him the name of the man who was with her on the day of his mother's visit. He was reasonable and sensible; but his mother's death under shock of Eustacia's rude behaviour towards her by not opening the door made him emotional. He was awfully angry with her. And it was quite natural. His anger aggravated because Eustacia being a married women still carried her affair with Wildeve.

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Clym always admired Eustacia and gently treated her ; but her shady activities with Wildeve were intolerable to him. If such woman die, their suicide or death gives immense relief to their husbands and thereby their blemished character regain some glory. Eustacia made clear her character in the eyes of Clym by ending her life. And Clym's doubts against her character melted away. Clym's words: "You would like to see her too, would you not, Diggory? She looks very beautiful now". In Clym's eye Eustacia had regained honour of her much talked of character by ending her life. And, indeed, handsome are they who handsome do. Eustacia had really done handsome by committing suicide; and, therefore, she looked very beautiful now to Clym.

In the end Clym achieved his mission of life. He became a moral preacher. Although all people didn't take him seriously yet they received him gently. He bore all blows of Fate with the patience of a stoic. Clym's character illustrates "courage and conviction of a strong and spiritual man".

Egdon Heath is a greater and stronger hero of the novel than Clym. Egdon Heath made and marred the life of so many. So happened in the case of Clym Yeobright. "If anyone knew the heath well, it was Clym. He was permeated with its scenes, with its substance, and with its odours. He might be said to be its product. His estimate of life had been coloured by it".

Clym himself is a key figure for a right appraisal of Hardy's art. He is the most direct representative of the novelist's strongest impulse in its simplest form—the return from town to country and the rejection of Urban life. Clym's experience never really includes the town or its world of thought, that menaces from beyond.

5.1.8 SKETCH THE CHARACTER OF EUSTACIA VYE

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Sketch the character of Eustacia Vye.

Or

"The tragedy of Clym Yeobright is the tragedy of unpractical idealism". Such is the character of Clym Yeobright.

Or

Eustacia is a complex character. Elucidate.

Or

Eustacia is a born hedonist and egoist. Discuss.

Eustacia Vye or Mrs Eustacia Yeobright is a complex character. Since her coming to Egdon Heath. She feels like a fish out of water. She quivers with a passion for the fashionable life of Paris. Egdon Heath proves to be a hell for her.

Eustacia is a woman of innocent and Pagan sensuality. She stands in direct contrast to Sue (of *Jude the Obscure*). Sue is basically intellectual while Eustacia is all emotion. No doubt she has moments of reasoning; but often she fails to control or restrain her epicurean spirit and romantic impulses. In Sue, the spirit governs the flesh while in Eustacia, the flesh governs the spirit. Eustacia is all flesh but glorious and excellent flesh. Her hunger for romance is acute : her blood passion for fashionable Paris is exceptionally strong. And these two innocent and Pagan sensuality land her into trouble and her suicide.

Eustacia had an appealing and charming personality. All young men are attracted by the magnetic charm of her beauty. She was tall and full bodied. She was somewhat heavy, but soft to the touch as a cloud. Her hair were darker than the dark winter. She had the killer's eye. They were rather Pagan full of nocturnal mysteries while her dark pupils shone with a flame-like radiance and reflected the colour of Eustacia's soul to be flame-like. Her hair closed over her forehead like nightfall extinguishing the western glow.

Her mouth seemed formed less to speak than to quiver, less to quiver than to kiss, less to kiss than to curb. If Eustacia were given opportunity to fashion and toilet, she would have looked like Artemis, Athena or Hera.

Eustacia was beauty of Egdon. She was daughter of Captain Vye. Her father was a bandmaster and musician. "Budmouth was her native place, a fashionable seaside resort in those times. She lost both her mother and father. She was brought up and educated by her grandfather. Since three ribs of her grandfather.... a navy Captain, became broken he selected an airy perch on Egdon to live."

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Eustacia, an educated woman and woman of taste, never liked Egdon Heath. Egdon was her Hades, and since coming there she had imbibed much of what was dark in its tone, though inwardly and outwardly un-reconciled thereto. "Her appearance accorded well with this smouldering rebelliousness, and the shady splendour of her beauty was the real surface of the sad and stifled warmth within her".

