

## UNIT-1

---

### TENNYSON : ULYSSES

---

#### Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Tennyson's Life
- 1.3 Text of the Poem
  - 1.3.1 Summary of the Poem 'Ulysses'
  - 1.3.2 Tennyson's Handling 'Ulysses' Legend
  - 1.3.3 Glossary
  - 1.3.4 Autobiographical Element
  - 1.3.5 Comparison with 'The Lotus Eaters'
- 1.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.5 Review Questions
- 1.6 Bibliography

---

#### 1.0 Objectives

---

This unit on Tennyson's poem *Ulysses* has been designed to help you to prepare yourself for your university examination. It provides you with all the needed information about the poem, the poet and the age to which the poet belonged. The questions that have been given at the end of the unit can be suitably answered from the reading material given in the unit. The questions are based on the individual poems prescribed but there are questions also which require study of both the poems.

---

#### 1.1 Introduction

---

Ulysses was a legendary figure conceived for the first time by the earliest known poet Homer who wrote the earliest two epics—*Odysseus* and *Iliad*. An epic is a long poem usually consisting of XII books in which the adventures and achievements of the hero are described. Later poets too have written poems about Ulysses to represent through him the tendencies of their age. Tennyson has also written his poem on Ulysses and has introduced some changes in the original story in order to reflect the tendencies and purposes of his own age. It is desirable, therefore, that the historical perspective is kept in mind while making a significant study of the

poem.

---

## 1.2 Tennyson's Life

---

Alfred Tennyson, also known as the first Baron Tennyson, was born on October 6 1809 and was also the Poet Laureate of Great Britain. He remains the most popular and oft quoted English poet next to Shakespeare.

Tennyson's best work is said to be his **In Memoriam** which was written in the memory of his friend Arthur Hallam who was also a poet and Tennyson's classmate at Trinity College, Cambridge but died quite early in the year 1833 of cerebral hemorrhage. Tennyson is also known by his famous work **Idylls of the King** written in 1885 which is a collection of narrative poems based on the life of king Arthur and the Arthurian tales. Its subject has been taken from Sir Thomas Malory's tales about king Arthur. It was dedicated to Prince Albert who was the Queen's consort.

Earlier it has been said that Tennyson is the most commonly quoted poet after Shakespeare and some of his best quoted lines are :

1. Better to have loved and lost /than never to have loved at all.
2. My strength is as the strength of ten/Because my heart is pure .
3. Theirs not to reason why/Theirs but to do and die
4. Come into the garden, O Maud.
5. Nature, red in tooth and claw.

Tennyson, born at Somersby, was the son of a rector and he was the fourth of twelve children and a descendant about ten generation back of Edmond, the Duke of Somerset and further back to Edward III of England . Tennyson's father gave great attention to the education and training of his children. With two of his elder brothers, Charles and Fredrick, he started writing poems at a very early age and all three published them when Alfred was only 17 years of age. For his education Tennyson first went to Louth Grammar School from 1816-1820 and then to Scaitcliff School and from there to King Edward VI Grammar School, Louth. In 1828 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge and there he met his best friend Arthur Henry Hallam. In 1830 he published his **Poems Chiefly Lyrical** that included his two celebrated poems 'Claribel' and 'Marianna'. The verses soon became popular and attracted the attention of well known literary figures including that of S.T. Coleridge.

In 1831 Tennyson's father died and he was required to leave Cambridge to look after his widowed mother and the large family of children. His friend Arthur Hallam came to stay there for some time and became engaged to Tennyson's sister, Emilia. In 1833 Tennyson published the second volume of his poems which was not well received by the public. In the same year came the news of the death of his friend Hallam which proved a severe blow to

Tennyson. In 1842 while living modestly in London Tennyson published two volumes of **Poems** which included poems of such lasting fame as that of “Locksley Hall” and ‘Tithonus’ and ‘Ulysses’ In 1850 he published his best work **In Memoriam** which he dedicated to Hallam and the same year following Wordsworth’s death, Tennyson was appointed the Poet Laureate the position he continued till his death.

As a Poet Laureate, Tennyson wrote mostly ordinary verses such as that of greeting to Alexandra of Denmark who arrived in Britain to marry the would be King Edward VII in **1853**. He produced also one of his best known poems ‘**The Charge of the Light Brigade**’ which was “a dramatic tribute to the British cavalymen involved in an ill-advised charge on 25th October 1854 during the Crimean War”. His other poems as poet laureate include ‘Ode on the death of Duke of Wellington’ and also ‘Ode Sung at the opening of the International Exhibition’.

Tennyson was greatly admired by Queen Victoria who in 1884 made him Baron Tennyson. In 1883 he was offered a peerage as a result of which he entered the House of Lords on March 11, 1884. Towards the end of his life Tennyson wrote that his ‘religious’ beliefs also defied conventions, leading towards agnosticism and in **In Memoriam** he wrote that “there lives more faith in honest doubt, believe me than in half of the creeds”. Other lines indicative of his loss of faith are ‘The churches have killed their Christ’ (Maud 1855) and in **Locksley Hall** he wrote, “Christians love among the churches, look’d the twain of heathen hate” and in his play **Becket** he wrote ‘We are selfuncertain creatures and we may, Yea, even when we know not, mix our spites and private hates with our defence of Heaven’ and in his **Diary** he wrote, ‘I believe in Pantheism of a sort’. He continued writing for a long time and at the age of 83 died in 1892.

---

### 1.3 Text of the poem

---

#### Ulysses

Alfred Lord Tennyson

It little profits that an idle king,  
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,  
Matched 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 enjoyed  
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those  
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when  
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades  
Vest the dim sea: 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 honoured of them all;  
And drunk delight of battle with my peers;  
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.  
I am part of all that I have met;  
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough  
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades  
For ever and for ever when I move.  
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,  
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!  
As though to breath were life. Life piled on life  
Were all to 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 scepter and the isle  
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill  
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild  
A rugged people, and through soft degrees  
Subdue them to the useful and the good.  
Most blameless is he, centered in the sphere  
Of common duties, decent not to fail  
In offices of tenderness, and pay  
Meet adoration to my household gods,  
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:  
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,  
Souls that have toiled, 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 had yet his honour 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:  
     It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,  
     And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.  
 Though much is taken, much abides; and though  
 We are not now that strength which in the old days  
 Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are,  
     One equal-temper of heroic hearts,  
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
     To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

### 1.3.1 Summary of the Poem

Ulysses is a legendary figure in Tennyson's poem by that name and the poem is in the monologue form. In this poem Ulysses himself is the speaker and he seems to be addressing his mariners who have been his companions in the Trojan War. His son Telemachus seems to be standing by him and Ulysses himself is the king of Ithaca.

Ulysses is old now in age but not in his spirit. He is greatly dissatisfied with his present condition as the king of Ithaca, an Island, and his subjects are rugged and savage in the sense that they do not value the importance of work and justice in life. They are the people who only "Hoard, and sleep, and feed and know not me." He further informs that his wife is old now and his son is young enough to take over the responsibility of his father's kingdom and family. Ulysses has been a great explorer and has made great discoveries. Though old now his spirit yearns for new adventures abroad. He says that he has been to different places of different kinds of people and of different "manners, climates, councils, governments" and all those people have paid honour and tribute to him as a result of which his name has become a substitute for great adventurer and explorer. He has proved his exploits in the Trojan war and as an explorer he has found that the world is too large to be measured by a single life and that the more he explores the more of it remains to be discovered. He says that his spirit is indefatigable and for him old age is not the time for rest and rusting but to gain more experiences in life. He is of the opinion that life means experiences and the more one gathers them the greater in

age one becomes.

He then contrasts his present life with that which has been and therefore he wishes “to shine in use”. He also says that he will not be alive for many more years and wishes that before he is laid to rest he wants to become a discoverer of new things. His spirits are very high and his ambition is to follow knowledge even beyond the seas.

He also says that in his absence his son Telemachus will be the king of Ithaca and he will try in every possible way to civilise his rugged and savage people by slow degrees and try to make them useful and good. Moreover, his son knows what his duties towards his family are and he will also properly worship his household gods. While he goes abroad his son will remain at home and perform all the duties that are expected of the head of a family. All preparations for Ulysses’s departure have been completed—there lies the port and the sails of his ship are open and full of air and his mariners are prepared to sail with him to meet any and every kind of adventure that comes their way. His mariners are undaunted and have never known any fear. They have been “free hearts, free foreheads” and though as old as he himself is yet they and he are alike in spirits. Like him his mariners also believe that though death is an unfailing certainty yet before death and even in old age “some work of noble note” can yet be done for these mariners were the people who in the past “strove with goods”.

He says that all is ready for his departure. It is the evening time, the moon is visible in the sky and the sea seems to invite the mariners with many kinds of noise. Ulysses asks his mariners to get ready immediately for “pushing off”, because his ambition is to reach the legendary “Happy isles” where he hopes to see his great ancestor Achilles face to face. He now regrets that he and his mariners are now not in possession of that energy and vigour that was theirs in their former youthful days when they could move “earth and heaven”. They have now been considerably weakened both by fate and by time but for them, there is no cessation from activity. They are all of “One equal temper of heroic hearts” and by defying both time and fate they must continue their old mission “to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield”.

### **1.3.2 Tennyson’s Handling ‘Ulysses’ Legend**

Tennyson has taken the material of his narrative from many sources. Ulysses is a legendary figure and the first introduction of him one finds in Homer’s epic poem *Odysseus* (the Greek name for Ulysses) and many later poets after Homer have taken his character for treatment and though the basic character is from Homer’s account of him but the later poets and dramatists have recounted his exploits and character to suit their own vision of him. Among the later poets and dramatists are those of Euripides, Horace, Dante, Shakespeare and Alexander Pope. Tennyson’s presents the Victorian account of him.

The broad outlines of the Ulysses myth have been taken from Homer’s *Odysseus*. In the eleventh book of the epic, the prophet Tiresias who was blind but had the vision of seeing into future, relates that having been away and after many trials and voyages Ulysses will come

back to his Ithaca but soon after undertake a new and mysterious Journey and meet a peaceful and unheroic death somewhere on the sea itself. Tennyson's account, however, differs from Homer's in several ways. Tennyson's Ulysses takes no interest in public affairs and is indifferent to his family duties. As a king of Ithaca he is mostly interested in fulfilling his own ambition for an adventurous life and neglects public duties calling his people as a "savage race" and "rugged" people. He feels no responsibility to his son Telemachus or his wife Penelope or his people over whom he rules as a king. He leaves all this to his son to manage and feels certain that his son is capable of performing all the duties towards his mother and his people and by "slow degrees" will be able to discipline and educate the latter. He will also properly worship his household gods.

Dante in his **Divine Comedia** has taken up the character of Ulysses but prefers to call him Ulisse. In **Inferno's** XXVI Canto Ulisse recounts his own voyage in the Eighth Circle of Inferno to which he has been condemned for being a false counsellor who hungers for adventures and neglects his public and his family in Ithaca. There he displays his lust for adventure and exploration of new lands and people.

And this gray spirit yearning in desire  
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,  
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This, however, does not mean that Tennyson has rejected the Homeric base. There are quite a few echoes of Homer in Tennyson's Ulysses — "I am become a name". Other lines in Tennyson's Ulysses such as "There gloom the dark, broad seas" (ll 45) and "The deep/ moans round with many voices" (ll 55-56) are the ones in which Tennyson recalls Homer. Still there is more of Dante's Ulysse in Tennyson's treatment of Ulysses than Homer's Odysseus.

There are one or two echoes of Shakespeare also in Tennyson's treatment of Ulysses concerning the attitude of Ulysses towards the people of his kingdom. Ulysses says that his subjects are rugged people "That hoard, and sleep and feed, and know me not (ll 3)" which closely echo Hamlet's soliloquy "What is a man but his chief and market of his tune/Be but to sleep and feed/a beast, no more" and also there is another echo in the lines "How dull it is to pause, to make amend/ to rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use," which are also reminiscent of Ulysses in Shakespeare's play **Troilus and Cressida**

Perseverance, my dear lord,  
Keeps honour bright :  
To have done is to hang  
In monumental mockery.

It is mostly in the last lines of Tennyson's poem of Ulysses that the influence of Dante is clearly visible particularly where Ulysses speaks about the marine voyages and of his mari-

ners. Dante's Ulysses asks his mariners to take up the oars in the following lines and encourages them to gather experience that is beyond the sun.

'O brothers', said I, 'who are come despite  
Ten thousand perils to the West, let none,  
While still our senses hold the vigil slight  
Remaining to us ere our course is run,  
Be willing to forgo experience  
Of the unpeopled world beyond the sun.  
Regard your origin, – from whom and whence!  
Not to exist like brutes, but made were ye  
To follow virtue and intelligence'.

There is, however, a paradoxical situation here. In Homer while Ulysses was returning home all his mariners had perished on the sea and Ulysses alone returned to Ithaca. When Tennyson addresses his mariners as his old friends a congruity appears. While in Dante Ulysses recounts his journey in the Inferno, the details of Tennyson's Ulysses are more in keeping with the facts of Dante than of Homer.

The original character of Ulysses belongs to Homeric times but Tennyson as a Victorian poet and representative of his age and times has to present the Victorian Ideals of indefatigable will and hunt for knowledge beyond the sun and seas. Read as such Tennyson can be said to have taken his material from whatever source to him appeared suitable for representing Ulysses as a hero, adventurer and a Victorian gentlemen.

### 1.3.3 Glossary

It little profits	It is unavailing/ It can do no good.
Idle king	Ulysses refers to himself as the idle king of Ithaca which is an island at the mouth of the Gulf of Corinth. Since he is widely known his name has become synonymous with inquisitive knowledge, courage, intelligence and undaunted spirit. Accordingly he finds himself of not much use while living a dull and do-for-nothing life in Ithaca. It is for this reason that he calls himself an idle king.
Barren	not growing anything
Still	wanting in any great deed.
hearth	It stands for his family and domestic life.



barren crags	it refers to the island of Ithaca which is covered with rocks that are barren as nothing can grow on them.
matched	married
aged	old
mete and dole	regret for not being worthy
savage	uncivilized
I met and doll ... savage race	Ulysses calls the Ithacans as savage because they do not live according to the laws of justice which regards every man as equal
unequal laws	unjust laws
that hoard... feed	who think that life consists of only collecting money and goods and of eating and sleeping after that
know me not	do not value me and my great adventures in life
rest from life	with no adventures in life
drink life to the lees	make the most use of life
to the lees	to the last remnants of the cup of life
rainy Hydes	Hydes is a group of stars that causes rains; therefore called rainy hydes.
scudding drift	clouds that during the rainy session move about confoundedly ( in the sky)
vexed	disturbed or making commotion in the sea
dim	dark owing to the clouds gathered in the sky
roaming	not stationery or moving from one place to another
with hungry hearts	with intense desire for new adventures
councils	advisory bodies to the king.
drink delight with my peers	have greatly enjoyed fighting with people who were my equals in strength in war.
ringing plains	in Toy the winds are blowing and making hissing sounds and for this reason to Ulysses it appears that the plains there were ringing.
How dull it is to pause,	to make an end of forward movement amounts to death while

	to make an end living and that is very dull for Ulysses.
to rust	to be useless by ending all movement
unburnished	without shining
in use	usefully
as though... life	as though life is nothing but only remaining alive in years.
Life piled on life	life heaped on life or all life one after the other taken together
Life piled on... little remains	Ulysses here says that so far as he is concerned merely to go on living without any great adventure or experience life becomes meaningless. In other words life must be counted by one's experiences and not by the number of years one has lived
Vile it were	It will be mean and absurd for him.
three suns	three years.
To store... myself	to save and not spend the period of life that remains with me in adventurous tasks.
Grey spirit	the spirit and body that is growing old
yearning in desire	desiring intensely or aspiring
to follow ... star	the comparison here is not between knowledge and star but between Ulysses's own life and a star. A star moves throughout night and finally sets in the morning and is seen no more. So Ulysses also says about his own life that he has travelled a lot and gathered experiences throughout his life before his life comes to an end. Indirectly it means that he will be hunting for knowledge till he dies.
Bound	boundaries or limits
beyond...thought	to the extreme limits of human thought or beyond the thinking capacity of a mind.
Sceptre	a king is known by his sceptre that he holds in his hand.
The sceptre and the isle	Ulysses says that when he is gone his son Telemachus will be the king and will rule his Island of Ithaca in his absence
discerning	carefully and thoughtfully deciding
to fulfill... labour	how best to perform the work of ruling the Island.
prudence	wisdom that tells what should be done and how best it is to be

	done.
To make mild	to civilise
rugged race	said for the people of Ithaca.
Rugged	uncultured
slow degrees	gradually
subdue	to bring them under control so that they become civilised
useful... good	to convince them as to what is good and useful for them which at present they do not know
centred... duties	his main concern is with the common duties that he is expected to perform
decent	he is so nice that he will not fail
offices of tenderness	the duties that require his affection and service (in the present case) to his old mother
meet adoration	make suitable and proper worship.
The vessel	the boat or the ship
puffs her sail	the sails of the ship are filled with air
souls	the spirit of the mariners
wrought	worked, here it means had adventures
thought with me	who have never disagreed with my ideas
there gloom... seas	the darkness of the sea is thickening as a result of which the sea looks more dark and broad
my mariners	the word "my" suggests that those were the same mariners who had been with him at the time of Trojan war while in Homer's Odyssey they had all died while returning their homes from Troy
frolic	cheerful
took the thunder and sunshine for	them the thunder and the rains were as much welcome as the sunshine
opposed	fought with courage all environmental changes
free hearts	whose spirits had been unfettered
free foreheads	on their foreheads there were no wrinkles at any time which

	shows their indomitable courage
Old age ... his toil	old age does not mean, as is usually thought, not performing great works of honour
unbecoming	unsuitable but here it means wanting in courage
strove	fought against. The reference here is to the saying that in the Trojan war the gods also fought on the side of the Trojan army
wanes	goes to set
the deep	the sea
moans	producing sad sounds
the long day... with many voices	all these details are suggestive that the day is going to set and the night is advancing on the sea
push off	start sailing
smite	strike forcefully
sitting well in order	occupying their fixed places while sailing the boat
the surrounding furrows	as the boat moves on the sea it makes furrows or long lines in the water of the sea
until I die	all this he wants to achieve before his death
gulfs will wash us down	we may be drowned in the sea
touch the Happy Isles	in Greek mythology the Happy Isles were in the extreme west where the spirits of the dead heroes of the past lived.
Achilles	the great Greek hero who slew Hector before the war of Troy began. Ulysses thinks that the great spirit of Achilles must be living in the Happy Isles which were also called by the Greeks as "Fortunate Isles" or "Blest Isles".
Much is taken, much abides	Ulysses means to say that although owing to their old age much of their youthful strength has been lost still whatever strength in them still survives is yet enough to add further experiences and knowledge to their lives
abides	still exists.
Moved earth and heaven	now it is used as a phrase which means to be able to achieve even that which is usually thought to be unattainable.

One equal temper of heroic hearts	Ulysses says that all his mariners in their minds think alike about life and adventure and their hearts are equally brave and courageous
By time	by the passage of time
to strike	to fight or work hard
to seek	to seek knowledge about new lands
to find	to gather fresh knowledge and experience
yield	to surrender or be defeated.

### 1.3.4 Autobiographical Element

At one time Tennyson had said that “There is more about myself in *Ulysses*, which was written under the effect of loss and that all had gone by, but that still life must be fought out to the end”. The loss referred to in the foregoing lines is the death of his father in 1831 but the more important event for him was the death of his close and intimate friend Arthur Henry Hallem in 1933. Hallem had been Tennyson’s close Cambridge friend and Tennyson was emotionally tied to him. The two friends in their life discussed poetry and philosophy, had written poems and had travelled together in the south of France and Germany. The loss was also great because one of Tennyson’s sisters, Emilia, had been engaged to Hallem and he had to console her also. Tennyson had great hopes about his friend particularly in the field of politics and of his becoming an astute statesman.

After his father’s death Tennyson had to bear the responsibilities of the household and his father had twelve children and so he was called back to look after the family at Somersby in Lincolnshire. The family strain was too much for him and for some time it greatly told upon his physical and mental health but soon after he got over the depression. He realized that life must be lived and fought and with this determination his outlook began to improve and he reestablished his contacts with his friends and published the first volume of his poems in 1933, when he received the news of Hallem’s death.

But the total effect of all this on the poet’s mind was for the better because now he realized that for him there was no escape and that life had to be lived and fought and at this time the myth of Ulysses gave him great encouragement and like the mariners he “at this time he wrote that the poem “gave my fillings about the need of going forward and braving the struggle of life.”

### 1.3.5 Comparison with ‘*The Lotus Eaters*’

The two poems are companion pieces only to the extent that these are related to the life of the great hero *Ulysses* and his mariners and both of these refer to Homer’s epic *Odysseus*

but there the companionship ends. While in subject matter and its treatment they are quite unlike each other even so they represent the two conflicting tendencies of the Victorian times.

The Victorian age had witnessed the progress of Industrial Revolution and it was an age of unprecedented growth and prosperity in England. It was the fervent prayer of every Victorian that the sun of glory may never set on English soil. This invited different reactions from the Victorian public. While for some it meant that they instead of living ordinary life must live it artistically but others were inspired to improve the quality of their living by being the heroes of the old times— to strive, to toil and never to yield. For Dickens it was the best of times and it was also the worst of times while for Matthew Arnold the one world of faith had dwindled but the other one had been beset with doubts and questionings, while one set of opinion thought that they had enough of struggle and it was for them the time for rest and comfort from labour but the others felt that it was the whiteman's burden of civilising the barbaric nations and people. The two poems represent these two conflicting tendencies.

It must be noted that in Homer, Ulysses and his mariners, on their return from the Trojan war, come to the land of Lotos Eaters but there is no description of the land in Homer; while Tennyson takes the opportunity to present the dreamy mood of perfect contentment of the mariners who had once dared to defy the gods in the Trojan war.

Now having eaten the lotos fruit and seen the dreamy atmosphere of the falling waters of streams they forget that they have any responsibility towards their land and families. The atmosphere of the land presented by the poet is extremely bewitching and attracts the mariners.

---

## 1.4 Let Us Sum Up

---

Tennyson makes the best and maximum use of his poetic powers to present the sensuous mood and the weariness from labour and toil felt by the mariners and this is reminiscent of the Victorian Pre-Raphaelitism and the aesthetic movement of those times while the poem *Ulysses* represents the contrasting mindset of every new experience being but an arch which reveals that there is no end to gathering experience and making life longer and worth living. In doing so Ulysses's mariners are less the rugged heroes of Homeric description and times but acquire the tendencies of Tennyson's age and they appear more like the Victorian gentlemen.

---

## 1.5 Review Questions

---

1. Tennyson borrows the material for his *Ulysses* from different sources but makes it uniquely his own. Substantiate.
2. Reconstruct in your own words Ulysses's views about old age from Tennyson's poem of that name.
3. "Yet all experience is an arch where through. . . ." What is the meaning and significance

of these lines as representing a philosophy of life.

4. Ulysses as presented by Tennyson is more of a Victorian gentleman subscribing to the great ideal of progress and fulfillment of life. Substantiate.

---

## 1.6 Bibliography

---

1. W. H. Auden, Tennyson : a Selection and Introduction (London, 1946)
2. P.F. Baum, Tennyson Sixty years After (Lodnon, 1949),
3. A.C. Bradley, The Reaction against Tenysson (The English Assoication, 1917); repr. In A Miscellany (London, 1929)
4. A.C. Bradley, A commentary on Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' (rev. ed., London, 1920)
5. J.H. Buckley, Tennyson : the Growth of a Poet (London, 1960)
6. J. Kilhan, ed., Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson (London, 1960)
7. F.R. Leavis in New Bearing in English Poetry (London, 1932; Penguin)
8. F.L. Lucas, Tennyson (London, 1957)
9. Harold NicoIson, Tennyson : Aspects of his Life, Character and Poetry (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1960)
10. Courthope, W.J. A History of English poetry (London, 1905)
11. Faverty, F.E. The Victorian Poets : a Guide to Research (Cambridge, Mass., 1956)
12. Grierson, Sir H.J.C. Lyrical Poetry from Blake to Hardy (London, 1928)
12. Heath-Stubbs, J., The Darkling Plain (a study of the later fortunes of romanticism) (London, 1950)
13. Lieder, P.R. Eminent British Poets of the Nineteenth Century (2 vols, New York, 1938)
14. Lucas, F.L. Ten Victorian Poets (Cambridge, 1940) – rev. ed. Of Eight Victorian Poets (Cambridge, 1930)
15. Walker, H. The Greater Victorian Poets (London, 1893)
16. Walker, H. The Age of Tennyson (London, 1897)
17. Graham, Richard The Masters of Victorian Literature 1837-1897 (London, 1897)
18. Saintsbury, G. A. History of Ninteenth Century Literature (1780-1895) (London, 1896)
19. Saintsbury G. The later Nineteenth Century (Edinburgh, 1997)
20. Vines, S. A. Hundred Years of English Literature 1830-1940 (London, 1950)

## UNIT-2

---

### TENNYSON : LOTUS EATERS

---

#### Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Tennyson and His Important Works
- 2.3 Characteristics of Victorian Literature
- 2.4 Text of the Poem The Lotus Eaters
- 2.5 Linewise Summary and Word Meanings
- 2.6 The Greek Gods
- 2.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.8 Review Questions
- 2.9 Bibliography

---

#### **2.1 Objectives**

---

This poem is in the nature of a Choric Song which is sung by all the persons present at a particular place and time and all of them present their feeling and emotions commonly experienced. Here the singers are all Ulysses's marine companions. All these mariners are weary of voyaging and are tempted by the bewitching atmosphere of the Lotus land. In the poem they seek an escape from all their duties and liabilities though it is only because of the effect of their having tasted the Lotus fruit. The word Lotus must not be confused with the flower Lotus which is well known to the Indian students. You will also be introduced here to the concept of Greek gods who are thought to be very different from the Christian God who is only and always one whereas the Greek, like the Indian, gods are many and by nature they were wanton and malicious and were always scheming against the good of man kind.

---

#### **2.1 Introduction**

---

The general impression about the movement known as the Romantic Revival is that it ended with the enthronement of Queen Victoria or thereabout but the fact is that it continued well into the Victorian age. Keats, among the poets of the Romantic Revival, has greatly influenced the later poets and his pictorial qualities, his sensuousness, his love of nature and his tension free world of escapism are some of the characteristics that are abundantly met in Tennyson's present poem the Lotus Eaters.



---

## 2.2 Tennyson and his Important works

---

Poems, Chiefly Lyrical (1930)

- Mariana

Lady Clara Vere de Vere (1832)

From Poems (1833)

- The Lotus-Eaters
- The Lady of Shalott (1832, 1842)

Pems (1842) :

- Locksley Hall

- Tithonus

- “Ulysses” (1833)

The Princess (1847)

- “Tears, Idle Tears”

In Memoriam A.H.H. (1850)

- Ring Out, Wild Bells (1850)
- The Charge of the Light Brigade (1854)
- Enoch Arden (1862)
- Idylls of the King (Composed 1833-1874)
- Locksley Hall Sixty Years, After (1886)
- Crossing the Bar (1889)

---

## 2.3 Characteristics of Victorian Literature

---

Tennyson is deemed to be the representative Victorian poet. This is because more than any other writer of the age he represents some of the well known characteristics and tendencies of his age and times. These can roughly be enumerated here.

1. It may be thought that with the Victorian age, its preceding age of Romantic Revival comes to an end. But in reality it is not so. In some sense the tendencies of the Romantic Revival continued well into the Victorian era with some alterations and necessary modifications. Among the poets of the Romantic Revival, Wordsworth and Keats, and particularly the latter exercised great influence on the poetry of the Victorian age. Keats’s pictorial, sensuous quality and particularly his nature poetry which material-

ized into the theory of art for art's sake had a powerful influence on the poets of Pre-Raphaelite movement such as Rossetti and Swinburne. Keats's theory of art for art's sake finds maturity in the aestheticism of Walter Pater which soon degraded into the decadence and fin-de-siècle tendencies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in writers like Oscar Wilde, Swinburne, Dowson and others.

2. The other important characteristics of the Victorian age is the conflict between science and religion. In 1859 Charles Darwin's book on *The Origin Of Species* had been published and it greatly told upon the question of faith in God and the well being of the universe. According to the Bible man was created in the image of God and he is the crown and glory of universe, placed as he is in the centre of the creation. Darwin on the strength of his exquisitely graded data and his theory of evolution could convincingly demonstrate that man was not created in the image of God but has resulted from the scum of the sea and through centuries of evolution has attained his present position. Nature follows the principle of evolution according to its tenets of the survival of the fittest and of natural selection. According to him struggle for existence in nature is always going on unabated and while the best only survive the weaker ones are naturally wiped out.
3. All this gave a new dimension to Wordsworthian concept of nature. For Wordsworth nature was still chaste and untarnished and perfectly capable of meeting all the basic requirements of life but he was also conscious of the fact that Christianity has made man materialistic. He registered his complaint against Christianity in his sonnet **The World is too much with us**. For Wordsworth though it was still the happy go-lucky merry gold agrarian natural England that it had always been but now he could also hear the shrieking wheels of the Industrial movement of the cities and regretted what man has made of man and for all these reasons he intensely wished to be a Pagan "suckl'd in the creed outworn" but for the Victorians Industrial Revolution had become a living reality from which no escape was really possible. Thus while Browning stoutly held on to the Christian belief that "God is in heaven / All's right with the world" but others unlike him believed that Browning looked only at the lower side of the glass being full of water but he could not see the other half that was empty. So Tennyson made his Lotos eating mariners take an oath that they would not return to their land where every thing must have changed for the worst. The mariners accordingly prefer to stay like Greek gods smiling at human grief. Hardy contradicted Browning by retorting that God is not in heaven / All's not right with the world. Hardy imagines god tied to the branch of a tree hanging downwards, his eyes and mind gone first and in nature he discovered that there is no peace but fierce struggle for existence continuously going on unabated. Instead of any divine order, the universe is being governed by strong passions and elemental forces and all sense of justice has been thrown to the winds. Important tragic characters in Hardy are governed by their passions and impulsiveness. The naked play of the elemental forces is to be conspicuously noted in the stormy

Bronte sisterhood of Emily and Charlotte.

4. The Romantic Revival had been conspicuous by the absence of the dramatic form of any kind. There was hardly any play written during the period and though the Victorian age is equally conspicuous by the absence of any stageable plays yet there are enough of verse plays. This age can also be noted for the revival of a verse form known as the dramatic monologue. Tennyson's **Ulysses** has been written in the dramatic monologue form and Browning's poems show a marked preference for this form of verse writing. For Wordsworth all the characters whether a leech-gatherer or a highland lass were part of nature and they had no distinct personality of their own apart from that of nature. The other poets of the Romantic Revival invariably identified themselves with nature and articulated their feelings and emotions through the objects of nature. Thus nature and people had been inseparable. But during the Victorian times men and women had been conscious of their own individuality. The Romantic Revival celebrated simple and pure Gothic kind of love which was love for its own sake and there was no consideration of sex in their love. But sex acquires an important place and consideration in matters of love and marriage. There are examples of sex politics and extra-marital relationships as that of Wildieve's in Hardy's **The Return of Native** or of a Becky Sharp in Thackeray's **Vanity Fair**.
5. Another characteristic of the Victorian literature is its interest in the psychology and particularly the motive analysis of a character who is either the protagonist of the dramatic monologue form or a character in a novel. There is no formal drama but dramatic situations prevail and placed in a dramatic situation the character begins to unfold his reasons for his having committed the particular deed. The novelist also as an omniscient observer informs us about the character and his deed in that situation. The outcome of it is that the hush-hush attitude of the Victorian people is severely under attack. The false morality of the age is a matter of joke and fun. The morality which was vehemently espoused by the Victorians is nakedly exposed and along with it the language of prudery. For the Victorians the sense of decency demanded that sex matters should not be publicly discussed. The sense of decency demanded that the word "naked", for example, should not be used in public. But the same could be nicely uttered as "unclothed". The Victorian morality demanded that girls irrespective of their age ought to be wholly innocent and so the Victorian concept of woman as a doll was quite popular. This concept of woman was rudely shocked by characters like Becky Sharp and Eustacia Vye and many others in the contemporary novels. The contrast among Victorian women characters is usually between the simple Victorian doll and the audacious and daring woman.
6. Thus the Victorian world consisted of sharp and uncompromising contraries. The theory of art for art's sake was opposed by the theory of art for life's sake and both of them are present in the two poems of Tennyson, that is, **Lotus Eaters** and **Ulysses**. There

is also the contrast of the Darwinian world and that of the Bible, that of Christianity and Paganism or of Pantheism, that of the concept of woman as a doll against her determined counterpart.

7. But between these two contrasting worlds is the figure of a poet and critic like that of Matthew Arnold who regrets the fact that the world is a rudderless boat. The powerful world of faith and certainty has gone but that of disbelief and agnosticism has not been fully established; "There lives more faith in honest doubt" wrote Tennyson. For Arnold the sea of faith which was once to the full has much receded and there are no clear values anywhere in sight. He therefore advises his Scholar Gypsy not to come in contact with the prevailing tendencies of his times. Thus in Tennyson also we find that after death, the lucky ones who go to heaven instead of the many who go to hell and the former acquire this attitude of indifference to the miseries of this world.

Blight and famine, plague and earthquakes

Roaring deeps and fiery sands

Clanging fights and flaming towns and sinking ships

and praying hands,

But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song

Steaming up, a lamentation and a tale of wrong

Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong.

---

## 2.4 Text of the poem 'The Lotus Eaters'

---

### I

"Courage!" he said, and pointed toward the land,

"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."

In the afternoon they came unto a land

In which it seemèd always afternoon.

All round the coast the languid air did swoon,

Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.

Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;

And, like a downward smoke, the slender stream

Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

9

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,  
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;  
And some through wavering lights and shadows broke,  
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.  
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow  
From the inner land; far off, three mountaintops,  
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,  
Stood sunset-flush'd; and, dew'd with showery drops,  
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse. 18

The charmèd sunset linger'd low adown  
In the red West: through mountain clefts the dale  
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down  
Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale  
And meadow, set with slender galingale;  
A land where all things always seem'd the same!  
And round about the keel with faces pale,  
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,  
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came. 27

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,  
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave  
To each, but whoso did receive of them  
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave  
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave  
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,  
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;  
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,  
And music in his ears his beating heart did make. 36

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,  
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;  
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,  
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore  
Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,  
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam,  
Then some one said, "We will return no more";  
And all at once they sang, "Our island home  
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam." 45

### CHORIC SONG

There is sweet music here that softer falls  
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,  
Or night-dews on still waters between walls  
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;  
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,  
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;  
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.  
Here are cool mosses deep,  
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,  
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,  
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep." 56

### II

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,  
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,  
While all things else have rest from weariness?  
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,  
We only toil, who are the first of things,  
And make perpetual moan,

Still from one sorrow to another thrown:

Nor ever fold our wings,

And cease from wanderings,

Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;

Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,

“There is no joy but calm!”

Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things? 69

### III

Lo! in the middle of the wood,

The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud

With winds upon the branch, and there

Grows green and broad, and takes no care,

Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon

Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow

Falls, and floats adown the air.

Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,

The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,

Drops in a silent autumn night.

All its allotted length of days

The flower ripens in its place,

Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,

Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

83

### IV

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,

Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.

Death is the end of life; ah, why

Should life all labour be?

Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,

And in a little while our lips are dumb.  
Let us alone. What is it that will last?  
All things are taken from us, and become  
Portions and parcels of the dreadful past.  
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have  
To war with evil? Is there any peace  
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?  
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave  
In silence; ripen, fall and cease:  
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease. 98

V

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,  
With half-shut eyes ever to seem  
Falling asleep in a half-dream!  
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,  
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;  
To hear each other's whisper'd speech;  
Eating the Lotos day by day,  
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,  
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;  
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly  
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;  
To muse and brood and live again in memory,  
With those old faces of our infancy  
Heap'd over with a mound of grass,  
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass! 114

VI



Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,  
And dear the last embraces of our wives  
And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd change:  
For surely now our household hearths are cold,  
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:  
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.  
Or else the island princes over-bold  
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings  
Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,  
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.  
Is there confusion in the little isle?  
Let what is broken so remain.  
The Gods are hard to reconcile:  
'Tis hard to settle order once again.  
There is confusion worse than death,  
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,  
Long labour unto aged breath,  
Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars  
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars. 133

## VII

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,  
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)  
With half-dropt eyelid still,  
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,  
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly  
His waters from the purple hill—  
To hear the dewy echoes calling  
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine—

To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling  
Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!  
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,  
Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine. 145

### VIII

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:  
The Lotos blows by every winding creek:  
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone:  
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone  
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is blown.  
We have had enough of action, and of motion we,  
Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge was seething free,  
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in the sea.  
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,  
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined  
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.  
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd  
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curl'd  
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world:  
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,  
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,  
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and prayinghands.  
But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song  
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,  
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;  
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,  
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,  
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;

Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whisper'd—down in hell  
 Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,  
 Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.  
 Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore  
 Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;  
 O, rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more. 175

---

## 2.5 Summary and word meanings

---

### Lines 1 to 9 :- Summary

One of Ulysses's mariners, after a weary journey on the seas, points to a land that comes into his sight and addressing his companions tells them that soon the high wave will take their boat to that land. The poet then describes the land of the lotos eaters and having reached there Ulysses' companions find that it is a pleasant land and that the air there is moving slowly which looks like the breathing of a tired man who has fallen asleep and while dreaming in sleep breathes very slowly. The moon there was standing full in the sky and there was also a thin stream which fell from a rock and then stood there for a while before moving downward further.

### **Word Meaning :-**

he	Ulysses
land	land of the lotos eaters.
mounting	rising high
afternoon	the time of rest & happiness
coast	sea shore
languid	lazy
breathing like ... dream	like the person who is tired and has fallen asleep and sees a dream while breathing restfully.
downward smoke	smoke that comes downward instead of going up
slender	thin
pause	stop for a little while

### Lines 10 to 18 :- Summary

Ulysses and his companions find that it was a land of many streams some of which

looked like thin veil of gauze slowly moving like a lazy sheet of foam. They also saw that the mountain peaks were covered with old snow on which the light of the sun was falling. There were pine trees on which the drops of water were there and the heads of those trees were upward in the sky.

**Word Meaning :-**

slow drooping	falling down slowly
veil	covering for the face (here it means covered with)
wavering	moving this way or that
rolling	moving
slumberous	as though in asleep
foam	particles of water
aged snow	snow that had settle on them for many years

**Lines (l.l. 19 to 27):- Summary**

It was the land where the lotos eaters lived. The sun at that time was going to set in the west but it was taking some time to do so. The valley was in the middle of that land between the mountains the margins of which were yellow because of the light of the setting sun falling on them and around those valleys were palm trees. There were meadows covered with soft galingale grass but the land was always the same with no changes being visible.

**Word Meanings :-**

charmed	magically spelled
linger'd	stayed
red west	the west was red because of the light of the setting sun
clefts	cleavages in the hills
dale	valley
down	high land
border'd	surrounded
plam	name of a very tall tree
winding	moving around
galingale	grass that grows on wet lands
Keel	here it means the mariners' ship

### **Lines 28 to 36):- Summary**

The residents of the lotos land when they came near the mariners were holding branches of the lotus tree and on those branches there were lotos flowers and fruits. As they came there they gave those branches to each of the mariners. The mariners as soon as they tasted the fruit became completely changed men. Though the waves of the sea were moving towards them yet to them it seemed that they were moving away from them to unknown and far away shores and when those mariners spoke to one another, their voices too had changed. Their voices became very thin as a result of eating lotos fruits and it seemed as if they were speaking from their graves and it also appeared as if those mariners were sleeping although in reality they were awake and not sleeping.

#### **Word Meaning :-**

Stems	tough branches of the lotos trees
laden	covered
gushing	coming out forcefully
rave	cry aloud (it refers to the sounds which the waves of the sea were making)
alien shores	other and unknown sea shores
spake	old past tense form of the word 'speak'
voices from the grave	as the mariners ate the lotos fruits their voices became very thin and when they spoke it appeared as if they were speaking from their graves
deep asleep	sleeping soundly
and music in his ears... make	their heartbeats appeared to them as sweet music.

### **Lines 37 to 45 Summary :**

Having eaten the Lotus fruit the marines lay down upon the sand of the sea of the Lotus land and as it was the evening time the poet calls it the time between the sun and the moon. Under the effect of Lotus fruit though they began to think of their native land and of their wives and children yet now they had no will left in them to go and meet them. In the meantime one of them cried aloud that they would return no more to their land and people and the same sentiment was echoed by his other companions. Such was the effect of the Lotus fruit on them.

#### **Word Meaning :**

evermore	every minute more,
weary	tired

weary the oar	inflect the oar was not tired but the mariners were tired and did not want to go to the sea again.
barren foam	the foam of the sea on which there was no boat to be seen.
wandering fields	field here refers to the surface of the sea on which they had wandered in their boat.
beyond the waves	far away from the waves.
roam	move about on the sea.
petals from blown rose	the flower petals that are blown by the wind.
ivies	plural of ivy which is a dark coloured creeper
weep	refers to the dews upon them.

**Lines 46 to 56 Summary :**

Then all the marines began to sing together in one voice. They sang about the music of the lotos land and the music on their years fell more softly than the Lotos petals falling on the grass and equally tenderly fell the night dews on the motionless waters of the lake between the dark granite walls of the mountain. It is the effect of the music of that land that calls for the comforting sleep from the happy skies. There were the ivy creepers which were growing among the cool mosses and the dews were falling from the long leaved flowers growing in the waters of those streams and there was also the smell of the poppy plant growing among the ledges made in the rocks.

**Word Meaning :-**

granite	A kind of stone.
shadowy	of dark colour.
gleaming pass	the passage which is shingling due to the light of the setting sun falling on it.
still waters	waters that are motionless.
gentler	more softly
blissful skies	the term blissful is meant for sleep and not for the skies (sleep is often said to be blissful as it causes the death of each day's weariness)
deep	mosses that are thickly growing.
craggy	formed of rocks
ledges	shelf like places.

poppy

A sleep inducing plant.

### **Lines 57 to 69 Summary**

The mariners comparing their lives with the objects of nature complain that in nature all things have rest while man alone is destined to labour and has no rest. Man is said to be the best creation of nature yet he is always moving and working and unlike the birds cannot fold his wings for rest. He is never allowed to rest from labour nor allowed to enjoy the balmy sleep nor allowed to listen to his inner voice that says that in life there is peace but no joy. All in all man is never allowed to rest from toil.

### **Word Meaning**

weigh'd upon	overpowered
Heaviness	tiredness,
consumed	eaten away and destroyed,
sharp distress	great difficulties,
toil	hard work,
first of things	man is said to be the best creation of the world,
perpetual	unending,
moan	complaining or being never satisfied
fold our wings.... wanderings	the image here is that of a bird which always flies but never takes rest,
fold	close
cease	stop
steep	to render cool by applying,
slumber's	sleep that has been personified,
harken	listen,
balm	lotion
inner sprit	the voice of conscience,
the roof and crown of things	man is said to be the best and the foremost of all creatures of the world,

### **Lines 72 to 83 Summary**

According to the mariners in nature all plants naturally grow into their leaves and buds which become flowers and fruits without any labour on their part. Nature does all the work for

them. The wind, the sun, the moon and dews at night make the fruit juicy and apples are filled with juice during the autumn season. All things in nature have their allotted days : they ripen, fall and die and for all this they are least required to labour.

**Word meanings :**

lo	look
folded	which has not yet turned into flower
woo'd from	before it grows into
there	in time
broad	fully developed
sun-steeped	bathed in the light of the sun
nightly	at night
dew-fed	fed upon or covered with dewdrops
sweeten'd	made sweet
waxing	growing fat
over-mellow	overripe and becoming greatly juicy
drops	falls down
allotted	fixed
ripens	becomes ripe into the form of fruit,
fades	loses its colour and finally dies,
hath no toil	does not have to work hard,
fast-rooted	utterly fixed
fruitful soil	the soil that turns flowers into fruit

**Lines 84-98 Summary**

The mariners in the Lotos land are of the view that there is no pleasure or joy in life and there is all the pleasure in having rest and not working at all either in the form of death or of dreamful rest. It is no use struggling in life because all things are heading towards their death. Death is the ultimate goal of life and sleep and rest are different forms of death. So, death or rest is preferable to life and living.

**Word meanings :-**

Vaulted serving as a vault or top



end	goal or destination
driveth onward fast	time is pushing all things towards their end
our lips are dump	we shall die
dreadful past	past is dreadful because all things have ceased to live
ripen towards the grave	all things grow old only to die
dreadful ease	death is dreadful ease because though it gives rest from activity yet we fear the ease that death brings

### **Lines 99-114 Summary**

The mariners now imagine that life should be full of dreams which means it is half awakened and half asleep. This kind of life they can have on the lotos land only while eating the lotos and growing old and doing nothing but watching the waves of the sea and see them striking against each other into fine creamy sprays. While on the lotos land they can afford to be influenced totally by the sad memories of the people of their earlier days and in imagination they can think about them who in bodies are now buried and covered by grass and all that remains of them now is only two handful of dust stored in an urn of brass.

### **Word meaning :-**

How sweet it were	a rhetoric way of saying that it would be extremely interesting and sweet
downward stream	stream flowing downward
yonder	there at some distance
myrr	the name of a fragrant bush
height	on high
whisper'd speech	speech in low tones
crisping	becoming small
ripples	waves moving in big lines
crisping ripples... on the shore	big waves of the sea becoming very small as they strike against the coast of the sea,
curve	bending of the body
melancholy	during sadness a man forgets all sense of anger and in mind and spirit becomes mild,
muse and brood	both the words mean thinking deeply and intensely

with those old faces of our infancy      our former friends and relatives who are now buried  
in their graves

two handful...urn of brass      those friends and relatives of our earlier days who are now  
reduced to handful of ashes and those ashes are now pre-  
served in an urn of brass.

### **Lines 115 to 133 Summary**

The mariners now say that the memory of their wives and their warm embraces and tears are comforting to us in thought but now all must have changed in Ithaca. If they return home they may not find a warm welcome because it is long time since they departed from their homes and wives and their figures have now much changed and in their Island they may be taken to be ghosts by their people. It is equally possible that suitors from the nearby Islands have usurped all that once belonged to them. It is equally possible that there has been disorder in their kingdom in their absence and now they may not be in a position to restore order there. The fact must also be considered that because of the long war and looking at pole star for long hours for the guidance of their boat their eyesight has become very dull. For all these reasons they give up the idea of their home return.

### **Word Meanings :-**

last embraces	embraces at the time of their departure from their wives
our households hearths are cold	Our wives must have been taken away by the neighbouring princes and emperors
our looks are strange	from youth we have turned into old age
to trouble joy	our people will not feel joy on seeing us
have eaten our substance	have taken away all that once belonged to us
minstrels	bards
sings... as half forgotten things	we are treated in their songs as great heroes of the past and not of the present
broken	destroyed or forgotten
reconcile	come to terms
long labour	on reaching home we will find long struggle and labour again,
sore	unpleasant
hearts	our hearts and bodies
pilot star	pole star (the mariners used to find the direction on the sea by looking at the pole star)

### **Lines 134-145 Summary**

The mariners sing to themselves that it is extremely pleasant to lie down here on the flowers of amaranth and moly under the dark and holy sky and they with half shut eyes can look at the emerald colour waters falling from the purple hills that bring ringing sound from the caves which are covered with vine creepers and it is also really very pleasant to sea and hear from this distance the waves of the sea which are shining because of the bright sun while they themselves are resting under the shadow of the tall pine trees.

### **Word Meaning :**

propt	supported while reclining
amaranth	the legendry flower that never fades
moly	a mythical magical flower
half dropt	half shut
haven	sky
drawing	moving
purple	dark yellow
dewy echoes	the sounds of falling waters
thick-twined vine	the vine creepers that have covered the caves,
emerald	a stone of green colour
divine	heavenly
acanthus-wreath	the cluster of the acanthus plants
brine	sea
pine	tree which is very tall

### **Lines 146-175 Summary**

The mariners now sing that the lotos are seen blooming on the Island on every hill top and creek of the hill and low and soft wind is blowing all the time and there are spicy plants on the hill slopes. Remembering their past sea life they say that they had enough toil, movement and adventure. They have been rolled over in their boat from one side to the other as the boat was rolled by the waves of the sea while the sea monster spouted more water into the sea. They suggest that they must take an oath never to return from that place but to permanently live there. They say that on this Island they will live like Greek gods and will not listen to the cries and miseries of mankind who have to suffer famine, plague, earthquake, troublesome sea and burning sand. Like gods they will drink nectar instead of water and will be indifferent to the pains and worries of human beings. Like gods again they will have pleasure in listening to

the cries and moans of the people on earth. They will laugh at the hard labour which the human beings have to undertake for the ordinary necessities of food and drink and they will also like to see human beings dying and being killed. They will be happy to see human beings after their death going to hell and suffering their worst. For all these reasons they decide not to return to their homes and not to lose the blissful life they have on the lotos Island.

**Word Meanings :-**

barren	on which nothing can grow
peak	hill top
winding creek	the circling rivulets
mellower	softer
alley lane	lane or narrow way on which none walks
Spicy downs	slopes on which spices grow
lotos dust	the pollen of the lotos flowers
actions	fighting in wars
motions	movements and journeys
starboard	the middle of a ship
larboard	both ( right and left) sides of a ship
rolled	carried away
surge	the rising wave
equal	uniformly one
reclining	lying or having rest
they	refers to the Greek gods
bolts	thunder
hurl'd	thrown
curl'd	surrounded
girdled	encircled
gleaming world	the world of the lights of the sun, the moon and other stars
blight	destruction
famine	starvation

clanging fights	fighting with weapons that make hard sounds when striking against others.
steaming up	rising up
cleave	is attached
enduring	hard to bear
perish	die
anguish	pain and suffering
Elysian	heavenly
dwell	live
asphodel	a very beautiful flower in haven which on earth is called, daffodils.

---

## 2.6 The Greek Gods

---

The mariners sing to themselves in the poem that they will not leave the lotos land and live there perfectly happy like the Greek gods in that land. They then describe how the Greek gods live in heaven. According to them Greek gods live a perfectly comfortable life and for water they have sweet nectar to drink and have no work to do but lie on the beds of the most tender, fragrant and beautiful flowers. Their homes in heaven are made of gold in which they live and those houses are surrounded by the curling clouds and the lights of all the shining stars falling on them.

Though they themselves live quite pleasantly yet their nature is mischievous and their attitude towards mankind is highly unsympathetic and even antagonistic. They bear a great grudge against men and they are all the time scheming against the happiness of men. They are of the view that since man is born he must suffer and work day and night and have no rest in life. For the sake of survival he must sow the seeds, look after the harvest and at the end of it collect and store the corn in order to provide himself with food throughout the year. In times of adversity mankind with folded hands weep and pray to those gods for help but the gods instead of helping men laugh at them and show no sign of mercy or sympathy for them. When the towns are destroyed by fire or by earth-quaeks or the ships sink into the sea the gods become very happy and such moments are occasions of merriment for them. They are never happy at the good fortune, if any, of men and they can kill human beings for it is their sport. Thus Greek gods are unsympathetic, mischievous and malicious.