Eustacia was a paragon of beauty on the Heath. Her presence brought memories of roses and rubies. She had red and lascivious lips. Her moods recalled lotus eaters, her motions spoke of the ebb and flow of the sea and her voice resembled to that of Viola's Charlie. Charley , Venn, Wildeve and even Clym Yeobright were entrapped by her beauty. Her beauty was infectious. She had a dignified mien and a queenly bearing. She was conscious of her beauty and culture and was conscious of the power of her beauty. Such was Eustacia's personality.

Eustacia is a complex character in *The Return of the Native*. Hardy has mixed up so many trends in her. Eustacia was full of those aspirations, passions and sensations that go with modernity. She had passions and ambitions of a modern woman. She suffered from an unrestrained romantic temperament. Her husband, wiser by his experiences in Paris, refused to take Eustacia to live in Paris. He now loved country and country life. Clym's love of Egdon and Eustacia's hatred of it gave birth to a crisis in their relationship which ultimately ended in tragic suicide of Eustacia and great grief of Clym. Her moods and sentiments constantly changed. She was impulsive, capricious and eccentric. She repented after the event. That shows that she was more impulsive than rational. Her craving was more for fashionable and glamorous life of Paris than for Clym or his mother. When her sleeping passions aroused they burst forth with something of the force and effect of a miniature volcano. In that sudden eruption she made several mistakes. She was sorry for marrying Clym when Clym refused

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to go to Paris and live there. Then she again turned to Wildeve. She couldn't forget her relation with Wildeve. She was never thoughtful. Actually she was more innocent than guilty. In her innocent behaviour she couldn't see through Wildeve's game. She had very little of judgment or her own will. She was led like an ass by Wildeve on several occasions.

Eustacia was proud of her beauty, culture and position. Therefore she had a magnificent contempt for her accusers and also for her inferiors. Her permanent weakness was her innocent and pagan sensuality for romance, fashionable life and society. She was a day-dreamer. Her constant feeling was that she was born to fascinate, to command and to be obeyed. It was difficult for anybody to predict her. She did not observe or follow religious conventions. She was a non-conformist.

Eustacia had her own definition and principles of love. She wanted a blaze of love than a glimmer of it. She longed to be loved to the limit of madness. She wants her lover to leave her and then return repentant. Wildeve, a shrewd psychologist, understood her mentality and every time succeeded in turning her thoughts in his own favour.

Loyalty and constancy in love had no meaning for Eustacia. In her love philosophy she suffered from innocent and Pagan sensuality. She flew with every blow of wind of circumstances that went against her passion for life in Paris. She was ready to do away loyalty and constancy to fulfil her ambition of living in Paris. She was also a victim of womanly jealousy in love. When she saw Wildeve carrying on his affair with Thomasin, she became indifferent to him and turned to more aristocratic Clym Yeobright. And when Clym Yeobright dashed her high hopes of going with him to Paris, she again turned to Wildeve in her innocence and pagan mentality or sensuality.

Eustacia was a natural hedonist. She wanted to drink the pleasure of life to its last drop. To live in Paris for romantic pleasures was so deeply in her blood that she hardly cared for the society and her future. She was an egotist. She always thought of herself and what others owed to her, and never of her duty to others. She put up a face of innocence and had always a list of grievances against her husband and her mother-in-law as well.

Eustacia lacked Victorian reticence although she had been created by a Victorian novelist. She is a very woman by nature. "Eustacia is not presented in the very act of love ; but she is described in unequivocal terms as a sophisticated, promiscuous sensualist who is willing to take almost any risk to attain new intensities of passion." Yet she was also beautiful, dignified, intelligent and noble. Hardy writes: "Vulgarity would be impossible for her. It would have been as easy for the heath-ponies, bats, and snakes to be vulgar as for her".

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Eustacia's only weakness was that she desired to turn dark and gloomy Heath into the glitter of Budmouth by her romantic imagination and fantasy. Thus by her romantic activities she transformed the dark and dismal Heath into a fairyland.