---

## 2.7 Let Us Sum Up

---

Thus we see that Tennyson's was a master craftsmen of poetry. For his poetry he employed a wide range of subjects which incorporated classical myths and medieval legends,

nature and many domestic situations and themes of contemporary interests but all these have a strong colouring and stamp of the age to which he belonged. The influence of Romantic poets and particularly that of Keats is prominently there on his poetry. During his childhood and school time he had been exposed to the publications of much Romantic Poetry and all this is well evidenced in the richness of his imagery in much of his descriptive pieces. The rhythm of his poems is haunting and many lines of his poems are used as common and ordinary quotations.

---

## 2.8 Review Questions

---

1. Discuss the pictorial qualities of Tennyson's poem Lotos Eater.
2. Tennyson is in no way inferior to Keats in the treatment of sensuousness in his poem Lotos Eaters.
3. What kind of the philosophy of life does the Choric Song in Lotos Eaters present.
4. Recount in your own words all those reasons that the mariners in Tennyson's poem Lotos Eater suggest for their not returning to their land and homes.
5. What are Ulysses's views about old age? How would you personally react to them?

---

## 2.9 Bibliography

---

1. W. H. Auden, Tennyson : a Selection and Introduction (London, 1946)
2. P.F. Baum, Tennyson Sixty years After (London, 1949),
3. A.C. Bradley, The Reaction against Tennyson (The English Association, 1917); repr. In A Miscellany (London, 1929)
4. A.C. Bradley, A commentary on Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' (rev. ed., London, 1920)
5. J.H. Buckley, Tennyson : the Growth of a Poet (London, 1960)
6. J. Kilhan, ed., Critical Essays on the Poetry of Tennyson (London, 1960)
7. F.R. Leavis in New Bearing in English Poetry (London, 1932; Penguin)
8. F.L. Lucas, Tennyson (London, 1957)
9. Harold Nicolson, Tennyson : Aspects of his Life, Character and Poetry (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1960)
10. Courthope, W.J. A History of English poetry (London, 1905)
11. Faverty, F.E. The Victorian Poets : a Guide to Research (Cambridge, Mass., 1956)
12. Grierson, Sir H.J.C. Lyrical Poetry from Blake to Hardy (London, 1928)
12. Heath-Stubbs, J., The Darkling Plain (a study of the later fortunes of romanticism) (London, 1950)

13. Lieder, P.R. Eminent British Poets of the Nineteenth Century (2 vols, New York, 1938)
  14. Lucas, F.L. Ten Victorian Poets (Cambridge, 1940) – rev. ed. Of Eight Victorian Poets (Cambridge, 1930)
  15. Walker, H. The Greater Victorian Poets (London, 1893)
  16. Walker, H. The Age of Tennyson (London, 1897)
  17. Graham, Richard The Masters of Victorian Literature 1837-1897 (London, 1897)
  18. Saintsbury, G. A. History of Nineteenth Century Literature (1780-1895) (London, 1896)
  19. Saintsbury G. The later Nineteenth Century (Edinburgh, 1997)
  20. Vines, S. A. Hundred Years of English Literature 1830-1940 (London, 1950)
-

## UNIT-3

---

### ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING : POEMS

---

#### Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 About the Age
- 3.3 About the Poet : Elizabeth Barrett Browning
- 3.4 Detailed Explanation of Texts
  - 3.4.1 Beloved, My Belived
  - 3.4.2 How Do I Love Thee ?
  - 3.4.3 The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point
  - 3.4.4 The Deserted Garden
  - 3.4.5 The Cry of The Children
  - 3.4.6 Aurora Leigh
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Review Questions
- 3.7 Bibliography

---

### 3.0 Objectives

---

This unit on Elizabeth Barrett Browning will introduce the poet in the context of the literary age and its special social, economic conditions. The context of a writer plays a role in shaping ideas, values and way of writing. This unit provides information about the age, the life of the author and then discusses some of her well-known poems. Elizabeth Barrett Browning was able to put her ideas in short forms like the sonnet and lyrics. She has also written some long narrative poems. The purpose of discussing her longer poems is to let the student know about her skilful use of stories and character to deal with social evils, problems and ideas of her age. The longer texts are referred to briefly, and the summary of the theme is given.

In this unit one lyric and two sonnets are discussed and their full texts are provided. Of the longer poems, like '*The Runaway slave at Pilgrim's Point*' only extracts are provided here, and comments on the full text are given. *Aurora Leigh* and some other poems are also discussed very briefly.



---

### 3.1 Introduction

---

Elizabeth Barrett Browning stands among the best poets in English Literature. Among the Victorian writers she was respected and admired for her sensitive portrayal of the emotions of love, kindness, desire for freedom and equality. She is a Victorian in spirit because her concern with real life led by the weaker sections of society is very strong. But she is mainly a fine poet and her images, metaphors are surprisingly new and innovative. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poetry was admired for its skilful use of language.

As a poet she looked to the other writers before her - in the ancient and modern periods. Her sense of tradition of poetry is strongly reflected in her translations of Greek plays, rewriting and adaptation of myths from Greek, Latin and Christian mythology.

---

### 3.2 About the Age

---

The age in which Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote is one of the most creative and productive literary periods in English literature.

England gained an unprecedented prosperity in the nineteenth century. Two of the main causes were the expansion of its Empire all over the world and the rapid industrialization within England. Its political and economic power increased tremendously during this century.

The middle period of the nineteenth century also saw the increase in the number of unemployed men and beggars. The increase in the number of factory workers brought the poor people from the villages to the cities, where the number of slum dwellings also increased. The unhealthy conditions in which women and children worked in factories, on streets and within homes was noticed by several writers. Charles Dickens, Charles Lamb, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Charlotte Bronte are among the many writers who portrayed the pathetic condition of the poor sections of the society. They tried to awaken the conscience of these holding important powerful positions within the Parliament and government. Although laws were made to help the farmers, poor and working classes, the situation remained grim and harsh.

The Victorian period (1830-1880) was spread over most of the nineteenth century. It is marked by a keen interest in religious reform through changes in personal life practice. Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin are among its leading thinkers who deliberated upon social and moral values. The tendency to treat science with a greater respect than the religious texts, even the Bible, created a general sense of loss of faith. The publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* in 1857 brought the whole matter to a head, when the stories of the Bible became open to doubt and reconsideration. Most of the literary writers of this period Alfred Tennyson, Elizabeth Gaskell, Robert, Elizabeth Brownings. Charles Dickens and George Eliot were seriously religious. But they have dealt in their writings with the crisis of faith that a large number of people experienced during this

period.

This period is remarkable for the large number of good novelists, poets, prose writers that appeared in it. Novel became the most popular literary form as there was an increase in the number of educated men and women. Poetry of high excellence was written by poets like Tennyson, Brownings (Robert and Elizabeth Barrett), Mathew Arnold. These poets wrote long narrative poems, depicting social conditions or debating issues of religion, women's education and vocation, childhood. They have written equally beautiful love poems using lyric, sonnet and ode forms.

---

### 3.3 About the Poet

---

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861) is one of the most talented and sensitive poets of her age. A Romantic in her taste and ideas, she lived mostly during the Victorian period. She combines the idealistic fervour and keen love for nature of the Romantics with the serious involvement with social and political issues and the desire to work for changing the real life conditions of the poor and the weaker sections of human society that some of the Victorian writers and thinkers had.

Born in a family that had lived in Jamaica, West Indies, and earned money from plantation and slaves, Elizabeth was brought up in England. Her father, Edward Barrett Moulton Barrett, brought his family to England and provided good education to the children. Elizabeth was the eldest in a family of 12 children. She had developed keen interest in writing poetry since her childhood. She pursued her study of literature with great dedication. At the age of ten years, she read Shakespeare's plays and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Elizabeth Barrett Browning started composing poems when she was twelve years old. Her father provided her the best teachers for her study of the Classical languages and literature. Owing to a spinal injury that she received while horse-riding she was forced to lead a life of an invalid since her fifteenth year. Gradually, she stopped moving out of the house unless under unavoidable circumstances.

One of these circumstances was created when she decided to marry Robert Browning, who was at that time a young poet less known than her. She had become fairly well-known with her works like *Poems* (1844), *A Drama of Exile and other Poems* (1845), and attracted the attention of Robert Browning in 1844. A correspondence started between the two of them and they exchanged some 574 letters over the next twenty months. Finally they decided to marry without the permission of Elizabeth's father who did not allow any of his children to marry. Elizabeth and Robert Browning got married in Italy in 1846, and lived there for the rest of Eliz's life. She wrote some of her best poems during this period. *Sonnets From the Portugese* written before her marriage, were now published (1850). They are considered by many of her critics and readers to be her best work. The imagery in these poems has been compared to Shakespeare's and her use of the Italian Sonnet form is as successful as Petrarch's (the famous Italian poet of the Renaissance period).

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (EBB) has expressed her strong sympathies for those exploited by the rich and powerful. She condemned the dehumanizing impact of slavery, which was practiced widely all over Europe, America and the colonies of the European countries. In her poem 'The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point' the agony suffered by a black woman is presented in full intensity, as she stands at the place which symbolizes the American people's commitment to freedom for all human beings. Her long text *Aurora Leigh* (1857) a novel-in-verse is now acknowledged to be a prime feminist text. The young woman poet struggles to pursue a literary career. *Casa Guidi Windows* is a collection of poems about Italians oppressed by the Austrians.

Elizabeth suffered from ill health for a few years she spent in Italy. She died in Florence on June 29, 1861.

---

### 3.4 Detailed Explanation of Texts

---

Sonnet No. 20 (*Sonnet From the Portugese*).

#### 3.4.1 Beloved, my Beloved.....

Beloved, my Beloved, when I think  
That thou wast in the world a year ago,  
What time I sate alone here in the snow  
And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink  
No moment at thy voice... but, link by link,  
Went counting all my chains, as if that so  
They never could fall off at any blow  
Struck by thy possible hand... why, thus I drink  
Of life's great cup of wonder! Wonderful,  
Never to feel thee thrill the day or night  
With personal act or speech,- nor ever cull  
Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white  
Thou sawest growing ! Atheists are as dull,  
Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

#### Introduction to the Poem :

*Sonnets from the Portugese* is a collection of 44 sonnets dedicated to Robert Brown-

ing, her husband. Written before marriage the collection was published in 1851. It reverses the traditional pattern of a (male) poet-lover wooing the unresponding or unattainable lady love. In these sonnets the female poet-lover woos her beloved. There are references to personal experiences, and feelings - of hope, fear betrayal, pain of an uncertain future and the deep sense of devotion, happiness etc., but the personal emotions are carefully presented in the form of conventional sonnet- the poet-lover expresses her love in a controlled form and tone.

**Explanation:**

The poet expresses her sense of wonder at the fact that though she had been alive she had no knowledge of the existence of her beloved a year before she met him. She imagines that she is sitting alone, surrounded by snow on all sides. In such a landscape, there were no footprints or sound to mark his presence or coming. In her loneliness she counted the links of all the chains that held her captive. In the last 6 lines her sense of surprise at coming to know him, becomes a justification in believing the possibility of love, even prior to one's actual knowledge/experience of love. Similarly unquestioning faith leads one to believe in the presence of God, even though one may not see Him.

**Analysis:**

The poem brings together belief in the possibility of love through imagination and knowledge of abstract ideas. Emotions and ideals can not be related only to physical, empirical and sensory experiences. One's knowledge does not depend on what one directly knows. Those who doubt the existence of God giving the reason of empirical reason are mocked at.

“Why thus I drink the great cup of wonder” - the line means: that the poet imagines life to be a cup from which she drinks the experiences. She now drinks (feels) the sense of wonder at her having lived life without knowing the beloved. After knowing the Beloved, she realises what a great change has come to her life. It is now full of joy and a sense of freedom.

“Nor ever cull..... growing” - the line means that the poet is surprised at her own lack of imagination; that she did not think about the presence or existence of a person like her Beloved from the beautiful objects around her, like the flowers. She did not have the foresight to think about love before she actually met him and began to love him.

The poet's sense of pleasant surprise at the discovery of the existence of the beloved contrasts with the lack of imagination in an atheist (one who does not believe in the existence of God). Faith and imagination fill life with new wonders and happiness. She contrasts the sadness in her life, which was like a bondage, to the happiness that has come with him.

### **3.4.2 How Do I Love Thee?**

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.

I love thee to the depth and breadth and height

My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of being and ideal grace.  
I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.  
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.

This sonnet, also from *Sonnets From Portugese*, is a simple love poem in which the poet tries to describe how much she loves her beloved. This is a convention in love poetry. She brings in the three dimensions of the universe - height, width and depth of all the space. As the love is experienced by her soul, the poet goes on to describe her love in terms of her innocence, faith and purity that her soul had. Finally the poet says love governs all the emotions of her heart - of happiness or unhappiness. She feels that her love would continue even beyond death.

The poet uses simple language to portray the deep current of emotion she feels. It is an unusual poem as it invites greater attention and repeated readings. Each line puts forth a different aspect of love - she loves "freely - as men strive for right", meaning that the act of striving for what is right is compared to the act of loving freely. The love is not only an emotional experience but a part of her self definition.

#### **Analysis :**

In these two sonnets the poet has used the Italian sonnet form. There are 2 sets of four lines making an octave (set of eight lines). The rhyme scheme is - abba abba. The last six lines (sestet) take the idea further, and use rhyme scheme - cde cde.

### **3.4.3 The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point**

#### **I**

I STAND on the mark beside the shore  
Of the first white pilgrim's bended knee

Where exile turned to ancestor,  
And God was thanked for liberty ;  
I have run through the night, my skin is as dark,  
I bend my knee down on this mark ...  
I look on the sky and the sea.

## II

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you !  
I see you come out proud and slow  
From the land of the spirits pale as dew,  
And round me and round me ye go !  
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run  
All night long from the whips of one  
Who in your names works sin and woe.

## III

And thus I thought that I would come  
And kneel here where ye knelt before,  
And feel your souls around me hum  
In undertone to the ocean's roar ;  
And lift my black face, my black hand,  
Here, in your names, to curse this land  
Ye blessed in freedom's, evermore.

## IV

I am black, I am black !  
And yet God made me, they say ;  
But if He did so, smiling back  
He must have cast His work away  
Under the feet of His white creatures,  
With a look of scorn, —that the dusky features

Might be trodden again to clay.

Since the beginning of her poetic career E.B. Browning had wanted to speak of love as a person, for a person, and also of the value of love in public actions. Social and political themes are found in several of her poems, such as 'The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point', the 'Cry of the Children', 'The City of the Children', 'A Curse for a Nation'. These poems deal mainly with the oppression of women and children in the rich countries, like England, America and other European countries.

"The Runaway Slave at the Pilgrims' Point" is one of her most memorable poems that dramatizes a slave woman's conflict between natural love for her infant and the grim realization of racial hatred and brutalities that thousands of black coloured men, women and children were experiencing all over the world in the 9th century. The slave speaks about the ghastly murder of her child that she has committed so that it may not become another white torturer of the blacks. She a black-coloured woman who has given birth to a child that is white, the colour of the master-owner whose white-colour the child has acquired.

The poem highlights the slave mother's long suffering under the white master who has forced a sexual relationship with her. Her husband, a black man has been killed as the two of them tried to escape from slavery. The woman narrates the way in which she has taken her child's life afraid that it will join the white people and act against its mother's community because of the different colours of their skins. The division of human beings and the discrimination, excessive exploitation using inhuman cruelties have created an America that is contrary to the vision of the Pilgrim Fathers, one of the first batches of European immigrants who came to that country. E.B. Browning uses the spot called Pilgrim's Point as a symbol of the dream of a new world with which these settlers had come. Standing at that point the slave woman asks some important questions about the grave injustices the white men are committing. Her narrative becomes an appeal for kindness, equal rights and forgiveness. She begins her story in anger and hatred and wants to curse the 'white' people for all the brutalities they have committed on the blacks. She remembers "Christ's seven wounds" received before his death. As he had forgiven his enemies, so does she. At the end she says "white men, I leave you all curse-free In my broken heart's disdain!"

#### **Explanation :**

The slave woman recounts her life's misery and the exploitation of all black people. As a woman she has been victim of physical abuse by her master and she has given birth to a white coloured child. In the first four stanzas we learn about America's first European settlers, who are known as Pilgrim Fathers. She imagines that the souls of these ancestors (of all Americans, including her) are standing around her at the place where she is now standing - known as the Pilgrim's Point.

She addresses them to save her from a white man who whips and tortures her, and commits sin. She is so full of anger and hatred against that man, and all the others like him that

she wants to curse the whole race, land and all those enjoying their freedom.

Even though she has suffered tremendously her faith in God's will and justice gives her moral strength. At the end of the poem, where she is seen to be gasping for breath and is probably dying, she forgives her tormentors and evil doers. Her image of Christ's charity helps her to move beyond anger and hatred.

### **Analysis :**

The poem ends on a note of charity and forgiveness, making the slave morally a better person than her oppressors. "The Runaway slave at the Pilgrim's Point" is one of E.B.Browning's most moving poems invoking the noble values of kindness among human beings. The poem is in the form of a **dramatic monologue**. The single speaker, the woman, keeps addressing those around her - the white men who are pursuing her, to catch her again. Their presence is noticed when she says

"For hark! I will tell you low... low...

I am black, you see, —— (xvii),

And when she says :

"Keep off! I brave you all at once —

I throw off your eyes like shakes that

sting!

You have killed the black eagle at nest,

I think :

Did you never stand still in your triumph and shrink

From the stroke of her wounded wing!" (xxx)

The speaker expresses her different feelings, of tenderness, shame threat, fear, anger. She questions vehemently the values proclaimed by the American people, and the white people's countries. The cruel deed that she has performed reflects the extent of degradation that she has suffered along with the other black skinned people in that country.

In the poem *The Runaway Slave.....* a black woman who is a slave of a white coloured farmer has run away from the plantation along with her husband, also a black coloured slave, and her child, who has white colour. The poem looks into the tragic division of human beings on the basis of the colour of their skin. As God is the maker of all human beings the woman thinks about His purpose in making the one race subjugated to the other.

### **3.4.4 The Deserted Garden**

I mind me in the days departed,



How often underneath the sun  
With childish bounds I used to run  
    To a garden long deserted.  
The beds and walks were vanished quite;  
And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,  
The greenest grasses Nature laid,  
    To sanctify her right.  
I called the place my wilderness,  
For no one entered there but I;  
The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,  
    And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,  
And spread their boughs enough about  
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,  
    But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me!  
I crept beneath the boughs, and found  
A circle smooth of mossy ground  
    Beneath a poplar tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,  
Bedropt with roses waxen-white  
Well satisfied with dew and light  
    And careless to be seen.

Long years ago it might befall,  
When all the garden flowers were trim,

The grave old gardener prided him

On these the most of all.

Some lady, stately overmuch,

Here moving with a silken noise,

Has blushed beside them at the voice

That likened her to such.

And these, to make a diadem,

She often may have plucked and twined,

Half-smiling as it came to mind

That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that lady proud,

A child would watch her fair white rose,

When buried lay her whiter brows,

And silk was changed for shroud!—

Nor thought that gardener (full of scorns

For men unlearned and simple phrase),

A child would bring it all its praise

By creeping through the thorns!

To me upon my low moss seat,

Though never a dream the roses sent

Of science or love's compliment,

I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see

The trace of human step departed :

Because the garden was deserted,  
The blither place for me!

Friends, blame me not ! a narrow ken  
Has childhood 'twixt the sun and sward :  
We draw the moral afterward —  
    We feel the gladness then.  
And gladdest hours for me did glide  
In silence at the rose-tree wall;  
A thrush made gladness musical  
    Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline  
To peck or pluck the blossoms white;  
How should I know but roses might  
    Lead lives as glad as mine.

To make my hermit-home complete,  
I brought clear water from the spring  
Praised in its own low murmuring, —  
    And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought, my likeness grew  
(Without the melancholy tale)  
To 'gentle hermit of the dale',  
    And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook  
Such minstrel stories; till the breeze

Made sounds poetic in the trees, —

And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write

I hear no more the wind athwart

Those trees,—nor feel that childish heart

Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,

My footstep from the moss which drew

Its fairy circle round : anew

The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse

The madrigals which sweetest are;

No more for me ! — myself afar

Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me ! when erst I lay

In that child's-nest so greenly wrought,

I laughed unto myself and thought

'The time will pass away'.

And still I laughed, and did not fear

But that, whene'er was past away

The childish time, some happier play

My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away,

And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,

Dear God, how seldom, if at all,

Did I look up to pray !

The time is past; — and now that grows

The cypress high among the trees,

And I behold white sepulchers

As well as the white rose,—

When graver, meeker thoughts are given,

And I have learnt to lift my face,

Reminded how earth's greenest place

The colour draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,

But more for Heavenly promise free,

That I who was, would shrink to be.

That happy child again.

**The Deserted Garden** was included in the volume titled **Miscellaneous Poems** published in 1850. It is a romantic lyrical recollection of the lost sweetness, innocence and happiness that is associated with childhood. The garden was the secret place to which she would go as a little girl and spend time thinking about her future.

**Explanation :**

The poet remembers the days spent in a garden which was deserted and therefore her sit in it all by herself. She remembers its flower-beds, green lawns and trees. She used to go underneath the branches of trees feeling thrilled at the adventure. In those days ladies who wore grand dresses used to come to the garden. The poet, a child, would look at those stately ladies. She did not feel the difference of rank or power at that time, for her whole interest was in the beauty of the garden.

When she looks back in time now as a grown up person, she thinks of the solace and calm the garden had provided to her. At the loss of childhood and its sweetness, the poet remembers the garden.

### **Analysis :**

The poem's retreat into childhood is romantic and emotional. The memories of the past bring with them nostalgia, for there is an association of freedom, excitement and thrill with the garden. The openness and greenery of the 'deserted' garden gave the girl-child a space where she could read, think and imagine in complete freedom.

That the childhood is over makes the nostalgia all the more powerful, for its glory of that time is no more. The note of melancholy that is felt through out the lyrical evocation of the garden and childhood, make the poem very effective. It is a beautifully simple, sensuous and lyrical poem.

### **Glossary :**

<b><u>Word</u></b>	<b><u>Meaning</u></b>
espy	catch sight of
Waxen-white	white as wax
diadem	Crown, plain or with jewels as a badge of sovereignty
Shroud	garment covering the dead
Ween	to be of the opinion
blither	full of joy, gaiety
ken	to see, range of view
'twixt	in between
sward	open area covered with short grass
thrush	a bird that sings
cresses	a plant with pungent edible leaves
nook	out of way corner, secluded place
sepulchres	tomb, especially cut in rock or built of stone or brick.

### **3.4.5 The Cry of the Children**

"The Cry of the Children" is also a moving account of children's suffering in the Christian countries. The orphan poor and unprotected children were exploited by the rich industrialists. Their miserable lot was ignored by the society's educated upper middle class, that enjoyed an unprecedented affluence and led a leisurely life. Other writers like Charles Dickens, Charles Lamb, Charlotte Bronte and Emile Bronte also depicted their miserable condition. E.B. Browning has in "The Cry of the Children" made children themselves speak out their

hardship and misfortune. The poem begins with the poet addressing the society :

“But the young, young children, O my brothers,  
Do you ask them why they stand  
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,  
In our happy Father land?

(II, 9-12)

In the Stanza-III the children begin to express their experiences of deprivation and exploitation. They begin by referring to the early deaths of children.

“It is good when it happens” say the children,  
‘That we die before our time’.

(IV, 10-12)

“For Oh’ say the children, ‘we are weary,  
And we cannot run or leap;  
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely  
To drop down in them and sleep.  
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping  
We fall upon our faces, trying to go,  
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,  
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow;  
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring  
Through the coal-dark, underground –  
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron  
In the factories, round and round”

(Stanza-IV)

In this poem, as in many other of her poems, E.B.Browning tries to portray the harsh and grim unhappiness of the weaker sections of the society. She renders poetically these social conditions so that their appeal to the imagination and the heart of the reader is intense.

## Text-VI : Aurora Leigh

E.B. Browning became well known for *Aurora Leigh* (1857) a novel-in-verse form in which several forms of narration come together. Autobiographical material - from her own life, her own character is used to depict the literary career of a young woman, Aurora Leigh, who is brought up by her aunt (father's sister) after the death of both her parents. In Book II Aurora is shown as a young girl who has just turned twenty. On her birthday her rich cousin Romney Leigh proposes marriage to her. The discussion is interesting for it expresses the typical male disregard for a woman's desire for independent identity and her decision to become a poet. He is surprised when she does not agree to marry a rich eligible bachelor like him. Romney, on learning that Aurora wishes to write poetry, tells her "Ah / But men, and still less women, happily / Scarce needs be poets".

As she insists upon becoming a poet, he finally expresses his inability to see her as a 'good' poet:

Women as you are,  
Mere women, personal and passionate,  
You give us doting mothers, and perfect wives,  
Sublime Madonnas, and enduring Saints!  
We get no Christ from you, – and verily  
We shall not get a poet, in my mind"

(Aurora Leigh Book-II)

Romney's reluctance to think of women as poet reflects the popular male attitude. He wants Aurora rather to serve the suffering human beings whom he sees in plenty around him, in the country; he wants her to marry him and work for the upliftment of the poor.

Romney's ideal of social work is contrary to Aurora's view. She feels that social change also needs a poet - i.e. a visionary. Unless the minds are changed people will not make an effort to improve their lot. She makes a defence for poetry, and poets, and argues with Romney on these ideas. It is one of the most interesting debates in poetry, looking at the differences in men and women's views on love, marriage and social service.

The novel is in nine books with a well-constructed plot, dramatic and exciting incidents. Aurora becomes a successful poet, helps a poor woman who has been ill-treated by a rich woman, and meets Romney after he has been blinded in a fire. 'Love' is defined in terms of compassion and equal status, since both Romney and Aurora go through important changes in their lives.

*Aurora Leigh* has been acclaimed highly for its central theme that creativity in women may face several social hindrances, but finds ways of expressing itself. The social and eco-



conomic conditions may hamper, restrain women's creative power, but the talent in itself does not have origin in social, economic or any other external source.

---

### 3.5 Let Ss Sum Up

---

Love emerges as one of the major subjects in the poems of EBB. She has depicted love through indirect comparisons with different human emotions. Her love poems are not just sentimental expressions, but relate it with all the other social, public aspects of life as well.

E.B.Browning deals with the issue of women's search for intellectual growth and independence in Aurora Leigh. She shows the male disapproval of a female poet, but also how gradually the heroine, Aurora Leigh, succeeds as a poet. The hero changes his views and admits her greater maturity and ability to love.

The themes of political and economic exploitation of women and children are presented in moving portrayals of such victims. Her poetry is able to touch one's heart and please the reader with her style.

We have seen how the simplicity of her style does not mean simple ideas. Her poems appeal because they also make the reader engage with ideas. These poems need to be read repeatedly so as to enjoy them more.

E.B.Browning attracted the attention of critics and biographers because of her extraordinary personality, her romantic, unusual love story and, above all, because she is a very good poet. A number of her biographies have been written dealing with some mysteries of her life.

The twentieth century women writers have read E.B.Browning with great interest and admiration. Her linguistic excellence, the variety of social and political subjects she has dealt with have encouraged women-writers to see her as an important feminist. In the mid-twentieth century there have been a large number of critical studies of her poems.

---

### 3.6 Review Questions

---

1. What are the main works of E.B.Browning? Why is the collection 'Sonnets From the Portugese' so well-known?
2. Discuss the theme of the poem 'The Deserted Garden'. What does the poet remember about the garden?
3. Discuss the slave-woman's miserable situation in the poem 'The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point'. Why is she so full of anger?
4. In the two sonnets discussed in the lesson, do you find the presentation of emotions complex? Is the poet able to convey her feelings?

5. Why does Romney Leigh not approve of Aurora Leigh's decision to become a poet?
6. Do you think E.B. Browning has some similarity with her heroine, Answer Leigh?

---

### **3.7 Bibliography**

---

1. Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader. Second series, London, 1932.
2. Glennis Stephenson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and the Poetry of Love. Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1989.
3. Margaret Forster, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. London, 1990.
4. Gardner B. Taplin, The life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. London, 1950.
5. A. Hayter, Mrs. Browning : A Poet's Work and its Setting. London, 1962.
6. M.H. Abrams, The Mirror and the Lamp : Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition. New York, 1958.
7. Isobel Armstrong (ed.) The Major Victorian Poets : Reconsideration. London, 1969.
8. Karen Hill (ed.) The Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The Wordsworth Poetry Library, U.K., Denmark, 1994.

## UNIT – 4

---

### ROBERT BROWNING : THE GRAMMARIAN’S FUNERAL

---

#### Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 About the Age
- 4.3 About the Author
- 4.4 Reading the Text
  - 4.4.1 Introduction to the Text
  - 4.4.2 Text : The Grammarian’s Funeral
  - 4.4.3 Glossary
  - 4.4.4 Detailed Explanation
  - 4.4.5 Critical Analysis
  - 4.4.6 Dramatic Monologue
  - 4.4.7 Style
- 4.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.6 Review Questions
- 4.7 Bibliography

---

#### 4.0 Objectives

---

In this unit we wish to make you familiar with and understand various aspects of the Victorian Age. We will give you practice to analyse and appreciate poetry through Robert Browning’s masterpiece. ‘The Grammarian’s Funeral’. We will give you practice by :

- (a) giving you text with introduction story and detailed line to line explanation of ‘The Grammarian’s Funeral’, one of the most prominent dramatic monologues of Browning.
- (b) giving you meanings in simple English meanings of difficult words and phrases used in the poem.
- (c) critically analysing the text and explaining the literary devices.

We will also let you know the social conditions of the Victorian Age and discuss

various literary trends prevalent during that Age. We will also discuss Robert Browning's life, family, education, literary genius and his contribution to society and literature at large. After reading and understanding various sections of this Unit, you will surely be able to :

- (i) know the social life and literary scenario of the Victorian Age,
- (ii) appreciate and evaluate a dramatic monologue, and
- (iii) develop an insight to understand, analyse and appreciate the hidden meanings and literary devices used by the poet.

---

## 4.1 Introduction

---

From 1830 onwards it is more and more evident that a literary transition is developing. And 1832 is the year of a great reform which lays the solid foundation of political democracy, the steady progress of which coincides with the long reign of Queen Victoria. To the decade which lies between 1830 and 1840 may be traced the beginning of a new age in English literature and society.

Romanticism indeed is not dead ; but its creative force is becoming exhausted, and writers now turn in ever-increasing numbers to other sources of inspiration. For the inner movement of minds is taking them away from Romanticism, or robbing it of the fullness of its appeal to them.

The poetry of Robert Browning exemplifies one of the dominant tendencies of Victorian poetry, and probably the more important one, because it comes nearer to expressing the originality of the period : the craving for analysis and moral criticism. Browning's art is entirely pervaded by intellectual curiosity and almost merged in the systematic quest of truth; it is parted from what is essential in pure science only by secondary intentions. The poet in whom this age was longest in recognizing itself is the one who best answered, not as Tennyson to its easier and emotional genius, but to its intense desire for rationality in religious beliefs and in life.

He began by deeply receiving the influences of Romanticism ; Shelley was to him a divine model. But very soon, the ardour of imagination and feeling was invested in him with a new intensity - the exalted consciousness of self, which develops into a penetrating, insistent, and complex psychological reflection, and finally becomes a philosophy, a direct analysis of the working of the mind, not viewed in its concrete quality, as with Wordsworth, but reduced to an interplay of ideas. One cannot say that *Pauline* is a lyrical effusion ; it is rather the strange confession of a writer who makes the state of his romantic soul the object of his study. In *Paracelsus* we have the tumultuous and superabundant outpouring of a doctrine which, grown impatient of all restraint, tries to express itself fully ; it seethes within the drama of a single life. In this work, the personality of Browning is seen to be already formed.

Browning's typical form, that towards which all the other forms may be said to converge, is the monologue; there properly resides the newness of his art. His main idea is to

throw light upon the realm of consciousness, and to do this he frees himself from all the shackles which impede psychological analysis, whether they are connected with action and narration, or the laws of material probability, and the various occasions when the external world in actual life obstructs and obscures that of the spirit. The novel and even the drama cannot but reserve an important, often a dominant place, for this element of circumstance. The psychologist finds full liberty only in the direct and individual expression of each being. The degree of clearness indispensable to this expression can be reached only through the actual hold which each personality has upon the states of its inner life. And as the psychologist's curiosity is infinite, Browning gives free vent to his imagination, roams through time and space, and selects in history and among the intense possibilities of life whatever cases attract him, either by their strong normality, or by virtue of their exceptional value; the common feature of all the characters chosen being the inherent complexity which they possess, and which they either realize themselves, or offer as a rich material to be exploited by the scrutinizing eye that can read them more clearly.

Only intermittently is his verse a means of aesthetic enjoyment. Its supreme quality is of another order. Admitting the general artifice in his work, and the presence of the writer behind his characters, he affords his readers a keen intellectual pleasure. He speaks to the intelligence, or to the imagination in its highest form, that imagination which can effect syntheses, and group together related elements. With unlimited profusion, he gives us the joy of understanding and reconstructing characters; he makes us appreciate, better than any other writer of his time, the swarming variety of moral types. His portraits are admirable examples of penetration, strength, and delicate colouring. He vigorously emphasizes the dominant features, and indicates detail with a minute understanding of the individual trait.

---

## 4.2 About The Age

---

Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837 and gave her name to the period which lasted until the end of the nineteenth century. Poetry at the beginning of this period had been refreshed as well as sometimes muddled by two generations of Romantic innovation. The legacy which the Romantics handed on to the Victorians did not prove to be Wordsworth's simplicity or his autobiographical self examination in quietly probing blank verse, nor was it in any conspicuous degree Shelley's mythopoeic excitement or Byron's alteration of dashing histrionics and a verse satire both colloquial and formal.

The Victorian poets, like the Romantic poets, were more adventurous in stanza forms than the eighteenth century. Tennyson liked to use fairly elaborate stanzas in which he could swing his lines with the mood. The four shorter lines, operating as an almost incantatory refrain, in the 'Mariana' stanza serve to gather up the implications of the imagery in the preceding lines and repeat, almost hypothetically, the suggestion of loss, regret, and weariness. Tennyson sometimes copies Keats' heraldic use of colour, but generally his use of colour images is simply for the mood or atmosphere.

The moral pulse beats in agreement with the circumstances of the time. During the Victorian era, art forms part of a coherent social whole. Simultaneously and from every direction comes the call for order and discipline. The Reform Act sets at rest the political disturbances by satisfying the impatient demands of the middle classes, and seems to inaugurate an age of stability. After the crisis which followed the struggle against the French Revolution and Napoleon, England sets about organizing herself with a view to internal prosperity and progress. At peace with Europe, she wishes to be at peace with herself. Rules of conduct and religious beliefs have been shaken in the storm; Romanticism has championed the claims of passion, and upheld the rights of the individual; the laxity in morals as witnessed during the regency of George IV has equalled that of the most unbridled periods of the eighteenth century. With the advent to power of a middle class largely imbued with the spirit of Puritanism, and the accession of a queen to the throne, English society reassumes a larger measure of self-control. Henceforth an accepted standard of stricter morality - sincere or merely conventional - is imposed by common consent; and with Carlyle lies the task of voicing the principles which preside over this national return to a sterner notion of duty.

This close connection between material expansion on the one hand, and a phase of realism and order on the other, finds definite expression in a privileged sphere of activity, which is, as it were, a common centre whence radiates at once the power of mind over matter, and the mental energy whereby mind can control itself. Since the sixteenth century science has been a growing, rival force beside religion and the arts; during the eighteenth, it ceased to be the privilege of an elite, and awakened an interest in the mind of every cultured person; about the middle of the nineteenth century, it comes to hold a place of primal importance among the intellectual pre-occupations of the average man. It proves its worth by the control it exercises over the physical universe, and also by the idea of unity which it offers or promises to the innumerable seekers in the many branches of knowledge. It gives power, and also the satisfaction of logical thinking; it holds supreme sway during this new age. It helps the progress of production, and is furthered by it in return. It accentuates the positive character of the century; but it is as much an effect as a cause, and owes its success in no small way to the fostering influence of positive ideas, during this phase when reason is paramount. The goal it sets itself is the search after truth; its formulae are linked together in a carefully balanced system. And so science provides the very type of a mentality that is essentially counter-Romantic, at the same time as it precisely defines the psychological tone of the period.

---

### **4.3 About The Author**

---

Robert Browning, born in Camberwell on 7<sup>th</sup> May, 1812, was the son of a clerk in the Bank of England. His father, an unusual man was a person of more than ordinary culture and originality of mind. He was a keen reader and had a good collection of books, which numbered to more than six thousand.

He allowed young Robert to use his library and encouraged his diversity of interests.

Side by side with his precocious literary omnivorousness, went from early childhood careful training in music and the Dulwich Gallery, not far away from his home, became a beloved haunt of his childhood.

The first book he bought with his own pocket money was 'Ossian', and as a young boy he based his first composition on the first book he bought. His first verses show a seductive imitation of the 'Ossian'. Browning gained maturity very early. He was impressed a great deal by the writings of Lord Byron and P.B. Shelley. If we do not clearly understand that Browning was an ardent and almost the first, disciple of Shelley, we shall miss the secret of his first inspiration. When he was twelve years of age, a collection of poems, under the name 'Incondita' was published. These poems were totally based on Byron's poems. Mr. W.J. Fox editor of "The Monthly Repository" was inspired and impressed by these poems of Browning. He saw a great poet in Browning and this forecast of his was turned true in due course of time.

The desire to compose something now actually confused the mind of young Browning. From 'Ossian' to Byron and then Shelley and Keats was a long tract which he wanted to imitate. This confusion is quite apparent in his poem "Pauline" which was first published anonymously in 1833. The poet was only twenty years of age at that time. It is probably the most consummate poem of its length ever written by a young poet. What astonishes the reader who considers the age of the writer is the assurance with which the delineation of a poet's soul is attempted together with an equal assurance in the use of language. It was a work which showed great promise of an upcoming poet. His next composition was "Paracelsus", the story of the hero's unquenchable thirst for that breadth of knowledge which is beyond of grasp the one person. It was published in 1835. This was followed by "Strafford", a play published in 1837. It was staged by Macready.

It is convenient next to deal with the entire group of eight volumes which published separately from 1841 onward were collected in one volume as Bells and Pomegranates in 1846. In addition to two collections of lyrical and narrative poems, this series included six plays, Pippa Passes (1841), King Victor and King Charles (1842), The Return of the Druses (1843), A Blot on the Scutcheon (1843), Colombe's Birthday (1844), Luria; and a Soul's Tragedy (1846). None of these is without its moments of drama, and they all show considerable spirit in their style.

Now at the height of his powers, Browning produced some of his best work in Men and Women (1855) which, with the exception of the dedicatory One Word More, addressed to his wife, consists entirely of dramatic monologues. Here are to be found the famous Fra Lippo Lippi, An Epistle containing the strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician. Andrea del Sarto, Cleon. Most of them are written in blank verse. The year 1864 saw the publication of his last really great volume, Dramatis Personae, again a collection of dramatic monologues. To illustrate their quality mention need be made of only such works as Caliban upon Setebos, A Death in the Desert, Rabbi Ben Ezra, and Abt Vogler. In style the poems have much of the rugged, elliptical quality which was on occasion the poet's downfall,

but here it is used with a skill and a power which show him at the very pinnacle of his achievement.

The remaining years of Browning's long life saw the production of numerous further volumes of verse, few of which add greatly to his fame. To-day they are read by none but his most confirmed admirers. *Balaustion's Adventure* (1871), *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, Saviour of Society* (1871), *Fifine at the Fair* (1872), *Red Cotton Night Cap Country* (1873), *The Inn Album* (1875), *La Saisiaz*, *The Two poets of Croisic* (1878), *Jocoseria* (1883), *Ferishtah's Fancies* (1884), and *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day* (1887), all suffer from the writer's obsession with thought content, and the psychologizing of his characters at the expense of the poetry. In too many of them the style betrays a wilful exaggeration of the eccentricities which he had once turned to such great account, but always the reader is liable to stumble across passages which, in striking landscape or lovely lyric, show that the true poetic gift is not completely absent.

His long life's work has a powerful close in *Asolando* (1889) which, along with much of the tired disillusion of the old man, has, in places, the firmness and enthusiasm of his prime.

Of his predecessors Shelley in particular influenced his mind, which was unformed and turbulent at this time with the growing power within. After a brief course at University College Browning for a short period travelled in Russia (1833); then he lived in London, where he became acquainted with some of the leaders of the literary and theatrical worlds. In 1834 he paid his first visit to Italy, a country which was for him a fitful kind of home. In 1845 he visited Elizabeth Barrett, the poetess, whose works had strongly attracted him. A mutual liking ensured, and then, after a private marriage, a sort of elopement followed, to escape the anger of the wife's stern parent. The remainder of Browning's life was occupied with journeys between England and France and Italy, and with much poetical activity. His wife died at Florence in 1861, leaving one son. Browning thereupon left the city for good and returned to England, though in 1878 he went back once more to Italy. His works, after suffering much neglect, were now being appreciated, and in 1882 Oxford conferred upon him the degree of D.C.L. He died in Italy, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

---

## 4.4 Reading the Text

---

### 4.4.1 Introduction to the Text

The dramatic mode for Robert Browning was a way of making his own emotional thoughts and experiences or fruits of his imagination more amenable to poetic treatment. A poem like "The Grammarian's Funeral" expresses, through a projection of the character of one of those heroic Renaissance Scholars whose scrupulous and unwearied pursuit of the minutiae of classical learning helped to lay the foundations of modern classical scholarship. This is something of the essence of Renaissance Humanism, but it also expresses Browning's own view of the nature of heroism and the importance of continuous endeavour.



#### 4.4.2 Text :The Grammarian's Funeral

Let us begin and carry up this corpse,  
Singing together.  
Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,  
Each in its tether  
Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,  
Cared for till cock-crow :  
Look out if yonder be not day again  
Rimming the rock-row!  
That's the appropriate country ; there, man's thought,  
Rarer, intenser, 10  
Self gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,  
Chafes in the censer!  
Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crops ;  
Seek we sculture  
On a tall mountain, citted to the top,  
Crowded with culture!  
All the peaks sour, but one the rest excels :  
Clouds overcome it ;  
No ! yonder sparkle is the citadel's  
Circling its summit ! 20  
Thither our path lies ; wind we up the heights :  
Wait ye the warning ?  
Our low life was the level's and the night's ;  
He's for the morning.  
Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head,  
'Ware the beholders!  
This is our master, famous, calm, and dead,

Borne on our shoulders.  
 Sleep, crop and herd! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,  
 Safe, from the weather! 30  
 He, whom we convoy to his grove aloft,  
 Singing together,  
 He was a man born with thy face and throat,  
 Lyric Apollo !  
 Long he lived nameless : how should spring take note  
 Winter would follow ?  
 Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone!  
 Cramped and diminished,  
 Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon !  
 My dance is finished?" 40  
 No, that's the world's way : (keep the mountain-side,  
 Make for the city!)  
 He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride  
 Over men's pity ;  
 Left play for work, and grappled with the world  
 Bent on escaping :  
 What's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled ?  
 Show me their shaping,  
 Theirs, who most studied man, the bard and sage, -  
 Give!" - So, he gowned him, 50  
 Straight got by heart that book to its last page :  
 Learned, we found him.  
 Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,  
 Accents uncertain :  
 "Time to taste life," another would have said,

“Up with the curtain!”  
 This man said rather, “Actual life comes next?  
 “Patience a moment!  
 “Grant, I have mastered learning’s crabbed text,  
 “Still there’s the comment. 60  
 “Let me know all! Prate not of most or least,  
 “Painful or easy!  
 “Even to the crumbs I’d fain eat up the feast,  
 Ay, nor feel guesday.  
 Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,  
 When he had learned it.  
 When he had gathered all books had to give!  
 Sooner, he spurned it.  
 Image the whole, then execute the parts -  
 Fancy the fabric 70  
 Quite ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,  
 Ere mortar dab brick!  
 (Here’s the town-gate reached : there’s the market-place  
 Gaping before us.)  
 Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace  
 (Hearten our chorus!)  
 That before living he’d learn how to live -  
 No end to learning :  
 Earn the means first - God surely will contrive  
 Use for our earning. 80  
 Others mistrust and say, “But time escapes !  
 Live now or never!”  
 He said, “What’s time? Leave Now for dogs and apes

Man has Forever.”

Back to his book then : deeper drooped his head :

Calculus racked him :

Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead :

Tussis attacked him.

“Now, master, take a little rest!” - not he!

(Caution redoubled, 90

Step two abreast; the way winds narrowly!)

Not a whit troubled

Back to his studies, fresher than at first,

Fierce as a dragon

He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)

Sucked at the flagon.

Oh, if we draw a circle premature,

Heedless of far gain,

Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure 100

Bad is our bargain!

Was it not great? did not he throw on God,

(He loves the burthen) -

God’s task to make the heavenly period

Perfect the earthen?

Did not he magnify the mind, show clear

Just what it all meant ?

He would not discount life, as fools do here,

Paid by instalment.

He ventured neck or nothing - heaven’s success 110

Found, or earth’s failure :

“Wilt thou trust death or not?” He answered “Yes!

Hence with life's pale lure!"

That low man seeks a little thing to do,  
 Sees it and does it :

This high man, with a great thing to pursue,  
 Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,  
 His hundred's soon hit :

This high man aiming at a million, 120  
 Misses an unit.

That, has the world here - should he need the next,  
 Let the world mind him!

This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed  
 Seeking shall find him.

So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,  
 Ground he at grammar ;

Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were life, clear  
 While he could stammer

He settled Hoti's business - let it be ! - 130  
 Properly based Oun -

Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic De,  
 Dead from the waist down.

Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place :  
 Hail to your purlieus,

All ye highfliers of the feathered race,  
 Swallows and curlews !

Here's the top-peak ; the multitude below  
 Live, for they can, there :

This man decided not to Live but Know - 140

Bury this man there?  
 Here - here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,  
 Lightings are loosened,  
 Stars come and go! Let joy break with the storm,  
 Peace let the dew send!  
 Lofty designs must close in like effects :  
 Loftily lying,  
 Leave him - still loftier than the world suspects,  
 Living and dying.

148

### 4.4.3 Glossary

1-20	thorpes	:	villages
	tether	:	stake, tied to its place of work
	rimming	:	forming a circle around
	rock-row	:	edges of the mountain peak
	self gathered	:	concentrated
	an outbreak	:	for expression
	chafes	:	frets, is eager to come
	sepulture	:	burial
21-40	sparcle	:	the flash of light, learning
	is the citalelis	:	comes from the fort on the peak
	no	:	not the morning light
	circling	:	situated on
	of the Night's	:	darkness of ignorance
	for the morning	:	for learning and culture
	new measures	:	new persons to take over
	dance	:	life
41-60	signal	:	old age
	world	:	in life

	furled	:	closed
	gowned	:	led the life
	the book	:	book dealing with human life
	last page	:	to acquire full knowledge
	uncertain	:	to talk only in halting
	up with the curtain:		to put aside books
	comes next	:	after the death
	patient a moment:		to devote more time to study
	crabbed	:	difficult and rough style
61-90	fain	:	gladly
	image	:	imagine
	the whole	:	the human body
	execute the part:		construct one part after another
	steel strike from :		tools of steel strike stone to fashion it into shape
	the quartz		
	quartz	:	stone
	mortar	:	cement
	dab	:	to get plastered
	peculiar grace	:	distinctive quality
	means	:	the knowledge required for life
	Man has forever:		man is immortal
	deeper droppedhis head:		stoop in his shoulder grew worse
	calculus	:	stone in the bladder
	racked	:	tormented
	Tussis	:	bronchial cough
91-120	fresher than at first:		the dead scholar returns to studies with greater zest
	flagon	:	the flask of knowledge
	circle premature:		have limited ambitions
	for gains	:	large and higher profits

	bad is our bargain:	people are looser in long run
	great	: heroic
	throw on God	: depended upon God
	discount life	: discount the proposed reward in Heaven
	ventured neck	: risked everything
	trust death	: death is not end but entry in Heaven
	pale lure	: worthless attractions
	hit	: achieved
	misses an unit	: fails to achieve any success
121-148	has the world	: is successful in life
	world mind him	: let worldly pleasures be his
	ground	: worked hard
	rife	: plentiful
	noti	: because
	oun	: therefore
	enclitic De	: to prefix De to give different meaning to a word
	purlieus	: haunt

#### 4.4.4 Detailed Explanation

The Grammarian, a great scholar, one who melted like a candle in the pursuit of knowledge, is dead, and his disciples are carrying his body up a tall mountain on the peak of which he is to be buried. One of the disciples sings the mourning song in which he gives an account of the dead Grammarian's life and achievement.

He says that they will carry his corpse up the mountain, and as the funeral procession proceeds, they would sing together a funeral song. They will leave behind the common fields and villages where the people live tied to their respective duties, like animals to the stake. They sleep safely in their villages situated on the plain, secure from all worry and care till the morning, when the cock-crows and awakens them. While it is still dark on the plains, the light of the rising sun strikes the edges of the mountain peak. The mountain peak, which is the first to receive the light of the rising sun, is the fittest place for the burial of the dead grammarian.

There are a number of peaks and all of them rise high. But one of them is higher than the others. It is encircled with clouds. There is to be seen a ray of bright light on this peak. It is



not light of the morning, it comes from the fort standing on that peak. They would bury their master at this peak. They would go up there. The singer asks the other disciples as to why they do not begin to climb. Are they waiting for any signal from him? As they begin to move, he compares their own lives with that of their master. Their life is the life of the plain and the night, while his life was the life of the morning. In other words, they pass their lives surrounded by the darkness of ignorance, while his life was passed in the light of knowledge and culture.

The disciples of the dead scholar climb up the mountain carrying the body of their master on their shoulders. The plains with their crops, with their cattle, with their fields and villages, are left behind. People there sleep comfortably in all their ignorance. In the plains, they are quite safe from storms and snowfalls.

The people in the plain are ignorant, while their master was learned and cultured. In his youth, he was handsome and healthy as Apollo the god of poetry and music. For a long time, he remained obscure and unknown. But he worked hard to acquire knowledge. In his youth, he did not know that the spring of his youth would soon be overtaken by the winter of old age. The old age came rather too soon, as a result of his excessive devotion to his studies. At the touch of disease caused by overwork, his youth was gone. He became old, shrunken and withered with his power and energy much diminished. But he did not groan, nor did he say that his career was over, and live the life of their choice.

The Grammarian devoted himself night and day to the study of books, with the result that he grew learned. But he also became old before his time. He became old, his eyes lost their brightness and because of physical weakness, he could talk only in a halting, incoherent manner. Another man in his place would have said that he had acquired enough knowledge, and now it was time for him to give up his seclusion and his books which come in the way of the enjoyment of life. But this man, the grammarian, said that real life is not in this world, but in the world to come. Life in this world is merely a preparation for the life to come.

The Grammarian was determined to acquire all knowledge, to know all about man and his life, before he actually began to live that life. In this passage human life is being compared to a building, or a project. Before constructing a building we first prepare a chart of that building; we try to form a clear idea of it in our imagination. Only when the entire conception of the building is clear to us, we proceed to construct it part by part. Only when the whole plan is clear, does a builder strike the stone with steel and plaster bricks with cement.

As the funeral procession marches up, they reach the town-gate and they see the market of the city opening wide before them. The singer asks his companions to take heart, for their journey is practically over and their destination is near.

Continuing with the enumeration of the many qualities of the dead Grammarian, the speaker points out that the distinctive quality of his character was that before beginning to live, he decided to acquire a knowledge of life. He decided that he would know fully about the

mystery of man and his life, before he begins to live and enjoy life. There was no end to his learning. His principle was that before beginning to enjoy life, he should understand life, for such understanding is necessary for real life enjoyment.

So he returned to his studies. He became even more absorbed in his studies. The stoop in his shoulders grew worse; he suffered from stone in the bladder and from various other bodily ailments. His eyes grew dull and lustreless as lead. He suffered from cough and bronchitis. His pupils asked him to rest, but he would not rest. The speaker now tells his companions to be more careful as the winding path is narrow there. They should walk two abreast. Again, returning to the life and character of their dead master he tells them that their master suffered, but he remained quite untroubled.

The dead Grammarian had noble ambitions. He did not care for gain or profit in this world; he aimed at higher reward in the life to come. He was not one of those who have narrow, limited ambitions. Such people are losers in the long run. They may make some immediate profit in the present, but they lose the larger profits which result from prolonged effort and waiting. The dead scholar did not make this mistake. He devoted his life to study, and hoped to get his profits, not here, but in the life to come. It was heroic, splendid on his part. He had full faith in God, and he threw himself entirely on the mercy of God. He depended upon God to reward him in the other world, for his labour in this world. He knew that God alone can make the life in heaven perfect and complete the life in this world. He therefore, did not care for earthly gains. Rather, he tried to enlarge his mind with knowledge, and understand the nature and mystery of life. He did not underestimate life, nor discount his future reward by accepting reward on this earth in instalments.

In this world, there are people of two kinds, low men with limited, small ambitions, and noble people, like the Grammarian, with high ambitions difficult to attain. The low men whose ambitions are small, and whose aims are limited, see clearly their goal and achieve it with a little effort. On the other hand, noble persons, like the Grammarian, have lofty ambitions. Their ideals are so high that they die even before they can form a clear idea of their ideals or objects of desire. The poet explains the point through the use of an apt illustration. A low man is like a person who wants only a hundred rupees. He makes efforts, earns them little by little in instalments, and soon gets the hundred he wanted. Such a man is successful, according to the standards of this world. On the other hand, a noble person like the Grammarian, aims at not a hundred rupees, but at one million. His aims are high, he is ambitious, but his life ends, even before he has achieved a single unit.

The dead grammarian was a brave scholar who continued to work hard at the study of Grammar, even upto the moment of his death. Even when he felt the suffocating hands of death at his throat, even when he was waging his last struggle, the struggle with Death, the great scholar did not cease his studies. Even when he was dying, and could utter only a halting and rattling sound, even when his speech grew halting and incoherent, he continued to discuss the

rules of grammar, such as the use of various parts of speech. Even at the very last moment, when he could hardly stammer, he explained the correct use of the Greek particles as *Holi* (because), *oun* (therefore), and *De*, which is prefixed to a word to give it a slightly different meaning. Even when the lower half of his body was paralysed, he continued his study and research in the principles of Greek grammar.

The funeral procession now reaches the highest peak of the mountain where there is a wide open space or platform. This the speaker considers to be a proper place for the burial of the dead Grammarian. The mountain peak is the haunt of such high flying birds as the swallows and the curlews. Like these birds, the Grammarian also soared high into the realms of knowledge, and so it is appropriate that he should be buried at the highest peak, the abode of these birds. The common men live in the plains below which are places of darkness and ignorance. But this Grammarian, instead of living a life of ignorance like them, decided to soar high in the realms of knowledge, and, therefore, he should be buried on the highest peak. This is the place where the shooting stars are seen, where clouds form, and where lightning is released from the clouds, and where the stars rise in the evening and sink in the morning. Grandeur and loftiness of nature at this place is in harmony with the loftiness and sublimity of the soul of their master.

#### 4.4.5 Critical Analysis

The Grammarian's Funeral is among the better known poems of Browning. It was first published in the volume of poems called *Men and Women*, 1855. Later on, the poem was included in *Dramatic Romances*, 1868. Though the name of no particular scholar has been mentioned in the poem, critics are of the view that Browning had in mind the life and achievement of Jacobus Miliclius, a German scholar of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. However, it is preferable to regard the Grammarian in the poem as a symbolic figure, as typical of those Renaissance scholars, who devoted their lives to study and research and fell, "martyrs to learning." The time is the early 15<sup>th</sup> century when the Renaissance was in full flowering and a number of scholars devoted themselves to classical studies and thus brought up a revival of ancient learning. They melted like a candle in pursuit of knowledge. Shunning all the pleasures of the world, denying themselves all the good things and comforts of life, they lived an austere life of exclusive devotion even to little known branches of learning. The dead scholar in the poem is a typical product of his age and environment, and through an account of his life and achievement, the poet has captured the very spirit of the Renaissance. The poem is an epitome of its age, as well as an epitome of Browning's philosophy. It has been called a, "psalm of life, the might optimistic song of a life lived in the life of eternity, rather than within the limits of time."

It is rather a long poem in 148 lines cast in the mould of a dramatic monologue, the favourite poetic form of Browning. It is a mourning song, a funeral chant or dirge sung by one of the disciples of the dead grammarian, as they carry his body up a tall mountain to bury him there. As the funeral procession moves up, the speaker or the singer sings of the self-abnegation and passion for learning of their dead master, and contrasts him with the common, ignorant

people who live in the plain below.

Thus the monologue grows out of a critical situation. Their dear, honoured master is dead and so, quite naturally, his disciples review his life and achievement. Quite naturally, they are reminded of his devotion to his books, and the way in which he martyred himself for the sake of knowledge. One of them speak for the whole groups of mourners.

The monologue is an epitome of Browning's philosophy. It brings out his faith in God, his faith in the immortality of the human soul, his belief that failure in this life means success in the life to come. 'Earth's failure', means, 'Heaven's success', and man's efforts are sure to be rewarded, if not here, then in the life to come. In this poem a life's accomplishment is measured by two different standards ; accordingly, as we take into account or ignore the life hereafter." The Grammarian, never doubting that, "Man has Forever," has been content to forgo everything else in the painful pursuit of the minutiae of Greek syntax. Born with the grace of Apollo, he has become shrunken, leaden-eyed, subject to torturing disease and premature death. If a man's life, like that of, "dogs and apes," has no endurance beyond death, then it is clear that this has been a paltry and grotesque existence. If on the other hand, the lofty belief, which he becomes a pageant of victory.

#### **4.4.6 Dramatic Monologue**

The Dramatic Monologue is used by Robert Browning with amazing skill, insight and success.

The Dramatic Monologue is, 'dramatic', because it is the utterance of imaginary characters and not of the poet himself and because in it character is developed not through any description on the part of the poet, but through a conflict between the opposite thoughts and emotions of the character himself. It is a, 'monologue', because it is the conversation of a single individual with himself (Mono' means 'one', and 'logue' means, 'conversation'). The form is also referred to as monodrama. This is a kind of comprehensive soliloquy, absorbing into its substance by the speaker's keenly observant glance, the surrounding scenery and audience, bringing all that is pertinent to the chosen moment by the channels of memory, argument, curiosity and association ; adding through the deep graven lines which habit has incised upon character much which the soul would fain conceal, and enriching the current of self revealing speech with the product of any other emotion which may have been powerful enough to share in the fashioning of this critical moment.

The dramatic monologue was peculiarly suited to Browning's genius. Despite all his appetency for Drama, Browning did better work in his dramatic monologues than in his plays. He did not achieve success immediately ; his power and his technique evolved slowly but steadily till perfection was achieved. Though hints and traces of this form are to be seen even in such early poems as Pauline, Paracelsus, and Sordello, the form comes to full flowering in *The Dramatic Lyrics*, 1842.

In each monologue, the speaker is placed in the most momentous or critical situation of his life and the monologue embodies his reactions to this situation. Unlike a dramatist, Browning does not begin slowly with an action leading to the crisis, rather he plunges headlong into the crisis. For this reason, his monologues have an abrupt, but very arresting opening and, at the same time, what has gone before is suggested cleverly or brought out through retrospective meditation and reflection.

The monologues are 'dramatic', and as such they must be entirely objective. Browning is amazingly objective in some of them, but more often than not he betrays his own personal point of view. His philosophy of life, his view on God and the immortality of the soul, etc., can all be gathered from a study of his monologues, such subjectivity is unavoidable in a verse form which requires the poet, to lend his own mind to his characters to enable them to defend their actions.

#### 4.4.7 Style

Browning's style is a pictorial style ; it is also rich in the use of imagery, similes, metaphors, etc. His images are usually startling in their originality and daring. Often they are drawn from the grotesque in nature. Nature is constantly used to illustrate the facts of human life. Often the concrete is used to clarify and bring home to the readers the spiritual and the abstract. His images are clear cut and vivid, and more often than not they have a symbolic significance.

Beauty of form in poetry also depends on the style and diction of a poet. Browning was a highly original genius, his style is entirely individual, and so for want of a better name it is called Browning-esque.

He uses the smallest number of words that his meaning allows. In the very beginning of his career, he was once charged with verbosity, and since then, "he contended himself with the use of two words where he would rather have used ten." This dread of being diffuse resulted in compression and condensation which made him often, if not actually obscure, at least difficult to understand.

Just as in his style, so also in his versification, Browning is often rugged and fantastic. Sometimes, this ruggedness is justified by the subject ; sometimes the use of a broken, varying, irregular verse is essential to convey the particular emotion or the impression which the poet wants to convey. Browning had a peculiarly keen ear for a particular kind of staccato music, for a kind of galloping rhythm.

Often he uses double or even triple rhymes to create grotesque effects. The real fault does not lie with such artistic use of the rugged and the fantastic ; the real fault arises when such a use is not necessary, when it is not artistically justified. And Browning's search for novelty frequently betrays him into using such clumsy and irritating metres, and this clouds his intrinsic merits as a metrical artist.

As a matter of fact, Browning was a great metrical artist and throughout his career he experimented with a variety of stanza-forms and other metrical devices. He is the greatest master in our language, in the use of rhyme, in the amazing variety of his versification and stanza-forms, and in the vitality both of his blank verse and rhymed verse. Browning is far indeed from paying no attention, or little, to metre and versification. Except in some of his late blank verse, and in a few other cases, his very errors are just as often the result of hazardous experiments as of carelessness and inattention. In one very important matter, that of rhyme, he is perhaps the greatest master in our language ; in single and double, in simple and grotesque alike, he succeeds in fitting rhyme to rhyme with a perfection which I have never found in any other poet of any age. His lyrical poems contain more structural varieties of form than those of any other preceding English poet.

---

## 4.5 Let Us Sum Up

---

In this unit you have read and understood the literary trends of Victorian Age and life and works of Robert Browning, one of the major poets of this Age. You have acquired practice in :

- (i) understanding the contents, thought, morale and style of Browning,
- (ii) analysing and appreciating a poem, and
- (iii) understanding and critically evaluating a poem and answering the questions based on the text in your own words.

---

## 4.6 Review Questions

---

1. Discuss characteristic features of Victorian Age.
2. What are major literary trends of Victorian Age?
3. Write a detailed note on Robert Browning's life.
4. Discuss Browning as a literary artist.
5. What is the philosophy of Browning.
6. Discuss the creative genius of Robert Browning.
7. Discuss the style and versification of Brownings on the basis of the poems of Browning read by you.
8. Comment on Browning's use of Grotesque.
9. 'Browning's characterisation establishes him as a poet of Man.' Comment.
10. What is the Dramatic Monologue?
11. Comment on the technique of Robert Browning.

---

## 4.7 Bibliography

---

1. Abrams, M.H., A Glossary of Literary Terms, Bombay, MacMillan, 1986.
2. Bradbury, Malcolm, Victorian Poetry, New Delhi, Arnold-Heinemann Pvt. Ltd., 1980.
3. Diches, David, A Critical History of English Literature, New Delhi, Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1984.
4. Evans, Sir I, English Literature : Values and Traditions, London, Unwin, 1962.
5. Ford, Boris, The New Pelican Guide to English Literature, Vol. VI, London, Penguin, 1982.
6. Hayword, John, The Penguin Book of English Verse, New York, Penguin Books, 1986.
7. Hood, T.L., Letters of Robert Brownings, London, Hull, 1933.
8. Orr, Sutherland, Life of Robert Browning, London, Penguin, 1929.
9. Raymond, W.O., The Infinite Moment and other Essays in Robert Browning, Toronto, Heinemann, 1959.

## UNIT-5

---

### ROBERT BROWNING : ANDREA DEL SARTO

---

#### Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 About the Age
- 5.3 About the Author
- 5.4 Reading the Text
  - 5.4.1 Introduction to the Text
  - 5.4.2 Text : Andrea Del Sarto
  - 5.4.3 Glossary
  - 5.4.4 Detailed Explanation
  - 5.4.5 Critical Analysis
  - 5.4.6 Characterisation
  - 5.4.7 Optimism
- 5.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.6 Review Questions
- 5.7 Bibliography

---

#### 5.0 Objectives

---

In this unit we will be making you read and understand the qualities and characteristics of Victorian Literature. We will be giving you some other aspects of the Victorian Age and Literature which you have not been made to study in our previous unit. We will also let you know some other facts about Robert Browning's life and works which have not been discussed in the previous unit.

We will give you practice to critically analyse Browning's dramatic monologue 'Andrea Del Sarto'. We will give you practice by :

- (a) giving you text with introduction, story and detailed explanation of 'Andrea Del Sarto'.
- (b) giving you meanings in simple English meanings of difficult words and phrases used in the poem, and



- (c) critically analysing the text and explaining the literary devices used by the poet. After reading and understanding various sections of this Unit, you will surely be able to :
- (i) know and understand the social conditions of the Victorian Age,
  - (ii) have knowledge about the life and creative genius of Robert Browning,
  - (iii) analyse and appreciate a dramatic monologue,
  - (iv) understand the difficult words and phrases in simple English
  - (v) develop an insight to understand the hidden meanings and literary devices used by the poet, and
  - (vi) answer the questions, based on text, in your own words.

---

## 5.1 Introduction

---

Nearly all Victorians wrote copiously and had little regard for eighteenth-century ideals of terseness and epigrammatic point. The mounds of unsaleable sermons and black-bound homiletic writing which, even now, make corners of second-hand bookshops look like ossuaries, remind us pungently of the special interests and demands of the expanding Victorian reading public. Both poets and prose-writers were aware of a taste for propaganda in its various forms, and this is one reason for the sheer bulk of Victorian writing and its repetitiveness.

Not so long ago, the Victorian period was considered one of literary decline, derivativeness, and disintegration, its literature was heavily penalized for its sentimentality and sanctimoniousness, it seemed a period of cultural provinciality. Now it is being acclaimed, in some quarters, as a time of great achievement in literature, even as the greatest in English literary history. This ‘whirligig of taste’ is very confusing even to those with leisure and inclination to work out their own judgements of value. If, however, we look carefully at the rediscoveries and reappraisals we find much with which to check the general reader’s scepticism about critical objectivity. Variations of emphasis there must be so long as a literature continues to matter to a large number of people, but criticism must always work for agreements about what is fine, about those works which give substance and meaning to all the qualitative words in the language. We find some rediscoveries are of such authors as George Eliot or Disraeli or Leslie Stephen, who have never before received detailed attention and who need to be made to count more distinctly. Then there are those writers such as Tennyson, Browning, Thackeray, Meredith, and others who, after much acclaim during their lifetime, went out of favour a generation or two ago, and are now ready for the normal reconsideration.

Browning, though he claimed to be mainly interested in ‘the incidents in the development of a soul’, never came near to envisaging difficulties and lack of qualifications. He is too often content with a verse equivalent of the modern newspaper ‘profile’. This has been the

crux of discussion of him since his own day. Writing in 1864, Bagehot reduced Browning's psychological investigations to 'a suspicion of beauty and a taste for ugly reality', and he made Browning the occasion for reflections on living in a 'realm of the half educated. A dressy literature, an exaggerated literature seem to be fated to us.' In what is still a standard work, *Browning as a Philosopher and a Religious Teacher* (1891), Sir Henry Jones wrote that after his analysis, Browning's 'optimism was found to have no better foundation than personal conviction, which anyone was free to deny, and which the poet could in no way prove'. This is not, however, a critical objection.

Browning is enjoyable, with fewest reservations, when he is not making claims as a psychologist or teacher. The lines everyone knows, *Home Thoughts from Abroad*, are obviously the work of a strong original talent, and remain thrilling despite their familiarity. Browning is almost alone amongst Victorian poets in his ability to express such immediate happiness and simple passion. With his positive nature, high spirits, and instinctive rejection of contagious pessimism and literary half-lights, Browning should have written poetry which altered and improved the literary climate. Instead he prematurely levelled off the explorations begun in *Pauline and Paracelsus*, and specialized in the ventriloquism of dramatic monologue which appealed to average tastes.

---

## 5.2 About The Age

---

That Victorian poetry should have assimilated the Romantics, excluding the indigestibly satirical Byron, to a convention of Victorian pastoralism, must be ascribed to the influence of Tennyson and the tastes of the middle-class public, though these two influences would be hard to separate. At first, the association of this rather decorative, second-hand, 'romantic' vocabulary with the lofty, earnest weighty themes of much Victorian poetry appears incongruous. But once we have understood the Victorian middle class, with its liking for sermons, its suspicion of wit and of all but the broadest humour, its tendency to mistake sententiousness for seriousness, then the oddity becomes intelligible, like Victorian Gothic, though it does not disappear. The total impression is of the prevalence of restricted notions of the function of poetry, and indeed of language. Arnold's distinction between the poetry of Dryden and Pope and genuine poetry - 'their poetry is conceived and composed in their wits, genuine poetry is conceived and composed in the soul' - neatly exemplifies the kind of theoretical and moral limitation which explains, at least in part, the deficiencies of Victorian poetry. That a critic as gifted as Arnold should have been content to make this witless 'soul' the well-spring of poetry, suggests a general contemporary inadequacy in manners and poetic theory. We have to do, in fact, with a Romanticism not only derivative but popularized and conventionalized.

The number of really fine poems, novels, and plays is small, whether we judge by the standard of achievement in earlier centuries or whether we bring to mind the scope of poetry and prose in France during the same period. What we are coming more and more to realize is the very large amount of interesting, miscellaneous reading-matter that was produced by the

Victorians, in the form of biography and autobiography, history, criticism, books of travel and for children, and periodical journalism. If it is not great, it is often distinguished, useful, or entertaining, and justifies a good deal of the enthusiasm and partiality nowadays shown to things Victorian. But our partiality cannot alter the unsatisfactory and nugatory quality of so much Victorian poetry, its lack of variety and power. It cannot disguise the absolute decline of the drama, or the moral confusion of writers in the period known as 'the Nineties'. The early Victorians derived a sense of purpose from their communal attempt to improve 'the condition of England', or to face the challenge of science, or to mitigate fanaticism. By the end of the century writers felt that the middle-class values which they had helped to establish were intolerably 'Philistine', complacent, and inimical to 'Art'.

---

### **5.3 About The Author**

---

In the previous unit we have given you knowledge about the life of Robert Browning and his literary works. You were told how Robert was a devoted reader since his early childhood and brought out his first collection of poems when he was only twelve years of age. He married Elizabeth Barret and lived with her in Italy. His wife was also a poetess of repute and like her husband, she also tried her hand at prose writings. But it was poetry which brought fame and reputation to the couple.

In this section we will discuss some of the prominent traits and qualities of Browning's writings.

A great deal of Browning's writing is connected with the substance of this vision. The natural world of his poems - of Saul, or Caliban, for instance - is a solid, rough-hewn, colourful world, imbued with an ever-changing plastic power ; a world of volcanic rocks, of agitated skies and waters, exotic stones, clustering flower-forms, and pulsating animal life ; an alluring but also a menacing world for the poet's worship. It brings intense stimulus and challenge to Browning's acquisitive men and women, his craftsmen, collectors, travellers, and enquirers, who encounter their environment as an obstacle or a quarry. He describes life in tangible metaphors of quest or adventure, as a ride, a pilgrimage, a research, an ocean voyage, a task of knight-errantry. But the goal of the adventure is not equally plain. Either Browning makes a flourish about soul somehow sparking from flesh or he reduces his poems to bits of immediate sensation. On the whole, he is more successful, his poetry is more consistently alive, as he leans towards the second alternative. His inmost relationship to his world is a state of excited, unquiet possession.

Browning worked out a new conversational form of dramatic lyric, releasing an ironic interplay between the setting, the action, and the spoken comments. The monologue of Two in the Campagna (from Men and Women, 1855) is a good example of his method. Two lovers are looking across the open country that covers the ruins of ancient Rome, and the man points out Nature's triumph over civilization.

Browning's inability to grasp a situation firmly as a whole, or as Santayana argues his inability to transcend 'the crude experience .... of self-consciousness', explains 'the arrest of his dramatic art at soliloquy'. In the formal monologues in blank verse or heroic couplets for which he is famous he sets out to make a virtue of his deficiency. The earlier ones, *My Last Duchess* (1842) and *The Bishop Orders his Tomb* (1845), are striking ironic character-sketches, in a manner recalling Chaucer, but with a new wealth of sensational and circumstantial details. The later ones set out to exploit a problem; they point forward to the speeches of special pleading by the characters of Shaw. They are still dramatic in so far as they reveal character within the framework of an ironic setting, but the sense of drama in them is swamped by argument as Browning turns the monologue into a form of confidential self-justification by men called upon to defend a questionable or imperfect philosophy of life. The most notable of these apologists are Fra Lippo Lippi, Andrea del Sarto, Bishop Blougram, Karshish, and Cleon (from *Men and Women*, 1855) and Caliban and Mr. Sludge, 'The Medium' (from *Dramatis Personae*, 1864). Their names alone suggest the range of Browning's human curiosity - two Renaissance artists, a semi-fictional Victorian Catholic, an imaginary Arab physician and an imaginary Greek poet from the first century of Christianity, Shakespeare's savage (speaking as an exponent of natural religion in the light of Darwinism), and a thinly disguised American spiritualist. But they are all concerned with two allied topics - with faith and success (or self-fulfilment, or the struggle for survival). And, like the main speaker in *Easter Day*, though in varying degrees, all of them have failed or missed or evaded the test of an ultimate vision. The Arab physician and the Greek poet have brushed against the revelation they both need and have failed to grasp it. The Christian speakers are on the defensive, and their special interest for Browning is the opportunity they afford him of putting the case for an acknowledged imperfection. In addition, their social position is ambiguous. Fra Lippo Lippi is a scapegrace monk; Andrea del Sarto has to swallow disgrace and humiliation; the great bishop and the whining medium are both in some measure charlatans.

Neglected while he was doing his best work, at the period of *Men and Women*, Browning was more than compensated by the reverence accorded to him as a sage after the sixties. Once Browning's opinions had fallen out of date, the muddle and patchwork in his art were clearly to be seen. He failed to revive the poetic drama or create a satisfying novel in verse; he failed to reach a stable compromise between the visionary and the realist. Yet much of the best of subsequent poetry, of Pound and Eliot in particular, owes a considerable debt to Browning's experiments in conversational verse and his ironic-confidential monologues; and English poetry would be much the poorer if Browning had not attempted to translate his romanticism into the language of contemporary life.

---

## **5.4 Reading the Text : Andrea Del Sarto**

---

### **5.4.1 Introduction to the Text**

Andrea Del Sarto was first published in the volume of Browning's poems entitled *Men*

*and Women*, 1855. Andrea Del Sarto (the son of a tailor) was a great painter of the Florentine School. Browning's poem was inspired by a picture of Andrea and his wife, Lucrezia, hung in the art-gallery of Pitti Palace, Florence. For the facts of the painter's life, Browning is indebted to his biography from the pen of his pupil, Vasari. According to Vasari's account, the great painter, "faultless but soul-less" was born in 1486, in Florence. Early in life he fell in love with Lucrezia, the wife of a hatter. She was a woman of rare beauty, but frivolous and faithless. On the death of her first husband, Andrea married her, and continued to love her even though he knew that she was unfaithful to him. For her sake, he played false to the king of France, Francis I, embezzled his money, as well as neglected his parents and allowed them to die of starvation. This faithless woman ultimately deserted him. Andrea died of plague in 1530, at the age of forty-three. Lucrezia married a third time after his death. Such are the bare facts of Andrea's life.

#### 5.4.2 Text : Andrea Del Sarto

But do not let us quarrel any more,  
 No my Lucrezia; bear with me for once :  
 Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.  
 You turn your face but does it bring your heart?  
 I'll work then for your friend's friend never fear,  
 Treat his own subject after his own way.  
 Fix his own time accept too too his own price,  
 And shut the money into this small hand,  
 When next it takes mind. Will it ? tenderly?  
 Oh I'll content him, -but tomorrow, Love!  
 I often am much wearier than you think,  
 This evening more than usual, and it seems.  
 As if-forgive now –should you let me sit.  
 Here by the window with your hand in mine  
 And look a half hour forth on Fiesole  
 Both of one mind as married people use  
 Quietly, quietly, the evening through  
 I might get up to - morrow to my work

10

Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.

To. morrow, how you shall be glad for this ! 20

Your soft hand is a woman of itself,

And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside,

Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve

For each of the five pictures I require:

It saves a model. So ! keep looking so-

My serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds!

-How could you ever prick those perfect ears

Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet-

My face, my moon my everybody's moon

Which everybody looks on and calls his 30

And I suppose is looked on by in turn

Which she looks-no one's : very dear, no less!

You smile? why, there's my picture ready made

There's what we painters call our harmony!

A common grayness silvers everything,-

All in a twilight you and I alike

-You at the point of your first pride in me

(That's gone you know ), but I, at every point;

My youth my hope my art being all toned down

To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole. 40

There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top ;

That length of convent-wall across the way

Holds the trees safer huddled more inside;

The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease

And autumn grows autumn in every thing,

Eh ? the whole seems to fall into a shape

As if I saw alike my work and self  
 And all that I was born to be and do,  
 A twilight-piece Love we are in God's hand  
 How strange now looks the life He makes us lead; 50  
 So free we seem so fettered fast we are!  
 I feel He laid the fetter : let it lie!  
 This chamber for example -turn your head  
 All that's behind us! You don't understand  
 Nor care to understand about my art  
 but you can hear at least when people speak:  
 And that cartoon the second from the door  
 -It is the thing, Love ! so such things should be-  
 Behold Madonna ! I am bold to say.  
 I can do with my pencil what I know 60  
 What I see what at bottom on my heart  
 I wish for if I ever wish so deep-  
 Do easily too-when I say, perfectly,  
 I do not boast perhaps: yourself are judge,  
 Who listened to the Legate's talk last week.  
 And just as much they used to say in France  
 At any rate 'tis easy all of it !  
 No sketches first no studies that's long past;  
 I do what many dream of all their lives  
 -Dream ? strive to do and agonize to do, 70  
 And fail in doing. I could count twenty such  
 On twice your fingers and not leave this town  
 Who strive-you don't know how the others strive  
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared

Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,-  
 Yet do much less so much less Someone says  
 (I know his name no matter)-so much less !  
 Well less is more Lucrezia: I am judged.  
 There burns a truer light of God in them  
 In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain 80  
 Heart or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt  
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.  
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves I know  
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me  
 Enter and take their place there sure enough,  
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.  
 My works are nearer heaven but I sit here.  
 The sudden blood of these men ! at a word-  
 Praise them it boils or blame them it boils too.  
 I painting from myself and to myself 90  
 Know what I do am unmoved by men's blame  
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks  
 Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,  
 His hue mistaken; what or that ? or else,  
 Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that ?  
 Speak as they please what does the mountain care ?  
 Ah but a man's reach should exceed his grasp  
 Or what's a heaven for ? All is silver-gray  
 Placid and perfect with my art; the worse!  
 I know both what I want and what might gain 100  
 And yet how peofitless to know to sigh  
 "Had I been two another and my self



Our head would have o'erlooked the world !” No doubt.

Yonder's a work now of that famous youth

The Urbinate who died five years ago.

(Tis copied George Vasari sent it me.)

Well, I can fancy how he did it all

pouring his soul with kings and popes to see

Reaching that heaven might so replenish him

110

Above and through his art-for it gives way;

That arm is wrongly put-and there again-

A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,

Its body so to speak; its soul is right

He means right-that a child may understand.

Still what an arm ! and I could alter it;

But all the play the insight and the stretch-

Out of me out of me! And wherefore out?

Had you enjoined tham on me given me soul

We might have risen to Rafael I and you !

Nay Love you did give all I asked I think –

120

More than I merit yes by many times.

But had you-oh with the same perfect brow

And perfect eyes and more than perfect mouth

The fowler's pipe and follows to the snare-

Had you with these the same but brought a mind !

Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged

“God and the glory ! never care for gain

The present by the future what is that ?

Live for fame side by side with Angolo !

130

Rafael is waiting; up to God all three

I might have done it for you So it seems ;  
 Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules  
 beside incentives come from the soul's self;  
 The rest avail not. Why do I need you ?  
 What wife had Rafael or has Angoso ?  
 In this world who can do a thing, will not;  
 and who would do it cannot I perceive :  
 Yet the will's somewhat-somewhat, too the power-  
 And thus we half-man struggle. at the end, 140  
 God I conclude compensates punishes.  
 "Tis safer for me if the award be strict  
 That I am something underrated here  
 poor this long while despised to speak the truth.  
 I dared not do you know leave home all day,  
 For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.  
 The best is when they pall and look aside;  
 But they speak sometimes; I must beat it all.  
 Well may they speak ! That Francis that first time  
 And that long festal year at Fontaianebleau ! 150  
 I surely then could sometimes leave the ground  
 Put on the glory Rafael's daily wear  
 In that humane great monarch's golden lood,-  
 One finger in his beard or twisted curl  
 Over his mouth's good mark tha made the smile  
 One arm about my shouldre found my neck,  
 The jingle of his gold chain in my \ear  
 I painting proudly with his breath on me  
 All his court found him seeing with his eyes

Such frank French eyes and such a fire of souls 160  
Profuse my hand kept plying by those hearts, -  
And best of all this, this ,this ,face beyond,  
This in the background waiting on my work.  
To crown the issue with a last reward !  
A good time was it not my kingly days ?  
And had you not grown restless.....but I know-  
'Tis done and past; 'twas fight my instinct said ;  
Too live the live grew golden and not gray  
And I'm weak-eyed but no sun should tempt  
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world. 170  
How could it end in any other way ?  
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,  
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine !  
'Rafael did this Andrea painted that;  
The Roman's is the better when you pray,  
But still the other's Virgin was his wife-  
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge 180  
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows  
My better fortune I resolve to think.  
For do you know Lucrezia as God lives  
Said one day Angolo his very self  
To Rafael.....I have it all these years.....  
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts  
Upon a palace wall for Rome to see  
Too lifted up in heart because of it  
'Friend there's a certain sorry little scrub  
Goes up and down our Florence none cares how, 190

Who were plan and execute  
 As you are pricked on by your popes and kings,  
 Would bring the sweat that brow of yours!"  
 To Rafael's – And indeed the arm is wrong.  
 I dare....yet only you to see,  
 Give the chalk here – thus the line should go!  
 Ay but the soul ! he's Rafael rub it out  
 Still all I care for if he spoke the tuth  
 (What he ? why who but Michael Angolo?  
 Do you forget already words like those ? 200  
 Ifreally there was such a chance so lost-  
 Is whether you're –not grateful-but are pleased.  
 Well let me think so. And your smile indeed!  
 This has been an hour Another smile?  
 If you would sit thus by me every night  
 I should work better do you comprehend?  
 I mean that I should earn more give you more.  
 See it is settled dusk now; There's a star;  
 Morello's gone the watch - lights show the wall  
 The cue-owls speak the name we call them by 210  
 Come from the window love - come in at last  
 Inside the melancholy little house  
 We built to be so gay with God is just.  
 King Francis may forgive me ; oft at nights  
 When I look up from painting eyes tired out  
 The walls become illumined brick from brick  
 Distinct instead of mortar fierce bright gold  
 That gold of his I did cement them with !

Let us but love each other. Must you go ?  
 That Cousin here again ? he waits outside? 220  
 Must see you - you, and not with me ? Those loans?  
 More gaming debts to pay ? you smiled for that ?  
 Well let smiles buy me ! have you more to spend ?  
 while hand and eye and something of a heart  
 Are left me work's my ware and what's it worth?  
 I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit  
 The gray remainder of the evening out  
 Idle, you call it and muse perfectly  
 Hoe I could paint were I but back in France  
 One picture just one more - the Virgin's face 230  
 Not yours this time ! I want you at my side  
 To hear them - that is Michel Angelo-  
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.  
 Will you ? To-morrow satisfy your friend.  
 I take the subjects for his corridor  
 Finish the portrait out of hand - there ,there  
 And throw him in another thing or two  
 If he demurs ; the whole should prove enough  
 To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside  
 What's better and what's all I care about 240  
 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff !  
 Love does that please you ? Ah but what does he  
 The Cousin! What does he to please you more?  
 I am grown peaceful as old age to – night.  
 I regret little I would change still less.  
 Since there my past life liesps why alter it ?

The very wrong to Francis ! - it is true  
 I took his coin was tempted and complied  
 And built this house and sinned and all is said  
 My father and my mother died of want 250  
 Well had I Riches of my own ? you see  
 How one gets rich ! let each one beat his lot .  
 They were born poor lived poor and poor they died:  
 And I have labored somewhat in my time  
 And not been paid profusely. Some good son  
 Paint my two hundred pictures - let him try!  
 No doubt there's something strikes a balance. Yes  
 You loved me quite enough it seems to-night.  
 This must suffice me here. What would one have ?  
 In heaven perhaps new chances one more chance - 260  
 Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,  
 Meted on each side by the angel's reed,  
 For Leonard Rafael Angolo and me  
 To cover-the three first without a wife  
 While I have mine ! So - still they overcome  
 Because there's still Lucrezia - as I choose.  
 Again the Cousin's whitsle ! Go my Love. 267

### 5.4.3 Glossary

1-60	Friend's Friend :	a wealthy friend of his wife's lover
	forth :	out of the window
	Fiesole :	a town near Florence
	shall be glad :	shall get more money
	woman in itself :	in all delicacy and charm
	rounds on rounds:	in graceful manner

	harmony	:	passionate combination of the whole body
	first pride in me	:	pride on first meeting
	fettered	:	helpless
	Let it lie	:	to God's will
	the Chamber	:	Andrea's studio
61-120	speak	:	praise, verbal praise
	Madonna	:	a picture of Virgin Mary
	legate	:	a high official of the Church
	in France	:	invited by the King of France
	Morello	:	a mountain peak near Florence
	the play	:	the spiritual activity
	the stretch	:	the range of emotions
	enjoined	:	incited, urged
121-180	them	:	the play of emotions
	fowler's	:	of the bird catcher
	mind	:	spiritual beauty
	Angelo	:	Michal Angelo, a great painter of Italy
	incentive	:	inspiration
	the rest	:	external sources of emotion
	speak	:	to make insulting remarks
	Fontaineblean	:	the name of the palace of King of France
	leave the earth	:	felt spiritually exalted
	seeing with his eyes:	:	admiring me like him
	fire of souls	:	abundant enthusiasm
	King's days	:	days spent in King's palace
	too live	:	too intense to bear (life in France)
	Grange	:	a farmhouse
	when you pray	:	has greater spiritual beauty

	other's Virgin	:	portrait of Virgin Mary painted by Andrea
181-240	as God live	:	a mild oath
	pricked up	:	encouraged
	an hour	:	the time to be remembered always
	Morello is gone	:	the mount Morello is not visible
	cueowls	:	a species of owls named after their cry "ki-ou"
	Mortar	:	cement
	that	:	money which Lucrezia took from him
	freaks	:	gambling debts
	scudi	:	an Italian coin worth five shillings
	ruff	:	frill for the dress of a lady
241-267	wrong to Francis:		misappropriation of King's money
	tempted	:	by Lucrezia

#### 5.4.4 Detailed Explanation

Andrea Del Sarto, the faultless painter, is infatuated with his beautiful wife, Lucrezia, who, however, does not love him and is unfaithful to him. One evening in the year 1525, the Florentine painter sits by the side of his wife in his studio. She has quarrelled with him for the last twelve years, ever since they were married, but now Andrea requests her not to quarrel with him, at least, for one evening. She must have patience with him for a short while. He will do whatever she wishes him to do. At his request, she sits by him and turns her face towards him. But does her face also bring her heart towards him? Andrea does not hope for any such good fortune. He knows that she looks towards him only in compliance with his request, but her heart is with her lover waiting outside. If only she would sit with him that evening and not quarrel with him, he would paint the picture which her friend's (lover's) friend wants him to paint. He will paint according to his directions; at the time fixed by him, and accept the payment he likes to make for the painting. Whatever money he gets, he will shut it in her small hand. Andrea is sure that she will give her hand into his, at least to take the money. Will she give her hand into his with love? As Lucrezia looks towards him, probably with some displeasure, the painter hastens to assure her that he would definitely satisfy her lover's friend, even if she does not love to him. But he would paint for him tomorrow. That evening he would prefer to enjoy her company.

Andrea tells his wife that he is too tired that evening to paint the picture which her friend's friend wants him to paint. He will definitely do so tomorrow. Often, he is much more



tired than she imagines. That evening he is even more tired than usual. He requests to let him sit by her side for half an hour with her hands in his. He would prefer to sit by the window and look out through it at the city of Fiesole at a distance of three miles. Married people often sit together in this way. He has never been able to enjoy the calm and peace of married life. They have always quarrelled. But if he enjoys it for that one evening, it is possible he will feel relaxed and refreshed, and, therefore, he will be able to work with greater will and enthusiasm next morning.

Andrea requests his wife, Lucrezia, to sit with him for just half an hour with her hand in his. Her soft and delicate hand curls in his hand as a woman curls on the bare breast of the man she loves. Her hand thus is likened to a soft and delicate woman and his own to the breast of the man she loves. Andrea further asks her not to consider the time she passes in his company as wasted. If she keeps looking at him as she is looking at the moment, she would form an excellent model for the five pictures he has to paint, and in this way much money would be saved. Infatuated with her, he says that she looks most beautiful, graceful and fascinating like a serpent. The phrase, "serpentine beauty", is an inspiration of genius, for it brings out the graceful beauty of her delicate curves, as well as her sinister influence on her husband. She must remain sitting there, coiled in that graceful way. Her ears are so perfect, so beautiful, that it appears to him an act of cruelty that they should have been punctured even to put those beautiful ear-rings in. Her beauty is so sweet and perfect that he cannot describe it in words. Her face is as beautiful and fascinating as the Moon. And like the Moon, it is looked on by everybody and called his, and like the Moon it, too, smiles on everybody. But just as the Moon belongs to no one, in the same way she, too, belongs to no one, not even to her husband. Not only is she his Moon, but also of everybody else. Even then he loves her dearly. At this compliment, Lucrezia smiles. Andrea in raptures exclaims that at the moment she looks a perfect model for a picture. Her smile would inspire him in the picture he paints next.

Andrea describes the autumn 'greyness', and, 'twilight' which has overtaken his life and his art. 'Grey' is a colour between white and black and, 'Autumn' is a season between summer and winter. A 'silvery' colour is a greyish white colour. Autumn greyness has overtaken his life as well as his art. His life is neither rapturously happy nor unbearably gloomy. Similarly, his art too has neither the bright colours of happiness nor the black of absolute despair. It has the dull colours of twilight suggestive neither of the brightness of day nor the darkness of night. The picture which he will now paint, and which will represent them sitting together, will have a silvery grey colour all over. It would be colourless and dull like his life. It would not have the bright colours of the morning and the evening, but there would be toning down of colours as at the time of dusk. There was a time when she was proud of him, but the dullness of twilight has fallen on it, too, and her pride in him is no more now. As far as he is concerned, autumn has fallen on everything about his life and his art. His youth, his art, his hopes, have all been subdued to the dull, sober colours of the city of Fiesole at the time of twilight, seen at a distance through the window. Inspiration is necessary for great art ; as he has failed to receive that inspiration he can paint pictures which are only technically perfect, but

which are soulless and so fail to rise to the heights of great art. His art is a twilight art having neither the ecstatic brightness of great art nor the unrelieved gloom of failure and despair.

In order further to explain his point, the painter calls the attention of his wife to the twilight landscape visible through the window. There is the chapel from whose tower comes the sound of the ringing of a bell. Within its walls, crowded close together, are to be seen a number of trees. They can even see the last monk returning to the convent from the garden. It is autumn season and so the days are growing shorter and shorter. Just as the uniform autumn greyness colour everything in the landscape outside, in the same way his life and his art have all become uniformly grey.

Having told Lucrezia of the 'greyness' of his own art and life, Andrea indulges in some reflection on human life. He takes refuge in a weak, fatalistic philosophy. Man seems to be free, but in reality he has no freedom of will. He is helpless like a prisoner fettered in chains. Man is entirely in the hands of God ; he cannot do anything himself. He holds God responsible for all his suffering and unhappiness. He can not do nothing but obey the will of God and act accordingly.

He then changes the subject and invites Lucrezia to look attentively at the various pictures in the room. Probably, Lucrezia has been listening to him with such scant attention that Andrea asks her to be more attentive to him, and look in the direction he points out. He asks her to turn her head and look at the pictures hanging behind them at the walls of the studio. He then draws her attention to the picture, second from the door. It is a perfect painting, one which should serve as a model for others. Every painter should paint like this and in no other way. Then there is the famous portrait of Virgin Mary. He can assert that he pictures is technically faultless, and that none can find fault with it. He can paint such a portrait quite easily, as if it were a mere sketch done by the pencil. What he knows and what he feels deeply, he can express easily and faultlessly. As far as technical perfection is concerned, he is second to none. Lucrezia can herself form an idea of his technical perfection as a painter from the praises of the high official of the church who visited them last week. And equally high were the praises of the people when he was in France. His technical perfection has always been admired.

Painting now is quite easy for him. He works effortlessly and can still achieve technical perfection. There is no need for him any longer to draw rough sketches, or to study his models carefully. The time when he had to labour hard is now long past. His technical skill is such that he can paint without effort and achieve a perfection which others dream of achieving all their lives, and still fail, despite all their hard labour and striving. They take pains, but still fall far short of perfection. Within their own city of Florence, there are many such painters who fail to achieve technical excellence, despite all the pains they take. The important point is that though other painters are far inferior to him in technical skill, their works are better and greater in another way. Their works are a judgment on his own ; by comparison with them his own inferiority is brought out. Their work may be technically imperfect, but still it is higher than his own as their soul is lighted by divine inspiration, but he himself lacks such inspiration. Their

brains may be confused, troubled, and dull, they may lack his own skill, but still they are greater than he, for their art is an expression of their divine visions. No doubt, he is a perfect craftsman, one who can paint without any faltering and hesitation, but he lacks deep emotions and high aspirations of the true artist. In this, he is inferior to others who are much lesser craftsmen. Their technical limitations pull their work downwards, but then they have divine visions, as if they have entered the very gates of heaven, entrance to which is always denied to him. They do enter heaven, they do have divine visions ; it is another matter that they cannot express their visions perfectly. They have their moments of ecstasy and rapture.

On the other hand, he has a passionless soul which is not at all affected by the praise or blame of others. He paints for his own satisfaction and not that of others, and he knows fully well what he is doing. Suppose somebody comes to his studio, points to his painting of Morello, the well-known mountain peak near Florence, and begins criticising it for its wrong outline, and mistaken colours. He will not be moved at all by his criticism. Both praise and blame leave him cold and unmoved. Just as the mountain is not moved by what others say of it, so also he remains unmoved by the views of others. His art has achieved perfection and that is his tragedy. A man's ideals should always elude his grasp. They should always remain beyond his reach. If he succeeds in realising his aspirations, he would have nothing left to hope for from heaven. Life in heaven will have no meaning for him. Moreover, perfection of achievement results in complacency, and, "divine discontent, is essential for advancement or progress. "The silver-grey," of autumn has overtaken his art. It is technically perfect, but it fails to rise to the heights of great art. It lacks the fire of emotion and inspiration. It does not burn with artistic frenzy. It is a static, unprogressive art, expressing his own content at his technical perfection. He aimed low, achieved what he aimed at, and so his art suffers from his complacency. His technical skill has been so much the worse for his art. He is fully aware of the limitations of his own art, and also knows how those limitations can be made good.

Andrea now draws the attention of Lucrezia to a painting done by the famous Renaissance artist, Rafael, who was born at Urbino and who died young, only five years ago. The picture is not the original work of Rafael but a copy of it sent to him by his pupil George Vasari who understands how the greatness of that picture was achieved. Raphael poured his whole soul into his pictures so that even Popes and Kings may see it and admire it. He was an inspired artist, he aimed high, his soul reached heaven itself, and he and his art were both inspired by his divine visions. He poured his soul into his art, and then refilled it by divine visions. He had vision and inspiration, but he did not have the technical skill to express that visions with perfection. The picture is technically wrong. For example, the arm is wrongly put and then there is another fault in its outline. But it is only the body of the picture which is defective ; its soul is perfectly right. There is nothing wrong with it. Even a child can understand the meaning of the picture, for the vision of Rafael was clear and vivid. He can easily correct the technical faults of Rafael, but the activity of Rafael's soul, his vision and inspiration, his emotional range, etc., are beyond his reach. That is his tragedy.

Andrea now proceeds to explain to Lucrezia the cause of this failure. It is she who is responsible for his failure. Had she wanted she could have inspired him, and then his art would not have lacked emotion and passion. Inspired by her, he could easily have put soul into his art, and then they together would have risen to the heights which Rafael attained. So great is Andrew's infatuation with his wife, he is so much afraid of offending her, that noticing a look of displeasure, a frown, on her face, he at once apologises. She gave him all that he had asked for, and much more several times over than he deserved. The real fault lies with him, for had he asked for more, perhaps, she would have given more. Still he has a pathetic consciousness of what his wife's incompatibility has cost him in fame and recognition. There is, no doubt, that she is perfectly beautiful. She has a beautiful face, beautiful eyes, and a beautiful mouth. She has sweet melodious voice, a serpentine beauty, which ensnares him, and holds him captive as birds are held captive by the melody of the 'owler's (bird catcher's) pipe. There can be no doubt that physically she is perfect, but lacks beauty of spirit. Her soul is not great enough to inspire him, as other women inspire their husbands.

She looked at his art purely from the utilitarian point of view. She cared for it merely as a source of earning money. Had she urged him to paint not for money, but for future name and fame, and to rise to the same heights as Michael Angelo and Raphael attained, and that all three of them should equally enjoy fame, glory and heavenly bliss, certainly he would have equalled their artistic achievements. It seems quite possible that inspired by her he would have done so. But she failed him and that is the tragedy of his life. But one should not complain, for they are all in the hands of God. Everything happens as He ordains. Man is not a free agent. He is merely an instrument of His will.

For a while, Andrea complains that his failure as an artist has been caused by the incompatibility of his wife. She cared only for money, and looked at his art from a purely utilitarian point of view. But the very next moment he realises his mistake, and the truth dawns upon him. True inspiration comes from within the soul of the artist himself; it is the artist's own inner urge which makes him sacrifice present gain for future fame and glory. No amount of external stimulus can be of much good in this respect. So, he was wrong in blaming his wife, and holding her responsible for his own failure. Rafael and Angelo could achieve perfection, they could put soul into their work, but they had no wives to inspire them and urge them on. The combination of will and ability is rare, with the result that they are all half men, having either the will, the desire, or the power and capacity. With their limited resources and incomplete powers, they, the half men, struggle somehow or the other to achieve their ends. In the end, God judges the actions of man and rewards and punishes accordingly as man has performed his duty or has failed in this respect. Everything is in the hands of God, and it is useless to complain or worry.

If the judgment of God is exactly in proportion to one's merits, then it means that he should surely be rewarded in heaven, and duly compensated for his lack of recognition in this world. Here he has been somewhat underrated, and has been poor, and he has been despised

by the people over a long period of time. To tell the truth, he does not go out of his house in the day time, for he is afraid of meeting any of the French lords, who might be on a visit to Florence. Often when they come across him in the streets, they avert their faces in disgust, look to the other side and ignore him. This show of contempt is preferable to the disparaging comments they sometimes make as they pass by him. He embezzled the money which the French King had given him to purchase some portraits for him in Florence. To please his wife, he built a palatial residence for her with that money. The Fontainebleau, with his pictures. The one year he passed there was the happiest period of his life, the period when he enjoyed the maximum of success, fame, and happiness. During these days, he was inspired, like Raphael himself. Often it seemed to him that his inspiration was lifting him up from the earth. He felt the same exaltation for a while, as Raphael felt everyday. The kind and sympathetic looks of the great monarch inspired him, and he felt glorified for the time being. Andrea then recalls the various gestures and movements of the king. He remembers how the king would bend over him as he painted, with one finger in his beard or on his lips, and his arms round his neck and shoulders. As the king watched him painting, he could hear the jingle of his golden chain quite close to his ear, and could also feel his breath on his face. He was proud of the favours shown to him by the King. There were happy days indeed. All the courtiers, would stand round the king, looking at his work with the same regard and consideration as the King himself. The French nobles had such frank eyes and they looked at his work with such abundant enthusiasm, that he was encouraged and inspired and kept steadily working, without feeling any fatigue at all. He hoped that on his return home he would get his highest reward, the reward he valued most of all, in the form of the love and appreciation of his wife. It was this hope, more than the enthusiasm and appreciation of the French king, which kept him steadily at his work.

Andrea tells his wife that the days which he passed in France, in the company of King Francis I, were the happiest days of his life. If she, Lucrezia, had not grown impatient at his long stay in France and called him back home, he would have stayed there for sometime more and achieved fame and recognition like Rafael and Angelo. Perhaps, at this, Lucrezia is displeased and he notices a frown on her face. So he at once remarks that what is past is dead and gone and it is no use regretting it. As a matter of fact, at that time he himself felt that it would be right and proper for him to return home. He instinctively felt that it would be better for him to go home to his beloved wife. Life in France was growing too full of glory and splendour to suit him. In order to explain his point, he compares himself to a bat. A bat is weak-eyed, and his eyes are blinded by the dazzling light of the sun. It feels comfortable only within the four walls of a farmhouse which forms its world. In the same way, he could not bear the glory, the splendour of the life, at the French court. This life did not suit him, and it was right and proper that it ended. She called him and he returned to her.