Her dignity survived her liaison with Wildeve and even the ignobility of being jilted by him. She could still be imperious on saying, "You may tempt me, but I won't give myself to you any more". When she had rejected his caress and sent him away, Eustacia sighed. It was not a fragile maiden sigh, but a sigh which gave her life a shiver. Physical desire impelled her. She longed for passionate love than for any particular lover. Her sense of passionate love was bred in her wild unconventionality and action.

Eustacia: Innocent and Pagan in Her Sensuality

Hardy seems to attach no moral stigma whatsoever to the simple fact of her keen quest for sexual sensation. We are led to pity her isolation, admire her intelligence and spirit, deprecate her fierce pride and perhaps condemn her snobbish sense of class.

Eustacia got implicated into a tragic web through no simple moral contribution for her physical sin but possibly because her life had confused her gifts into a strange mixture of innocence and sophistication. Social critics have their own opinion of her. They believe that Eustacia approached the savage state, though in emotion she was all the while an epicure.

Eustacia was not a woman with moral principles. She was a woman of pagan sensuality. She is a pessimist. A little change here or there dampens her enthusiasm, joy and gaiety. There is, in her blood as well as in her mind, a certain gloom which is further intensified by the gloomy atmosphere of Egdon Heath,

which she hates but where she has come to stay. The real cause of her gloom is want of an object in her life.

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Eustacia illustrates Hardy's philosophy of Immanent will and cruel fate. Hardy's heroines, despite their physical and intellectual beauty suffer. They suffer because gods behave like wanton boys and kill these butterflies for their joy and merriment. Mark how Eustacia is a rebel against fate. She speaks bitterly. "The world seems all wrong in this place". Instead of blaming herself she lays the blame upon the shoulders of some indistinct colossal Prince of the world, who has brought her to dismal and dark Egdon Heath. Again when Wildeve told her that he was the cause of her ruin, her tragic reply was "Not You; the place I live. I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman and how destiny has been against me..... I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control . O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to heaven at all." Her Pagan sensuality is also to be noticed here.

Mark in the last words Eustacia's innocence and chastity of character. Her tragedy was not due to her character because she did not give up to Wildeve or reddleman but due to her immense passion for a romantic life in Paris. In reality she was innocent in the sense that she was unaware of the bitter or hard realities of life.

Eustacia had every reason to ask the supreme Power by what right a being of such exquisite finish had been placed in circumstances to make of her charms a curse rather than a blessing.

Eustacia, like all other pretty and intelligent heroines of Hardy's tragedies, is the thesis of Hardy's philosophy and pessimism. Eustacia, like the other heroines in Hardy's novels, is more sinned against than sinning.

5.2 JOHN RUSKIN

John Ruskin , English author and art critic, was born in London. He was the son of a wealthy wine merchant, who was brought up in a cultured and religious family, but his mother's over protectiveness undoubtedly contributed to his later psychological troubles. On his frequent trips in Europe, he took an artists's and poet's delight both in landscape and works of art, especially medieval

and Renaissance. His first great work, *Modern Painters* (5 volumes, 1843-60), began as a passionate defence of Turner's pictures, but became a study of the principles of Art. In *The Seven Lamps Of Architecture* (1849) and *The Stones Of Venice* (1851) he likewise treated the fundamentals of architecture. These principles enabled him, incidentally, to appreciate and defend the Pre-Raphaelites, then the target of violence and abuse. To Ruskin the relationship between art, morality and social justice was of the utmost importance and he increasingly became preoccupied with social reform. His concern inspired, among others, William Morris and Arnold Toynbee, whilst in the practical field he founded the Working Men' s college (1854) and backed with money the experiments of Octavia Hill in the management of house property. He advocated social reforms which later on were adopted by all political parties, like old-age pensions, universal free education, better housing.