Andrea tells Lucrezia that he would like to paint her beautiful face with her golden hair, as sweet and charming as she looks at the moment. She was his, and this was all he wanted; her love was a sufficient compensation for him for his failure as an artist.

He then proceeds to compare his own work and that of Raphael in the presence of his wife, and thus brings out his comparative superiority. The comparison reveals clearly that he is more fortunate and lucky than Raphael. That was the time when young Rafael was painting in Rome to decorate the palace, most probably of Pope, so that all Rome may see his paintings. At that time, he was really inspired and exultant. He was widely praised, and so was getting a little proud. It was in those days that Angelo told Raphael that there was a certain poor, mean and worthless fellow (Andrea himself) going about the streets of Rome. Nobody cared for him at the time, but he, if he were encouraged and inspired by Popes and Kings as Rafael had been, and was set to work to devise and paint pictures, would bring sweat to his face.

Andrea points out to Lucrezia his technical superiority as a painter, even over great and reputed painters like Raphael. Pointing to the arm of Raphael's pertrait of Virgin Mary, he tells her that the arm has been painted wrongly. Before the world, he dares not point out the fault of Rafael, so great is his name and popularity, but he can tell his wife without any fear. In order to show her where the arm is defective, he takes a piece of chalk and corrects it. But in a tone of bitter grief, he continues that the technical imperfections of Rafael do not matter much, because the soul of his portraits is always right, while his, Andrea's portraits lack soul, despite their technical perfection.

He does not care very much for what others say of him or what he (Angelo) said of him. He cares only for love, and for a place in her heart. Perhaps, at this point, Lucrezia interrupts him to inquire whom "he said", refers to. At this Andrea feels much hurt, for her question shows that she has already forgotten about the words of Angelo which he had overheard. It is an important matter for him, for it reveals his greatness as an artist, but it seems, his wife cares little for it.

Lucrezia smiles, and her smile is a sufficient compensation to Andrea for his failure as an artist. The hour which he has passed in her company would always he cherished and remembered by him. At this, Lucrezia smiles again. Feeling amply rewarded by her smiles, he tells her to understand clearly that if she would sit with him in that way every night and smile at him, he would be inspired and would be able to paint better pictures. Then he would earn more, and so would be in a position to give her more money.

The darkness has increased and the stars have appeared in the sky. Mount Morello is no longer visible. The city walls can be seen only in the light which the watchmen have lighted at their cry, 'Ki-ou', can now be heard. Therefore, Andrea asks Lucrezia to come away from the window into their house which he had built to please her with money of the French king.

He prays that may King Francis pardon him for misappropriating his money. He has been sufficiently punished by his own conscience. When at night his eyes are tired as a result of having worked for long hours, and he looks up at the walls of the house, it seems to him that they have become golden. He sees each brick distinctly, and it seems to him that they are plastered with gold instead of cement.

Andrea wants Lucrezia to sit with him for some time more but she says that her cousin, who is in reality her lover, is waiting outside and so she must go. Reluctantly, Andrea agrees to her leaving him, since he wants to see her alone and not in his company. She wants more money; perhaps, she needs it to pay the debts which her cousin has incurred in gambling.

He will purchase her smiles with all that he can earn through his art. As long as he can work, as long as his powers are intact, he will go on working, and purchasing her smiles with what he earns. Only, he pleads with her once again, she should sit with him for the remaining part of the evening and bestow on him her charming smiles. She calls it merely a waste of time, but it refreshes him and enables him to work with greater energy the next morning. In one last effort to make her interested in his art, he tells her that evening he would like to imagine how well he would paint now, if he were invited once again by the French King to work at his court, even if it were to paint only one picture. He would paint a portrait of Virgin Mary, but this time he would not paint it with her, Lucrezia, as his model. He would like it very much that she should sit with him as he works, and hear the great Michael Angelo praise his art.

Andrea asks Lucrezia, if she is willing to sit with him for the rest of the evening. She can meet and satisfy her friend tomorrow. If she would give him her company for that evening, he would be relaxed and refreshed and would be able to paint quite easily the picture which her friend wants for his art-gallery. He would be able to complete that picture off hand, quite easily. Andrea then shows her by his gestures how easily he would paint that picture tomorrow. If he hesitates to pay the full amount required to pay off the debts of her lover, he would paint one or two more pictures for him. In this way, he would get sufficient amount to clear the gambling debts of her friend. He would also earn the thirteen silver coins she needs to buy a frill for her dress.

Andrea tells Lucrezia that at least that evening he is quite satisfied and serene, as serene and calm as a man should be in old age. He has no regrets, and no desire to change the past, even if the past could be changed. The best part of his life is already over, and he has no desire to change it. No doubt he has been guilty of some crimes in the past. For example, he did a great wrong to king Francis. He misappropriated his money, but he was tempted by her to do so, and he built the house with that money at her request and in order to satisfy her.

He has been guilty of another sin also, but there is justification for that too. He allowed his parents to die in poverty. But then it must be remembered that he was not rich and whatever he earned, he earned it with the sweat of his brow. Secondly, each one must bear his lot. Thirdly, it must be remembered that his parents were born poor, they lived poor and, therefore, it was but natural that they died poor. Poverty was their lot; why should he be blamed for that. He himself has worked hard in his life, and has not been paid his due. He often received insufficient payment. This has been his misfortune, and he has to bear it. He might not be a good son, but let those, who are considered good son, work hard like him and paint two hundred pictures.

Andrea then expresses his satisfaction at the way in which she has sat with him and loved him that evening. That is sufficient for him; he does not require anything more. He is fully satisfied. He adds that, perhaps, in heaven he would get one more chance to paint a picture and thus show his worth and skill as an artist. It is just possible that God may desire the four walls of the Holy City, New Jerusalem, mentioned in the Bible, to be decorated with pictures. He will find that in His Heaven there are four great painters, Leonardo, Rafael, Angelo and Andrea. He would ask each of them to decorate one of the walls.

The other three would have no wives, while he himself would still have Lucrezia as his wife. His infatuation for her would drag him down in heaven as well. The cousin's whistle is again heard, perhaps more insistent and urgent than before. So Andrea allows his wife to go to him.

### **5.4.5 Critical Analysis**

Like other monologues of Robert Browning this long dramatic monologue also grows out from a peculiarly critical condition. The speaker is Andrea, a painter of repute, who addresses to his wife. He fully knows that his beautiful wife does not love him, and comes to him only when she is in need of money. The pointer is shown to have got a chance to be with his wife. She has come to take money so that she can repay the debts of her lover. The painter is in his studio with her, and begins to express his unbound love for her in spite of knowing that she does not love him. Andrea is shown in a reflective mood and his thoughts range over the past and present and in this way he reveals various aspects of his tragic life and his wife's unfaithfulness.

As Lucrezia looks towards him, he asks her to keep looking like that. He praises her beauty and calls her, 'my serpentining beauty'. Her ears are so perfect that their beauty is spoiled even by the pearl that hangs therein. Her face is beautiful like the Moon, and as with the Moon, everyone is fascinated by her also. All love her, though she loves no one. Lucrezia is pleased at this compliment and smiles. Andrea asks her to look at that yonder portrait representing her in her first pride in him, and Andrea himself is a young man full of hopes, but now toned down to an autumnal sober grey as that of Fiesole at the time. It is all as God wishes; we seem free, but are really fettered.

If Lucrezia had loved him and inspired him, he would have attained to Rafael's heights. If, with her perfect beauty and low ensaring voice, she had brought an equally noble mind, and urged him to paint, not for gain, but for, "God and the Glory," he would have ranked with painters like Raphael and Michael Angelo. But it is no use regretting for what is past and gone. He must not blame her. "All is as God overrules." Besides, Raphael and Angelo had no wives, and yet they could put soul into their works. This shows that true inspiration comes from within.

God compensates and punishes adequately everyone at the end, and it is better that he



has not received his reward in this world. God will reward him in the life to come. He can now look forward to heaven with hope and confidence. Thus Andrea becomes the spokesman of Browning's philosophy.

Therefore, he does not regret his failure. He would very much like to paint a portrait of Virgin Mary with his wife serving as his model. People will compare Raphael's painting to his and would prefer him (Raphael), but they will excuse him, when they come to know that the Virgin in his picture was painted after his own wife, while Rafael had no such wife as his model. They would realise that it was his wife who dragged him down.

In order to impress her further with his skill, he tells her that once Angelo said to Raphael, while the latter was in the prime of his powers, that there was, "a sorry little scrub", in Florence who, if encouraged and inspired by Popes and Kings in the way Rafael was, would prove a formidable rival to him.

But what matters to him is whether Lucrezia is pleased or not, for it was for her that he had thrown away the golden chance of his life. All he wanted was only such an hour as this, such a smile as hers at that moment. Refreshed in this way, he could paint better, get more money and then give it all to her.

Andrea wants to keep her to himself for sometime more, but she is impatient to go to her cousin waiting outside for a private meeting with her. Perhaps, she wants money to pay his debts, and perhaps she wants to take that money from him with her smiles. By all means, he is ready to give her the money she needs in exchange for her smiles.

The past comes to Andrea's memory as it would to an old man's. He realises full well that he sinned in embezzling the money of Francis. He was also guilty of letting his parents die of want, but he justifies his conduct saying that, that was their lot ; he, too, has suffered from lack of means. Everyone must bear his lot in the world.

In Heaven, he might get a chance and paint again with great artists, like Leonardo, Michael Angelo and Raphael. But he would still have her as his wife (they three being wifeless) and so he would still be dragged down by her. Even then, he would prefer to have her there also. So great is his love for her.

At this moment, the cousin (the lover) of Lucrezia whistles again Perhaps his whistling is more urgent than before, and so Andrea permits her to leave him and go to him.

#### **5.4.6 Characterisation**

The Monologue tells the pathetic tale of the moral and artistic failure of a talented painter, "faultless", in execution, but devoid of any lofty purpose in his life or art. The use of the word "faultless" is ironical, for no art can be called perfect, which does not have spiritual beauty. The true artist is he who has lofty ideals to inspire him, and whose execution is necessarily imperfect, as it can never attain the height of his ideal. The artist, whose execution is

perfect and faultless, but lacks “soul”, must needs be an inferior artist : he might be a great craftsman, but he can never be ranked with supreme artists like Raphael or Michael Angelo who, no doubt, committed technical mistakes in their pictures, but whose ideal was always pitched high, and whose art is expressive of, “the divine discontent”, within their souls. Andrea aims low, achieves his ideal, and knows that the grayness of complacency has fallen over his art and so sighs :

Ah, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp,

Or what’s Heaven for ?

The tragedy of Andrea is that he has no “loftiness of ideal,” though in point of workmanship he is simply faultless. This innate defect in Andrea, Browning represents as increased by the influence of his wife, Lucrezia, whom he pictures as not merely unprincipled, but heartless and shallow, quite incapable of appreciating any, but the lowest and most material aspects of life.

### **5.4.7 Optimism**

This poem is not only an admirable piece of character-study, it also embodies Browning’s philosophy. It brings out the poet’s optimism, his faith in God, and in the immortality of the human soul. It also throws light on his theory of art. Artistic greatness is not merely a matter of technical perfection ; it must also be expressive of the urge within the artist’s soul for the ideal and the unattainable. A great artist must pitch his ideals high, and the ideal must always elude his grasp. Attainment and satisfaction result in complacency. This was the tragedy of Andrea. He achieved technical perfection and so lacked the inner urge for greater achievement. His art lacked, ‘soul’, the fire and glow of passion and inspiration, and so must be ranked inferior to the art of Raphael and Angelo, painters who were far his inferiors in technical excellence.

---

## **5.5 Let Us Sum Up**

---

In this unit you have acquired knowledge and had practice:

- (i) to understand dramatic monologue in blank verse,
- (ii) to know about the life and poetic genius of Robert Browning.
- (iii) to understand various literary trends of the Victorian Age,
- (iv) to critically analyse Browning’s dramatic monologue, and
- (v) to appreciate the poem and understand its poetic qualities.

---

## **5.6 Review Questions**

---

1. What qualities do you find in ‘Andrea Del Sarto’?

2. Discuss Browning as a love poet.
3. Comment on Browning's style and versification.
4. Discuss psycho-analysis in Browning's poetry.
5. What are the foundations of Browning's optimism?
6. Comment on the use of pictorial elements in Browning's poetry.
7. Discuss the lyrical expressions of Browning.
8. "Browning excelled in long narrative poems." Comment.
9. Comment on the modern note in the poetry of Robert Browning.

---

## **5.7 Bibliography**

---

1. Allick, Richard, The English Common Reader 1800-1900, Chicago, Oxford, 1960.
2. Briggs, A., Victorian People, London Cambridge, 1963.
3. Hood, Thurman, Letters of Robert Browning, London, New Heaven, 1933.
4. Levis, F.R. New Bearings in English Poetry, New York, Penguin Inc., 1982.
5. Nowell, S., Poetry and Prose of Robert Browning, London, Hull, 1950.
6. Rai, V. History of English Literature, Varanasi, Bhartiya Vidya Prakashan, 1966.
7. Reeves, J. Teaching Poetry, London, Heinemann, 1963.

## UNIT-6

---

### MATTHEW ARNOLD: A GREAT-VICTORIAN GENIUS

---

#### Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Arnold and His Faith
- 6.3 Arnold and His Age
- 6.4 Matthew Arnold's Literary Output
  - 6.4.1 Matthew Arnold as a Literary Critic
  - 6.4.2 Arnold and the Grand Style
  - 6.4.3 Elegiac Note in Arnold's Poetry
- 6.5 Bibliographical References and Annotations
- 6.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.7 Review Questions
- 6.8 Bibliography

---

#### **6.0 Objectives**

---

The objective of this study is to unfold the various attributes of the personality of Matthew Arnold who was a man of unique gifts. He was not only a poet and philosopher but also a profound scholar and culture critic. He ranks with Robert Browning, Thomas Hardy, Charles Dickens, Carlyle and Ruskin in many ways. He is a great genius *sui generis*. Attempt has been made to crystallize his stature as a great Victorian writer who created a grand niche for himself. He was a formidable literary critic in his own right. What Dr. Samuel Johnson was in the eighteenth century England, Matthew Arnold was in the nineteenth century England. He stood in symbolic relation to his age as Oscar Wilde did in relation to the decadent 1890s. Arnold's work is a veritable goldmine of ideas in all walks of Victorian life.

---

#### **6.1 Introduction**

---

Matthew Arnold with his philosophical bent of mind was nearly always pre occupied with culture, discipline and moral grandeur. As a scholar, poet and critic he was enamoured of ancient Greek masters. His father Dr. Arnold of Rugby, the famous schoolmaster, had nine children, of whom Matthew was the eldest son. His birthplace was Laleham village. His father

was the founder of modern public school system in England. He came in close contact with Wordsworth whose brilliant critic and interpreter he eventually became. Dr. Thomas Arnold was a stern Puritan. Matthew Arnold pays a high tribute to him in his poem. *Rugby Chapel*:

.....*To us thou wert still*  
*Cheerful, and helpful and firm*  
*Therefore to thee it was given*  
*Many to save with thyself;*  
*And, at the end of the day,*  
*O faithful shepherd ! to come,*  
*Bringing the sheep in thy hand*

In course of time, Oxford became his home. What London was to Dr. Samuel Johnson, Oxford was to Matthew Arnold. Oxford -- home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties- became dearer to him than Rugby or Lancham (his native place). Matthew Arnold received the Newdigate prize on his poem *Cromwell*: it shows Wordsworth's influence on the young poet.

*Yet all high sounds that mountain children hear,*  
*Flash'd from thy soul upon thine inward ear.*

Young Arnold was in the making of a poet and critic at Rugby and Oxford, the earliest influence being Wordsworth on him. Though Arnold was associated with Education throughout his life, he was private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, the then President of the Council in the administration of Lord John Russell. Lord Lansdowne was a Whig. Matthew Arnold's liberal politics was substantially the ideology of his patrons. In spite of his interest in politics, he was never a candidate for Parliament. Arnold's heart lay in Oxford - "beautiful city, so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our country, so serene." He was never tired of describing the glamour of Oxford. "And yet, steeped in sentiment as *she* (Oxford) lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantment of the Middle Age. Who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection- to beauty, which in only truth seen from another side, - nearer perhaps all the science of Tübingen? This is Arnold's *Scholar Gipsy*- vein. Oxford is central to his beautiful vision.

Arnold as poet grew up a passionate lover of the countryside. In his early poems, there is clarity of mind and lucidity of soul. He made his mark as a renowned Victorian poet: His poems *Empedocles on Aetna*, *The Scholar Gipsy*, *Dover Beach*, *Sohrab and Rustum*, *Balder Dead*, speak volumes of his mind. *Balder Dead* is Homeric in tone like his *Sohrab and Rustum* though the subject of the former is lifted from Norse Mythology. Arnold as a

professor of poetry distinguished himself not only as a poet but as a critic. He appreciated the Greeks as the unapproached masters of the grand style. *Sohrab and Rustum* is a story narrated in blank verse but it is in the Homeric vein. Sohrab's reply to his father rings genuinely of nobility:

*Truth sits upon the lips of dying men,  
And falsehood, while I lived, was far from mine.*

Arnold perceived a close intellectual sympathy between the Greece in the glorious days of Pericles and the England of his own time. His tragedy *Merope* is Hellenic in theme. Merope, the widowed queen of Messenia, whose son Aepytus takes his revenge upon Polyphontes- the murderer of his father. The most thrilling scene in the play is where Merope is about to kill her own son Aepytus, not recognising him for her son but believing him to be her son's killer. Thematically Merope's tragic appeal comes closest to that of *Sohrab and Rustum*. It is actually Victorian pessimism at the root of pathos:

*Yes, and not only have we not explored  
That wide and various world, the heart of others  
But even our own hearts, that narrow world  
Bounded in our breast, we hardly know,  
Of our actions dimly trace the causes.*

Arnold is a poet-critic. He was genuinely a poet before he turned to poetry. It would be worthwhile to study his critical theory before we appreciated *Sohrab and Rustum*. Arnold regarded poetry to be the expression of "the state of mind of the poet." This led to an extravagance of thought and ungoverned emotion. Arnold's *Empedocles at Aetna* and *Sohrab and Rustum* are the best examples of it. The Spasmodics, Arnold being one of them, believed that the subject of poetry should be conducive to "joy". Since his Age did not supply such subjects, Arnold turned to the Greeks. The Greek tragedy inherited the noblest form of joy/delight through the enactment of elementary feelings which were quintessentially human and independent of time. They were an integral part of the universal constants of human nature.<sup>3</sup>

Matthew Arnold became Professor of Poetry in his early thirties. He was sent to France to prepare a report on primary education. He inspected some prestigious schools there and wrote a book *A French Eton* in 1864. He was an excellent orator and delivered several remarkable lectures.

In 1858, he heard John Bright at Birmingham. He was spell bound by his gift of oratory. He refers to him admiringly in his *Culture and Anarchy*. As a Professor of poetry, he remarked "The present system in England materialises the upper class, vulgarises the middle class and brutalizes the lower class." Arnold became a very renowned literary critic. He disap-

proved of those who tried to serve both God and Mammon. This was the time when Disraeli was the Leader of the Conservative Party in the House of Commons. Arnold was a liberal conservative. He did not like mercenary contemporaries and expressed with regret that the world soon be “the philistines” He was an unrelenting adversary of Philistinism. In 1864, Arnold happened to meet Lord Bishop of England. He was the man who could make the best of both worlds. His *Essays in Criticism* highlighted his reputation as a critic. He regarded Byron as a greater poet than Tennyson. He described Shelley as “the most ineffectual angel, beating in the void, his luminous wings in vain.” In his Essay on Heine, he defined poetry as “the most beautiful, impressive, and widely effective mode of saying things.” He also wrote the philosophical essays on Spinoza and Marcus Aurelius.

He remained Professor of Poetry at Oxford for one decade (1857-1867) He wrote *Emoedocles on Etna*, *Thyrsis*- a monody or elegy- on his friend Arthur Clough. *Thyrsis* reads like a sequel to *The Scholar Gipsy*. His *Dover Beach* strikes a deep elegiac note. Arnold had a notion of living in the transitional phase of Victorian age:

*Wandering between two worlds, one dead*

*The other powerless to be born.*

*With nowhere yet to rest my head,*

*Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.*

As an educationist, he recommended that Greek and Latin should be studied in England. He was the most enlightened Victorian who wanted to make the world better than what he had found it. He regarded the state as an instrument of education.

---

## 6.2 Arnold and His Faith

---

Arnold rose to be the most vocal spokesman of the spirit of scepticism of his age. Surely, there was “more faith in honest doubt.” He was rather shocked to notice that the well-established social and religious values and institutions were gradually crumbling down under the impact of utilitarianism. He regretted loss of faith of good old times:

“The sea of faith

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

Lay like folds of a bright girdle furled.”<sup>4</sup>

-- *Dover Beach*

This ‘sea of faith’ has receded to the background,

“But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long withdrawing roar,

Retreating to the breath  
Of the night wind down the vast egress  
And naked shingles of the world.”<sup>5</sup>

--*Dover Beach*

He criticized Christianity as a spent-up religion. Like Carlyle he believed that religion must be dynamic. He observed that God was as ‘that stream of tendency by which all things strive to fulfil the laws of their being.’ His doctrine of religious faith was, thus, moralistic and spiritual. He was aware of the fact that *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin had shaken the Biblical myths to their foundations. He was against dogmatism. The church represented dogmatic authority in opposition to the principle of liberal democracy. He desired the revival of genuine culture as a remedy of ills of society. This meant the revival of fine arts, especially poetry. He visualised that poetry would be the religion of the future and it would complete science and philosophy. His lectures ‘On the Translating of Homer’ which had spell-bound the England audience did not have the same impact when the British lion with exquisitely modulated voice spoke to the American audience at Boston and New York.

Arnold retired in 1886 from the Department which he had served faithfully for thirty five years. Two years after he suddenly expired of cardiac failure, while running to catch a train at Liverpool. That was the end of “the last Greek.” Lionel Trilling remarked on hearing the news of Arnold’s death, “It was surely the death of a Christian, but quite as surely it was the death of a Roman of the great mould- republican, stoic,..... For the aim of Arnold’s life long thought and action was an idealized and Christianized Roman empire- its corner stone responsibility, its pinnacle unity.”

---

### 6.3 Matthew Arnold and his life

---

The Victorian age corresponds to the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) sprawling over the three quarters of the nineteenth century. This was the period when England was sowing her future and reaping her past. It was a period of social, economic and political turbulence. It is characterized by industrial and scientific progress. The England dominions beyond the seas were being consolidated. Literature and the fine arts also flourished under the umbrella of morality. The Industrial Revolution, which was in vogue, gave rise to certain problems. The industrial worker was put to hard and exhausting labour.

John Ruskin observed in *The Crown of Wild Olive*, “Rough heaving clay out of a ditch, or driving an express train against the north wind all night, or holding a Collier’s helm in a gale on a lee shore, or whirling white-hot iron at a furnace mouth, that man is not the same at the end of the day, or night, as one who has been sitting in a quiet room, with everything comfortable about him- reading books,.....,or painting pictures.”<sup>6</sup> Ruskin, thus, exposed the hiatus between the affluent and the poor. Obviously the capitalist class rolled in riches, while the labourers languished in poverty. The small agricultural holdings of peasants and the



small workshops of the artisans were taken over by large scale mechanized farming and power driven factories polluting the environment with monstrous quanta chimney smoke. Ugliness was writ large on the face of the country. The Industrial Revolution ushered in an era of prosperity and progress on the one hand but on the other hand, it created misery and adversity to millions of workers and hydraheaded problems.

This was a period of expansion of Colonialism. The Great Britain became a great imperialist power as it appropriated Egypt, Sudan, acquired control of the Suez, established a big empire in India and developed self-governing English colonies in Canada, Australia and Newzealand, and ruled highhandedly in S.Africa and obtained several African Suzerainties from the Turkish Empire: The sun did not set in the British Empire. Lecky, Cole, Postgate and the like historians have admired the bureaucratic governance and prestige of the British Parliament in Europe. England did commit some political blunders such as the opium war with China, and the Creamean War-- which intensified the hostility between her and France. The diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria was the showdown of the England nation “drunk with power.” There were war-ships for miles together at Spithead, Aristocrats, Princes and the representatives ruling over several British’s colonies who had never before owed allegiance to a single flag assembled to pay homage to the aged sovereign with ostentatious fanfare.

The Victorian Age was an era of deep social unrest. The poor living conditions of industrial workers attracted the attention of social reformers and writers who depicted a realistic picture of the contemporary social set up consisting of the haves and have-nots and felt morally obliged to realise their social responsibility. Both liberal and technological education advanced in the Victorian period. Both Cambridge and Oxford universities had fallen low in their established standards needed some stimulus from the scholastic and pedagogic languor of the eighteenth century. Consequently a Royal Commission was appointed in 1850 for Oxford University and two years later, another commission was appointed for Cambridge university also. Education Act was passed, Press became a strong political force. Newspapers, Journalism and the writing of novels flourished as the number of reading public increased phenomenally: The great novelists of the period were Charles Dickens, Thackeray, Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, Kingsley, Disraeli, Bulwer Lytton, Meredith, Jane Austin, R.L.Stevenson....etc. Renowned prose writers of the period were Macaulay, John Ruskin, Walter Pater, etc. They were all remarkable stylists.

The progress in all departrmants of national life- Navy, Finance, Indian Colonial policy, Locomotive and Transport, Education, Science and Medicine- was unprecedented.

---

## **6.4 Matthew Arnold’s Literary Output**

---

Matthew Arnold was a poet, essayist, critic, educationist and a socio-political thinker. It would be worthwhile to refer to some of his important works here. *The Strayed Travellers* (1849) is modelled on Milton’s *Comus*. It is written in blank verse and has classical tone and

treatment. *The Forsaken Merman* (1849) is a romantic monologue. *Resignation* (1849) is a philosophic poem. In its tone and spirit it bears an unflinching affinity with the Graveyard School of Poetry. *Tristram and Iseult* (1852) is a play. *The Scholar Gipsy* (1853) is one of the masterpieces by Arnold. It is pastoral in setting and is based on a legend as narrated by Glanvill in his *Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661) <sup>7</sup> The protagonist happens to be an Oxford Scholar who had to discontinue his studies. He joined his tribesmen to learn their lore, and roamed over the Oxford countryside. With this story is incorporated a wonderful evocation of the landscape of Oxford, and his reflections follow on the contrast between the faith of the scholar-gipsy and “this strange disease of modern life, with its sick hurry and divided aims.” The poem is an impassioned critique of the materialistic civilization. It seeks to re-establish the good old times of faith, devotion, ease and simplicity.

*Sohrab and Rustum* (1853) is a narrative tale. It is based on Firdausi's *Shahnama*. It has a chapter on the glorious history of Persia. It describes realistically and vividly the battle between Rustum and his son Sohrab. It is a specimen of heroic poetry. The poet's tone is Homeric. It has several elaborate similes as superb examples of Arnold's narrative art. He wrote several love poems about Marguerite- a French maiden living at Thun. He wrote “*Switzerland*” *Love poems* (1853). He wrote *Marope* (1858)- closet drama. *Empedocles on Etna* (1862) is another closet play. It is remarkable for the songs of Callicles. *Dover Beach* is an impressive lyric. It has a melancholy tone. The poet expresses his scepticism in it and describes that the old order is breaking down. *Dover Beach* is one of the most anthologised poems by Arnold. His pastoral elegy *Thyrsis* (1867) is in the tradition of Milton's *Lycidas* and Shelley's *Adonais*. It mourns the death of his friend Arthur Hugh Clough. In cadence, rhythm and apt phrases it equals *The Scholar Gipsy*. It equally excels in the picturesque description of the countryside around Oxford. *Rugby Chapel* (1867) is a reflective lyric in memory of his father- Dr. Thomas Arnold, the Headmaster of Rugby Chapel School. It has a deep moral tone. *Calais Sands* (1867) is one of his best known love poems. It is autobiographical as it refers to his passionate love for Lucy Wightman whom he married later on.

Arnold wrote several critical essays of literary value. *On Translating Homer* (1861) has sweeping statements about the poetry of Homer. Arnold states in it that his contemporary poets should adopt Homer's style and technique in their compositions. Arnold has several titles of essays to his credit. His *Essay in Criticism* cannot be underestimated. His *Study of Poetry* sets down most completely his critical method of appraising the works of literature by means of test passages of proved excellence. It is called his ‘Touchstone Method’ of literary judgment. He anticipated Croce. His essay on Milton and Wordsworth are remarkable. Arnold made his mark as a social critic, philosopher, reformer and prophet. *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) is his famous treatise on Hebraism. The most appealing chapter in the book is on the Greek and Hebrew attitude of mind. In this book he divides society in three classes- Barbarians, Philistines and Populace. His moral message to mankind is that the remedy of malaise of society lies in the revival of ancient cultural values. His work on *St. Paul and Protestantism*

(1870) is on Christian theology with reference to St. Paul. It seeks to break down the renderings of St. Paul's theology known as Calvinism and Armenianism and correct the mistakes of Non-Conformity. His *Friendship's Garland* (1871) is a sequel to *Culture and Anarchy*. It shows Voltairian wit and veiled irony. In his attitude, Arnold is much closer to Max Beerbohm. *Literature and Dogma* (1873) was specifically written "to restore the use of the Bible" to simple people who might be in danger of losing it. It shows his Biblical scholarship and polemic bias. *God and the Bible* (1875) was a sequel to *Literature and Dogma*. The work was highly admired by scholars and theologians for his sustained thesis on the Gospel of St. John.

As an Inspector of schools and educationist Arnold rendered a great service to the cause of education not only in England but in the whole Europe. What Arnold did for the Primary school education, his father had done for the public school education. He raised pedagogy to the standard of a scientific discipline. He visited several European countries in his official capacity and wrote several reports and treatises on education. He observed, "We have Hebraised too much. Let us Hellenise now,....."

#### 6.4.1 Matthew Arnold as a Literary Critic

As a literary critic, Matthew Arnold is different from Coleridge, Charles Lamb and Hazlitt. He propounded many critical principles. Let us discuss his major critical ideas:

- (a) Arnold notices a subtle nexus between the genius of the poet and his epoch. Genius in isolation cannot be understood. Genius acquires its significance in relation to the epoch i.e. the mental climate/ ethos/ intellectual climate. The performance of genius is determined by his contemporary social, political and historical forces. He was all praise for the age of Pericles in relation to ancient Greek literature.
- (b) He distinguished between 'prose' and 'poetry'. He assigned regularity, precision and balance as the qualities of prose. According to him, the eighteenth century was the age of prose and reason. He entertained the notion that England was *weak in prose* but *strong in poetry*.
- (c) He regarded Poetry as *criticism of life*. The word 'criticism' means to him, 'application of ideas to life.' Thus, all literature is an application of ideas to life. But poetry consists of 'high seriousness' and 'grand style.' The subject matter of poetry is not only human *action* but also *thought*. Poetry involves a sort of transfiguration of an idea or image in articulate manner. Arnold assigns moral dimension to poetry since it is concerned with life. "Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge" was declared by Wordsworth. Matthew Arnold, in a way, rephrased the statement rather differently, "Poetry is superior to religion, science and philosophy." Arnold's insistence on comparative criticism is also very valuable.
- (d) *The Test of poetry is its truth, - its interpretative Power.* What Arnold means is that

the truth of poetry is the truth of feeling. Poetry by its interpretative power appeals to the whole man.

Arnold did not find his age congenial to poetry. His age, he thought, was an age of material progress wanting in moral grandeur. It did not have the very ethos of poetic creation and growth. He was a fan of Greek and Elizabethan periods of literary excellence. He was enamoured of Goethe's works and those of Heine. His personal grievance was that his contemporaries had neither the German wealth of ideas nor the French enthusiasm for applying the ideas to life. He defined poetry as "a criticism of life under the conditions fixed..... by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty." He believed that even Shelley and Byron were unable to bring themselves in harmony with the *Zeitgeist* of their epoch. But Shakespeare and Aeschylus certainly achieved harmony with the spirit or ethos of their respective epochs. It is the question of *man* and the *moment* being cut out for each other. There is essentially a subtle relationship between the creative artist and his age: there is an inevitable conjunction of the potentiality of the moment and the creative genius of the artist. The artist and his age must meet half way. At times the age lags behind or is antagonistic to the artist. Creative epochs are certainly rare. Arnold says that *Byron's genius was thwarted by British Philistinism*. Thomas Gray was a highly gifted poet but his age -the age of prose- was not congenial to him. Arnold speaks very highly of Wordsworth for poetry is a transcript of the experience of life. There is an unfailing experiential content in Wordsworth's poetry particularly in his *Prelude*, *Ode to Immortality*, *Lines on Tintern Abbey*, *Solitary Reaper*, *Daffodils*, .....etc.

- (e) One of the critical principles of Arnold's *disinterestedness*. He is for 'disinterested objectivity' in criticism which espouses no cause except that of truth and the general welfare of man. The great power of poetry is its interpretative power: it is not a power of drawing out in black and white an explanation of the mystery of the universe but it is to awaken in us a wonderfully full new intimate and essential sense of objects so that we can be in harmony with them. The action of the poem in Arnold's view should have an *organic unity*: it must have an architectonic quality of making it a synthesized and well coordinated whole. Poetry is not Lady of Shallot's mirror that cracks the moment it is brought into contact with reality but King Arthur's Ex-caliber that sallies forth in search of adventure.

#### **6.4.2 Arnold and the Grand Style**

Arnold, in his famous essay, *On Translating Homer* (1861) emphasizes the notion of the grand style. He regards Homer, Dante, and Milton as the masters of grand style. The grand style, according to Arnold, arises in poetry when a noble nature, poetically gifted treats with simplicity or severity a serious subject. Severity is austerity: It is "gorgeousness severely restrained" as in Milton's poetry and in Homer's poetry too. It is not stilted. In his sonnet *Austerity in poetry*. he says that the poet's bride is

“.....a hidden ground  
Of thought and of austerity within.”

Grand style involves sublime thought and sublim expression. It elevates, consoles, and transports us beyond ourselves.

It expresses sublime thought with felicity, force, rapidity, and plainness. Arnold re-phrases and re-interprets Longinus who in his treatise *On the Sublime* elaborated Grand style. The adjective ‘grand’ means ‘transcendental’, Transcendence can not be defined but it can be experienced at the aesthetic level. it is a sine qua non of great poetry. The term grand style is applicable to painting, music,.....etc. Arnold recommends great classical poetry as the touchstone to gauge the degree of sublimity in contemporary poetry. Arnold is hats off to the masters of grands style- Chauced, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth ahs occasional glimpses of sublime style in his poems.

Arnold takes a very limited and circumscribed view of the grand style and excludes a larger fraction of English poetry from its charmed circle.

### **6.4.3 Elegiac Note in Arnold’s Poetry**

The temper of Arnold’s Muse is essentially elegiac. it is the dominant passion of his poetry. His elegies are numerous and they constitute a larger segment of his poetry. *Thyrsis* is an elegy on his friend A.H. Clough, *Rugby Chapel* comemorates his father, Dr. Thomas Arnold, the Headmaster of Rugby school, *A Southern Night* is for his brother, and *Westminster Abbey* is composed on Dean Stanley. Gray’s *Elegy Written in a Country Chuchyard* comes closest to Arnold’s style of elegiac poetry. Arnold’s melancholy sprang from various causes: One of them was his ‘contemplation of man’s destiny from the hopeless (t) angle of his own age’ and fron the course of the life of men on the earth,’ the other causes being his disappointment in love, deaths of his friends and relatives, loss of faith etc. The feeling of misery and sadness throbs in every poem of Arnold. Arnold thinks that Man’s destiny in the world is one of helplessness, despondeney and despair. Man is lonely in the world of overwhelming forces out to annihilate him. He has, thus, an unfailling sense of existential despair. He writes feelingly in *The Scholar Gipsy*:

“For whom each year we see  
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new  
Who hesitate and falter life away  
And lose tomorrow the ground won today.”

In one of his poems, the miserable spectacle of a man marching sadly to the grave poignantly is painted:

“With aching hands and bleeding feet

We dig heap, lay stone on stone  
We bear the burden and the heat  
Of the long day, and wish it were done.”

He describes in *Rugby Chapel*:

Most men eddy about  
Here and there-- eat and drink  
Are raised aloft, are hurl'd in the dust,  
Striving blindly, achieving nothing  
And then they die.....”

Man is a mere puppet in the hands of destiny of fate. This is what Thomas Hardy expressed in his novels. Arnold has observed in *Sohrab and rustum* the quirks of fate-

“We are all like swimmers in the sea,  
Paused on the top of a huge wave of fate  
Which hangs **uncertain** to which side to fall,  
And whether it will leave us up to land  
Or it will roll us out to the sea,  
Back out to sea, to the deep waves of death  
We know not.....”

In *Tristram and Iseult* the futility of love and ambition in human life is represented through the life of Alexander the Great, who died at the age of thirty-two only. The foolishness of his conquering big empires and that of extending newer dominions is exposed. The poem is, thus, about the vanity of human wishes.

Arnold's melancholy has redeeming aspect also. There is silver lining in its cloud. His scepticism is not without sunshine. There us another articulate voice:

“Despair not thou as I despair'd  
Nor be cold gloom thy prison;  
Forward the gracious hours have fared,  
And see! the sun is risen.

Arnold knows that melancholy feeling or tragic possibilities could not be entirely eradicated in the world. Even Goethe could not find its remedy.

“When Goethe’s death was told, we said:  
Sunk, then, in Europe’s sagest head,  
Physician of the Iron Age,  
Goethe has done his pilgrimage,  
He took the suffering human race,  
He read each wound, each weakness clear;  
And struck his finger on the place.  
And said, ‘thou ailest here, and here;  
He looked on Europe’s dying hour  
Of fitful dream and feverish power.”

There were people like Lord Macaulay<sup>9</sup> who were satisfied with the expansion of the British Empire and with the growth of material prosperity and progress in Europe. Arnold did not share this opinion with many of his contemporaries. He was not with Robert Browning who was convinced that ‘God was in his heaven’ and ‘All’ was ‘right with the world. Arnold did not think like Lord Tennyson

“I want to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crossed the bar”

What his time demanded was the discovery of some shore towards which one might steer. In *A Summer Night* Arnold draws the picture of a helmsman attempting to steer his way across the trackless ocean of life.

“And then the tempest strikes him and between  
The lightning- bursts is seen  
Only a driving wreck’  
And the pal master on his Spar-strewn deck  
With anguished face and flying hair  
**Grasping the rudder hard**  
**Still bent to make some port he knows not where**  
**Still standing for some false, impossible shore.”**

In the poem *The Future*, he has a glimpse of the promised land. There is an under current of meditative philosophy and wisdom in many poems charged with *lacrimal rerum* - the sense of tears in all mortal things. Arnold’s perception of nature presents a perspective

which is in direct contrast to the turmoils of Victorian life. Shall I add that Wordsworth had considerable influence on Matthew Arnold who studied him fairly deeply but there is a world of difference between the two poets. Arnold is agnostic and melancholy but Wordsworth is full of joy and rapture and poetry comes out of his elated cheerfulness.

Wordsworth observed,

“Pleasure is spread through the earth

In stray gifts to be claimed by whoever shall find them”

Nature taught Wordsworth calm and tranquillity. Arnold also shared this notion and remarked that the mystery of nature lay in peace, not joy. He preferred moonshine to sunshine. It is in moonlight that the quest of the Scholar Gipsy begins. Wordsworth rejoices in nature alone but Arnold bears an attitude of stoic resignation. His description of the Oxus river in *Sohrab and Rustum* and that of countryside of Oxford in *The Scholar Gipsy* is excellent.

---

## 6.5 Bibliographical References

---

1. Dr. Thomas Arnold was the famous Headmaster of Rugby School. He was a stern Puritan and a classical scholar.
2. His *Sohrab and Rustum* was based on Firdausi’s chronicle *Shahnama*. There is a chapter on Persian history in it.
3. Arnold echoes Aristotle’s discussion in his *Poetic* with references to Tragedy.
4. Matthew Arnold’s poem *Dover Beach*.
5. *Ibid.*
6. John Ruskin: *The Crown of Wild Olive*.
7. Arnold’s celebrated poem *The Scholar Gipsy* was based on an old legend which is narrated by Glanvill in his *Vanity of Dogmatizing*(1961)
8. Arnold has in his mind the ancient treatise *On the Sublime* by Longinus. The phrase ‘grand style’ means ‘grandeur of thought, expression and a happy synthesis and harmony of lesser elements in a work of art.
9. Lord Macaulay was a brilliant contemporary of Matthew Arnold. Macaulay is the pioneer of English education policy in India. Arnold was also an educationist of great repute.

---

## 6.6 Let Us Sum Up

---

The spiritual void of his period- Victorian Age -is the major theme of his poetry. His writings- poems, essays, etc- illustrate a heightend conflict between faith and doubt, between



reason and intuition and between head and heart. Milton, Goethe, Wordsworth, Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Shakespeare, Chaucer.....are his masters. His writings reflect his inner anguish which he experienced in an age of unrest. He was on the side of morality in life and in poetry. He asserted ‘A poetry of revolt against moral ideas is a poetry of revolt against life; a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is poetry of indifference towards life.’ The statement speaks volumes of his mind. According to him, good poetry must be both- elevating and elevated. He appreciated, therefore, the grand style of Milton and Homer. He regarded poetry as “criticism of life”. He looked upon Greek and Roman mythologies as a treasure house of poetic subjects. He advocated lucidity, simplicity and austerity of expression in poetry. The French Revolution which had unsettled the beliefs and social ideals all over Europe, made the nineteenth century England a melting pot of human values.

He found his age full of perplexity, uncertainty and morose. He disapproved of growing materialism of his time. Therefore, “an eternal note of sadness” and ‘ the groaning tone of human agony’ characterize his poems thematically. According to Arnold man suffers because “from change to change.” ‘his being rolls.’ There are two voices in Arnold - He is both a romanticist and a classicist. Both romanticism and classicism overlap in his poetry. The stamp of intellectualism and profound scholarship is nearly always there.

---

## 6.7 Review Questions

---

1. Discuss Arnold’s view of poetry as a ‘criticism of life.’
2. Describe Arnold as a Victorian sceptic.
3. Write a brief essay on the elegiac note in Arnold’s poetry making pointed references to some of his poems to illustrate the point.
4. Is Arnold a romanticist as a poet ? Discuss.
5. What are the major influences on Arnold that shaped his sensibility.
6. Enumerate and elaborate Arnold’s principles of criticism.
7. Evaluate Arnold as a literary critic or as a poet.
8. How far does Arnold stand in symbolic relations to Victorian Age ? Expatiate.

---

## 6.8 Bibliography

---

1. Botha, Edith C. and Dobree, Bonamy: The Victorians and After. (1830-1914)(The Cresset Press. London. 1938)
2. Beach, Joseph Warren: The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth Century English Poetry. (Russell and Russell. N. Y. 1966)
3. Compagne, E. T. (Ed.) Prose Selection from Matthew Arnold.

4. Decker, R. Clarence: The Victorian Conscience. (Twayne Publisher. N. Y. 1952)
5. Hough, Graham: The Romantic Poets. London.
6. Prasad, Suman Prabha: Thomas Hardy and D.H. Lawrence. (Arnold-Heinemann. London. 1976)
7. Trevelyan, G.M.: English Social History. Pelican Books. London. 1964.
8. Walker, Hugh: The Literature of The Victorians Era. Cambridge University Press. 1909
9. Watson, George: The Literary Critics. Penguin Books. London. 1968
10. Welleck, Rene: Axel's Castle. (London. 1962)

## UNIT-7

---

### MATTHEW ARNOLD : SOHRAB AND RUSTUM

---

#### Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 The Tale told by Firdausi
- 7.3 Arnold's Treatment of the Story
- 7.4 Homeric Similes in Sohrab and Rustum
- 7.5 Paraphrasing Sohrab and Rustum in brief
- 7.6 Glossary
- 7.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.8 Review Questions
- 7.9 Bibliography

---

#### 7.0 Objectives

---

Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum* was modelled on Firdausi's chronicle *The Shahnama*. The very purpose of this study unit is to point out succinctly how the great Victorian poet treated the legend to voice his sentiments with Homer like sublimity. It is an exercise to study the elaborate similes devised by Arnold.

The unit underlines the quirks of fate which are responsible for failure or success, rise or fall, ignominy or fame in human life. The poet assigns, in symbolic terms, the Oxus with intelligence. The river is imagined as a wanderer born in Pamir trying to make his way to home in the Aral Sea, where he would attain peace. The moral message is that peace, not war, is the desirable condition of existence above all tensions, dissensions, conflicts and anxieties. **Man attains perfect peace when his Soul unites with the Universal Soul. Symbolically, the Oxus falls into the Aral Sea.**

---

#### 7.1 Introduction

---

*Sohrab and Rustum* (1883) is an elaborate narrative, designed specially by Arnold to illustrate a particular theory. The story of *Sohrab and Rustum* was told by the Persian poet Firdausi in his chronicle *The Shahnama*<sup>1</sup>. In 1853, A French gentleman Monsieur Mohl was getting an edition of *The Shahnama* published along with its prose translation. The great French critic, Sainte Beuve, happened to write an analytical essay on the episode of Sohrab

and Rostum. Matthew Arnold happened to come across this text which furnished him with the material and inspiration for writing his *Sohrab and Rostum*.

An English critic who wrote for a Christian magazine charged Arnold with blatant plagiarism for his having made use of the extracts from M. Mohl's translation quoted by Sainte Beuve. Arnold had retorted with just scorn that his only regret was that he could not find the complete translation of the episode otherwise he might have quoted more extensively from it. Firdausi flourished in Persia in the eleventh century. According to Firdausi Sohrab and Rostum had met thrice in dreadful contests but Arnold winds up the issue in one single combat.

Rostum descended from a family of distinguished warriors. His great grand father, Nariman, was a mighty chieftain in his time. His father Sam was an excellent warrior and his father Zal was a wise and strong chieftain known for his white hair. This family of chivalrous warriors Zabistan which comprised the Western-half of the present day Afghanistan and they, owing to their military prowess, made themselves the Lords of Iran. They remained loyal to the traditional dynasty of Feridun from whom the Persian Sultans had descended. Rostum, at the command of Zal, went to the Elburz mountains and from there he brought back Kaikobad, a distant relation of the family of Feridun and he was made Sultan. Kaikobad proved himself a judicious and reasonable sovereign and always held the family of Zal and Rostum in great esteem. He was succeeded by Kai Kaus in whose reign, according to the *Shahnama*, the adventure of Sohrab and Rostum took place. Kai Kaus was not a reasonable person: Time and again he happened to offend Rostum who overlooked these offences on account of his loyalty to the house of Feridun. He rescued the prince thrice from grave and dangerous situations. The invasion of Sohrab was the fourth occasion when Rostum saved the throne of Persia for Kai Kaus.

**Sohrab was the fruit of Rostum's early amours.** Young Sohrab had left his mother and sought big name and fame under the banner Afrasiab, the Tartar King, whose armies he commanded. He had acquired great fame than that of all contemporary heroes with the single exception of Rostum. Sohrab was big terror and the Persian forces trembled at his name except Rostum. He had the toughest encounter of his life with Rostum. They had met three times: The first time they fought ferociously, Rostum under a feigned name, though Sohrab had the advantage. They parted with mutual consent. Second time, Sohrab came out victorious but spared the life of Rostum. (He did not know him as his father) The third encounter was fatal to Sohrab, who, while writhing in the pangs of death, warned his conqueror to shun the vengeance of his father Rostum who was shocked to learn that he had slain his son Sohrab. These words were mortifying and stupefying to the aged hero- Rostum that fell into a trance. When he regained his consciousness he asked dying Sohrab the proof of his being his son. The afflicted and dying youth tore open his coat of mail, and showed his father's seal which his mother had placed on his arm and had bidden him to seek his father. The very sight of his own signet rendered Rostum frantic: He cursed himself. He thought of ending his life but dying Sohrab prevented him from the act of suicide. As Sohrab bled to death, Rostum burnt his tents and all

his goods and carried to corpse of his son Seistan. The army of Turan was, according to the will of Sohrab, permitted to cross the river Oxus. To reconcile us to the improbability of this legend, we are informed that Rustum had no idea that he had a son. The mother of Sohrab had written to him that he child was a daughter, fearing to lose her darling infant Sohrab if she revealed the truth. Rustum, as has been stated earlier, fought under a feigned name.<sup>2</sup>

---

## 7.2 The Tale told by Firdausi

---

Once upon a time, Rustum went hunting the borders of Turan. Having killed a wild ass- *onager*- he roasted and ate it, and then lay down to sleep leaving his faithful horse Ruksh to graze at will. The horse was caught by a band of Tartar soldiers and taken away. When Rustum awoke, he found the house missing, Rustum, intent upon tracing it, followed its foot tracts till he reached the land of Samengan in the country of Aderbeijan. He was received with royal welcome and the king gave him his daughter Tamineh in marriage. But Rustum could not stay long with his wife and gave her an amulet. She was going to become the mother of his child. But his instructions while taking leave of her, were that if the child of their union were a daughter, she was to put the amulet on her hair; if it were a boy, she should bind it about his arm. The child happened to be a boy- Sohrab. But Tamineh, intending to keep him by her side, sent word to Rustum that it was a daughter. Hearing this Rustum was greatly disappointed and never afterwards talked of Tamineh and Samengan. In course of time Tamineh's son grew up wonderously strong and stout. Even when he was nine, there was not a single boy who could match his strength in Samengan. He used to ask his mother about the whereabouts of his father. She told him that Rustum was his father. She warned him not to speak rather too much about it lest Rustum should take him away or Afrasyab- the Tartar king- might kill him. But Sohrab did not want either to hide his identity or remain at home. He told his mother that he desired to make his name as a valiant fighter in the war: He would first fight with Kai Kaus and make his father King of Persia; and then he would turn against Afrasyab and make his father King of Turan also. Tamineh wept bitterly as Sohrab, having got a horse of his choice (a foal of Ruksh) set forth single handed to fight against the power of Kai Kaus. Rustum and Kai Kaus got the wind of it. Sohrab was helped to raise money and his troops by Rustum as he rejoiced at the bright prospects of the young hero. After this, Afrasyab instructed his generals to fight and never allow Sohrab and Rustum to know each other. His idea was that Sohrab and Rustum should meet on the battle field. The winner- Sohrab or Rustum- would be a gain for Turan. He anticipated that young Sohrab would kill Rustum and then he would get rid of Sohrab also.

Tiding of these preparation reach Kai Kaus and he was sent for Rustum who met the king on the 9<sup>th</sup> day. This angered Kai Kaus. Rustum was also incensed at the insult hurled upon him. Rustum said to the king:

*“Weak and insensate !.....*

*.....go thyself,*

*And if thou canst, impale Sohrab alive !*

*When wrath inflames my heart, what is Kaus,*

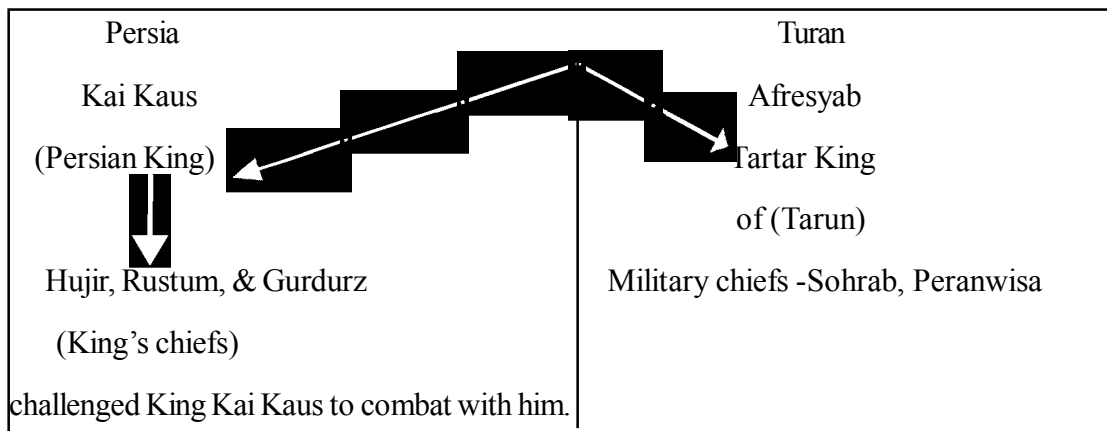
*What but a clod of earth ! Him must I dread !*

*No, to the Almighty power alone I bend!"*

After this Rustum withdrew. The Persian ranks deliberated and asked Gudurz- one of their Generals- to appease and calm down the wrath of Rustum who yielded to Gudurz's request and join the king's forces. Then, they proceeded unitedly to encounter the Turanian forces.

In the mean time, Sohrab had defeated a chieftain Hujir and taken him prisoner. When Sohrab noticed the Persian army encamped in front of him, he took Hujir to the top of a fortress to point out to him the Persian lords. Hujir did point out the tents of all chiefs except that of Rustum, fearing that if he did it, Sohrab might kill Rustum. Thus, Sohrab was ignorant of Rustum's presence. The very next morning, Sohrab-

#### Perspective of the war



*"Why have they named you Kai Kaus the king,*

*If thou art unfit to combat with the browe ?"*

Kai Kaus, frightened at this, sent for Rustum immediately. Rustum came forth though he was rather unwilling to fight that day. The combat lasted three days: On the first day Sohrab received his opponent with the boastful remark. "No mortal has power to resist this arm- thou must perish." Rustum responded mildly, "Why do you boast so much. Thou art a child, while I am old and experienced warrior.":

*"Compassion rises in my heart*

*I cannot slay thee, let us part.*

*Thy youth, thy gallantry demand*

*A different fate than murderous brand."*

Sohrab eagerly said, "Perhaps thou art Rostum." But Rostum replied that he was only the servant of Rostum. They began to fight boisterously but the first day's fighting was indecisive- the advantage, if any resting with Sohrab, for he struck a heavy blow on Rostum's head which made him reel with severe pain. On the second day also, the advantage lay with Sohrab. He threw Rostum on the ground and was about to chop off his head but the old warrior remarked that according to the rules of the combat, the first time that a warrior fell down, his head was not severed: it could be done only after the second fall. Sohrab forbore and let his opponent escape death. On the third day there was a fierce encounter between the two and finally Rostum plunged his dagger in Sohrab's side.

Groaning heavily the dying Sohrab said that he had come to look for his father and it has cost him his life. He told Rostum, "But if you were a fish and sought refuge in the sea of a star in the heavens, my father would take revenge upon you." Rostum asked who his father was. He said, "Rostum". Hearing these words the world faded from the grand old champion's eyes and he fell to the ground stupefied and stunned. The rest of the story is about Rostum's grief and dying Sohrab's consolation. We are told that King Kaus had a balsam<sup>3</sup> in his possession which might have saved Sohrab's life but the king, for reasons apparent refused to provide him with it.

---

### 7.3 Arnold's treatment of the story

---

Though the poem is based on Firdausi's work, the great Victorian poet departs from the parent poem. Arnold is an expert craftsman as a poet. In his *Sohrab and Rostum*, he omits the whole of preliminary account and allows us to gather the threads from conversation between the characters. Arnold's poem describes, to begin with, the very morning<sup>4</sup> when the combat has to take place between the Tartars and the Persians. Arnold describes one single combat while the three combats were fought for three days consecutively. Sohrab is depicted as a boasting fellow: he is not arrogant in Firdausi's poem.

Chronologically, Firdausi places the episodes in the reign of Kai Kaus while Arnold places them in the reign of Kai Khusroo- the grandson of Kai Kaus. In Firdausi, Haman is the chief commander of the Tartar army and Peran-wisa does not appear there. In Firdausi, Sohrab's challenge is addressed to King Kai Kaus, but in Arnold's poem it is an open challenge. The reason for Rostum's moral indignation with the king is different in Firdausi and Arnold. Rostum to Firdausi is a demi-god who performs and accomplishes superman actions. Arnold's Rostum is a man with spontaneous outbursts of passion, of filial affection, and of grief and remorse.

*Sohrab and Rostum* approximates the structural conditions of the epic. The theme and the characters are noble, and the style is dignified and stately. Yet it can't be called an epic because it has only one episode to depict. An epic has several episodes which are duly elaborated. It is miniature epic. Arnold's concern is not with rules but with the "red-ripe" of the human heart.

The story is very well told. Arnold follows the historical account by Sir Malcolm. The poem opens with the dawn of the fatal day and Sohrab's desire for a single combat. The challenge being given, the Persian lords persuade Rustum to accept it. He agrees to fight on the condition of being unknown. *Sohrab and Rustum* is an impressive narrative poem with philosophical reflections and has wonderful similes in Homeric and Miltonic style to heighten the narrative effect. Arnold has chosen the similes which are finished and well-sustained. Sohrab has a touch of his Persian noble descent. Rustum is a man of strength- haughty and fearless. Peran-wisa is a wise councillor.

Arnold has illustrated through this poem the oriental theory of destiny. It appeals to the Indian sensibility. The end is superb and sublime. The oxus forming a delta while falling into the sea, the river has allegorical implications. Sohrab bleeding profusely ends his life in a pool of blood formed by the trickling streams of blood from his body. The flux of life ends itself into the sea- eternity of time. The last lines are very powerful and are suggestive of allegory about the course of human life. The end of the poem is as appealing and transporting- essentially cathartic in experience- as the last lines of Hemingway's novel *Farewell to Arms*. Arnold winds up his *Sohrab and Rustum* with the lines:

But the majestic river floated on,  
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,  
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,  
Rejoicing, through the hush'd Chorasman waste,  
Under the solitary moon; -he flowed  
Right for the polar star, past Orgunje,  
Brimming, and bright, and large; then sands begin  
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,  
And split his currents; that for many a league  
The shorn and parcel'd Oxus strains along  
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles-  
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had  
In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,  
A foil'd circuitous wanderer- till at last  
The long'd- for dash of waves is heard and wide  
His luminous home of waters opens, bright  
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars



Emerge, and shine upon the Aral sea.<sup>5</sup>

Ls.875-892

Sohrab's challenge to single's combat causes a flutter of fear in the Persian camp. The warlord see that the only remedy is to persuade Rustum to take up the gauntlet. Rustum agrees to fight incognito. Rustum's ignorance of his son is expressed with regret:

Would that I myself had such a son

And not that one slight helpless girl I have.<sup>6</sup>

Ls. 229-230

When dying Sohrab, wounded fatally, remarks that his father Rustum would avenge his death, Rustum is disillusioned and when he notices his signet, he is drowned in grief.

“And with a cold incredulous voice he said:

What prate is this of father and revenge,”

.....

“For he had had sure tindings that the babe

Which was in Aderbaijan born to him

Had been a puny girl, no boy at all;

So that sad mother sent his word, for fear

Rustum should take the boy, to train in arms.<sup>7</sup>

Ls.607-611

Sohrab dies with deep satisfaction. As the action of the poem ends, night comes on and Rustum mourns the death of his son.

“As those black granite pillars, once highly reared

By Jemshid in Persipolis to bear.

His house, now, ' mid their broken flights of steps,

Lie prone, down the mountain side,

So in the sand lay Rustum with his son.”<sup>8</sup>

*Sohrab and Rustum* speaks volumes of Arnold's mind: it illustrates his theory of poetry. As a critic, he postulated 'human action' as the subject of poetry and it must appeal to the "primary human affections". Stylistically, he desired *clearness* of arrangement, *rigour* of development, and *austerity* or *simplicity* of style. In *Sohrab and Rustum*, two great heroic

personalities- father and son- estranged from each other throughout their lives, meet under such shocking and unfortunate circumstances that the quirks of fate could alone explain. What is tragic is that something *infinitely noble* in human life is destroyed heartlessly and callously by fate. *Sohrab and Rustum* focuses our attention on the fact that sorrow is woven into the very texture of human existence.

---

## 7.4 Homeric Similes in Sohrab and Rustum

---

The *simile* is a figure of speech in which a comparison is made between two objects, scenes, or occurrences which are similar in some prominent respect although dissimilar in others. The primary function of simile is to explain to illustrate by reference to something more familiar. A Homeric or epic simile is functionally a little different from what is ordinary simile: the poet, after introducing an *image* for the sake of comparison, is lured by the beauty of it and goes far beyond the limits of comparison to develop it for its own sake. Milton makes use of the Homeric simile in *Paradise Lost* while describing Satan through the leviathan image and his shield through the image of the moon:

“Thus Satan, talking to his nearest mate  
With head unlift above the wave,.....  
....., his other parts beside,  
Prone on the flood, extended long and large,  
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge  
As whom the fables name of monstrous size,  
.....that sea-beast  
**Leviathan**, which God of all his works  
Created hugest that swim the ocean stream  
Him, haply slumbering on the Norway foam,  
The pilot of some night-foundered skiff  
Deeming some island, oft as seamen tell,  
With fixed anchor in his scaled rind  
Moors by his side under the lee while night  
Invests the sea and wished morn delays.  
So stretched out huge in length the Arch-Fiend lay,.....<sup>9</sup>

Paradise Lost Bk I, Ls. 191-209

Milton describes Satan's shield in the Homeric way:

“.....his ponderous shield  
Ethereal temper, mass and large and round  
Behind him cast. The broad circumference  
Huge on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb  
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views  
At evening from the top of Fesole  
or in Valdarno, to decry new lands  
Rivers or mountains, in her spotty globe.”<sup>10</sup>

Paradise Lost Bk I, Ls.283-29

Milton's descriptions of Satan's spear is equally Homeric in style:

“His spear- to equal which the tallest pine  
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the mast  
Of some great ammiral, were but a wand”<sup>11</sup>

Paradise Lost Bk I, Ls.292-294

William Wordsworth who influenced Arnold also indulged in the style of Homeric similes-

“No nightingale did ever chaunt  
More welcome notes to weary bands  
Of travellers in some shady haunt  
Among Arabian sands”<sup>12</sup>

The Solitary Reaper, Ls.9-12

and also,

“A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard  
In spring time from the cuckoo-bird,  
Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthwst Hebrides”<sup>13</sup>

The Solitary Reaper, Ls.13-16

Mathew Arnold steps into the shoes of his masters. He is inclined to developing and

extending a simile far beyond the necessities of comparison. For example,

“Then, with weak hasty fingers, Sohrab loosed,  
His belt, and near the shoulder bared his arm,  
And show’d a sign in faint vermilion points  
Prick’d as a cunning workman in ekin  
Pricks with vermilion some clean porcelain vase,  
An emperor’s gift- at early morn he paints  
And all day long, and when the night comes, the lamp,  
Lights up his studious forehead and thin hands.  
So delicately pricked the sign appear’d  
So Sohrab’s arms, the sign of Rustum’s seal.<sup>14</sup>

*Sohrab and Rustum* abounds in rich and beautiful similes. Some of them are rather lengthy but they are well-sustained.

From their black tents, long files of horse, they stream’d;  
As when some grey November morn the files,  
In marching order spread, of long neck’d cranes  
Stream over Casbin and the southern slopes  
Of Elburz, from the Arabian estuaries,  
or some from Caspian reed bed, southward bound  
For the warm Persian sea-board- so they streamed.<sup>15</sup>

Ls.110-116

The simile depicts a natural perspective in the regions surrounding the Caspian Sea and the long files of peregrinating birds seeking warmer and more pleasant climes, and it offers an apt comparison to the hordes of Tartars as they stream out of their tents.

But as a troop of pedlars, from Cabool,  
Cross underneath the Indian Caucasus,  
That vast sky-neighbouring mountain of milk-snow;  
Crossing so high, that, as they mount, they pass  
Long flocks of travelling birds dead on the snow,  
Choked by the air, and scarce can they themselves

Slake their parch'd throats with sugar'd mulberries

In single file they move,.....<sup>16</sup>

    Ls. 160-167

This a common sight seem among the mountain passes in the lofty Himalayas, when the poorer classes of merchants from Kabul traverse the passes to find ready market in India for their cheap wares.

Here is a glimpse of the feeling of a rich woman for a slave:

As some rich woman, on a winter's morn

Eyes through her silken curtains the poor drudge

Who with numb blacken'd fingers makes her fire

At cock-crow on a star-lit winter's morn

When the frost flowers the whiten'd window panes

And wonders how she lives, and what the thoughts

Of that poor drudge may be; so Rustom eyed

The unknown adventurous youth,.....<sup>17</sup>

    Ls. 302-309

The following simile depicts Sohrab's physical appearance and figure:

“For every young he seem'd, tenderly rear'd;

Like some young Cypress, tall and dark and straight

Which in a queen's secluded garden throws

Its slight dark shadow on the moon lit turf,

By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound-

So slender Sohrab seem'd, so softly rear'd.

    Ls.313-318

The following simile describes the crying of the horse as there is an unnatural conflict:

“No horse's cry was that, most like the roar

Of some pain'd desert lion, who all day

Hath trail'd the hunter's javelin in his side

And comes at night to die upon the sand”<sup>18</sup>

How tragic, how expressive of the agony is Sohrab's final struggle with death. In the following simile Arnold describes a scene of nature:

“As when some hunter in the spring has found  
A breeding eagle sitting on her nest,  
Upon the craggy isle of a hill lake,  
And pierced her with an arrow as she rose  
And followed her to find her where she fell,  
For off:.....anon her mate comes winging back  
From hunting, and the great way off descries  
His huddling young, left sole, at that he checks  
His pinion, and with short, uneasy sweeps  
Circles above his eyry, with loud screams  
Chiding his mate back to her nest, but she  
Lies dying, with an arrow in her side,  
.....  
As that poor bird flies home, nor knows his loss,  
So Rustum knew not his loss, but stood  
Over his dying son, and knew him not.”<sup>19</sup>

Ls.556-575

Thus several functions are served by these elaborate Homeric similes- They are picturesque and they add a local colour. They even divert the mind to calm and quiet scenes of nature away from the shocking and conflicting situations of life.

---

## **7.5 Paraphrasing Sohrab and Rustum in brief**

---

The day dawned on the eastern horizon while a cloud of fog covered the surface of the Oxus river. All was quiet in Tartar army camp. Sohrab, who had been tossing all night in his bed, was wide awake. Having put on his horse man's cloak, he went to Peranwisa's tent. It was on the sandy beach of the Oxus. The old chief awoke to hear at Sohrab's approaching steps. Sohrab told Peranwisa that Afrasiab had told him in Samarcand to seek his advice. He spoke to him that he had carried the victorious flag of the Tartar army everywhere but he had a grievance: He was not able to find his father Rustum. It would be a moment of bliss if Rustum

could welcome his worthy and glorious son. Therefore, he desired Peranwisa's consent to challenge the bravest among the Persians in a single combat with him. If he wins, Rustum would surely know about it. The old chief listened to him attentively and advised him to look for Rustum not in the midst of battle but in peace time. He informed him that Rustum lived Seistan and was not sighted on the front line of the Persian army. Of late, he had developed some dissent with the Persian king. During the day, the Tartar and the Persian forces who stood ready to fight but Peranwisa declared "Peace" between them and added that Sohrab would fight a single combat with the bravest Persian champion. The Persians held their breath for fear as in the state of general consternation, their chiefs started consultation to nominate some one to fight with Sohrab. The challenge was accepted. Gudurz went to see Rustum and acquainted him with Sohrab's challenge to the Persians. Rustum agreed to fight a single combat under a feigned name. Rustum and Sohrab stood face to face. Rustum, seeing young Sohrab, was filled with compassion and advised him not to fight with him. But Sohrab was bent on fighting: it looked like a fight between a hawk and a partridge. Both of them fought furiously- provoked by each other's fiery words and taunts. The Tartars and the Persians heard the terrible neighing of Rustum's war horse Ruksh and trembled with fear. There was a cloud of dust which enveloped the combatants. The moment came when Rustum's spear transfixed him through his unguarded side. He staggered under the force of the blow, stumbled back for a step or two, and then fell slowly to the ground. The Tartars and the Persians saw that Rustum was standing erect and whole while Sohrab lay wounded and prostrate on the blood soaked sandy ground. Dying Sohrab was saying that his death would be avenged by Rustum- his father- in search of whom he had been wandering all over the world. When Rustum heard these words he just remarked, "Why do you talk thus foolishly about Rustum as your father and his taking revenge for your death?" Rustum was still under the impression that he had no male child. Sohrab replied that he had a son. He pitied his misfortune. Rustum recollected that Timeneh had sent him word that the new born was a girl for fear that he would take away the boy and bring him up to the profession of arms. Rustum thought the youngman was just bragging. He could see in his imagination Timeneh in blooming beauty but Sohrab told him that a dying man could not tell a lie. He could show the tattoo mark of that signet which Rustum had given to Timeneh to imprint on the arm of the child if it were a boy. Sohrab unclasped his belt, bared his arm near the shoulder to show a sign pricked in faint vermilion- a figure of the griffin. As soon as Rustum saw his signet on Sohrab's arm, he grew ghastly pale and he was mortified- unable to speak any word. Rustum clasped his arm, kissed him, patted him on the cheek with loving fingers. Rustum was so shocked that he grasped his sword to commit suicide but Sohrab, guessing his purpose, dissuaded him saying "Father, don't be so rash. Be not overwhelmed with grief" and remarked that the quirks fate were responsible for whatever had happened in their lives. He was however, satisfied that he had found his father at long last. His greatest happiness would be his being addressed as Rustum's son. Tears gushed forth from his eyes and he embraced his son who was bleeding profusely. Ruksh stood mute nearby with bent head and tail. Sohrab said that his mother would often talk to him about Ruksh. Sohrab was unfortunate as could neither see his grand father's face, nor could he taste the water of the river Helmund nor that of

the lake of Tirra nor could he see the place in Seistan. Sohrab having soothed Rustom's grief, declared his will that his corpse should be taken to Seistan across the river Oxus for burial and tall pillar be erected on his grave so that the horsemen might see it and remark, "Sohrab, son of great Rustom, who was killed by his father's ignorance lies buried under this tomb....." Sohrab breathed his last with a message of peace that passeth all understanding. The river Oxus flowed on feebly to fall into the Aral sea indifferent to the quirks of fate in human existence.

---

## 6.6 Glossary

---

**The Oxus:** The two streams-The Syr Daria and the Amu Daria rise out of the Pamir plateau and flow eastwards and northwards to the Aral Sea. The western stream is called the Oxus. It empties itself into the Caspian Sea.

**Afrasiab:** He was the son of Turanian King Pesheng and descendent of Tur s/o Feridun. Afrasaib was murdered by Kai Khasru.

**Samarcand:** It was a very ancient city which was destroyed by Alexander the Great. It was a seat of learning and a great centre of trade in silk. It was again destroyed by Chengiz Khan in 1219 A.D.

**Aderbaijan:** A province of North-Western Persia. It was the home of the Tartars.

**Seistan:** A terrain to the south-west of Afghanistan. It was ruled by the ancestors Rustom.

**Zal:** He was the son of Sam of the royal house of Seistan. He was born with white hair and therefore, he was named Zal. Since it was an ill omen to be born with white hair, he was abandoned on Mt. Elburz. But he was nourished by a Griffin (Simurgh) until Sam reclaimed his son in obedience to a dream.

**The Indian Caucasus:** The griffin's figure was in the seal of Rusrum. It is an incorrect translation of the Hindukush mountains. It is the far western arm of the Himalayas.

**Plummet:** A piece of lead for sounding the depth of the sea. It dropped vertically below with fast speed.

**Hyphasis:** The Greek name for the Sutlej river.

**Hydaspes:** The Greek name for the Jhelum river.

**Champion:** Combatant or fighter.

**Autumn star:** The Sirius or the dog star. It is in the ascendent during the hottest part of summer. In astrology, it is supposed to cause malignant fever.

**Transfixed:** pierced through.

**Koords:** A brave tribe of Tartars. The Koords occupied the territory known as Koordistan-south-west of the Caspian Sea. They were Turanians in their origin.



**Writ in Heaven:** Predetermined. The idea is beautifully described by Omar Khayyam. See Fitzgerald's English translation.

The moving finger writes and having writ,  
Moves on, Nor all thy piety nor wit,  
Shall lure it back to cancel had a line,  
Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.

**Curled minion:** A servant with effeminate elegance. He was favourite of ladies.

**Eyry:** or eyrie is the nest of a bird of prey built at an eminence.

**Seal:** According to Firdausi it was an amulet of Onyx that Rostum gave to Temineh to fasten on the arm of any son that might be born. But Arnold makes a variation saying that it was a seal with Rostum's badge which was to serve as a birth-mark. It contained the figure of a griffin- a fabulous bird with the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion.

**Heavy mailed hand:** gloved hand

**Cunning workman:** a skilled artist.

**Caked the sand:** formed the sand into thick wet lumps.

**Jemshid:** One of the Persian kings. He was the founder of Persepolis- the capital of Persia.

**Hushed Chorasmian waste:** The desert of Chorasmia.

---

## 7.7 Let Us Sum Up

---

Sohrab has been sketched with a degree of fulness in the poem. He is the hero of this great poem. Sohrab's deep filial piety is the keynote of his character. As a warrior, he was 'the lion's cub'. Credit goes to Sohrab that the Tartar flag was victorious everywhere. He believed in fate: "Success was always with the breath of Heaven" and he uttered

"Father, borbear ! for I meet today  
The doom which at my birth was written down  
In Heaven, and thou art Heaven's unconscious hand.  
Surely my heart cried out that it was thou,  
When first I saw thee; and thy heart spoke too,  
I know it, but fate trod these prompting down  
Under its iron heel; fate, fate engaged  
The strife, hurl'd me on my father's spear."<sup>20</sup>

Sohrab dies with the grievance that he never ‘trod the sands of Seistan’ and ‘never sniffed the breezes of his father’s home.’

“.....I have never known my grandsire’s furrowed face

Nor seen his lofty house in Seistan

Nor slak’d my thirst at the clean Helmund’s stream.”

But lodged among my father’s foes, and seen

Afrasiab’s cities only, Samarcand,

Bokhara,.....”<sup>21</sup>

Sohrab wails in the last minutes of his agony and even Death is powerless to assuage his sorrow.

Sohrab was taunted by Rustum as being “nimble-footed dancer” but Sohrab was generous enough to spare his antagonist’s life. Sohrab had dropped his shield, surprised and taken aback at the sudden mention of his father’s name and then Rustum had rushed forth to attack the unarmed foe and transfixed him with his spear. But in the end, whatever is disagreeable in his character is redeemed by his overwhelming grief. Nothing can be more pathetic when Rustum places his “horseman’s cloak over his face” and keeps watch by his son who lay dead on the sandy beach of the Oxus.

---

## 7.8 Review Questions

---

1. What is the background of the grand poem *Sohrab and Rustum*. Discuss.
2. Comment upon Arnold’s treatment of the story of *Sohrab and Rustum*.
3. Write an elaborate note on the nature of similes in *Sohrab and Rustum*.
4. How do you appreciate the end of the poem? What makes it so aesthetically appealing and emotionally moving? Elaborate.
5. Compare and contrast Rustum and Sohrab as characters. Do you agree that *Sohrab and Rustum*, is the hero of the poem? Justify your stand.

---

## 7.9 Bibliography

---

1. Arnold, Matthew: Sohrab and Rustum ed. H. Karpneck. (Toronto. 1853)
2. Shaw, Bernard: Arms and the Man (Penguin Books. 1963)
3. Botho, Edith C. & Dobree Bonamy: The Victorian and After (1830-1914) (The

Cresset Press. London. 1938)

4. Decker, R. Clarence: The Victorian Conscience (Twayne Publisher. New York. 1952)
  5. Drabble, Margaret (ed): The Oxford Companion to English Lit. (New Edition. OUP London. 1999)
  6. Hemingway, Ernest: Farewell to Arms. (Penguin Books. 1947)
  8. Milton, John: Poetical Works ed. Douglas Bush (OUP London. 1966)
  9. Wordsworth, W.: Poetical Works ed. Thomas Hutchinson Rev. Ernest Selincourt.
-

## UNIT – 8

---

### HOPKINS : THE WINDHOVER

---

#### Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 About the Poet
  - 8.2.1 Hopkins and His Age
  - 8.2.2 Life, Career and Contribution
- 8.3 Reading the Poem
  - 8.3.1 The Windhover (Text)
  - 8.3.2 Explanatory Notes
- 8.4 A Detailed Analysis of the Poem
- 8.5 Literary Terms Associated with Hopkins
- 8.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.7 Review Questions
- 8.8 Bibliography

---

#### **8.0 Objectives**

---

The purpose of this unit is to enable you to critically appreciate Hopkins' most favourite poem 'The Windhover' by acquainting you with the three mirrors of God's grandeur – physical, moral and divine – represented in the poem. We also intend to explain to you the parallel between Christ and the falcon that is inherent in the poem. All this we shall do by presenting to you a detailed analysis of the poem.

---

#### **8.1 Introduction**

---

'The Windhover' is a sonnet in sprung rhythm. It was Hopkins' favourite poem and he called it "the best thing I ever wrote". The sub-title of the poem 'To Christ, Our Lord' is significant because it provides a clue to the phrase "my chevalier" which applies as much to Christ as to the windhover. Another sonnet *The Caged Skylark*, written during the same year, centres around the bird already made famous by the odes of Wordsworth and Shelley. But 'The Windhover' has raised to a position of rival prominence a bird scarcely mentioned by previous poets. The volume of commentary which this sonnet has produced is evidence of its

continuing fascination.

The poem presents the power, beauty, speed and ecstasy of the Kestrel's flight. To Hopkins, its flight was the distinctive, essential quality of the bird, its inscape. The octave is an onomatopoeic and emphatic recreation of the flight of the bird in its magnificent and triumphant career. The sestet describes and interprets the inscape of this experience.

The general theme is that the 'brute' (purely natural) beauty of the bird is only a faint flash of the splendour of Christ. The images of buckling, gashing and galling recall the Crucifixion of Christ. Hopkins did not dedicate the poem to Christ until some six years after he had written it. But then he thought that the poem was the best thing he wrote ; so he decided to dedicate it to his Lord.

As for the imagery in the poem, the early images are those of a royal court : the bird is the minion of the morning and the dauphin or heir-apparent of 'the kingdom of daylight'. In the octave, the poet's rhythmic skill is breath-taking and no theory of sprung rhythm explains it fully. In the phrase 'brute beauty' is condensed much of the point of the poem.

The poem is a direct address to Christ. God's grandeur is flaming out, this time in the bird's majesty ; this grandeur is a 'billion times' more dangerous than that majesty. The taut, swooping Windhover is the terror of the air; but the disciplined life of the spirit is much more dangerous, because it is menaced by, and must itself overcome, a far greater foe – the powers of evil.

The poem should be taken as an example to describe the state of equilibrium maintained by the two vocations of Hopkins – that of the priest and that of the poet.

---

## **8.2 About the Poet**

---

### **8.2.1 Hopkins and His Age**

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) was a nineteenth century poet whose place and influence has been left for the twentieth century to assess and determine. Except for a few intimate friends, including Coventry Patmore and Robert Bridges, his work was hardly known to anybody. His poetry remained hidden away in manuscript form until Bridges launched his major works as *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*. It happened in 1918 although he had died in 1899. The second edition of his poems was issued in 1930. While the first edition had an introduction from Robert Bridges, the second edition was introduced by a great but discriminating admirer of Hopkins, Charles Williams.

Hopkins lived in the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century; so his one face looked at his own, the Victorian age; his poetry having been brought to light only in 1918, his other face looked towards the modern age. Again, as an artist, his one face looked at beauty with a deeply sensuous appreciation; as an ascetic, his other face looked at ascetic denial with all the inten-

sity of a devout man of religion. As a boy, he had a passion for drawing and he wrote poetry under the influence of Keats and the Pre-Raphaelites. As a youth he came under the influence of Cardinal Newman and the Oxford Movement; became a Roman Catholic in 1866, and Jesuit priest in 1877. England was non-Catholic but 'rare-dear' England for Hopkins, the patriot.

From his youth, his life was one of inner strife, very keenly felt. At first, he gave up poetry: "what I had written, I burnt before I became a Jesuit and resolved to write no more, as not, belonging to my profession, unless it were the wish of my superiors." But after seven years of poetic silence, he resumed poetry in 1875 with 'The Wreck of Deutschland', taking as permission, the remark of his rector that he wished someone would write a poem dealing with that disaster in which five nuns, banished from Germany, were drowned at the mouth of the Thames. Even so, there were times when he felt that to write poetry was to misuse time for which God's service had other demands, though his letters prove how continuously he was preoccupied with an insatiable interest in the technique of poetry. He feared beauty almost as much as he loved it and he would punish himself by sometimes refusing to let himself look upon the beauty of nature when he was walking. Indeed, in 1866, in a poem, 'The Habit of Perfection', when he was contemplating the taking up of religious life, he bade all his senses renounce the world:

Elected-silence, sing to me  
And beat upon my whorled ear,  
Pipe me to pastures still and be  
The music that I care to hear.

Hopkins was typical mid-Victorian. He was born in 1844; he died in 1889. In the words of Martin Gilkes, "These are unexpected dates. They suggest *Sesame and Lilies* and *Idylls of the King*; beards, ottomans and four-wheel cabs: the palmy days, in fact, of the nineteenth century, the period in which everything that we mean by Victorian came to full flower. The decadence of the '90's had not yet set in, and as for the modern revolt against nineteenth century standards and 'poetical' poetry-the mere idea would have seemed fantastic and incredible. Yet today the greatest single influence upon the development of modern poetry, with the solitary exception of T.S. Eliot, has been this stray mid-Victorian-who is anything but mid-Victorian when you come to read him.

So, Hopkins, the Janus-faced, is the only 19<sup>th</sup> century poet who is included in the anthologies of both the Victorians and the Moderns, for now, both are equally eager to claim him. In this matter of being published out of times, he resembles Emily Dickinson. Although he died at the age of 45, in 1889, his poetry was not published until 1918. Prophetically during his lifetime, Hopkins had written to his lifelong friend and correspondent, Robert Bridges, about his poetry: 'If you do not like it, is because there is something you have not seen and I

see....., and if the whole world agreed to condemn it or see nothing in it, I should only tell them to take a generation and come to me again.’

When the history of the 1920s comes to be written by a dispassionate critic, no influence will rank in importance with that of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Most critics saw Hopkins as a Maverick, born out of his due time, an idiosyncratic poet without affinities. Only recently have critics seen his poetry as a synthesis of the new and the old, the revolutionary and the traditional. It has at last been recognized that his poetry was either the result of the organic and integral collaboration of the priest and the poet, of his sensibility and belief, or on the other hand, that it was an inscape of the tension between the two, a triumphant and victorious expression of his inner drama, “the war within”, as he refers to it in one of his sonnets. It is true that the poet’s religious dedication restricted the quantity of his poems, but they correspondingly gained an intensity and in those very qualities which every critic now considers as constituting the greatness of Hopkins.

Hopkins was a major influence on modern poets. When the second edition of the poems of Hopkins was published in 1930, the appreciative reviewer of the *Times Literary Supplement* made the following bold statement on 25 December 1930 : “It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that Hopkins was the most original of the poets of the nineteenth century.” There is no denying the fact that Tennyson, Browning and Arnold were original in their own peculiar ways, though none of them broke new grounds like Hopkins. The technical innovations brought about by Hopkins were so perfect that Edith Sitwell was forced to remark that he should not be regarded as a model, “since he worked his own discoveries to the uttermost point; there is no room for advancement, for development, along his lines.”

In the thirties Hopkins became a major influence upon new poets. But for the undeniable traces of his influence we must go back to the “Georgians”, to Robert Bridges, in whom we find unconscious echoes of the diction of the younger friend. About his influence on the poets of the thirties, Ifor Evans wrote : “In the thirties Hopkins became a major influence on new poets. They were not interested in his religious themes, for many of them, at that time at least, were agnostics, but they were fascinated by the originality of his rhythms and his vocabulary and, above all, in the contrast of his genius against the whole nineteenth century romantic tradition.

### **8.2.2 Life, Career and Contribution**

Gerard Manley Hopkins was born on 28 July 1844, in an Anglican family in Stratford, Essex. He was brought up in a family where simple piety and practical endeavour mixed with varied artistic culture. His father was the Counsel-General of the Hawaiian Islands to Great Britain. He combined this office with that of an average adjuster in the city. His father mixed practical efficiency with something of a poet’s vision. His mother, who was a religious woman, gave to her son her simple nature and love for metaphysical speculation. The literary bent of the mind of his father, gave Gerard a poetical turn. Through his father he also came in contact

with problems of nautical law and he wrote learnedly on this subject. There are many people who believe that his love of the sea was responsible for the writing of the great odes of the sea such as 'The Wreck of the Deutschland' and 'The Loss of Eurydice' Although his parents were devout, they were far from narrow out-look, and painting and music, both of which influenced Hopkins, were cultivated and loved in the family. Most of the children in the family were interested in painting and music. Arthur, a younger brother, ultimately became a professional painter. The poet himself, received, after his sixth year, lessons in music and drawing from an aunt who was both a musician of sorts, and an accomplished portrait-painter.

Soon Gerard's interest in drawing increased and he made great progress, and by the time he was twenty he had developed strength and delicacy of line, together with a feeling for internal patterns. These are difficult things for an amateur to achieve. But Gerard was able to achieve these delicacies of taste. He was a great admirer of Ruskin. His affinity with Ruskin is revealed in his love and knowledge of architecture and in the nature descriptions and word paintings of his journal.

With age his interest in music also matured. But the difficulty with him was that he was neither able to devote himself exclusively to music nor to poetry, though he knew well that the production of a large body of work of the highest excellence in any of the disciplines demanded devotion. Still his musical studies were not wasted, for they influenced his poetry by giving it typical rhythmic patterns.

He was born at Stratford, Essex, but soon his family moved to Hampstead. In 1854 he was sent to the Cholmondley Grammar School. Hopkins showed an unusual interest in study and excelled in English. The devoutness of his parents was of moderate character, but Hopkins soon became less moderate under the influence of Canon Dixon, who was at that time the curate of the parish of Lambeth. He also worked as a teacher in the Highgate school where Gerard was a student. Hopkins had already been attracted by poetry. At this stage the influence of poets like Spenser and Keats was predominant. At the school he twice won the Poetry Prize. When he was sixteen he won the Poetry Prize for his poem 'The Escorial' The second poetry prize was won by him two years later, when he was eighteen.

In 1862 Hopkins won a scholarship to Balliol College, Oxford. In the same year he wrote a poem 'A Vision of the Mermaids'. He entered Oxford in October 1863 and for the next four years he remained an avid reader of the classics. Here he came under the influence of Jowett, The Regius Professor at Oxford. The friendship he made at Oxford lasted all through his life and the reference must especially be made to Robert Bridges, who was later to become the literary executor of Hopkins. Among his more intimate friends, besides Bridges, were A.W.M. Baillie, and D.M. Dolben.

Hopkins himself had started taking life seriously. As a student he was very punctual. Bridges writes : "Hopkins was so punctitious about the text, and so enjoyed loitering over the difficulties, that I foresaw we should never get through". This fascination for the difficult re-



mained a life-long infatuation with Hopkins. His diaries provide a fairly accurate and very scrupulous account of his youthful misdemeanours. In 1866, during Lent, he wrote : “No puddings on Sunday. No tea except to keep one awake, and then without sugar . . . Not to sit in armchairs except I can work in no other way. Ash Wednesday and Good Friday bread and water”.

Hopkins entered Oxford University at a time when it was vibrant with many religious controversies. Eighteen years earlier, Cardinal Newman had entered the Roman Catholic Church and the repercussions of his conversion to Catholicism were still felt at Oxford. Edward B. Pusey, who after Newman became the leader of the Oxford Movement was still at the University. And so was Benjamin Jowett, who represented the more rational and intellectual conceptions of Christianity. Hopkins was influenced by all these three church leaders. Largely under the influence of Cardinal Newman he embraced Roman Catholicism in 1867. Then he wanted to leave the University. But Cardinal advised him to complete his degree. He graduated the same year with First class in Classics. This conversion to Roman Catholicism had far reaching effects. His letters record how deeply his conversion affected his whole being; he offended his family by this conversion. This also caused complication in his relations with Robert Bridges. As a result of this conversion he was isolated from many Oxford personalities with whom he was on the best of terms. His anguish and depth of distress can be gauged from a letter he wrote to Newman : “I have been up at Oxford long enough to have heard from my father and mother in return for my letter announcing my conversion. Their replies are terrible. I can not read them twice. If you will pray for them and me just now I shall be deeply grateful.”

This conversion caused a tragic isolation for Hopkins from the world that he had known for so long. And his only possibility of consolation lay in a strenuous, fervid and consuming loyalty to the new-found faith. The experience of a person who has become a convert is always different from that of a person who has been born into a faith. Such a person has to work in isolation. This isolation must be compensated by the intensity of the faith. This also explains why Hopkins attached so much importance to his relations with friends like Robert Bridges.

After graduation Hopkins left Oxford. From now onward the religious experience is the one great reality for the poet. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1868 and subordinated himself passionately to its discipline. Now he left poetry considering it to be something which could not continue with his life as a priest. He burned much of his earlier work. On leaving Oxford Hopkins first went to Birmingham where he served at the Oratory school. Here Cardinal Newman initiated the new convert to the Catholic ways. Now, the main field of his study remained philosophy. About the hardness of this life he wrote to A.W.M. Baillie : “The life here though it is hard is God’s will for me as I most intimately know, which is more than violets kneedeep.” In 1877 he was ordained as a priest. When he entered the Society of Jesus he left poetry, but now he was encouraged to recommence his work as a poet. This was the happiest advice which could have been given to any poet. His highly individual poetry, which arose from

his faith and his deep and mystical attachment to it belongs to the later years (1875-1899).

As a member of the Society of Jesus he was asked to fill many positions. He served both as a teacher and as a preacher. His health was seldom very good, and he was moved from one office to another with great regularity, for reasons which have never been fully explained. After 1877 he served at Jesuit College at Manresa House and Stonyhurst. In 1884 he became Professor of Greek in the Catholic University of Ireland. Sometimes before his death Hopkins wrote : “Unhappily I cannot produce anything at all; not only the luxuries like poetry, but the duties almost of my position. I am a eunuch-but it is for the kingdom of Heaven’s sake”.

At the age of forty-four Hopkins died of typhoid fever. He lived a life of hard work, deprivation and suffering. He was a puritanical person who enjoyed self-abnegation and self-suffering. Once he wrote in his Diary : “Consider your own misery and try as best as you can to rise above it, by punctuality, and the particular examine; by favour at office, mass and litanies; by good scholastic work; by charity if you get opportunities.”

Hopkins never aimed at worldly success. The deep, religious strain in his character prevented him from seizing worldly success which appeared to be almost in his grasp.

The influences which shaped him should be clearly understood. Reference has already been made to the influence of Newman and the Oxford Movement. That his early model was D.G. Rossetti shows that he was influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite movement. From sixteen to twenty-two, he essayed with skill, the styles of many poets from Milton to Byron and Keats, Tennyson, Arnold and Rossetti. The Keatsian sensuousness in his approach to poetry is clearly marked; in fact his poetry is the battle-ground between the Keatsian sensuousness and the sacramental view of Nature-that Nature abides as a handiwork of God. Hellenic intellectualism also had its hold on him in the early stages. The influence of the Welsh language with its beauty of ‘consonant chime’ and internal rhyme (called *Cynghanedd* : pronounced *Kung-hanneth*) is also evident in his poetry. But much more than all these were the influence of the Franciscan philosopher Duns Scotus (in the matter of idiosyncrasy and individuation) and of St. Ignatius Loyola (on Hopkins’ theme and metaphor).

Among his early poems of 1860 to 1868, ‘Heaven-Haven’ and ‘The Habit of Perfection’ indicate the turn of the poet’s mind and heart towards priesthood. Then followed ‘the ten years itch’ when he assiduously cultivated silence. Out of the pent-up energy and tension were born the ‘Wreck’ poems – ‘The Loss of Eurdice’ and ‘The Wreck of Deutschland’ – and some ten other religious poems of 1876-1879. ‘The Poems of Priesthood’, fifteen in number, dealing with the everyday experiences of a priest, belong to the years between 1879 and 1883. ‘The Windhover’ (falling paeonic rhythm, sprung and outriding) and ‘Pied Beauty’ (a Curtal Sonnet), ‘Duns Scotus’s Oxford’ (Sprung, outriding rhythm), ‘Felix Randal’ (Sonnet, sixfoot lines), ‘As Kingfishers (Scotist’ Sonnet) are all sonnets of 1876-1883. From 1883-1889 came what are now called ‘The Terrible Sonnets’, dealing with the wreck of his own life. Unfinished poems, fragments, light verse, translations, Latin and Welsh poems, many in number, are not accounted for, here.

In spite of the ‘terrible pathos’, Hopkins poetry as a whole gives the impression of strength – a strength which is often refined to delicacy. Even in the poems of desolation the note of heroic resistance, or stoic acceptance, or willing surrender to the higher necessity, is more marked than the tone of self pity. He is the poet with ‘plumage of far wonder and heavenward flight’. He is the poet with ‘plumage of far wonder and heavenward flight’. He wanted a stronger rhetoric of English language, tried to capture ‘the naked the and sinew of the English language’. You will find him strange if not obscure at first; he is the poet of many ‘faults’ as Bridges called him, because of his syntactical inversions, ellipses, parentheses, and violent packing of words into unexpected places. You will have to familiarize yourself with ‘Sprung Rhythm’, ‘Inscape’ and ‘Instress’ to understand him. But he is also the greatest master of the poetic compound word in English. His style is, by turns, dramatic and contemplative, strenuous and graceful. There is variety, originality and organic function in his imagery. He has a unique command of rhythm. He was a master of the sonnet form though both an innovator and preserver. He gave depth and spiritual power to everything he wrote. His poetry was the outcome of a tension between the creativity of the artist and the dedication of the priest. He wrote to serve and praise God. And as Browning’s poetry is described, his poetry is not a substitute for a game of cards.

Misunderstanding about his life, and accomplishment and ill-health marred the last year of Hopkins. Mental depression coupled with drudgery made him say : ‘Life here is as dank as ditch water’. Yet, his death bed words were : ‘I am so happy, I am so happy, I am so happy’.

The question often asked is : ‘Did his becoming a Jesuit priest affect his poetry ? Quantitatively. There was restriction. But qualitatively, it added to his absolute honesty, directness, passionate personal utterances and concentrated intensity. Renunciation made him independent and unconventional.

His last poems are deeply expressive of his religious belief. The Seven Sonnets of 1884-85 are possibly the greatest of all his poems. These sonnets, all highly autobiographical, are written in blood’. They show the final struggle of the poet to adapt himself both to the ways of Christ and the ways of society. ‘Carrion Comfort’, ‘To R.B.’ and other sonnets of this period illustrate the religious despair, and the lament for the waste and loss of his poetic gift.

---

### **8.3 Reading the Poem**

---

Now read the poem carefully

#### **8.3.1 The Windhover**

(Text)

I caught his morning morning’s, minion, king –

dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple – dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding  
 Of the rolling level underneath him steady air and striding  
 High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing.  
 In his ecstasy then off, off forth on swing,  
 As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow bend : the hurl and gliding  
     Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding  
 Stirred for a bird, - the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!  
 Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride plume, here  
 Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee, then a billion  
 Times told lovelier, more dangerous. O my chevalier !  
     No wonder of it: sheer plod makes plough down sillion  
 Shine, and blue – bleak embers, ah my dear,  
     Full, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

### 8.3.2 Explanatory Notes

The poem is about the bird kestrel, falcon or hawk. The bird is from nature; the dedication is to God. The poet sees a falcon flying high and solitary in the early morning sky. To Hopkins, 'the brute', purely natural beauty of the falcon is only a faint flash of the splendour of Christ. The sub-title of the poem 'To Christ our Lord' and 'my chevalier', who is Christ, indicate the dedication which was made six years after he had written the poem.

*Line 1.* 'The Wreck' began with 'Thou... God'. 'The Windhover' begins with 'I', man. I 'caught', not 'saw' – inscapes the moment of the royal encounter. Though just a priest, I caught The windhover, the symbol of God.

**This morning** – not just any Windhover. My experience of the morning. **Minion, king** – there is a court and a king, suggested ; the king who has his minious, darlings, favourites of a prince. The falcon really introduced.

*Line 2. Dauphin* - prince – a chivalric term. Read the second line aloud; note the rhyme and the sound echoing the sense. The falcon is the morning's darling and prince of daylight. Now, dauphin and minion become apt for the 'riding', 'striding' falcon.

Medieval chivalry, knight – errantry and active pride are suggested, **Dapple – dawn – drawn** – one meaning : the falcon is drawn, outlined, etched against the spotted dawn. The second, and better explanation will denote movement, attraction, the charge, and symbolically suggest the Christian Knight charging on his horse against evil. Expressions which follow like

'rein' add to the sense of 'riding' as also suggesting 'reign' – the king, the prince and his power and control over nature.

*Line 3.* Here the Falcon's supremacy and control are heightened. The air is rolling, but the Falcon's command is such that it appears level beneath him; the air is 'steadied', 'subdued', 'conquered' by him.

*Line 4. Rung* – a term in hawking describing a spiral climb. The image is that of the Falcon's lifting flight. The over-all, image, so far should be that of 'controlled freedom', with 'rein' in mind. **Wimpling wing** – The bird's flight is inscaped, through another image of, 'the wimpling wing', that of feathers appearing graceful, of banked flight of contracted wing and when spoken aloud, suggesting a rippling, shuddering motion. 'Wimpled' also suggests feathers arranged one above the other.

*Line 5. In his ecstasy* – The Christian knight rejoiced at his strength when he battled against evil; the falcon is also in ecstasy, when he battles against the wind.

*Line 6. Skate's-heel* – The simile of the skate's heel gives a picture of the movement of the bird in a curve made by the heel of the skate on a loop-bend. Or it can be better explained by the image of an English long bow held at tension.

*Line 7.* The strength, vigour and courage of the bird in the flight, rebuff the wind. Again, the bird becomes a symbol for the poet; it is the image of the Christian endeavour. The falcon's example has re-animated the poet's failing purpose. The bird has become the instrument of God and has brought the flash of recognition of God's stress. **My heart in hiding** – secretly; Hopkins, the priest and Hopkins, the poet; the one hiding, when the other in him emerged. As poet, not thinking of God; as priest, not thinking of the senses.

*Line 9. 'Brute beauty' etc.* – The Windhover is only a bird : the speaker is a man and the bird is inferior, and yet the poet envies him, just as the poet envied the blacksmith in the poem 'Felix Randal'.

*Line 10. Buckle* – Any number of meanings can be given – (a) in the sense of 'bending the knee' to a supernatural or transcendental beauty, (b) in the sense of bending and breaking of the natural order, or (c) a sudden snapping together or fusing together. The word can be taken as a statement to mean 'crumble', as a command to mean 'surrender' and an order to mean 'gather up'. The poet is admonishing the bird one way or the other – oh, bird ! your physical prowess crumbles; or, oh bird ! gather up and make good use of these physical powers. The meanings depend upon the indicative or imperative mood.

**AND** – if that is so or 'and a certain result'; 'then in consequence'. The Capitals express a dramatic moment of revelation (epiphany). The word must be pronounced with speed and stress though it counts as a slack syllable. Hence the capitals.

**The fire that breaks etc.** – In the sudden revelation of God's majesty in the sight of the Falcon, divine fire or energy breaks into the world. If this struggle of the falcon is re-

enacted in the poet's soul, then, in consequence, a glory, 'fire' will break forth from him too. Thee – addressing 'Christ' and 'his heart' and 'The falcon' which are inseparable.

*Line 11.* **Told** – counted; suggests the bells tolling at a church. **Billion times lovelier** – the greatest beauty in this world is the beauty of sacrifice. The brute beauty of the bird is something which perishes. The intensity of the beauty depends on the intensity of the sacrifice. **More dangerous** – because the love of God can be terrible and all – consuming. **Oh, my chevalier** – addressed through the falcon to Christ, who created the bird and sustains it in being, and of whom the splendour of the bird is a living symbol, like 'dauphin' and 'minion' used earlier, the word echoes chivalry.

*Line 12.* **No wonder of it** – There is no wonder – nothing surprising – that the highest Christian qualities should be struck out of conflict. It is the 'sheer plod', the sheer effort, involved in driving the plough share through the sillion (the loose earth turned up by the plough) that makes it (the plough share and not the sillion) shiny and bright; it flashes brighter for its use and friction; you win glory in proportion to the suffering you undergo.

*Line 13.* When the plough passes through the land, the sand particles fall, or loose earth falls, like embers. **Ah, my dear** – Christ; because the blue-black embers recall Christ's dying body. (Refer to George Herbert's line, on Christ Crucified : 'Ah, my dear, I cannot look on thee).

Line 14. The embers (the cinder) fall and the burning fire is exposed, vermilion in colour. The suggestion is to the humbler occupations of life. **Gall** – wound; hurt themselves. **Gash** – a deep, long cut made on the earth by the plough, 'gash and gall' recaptures the battling spirit of the falcon, the militant zeal and delight and suggests no writhing agony. The embers are probably blown away by the wind, and the wound is exposed and the vermilion gushes forth. Are the wounds of Christ, referred to, here ? **Gash-gold – vermilion** – royal heraldic colours; also, vermilion, the colour of the royal blood, from the wound on Christ's side, the 'gold' that redeemed the world.

---

## 8.4 A Detailed Analysis of the Poem

---

In this instance you may or may not receive help from the title as the word is largely limited to British usage. But it is suggestive of something that hovers on the wind, and this is confirmed by the allusion to the falcon in line two. Reference to the dictionary shows the windhover to be a small European kestrel, a bird about a foot long which frequently hovers for some time in the air against the wind.