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Gothic was for Ruskin the expression of an integrated and spiritual civilisation; classicism represented paganism and corruption; the use of cast iron, and the growing importance of function in architecture and engineering seemed to him a lamentable trend. He was Slade Professor of art at Oxford (1870-79) and (1883-84). His later works, eg. *Sesame and Lillies*(1865), *The Crown Of Wild Olives* (1866) and *Fors Clavigera* (1871 -74), contain the programme of social reform in which he was so interested. Ruskin married (1848) Euphemia (Effie) Gray (the child of whom he had written *The King Of the Golden River*) but in 1854 the marriage was annulled and Effie later married Millais. Ruskin did not marry a second time, although on occasions he fell in love with girls much younger than himself and his last disappointment over Rose la Touche contributed to his mental breakdown which caused him to spend his last years in seclusion at Brantwood on Lake Coniston, where he wrote *Praeterita*, an unfinished account of his early life. A good deal of his wealth he devoted to the '*Guild of St. George*', which he founded, and other schemes of social welfare.

5.2.1 RUSKIN AS AN ECONOMIST

How would you assess Ruskin as an Economist?

Ruskin's attack on the orthodox political economy provoked his critics to adjudge him as “a lounging aesthete who strolled into economics and talked sentimentalism.”

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Ruskin's England was reaping the harvest sown by the Industrial Revolution and watered by Bentham's theories of political economy and guarded by J.S. Mill and other Utilitarians. Thus Industrial Revolution had, certainly, shattered the village economy. Villages had been deserted. England had become the foster-mother of ugliness and slums. D. H. Lawrence says, "The great crime which the moneyed classes and promoters of Industry committed in the palmy Victorian days was the condemning of the workers to ugliness, meanness and formless and ugly surroundings." And the Industrial Revolution which had brought material prosperity to England had supplanted ethical consideration by banishing humanitarian instinct from the privileged class. The tide of prosperity which has made the rich richer had dragged the poor into the deep abyss of drudgery and living hell.

Laissez-faire was the craze of the Political Economists. They advocated the non-intervention of the State in matters of Industry. Ruskin, like his master, could not remain dumb. Carlyle was so much overcome by contemplation of the folly of mankind that he could do little more than scold. But Ruskin who was just as convinced that the western civilization had taken the wrong direction, explored the immediate causes more carefully and tried to show how to recover the right path. Like Carlyle, he opposed the pervading Liberalism of the days saying "I hate all liberalism as I do Beelzebub."

Ruskin saw the devastation wrought by laissez-faire as clearly as Lord Shaftesbury, Disraeli and Carlyle. Dickens and Thomas Hood, Mrs Browning and Tennyson, had denounced Bumbledom, or sweating, or adulteration, or legal cruelty to children. Ruskin was greatly affected by Carlyle's *Past and Present*. Ruskin's war on the economists was also Carlyle's war, only conducted with greater accuracy of attack.

Discussing John Ruskin's *Political Economy*, Oliver Elton asserts that Ruskin always considered as most of his readers consider today that his four papers entitled *Unto This Last* contain in its purest expression the essence of his teaching concerning the true wealth of nations.

"Political strife, in the ordinary sense," says Elton, "Ruskin did not touch. He was of no definable party and though he called himself a Tory of the old school, he was much too full of explosive material to be a Tory really; indeed he

attacked the assumptions of Tory, Whig, and the Radical alike, at their roots." All of them were more or less devoted to the policy of laissez-faire which to Ruskin simply meant the neglect by the State both of its obvious duty and of the instinct of self-preservation. But it was the old mercantile economy, now sometimes called 'plutonomy', he opened fire, choosing the younger Mill and Fawcett for his target, but actually criticising the more abstract school of Ricardo and Mill the elder man.

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Applied economics was considered as the art of getting rich. Carlyle called it the 'dismal science'. Ruskin called the orthodox political economy 'Mercantile economy'. Ruskin called the orthodox political economy, held synonymous with political economy, as 'bastard science'. Unlike the orthodox economists, "Ruskin denied that a separate and valid science, inductive and deductive could be framed on the basis of disregarding every human motive in commercial affairs except that profit." Ruskin denied that such a political economy deserved to be called political economy. According to Ruskin's opinion social affection and the play of disinterested motive were not casual factors nor did he agree with the orthodox economists that the interests of the master were antagonistic to those of his men.

Ruskin advocated very openly the cause of the workers working under unfavourable and unpleasant conditions. Attacking the orthodox political economy, he asserted that the master should provide the labour with favourable conditions of working. Ruskin appears to be sentimental when he recalls that he demanded of the master that he should treat his men as he treated his own son.

In the days of 'Iron Law of Wages' he asserted that the workmen should be engaged at fixed rate of wages irrespective of the demand for labour. He wrote: "We do not sell our prime-ministership by Dutch-auction; nor on the decease of a bishop, do we offer his diocese to the clergyman who will take the episcopacy at the lowest contract."

and demanded that good and bad workmen should be paid alike. Besides this he asserted that "the wages which enable any workman to live should be necessarily higher. If his work is liable to intermission than if it is assured and continuous." In other words Ruskin stood for "Fixed minimum wages to all workers thereby abolishing the wages calculated by supply and demand."

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Talking about just payment for labourers Ruskin wrote, “Money payment consists radically in a promise to some person working for us, that the time and labour he spends in our service today we will give or procure equivalent time and labour in his service at any future time when he may demand for it.” Again stressing the law of justice he said that justice is that “which is that of perfect and accurate exchange the amount returned is at least in equity not to be less than the amount given.”

Ruskin assigned a new meaning to “value”. In common parlance the word 'value' means exchange. J.S. Mill said that “Wealth consists of all useful and agreeable objects which possess exchangeable value.” In Mill's parlance “usefulness and agreeableness underlie the exchange value, and must be ascertained to exist in the thing.” Ruskin regarded it as a fallacy. To point out the fallacy, Ruskin compared obscene pictures with a painted ceiling. The former can be sold and so have exchange value but the other things being fixed have no exchange value.

Ruskin, unlike the orthodox economists, was of the belief that, “there is the exchange value and the intrinsic value.” The latter is the life-giving power. Thus two commodities may have the same exchange value but different intrinsic value.

Differentiating between ‘Political economy’ and ‘Mercantile economy’, Ruskin wrote that “Political economy consists simply in the production, preservation, and distribution, at fittest time and place of useful or pleasurable things whereas Mercantile economy signifies the accumulation, in the hands of individuals, of legal or moral claim upon, or power over the labour of others.”

5.2.2 RUSKIN AS A SOCIAL REFORMER

Ruskin as a Social Reformer

In English literature after 1848 all the great voices that were then raised were mostly against the anarchy of laissez-faire. Matthew Arnold was as anxious as Thomas Carlyle to replace the rule of Manchester by the rule of wisdom; and Dickens could denounce political economy as fervently as Ruskin. The whole doctrine of individualism was to the artist hard and crude, rather slovenly in its

insistence on axioms as rigid as those of Euclid — repellent in its mathematical calculus of utility; unsympathetic in its attitude to human sentiments and aspirations. Already in 1829 the poet laureate Robert Southey was preaching the tenets of philanthropic collectivism, and his colloquies showed an antipathy for laissez-faire which was to influence Lord Shaftesbury. The literary tradition of Southey was continued in the novels of Kingley and Mrs Gaskell, of Dickens and Charles Reade: and it appears, if in new forms, in the philippics of Carlyle and the delicate satire of Arnold.

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"Carlyle," says Professor David Daiches, "attacked nineteenth-century commercial civilisation for its breeding of hypocrisy and shams, Arnold for its elimination of culture, Ruskin for its deadening effect on art. Ruskin could not resist the temptation to which Carlyle had succumbed in *Past and Present* of looking back to the middle Ages for his ideal."

Ruskin, for all his medievalism, tried to get down to the facts of contemporary life. But he, remarks Professor Barker, combined the artist's longing for beauty with moralist's passion for social justice. Like Morris, he came to the study of social problems by way of art. Morris felt that social life must be remoulded to make beauty at once deeper and more widely diffused; Ruskin felt that art, which is ultimately the expression of national character, needed for its perfection the cleansing of national character, and, to that end, a remoulding of all institutions of social life which go to determine national character. Morris preached that good workmanship was only possible to free and joyous workers, and that free and joyous workers could be made possible only in a socialistic state; Ruskin taught that art can only be good and beautiful. "Art not for art's sake but art in relation to life, art as the expression of individual and of national character; life without industry as guilt, but industry without art as brutality; beauty in a world governed by social justice; these are ideas implied in all Ruskin's books."