The opening of the poem is about a bird – but one is struck immediately by the characterization accorded to the falcon, which Hopkins tell us he caught. Very simply, then, he saw a bird. But "caught" is stronger than "saw", and suggests that he seized it with his eyes and held it with the force of his feeling. And he did not "seize" merely a bird, the falcon becomes so meaningful to him that he conceives of it as a personality. He calls it "morning morning's min-

ion.” The genitive phrase “morning’s minion” expresses that the bird is the favourite of the morning. “Minion” is associated with court relationship, and this idea is carried into the next line where the bird is further characterized as the prince (dauphin of the kingdom of daylight, i.e. of the morning. )

1. King -  
dom of daylight’s dauphin  
dapple-dawn-drawn falcon.

Further, Hopkins describes morning to be a “dapple-dawn”. Here the poet’s excitement is visible as he divides and arranges single word “kingdom” into two lines. The poet’s excitement also begins to come through in the speeded up rhythm as he shortens the normal “dappled-dawn” (past participle used as adjective + noun) and intensifies the natural tendency to elide the final “d” by eliminating it as it happens in our everyday discourse. The speeded up rhythm shows that the poet is in a rush to capture the moment into words before it passes. “Dappled,” of course, means to become variegated with patches of colour and refers here probably to the scattered clouds catching the first light. But then the unique structural position of the word “drawn” may mean that this dawn has either (1) attracted the falcon and brought it out of its nest or abode, or (2) the falcon seems pulled along by the movement of the clouds, or (3) as it hovers, the bird seems to be drawn against the dappled sky. This type of ambiguity occurs very frequently in Hopkins’ poetry. It not only enriches the content with multiple suggestion but also makes the interpretation quite challenging :

2. in his riding
3. of the rolling level underneath him steady
4. High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
5. In his ecstasy.

The description of the bird is tinged with the qualities of nobility. It gives way to a delineation of the falcon’s movement. Here the lines are charged with Hopkins’ excitement as he responds to what is taking place before him. At first, the bird is quite literally “riding” the wind with such a mastery that it is not thrown about by the ‘rolling level’. Rather, the brilliant paradox of “rolling level underneath him” seems to suggest that the bird makes the air flat and steady beneath it. And when the bird flies, it seems to “stride” upward as it spirals in a circle controlled by wings that guide its “ecstatic” flight. “Wimpling wing” is of course a bold phrase in the poem, but “one should not be surprised by this boldness in a writer who exhibits linguistic originality in almost every piece of his literary writing.” A wimple is a covering of cloth over the head and arranged round the neck and face. It was worn by women in middle ages and is still used by some nuns. A “wimpling wing,” then, refers to a wing that ripples and curves in flight.

5. The off, off forth on swing
6. As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow, bend...

The next moment the bird surged forward on his flight as it was given a freer movement by the controlled spiral. Hopkins likens the swooping or surging flight of the bird to the smooth and swift gliding movement of a skater on a bow-bend on the snow-covered mountain.

6. the hurl and gliding
7. Rebuffed the big wind.

The onward thrust (the hurl) and the smooth movement (gliding) overcame the strong current of air. Commenting on the versification of these lines Lawrence John Zillman writes :

“The two motions of the bird are then keyed by two words : “hurl” and “gliding”. Whether by “hurling” itself (compare “striding” of line three and “off forth on swing” of line five) into the the wind, or by moving gracefully as it “glides” with the wind, (compare “riding” of line two and “rung upon the rein” of line four) the falcon is the master. The attempt of the “big wind” to overcome it has been checked or turned aside (rebuffed). “Rebuffed” is again a bold word, one sense of which, although rare, is to “blow back”. If Hopkins was aware of this meaning it is particularly effective in its relationship to the wind; but even the more usual connotation of “rebuff” as “snub” would carry interesting overtones for the principal meaning.”

7. My heart in hiding
8. Stirred for a bird – the achieve of, the  
mastery of the thing !

When the poet watched the falcon, his heart was in hiding. However, he was moved deeply by the achievement and attainment that had occurred before him. Here the shortening of “achievement” to “achieve” (in line No. 8) gives us the feeling of excitement.

As to the “heart in hiding”, it is obvious that there would be no reason for the poet to hide physically. The phrase “in hiding” is aging a shortened syntactic form of “in hiding to nothing.” Here, it means that the poet as a priest felt that he was a complete failure in his profession. He realized that in comparison with the free flight and unfettered scope of the bird, his heart is in effect hidden from such activity.

9. Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here.
10. Buckle!....

There is a shift from the past tense to the present tense in the Sestet. It suggests that whatever the poet felt because of the stirring of his heart has freshened up his spirit with awareness. In these lines we see a rush of words (brute beauty, valour, act, air, pride, plume,



etc.) as the poet tires to capture the qualities of the falcon, and through him wants to delineate the patterns and inner designs of the Creator. The first manifestation of this inner design was natural or physical beauty (“Brute beauty”); then valour (a word which establishes relationship between the princely “dauphin” above and the “chevalier” in line No. 11); then action (Hopkins uses the shortened form of the word, i.e. act); then “air” “pride” and “plume”. The poet introduced the qualities of “air” “pride” and “plume” after an exclamatory interjection – to intensify the effect of excitement. Here, the word “air” may be interpreted in two ways. Commenting on the ambiguity of the word “air” Lawrence John Zillman writes :

“Air offers another ambiguity. It can be taken as the atmosphere through which the bird has been flying, but its neighboring word “pride” offers a more attractive alternative, suggesting that the “air” of the bird in its proud mastery of the dawn wind is rather its manner or appearance (as we say, “he has a proud air about him.”) This would fit better with “plume” also, since the latter not only denotes the plumage of the bird, but also connotes the head-dress of both dauphin and chevalier; and it is reminiscent of the spirit of knighthood and chivalry that has coloured other passages of the poem.”

Whatever the word “air” means, these qualities are representative of the details of the first eight lines. Then we are faced with the two most controversial words in the poem – “here/ Buckle!” which category of adverbs “here” belong to is not clear. It may refer to adverb of place or adverb of time. If it has been used as an adverb of place, it would refer to the poet’s heart. Which has “stirred for a bird.” If it is employed as the adverb of time, it would mean “now” that is “the flight of the falcon.” “Buckle” can either mean “join together”, “grapple” “struggle” or “conversely” “collapse” or “fall apart”.

10. Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion.

Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!....

These possibilities of meaning, says Zillman, “lead to two principle alternative reading, the first as follows : the appearance, action, spirit and environment of the falcon suddenly come together (“buckle” as “join”) for the poet in a heart that has been out of touch with (“hidden” from) such things, AND; (the capitals are important for emphasis) as the combined elements that he has observed strike him suddenly and fully when the union has been effected (“then”); it is as though the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts, and the flashing of the bird in the sunlit dawn is intensified to the point of “breaking” forth (compare “gash” below) into flaming beauty (Fire: compare “embers” below), many times (note the hyperbole of “a billion”) “lovelier” than he at first realized, and correspondingly “more dangerous” to a heart that might wish to remain hidden and untempted by such physical beauty. Consistent with he “dauphin” and the “plume” images above, the bird then becomes a knight addressed by the poet in the exclamatory “O my chevalier!” The second, and preferable, possibility takes “buckle” in the sense of “collapse” : the physical beauty the poet has been observing suddenly collapses at the moment when he has seized it most fully with his senses. The collapse let it be noted, follows

immediately on the “stirring” of a heart. This stirring has had a seismic effect: it has shaken open or cut through (compare “gash” below) the mass of physical beauty, AND (the capitals imply that this is the important thing) as the mass “then” buckles, the fire of the spiritual beauty within “breaks from” it, just as a fire within a building breaks out when the walls buckle under the force of the inner flame. But this is no physical fire : it is a light, an insight revealing the significance of an overwhelming spiritual beauty that can be fully seen only when the physical has split open to reveal it. And this revelation is incomparably (“a billion/Times”) more “lovely” than is the merely exciting beauty of the physical scene before him. It is an inner refined beauty revealed through the gross, material outer beauty (the “Brute beauty”), and it involves a correspondingly “more dangerous” experience since a greater risk must be assumed in penetrating to the mystery of the universe as reflected in its external manifestations; the spiritual realization always involves greater hazards for the individual soul than does the physical. Hopkins then closes the tercet with his final gesture to the falcon that has made the realization possible his “chevalier”. In fact, Hopkins wanted to convey both the religious interpretations in the minimum structures possible. That is why, perhaps, he fuses into a single word so many interpretations corresponding to the structure and texture of the poem.

12. No wonder of it: Sheer plod makes plough down sillion.
13. Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
14. Fall, gall themselves, and gash-gold vermillion.

These lines bring an unexpected turn. “No wonder of it” suggests that the wonderful thing Hopkins has been describing is not so surprising or wonderful. He goes on to give us two examples from common experience: (1) The mere plodding of a ploughman as he pushes his plough down the “sillion” or furrow produces a brightness on his ploughshare. In the same way fidelity in religious life produces a spiritual brightness in the soul. (2) The embers of a fire may appear to be dying, they may look bleak in their faded blue colour; but it is precisely then that these embers fall and bruise themselves, so that they break open and reveal a hidden fire of “gold vermillion.” The poet’s soul, too, is “blue-bleak” or seemingly lifeless. But through suffering and mortification for the sake of Christ, the poet would experience a spiritual glory. The idea of plodding has been foregrounded by employing the abbreviated word “sheer plod” (not “ploughed”) as in “achieve” (line eight). Then the unique syntactic structures of the compounds “blue-black” and “gold-vermillion” help confirm the reality of the superficial ecstatic experience. The lines balance the description of a superficially ecstatic experience with the inner response.

So far we have seen the rhythmical effects of Hopkins’ sonnet. The most significant thing which remains to be done, is to point out the details of the application of sprung rhythm as the sonnet develops. The first line is metrical in its iambic pentameter regularity. The reader, however, is struck by the devices for sound by the unexpected division of “kingdom” (king - dom) at the end of the line. The line has five-stress pattern expected of a sonnet (in accordance

with Hopkinsian principle of scansion). In line two, we find sixteen syllables. However, the five-stress agreement has been maintained. Hopkins also indicated marking for the poem. The remarkable thing, here, is that a compound comprising three words and functioning as an adjective carries a single stress only. Hopkins employs it as an attributive for the Falcon. The line increases the speed of feeling and anticipates the mood of excitement. The third line also consists of sixteen syllables, while line four has three conventional anapests:

Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding  
High there, how the rung upon the rein of a Wimpling wing

Line four shows Hopkins' eccentric manner of writing to maintain the principle of scansion in his poetic discourse. Fourth line leads directly into line five. Then line nine presents a unique problem with its six nouns :

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride plume here.

Hopkins employs connective word "and" between "Brute beauty" and "valour," and then between "valour" and "act." It shows that the poet is counting the attributes without any haste, but suddenly, after the interjection "oh," he drops the connectives and rushes towards the phrase "here/Buckle!" The result is that "air-pride-plume" becomes a triplet having a single accent.

The Sestet can be divided into two tercets. The rhythm of the first three lines reflects the excitement of the new discovery made by the poet. This discovery leads to another. One might expect that the contrast between the first tercet and the second tercet will be followed by a quieter statement. The second tercet, however, thwarts the expectations. The second tercet is as forceful as the previous one. It holds the mood of what has gone before and support the real one.

So far the rhyme sounds are concerned, the sonnet offers interesting differences from those we have read earlier. In the present sonnet, all the rhyme sounds of the octave involve an 'ing' alternating between the single syllable structured words of "king-wing-swing-thing" and the two syllable structured words of "riding-striding-gliding-hiding." The sestet has the rhyme sound cdc, dcd. The end rhymes are given support by repetition and medial rhyme. The 'ing' ending in the first line of the octave is anticipated by the repetition of "morning morning's" (Genitive Phrase). The medial repetitions of this type is supplemented by medial rhymes like "dawn-drawn," "stirred-bird," "sheer" etc.

The alliteration is very prominent in the sonnet. A few particularly interesting application of alliteration can be noted in the following line –

1. I CAUGHT this morning morning's minion, king –
2. dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding.
3. of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding.

In line one, in addition to the alliterative ‘m’ sounds, the opening and close of the verse are linked by the hard ‘C’ (K) of “Caught” and the ‘K’ of “king”. The assonance in the lines is in the sounds of the words “caught,” “morning,” “morning’s,” “dauphin,” “dawn,” etc. To maintain the alliterative rhythmic effect, Hopkins uses “morning” in two different ways – as an adverb of time and as an adjective.

The sonnet shows Hopkins’ perfect rhetorical mastery and makes it different from other nineteenth century sonnets.

---

## 8.5 Literary Terms Associated with Hopkins

---

**Inscape** – If the poet has made an object *concrete*, (1) if there is *action*, (2) if it is made *distinctive*, and (3) if it is *dynamic*, not static, and (4), there is Inscape (1+2+3=4).

We talk of Oak trees. We generalize. But Hopkins treated each oak tree as an individual item. When you read his ‘Windhover’, you find the flight of the Windhover, expressing the whole personality of the bird. That is ‘inscape’ for Hopkins (and should be, for you). ‘I have no other word for that which takes the mind or eye in a bold hand.’ So he coined a new word ‘Inscape’. He used it to designate the beauty which is distinctive and patterned. It is the individual quality of an object as revealed in its characteristic action which reveals the inner form of it. Inscape is an effect to translate this into words. Verse is inscape of the spoken sound. Poetry is only speech employed to carry the ‘inscape’ of speech. Hopkins adds: “It is the virtue of Inscape to be distinctive and it is the virtue of distinctiveness to be queer. ‘Inscape’ is the very soul of art.”

**Verbal Inscape** – Verbal inscape is a pattern of design in words. When words are used to suggest the inscape by means of a sound pattern, we get verbal inscape. For example, (1) ‘earliest stars, earl stars’, (2) ‘dapple-drawn dawn’.

**Instress** – Inscape is the individuating quality. The reader’s response to the inscape may be called ‘instress’. It is the observer’s response to the object of observation. It is ‘stress’ emphasized, ‘stress’ felt inside, seen through the inner self. It is in order to produce this effect that the poet creates the inscape which the object has, in such a way that the desired instress is produced. Hopkins tries to capture the flight of the Windhover in words and his apprehension of the characteristic activity of the bird, passes on to the readers, is called instress. It is the sensation of the ‘inscape’ – (W.H. Gardner). Hopkins has nowhere specifically defined ‘instress’.

**Sprung Rhythm** - A term used by Hopkins to denote the method by which his verse is to be scanned. In his time, most English verse was written in Running Rhythm, that is, metres with regular rhythm, so as to bring verse into closer accord with common speech, to emancipate rhythm from linear unit, and to achieve a freer range of emphasis. It is a rhythm not counted by syllables and regular feet but by stresses (stress being the emphasis of the voice upon a word or syllable). If you imagine a line divided into feet, then one syllable would be

stressed in each foot, but that syllable can either stand alone or be accompanied by a number of unstressed syllables (usually not more than four). As stresses, not syllables, make up the line, it may vary considerably in length. To put it differently, in Sprung Rhythm, the number of stresses in each line is regular, but they do not occur at regular intervals, nor do the lines have a uniform number of syllables. The rhythm also drives through the stanza, and is not basically linear. Consider these lines from ‘The Wreck’.

‘Thou hast bound bones and veins in me fastened me flesh,  
And after it almost unmade, what with dread’.

**Synaesthesia** – The transference of meaning from one sense to another; one kind of sensation suggesting another kind of sensation. Mixing, up of two things apprehended by two senses. For example : ‘belled fire’, in stanza 26 of ‘The Wreck’.

**Counterpointed Rhythm** : If, on the basic iambic rhythm, the trochaic rhythm is superimposed, two rhythms may be said to coexist and this conjunction of rhythms, Hopkins called Counterpointed Rhythm. Early examples : the choruses in Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*. In Hopkins : ‘God’s Grandeur’ and ‘The Starlight Night’.

---

## 8.6 Let Us Sum Up

---

The discussion may be summed up as follows :-

- (a) The poem ‘The Windhover’ has been dedicated “To Christ, our Lord.”
- (b) The poem is an instance to describe the state of equilibrium maintained by the two vocations of Hopkins that of the priest and that of the poet.
- (c) It is an extremely complex poem. The theme follows the pattern : a progression from the concrete beauty of Nature described in the octave to its spiritual meaning in the Sestet.
- (d) It is an ‘Energy Poem’ as it abounds in the images of energy, such as ‘riding’, ‘striding’, etc.
- (e) T.S. Eliot considers ‘The Windhover’, a Nature poem.,

---

## 8.7 Review Questions

---

- 1. Attempt a Critical appreciation of *The Windhover* with special reference to its theme, imagery, diction and versification.
- 2. The poem *The Windhover* is a good example of the violence to syntax. Discuss.

---

## 8.8 Bibliography

---

- 1. A.S.J. Devasahayam : Understanding Hopkins : The New Spring Poetry (St. Paul’s

Press).

2. J.F.J. Russel : A Critical Commentary on G.M. Hopkins' Poems (Macmillan).
  3. Lawrence John Zillman : The Art and Craft of Poetry.
  4. W.A.M. Peters : G.M. Hopkins : A Critical Essay Towards the Understanding of His Poetry(OUP)
  5. W.H. Gardner : Gerard Manely Hopkins. A Study of His Poetic Idiosyncrasy in Relation to Poetic Tradition, Vol. I (OUP)
-

## UNIT – 9

---

### HOPKINS : CARRION COMFORT

---

#### Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Reading the Poem
  - 9.2.1 Carrion Comfort (Text)
  - 9.2.2 Explanatory Notes
- 9.3 A Detailed Analysis of the Poem
- 9.4 Terrible Sonnets
- 9.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.6 Review Questions
- 9.7 Bibliography

---

#### **9.0 Objectives**

---

In this unit we intend to present a detailed analysis of one of the terrible sonnets (which are termed as the rhetorical masterpiece of Hopkins' poetry) 'Carrion Comfort. In these sonnets, Hopkins gives expression to the successive stages of spiritual crisis in his life. Besides, our purpose will also be to enable you see how Hopkins concretizes the period of his spiritual crisis and utter desolation in these sonnets.

---

#### **9.1 Introduction**

---

Robert Bridges gave this poem the title, 'Carrion Comfort'; the phrase defines religious despair or feeding upon the corpse of one's soul. Bridges thought this to be the sonnet of which Hopkins said, "If ever anything was written in blood, one of these was". Later, Bridges demurred at this opinion. The poem contains as many as nine interrogations; and in spite of 'the technical lapse', the poem is held by good critics to touch the sublime.

This poem "Carrion Comfort" is one of the terrible sonnets, which was written by Hopkins at the end of his poetic career.

---

#### **9.2 Reading the Poem**

---

Now read the poem 'Carrion Comfort' carefully.

### 9.2.1 Carrion Comfort (Text)

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feat on thee;  
Not untwist – slack they may be – these last strands of man  
It me or, most weary, cry I can no more, I can;  
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.  
But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude on me  
Thy wring – world right foot rock ? lay a lionlimb against me ?  
scan.  
With darksome devouring eyes my bruised bones ? and fan,  
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoid  
thee and flee ?  
Why ? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear.  
Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I kissed the rod,  
Hand rather, my heart lo ! lapped strength, stole joy, would  
laugh, cheer.  
Cheer whom though ? The hero whose heaven – handling  
flung me foot trod.  
Me ? or me that fought him ? O which one ? is it each one ?  
That night, that year  
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

### 9.2.2 Explanatory Notes

*Lines 1- 4.* Taking pride in the invincible human spirit, rooted in human pride rather than Christ-like humility, the poet asserts himself and encounters a divine enemy. And Christ, perfect in His selflessness, is trying to overpower the poet by force of divine example.

*Line 1.* The poet refuses to despair. **Despair** – despair is the comfort of decaying flesh, carrion comfort. **I will not feat on thee**, - I will not feed upon the despair. Corpse of my soul.

*Line 2.* **Untwist** – to twist backwards to separate or open out. **Slack** – lax, not tense. **Last strands of man** – the fibres making up the human body in its final stage; man in the weakened stage; decaying man.



*Line 3.* **I can – I can do no more** ; ‘no more’ applicable to ‘I can’ also; or the sudden twist from ‘I cannot’ too. ‘I can’ indicating indecision.

*Line 4.* **Can something hope** – what can the poet do ? he can hope for something **Not choose not to be** – ‘I do not want to be independent of God’, means ‘I want to be dependent on God’. ‘Not choosing not to be’, therefore indicates the defiant stand of the poet that he does not want to be dependent on God. An ungodly answer, because man cannot choose to be independent of God; man is made to serve, not to govern.

Lines 5-8. Christ, the son of God, the divine enemy, the poet’s combatant, is described in images of great mastery.

*Lines 5.* **O Thou terrible** – not Despair, but Christ, the wrestler, the combatant against the poet. **Rude** – violently, in an uncouth, violent manner.

*Line 6.* **Wring-world** – powerful enough to wring all the world. **Right foot rock** – wouldst rock; governs ‘foot’. Why wouldst thou, O Christ rock thy foot which is powerful enough to wring the world, violently on me ? **Rock** – sway to and fro. **Lionlimb** – Christ usually, naturally a symbol of the limb, now having the ferocity and majesty of a lion. **Scan** – examine critically.

*Line 7.* **Darksome devouring eyes** – looking menacingly. **My bruised bones** – the poet, in a state of weakness and exhaustion.

*Lines 7-8.* **Fan, O in turns of tempest, me heaped there** – use your tempestuous power on me lying helpless, down below.

*Line 8.* **Me, frantic to avoid thee and flee ?** – the poet now realizes his inadequacy; overpowered by Christ, he is eager to escape from the divine enemy.

*Lines 9-14.* Why does Christ want to vanquish the poet? Hopkins recognizes his enemy’s truly selfless motivation. The battle is waged to purify the poet, to separate the chaff from the corn. The motive and result of the conflict is the divine gift of grace, carrying the poet to self-sacrifice and salvation.

*Line 9.* **My chaff might fly, my grain lie** – to separate the chaff from the corn; to remove the impurities and make the essence good and pure.

*Line 10.* **In all that toil, that coil** – in all that struggle and trouble. **I kissed the rod** – I submitted myself to punishment.

*Line 11.* **(Seems) hand rather** – the hand of Christ chastising Hopkins; gives the suggestive meaning of ‘occasionally’, ‘moments of’, the poet and feelings of . . . . My heart lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh and cheer – The poet derived strength and joy from the enemy and felt the need to laugh and be cheerful.

*Lines 12-13.* **Cheer whom though?..... that fought him ?** – The poet is still confused

whether he should praise himself for daring to fight a powerful force or whether he should cheer the hero (Christ) who, in defeating, also elevates.

*Line 12. Heaven – handling flurg* – blazing in the Heavens; flurg, a derivative from ‘flue’, light. **Me foot trod** – trod me under foot; vanquish me.

*Line 13. Me ? or me ?* – the first ‘me’ passively accepts; the second ‘me’, fights, wrestles. **Or is it each one** – the poet is still in the throes of doubt; whether he is a combination of the challenger and the acceptor of grace, whether he fought with one hand and received by the other.

*Line 14. That night, that year* – that year-long night, when death, envisaged as final, seemed the only good.

*Line 15. Now done darkness* – darkness, doubts, trials and tribulations now done away with, over.

**I wretch lay struggling with my God** – The wretched poet lay wrestling with God, like Jacob (in the Bible, Genesis 32) wrestling with the Angel of God in order to secure the blessing of the name ‘Israel’. (**My God!**) – a horrified whisper at his daring to have wrestled with God. The poet expresses his feelings of profound and appalling guilt. He now realize that his dreaded adversary is also his received master and is exhausted by his ultimate discovery. He has received a stress from Christ; has undergone the first stage in his spiritual crisis.

---

### 9.3 A Detailed Analysis of the Poem

---

Carrion Comfort represents the first stage of Hopkins’ spiritual crisis. Refusing to indulge in despair, the poet asserts himself. The poem opens thus:

1. Not, I’II not, Carrion Comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;

The poet finds himself confronted with Despair but he promptly declares his resolve not to take recourse to it. The promptness of the decision is marked by the shortened verb form “II”. The poet counters the approach of Despair with a deliberate and willed effort. The word “Not,” used three times in the same line shows the poet’s determination not to seek comfort in despair. The rhythmical movement (which the poet has indicated through the use of pauses) divides the sentence into three part :

Not, I’II not,/Carrion comfort, Despair/ not feast on thee;

The first part is an emphatic negation, conveying the poet’s firm refusal to abandon himself to despair. The second part presents the perception of the poet towards despair. The third part is about the rejection of sensual pleasures by the poet.

2. Not untwist – slack they may be – These last strands of man.
3. In me or, most weary, cry I can no more.

The metaphorical structure heightens the poet's firm resolve. The "last strands of man" are the bones and veins of the poet. It conveys the idea of vital energies in him. The poet is very conscious to maintain the rhythmical excitement (the inverted word order shows it) in the poem. The rhythmical speed is increased by transposing the verb "cry" before the pronoun "I". (As a Professor of Rhetoric, Hopkins was more conscious to provide artistic perfection by paying more attention to the rhythmical pattern which, he believed, could enliven even a worthless piece of art).

3. .... I can;

4 Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.

The poet will not helplessly cry – "I can do nothing now". He can still do something. He can even now feel some hope for the day to come when he will get himself free from the nights of depression and despondency. The pauses mark the rhythmical pattern in the line. The modal auxiliary 'can' stands out and becomes quite prominent as a marker of Hopkins' capabilities. To increase the rhythmical pace, Hopkins deletes "merely grammatical and toneless" words and uses shortened form "wish day come" (and not "wish that day will come"). Then among the several negatives in the first four lines stands the simple assertion "I can", an assertion which is reinforced by the double negative "not choose not to be". The phrase establishes a direct link with the first line (compare "not feast on thee" in first line with "not choose not to be").

4. But ah, but O thou terrible, why would thou rude on me.

5. The wring – world right foot rock ?

Whereas the first four lines are addressed to Despair, the next four are addressed to Christ or to God. After rejecting despair, the poet now turns to Christ. At first he sees Christ as a terrible monster (thou terrible) and feels himself rocked to and fro somewhat harshly by His right foot which wrings the world. Line five expresses Hopkins' surprising shock. The exclamatory interjection ("ah" and "O") and the connective "but" (used twice) occur side by side. It brings home the feelings of surprise mingled with shock. The rhythmical movement does not flow at the same pace. In the first half of the sentence, ("But ah, but O thou terrible.") it is slackened after the exclamatory interjection. But, then, it is heightened through a direct question addressed to the creator. The packed structure of the phrase "Thy wring-world right foot" intensifies the movement. It seems that the poet is in a haste to end the line.

6. .... lay a lion limb against me? Scan

7. With darksome devouring eyes my bruised bones ?

The lines are in continuation with the series of interrogative which began from line four. Hopkins asks God : Why is He so cruel to him? Why is he subjected to brutal treatment? Why should Christ, lion-like, threaten to devour him? The poet feels that the

lion-like Christ is scanning his bruised bones with eager eyes that seems to devour him in a moment. The lines are significant as they present Christ, the combatant, in terms of cruelty. To present the incomprehensible and unique cruel image, Hopkins invents unique deviant structures, like, "lionlimb," "devouring eyes," "bruised bones." Christ is presented as a "lionlimb" (the poet has the feeling that God or Christ is like a lion putting a limb or a claw against the poet menacingly. The comparison of God with a lion is Biblical) with "devouring eyes" who menacingly scans the poet's "bruised bones."

7. . . . . in fan,

8. O in turns of tempest, me heaped there, me frantic to avoid thee and flee?

Christ, the poet goes on to say, is coming towards him like a mighty whirlwind. The poet is heaped like a pile of grain, and against this pile, the whirlwind of Christ will blow like a winnowing wind. As this whirlwind is like a scourge for the poet, he is anxious to avoid it and flee from it. Here, the word "fan" is used as a verb to mean "toss violently against the wind," or "blow against". The word is linked with "me" in the next line. Thus, the full sentence can be read as "Why would thou fan me, heaped there". The repetition of the hard sound "t" (in "turns" and "tempest".) intensifies the effect of cruelty, meted out to the poet by the Almighty.

The pauses (commas) weaken the rhythmical excitement at certain intervals to fully unfold the metaphorical images which knit the texture of the poem. (e.g. "tempest", "me heaped there", etc.) The images forcefully convey the idea that Hopkins is battling an enemy who is the most powerful Being in the Universe.

9. Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, Sheer and Clear.

The Sestet sets in a shift from protest and defiance to affirmation. Here, the tempest, symbolizing divine wrath, is treated as a process by which the poet is to be purified. Hopkins recognizes his enemy's truly unselfish motivation. The battle is fought so that the poet's chaff might fly and his grain be left sheer and clear. The interrogative "why?" rings like an alarm, and enables Hopkins to perceive the presence of divine grace throughout the conflict.

10. Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I kissed the rod,

11. Hand rather, my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, cheer.

The lines present a paradoxical situation. In the very act of kissing the rod and thus accepting God's punishment, the poet will feel strengthened by an unexpected feeling of joy. Amid the toil and coil, or the suffering and ordeals, the poet will recognize not only that rod but God's hand which holds that rod. Thus the poet will see the warmth of love behind God's wrath; he will then feel like laughing and cheering. "Nay" used as an adverb suggests that that is not all. There is something stronger than what has just been said. The paradox in the line means that amid the ordeal the poet will recognize

not only the rod but also the hand which holds that rod. The paradoxical sense is intensified in the lines by the use of shortened verb form “lo!” (instead of “look”). The result of kissing the rod is heightened by exploiting the deviant structures “lapped strength”, stole joy” etc. The rhythmical movement is intensified at the line end where “laugh” and “cheer” seem to go together in the heightened speech.

12. Cheer whom though? The hero whose heaven-handling flung me, foot trod.
13. Me? Or me that fought him? O which one? Is it each one?

The series of questions in these lines begin with a major rhetorical question; “cheer whom though?” and is followed by as many as four allied questions. The poet asks whom he should applaud and admire—Christ, himself or both. The series of questions show that Hopkins can no longer be patient in this state of confusion. The rhythmical movement is speeded up by the interjection “O”. The phrase “O which one?” shows that Hopkins is utterly confused.

13 .....That night, that year.

14. of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

Full of awe, the poet perceives the whole truth at the end of the sonnet. The movement is hastened in the heightened speech and there seems to be no gap between the equivalent structure of “that night and that year.” The poet recalls a particular night which seemed as long as a year. It was a night when he wrestled in his mind with God. “The year” becomes synonym of “that night”. Hopkins feels that he was a fool to have engaged in that conflict with God. The exclamation heightens the poet’s surprising-shock and, in turn, the rhythmical movement. Thus, line fourteen conveys “what a fool Hopkins was to have engaged in that conflict with God, when he should have fallen at God’s feet in humble adoration! (The exclamatory “my God!” can be compared with the vocative “my God”). The sense of profound and appalling guilt is conveyed through the phrase “wretch”. Then the exclamation, “my God!” in the last line is the characteristic of Hopkins’ ability to make an ordinary, every day phrase serve his purpose effectively. The phrase expresses his amazement as it does in its ordinary usage; it also marks his deeper wonder that he has really been in conflict with God and expresses his faith that God is indeed his in a very personal way: “my God!”. The poet, thus, has undergone the first stage in his spiritual crisis and has received a stress from Christ.

The alliteration is noteworthy as it provides momentum to the thought-progression in the poem. Some interesting application of the alliteration can be seen in the following lines :

7. With darksome devouring eyes my bruised bones?
10. Nay in all that coil, that toil.

The phrase “dark-some devouring eyes” enhances the rhythmical speed. The use of “devouring” as an adjective is remarkable. The internal rhyme between “toil” and “coil” has Shakespearean echoes and means simply the ordeals. Hopkins uses to structure “toil” and “coil” to keep up the musical pace in the poem.

Donald McChesney comments “The sonnet *Carrion Comfort*’ is a masterpiece. The restless weaving of alliteration and internal rhyme, the constant shift of pace and mood, all capped and closed by the last memorable lines are noteworthy.”

The metaphorical structures knit the texture of the sonnet. The style is metaphorical throughout. The comfort which comes from Despair is called “carrion comfort”. The phrase “these last strands of man” is used to convey the idea of vital energies in man, i.e. the bones and veins bound with the fibres of man’s spiritual being (“last” because the poet’s resistance was on the verge of collapse when he recovered his balance). “Thou terrible” is metaphorically used for “Christ”, or “the punitive aspect of God”. The word “tempest” is metaphorically used for “divine wrath”. “Chaff” and “grain” are metaphorically used for “impurities” and “solid merit” respectively. Similarly “toil” and “coil” metaphorically convey the afflictions, the ordeal and the tumult of feelings which the poet has gone through before he is able to reconcile himself to God. All these metaphorical phrases convey vivid and appropriate images to our minds. The metaphorical structures concretize the image of Christ, and the readers can perceive it happening before their eyes.

The most significant thing about his sonnet is the application of Sprung rhythm. The use of Sprung, rhythm, outriding feet, and ‘long six-stress lines’ gives the sonnet an unusual breadth and complexity. Quite contrary to the standard rhythm, we find fifty one syllables instead of forty in the first four lines. The use of packed phrases is remarkable in the following line :

“Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be”

The initial “can” serves the purpose of a proform for the following phrases (“hope”, wish day come,” “not choose not to be.”)

In brief, the sonnet is a rhetorical masterpiece. The poet manages to articulate the feeling of frustration, self-loathing and despair through condensed, and integrated artistic structures.

---

## 9.4 Terrible Sonnets

---

“Terrible Sonnets’ are the rhetorical masterpiece of Hopkins’ poetry. David Diaches writes that the terrible sonnets are Hopkins’ most impressive and profoundly moving poems where he expressed his experience of the dark nights of the soul with extraordinary power. These sonnets represent successive stages of spiritual crisis in Hopkins’ life. Patricia A. Wolfe

thinks “that it could be the loss of physical vitality which caused the depression and inner conflict of Hopkins’ last years, or that the basis was primarily psychological. At any rate, out of the gloom of those final years, the poet created six intensely introspective sonnets which are outcries of a man to his tortured consciousness. These sonnets represent successive stages in the poet’s spiritual crisis and describe Hopkins’ gradual recognition of the paradox of self. By degrees Hopkins learn that a finite being must become infinitesimal before he can partake of the infinite. It is not surprising that he gives expression to his feeling of the nothingness of self and the overwhelming God”.

These sonnets describe the changing nature of Hopkins’ relationship to God. The poet is at first the culprit, fighting a power he refuses to acknowledge and acknowledging too late that his opponent is God. Having lost touch with the Divine he sinks into desolation and gropes for a way out; he is the lost sheep. He has to contend with and overcome his own weakness before he can re-establish communication with the Divinity. The inner struggle continues until, with surprising suddenness, the lost sheep becomes the redeemed. The poet once more establishes a relationship with his God.

---

## 9.5 Let Us Sum Up

---

In this unit we have

- (i) discussed terrible sonnets
- (ii) presented a detailed analysis of one of the terrible sonnets ‘Carrion comfort’

---

## 9.6 Review Questions

---

1. Critically appreciate Hopkins’ sonnet ‘Carrion Comfort’.
2. Discuss Hopkins as a Sonneteer.
3. Explain the terms Inscap, Sprung Rhythm and Instress with reference to Hopkins poetry.

---

## 9.7 Bibliography

---

1. A.S.J. Devasahayam : Understanding Hopkins : The New Spring Poetry (St. Paul’s Press)
2. J.F.J. Russel : A critical Commentary on G.M. Hopkins’ Peoms (Macmillan)
3. Lawrence John Zillman : The Art and Craft of Poetry.
4. W.A.M. Peters : G.M. Hopkins : A Critical Essay Towards the Understanding of His Poetry (OUP)

## UNIT-10

---

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE NOVEL

---

#### Structures

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Evolution of the Novel
- 10.3 Proliferation of Types
- 10.4 Aspects of the Novel
  - 10.4.1 Plot
  - 10.4.2 Character and Characterization
  - 10.4.3 Narrative Modes
    - 10.4.3.1 Types of Narrative Modes
  - 10.4.4 Style
  - 10.4.5 Time/Place
  - 10.4.6 Themes
- 10.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.6 Review Questions
- 10.7 Bibliography

---

#### **10.0 Objectives**

---

In this unit we shall introduce you to one of the most popular literary forms, i.e. the novel. A novel (from, Italian novells, Spanish *novella*, French *nouvells* for “new”, “news”, or “short story of something new”) is today a long, written, fictional, prose narrative. You shall read the evolution of the novel, different aspects of novel, types of novels, and also how to read a novel.

---

#### **10.1 Introduction**

---

In this unit you would read the development of the novel as a new means of expression, different forms of exploration, enquiring modes of knowledge, self discovery, travel writing, autobiography etc. The novel is only one of the many possible prose narrative forms. It shares with other narratives, like the epic and the romance, two basic characteristics: a story



and a story-letter. The epic tells a traditional story and is an amalgam of myth, history and fiction. Its heroes are gods and goddesses or extraordinary men and women. The romance also tells stories of larger than life characters. Its events project in symbolic form the primal desires, hopes and terrors of the human mind. But as against imaginative or fictional, the novel is a realistic form. It presents that segment of life and society, in more or less approximate terms, which has been seen and experienced by actual men and women of a particular period.

---

## 10.2 Evolution of the novel

---

The term for the modern novel in mostly western countries is 'roman', which suggests its association with early 18th century but the English name is derived from the Italian *novella*, meaning 'a little new thing'. The *novella*, predecessor of the novel, however, related to universal oral traditions. It is difficult to give a full catalog of the genres that finally culminated with the works of Chaucer, Cervantes etc. The original 'novel', is generally categorized under the term *novella*. which did not have its own generic term. It included the story within a story: situations in which a series of stories were told as well augment sermons *The Canterbury Tales* constitutes a classic example, with its noble storytellers fond of romantic stories and stories of everyday life. Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, the story of an engaging madman who tries to live by the ideals of chivalric romance, explores the role of illusion and reality in life and became the most important progenitor of the modern novel.

In the seventeenth century Descartes and Locke, emphasised the importance of individual experiences. They believed that reality could be aesthetically experienced by individuals, so time and space should be observed. The stories then were focused on the histories of the Roman Empire, party propaganda, dubious scandalous revelations, travelogues and political memoirs. Fusion of fiction and history could be seen in stories as novels. Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, are picaresque stories wherein there is a sequence of episodes held together by individual experiences. Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and *Clarissa* are epistolary novels. (in which the narrative is conveyed entirely by an exchange of letters) Defoe's realistic fiction and Richardson's novel of character or psychological novel, established the novel's claim as an authentic account of the actual experience of individuals whose plots were not shadowed by history, legends, mythology or previous literature.

As it evolved, the novel in 18<sup>th</sup> century became the most popular of literary forms as it was closely representing the lives of the majority of people. Henry Fielding's works *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, were the most powerful artistic expressions of the social conscience of the age. In Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, Sterne creates a world, a world that extends the reader's knowledge of the world, characters having the enduring quality, different ways of expressing behaviours and temperaments etc. Thus, works which played with the art of fiction, with the pure pleasure of constructing and deconstructing a narrative appeared. Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* became the leading work in this new metafictional world of writing experiments. The 'novel of sentimentalism'

created a new wave of novel wherein a culture of new 'romantic' individuals too strong, too natural, to be perceived as civilized and domesticated came into existence.

However, it was in the nineteenth century that the novel in its classical form reached its height. Writers began to experiment with different modes of presentation. Nineteenth century novelists like Thackeray and Dickens often told stories through an omniscient narrator, who is aware of all the events and the motivations of all the characters of the novel along with the thoughts of the characters without explaining how this information is obtained. Henry James used the technique of point of view narration so completely that the minds of his characters became the real basis of interest of the novel. Writers like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and William Faulkner used a method of narration known as stream of consciousness. Perceptions, thoughts, judgements, feelings, associations and memories are presented just as they occur, without being shaped into grammatical sentences or logical sequences. In stream-of-consciousness narration, all narrators are to some degree unreliable and which reflect preoccupation with the relativity and the subjective nature of experience of knowledge and of truth.

---

### 10.3 Proliferation of Types

---

The novel continues in its popularity to this day. Critics have tried to classify novels into various types. It has shifted from a primarily realistic focus and has evolved into the expansive form that incorporated all other functional modes.

#### 1. **Realistic Novel:**

The realistic Novel is the authentic representation of life and character in the context of society. It faithfully recreates the socio-cultural environment prevailing in society, along with analysis, interpretation and criticism of society.

E.M. Forster in his book *Aspects of the Novel*, has described as a time-art. The distinctive role of the realistic novel has been to depict life by time. Fielding's novel *Joseph Andrews* represents the real picture of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century society. When a literary method comes to be realistic, it tends to employ mainly two things:

a) There is a dominant and shared notion of reality in operation upon which the writer and the audience can rely.

b) There is, secondly, a moral value in the representation of that reality. In addition to this, realism has been the dominant mode in the English novel from its inception to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. North Frye's definition in his book *Anatomy of Criticism*, 'The realistic novel requires the novelist to deal with things as they are rather than as he would like them to be for his convenience.'

#### 2. **Psychological Novel:**

Psychological novel is primarily concerned with, "What a man thinks and what he

feels”, observed Henry James. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was felt that reader was to be given a more intimate view of a character as to how he reacts, his feelings, his mental state, his conflicts etc. and why.

George Eliot and Henry James were the first English writers to create psychological novel. George Eliot felt that no human life could be sympathetically understood without penetrating the unique inner experience of that life. This brought in a novel an extraordinary density of analysis: to be the problem of choice and self deception.

In *The Mill on the Floss*, the central character Maggie Tulliver faces the dilemma in the conflict between duty and passion and makes mistakes in making choices for her track of understanding of her ownself. She is seen as renouncing all personal pleasures and desires for the purpose of fulfilling a promise made to her father. In this she acts against her inner nature because she essentially craves for the fulfilment of passion. In this way George Eliot shows how the psychological process of sublimation works. Actually Maggie wants to enjoy life, its beauty, its colour and passion. And when she finds that circumstances do not favour such fulfilments she turns towards religion and tries to find a substitute passion.

### 3. **Historical novel:**

The historical novel takes its setting and some of the (chief) characters and events from history. It develops these elements with attention to the known facts and makes the historical events and issues important to the central narrative.

Walter Scott in his novel *Red Gairtlet* artistically presented the relations between the public and private events, between the world of historical realities and that of fictional possibilities. Darksie Latimer and Allen Faiforde, the two main characters had separate destiny yet are transformed at the climax of the action from matters of private and independent concern into matters touching the public destiny of Scotland and England.

Other historical novels are Charles Dickens’s ‘*A Tale of Two Cities*’ (a novel of French Revolution) Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* (invasion of Russia by Napoleon) to name a few.

### 4. **Bildungsroman novels:**

The Bildungsroman (novel of education) is a type of novel originating in Germany which presents the development of a character mostly childhood to maturity. This process typically contains conflicts and struggles, which are ideally overcome in the end so that the protagonists can become a valid and valuable member of society.

In the **epistolary novel** the narrative is conveyed entirely by an exchange of letters. eg. Richardson’s *Pamela*

A **picaresque novel** is an early form of the novel. It presents the adventures of a lighthearted rogue. It is usually episodic in structure, the episodes often arranged as a journey. The narrative focuses on one character who has to deal with tyrannical masters and unlucky fates but who usually manages to escape these miserable situations by using her/his wit. The form of the picaresque narratives emerged in sixteenth-century Spain. Examples are: Cervantes, *Don Quixote*; Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*.

**The bildungsroman** (novel of education) is a type of novel originating in Germany which presents the development of character mostly from childhood to maturity. This process typically contains conflicts and struggles, which are ideally overcome in the end so that the protagonist can become a valid and valuable member of society. Examples are Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones*; Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*; James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

The **gothic novel** became very popular from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards. With the aim to evoke chilling terror by exploiting mystery and a variety of horrors the gothic novel is usually set in desolate landscapes ruined abbeys, or medieval castles with dungeons, winding staircases and sliding panels. Heroes and heroines find themselves in gloomy atmospheres where they are confronted with supernatural forces, demonic powers and wicked tyrants. Examples are Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*; Ann Radcliffe, *Mysteries of Udolpho*; William Faulkner, *Absalom! Absalom!*

The **social novel**, also called industrial novel became particularly popular between 1830 and 1850 and is associated with the development of nineteenth-century realism. As its name indicates, the social novel gives a portrait of society, especially of lower parts of society, dealing with and criticising the living conditions created by industrial development or by a particular legal situation. Well-known examples are: Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*; Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*; Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil* and Charles Kingsley, *Alton Locke*.

---

## 10.4 Aspects of The Novels

---

### 10.4.1 Plot

The term 'Plot' as we understand it, was mentioned first of all by Aristotle in his famous work POETICS. He identified plot as the most important of the six constituents of a tragedy. His definition of plot as a 'combination of the incidents, events, situations and actions in a story', though primarily used to understand the dramatic form called tragedy may be found to have some relevance in our study of the novel as well. However, it must be pointed out that Aristotle did not think it fit to make the necessary distinction between a 'Plot' and a 'Story', which, as we shall discover, is very important for our own purposes here. Plot is, essentially, an

overall arrangement, a way of ordering a set of diverse situations and characters in a manner that can help sustain the reader's interest without compromising either on probability or a unified vision. The construction of the plot involves the process of selection and rejection of situations and incidents, which is among the chief tasks of a novelist. If you are fond of reading novels, you would perhaps recall that all novels do not begin necessarily in the manner in which your grandmother often used to tell bedtime stories, always starting with that all-too-familiar "Once upon a time....". In certain cases, a novelist may like to use what we call a flashback technique which means that the action rolls, not forwards, but backwards in time. Here, the distinction between a 'Plot' and 'Story' becomes absolutely necessary. Plot is the outcome of a novelist's rather clever use of certain strategies with a view not simply to narrate but build up a story in a novel. As opposed to this, a story is a way of recapitulating the events or incidents in the plot, a reader's reconstruction. In short. E.M. Forster, an English novelist said this of the difference between a story and a plot. The same story can have different plots depending on the way the events are handled by the writer.

There can be more than one way of arranging or ordering a plot. To understand this we need to identify different types of plots. Classification of plot is based upon the study of the following factors:

(a) Internal

(b) External

When we seek to offer a classification based upon our understanding of the internal factors of a plot, Aristotle's distinction between a 'simple' and a 'complex' plot comes to mind. According to him, a simple plot is largely episodic in nature while a complex one involves both reversal of fortune and recognition. This is where the problem begins. An episodic plot, which consists of a series of anecdotes loosely strung together, forms the very basis of an important type of a novel called picaresque. Moreover, reversal of fortune and recognition may or may not figure in every novel as prominently as they often do in a tragic drama. This being so, we can easily say that Aristotle's classification, which in any case is meant for drama, does not hold good for a novel at all.

Another classification, which is based upon the study of external factors, has been put forward by Nathaniel Hawthorne. He identifies four types of plots viz., tragic, comic, satiric or romantic, depending upon the subject-matter/content of each novel. However this classification ignores a large variety of novels such as psychological novels, political novels, historical novels, crime novels etc.

#### **10.4.2 Character and Characterization**

A character is a person endowed with physical, moral and psychological attributes by a novelist in such a way that s/he comes alive for us when we read a novel. A good novelist always takes care to present his/her characters in a convincing, plausible and consistent manner. For a character to be convincing or consistent, s/he does not necessarily have to corre-

spond to the persons we either know or have met in real life. It simply means that a character should not either say or do anything that makes his/her temperament, behaviour or attitude appear self-contradictory. If it does happen, as it might in certain cases, it is important to question either the character's or the novelist's motivation in doing so. Sometimes a novelist may take the liberty to present a certain character in an exaggerated manner. S/he may achieve the necessary effect by exaggerating either the details of the physical appearance or demeanour or temperament of a certain character. As a result of this, the character may appear to you as incongruous as any figure would in good cartoon. If you do come across such a character, you would think of him/her more as a 'caricature' and less as a 'character'. For example, in Dickens's novels you will come across a whole range of memorable caricatures.

As in the case of plot, so in character, there are several ways of classifying different types. But whichever way you choose to look at it, ultimately there are only two types of characters we can either identify or distinguish. For the purpose of our discussion here, we shall make use of the distinction made by a famous English novelist and critic E.M. Forster. In his critical work *Aspects of the Novel*, he has suggested that characters are primarily of two kinds; *flat* or *round*. We shall present this distinction to you in tabular form so as to help you understand it easily:

<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Flat Character</b>	<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Round Character</b>
1.	Is built around a single idea or quality.	1.	Is a combination of several ideas or qualities
2.	Is often presented rather cursorily in a single phrase or sentence and so does not go beyond a mere outline.	2.	Is sketched in details rather pains takingly and may require an extensive treatment.
3.	Derives a sense of collective identity from the type or group (social or literary) to which s/he belongs. So words deeds and attitudes are dismissed as quirks of the class.	3.	Does not derive its identity from any group. Has a distinct sense of personal identity and is often responsible for his/her words, deeds and attitudes.
4.	Is two-dimensional and so does not undergo any change in the course of a novel.	4.	Is three-dimensional and has the power to surprise us through an unexpected (though not totally improbable) act of transformation.

### **Characterization**

Character and characterization are two different though interrelated critical concepts and so should not be used as synonyms. While the term character refers to a person (not necessarily an individual), characterization is a study of different methods available to a novel-

ist with the help of which s/he is able to present the whole range of characters in an orderly fashion. A novelist's selection of characters or methods of presentation is often guided by the following factors:

- a) His/her choice of the narrative/ story and the way in which s/he wishes to develop it.
- b) The idea/ideas s/he seeks to represent through the characters,
- c) His/her personal attitude to the ideas s/he seeks to present through different characters.

Depending upon various combinations of these factors, a novelist is able to settle the following questions in relation to characterization:

- (i) How much importance should be given to which character and how?
- (ii) How should the characters be made to interact with each other, and why?
- (iii) How and why should the characters be grouped together into different categories viz. character/caricature, individual/types, major/minor?

In your reading of different novels you will discover that a novelist often uses both the methods, and not one at the expense of the other. In other words, these two methods of characterization are not mutually exclusive but complementary to each other.

For your own purposes of evaluation of either characters or methods of characterization, you may find it convenient to ask yourself the following questions;

- i) What does the character say or do, and why?
- ii) What do other characters in the novel say about him/her and why?
- iii) What does a novelist have to say about a character and why?
- iv) How does a novelist describe a character, and why?
- v) Which categories does a character belongs to, and why?

### **10.4.3 Narrative Modes**

Before we give you some idea of what narrative modes are and how these could be defined or classified, we would like you to understand the term 'narrative'. Some people might say that narrative is just another, more sophisticated, word for what is ordinarily known as a 'story'. This, however, is a serious misconception. Story is merely what is told whereas narrative combines this question of what is told with the method of telling it. In other words, story is simply an element of the narrative but certainly not the only one. This should not lead you to think that narrative is of a piece with the plot. Just as a story is one element of the narrative, so narrative is only one of the several methods of giving shape to a plot. Narrative

therefore, is an important strategy available to a novelist with the help of which s/he is able to create, describe or comment upon either the situation or characters or both. The study of narrative modes can be of immense help to you in two different ways:

- i) It can help you understand how a novel is different from other genres such as a poem or a drama.
- ii) It can also help you distinguish between different types of novels and to an extent, help you to understand the basic nature of these differences as well.