As early as 1857 Ruskin was daring enough to deliver in Manchester itself, the home of economic orthodoxy, a series of lectures in which he attacked the cult of wealth and the worship of competition. These lectures, printed under the title of *The Political Economy of Art*, but reprinted afterwards under the new title of *A Joy for Ever*, already contain some of Ruskin's cardinal tenets. They advocate co-operation (as a household—the very analogy used by Plato) in lieu of

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competition: they advocate State education, State-employment, and State-provision for the labour class. Government and co-operation are the laws of life; anarchy and competition the laws of death. To fulfil the law of life, the workers must become like unto soldiers. They should be trained like soldiers and like soldiers they should be guided. In those days men shall speak of 'soldier of the Ploughshare as well as soldiers of the Sword'. Teaching of this order shocked an age devoted totally to a different doctrine; and critics applied to Ruskin the strictures which Macaulay had passed on Southey. He would make the State, they said, "a jack of all-trades". But Ruskin remained undeterred by his critics. Ruskin in 1860 published a new essay, on the first principle of political economy under the title of *Unto This Last*, which had been adopted from Barker.

David Daiches assesses the importance of *Unto This Last* thus: "Ruskin attacked the accepted economic theories of his day, pointed out that the abstract, mechanical view of economics, ignored the moral factor and postulated an economic man devoid of all human qualities. The 'one great fact' he wished to stress is that "there is no Wealth but life." Care in nowise to make more of money, but care to make much of it; remembering always the great, palpable inevitable fact—the rule and root of all economy—that which one person has, another cannot have; and that every atom of substance, of whatever kind, used or consumed, is so much human life spent; which, if it issue in the saving present life or gaining more is well spent, but if not is either so much slain.

In his preface to the edition of 1862, Ruskin advocated Training school for youth, established at government cost where practical and moral education should be given; the establishment of government manufactories and workshops for the sale of every necessity of life, and for the exercise of every useful art, the employment, if necessary after special training, of those out of work, in the nearest government workshop; and the provision of comfort and home for the old and destitute.

Compton Rickett further asserts that Labour should be made healthy and pleasurable. Ruskin maintained that the great evil of the modern civilization lay not in the fact that men are half starved but that they take no pleasure in the work by which they earn their living, looking to the acquisition of money as the only means of pleasure.

The just payment of labour means that wealth is not concentrated in the hands of one individual, but circulates among several people. Therefore, the just payment of labour tends to be more even distribution of wealth in society; but unjust payment means putting all the wealth in one man's hands.

The second outcome of just payment of labour is that the labourer is given an opportunity of rising in the social scale, if he so chooses. He is held back not so much by unnecessary taxation as by his insufficient wages. The real destiny of the poor always depends on this question of the justness of their wages. Their stress arises primarily from the two forces of competition and oppression. The laziness, their errors and their crimes, if any, weigh less in the balance.

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Ruskin holds that there is not yet, nor for ages will there be, any real over-population in the world. But a local over-population shows itself by the pressure of competition. On this account, the employer tries to obtain their labour unjustly cheap. In the end, when the nation is driven to disaster, the oppressor suffers as much as the oppressed.

Some people hold the view that the real solution of the problem is socialism. But if socialism means equality among all, it is an impossibility in this world. For some men are always superior to others. Such people understand better the affairs of the world, and hence the superiors should lead and the inferiors must follow. Government and co-operation are the Laws of Life. Anarchy and competition are the Law of Death.

The poor should not be robbed because they are poor, similarly the poor have no right to the property of the rich. Ruskin shows himself as the upholder of the rights of private property.

Thus Ruskin pleads for justice in economic relations as the cure for all the ills of society. And it rests primarily on payment of just wages to labour, irrespective of the demand for or supply of workmen available.

5.2.3 RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EMPLOYERS AND THE EMPLOYED

The Relations between the Employers and the Employed, according to Ruskin.