### **10.4.3.1 Types of Narrative Modes**

Novelists have, over a period of time, developed a large variety of modes/strategies to present a story. Generally, a novelist uses only one specific type of narrative mode suited to what s/he wants to narrate and how s/he wishes to do so. Sometimes, several modes can be used simultaneously in a single work of fiction though this is done only in some cases. The following types of narrative modes are rather well-known:

- I. Third Person Narrative
- II. First Person Narrative

#### **I. Third Person Narrative:**

In this narrative mode, the narrator is someone outside the story who refers to all the characters in the story by name or as ‘he’ ‘she’ ‘they’. Chinua Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart*, which you shall get to read in Post Colonial Literature, is a fine example of what we mean by a Third Person Narrative. Just consider the opening lines of the novel “Okonkwo was well-known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalze the Cat.....”

In this case, you can see, the narrator is a know-all in the sense that he knows everything that needs to be known about the situations or characters. He may appear to have a god-like presence in the novel, an unchallenged monarch of all he surveys. He has complete hold over and access to a character’s thoughts, feelings, motives or his speech and actions.

Whenever a third-person enjoys this privilege, almost sovereign status, we say, that the narrator is omniscient and that the narrative mode is the third person omniscient mode.

However, when the third-person narrator chooses to focus on the thoughts, feelings or experiences of single character or a limited number of characters within a story, we identify it as third person limited narrative mode. In such instances, a novelist seeks to impose certain limitations upon her/himself so as to present all situations/characters through the eyes/perspective of a character s/he sympathizes with the most. If you get to read the novels of Henry James you would be able to appreciate the third person limited narrative mode.



## II. First Person Narrative:

Very often, a novelist creates a character/person on first-person and attempts to view other characters/ situations through his/her eyes. When such a mode of narration is used in a sustained manner throughout a novel, we say that it is an instance of the first person narrative mode. Sometimes the use of the first person may mislead us into thinking that the narrator is the same as the author or at best, an alter ego of the author. While in certain cases, especially in an autobiographical novel, the narrator/author distinction may ultimately disappear, it does not always happen in this way. It would be wrong to say, then, that the first person narrator is used by the novelist as a pretext for giving a fictional account of his/her life or drawing upon his/her personal experience. In fact, even in an autobiographical novel, the facts/events/situations are fictionalized to such an extent that the distance between the narrator and the author increases considerably. To give you some idea of how this mode functions, here is an example from Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*: "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning of my life, I record that I was born (as I have been informed and believe) on Friday, at twelve o'clock at night....."

Charles Dickens has made use of the first person narrator. Though *David Copperfield* is often read as a semi-autobiographical novel, it is apparent that the novelist has created enough distance from the narrator. This is what makes it possible for him to laugh at David the way he does in the given opening lines.

As compared to the third person narrative mode, the first-person mode certainly imposes more limitations. Since it perceives characters/situations from the standpoint of a single character and not an omniscient narrator, it does offer a circumscribed view of whatever a novel may describe. However, it is generally preferred for the following reasons:

- i) It lends a degree of authenticity to the narrative as the reader gets a feeling that s/he is listening to the story straight from the horse's mouth.
- ii) It lends a sense of immediacy to the narrative and therefore makes for a greater involvement on the part of the reader.

### 10.4.4 Style

It is commonplace to say that all literary artists, novelists included, have to work within the available range of a specific language. A good novelist always strives to enrich the language s/he decides to work with. What really distinguishes a good novelist from an indifferent one to some extent, is the way in which language is either used or handled. In a manner of speaking, language is the ultimate material available to a novelist or writer. Style is essentially an aspect of the language and is largely reflected in a novelist's ability to turn language into an effective and imaginative vehicle for the purposes of narration and/or communication of his/her ideas. Since each novelist is likely to use language in his/her own unique manner, the styles

would vary from one to another. Style is a distinctive signature of a novelist, an expression of his/her creative genius almost in the same manner as your selection of particular dress may be said to carry an imprint of your imagination or lack of it. We would like to suggest here that in view of a large variety of styles available, no classification is either possible or desirable. That being so, you may wonder how you could gain some understanding of a particular novelist's style or her/his creative use of language. We suggest that you base impressions of a particular novelist's style on your ability to answer the following questions:

- i) Does a novelist use the language in a manner familiar to you or does s/he strive for novelty, richness or creativity?
- ii) Does this creative use of the language lie in his/her use of words, diction or his/her sentence/structure or all three of them?
- iii) Can you identify some of the recurrent images and symbols in the novel? If so, make out a list of each one of them?
- iv) Do images and symbols make his/her language 'obtuse' or transparent?
- v) Does s/he use a simple style or a complex one?

#### **10.4.5 Time/Place**

The action of a novel, like that of any other human activity, has to be located in 'time' as well as 'place', if it has to make any sense to us. Both 'time' and 'place' as represented in a novel are, more often than not, imaginary not real categories. It is so because a novelist always likes to exercise his/her prerogative of adding an element of fiction to whatever s/he may choose to describe or narrate. As a matter of fact, this tendency towards the fictionalization of time/place categories as also the characters, situation or actions is what makes a work of fiction different from a historian's work on the one hand and a journalistic report on the other. Even when a novelist chooses to describe an actual or historical time/place category, as s/he may often do, s/he presents it in a manner that it appears rather strange or unfamiliar. Sometimes s/he may describe the real or known time/place in such a manner that it might appear far removed from the way we may have either experienced, seen, heard or read about it. This is not to suggest that a novelist cannot or does not ever use time/place categories without fictionalizing them. S/he can and may often do so and whenever s/he does it the novel may either become historical in nature or take on the shape of reportage.

Since a novel presents action on a fairly broad scale, a number of 'time sequence' and 'locations' often come into play. It needs to be pointed out that the action of a novel can move either in a linear fashion or in a disjunctive manner. It is said to move in a linear fashion when the chronology of events is consistently maintained in the act of narration and there is an onward movement from one place to another. Linear action follows the alphabetical order and if the action starts (in terms of both time/place) at say point A, it moves towards B.C.D.....

and ultimately Z. Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* is a good example of what we mean by the linear movement of action. On the other hand disjunctive action comes into play when the chronology of events is carefully and systematically disturbed for the purposes of narration and there is a movement back and forth in both time and place. It often happens when a novelist either uses the flashback techniques or makes a character reconstruct events in a random fashion. In this case, the action may start at point H, revert back to A and move towards B.C.D.....G before it jumps forward to another point P..... and so on. Such disruptions in time/place make the action disjunctive and are often created consciously by the novelist with the purpose of attracting the reader's attention through new ways of narrating or describing. The disjunctive mode is often associated with most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century novels as much as the linear mode is said to be characteristic of the 19th century novels or the novels written in the preceding centuries.

#### **10.4.6 Themes**

So far we have restricted our discussion to what we call the 'form' of novel, its various manifestations or critical concepts/ strategies with the help of which the 'form' can be comprehended fully. We must remember that the content of a novel should preferably be mediated through its form. In other words, if you are able to put these critical strategies to an optimum and effective use, you may be able to decipher the 'content' as well. This brings us to a point where it becomes necessary to explain what we really mean by the term 'content'. In its broad sense, content would refer to the themes/ideas that run through the fabric of any novel. However, it is important to point out here that every idea a novel may seek to present does not necessarily develop into its theme. An idea becomes a theme only when it recurs through a novel in such a way as to demonstrate a novelist's preoccupation with it. A novelist often reveals his/her concern or preoccupation with a theme or a set of theme in several different ways, some of which are as follows:

- i) Indirectly through the medium of character/characters, as a character is widely held to be the chief vehicle of an idea or ideas in a novel.
- ii) Indirectly through certain patterns of imagery and symbolism that run through a novel.
- iii) Indirectly through key words or phrases that find a recurrent expression in novel.
- iv) Directly through authorial comments that lie interspersed in a novel, where a novelist takes the liberty to comment on either the characters or situation or both

This by itself would make it clear to you how closely interrelated and interdependent both 'form' and 'content' are. In your search for the different themes of a novel, you may focus specifically on this particular aspect of a novel.

---

## 10.5 Let Us Sum Up

---

Broadly speaking, any literary work, including a novel, can be said to have two aspects viz 'content' and 'form'. It is always helpful to approach the 'content' of a novel via its 'form', though the relationship between the two is one of complementarity. The 'form' of a novel, can, in turn, be mediated through various critical concepts such as plot, character/characterization, narrative modes, style, and time/place. It is important to know how each of these concepts can be defined and classified if you really wish to understand a novel fully. Plot, being an overall arrangement of characters/situations is different from the story which refers primarily to the manner in which we like to remember whatever happens in the plot of a novel. Character refers to a person with certain physical, moral and psychological attributes while characterization involves the use of various strategies available to a novelist for the purpose of delineation/presentation of a character. Narrative modes are the different ways of narrating the sequence of events or presenting the characters and action in a novel. By using different modes, a novelist is able to sustain the reader's interest in the narrative and is also able to emphasize different viewpoints in a novel. Style is an aspect of the language and carries an exclusive imprint of a novelist. Time/place are two important categories which help us to understand the geographical or temporal sequence of action in a novel. Content refers primarily to the themes which find expression in a novel through key words, phrases, images, symbols and characters or authorial comments, repeated in such a way as to reflect the novelist's preoccupation or concern with them.

---

## 10.6 Review Questions

---

1. When was the novel born in England?
2. Mention any three reasons for the emergence of the novel in England.
3. Why is it important to know about the different aspects of the novel?
4. What is the nature of relationship between content and form?
5. How would you like to define the term 'plot'?
6. Define the term 'character'.
7. What is the meaning of the word 'narrative'? How is it different from a story and plot?
8. How would you like to define the term style?

---

## 10.7 Bibliography

---

1. Allen Walter, The England Novel (1970)
2. Forster, E.M., Aspects of the Novel (1954)
3. Watt, Ian, The Rise of the Novel (1957)

4. Booth, Wayne C., *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961)
  5. Forster, E.M., *Aspects of the Novel*(1954)
  6. Ghent, Dorothy Van., *The England Novel* (1954)
  7. Kettle, Arnold, *An Introduction to the England Novel-2 Vols* (1951)
  8. Lubbock, Percy, *The Craft of Fiction* (1921)
  9. Muir, Edwin, *The Structure of the Novel*(1928)
  10. Raymond Williams, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*(1984)
-

## UNIT – 11

---

### CHARLES DICKENS : GREAT EXPECTATIONS (I)

---

#### Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 The Novel in English
- 11.3 Reading ‘Great Expectations’
  - 11.3.1 Charles Dickens : His life and Career
  - 11.3.2 Brief Synopsis
- 11.4 Shades of Autobiography
- 11.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.6 Review Questions
- 11.7 Bibliography

---

#### 11.0 Objectives

---

In this unit our purpose is to enable you to comprehend and enjoy reading Charles Dickens’ novel *Great Expectations*. To fulfil the aforesaid purpose we intend to tell you about Charles Dickens’ life and literary career and provide you a brief synopsis of the novel. The unit also contains a short description of the themes that emerge in the moments of reflection after successive readings of the novel.

---

#### 11.1 Introduction

---

*Great Expectations* originally appeared in serial form in Dickens’ own magazine, *All the Year Round*, and was subsequently published in volume form in 1861. Originally, Dickens had intended the novel to be issued in twenty monthly parts, but the heavy fall in circulation of *All the Year Round* obliged him to come to the magazine’s rescue with a weekly serial. He was far less fond of writing weekly installments and was tempted after a while to condense the story. This probably explains why the first of the book’s three sections is easy-flowing and leisurely, while in the two remaining parts the complications of the plot have a tendency to become difficult to follow.

Dickens set much of *Great Expectations* amid familiar scenes. The village where Joe Gargery has his forge is modelled on the tiny hamlet of Gooling, a few miles from Dickens’ home at Gad’s Hill. The black prison hulk is probably based on one of the convict ships which

the author remembered from his boyhood days at Chatham. Satis House, where Miss Havisham lives, is based on an old Elizabethan mansion south of Rochester Cathedral, standing in countryside across which Dickens frequently strolled. Although the story is told in the form of an autobiographical narrative, however, Pip, its hero, is much less literally a portrayal of Dickens than David Copperfield was, and the events in Pip's career have no resemblance to those in the life of his creator.

Although the novel is quite devoid of dates, critics have suggested (from internal evidence in the story itself) that Pip is supposed to have been born in about 1807. The neighbourhood of Rochester in Kent provides the setting for Pip's boyhood, the marsh country being the tongue of land between the estuaries of the Thames and the Medway. The journey to London from Pip's village takes five hours by stage-coach. In London itself, Pip and Herbert live close to the River (near Temple Inn), the eccentric Pockets reside at Hammersmith, Wemmick and his father in the suburb of Walworth south of the Thames, while Jaggers lives in the heart of Soho (Gerrard Street).

Dickens himself wrote a dramatized version of *Great Expectations*, hoping that John Toole (a famous actor and producer on the London stage who had created the role of Bob Cratchit in *A Christmas Carol*, 1859) would play the part of Joe Gargery; but this version was never acted, and the first stage presentation was prepared by W.S. Gilbert (of Gilbert and Sullivan fame) and given at the Court Theatre in May, 1871. Thereafter, owing to the absence of copyright laws, the novel was pirated on several occasions for the American stage. In 1952 a full-length British film version of the story was made, with John Mills as Joe Gargery.

---

## 11.2 The Novel in English

---

A NOVEL is, in literature, "a sustained story which is not historically true, but might very easily be so. The novel has been made the vehicle of satire, for instruction, for political or religious exhortation, for technical information; but these are side issues. Its plain and direct purpose is to amuse by a succession of scenes painted from nature, and by a thread of emotional narrative". (Prof. P.H. Boynton, in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1947 Edition. Vol. 16, p. 572)

The novel is, actually, a comparatively recent entrant into the field of English Literature; only by the 18<sup>th</sup> century did the novel become a prominent factor in literature, while its present commanding position was not consolidated until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Literary historians are able to trace the development of the novel right back to classical days, when the works of a few of the Greek and Roman writers were of a form basically similar to that which we now regard as typical of a novel. Some of these Latin stories were, indeed, translated into English in Renaissance and pre-Renaissance days.

The actual word "novel" is derived from the Italian "novella", the term used for each of a collection of about one hundred narratives which appeared in the latter half of the thirteenth

century. From that date onwards, the novel as a literary type rapidly gained popularity in Italy and many of these Italian “novelle” were translated eventually into English.

Some critics hold Thomas Malory’s *La Morte d’ Arthur* (ca. 1470) – the life of the legendary king whom Tennyson afterwards immortalized in verse- to be England’s first contribution to narrative prose, but others claim this early work belong more to the field of poetry than of fiction. Thereafter, a number of works were produced which leant towards the novel scheme- not the least of these being Daniel Defoe’s classic *Robinson Crusoe*.

The birth of the English novel as we today understand the term came in 1740 with the publication of Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela : or Virtue Rewarded* - a series of letters between two imaginary characters; they were designed to encourage in the youth of the period strict observance of correct moral principles. Richardson’s work led immediately to *Joseph Andrews* by Henry Fielding and *Roderick Random* by Smollett. It was not long before Fielding’s *Tom Jones* appeared- the first English novel which can be said to have had a definite and carefully thought-out plot. Smollett replied with his *Peregrine Pickle* ( 1751), while Fielding took up the pen again to produce *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753).

New themes and new ideas had their effect on the English novel in the thirty years following Richardson’s *Pamela*, and in this period we get Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* and the fiction works of Dr. Johnson, Horace Walpole and Oliver Goldsmith. By 1770, the novel had firmly established itself as a literary form.

The remaining years of the eighteenth century brought forth little of great value in English works of fiction. The second decade of the nineteenth century, however, produced two great writers whose names will for ever hold a place of distinction in the history of English – indeed, of world- literature. These are Jane Austen and Walter Scott. Jane Austen was the satirist of English society at her time. Yet that satire is so gently- so delicately presented through her brilliantly portrayed characters- that it cannot offend, although it is none the less effective for all that. Scott’s approach was different. For his themes he delved into legend and history; his heroes were knights and lords of bygone days.

---

### **11.3 Reading ‘Great Expectations’**

---

You are advised to read the novel *Great Expectations* first and then read the sections dealing with brief synopsis, themes of the novel, textual notes, etc.

#### **11.3.1 Charles Dickens : His life and career**

CHARLES DICKENS was born at Portsmouth in 1812, one of a large family with origins which gave little promise of the exceptional genius and prodigious personality born in this writer. His father, John Dickens, was a clerk in the Navy Pay office, a man of vivid temperament, and the person on whom the character of Micawber, in *David Copperfield* was based.



John Dickens was an impecunious sponger, who failed in his financial responsibilities. With declining family fortunes there was a move, in Dickens's early childhood, to a neighborhood which furnished him with memories used in his later writing; Chatham and Rochester. At this time he read intensively eighteenth-century novelists who influenced the form of his earlier novels, his characterization, and his prose: Fielding, Goldsmith, Defoe and Smollett.

In 1823, further difficulties took the family to Camden Town, a poor, truly Dickensian part of London. Here his schooling temporarily ceased and from here he explored London: Limehouse, the East End, Soho, Convent Garden, and the "wicked" Seven Dials area. The London scene, especially the slums, began to stimulate his imagination.

At the age of ten, he began to work in a blacking factory at Hungerford Stairs, overlooking the Thames, under conditions of stress and want which he never forgot (see the autobiographical novel, *David Copperfield*).

John Dickens had been committed to Marshalsea debtor's prison, and was joined there by the family, but Charles Dickens lodged in Southwark (area of Jacob's Island).

At this time he began to store up observations of London people, and to grow in sympathy with the victims of poverty and social ills. In 1824, with the release of his father, Charles Dickens returned to school. He then worked first for a solicitors' firm, and then as a reporter in Doctors Commons, developing an interest in legal courts, and registering impressions of comedy, tragedy and melodrama in law, and human nature in the witness box, which he later used in his writing. At the same time his interest in acting increased. At one time he intended becoming an actor, and the theatre was a lifetime enthusiasm.

In 1832 Dickens was a press reporter in the House of Commons. He began the first of the Sketches by Boz, illustrated by Cruikshank.

In 1835 he married Kate Hogarth. At the same time the first numbers of *Pickwick Papers* began to appear, illustrated by Phiz. Kate's sister Mary, aged sixteen, went to live in the Dickens home. Dickens idealized her and became deeply attached to her.

In 1837 Mary died suddenly, which was a great emotional blow. In the same year, *Oliver Twist* began as a serial in *Bentley's Miscellany*.

In 1838-41 *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *Barnaby Rudge* were written.

A tour of the United States in 1842 resulted later in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, satirizing life in America.

In 1843-49 *A Christmas Carol*, *Dombey and Son* and *David Copperfield* were published.

In 1850 Dickens began to edit a weekly paper, *Household Words*.

In 1852-57 *Bleak House*, *Hard Times* and *Little Dorrit* were published.

In 1859 Dickens, no longer associated with *Household Words*, began to publish another weekly, *All the year Round*, in which *A Tale of Two Cities* was serialized.

Between 1859 and 1870 Dickens gave readings of his works, at intervals, in the British Isles- great solo acting performances which seized his audiences with “mesmeric possession”.

1861-65 saw the publication of *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend*.

In 1866, a sick man, Dickens toured the U.S.A., giving readings from his works.

In 1868 he started another reading tour of Britain and introduced an episode from *Oliver Twist*- the murder of Nancy- into his repertoire. It had an electrifying and horrifying effect on the audience, and in its emotional tensions helped to hasten Dickens’s end.

In 1870 he began *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, and died before its completion.

Dickens’s writing, which extended approximately over the first thirty-five years of Victoria’s reign, showed, particularly to begin with, the continuity of the eighteenth- century tradition of the writers Fielding and Smollett, in the novel form (loosely connected adventures, moving in locality from place to place) and in his use of farcical situations and a profusion of “typed” comic, often eccentric characters.

Dickens was both a Victorian and a “giant” with too great a genius to be compressed into the fashions of his time.

In his writing he showed himself a liberal reformer of his age, concerned with the problems arising in city life and the life of the poor, especially in London, as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Although as a social critic he was independent and individualistic, he was not a pioneer. He was a spokesman for attitudes which had already been taken up by his public, and shared with them ideas to which their sense of right and wrong prompted them about the abuses of the day (e.g. the problem of chimney sweepers).

Dickens appealed to various classes of society- from aristocrats to labourers. He appealed to intellectuals and simple people, and to different levels of emotion. In this range and universality he has been compared to Shakespeare.

After 1832 there grew up a large magazine public who appreciated his work. His popularity extended outside England to Europe and the United States.

He is “one of the great pivotal authors of England, embedded deep in the national mind”, and expresses the “being of the people of England”. Especially among the middle and lower classes, in a way that they understand.

Even to those who have never read his works, words such as “Pickwick”. “Micawber”, and “asking for more like Oliver Twist”. Conjure up a familiar idea.

From the time of publication of *Dombey and Son*, Dickens's mood and method altered. He began to use highly organized, *often cumbersome plots*. His social criticism grew more mature and searching. He began to attempt the more subtle modern methods of psychological characterization. Though he still showed "unreflecting joy in the absurd and comic for their own sake". His mood deepened and saddened, and his social satire became fiercer.

His influence on later writers was great, and he is part of "the literary climate in which western man lives."

### **11.3.2 Brief Synopsis**

It is essential for the student to possess some knowledge of the general sweep of the action before any attempt can be made to interpret *Great Expectations* in greater detail. The following, then is a brief outline of the plot, and this Section should be constantly consulted while reading the novel.

#### **FIRST STAGE (Chapters I – XIX)**

Pip had been left an orphan as a young boy, to be grudgingly reared by his sister, whose husband, Joe Gargery, a blacksmith, was kind and loving. The trio lived in a cottage in the marsh country of Kent, where Pip, wandering alone one day, was accosted by a wild-looking stranger who demanded food and a file to cut the iron chain that bound his leg. When Pip returned with a pork pie and a file, he saw another mysterious figure on the marsh, who, after a desperate struggle with Pip's stranger, escaped into the fog. The man Pip had aided turned out to be an escaped convict who was later recaptured. He promised Pip he would somehow repay him for his help.

Miss Havisham lived in a gloomy house where all the clocks had been stopped on the day her bridegroom failed to appear for their wedding; she still dressed in her bridal robes and the remains of an uneaten wedding breakfast cluttered the tables of an unused room. At Miss Havisham's request, Mrs. Joe periodically sent Pip to this house, where the shy boy also encountered a beautiful young girl named Estella, who delighted in tormenting him. Miss Havisham enjoyed watching the two children together, and encouraged Estella in her haughty teasing of Pip.

Although Pip was apprenticed to Joe, a solicitor named Jaggers one day presented him with the opportunity to go to London and become a gentleman. Pip imagined that the backer of this proposal was Miss Havisham, who wished to make him fit to marry Estella some day.

Before Pip left for London, his sister was attacked by an unknown assailant and was struck unconscious; she never fully recovered from this blow. (The attacker was Orlick, Joe's assistant, who had been on bad terms with the Gargery family for some time).

## **SECOND STAGE (Chapter XX-XXXIX)**

In London Pip found a small apartment set up for him, and for a living companion he had a young relative of Miss Havisham, Herbert Pocket. When Pip needed money, he was instructed to go to Mr. Jaggers. Pip quickly adapted himself to his new circumstances, spent money at a great rate, and received some tuition from Herbert's father. When Joe came to visit Pip in London, the latter had outgrown his rural background and was ashamed of Joe's rustic manners.

A few years later, Miss Havisham expressed a wish to see the young man, and Pip went to visit her. She told him that it was time for Estella to come to London and that it would not be out of place for him to fall in love with the beautiful girl. Estella, however, had not been in London long before she had many suitors, and although Pip saw her frequently and she treated him with friendship, he knew she did not return his love.

On his twenty-third birthday, after moving with Herbert to better quarters near Temple Inn, Pip received a visit from the man he had helped on the marshes many years before and learnt that his benefactor had been this ex-criminal, Abel Magwitch, who had been transported to Australia, where he had grown rich. He warned Pip that he (Magwitch) faced the death penalty should the authorities learn of his return to England, but he was so anxious to see the boy to whom he had tried to be a second father, that he was willing to take this risk. Pip now realized that Miss Havisham had nothing to do with his great expectations.

## **THIRD STAGE (Chapters XL-LIX)**

Magwitch was using the name Provis to hide his identity. Pip learnt, too, that the other convict on the marshes was Compeyson, his benefactor's bitter enemy, who was also the lover who had jilted Miss Havisham.

Pip lost no time in visiting Miss Havisham to upbraid her for having allowed him to believe she was helping him. During this visit he was informed that Estella was to marry Bentley Drummle, a disagreeable fellow whom Pip had come to know in London. Since Miss Havisham had suffered at the hands of one faithless man, she had reared Estella to inflict as much hurt as possible on the many men who had come to love her. After Estella had married, Pip again visited Miss Havisham at her request and she asked his forgiveness for the wrong she had done to him. As Pip left the gloomy old mansion, an accident started a fire and the old lady died in the blaze.

Pip's main purpose in life thereafter was to ensure the safety of Magwitch, who, because of the machinations of Compeyson, remained in great danger of capture. With Herbert's assistance, Pip arranged to smuggle the old man across the Channel to France; he would then join him there, and they would go abroad together. Elaborate and secretive as their plans were, Compeyson managed to overtake them as they were putting Magwitch on the boat. The two enemies fought one last battle, Compeyson was killed, and Magwitch taken to jail, where he died before he could be brought to trial.

When Pip fell ill shortly afterwards, it was Joe Gargery who came to nurse him. Older and wiser from his many experiences, Pip no longer felt ashamed of his uncle. His sister, Mrs. Joe, had died of her injuries, and Joe married again- his choice falling on Bidley, a kindly village girl who had kept house for him since Orlick's attack. Pip had discovered, meanwhile, that Estella was Magwitch's daughter.

Later, Herbert and Pip set up a business partnership in London. Estella's brutal husband, Drummle, died in a horse-riding accident, and, eleven years thereafter, Pip by chance met the widowed Estella on the site of Miss Havisham's mansion and they resolved to marry.

---

## 11.4 Shades of Autobiography

---

What Dickens could not do in reality he fictionalised in *Great Expectations* which like *David Copperfield* has shades of autobiography. On the suggestion of Bulwer Lytton, Dickens changed the ending and hinted that Pip and Estella would begin a new life again.

As young boy Pip goes to play with Estella at Satis House, the residence of Miss Havisham Estella is the ward of Miss Havisham she is a proud and beautiful girl. As a young boy Pip is scorned and insulted by Estella and he begins to feel ashamed of his coarse upbringing. Estella and Miss Havisham have an out-of-the world look about them and they represent a society to which Pip aspires. Miss Havisham is dressed always in her bridal finery and she remains locked in her own house. She refuses to see the day light and is surrounded by wax-candles which cast shadows all around and heighten the fairytale atmosphere.

Miss Havisham was jilted by her lover on her wedding day and ever since then she has not come out of her house. This betrayal causes Miss Havisham to seek revenge on the male sex in a most perverted way. Miss Havisham instructs Estella never to fall in love, to play false to men and to break their heart. Estella is brought up to be icy maiden devoid of any gentle feelings. The world of Miss Havisham and Estella enchants Pip and his initial fear of going there and playing with Estella is replaced by a curiosity to know more about this world.

Pip desires to be a gentleman in order to impress Estella. By a stroke of good fortune Pip's education is financed by an unknown benefactor and Pip thinks that the benefactress is Miss Havisham. Miss Havisham does nothing to dispel this belief. When Pip matures into a young man, he realises that he loves Estella. Estella has been brought up without feeling and emotion and here she is reminiscent of Louisa Gradgrind. Whereas Louisa has been taught to rationalise every issue, Estella has been trained to encourage men to play homage to her beauty, and then to discard them. Estella's upbringing may sound improbable but fiction involves a "willing suspension of disbelief".

If Miss Havisham is imprisoned in her own world, Estella too, is a prisoner of her upbringing. She is the star for whom Pip aspires to be a gentleman : Estella is cold, distant and

aloof and Pip is the 'hopeless-lover' who never finds solace and happiness in her company. As Michael Slater puts it : "Pip has, we realise fallen in love with a beautiful monster, a creature who has been made incapable of feeling love.....the story of Miss Havisham and Estella is essentially that of a malign spirit (who may once have been human) magically depriving someone of some basic human attribute."

Estella does not adhere to the angel in the house image of woman. She is cold and cruel. This image of the cruel maid is a conventional one- it has been there in European literature since the time of Petrarch. But Estella is slightly different: she is dutiful in so far as she follows Miss Havisham's directions. If she is not an angel, she is no monster either. She does not strike terror-instead she attracts a host of admirers and they succumb to her beauty.

This type of feminine figure was another stock-in-trade of medieval literature- *la femme fatale*- revived in the nineteenth century by John Keats in his poem 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci'.

Estella is aware that Pip loves her and he is sincere in his feelings. She sees the hopelessness of his love and warns him repeatedly not to be attracted towards her:

Pip..... will you never take warning ?

Of What?

Of me.

Warning not be attracted by you, do you mean, Estella?

Do I meant! If you don't know what I mean, You are blind.....

Do you want me then.....to deceive and entrap you? Do you deceive and entrap him (Bentley Drummles),

Estella. Yes, and many others- all of them but you.

(GE, pp. 284-295).

Pip does not take any heed of Estella's warning and persists in loving her. Estella, however, tells him firmly "it seems that there are sentiments, fancies- I don't know how to call them- which I am not able to comprehend. When you say you love me, I know what you mean, as a form of words, but nothing more. You address nothing in my breast, you touch nothing there. I don't care for what you say at all. I have tried to warn you of this; now, have I not ?"

Pip feels that her behaviour is contrary to Nature, but Estella would not agree, "It is in my nature.....It is in the nature formed within me" (GE, p. 342).

Estella resembles Edith Dombey to a great extent. Both are proud, beautiful and victims of their mothers' manipulations. Edith's mother virtually sells her to Mr Dombey. Miss

Havisham (Estella's mother by adoption) manipulates, through Estella, her revenge on society. Miss Havisham is no fairy godmother, rather there is a "witch-like eagerness" in her whenever Estella talks about her admirers. From Miss Havisham's actions and gestures, Pip learns about "the intensity of a mind morally hurt and diseased". Miss Havisham derives sadistic pleasure from Estella's cold and cruel behaviour towards her admirers. Miss Havisham reminds the reader of Mrs Clennam, Miss Wade and Rosa Dartle. They are all passionate women and they express their resentment towards society in various ways. But while seeking revenge on these men, Miss Havisham appears to be equally tortured. As Philip Hobsbaum remarks: "All this self-torture is part of a vendetta directed not only at herself but outwards, as well, against the world.....like many of Dickens's great eccentrics, her portrayal is a faithful representation of one psychological fact : that the human psyche will make great sacrifices in order to avoid total disintegration."

By training Estella, Miss Havisham continues to have a hold on life, however thin that hold may be. Miss Havisham sent Estella out of Satis House "with the malicious assurance that she was beyond the reach of all admirers, and that all who staked upon that cast were secured to lose" (GE, p. 286).

But after sometime gets a "little tired" of Miss Havisham's schemes. Sharp words are exchanged between them and in her remarks Estella reminds one of Louisa and Edith. Miss Havisham accuses Estella of being "cold" and "indifferent" and of being "hard and thankless". Estella's answer reminds one of Gradgrind's utilitarian theory : "I am what you have made me..... At least I was no party to the compact, for if I could walk and speak, when it was made, it was as much as I could do..... and if you ask me to give me, my gratitude and duty cannot do impossibilities .....who taught me to be hard ? Who praised me when I learnt my lesson?..... I have never forgotten your wrongs and their causes. I have never forgotten your wrongs schooling. I have never shown any weakness that I can charge myself with..... so, I must be taken as I have been made. The success is not mine, the failure is not mine, but the two together makes me" (GE, pp. 287-290).

Miss Havisham adopts Estella and keeps her "as a plaything, and rears her on the principle of vengeance, carefully cultivating Estella's beauty so that she can grow up to break the heart of me."

Estella's behaviour can be attributed to the training Miss Havisham impart to her and her success and failure can also be attributed to Miss Havisham's instructions. Estella's above thought or feeling to seep into her mind.

Estella tells Pip that she will be marrying she will be marrying Bentley Drummles Pip remonstrates with her but it is of no use because Estella's mind is made up. She alone is responsible for this act because she tells Pip : "I am going to be married to him....It is my own act." And to Pip's query "Your own act, Estella, to fling yourself away upon a brute?" Estella replies : "On whom do I fling myself away? Should I fling myself away upon the man who

would the soonest feel. (if people do feel such things) that I took nothing to him? There! It is done. I shall do well enough, and so will my husband. As to leading me into what you call this fatal step, Miss Havisham would have had me wait, and not marry yet; but I am tired of the life I have led, which has very few charms for me, and I am willing enough to change it. Say no more. We shall never understand each other....Don't afraid of my being a blessing to him, I shall not be that. Come! Here is my hand. Do we part on this, you visionary boy- or man? (GE, p.343)

It is important to note that even though Pip had grown up, he retains his fascination for Estella. He has not matured into a mercenary man, and still idolises Estella and is genuinely concerned for her. Estella knows about Pip's feelings and it is to her credit that she warns him about herself and her upbringing. Pip's belief that Miss Havisham is his benefactress has been quashed by the return of Magwitch, his actual benefactor. Pip's vision of marrying Estella and leading a blissful life is also dashed to the ground by Estella remark that she is going to marry Drummles.

Pip suffers inwardly but he pours out his heart before Estella and Miss Havisham, saying : "you are part of my existence, part of myself. You have been in every line i have ever read, I first came here, the rough common boy whose poor heart you wounded even then..... Estella to the last hour of my life, you cannot choose but remain part of my character .....O God bless you, God forgive you" (GE. pp.343-44)

While Pip speaks, Estella looks at him with "wonder" but Miss Havisham's face seems filled with "pity and remorse" Pip's earlier declaration of love has made Miss Havisham aware of Pip's sincerity and she sends for Pip. She realises her mistake and feels very sorry for allowing Pip to believe that she is his benefactress and Estella is destined to marry him once he becomes a gentleman. Miss Havisham wishes to atone for her mistake. Pip tells her to help Herbert Pocket financially and she agrees to do so saying, "Can I only serve you, Pip, by serving your friend? Regarding that as done, is there nothing I can do for you yourself" Pip replies in the negative, he needs nothing from her for his own self. Miss Havisham begs his forgiveness saying, "If you can ever write under my name, 'I forgive her' though ever so long after my heart is dust- pray do it" (GE, p.376)

Catching hold of Pip's hand, Miss Havisham sheds tears of sorrow and Pip allows her to cry in the hope that would bring her "relief". Pip forgives her, and very soon Miss Havisham's dress catches fire and she dies of burn injuries. (The burning may be a ceremonial purging of Miss Havisham's sadistic outlook).

Estella has, in the meantime, got married to Bentley Drummles. Drummles appears to be a useless character. Estella suffers greatly at his hands and in the process she is purged of Miss Havisham's trainings and begins to value humane feelings. When Pip and Estella meet for the last time, it is with the hope that they will never part again. In the evening of his life, Pip's star Estella arrives finally at his horizon. Suffering has made the once cold beauty into a com-



plete woman and she is able to understand Pip more sympathetically.

Estella, as Michael Slater remarks is “simply a given entity in the novel, star-like, as her name suggests, in her coldness, beauty and remote indifference to the agony and strife of human hearts. Only as a child does she seem psychologically convincing : the self-possessed little girls’s gleeful tormenting of the awkward village boy, so out of his depth in her strange home, is entirely plausible. But the adult Estella must, it seems to me, be considered more as a fictive device than as a character in the mode of psychological realism.”

Slater goes on to say that Estella appears to be “a sort of robot” who carries out Miss Havisham’s plans very effectively. He remarks, “Human emotions are as incomprehensible to her as to Swift’s Houyhnhymns.....”. Slater also feels that Dickens is not consistent in the portrayal of Estella- at times she is “passionless” and at times “he makes her suddenly display natural emotions.....” Another Dickens’scholar, Barbara Hardy finds Estella to be a “puzzling character” and says that she is “best explained as another looser and vaguer of Edith Dombey.” Estella leaves a deep impact on the reader and one tends to view her sympathetically especially after her suffering which makes her more compassionate towards Pip.

In nearly all his novels, Dickens denounces those women who have strong feelings and are very articulate. Passion was out of place in a well-ordered society, hence Dickens is critical of passionate women. Dickens associated any violent display of passion with aggression and self-destruction. Examples of such destructive persons are Rosa, Edith, Hortense, Miss Wade and Miss Havisham. Such women are discontented-they cannot derive happiness and comfort from their homes and surroundings. In Mrs Joe Gargery (Pip’s sister) Dickens presents a shrew.

Mrs Joe has brought up Pip and hence expects complete obedience and gratitude from Pip. Mr Hoe and Pip have often been the victims of her temper and when she is roused she can be like a “Mogul” tyrant. The tyrannical women was the butt of traditional male satire. But Joe does not “tame” his shrewish wife because she has a “mastermind” and is a “fine figure of a woman”.

In Chapters VII, Joe gives his reasons (Which are psychological) for accepting Pip’s sister as his wife. Joe’s wife “is perpetually on the Rampage about one thing or another. She treats them both very much alike, as backward children, pulling Joe’s whiskers and dosing Pip with Tar-water.”

Joe’s father was a drunkard and often he would beat Joe and his mother mercilessly. He would spend all the money on alcohol and his mother had to toil very hard to make both ends meet. When Joe’s parents died, he was lonely and finally he got acquainted with Pip’s sister who was bringing up Pip. Finally Joe marries with Pip’s sister and Joe tells Pip : “This I want to say very serious to you. Old chap-I see so much in my poor mother, of a woman drudging and slaving and breaking her honest hart and never getting no peace in her mortal days, that I’m dead afeerd of going wrong in the way of not doing what’s right by woman, and

be a little ill-convenienced my self' (GE, p.45)

In Joe's comments one can glean Dickens's awareness of cruelty to wives and mothers. By writing about these practices, Dickens wishes to draw the reader's attention to women's problems. By all counts then, Joe is the perfect gentleman who would suffer rather than make the woman suffer.

Mrs Joe Gargery was known for her sharp tongue and outspoken behaviour. One day she had a quarrel with Orlick, a man apprenticed to Joe. Orlick attacks her and she dies after a few days. Joe then marries Biddy who brings him pleasure and happiness.

In *Great Expectations* Biddy is "one of the wisest girls" Pip knows. She is his first teacher and she has an uncanny ability to perceive the truth. Pip expresses to Biddy, his desire to be a gentleman because Estella has spited him and found him coarse and common. But Biddy's advice is that Estella "was not worth gaining." This advice shows that Biddy is a good judge of character. Pip wishes that he could "fall in love" with Biddy, but she had no such hope for him and tells him frankly, "But you never will, you see." Pip's ego is hurt but he admits the truth of her remark. As Leavis sums up "That Estella is a living symbol for Pip is shown by his inability to fall in love with Biddy, whom he recognizes as kinder, and more suitable for his future life as a village blacksmith, at the time when no alternative 'real' life seems possible: he confides in Biddy but he can't take advice from her, Mr Wopsle's great-aunt's grand-daughter who was down-at-heel and is not much more literate than Joe." Biddy is a kind, sincere and loving girl who cares for the people around her.

Eventually Biddy marries Joe and she brings joy and gladness into Joe's life. She has no grouse against Pip and welcomes him warmly when he comes to meet them; "Dickens avoids idealizing Biddy and so should the modern reader."

If Biddy represents the conventionally "good" female then Mrs Joe Gargery is her opposite in her behaviour. As Slater has pointed out: "*A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations* feature four cases of women monstered by passion. Madame Defarge is a 'tigress', Mrs Joe a virago, Molly (Estella's criminal mother) 'wild beast tamed' and Miss Havisham a witch-like creature, a ghastly combination of waxwork and skeleton. In each case the perversion of womanhood that the character represents is stamped on our imaginations by our being shown her apparently enacting some conventionally 'good' female role or performing some conventionally 'good' female activity- but always with some horrible twist given to the thing.....Mrs Joe is supplying the place of a mother to her little brother but the bib of her apron is 'struck full of pins and needles' that get into the bread she gives him to eat. Molly appears Jaggers's housekeeper, placing food on the table for him and his guests, but she is a very disturbing version of the Good Provider :.....Miss Havisham is arrayed as a young bride but the dress has rotted on her and she herself has withered into hideousness."

Miss Havisham remains vivid in the reader's mind. She is a "fantastic creation" and there is a compelling force within her which evokes country feelings. One can sympathize with

the fact that she has been jilted on her wedding day but it is difficult to accept her sadistic behaviour as the fitting rationale to her own emotional set-back. In spite of her peculiarities, Miss Havisham has an enchanting air about her and when Pip sees her for the first time, he is drawn towards her. Indeed, Miss Havisham is like “an evil spirit casting a spell over Estella and, through her, over Pip too.....It is one of the many ironies of this great ironic novel that Pip is indeed destined finally to exorcise Miss Havisham’s evil spirit, to restore her to humanity.”

Miss Havisham realises the mistake that she has made, and she begs Pip to forgive her, and she dies subsequently.

---

## 11.5 Let Us Sum Up

---

In this unit we have discussed in detail :

- the life and literary career of Charles Dickens
- the brief synopsis of the novel ‘Great Expectations.
- The development of novel in English

---

## 11.6 Review Questions

---

The following short or one-word-answer questions range indiscriminately over the whole novel. The answers should be written down and then checked against the correct list at the end of this section, but no attempt should be made to tackle these questions until the book has been carefully studied.

1. What was the name of Miss Havisham’s home ?
2. What name did Mr. Wopsle assume for his stage career ?
3. In which suburb of London did Estella live after arriving from Kent?
4. Who sent Pip the letter telling him of his sister’s death ?
5. How old was Pip when Magwitch re-appeared in his life ?
6. Who was “so sulky a fellow that he even took up a book as if its writer had done him an injury” ?
7. What name did Magwitch assume after returning to England?
8. What was Herbert Pocket’s nickname for Pip ?
9. What was the name of Estella’s mother and Mr. Jaggers’s housekeeper ?
10. Besides being the village undertaker, what was Mr. Trabb’s other profession ?
11. What was Pip’s surname ?

12. Whom does Pip describe as “pleasant and wholesome and sweet-tempered” ?
13. What was the name of Pocket’s “today neighbour- a widow lady of a highly sympathetic nature”?
14. What card game did Pip and Estella play on his first visit to Miss Havisham’s ?
15. What was the name of the firm in which Pip bought Herbert (unknown to the latter ) a small partnership ?
16. What was the title of the smyth song which Miss Havisham induced Pip to sing as he pushed her about in her wheel-chair ?
17. In which part of London was Wemmick’s “Castle” located ?
18. Who was the lady “with whom Estella was placed “ when she came to live in London ?
19. Who conducted the night – school in Pip’s village ?
20. How much money did Miss Havisham pay Joe as a premium on apprenticing Pip ?
21. What occupation had Miss Havisham’s father followed ?
22. What was the name of the club which Pip joined in London ?
23. What was Orlick’s first name ?
24. What was Mr. Mr. Hubble’s occupation in Pip’s village ?
25. Who was Herbert Pocket’s fiancée ?
26. Where had Herbert’s father been educated ?
27. What was Herbert’s name for Mr. Barley ?
28. Who accompanied Herbert and Trabb’s boy when they rescued Pip from the old sluice-house ?
29. What did Joe and Biddy call their son ?
30. Who accompanied Pip on his first visit to Miss Havisham ?
31. At what time every night did Wemmick fire his gun ?
32. What was the name of the nursemaid to the younger Pocket children ?
33. In which London street was Mr. Jaggers’s private residence situated ?
34. How much money did Miss Havisham give Pip to purchase a business partnership for Herbert ?
35. What was the name of the inn where young Pip encountered “ a secret looking man”,

whose “head was all on one side, and one of his eyes was half shut up....”?

36. What was the name of Mr. Jaggers’s disreputable client, “a gentleman with one eye, in a velveteen suit and knee- breeches”?
37. Where did Magwitch first become acquainted with Compeyson ?
38. In which neighbourhood of London did Mr. Jaggers have his legal offices ?
39. Where was Estella when the fatal accident overtook Miss Havisham ?
40. How much money did Miss Havisham bequeath to Herbert’s father ?

(In each of the following questions, first put down the name of the speaker and then the name of the person being addressed) –

41. “You’d be everybody’s master if you durst.”
42. “Lord forbid that I should want anything for not standing in Pip’s way.”
43. “Here, give me your fork, and take the baby- don’t take it that way, or you’ll get its head under the table.”
44. “Take it in your right hand ! Lord strike you dead on the spot, if ever you split in any way soever.”
45. “All I possess is freely yours. All that you have given me, is at your command to have again.”
46. “Take Mr. Pip’s written order, and pay him twenty pounds”.
47. “What’s all this ? You with an old father, and you with pleasant and playful ways?”
48. “I wish you had him always : you know so well how to deal with him.”
49. “Are you quite sure, then that you will come to see him often ?”
50. “Hold that noise, or I’ll knock your head off!”

(Adapted from Methen Study – Aid Series)

---

## 11.7 Bibliography

---

1. A. W. Collins : Dickens and Crime (1962)
2. George Bernard Shaw : “Preface” Great Expectations.
3. J. Hillis Miller : Charles Dickens : The World of his Novel
4. John Linderg : Individual Conscience and Social Injustice in Great Expectations *College English X XIII* (1961)

## UNIT-12

---

### CHARLES DICKENS : GREAT EXPECTATIONS (II)

---

#### Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Reading *Great Expectations*
  - 12.2.1 Characterization
    - 12.2.1.1 Major Characters
    - 12.2.1.2 Minor Characters
  - 12.2.2 Dickens' Techniques in *Great Expectations*
- 12.3 Symbolism in *Great Expectations*
- 12.4 Some General Observations
- 12.5 Let Us Sum up
- 12.6 Review Questions
- 12.7 Bibliography

---

#### 12.0 Objectives

---

The purpose of this unit is to acquaint you with the varied literary aspects associated with the English novel such as technique, symbolism, characterization, particularly those employed in Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*.

---

#### 12.1 Introduction

---

*Great Expectations*, though published in 1861 at the height of the Victorian Period (1837- 1901), is neither set in that period nor does it reflect any of the prevailing attitudes which characterized the period. The novel, however, has more claim to greatness as a work of art. The narrative and the symbol only seem to merge in order to create that totally significant atmosphere which is Dickens' greatest achievement in a few scenes- such as with Magwitch on the marshes. There is a certain timidity about the odder characters. For all Miss Havisham's insanity she lacks the great test of divine madness in Dickens' world. The minor characters of the novel are a regression and belong to the feeble facetiousness that on the whole had died away from his work by that time. Irony and economy are the marks of artistry well employed in the novel. These aspects have been dealt with in the sections that follow.

---

## 12.2 Reading *Great Expectations*

---

### 12.2.1 Characterization

By the time Dickens came to write *Great Expectations*, Dickens had fully mastered the art of correlating plot with characters and blending the two together to form an integral whole.

Most of the major characters in the story are dynamic creations- their personalities undergo transformation as the plot unfolds. The mood of Magwitch becomes softened, Estella develops a feeling of tenderness towards Pip, Miss Havisham becomes subject to fits of hysterical remorse, while Pip himself ultimately throws off selfishness (both of which are alien to his character) and shows his true worth.

Dickens, of course, does tend to use symbolism in his character portrayals : both Biddy and the self-effacing Joe represent the humble goodness of domesticated rural life ; at the other extreme are to be found Orlick and Drummle (with Compeyson hovering in the background) as the evildoers without any feelings of decency or compassion.

#### 12.2.1.1 Major Characters

##### **PIP (PHILIP PIRRIP)**

Pip, around whom the whole novel revolves, is largely a victim of circumstances. During his early childhood, he is so unjustly suppressed and bullied by his sister, and, to a lesser degree, by Pumblechook and the rest of the village, that he develops as a timid and sensitive youth. The little chance he has of developing any good characteristics is through the devotion and love of Joe who, however, can do but little against the iron rule of his wife. Nevertheless, the relationship between Pip and Joe is always that of friend and equal, and in no way that of foster-child to foster-father. Later, Pip's overwhelming love for Estella and his reaction to his sudden rise to comparative affluence blind him to real values, and he reveals towards Joe a certain ingratitude which, from time to time, his conscience tells him to be wrong but which he has difficulty in overcoming. It is easy to criticize Pip for his change of feeling towards his one-time friend, but we must all the time take into account the wretched bullying which the youth had suffered in his early years at the hands of his sister.

Some might say of Pip that his life in London brought out in him the baser aspects of his character, for the income he enjoyed- an allowance whose design was the making of a gentleman out of an orphan boy – led him to a life of gaiety, indulgence, recklessness and debt. In judging Pip, however, one must always take into account the circumstances which were at all times around him. Never before had he known any independence- never before has he felt himself free of the cruel and dictatorial authority of his sister and the rogue, Pumblechook. Then, again, he was sure in his own mind that his benefactor was Miss Havisham, and that she

had designed his rise in station in order to equip him for marriage to her ward. We have evidence to show that Pip did not lose that essential goodness which is so much part and parcel of him. Thus, we find him devoting a great part of his wealth to secure the establishment of Herbert in business- quite unknown to his friend- and when his own financial position is embarrassed, Pip goes to ask help of Miss Havisham, accepting money from her for his friend's benefit but refusing any aid himself. Then, too, we cannot but respect Pip's feelings when, after learning the identity of his benefactor, he refuses to accept further financial help- even though he is afterwards to find that his ex- convict helper was a better man by far than he at first thought.

Although Pip was at one period unjust to Joe, whose kindness he forgot and whose station he despised once wealth had altered his outlook, we can nevertheless say that Pip was, in essentials, a loyal and good friend. We have seen how he helped Herbert. Then, again, he stood by Magwitch as friend and helper until his trial and death. Pip had, indeed, the force of character which leads to the attraction of good and loyal friends- such as Joe, Herbert, Biddy, Wemmick and even the hard-headed Jaggers- but it is nevertheless true to say that it was more through the loyalty and help of these friends than through his own efforts that Pip found his true level.

Herbert's own summing-up of Pip is very near to a true picture : "A good fellow, with impetuosity and hesitation, boldness and diffidence, action and dreaming, curiously mixed up in him." We need only refer to the promptness with which Pip comes to help in solving the problems of others, and the way in which he allows his own to slide, to appreciate the strange mixture of temperament to which Herbert calls our attention.

### **JOE GARGERY**

Joe Gargery is a lovable character, even though we are at time given to despise him for his unquestioning submission of his tyrannical wife. It is only through realizing the circumstances of Joe's unhappy life, however, that we appreciate that it needs a stronger man than he- a stronger man that has ever been born- to live with Mrs. Joe and yet maintain some slight element of peace.