Ruskin affirms in *The Roots of Honour* that the relation between the employer and the employed is the 'first vital problem which political economy has to deal with'. For it is at the root of all possibilities in commerce and industry. Employers and employees are the two principal parties to the production of wealth and also the two principal claimants in the distribution of that wealth.

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Unfortunately, their relation is often tense and unhappy: hence while it is easy to imagine an enthusiastic affection existing among soldiers for the Colonel, it is not so easy to imagine an enthusiastic affection among cotton spinners for the proprietor of the mill. This is because orthodox political economy ignores the play of human motive and social feelings and concentrates on the profit motive in framing its laws of the production and distribution of wealth. When the distribution of profit is made in terms of such laws, labourers are often aggrieved; and when they go on strike, "lives in multitudes and wealth in masses are at stake". In such a crisis, "the political economists are helpless—practically mute. Obstinately the masters take one view of the matter: obstinately the operatives another: and no political science can set them at one". Hence Ruskin advocates a human approach to the problem of the relation between employers and employees.

At the very outset, Ruskin makes it clear that according to circumstances the interest of employers and employees may be either alike or opposed. A generalisation such as that the interests of the parties are alike or that they are opposed, cannot be made. It is always the interest of both the parties that the work should be done well and that a good price should be got for it. In other words, the production of wealth is the interest of both parties; but in the distribution of wealth there may sometimes be a clash. However, it does not follow that, when interests are opposed, persons should develop a hostility mutually. Moreover, there need be no clash of interests, if it is remembered that the master's interest can never be served by paying his workmen such low wages that they become sickly and depressed, and that no workman's interest is served by his being paid such high wages that the master's profit becomes too small to let him expand the business or conduct it in a safe and broad-minded way. The reciprocal interests of the two principal parties to the production of wealth, being thus endlessly various, rules of action in social problems should always be deducted from considerations of justice and of affection, such as men owe one another.

Ruskin then proceeds to show that the workman's claim on his master is not only for fair wages, his claim also is that the master should attend to the needs of his mind and to the culture of his soul. Or, in the words of Ruskin: "On him (the master) falls, the responsibility for the kind of life they (the workmen) lead." It is the master's duty to study how the various processes involved in the

production of his particular commodity can be made most beneficial to his workmen, just as it is his duty to be studying how his particular commodity can be produced in the purest and cheapest form. In his office as governor of his workmen, he becomes clothed with an almost fatherly authority and responsibility. Usually a youth who enters a commercial establishment is withdrawn from home influence. His master's authority together with the character of his fellow-workmen and the general tone and atmosphere of the business, will have more weight than home influence in moulding his character. The man of commerce should therefore deal with his workmen as he would deal with his own son, if the latter is forced by circumstances to take up that position. As the captain of a ship should be the last man to leave his ship in case of wreck, and should share the last crumb with his sailors in case of famine, so the merchants, in case of any commercial crisis, should take a share in the consequent suffering even laying more of it on himself than on his workmen.

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If, as yet, such a state of affairs has not come to be, it is because what passes for commerce among us is not true commerce, but cozening. In true commerce, one should be prepared for occasional self-sacrifice. One realises that "the market may have its martyrdoms as well as the pulpit: and trade its heroisms as well as wars."

5.2.4 VIEWS OF RUSKIN ON THE FUNCTIONS OF A MERCHANT

The Views of Ruskin on the Functions of a Merchant

According to Ruskin, true commerce never was, or can be selfish. The selfish pursuit of money which passes among us under that name is not commerce at all, but cozening. There is as much gap between the true merchant of Ruskin's conception and the false merchant of political economy, as there is between the philosophic pedlar of Wordsworth's *Excursion* and the thieving, roguish pedlar of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. The true merchant is now whose example will not make a gentleman ashamed of becoming a merchant; he is one who is ready to make occasional self sacrifice and who finds in his occupation as much scope for martyrdom or heroism, as the pastor or the soldier. If all this cannot, as yet, be

said of our commerce it is because presently fine natures fight shy of taking to commerce. Hence in *The Roots of Honour*, Ruskin explains clearly the functions of a merchant, in order to demonstrate that commerce is not essentially selfish and to attract men of fine nature to it.

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The functions of a merchant is to provide for the nation, as it is the soldier's to defend it, the pastor's to teach it, the physician's to be mindful of its health, and the lawyer's to help in the administration of its justice. And it is not the merchant's function to make money. Some profit he must have, as a due and necessary adjunct of his function, but not as the one and only object of his life. Like the physician or the pastor, the merchant has a role to play, irrespective of profit or fee and even without any profit at all or at risk to his property or life. He should know the qualities of his particular commodity fully, and he should also study the means of producing it. He should devote all his powers to the production of it in the purest and cheapest form.

He should also study how the various processes involved in the production of his particular commodity can be made most beneficial to the workmen under him. For his responsibility is not only to give fair wages to them but also for the kind of life which they lead. In his capacity, as the governor of his workmen, he becomes clothed with an almost paternal authority and responsibility. In his concern for the character of a workman, he should have an eye on the general tone and atmosphere of his business and on the characters of the associate workmen will have. He must treat everyone of them as he would treat his son, if the son were to be, by some chance or coincidence, one of them. As the captain of a ship, in case of shipwreck, he should be the last one to leave his ship and should share the last crumb with his sailors in case of famine so the merchant should, in case of any commercial crisis, take a share in the consequent suffering, even laying more of it on himself than on his workmen.

Just as the solider, the physician, the pastor and the lawyer have to be ready for occasional loss, the merchant should be prepared to lose money, under a sense of duty. It is the duty of men in all those professions to die for their country on due occasion. The soldier should die, rather than leave his post in battle; the physician, rather than desert his post in plague; the pastor rather than teach falsehood; the lawyer, rather than support injustice. Similarly, the merchant has a “due occasion” of death. Rather than fail in any of his engagements or

consent to any deterioration or adulteration of or unjust price for his particular commodity, he should meet fearlessly the consequent poverty of distress; he is even bound to give up his life, if need be, in the process of scrupulously discharging his duties.

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When a merchant does not regard his function in his spirit and prefers the system of production sanctioned by orthodox political economy he gets a great deal of opprobrium heaped on his head by the public. Ruskin says that it is not without reason that at present a merchant is held in considerable scorn; for, he is presumed always to act selfishly and to seek his own gain at the expense of others.

5.3 COMPREHENSION EXERCISES

1 Write a note on Hardy's art of characterisation.

2 Give Thomas Hardy's views on Love and marriage.

3 Sketch the character of Eustacia Vye.

4 How would you assess Ruskin as an Economist?

5 Write a brief note on Ruskin as a Social Reformer.

6 Discuss the Relations between the Employers and the Employed, according to Ruskin.

7 Express the Views of Ruskin on the Functions of a Merchant.

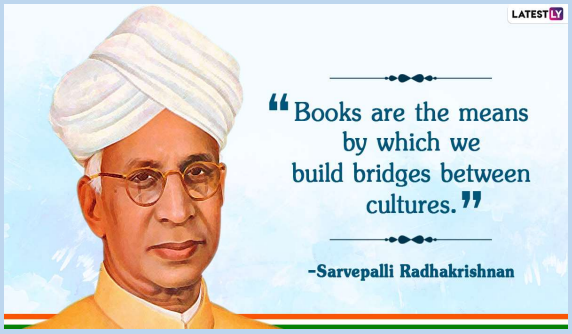
5.4 LET US SUM UP

Unit V tells you about Thomas Hardy and John Ruskin. Besides discussing their life and works in general, you shall further be competent enough to present an analysis on *The Return of the Native*. In addition to this you have become quite competent to present Ruskin's views on social and economic problems.

NOTES

SUGGESTED READINGS

1. Edward Albert A History of English Literature
2. Hudson An Outline History of English Literature
3. Ifor Evans A Short History of English Literature
4. M H Abrams A Glossary of Literary Terms
5. M. H. Abrams (ed.), The Norton Anthology of English Literature, London: Norton
6. Pat Rogers (ed.), The Oxford Illustrated History of English Literature, London, Oxford University Press.
7. A N Jeffares (ed.), The Macmillan History of Literature, London, Macmillan.



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