A giant of a man, with fair curly hair and mild blue eyes, Joe is a giant of heart as well as of stature. He stoically accepts the iron rule of his wife, for as a realist he has soon come to the obvious conclusion that opposition is impossible. He loves Pip as he would have loved his own child, but, nevertheless, through his very love of peace Joe is prepared to take the punishment with Pip rather than to stand up against his vicious wife on Pip's behalf. Although a man of no education, Joe is always willing to learn, although even Pip in his boyhood years can sense that knowledge is not easily assimilated by his foster- father.

A match for any man who may cross his path, Joe is nevertheless essentially simple, sweet -tempered, easy- going and God- fearing. At the same time, he is somewhat self-conscious of his own lowly trade. Through this- coupled with a pride that is more often found



among the poor than among the rich he stays modestly in the background while Pip is undergoing his training to be a gentleman. Nevertheless, so true a friend is Joe to the boy who has formed so great a part of his life, that he ignores the coldness which Pip reveals and remains his truest friend and helper. Thus, when Pip is in need, we find Joe there to help him, devoutly nursing him through his long illness and unassumingly withdrawing once his patient has recovered.

Joe is essentially a simple man, prepared contentedly 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.

### **MRS JOE GARGERY**

A big, raw-boned woman with black hair and eyes, Mrs Joe is an overpowering and domineering woman obsessed with her own ideas of righteousness. A hard and vicious woman, she is brutally unfair to her own brother, Pip, to whom she shows no spark of kindness, but whom she bullies incessantly from morning till night- it is typical of the woman that she expects the boy to show in return appreciation for the shelter which she has given him.

Joe is ruled by no less rigid rule of iron than her brother. Indeed, Mrs Joe's nature is such that she must dominate all those with whom she comes into contact- except, of course, the vicious Pumblechook, who is a kindred spirit.

Mrs Joe is not a good-looking woman. She is tall and bony, and almost always wears a coarse apron, fastened over her figure with two loops, and having a square, impregnable bib in front, stuck full of pins and needles.

### **BIDDY**

We first meet Bidy as a ragged, unkempt, orphan girl, possessed, however, of sound intelligence and a warm heart. Later, Bidy develops into a sweet, wholesome woman with a remarkable understanding of human nature. Throughout the story, she shows herself as a loyal friend to Pip and her unobtrusive influence for good is felt at all times.

When we first meet her, "her hair always wanted brushing, her hands always wanted washing, and her shoes always wanted mending and pulling up at the heel". She is introduced in her grandmother's little general shop and school. When that old lady conquers a "confirmed habit of living". Bidy comes to the forge to nurse Pip's sister.

Subsequently, when Pip's fortunes improve, he overlooks her, and she becomes a school-mistress. By the time Pip appreciates her true worth and would make amends, she has become Joe's second wife and the mother of a younger Pip.

### **ABEL MAGWITCH**

Although we first see Abel Magwitch (alias Provis) as a dirty, ragged and desperate escaped convict, we feel nevertheless that beneath that awesome exterior there lies a heart

from which even the horrors of years in a prisonhulk have not succeeded in driving all the good. This is first revealed to us when, after his recapture, a meaningful glance passes between the convict and the boy, Pip, and when the wretched creature falsely announces that he stole food from the house of the blacksmith.

The good in Magwitch comes out when he determines that his sole purpose in life shall be to aid the small boy who, through sheer terror, helped him in his attempt at escape on the marshes. Thus, after his escape from captivity in Australia, the convict uses virtually every penny of his considerable wealth to make a gentleman of Pip and to give to the youth those opportunities in life which he himself has never known. Magwitch even risks death by returning to England to see Pip.

We have, in Magwitch, a strange contrast to Miss Havisham. The disappointed woman, her reason twisted and her mind warped to sadism, marshals her every resource to gain vengeance by hurting her fellow beings. In Magwitch, we find one who has strayed along the paths of wrong, but who, even after the horrors of years in wretched prison cells, has a heart which can yet respond to human kindness; thus, from one to whom life gave so little, there comes forth the noble purpose of devoting his last years to doing good.

### **ESTELLA**

Estella is, as much as Pip, a product of an unnatural upbringing. A beautiful and cultured girl, she has been schooled to be proud and heartless. Miss Havisham uses Estella for the purpose of wreaking her own vengeance on men, the girl proving a very apt pupil; it is, of course, on the unfortunate Pip that her art is practised, ably aided and abetted by her guardian.

Only after her unfortunate marriage to Bentley Drummle and the wretched years which follow is the proud and scornful spirit of Estella broken. She is then able to see the good in Pip and the wrongness of her treatment of him in the past.

Pip himself is enchanted by Estella from the very first time he encounters her at Satis House, where she is being trained by her deranged foster-mother to break men's hearts. Pip continues to love her, even after her marriage to "the Spider", and subsequently learns that she is the daughter of Magwitch and Molly, Mr. Jagger's housekeeper.

### **MISS HAVISHAM**

Miss Havisham is a strange woman whose mind has been warped by the disappointment which she suffered on her wedding day. Psychologically unbalanced by the unhappy events of that day, she determines that life will, for her, end at the very hour of her disappointment and thus, to satisfy what has become almost a lust for the sordid, she determines that everything around her shall remain as it was at that moment. Further than that, moreover, she determines to wreak vengeance upon men and to further that end she brings up the child, Estella, to think along the same sadistic lines as he thinks. Then, again, the woman gains a cruel delight in leading her relatives to believe that they are to receive nothing on her death from her

considerable estate.

Nevertheless, this embittered personality is not entirely devoid of heart. Thus we see her paying the money required for Pip's apprenticeship to Joe; she responds to Pip's request for the balance of the money required to see the establishment of Herbert; and she offers Pip financial assistance- which, however, he refuses. Furthermore, Miss Havisham prefers that her name should not come into the picture with respect to these gifts. Then, again, her better nature reveals itself when she asks Pip for forgiveness.

When Pip first encounters her, she appears as an immensely rich and grim old lady living a life of seclusion in a large and dismal house. She is dressed in rich, faded materials- satins, lace, and silks, all of them white, with a long white veil and bridal flowers in her hair.

### **MR JAGGERS**

Dark-complexioned, burly, with an exceedingly large head, prematurely bald on top, and with sharp suspicious eyes, Mr Jaggers reveals in his character many of the traits which his external appearance suggests to us. This brilliant criminal lawyer is a man of hard and forceful personality, he surrounds himself with an impregnable reserve, through which he seeks to prevent even the faintest glimmer of sentiment from shining through. Every word which Jaggers utters is carefully chosen, with that keen selection which enables him to reveal only so much as might, in any case, have been deduced from available evidence.

Nevertheless, we can still feel that, in Mr Jaggers, there is some softness of heart which, however, he prefers not to be recognized. Thus he took steps to ensure that Estella, the child of a woman charged with murder, found a good home, while the mother herself was taken into his house as a domestic.

He is first introduced at Satis House as Miss Havisham's legal adviser. For a long time thereafter he is the only person Pip knows in connection with his "great expectations", as everything done for him is through Jaggers. His last of many appearances in the story is when he conducts the case for Magwitch.

### **WEMMICK**

Jagger's clerk is a short, dry little man of dual personality. In business, Wemmick is as hard and reserved as Mr Jaggers himself, making every endeavour to ensure that he is as cautious and as unapproachable as his employer. At home, however, we see a quite different Wemmick- a man whose life is given up to affectionate devotion to an aged parent, a home-lover proud of his castle and of the strange contraptions he has created therein, and a genial host. Wemmick is, also, a good friend and shrewd adviser to the few to whom his heart opens- in particular, he shows these traits in his relationship with Pip.

Wemmick's most pronounced feature is his "post-office slit" of a mouth, set in a square, expressionless face, He wears at least four rings, besides a brooch representing a lady and a

weeping willow at a tomb with an urn on it; several additional rings hang from his watch-chain. Dickens nearly always draws attention to the eyes of his characters, and we are told that Wemmick's eyes are glittering, small, keen, and black.

### **HERBERT POCKET**

Herbert appears to us, at our first meeting, as the pale and delicate youth who with an inexplicable spontaneity and without apparent reason challenges Pip to fight, taking his beating in a gentlemanly and sportsmanlike manner. Years later Herbert becomes Pip's best friend, and in that friendship we see something of the striking characteristic of loyalty which is part and parcel of Herbert's whole make-up.

With his cheerful, frank and easy manner, Herbert reveals a natural incapacity for doing anything secret or mean. He is utterly unselfish in his devotion to those whom he loves, and he is prepared for any sacrifice to help his friends. Although something of a dreamer, for ever coming out with great and ambitious plans for the future, Herbert is nevertheless quick-witted and reliable, and on his judgment Pip relies in the solution of many of his problems.

### **12.2.1.2 Minor Characters**

*Great Expectations* is filled with numerous lesser personages encountered by Pip, nearly all of whom are sharply delineated and memorable in themselves.

#### **Mr Pumblechook**

With fish-like mouth, dull staring eyes and a great mop of unruly sandy hair. Mr Pumblechook is unprepossessing of appearance; He is no less unprepossessing as a character. This despicable individual is a bully, a braggart and an impostor. He delights in venting his spleen on the youthful Pip and bitterly resents the chances in life which the lad's benefactor has given him ; his complete disregard for honour and truth even allows Pumblechook to pose as Pip's unknown benefactor.

#### **Mr Wopsle**

A vain, self-opinionated man with an exalted opinion of his own capabilities, this one-time clerk of the church afterwards turns to what his conceited nature tells him to be his natural bent- play acting, Although an utter failure in his new calling, the futile Mr Wopsle is quite incapable of seeing himself as he really is, for his efforts on the stage are nothing but ludicrous.

#### **Orlick**

Orlick is a low, dull and vicious criminal, from whom only the meanest can be expected. Revengeful, deceitful and devoid of all goodness, this wretch is incapable of responding to any kindness; he is prepared to stoop so low as to strike down the defenceless Mrs Joe, and afterwards allies himself with Compeyson in order to gain revenge against Pip.

## **Bentley Drummler**

Drummler is a coarse, boorish and dull-witted fellow, whose apparent delight it is to capture the hearts of the women with whom he associates and to revel in the hurt which his actions cause to others. As a husband he proves himself to be a complete failure, unable to appreciate in any way his responsibilities to his wife, and we can feel little pity when we learn that he has been killed by a horse which he has ill-treated.

## **Matthew Pocket**

Herbert's father is a natural and unaffected scholarly gentleman who is an efficient tutor, well-read in his subjects. He proves himself hopeless, however, in the management of his domestic affairs.

## **Compeyson**

Compeyson, Miss Havisham's false lover, originally appears as the second convict whom Pip sees on the marshes, and is recaptured with Magwitch. After his return from penal servitude, he sees Magwitch and gives information about him to the authorities, but is killed when Magwitch is recaptured.

## **Clara Barley**

Clara Barley, a pretty, gentle, dark-eyed girl, and Herbert's fiancée, at first dislikes Pip because he leads her betrothed into debt; her father, a former ship's purser, is always ordering her about.

### **12.2.2 Dickens' Techniques in *Great Expectations***

#### **Soliloquy as a Technique**

Some of the most wonderful scenes in *Great Expectations* are those in which people, presumably in the act of conversation, raptly soliloquize; and Dickens's technique, in these cases, is usually to give the soliloquizer a fantastic private language as unadapted to mutual understanding as a species of pig Latin. Witness Mr Jagger's interview with Joe Gargery, in which the dignified lawyer attempts to compensate Joe financially for his part in Pip's upbringing, and Joe swings on him with unintelligible pugilistic jargon.

"Which I meantsay... that if you come into my place bullbaiting and badgering me, come out ! Which I meantsay as such if you are a man, come on ! Which I meantsay that what I say, I meantsay and stand or fall by !"

Or Miss Havisham's interview with Joe over question of Pip's wages ; for each question she asks him, Joe persists in addressing his reply to Pip rather than herself, and his replies have not the remotest relation to the questions. Sometimes, by sheer repetition of a phrase, the words a character uses will assume the frenzied rotary unintelligibility of an idiot's obsession, as does Mrs Joe's 'Be grateful to them which brought you up by hand', or Pumblechook's

mincing 'May I?' The minimal uses of language as an instrument of communication and intellectual development are symbolized by Pip's progress in the school kept by Mr Wopsle's great-aunt, where the summit of his education consists in his copying a large Old- English 'D', which he assumes to be the design for a belt buckle; and by Joe's pleasure in the art of reading, which enables him to find three J's and three O's and three 'J-O, Joes' in a piece of script.

"Give me (he says) a good book, or a newspaper, and sit me down afore a good fire, and I ask no better. Lord! when you do come to a J and a O, and says you, 'Here, at last, is J-O, Joe', how interesting reading is!"

### **Technique of Language**

There is perhaps, no purer expression of solipsism in literature. The cultivation of the peculiar Dickensian value of language reaches its apogee when the convict Magwitch, with a benefactor's proud delight, asks Pip to read to him from a book in a foreign language, of which he understands no syllable.

The book opens with a child's first conscious experience of his aloneness. Immediately an abrupt encounter occurs- Magwitch suddenly comes from behind a gravestone, seizes Pip by the heels, and suspends him upside down. "Hold your noise!" cried a terrible voice, as a man starts up from among the graves at the side of the church porch. "Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!"

Perhaps, if one could fix on two of the most personal aspects of Dickens' technique, one would speak of the strange languages he concocts for the solitariness of the soul, and the abruptness of the tempo. His human fragments suddenly shock against one another in collisions like those of Democritus' atoms or of the charged particles of modern physics. Soldiers, holding out handcuffs, burst into the blacksmith's house during the Christmas dinner at the moment when Pip is clinging to a table leg in an agony of apprehension over his theft of the pork pie. A weird old woman clothed in decayed satin, jewels and spider webs, and with one shoe off, shoots out her finger at the bewildered child, with the command; "Play!" A pale young gentleman appears out of a wilderness of cucumber frames, and daintily kicking up his legs and slapping his hands together, dips his head and butts Pip in the stomach. These sudden confrontations between persons whose ways of life have no habitual or logical continuity with each other suggest the utmost incohesion in the stuff of experience.

### **Technique of Projecting Vision of Life**

Dickens's technique is an index of a vision of life that sees human separatedness or loneliness as the ordinary condition, where speech is speech to nobody and where human encounter is mere collision. But the vision goes much farther. Our minds are so constituted that they insist on seeking in the use of language an exchange function, a delivery and a passing on of perceptions from soul to soul and generation to generation, binding them in some kind of order; and they insist on finding cause and effect, or motivation, in the displacements and encounters of persons of things. Without these primary patterns of perception we would not

have what we call minds, And when these patterns are confused or abrogated by our experience, we are forced, in order to preserve some kind of psychic equilibrium, to seek them in extraordinary explanation- explanations again in terms of mutual exchange of cause and effect. Dickens saw his world in pieces, and as a child's vision would offer some reasonable explanation as to why such a world was that way- and, by the act of explanation, would make that world yield up a principle of order, however, obscure or fantastic- so, with a child's literalism of imagination, he discovered organization among his fragments.

### **Use of Pathetic Fallacy**

Dickens' fairly constant use of the pathetic fallacy (the projection of human impulses and feelings upon the non- human, as upon beds and houses and muffins and hats) might be considered as incidental stylistic embellishment if his description of people did not show a reciprocal metaphor ; people are described by non human attributes, or by such an exaggeration of, or emphasis on one part of their appearance that they seem to be reduced wholly to that part, with an effect of having become 'tinged' into one of their own bodily members or into an article of their clothing or into some inanimate object of which they have made a fetish. Dickens' devices for producing this transposition of attributes are various. To his friend and biographer, Forester, he said that he was always losing sight of a man in his diversion by the mechanical play of some part of the man's face, which 'would acquire a sudden ludicrous life of its own'. Many of what we shall call the 'signature' of Dickens's people – that special exaggerated feature or gesture of mannerism which comes to stand for the whole person- are such dissociated parts of the body, like Jaggers, huge forefinger which he bites and then plunges menacingly at the accused, or Wemmick's post office mouth, or the clockwork apparatus in Magwitch's throat that clicks as if it were going to strike. The device is not used arbitrarily or capriciously. In this book, whose subject is guilt and atonement, Jaggers is the representative not only of civil law but of universal law, which is profoundly mysterious in a world of dissociated and apparently lawless fragments; and his huge forefinger, into which he is virtually transformed and which seems to act like an 'it' in its won right rather than like a member of man, is the Law's mystery in all its fearful impersonality. Wemmick's mouth is not a post- office when he is at home in his castle but only when he is at work in Jaggers' London office, where a mechanical appearance of smiling is required of him. And as Wemmick's job has mechanized him into a grinning lot, so oppression and fear have given the convict Magwitch a clockwork apparatus for vocal chords.

### **Technique of Association**

Association is a powerful device employed in the novel to convey the essence of objects and persons. Mrs Joe wears a large apron, 'having a square' impregnable bib in front, that was stuck full of pins and needles- she has no reason to wear it, and she never takes it off a day in her life. Jaggers flourishes a large white handkerchief- a napkin that is the mysterious complement of his blood-smeared engagements. Estella- who is the star and jewel of Pip's great expectations- wears jewels in her hair and on her breast; 'I and the jewels', she says, as

if they were interchangeable. This device of association is a familiar one in fiction; what distinguishes Dickens's use of it is that the associated object acts not merely to illustrate a person's qualities symbolically- as novelists usually use it- but that it has a necessary metaphysical function in Dickens's universe : in this universe objects actually usurp human essences ; beginning as fetishes, they tend to- and sometimes quite literally do- devour and take over the powers of the fetish- worshipper.

### **Use of Coincidences**

It is necessary to view Dickens' 'coincidences' under the aspect of this wholesale change in the aptitudes of external nature. Coincidence is the violent connection of the unconnected. Life is full of violent connections of this sort, but one of the most rigorous conventions of fictional and dramatic art is that events should make a logically sequential pattern; for art is the discovery of order. Critics have frequently deplored Dickens' use of coincidences in his plots. But in a universe that is nervous throughout, a universe in which nervous ganglia stretch through both people and their external environment, so that a change in the human can infect the currents of the air and the sea, events and confrontations that seem to abrogate that the laws of physical mechanics can logically be brought about. In this sense, the apparent coincidences in Dickens actually obey a causal order- not of physical mechanics but of moral dynamics. 'What connection can there be', Dickens asks in another novel, 'between many people in the innumerable histories of this world, who, from opposite sides of great gulfs, have, nevertheless, been very curiously brought together !

---

## **12.3 Symbolism in Great Expectations**

---

### **Symbolic Representations through Plot**

Often it seems that what we call the poetic view of life- the feeling that things somehow hang together and make sense, that we can somehow relate ourselves as a whole of experience- often it seems that the only argument in favour of that view of life is our profound need of it. But Dickens saw a stronger argument, and in *Great Expectations* he advances it as a novelist ought to advance his arguments- by the plot.

The plot of *Great Expectations* is a good one it holds the reader's interest ; it is full of surprises and odd turns; its complexities all come out neatly in the end. But more than that, it is a symbolic representation of Dickens's vision of the moral universe, and the chief characteristic of that vision is that good and evil, what we most desire and what we most loathe, are inextricably intertwined and involved with one another in such a way that no human hand can sort them out.

The plot is resolved through the discovery of a series of surprising relationships, and each of these is a relationship between something loathsome and something desirable. The first of these is the discovery that Pip does not owe his great expectations to the fairy godmother, Miss Havisham but to the ogre, Magwitch. Magwitch has been transported to Australia ; there



he has prospered as a sheep rancher, and he has decided to use his wealth to make a gentleman of the little boy who stole the food and fled for him on the marshes long ago. Pip's rise in the world has not been an act of magic ; it has actually been a reward for theft, for what he regarded as the most shameful deed of his life.

The second great discovery is that Estella, whom Pip has wasted his life in loving, is far from being a princess; she is in fact the illegitimate daughter of Magwitch by the criminal who now serves as Mr Jagger's servant. Miss Havisham is no fairy god mother ; she is a foolish old meddler.

### **Life Represented as an Old Growth**

Life is not, Dickens is showing us symbolically by the plot, a dung-heap in which one can find an occasional jewel to plunge out, as Mr Jaggers supposes. It is an old, old growth : the fairest flower and the most noxious weed have their roots in the same ancient soil. Joe Gargery's view of experience is right because he has grasped this fact- not intellectually, for Joe is no intellectual, but by accepting in love the complexity of the moral universe.

Pip himself represents an impure mixture of the easiest parts of both Joe's and Mr Jaggers's attitudes toward experience.

Actually it is not altogether fair to compare Pip with Joe and Mr Jaggers : they are unchanging, fixed points of reference in the book – so much so that they seem never to age. But Pip changes. When first we meet him he is an innocent little boy. When last we see him he is a man in early middle age, much chastened by experience. The book is essentially an account of Pip's moral education, and in order to understand the nature of that education, we must see Pip's attitude toward experience clearly- in itself, and in relation to Joe's and Mr Jaggers.

### **Joe and Jaggers- Moral Realists**

Joe and Mr. Jaggers have this in common : they are both in some sense moral realists. To be sure, they differ as fundamentally as two men can about what should be dignified with the label of reality, but they are realists in that both accept the consequences of their own views. For Joe this means that, if to follow the demand of his heart, to love and cherish little Pip involves marrying a shrew, then he is ready to pay the price, and he never whines of it afterwards. When Joe realizes that the larks that he and Pip were to share are never going to happen, when he realizes that there is no longer any place for him in Pip's life after Pip has gone to London, he recognizes the situation for what it is ; his love takes on a tragic cast but it remains love. Mr Jaggers is equally steadfast in facing the worst that his own attitude toward life entails : he is a man isolated, cut off from other human being- respected and feared but unloved. But Mr Jaggers can face the worst, unflinching, and recognize it for what it is.

### **Pip- A Fantasist**

Pip differs from both men. He is not a realist; he is a fantasist. He supposes that he can

have the best of both views and the unfavourable consequences of neither. He embraces isolation, as Mr Jaggers does, but he embraces it selectively or, in other words, he becomes a terrible snob. He cuts himself off from his own past- he neglects Joe, he does not go back to the forge, he is ashamed of his blacksmith's arm among the languid or vicious young bloods whose society he cultivates in London. He isolates himself from those who love him, but he does not accept the natural consequence of his action, which is lovelessness. Love is as necessary to Pip as to Joe Gargery, but Pip wants it on his own terms, the terms of fantasy. He can only love the fairy- tale princess, the cold glittering distant star, Estella.

Now Pip is not entirely to be blamed for all this. His early life was fantastic ; his contacts with creatures like Magwitch and Miss Havisham could only encourage the habit of fantasy in him : and then in adolescence to have his wildest dreams realized, to be suddenly transformed from a humble village apprentice to a young Londoner with great expectations- what result could all this have except to make the boy suppose that the world is indeed whatever his fancy would like it to be ? How could he avoid supposing that he was one singularly excused by the gods from facing consequences ?

### **Dickens' Own Fantasy**

Dickens understood the life of the fantasists because he had lived it, and no one who is familiar with the recent scholarship dealing with Dickens' life can doubt that *Great Expectations* is a kind of symbolic autobiography. *David Copperfield* is closer to the facts of Dicken's life, but *Great Expectations* is closer to its spirit. For Dickens, as for Pip, life had "come true" to an extent that even his wild fantasy could hardly have suggested in childhood. As a boy Dickens knew poverty and limitation and social disgrace- his father in debtors' prison, his own experience in the blacking factory. He knew what it was to be "cut off from all the luxury of the world." But he was extraordinarily successful, extraordinarily young, and with the possible exception of Mark Twain, there has probably never been another writer to know such fame in his own life time. The world was at his feet, yet he was afflicted with a passion for a woman who almost certainly did not return his feeling and probably found him simply distasteful. It is useless to speculate how close Estella in *Great Expectations* is to the woman Dicknes loved in the last years of his tempestuous, fame-soaked, unfulfilled life ; the point is simply that in writing the novel Dickens is not "talking down" ; in creating Joe Gargery and Joe Gargery's attitude toward life, he was struggling to save something he needed as much as we do. The novel ends with Pip and Estella reunited at the gate of the ruined Satis House.

### **Pip Back to the Forge**

The healing touch at the end of the novel is not the reunion of Pip and Estella, but Pip's return to the forge. By the time he goes back, his sister, Mrs Joe Gargery, has long since died, and the ageless Joe has married Bidley, the girl whom Pip might once have married had he been free of the myth of his own life. They have a child, a little boy, and they have named him Pip. "And there was I again ! " the old Pip cries to himself. Another generation has come along;

another branch of that ancient vine, the human race, has sprung forth. Its roots are in the tangled dark, as ours are : they will have to learn to live with that fact, as we must : but perhaps, acknowledging the dark, they will do a better job of seeking the light.

In the century since his careere was at its zenith, there have been many Dickneses. There was, for instance, Dickens the defender of hearth and home. That Dickens is not very popular today, partly because of the sentimentality that marks the more domestic private life gives the role a doubtful appropriateness. Then there was Dickens the reformer, the social thinker, the radical. As recently as fifty years ago he was something of a favourite of the Marxist critics, who saw him as very nearly one of their own. Dickens certainly did take a marked interest in the social problems of his time, and he attacked injustice where he found it and as he saw it, bitterly and brilliantly. He was also profoundly conservative ; he loved the old England before the railroads, and was the last great chronicler of the stagecoach, the country inn, the roast beef of Old England. As for any programme of reform he might have envisioned, as George Orwell has pointed out, it hardly amounted to more than this ; that we should all behave better as indeed we should.

The Dickens we have tried to sketch is a kind of symbolist poet, a man with a sweeping vision of the fundamental relateness that underlies the surface fragmentation of human life, a man with the insight to see to the moral and psychological consequence of that vision, and a man with the power of imagination to set it forth in a vivid, wildly fantastic, yet deeply controlled narrative.

---

## 12.4 Some General Observations

---

In some of his novels Dickens' primary objective was to reveal the existence of certain social evils. Thus, *Nicholas Nickleby*, in part, pictured the abuses in some of the boarding-schools of the day, *Oliver Twist* revealed the horrors of the operation of the Poor Law, while *Bleak House* was an attack on the workings of the legal system in general.

The story itself, however, is uppermost in *Great Expectations*, and the author's didacticism is of secondary importance. Nevertheless, at least three moral purposes can be distinguished –

The deceptive lure of money: the influence of money on human behaviour pervades the entire stroy. Magwitch devotes part of his wealth to making Pip a gentlemen, and Pip himself is at first unable to cope with such unexpected affluence, getting into debt and leading his friend Herbert along the same path. Miss Havisham's relations (Matthew Pocket and his family excepted) have greedy hopes of enriching themselves at her expense. Pumblechook and Trabb, as Pip discovers, treat people according to their wealth, and Compeyson's whole criminal career was bound up with the lure of money.

The fascination of false gentility : Dickens – mainly through Pip's behaviour – tries to demonstrate how misleading it is to be taken in by superficial appearance. As a poor, or-

phaned boy, Pip is made aware of his own humble surroundings and coarse breeding by what he sees at Satis House. For Estella's sake he longs to become a "gentleman", and when he eventually does manage to improve himself and to become a part of fashionable London society, the author accomplishes this transformation by resting Pip's fortunes on the sentimental whims of an ex-convict !

The essence of true gentlemanliness : in contrast to the hollowness of such false gentility, Dickens sets the positive virtues of true decency through his portrayal of Joe Gargery (who in many ways is the story's real hero ). The village blacksmith, although he lacks "breeding", education, and the social graces, behaves without malice and displays natural instincts of patience, tactfulness, and loyalty towards Pip- in spite of the latter's selfish and snobbish behaviour. In Joe, the author implies, are to be found the true virtues of decency.

### **The Interweaving Of Sadness And Joy**

Dickens depicts Pip's feelings for Estella in sombre hue. In none of his earlier novels had he portrayed a man's love for a woman with such emotional depth. Pip's love is without tenderness, without illusion ; it reveals no desire to confer happiness upon the beloved.

Thus, in love, too Pip's "great expectations" are disappointed and deceived and ideally the story should have ended with that loss, as the author originally planned. Pip's love for Estella is as selfish as his desire to be a gentleman. It is the culminating symbol of society dedicated to selfish ends. Yet, Pip is not altogether selfish, and by the end of the story he has learnt from his experiences to think of others and to act generously. But instead of Pip and Estella bidding each other a chastened farewell, Dickens was induced to tack on the addition of a belated marriage to Estella.

Nevertheless, in spite of its theme of disillusion, *Great Expectations* is not a melancholy book, and there are many scenes of high- spirited enjoyment and comic gusto.

For example, there is young Pip's flight into a series of fantastic lies when Pumblechook is badgering him to tell what happened during his first visit to Satis House and he invents a picture of Miss Havisham sitting in a black velvet coach having cake and wine on gold plates while they feed veal cutlets from a silver basket to four large dogs, wave flags, and shout hurrahs (Ch. ix). There is Mr. Wopsle's famous performance of Hamlet, with the Danish nobility represented by "a noble boy in the wash-leather boots of a gigantic ancestor ....." (Ch. xxxi). There is Trabb's boy imitating Pip's progress down the High Street by pulling up his shirt collar, smirking extravagantly, and drawling, "Don't know yah, don't know yah, 'pon my soul don't know yah!" (Ch. xxx). And there is Joe's description of how the robbers looted Pumblechook's shop : "and they dranked his wine, and they partook of his wittless, and they slapped his face, and they pulled his nose, and they tied him up to his bed- post, and they giv' him a dozen, and they stuffed his mouth full of flowering annuals to perwent his crying out" (Ch. 1 vii).

These joyous moments, however, do not undermine the predominant seriousness of *Great Expectations* and its theme. And Dickens' analysis of the frivolity, falseness, emptiness, and sense of futility experienced by Pip is a measure of the general corruption which he saw in society. On a smaller scale, this same judgment is conveyed in his portrayal of Jaggers, who specializes in representing accused criminals, whose unsavoury cases he handles with the most unscrupulous and triumphant skill. But with the departure of every felonious visitor he goes to a closet and cleans his hands with scented soap, as if he were washing off the client. Though Jaggers is a highly successful and respected professional man, his own sense of the necessities his life imposes on him is one of degradation and pollution. Its consequence is to force upon a man of any sensitivity a dual personality. and this is again brought out in the portrayal of Wemmick, who dwells in the kindest domestic affection at Walworth but in the office "his mouth is a dry slit like a mailbox" (Ch. xxxvi).

### **The Importance Of Redemption**

According to Bernard Shaw, "Pip, like his creator, has no religion... Pip never prays, and church means nothing to him but Mr Wopsle's orotundity". Moreover, Shaw believed that Dickens was a revolutionary who regarded the existing social order as "transitory, mistaken, objectionable, and pathological : a social disease to be cured".

It is perfectly true, of course (as suggested above), that *Great Expectations* is a searching study of a society dominated by cash values. Pip believes that money will do anything: it will make a gentleman of him and give him Estella. It enables Miss Havisham to torment her relatives and to train Estella so that she may have her revenge. Even Wemmick wants portable property.

Yet Dickens stresses that it is not money as such but the love of money which is at the root of evil in society. And Pip is redeemed by his generosity to Herbert through secretly buying him a partnership. The author raises no moral objection to Matthew Pocket's inheriting 4,000 from Miss Havisham. (Some characters, like Compeyson and Orlick, are irredeemable criminals by nature ; others, like Magwitch, are unfortunate, and need forgiveness rather than justice). But the whole point of Pip's progress is that it is not determined by the faults of society, and that in the end he comes to know when he is doing wrong and tries to do what is right.

Thus, while there may be little formal religion in the story, the emphasis throughout is on the virtues of charity and love. In the interview just before she meets her death, Miss Havisham begs Pip to forgive her ; even Magwitch in the end believes he has received his "sentence of death from the Almighty". while, throughout the last stage of his expectations, Pip grows more and more to realize how much everyone is in need of redemption, and begs Joe and Biddy, "as you have been to church today, and are in charity and love with all mankind", to forget his past faults and to forgive him.

---

## 12.5 Let Us Sum Up

---

In this unit we have presented to you:

- Sketches of major and minor characters in *Great Expectations*.
- A detailed discussion on *Great Expectations* as a fairy tale.
- Some general observations, such as Dickens' didactic aims, the interweaving of sadness and joy, the importance of redemption.

---

## 12.6 Review Questions

---

1. Do you think that *Great Expectations* is a novel based on fantasy? Discuss.
2. Discuss the symbolic devices employed by Dickens in *Great Expectations*.
3. Draw a character sketch of each of the following :-  
(a) Pip                      (b) Estella                      (c) Miss Havisham
4. Discuss Dickens' didactic aims in writing *Great Expectations*.

---

## 12.7 Bibliography

---

1. A. W. Collins                      : Dickens and crime (1962)
  2. George Bernard Shaw : "Preface" *Great Expectations*.
  3. J. Hillis Miller                      : Charles Dickens : The World of his Novel
  4. John Linderg                      : Individual Conscience and Social Injustice in Great Expectations College English X XIII (1961)
-

## UNIT-13

---

### GEORGE ELIOT: *SILAS MARNER*

---

#### Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 About the Author and The Age
- 13.3 The Story of the novel *Silas Marner* in brief
- 13.4 Analysis of the text
  - 13.4.1 Plot and Structure
  - 13.4.2 Technique
  - 13.4.3 Characterization
  - 13.4.4 Themes
  - 13.4.5 Symbolism
- 13.5 *Silas Marner*: A Concrete Work of Transition
- 13.6 Major/Minor Characters
  - 13.6.1 *Silas Marner*
  - 13.6.2 Nancy Lammeter
  - 13.6.3 Eppie
  - 13.6.4 Godfrey Cass
  - 13.6.5 Dunstan Cass
  - 13.6.6 Dolly Winthrop
  - 13.6.7 The Choral Characters
- 13.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.8 Review Questions
- 13.9 Bibliography

---

#### **13.0 Objectives**

---

The main objectives of this unit are:

- That the student should have read, with care and understanding, this representative work of one of the major novelists of the Victorian Age in England i.e. *George Eliot*.
- That the student should be able to give an account of the history of English novel in the Victorian period especially with reference to George Eliot's *Silas Marner*.
- That the student should be able to identify and explain major events of English history and major literary and social issues relevant to the development of fiction-writing in the Victorian Period.
- That the student should be able to demonstrate familiarity with the bibliographic tools and resources appropriate to the study of novels in Nineteenth Century England and of the novelist cited above, and to apply these tools and resources to literary research.
- That the student should be able to demonstrate capacity to develop critical analyses of novels from Nineteenth Century England in the context of established critical approaches.
- That the student should be able to recognize, identify, and use accurately literary terms and concepts applicable to English novel in the Nineteenth Century, and to understand and apply appropriate literary conventions.
- That the student should be able to express insights which relate his readings of the critical composition to fundamental questions of human behavior and value, and to contemporary thought.

---

### 13.1 Introduction

---

This unit based on *George Eliot's Silas Marner*, has been written with an aim to provide to the student, the knowledge of certain aspects of the writings of the novelist who was a leading exponent of her time. The student of English Literature rejoice in knowing about the author and her age because there is a lot of intellectual, political and social significance attached to the author and her age. An attempt has been made to analyze George Eliot as a novelist and a comparison with her contemporaries has been incorporated to ascertain the actual position of the writer during her own time.

The text dealt with here is the famous work, "*Silas Marner*" which was written and published in 1861 The background and analytical aspect of this work has been attempted to draw the attention of the reader to certain facts and factors, hitherto unknown and unrecognized. Copious critical notes have been provided for the sake of reference to enable the students to comprehend the background to this work, its historical significance and its current impact on the contemporary readers as well as those of the after-times. Questions have been framed for the students to review their comprehension of the subject matter which they are expected to do on their own by referring to the given text. They are also advised to take the help of books which have been mentioned in the bibliography section along with the list of reference books. The list of works by the author published during her lifetime and those of



critics published posthumously will add to the knowledge of the students.

---

## 13.2 About the Author and The Age

---

*George Eliot* was the pen name of Mary Ann (later Marian) Evans, who was born in a country house at Nuneaton, Warwickshire, in 1819. Mary, and her sister, went to two boarding schools for girls, where she was very much impressed by evangelical Christianity. Miss Lewis, the principal of the second of these schools, was especially significant for her. Under these circumstances Mary Ann adopted the religious devotion and self-repression that dominated her youth.

Her mother died quite early and her sister got married in 1837. At this time Evans took charge of her father's household. In 1841, they moved to a house near Coventry. With the passage of time, she matured and her religious beliefs changed. Also, her friends shook her faith in Christianity. She soon reached a point where she felt that she could no longer attend church in good faith. Her father refused to live with her on those terms, and she went to her brother for three weeks. A re-union between the father and daughter was arranged by her brother and her friends, and she agreed to resume church attendance and returned to her father. However, her rejection of all religious doctrine was complete, and she remained a nonbeliever until her death.

In spite of the ups and downs of life, Evans had continued her studies of Italian, German, Greek, and Latin. Her first published work was a translation of *Das Leben Jesu* ("The Life of Jesus") by the German theologian David Strauss. She also contributed articles and reviews to a periodical edited by her friend Charles Bray. Her father eventually died in 1849. After his death, she moved to London and became assistant editor of the *Westminster Review*, a liberal periodical. In London, she met George Henry Lewes a professional drama critic and man of letters, actor, and author of a history of philosophy. She was strongly attracted towards him and fell in love with him. Lewes was married, but his wife had deserted him. However, there was no chance of a legal divorce. In 1854, Lewes and Evans sailed together to Germany, and from that time they lived together as man and wife until his death in 1878. Such unconventional union at first made them social outcasts, but when it became obvious that this was not a reckless affair, they were accepted by their friends and society as a married couple. After the death of Lewes, Evans married, in 1880, an old friend, the American banker J. W. Cross. But this was a short termed episode of her life. Soon after, on December 22, 1880, George Eliot died.

Lewes' back-up had much to do with George Eliot's career as a writer of fiction, which began with the publication of three stories in *Blackwood's Magazine*. These were published together in 1858 as *Scenes of Clerical Life*. *Adam Bede*, published in 1859, brought her instantaneous success. It was followed by *The Lifted Veil* in 1859, and her first great novel, *The Mill on the Floss*, in 1860. *Silas Marner* appeared in 1861. Her later works include *Romola* (1862-63); *Felix Holt* (1866); *The Spanish Gypsy* (1868),

which is a drama in blank verse; a volume of verses, *The Legend of Jubal and other Poems* (1874); and a volume of essays, *The Impressions of Theophrastus Such*. The novel which is considered to be her masterpiece is *Middlemarch*, which was published in 1871-72.

The three famous novels—*Silas Marner*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Adam Bede* form a distinct group of novels that make use of childhood reminiscences and the rural world Eliot knew in Warwickshire. Eliot said that *Silas Marner* came to her “first of all, quite suddenly, as a sort of legendary tale suggested by my recollection of having once, in early childhood, seen a linen-weaver with a bag on his back.” The novel also includes other aspects of her childhood as well, including her comprehension of both Anglican worship and the more enthusiastic and passionate forms of Christianity.

‘Eliot has confessed that the idea of the story of *Silas Marner* occurred to her in her very childhood, but, the story took the final shape in the mind of a grown-up and highly intellectual woman, and it represents the attitude of her adulthood. Two ideas that are expressed in Eliot’s letters of about this time are that “the idea of God . . . is the ideal of a goodness entirely human,” and that “no man can begin to mould himself on a faith or an idea without rising to a higher order of experience.” Eliot held strongly that there was an inevitable interdependence of humankind, and in all her novels she is greatly concerned to discover what might be considered good and what bad in social associations and relationships. *Silas Marner* is no exception. Eliot said of the book: “it sets—or is intended to set—in a strong light the remedial influences of pure, natural human relations.” It implies that the great work of fiction concerned here, was also a matter of concern for her and she had a very clear idea of what she was writing.

### **About the Age**

Victorian literature is the literature produced during the reign of Queen Victoria which was from 1837 to 1901. It forms a connection and transition between the writers of the romantic period and the very different literature of the 20th century. In the 19th century, the novel became the leading form of literature in English. The writings by pre-Victorian writers like Jane Austen and Walter Scott had perfected both closely-observed social satire and adventure stories. Popular works opened a market for the novel amongst a reading public

. The 19th century is often regarded as a high point in British literature as well as in other countries such as France, the United States of America and Russia. Books, and novels in particular, became omnipresent, and the “Victorian novelist” created heritage works with continuing command. Significant Victorian novelists and poets generally read are: the Brontë sisters, (Anne, Emily and Charlotte Brontë), Robert Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Lewis Carroll, Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, Benjamin Disraeli, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Gissing, Thomas Hardy, A. E. Housman, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, Bram Stoker, Philip Meadows Taylor, Lord Alfred Tennyson

In this unit, we are basically concerned with George Eliot, but, it is advisable for the scholars to take a view of the age in which *Silas Marner* was written and become familiar with the other great novelists of this period along with George Eliot. Charles Dickens exemplifies the Victorian novelist better than any other writer. He was extremely popular in his day with his characters taking on a life of their own beyond the page. Even today, Dickens is the most popular and read author of the time. His first real novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, written at only twenty-five, was an overnight success, and all his subsequent works sold extremely well. He was in effect a self-made man who worked conscientiously and effectively to produce exactly what the public wanted. He also reacted to the public taste by changing the plot direction of his stories between monthly numbers. The comedy of his first novel has a satirical edge which pervades his writings. These deal with the plight of the poor and oppressed and end with a ghost story cut short by his death. The slow trend in his fiction towards darker themes is mirrored in much of the writing of the century, and literature after his death in 1870 is remarkably diverse from that at the start of the period.

The name of William Thackeray, who was Dickens' great competitor at the time, is also of significance for the students. He had an analogous style but a slightly more disconnected, sharp and pointed satirical view of his characters. With this he also tended to give a picture of situations of a more middle class flavour than Dickens. He became particularly famous for his novel *Vanity Fair*, subtitled *A Novel without a Hero*, which is also an example of a form popular in Victorian literature: the historical novel, in which very recent history is illustrated.

In contrast to the above two novelists, Anthony Trollope tended to write about a slightly different part of the social structure, namely the landowning and professional classes. The Brontë sisters wrote fiction rather different from that common at the time. Away from the big cities and the literary society, Haworth in West Yorkshire held a powerhouse of novel writing: the home of the Brontë family. These three sisters: Anne, Charlotte and Emily Brontë produced masterpieces of fiction although these were not instantaneously cherished by Victorian critics. *Wuthering Heights*, Emily's only work, in particular has violence, passion, the supernatural, heightened emotion and emotional distance, an extraordinary jumble for any novel, predominantly at this time. It is a prime illustration of Gothic Romanticism from a woman's point of view during this period of time, which explored class, fabrication, myth, and gender.

Another important writer of the period was George Eliot, a pseudonym which masked a woman, Mary Ann Evans, who wished to write novels which would be taken seriously rather than the romances which women of the time were supposed to write. With this type of attitude for novel-writing, Eliot emerged as a prominent novelist of the Victorian age. The style of the Victorian novelists is also noteworthy. Virginia Woolf in her series of essays *The Common Reader* called George Eliot's *Middlemarch* "one of the few English novels written for grown-up people". This appreciation is a fair comment on the fiction of the Victorian Era. Influenced as they were by the large sprawling novels of deep feelings of the previous age, they tended to

be idealized portraits of difficult lives in which hard work, determination, adoration and providence win out in the end; virtue would be rewarded and wrong-doers are rightfully punished. They tended to be of an improving nature with a central moral lesson at heart, informing the reader how to be a good Victorian. This formula was the basis for much of earlier Victorian fiction but as the century progressed the plot thickened and many changes occurred in the style of the novels.

Eliot in particular strove for pragmatism or realism in her fiction and tried to banish the picturesque and the extravaganza from her work. Another woman writer Elizabeth Gaskell wrote even grimmer, grittier books about the poor in the north of England but even these usually had happy endings. After the death of Dickens in 1870 happy endings became rare. Such a major literary figure as Charles Dickens tended to stipulate the direction of all literature of the era, because he edited *All the Year Round* a literary journal of the time. His fondness for a happy ending with all the loose ends neatly tied up is clear and although he is well known for writing about the lives of the poor they are sentimentalized live pictures which have been set within acceptable limits for people of character to read; to be shocked but not disgusted.

These changes in style in Victorian fiction was slow coming but clear by the end of the century, with the publications in the 1880s and 90s more down-to-earth and often of a grim nature. Even writers of the high Victorian age were taken to task for their plots showing aggression towards the conventions of the day with *Adam Bede* being called “the vile outpourings of a lewd woman’s mind” and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* “utterly unfit to be put into the hands of girls”.

The repulsion of the readers reached its climax with Thomas Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* which was set afire by an infuriated bishop of Wakefield. The cause of such annoyance was Hardy’s frank treatment of sex, religion and his ignorance for the subject of marriage; a subject close to the Victorians’ heart, with the customary plot of the Victorian novel sometimes being described as a search for a correct marriage Hardy had started his career as a safe novelist writing rustic scenes of rural life but his estrangement with some of the institutions of Victorian Britain was an underlying sorrow for the changing nature of the English countryside. The antagonistic response to *Jude* in 1895 should have declared the end of his career as a novelist, but he continued writing poetry into the mid 1920s.

Many writers such as Samuel Butler and George Gissing confronted their antipathies to certain aspects of marriage, religion or Victorian morality and peppered their fiction with notorious anti-heroes. Butler’s *Erewhon*, is a utopian novel satirizing many aspects of Victorian society with Butler’s particular dislike of the religious hypocrisy attracting disparagement and being shown as “Musical Banks”. Whilst many great writers were at work at the time, the large numbers of insatiable but unsuspecting readers meant that poor writers, producing scandalous and shockingly colorful novels found ready audiences. Many of the faults common to much better writers were used abundantly by writers who are almost forgotten today. These faults were: over-sentimentality, improbable plots and moralizing obscuring the story. Edward

Bulwer-Lytton, who was extremely popular in his time, is now held up as an example of the very worst of Victorian literature with his sensationalist story-lines and his over-boiled style of prose. Other writers popular at the time but largely forgotten now are: Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Charlotte Mary Yonge, Charles Kingsley, and R. D. Blackmore.

---

### **13.3 The Story Of The Novel Silas Marner In Brief**

---

The story of the novel is located in the village of Raveloe. Here lives the hero of the novel- a weaver named Silas Marner. The local people look upon him with suspicion because he comes from a remote part of the country. Another important factor is that he lives completely alone, and he has been known to have strange hysterics. For fifteen years he has lived like this.

Fifteen years earlier, Silas was an esteemed member of a church at Lantern Yard in a city to the north. His hysterical fits were considered there as a mark of extraordinary intimacy to the Holy Spirit. He had a close friend named William Dane, and he was engaged to marry a serving girl named Sarah. But one day the elder deacon fell ill and had to be looked after round the clock by members of the congregation and the parishioners, as he was a childless as well as a widower there was no one else to take care of him during his days of ill health. During Silas' watch, a bag of money disappears from a drawer by the deacon's bed. The condition becomes worse when Silas' knife is found in the drawer, but Silas swears he is innocent and asks that his room be searched. The empty bag is found there by William Dane. Then Silas remembers that he last used the knife to cut a strap for William, but he says nothing to the others. Naturally, everybody suspects him of theft.

To confirm the truth, the church members take the help of prayer and drawing of lots, and the lots declare Silas guilty. Silas feels that he has been cheated by his friend and now by his God. In this desperate condition he declares that there is no just God. He is sure that Sarah too will walk out on him; therefore he takes refuge in his work. He soon receives a message from Sarah that their engagement is ended, and a month later he gets a more severe blow when she marries William Dane. Silas is frustrated by the turn of events in his life and leaves Lantern Yard. He settles in Raveloe, where he feels he is out of sight even from God. His work is at first his only consolation, but soon he begins to receive gold for his cloth. When the whole world has turned its back on him, the gold gives him a kind of camaraderie. He works harder and harder to earn more of it and stores it in a bag beneath his floor. His contacts with humanity become weak. Once he gives help to a woman who is ill by treating her with herbs as his mother taught him, but this action gives him a reputation as a maker of charms. People throng him to ask his help, but he cannot give any. Consequently he is believed to cause other misfortunes and be in association with the evil spirit. Now, Silas is more alone than ever.

The most prominent person of Raveloe is Squire Cass. His wife died some time ago, and his sons are left to take care of themselves. Because of their unguarded state and lack of judgement, the sons get entangled in certain problematic situations: the eldest son, Godfrey,

has made a hasty marriage with a woman of poor reputation, and the second son, Dunstan, is blackmailing Godfrey to keep this secret from their father. Godfrey has given Dunstan some rent money from one of his father's tenants; now the Squire wants the money, so Godfrey gives Dunstan his horse to sell to raise the cash.

Dunstan passes the cottage of Silas on the way to the hunt where he hopes to sell the horse. This sight gives him the idea of borrowing the money from Marner, but he rather likes the idea of annoying his brother, so he continues to the hunt and makes the sale. However, instead of turning over the horse at once, he rides in the chase and kills the animal on a stake. Desperately, Dunstan begins to walk home. It becomes dark and foggy before he can reach there, and in the darkness he comes to Marner's cottage. Dunstan goes there to borrow a lantern and to try to get some money out of the weaver. He finds the cottage empty. Searching around the floor, he soon finds where the money is hidden. He replaces the bricks that had covered it and carries the money away.

As time has passed by, Silas has poor eyesight, and on his return he finds nothing wrong until he goes to take out his money to count it. To his utter surprise he fails to find it, he feels that once again he has been robbed by an unseen power. However, he clings to the hope that there was a human thief, and he goes off to the village inn to find the constable. At the inn, the tête-à-tête has been of ghosts, and when Silas bursts in he himself is for a moment taken for a ghost. But Silas is so worked up that it is noticeable he is no ghost, and when he tells of the robbery, all the inmates have sympathy for him. His helplessness removes any feeling that he is connected with the devil. Some of the men set out after the constable.

The news of the robbery spreads like wildfire, and there is soon general conformity that the thief must have been a wandering peddler who had been in the neighborhood: no other stranger has been noticed, and no local person could be suspected. Dunstan's disappearance is not thought strange because that has happened before. Godfrey is not surprised either, for he soon learns that Dunstan has killed his horse. Finally, he decides to tell his father of his marriage. He tries to weave the story by telling of his horse and of the rent money that he had given to Dunstan; but he gets no farther, for his father is furious with anger, which leaves Godfrey in a worse position than ever. There is a change for Silas who is now treated with some kindness by his neighbors. Dolly Winthrop, tries to persuade him into attending church, at least on Christmas. However, Silas finds no connection between local religious customs and those he knows of, and Christmas finds him at home as usual. There is no evident change in Silas.

Christmas and New Year are the time of special festivals in Raveloe. The most important merriment is the New Year's dance at Squire Cass' home. There, Godfrey is unable to keep himself away from Nancy Lammeter, the girl he has always wished-for to marry. He knows very well that it is wrong, and that the news of his marriage must come out soon, he thinks there is no harm in enjoying himself with Nancy while he can. We see that Nancy also wants to marry Godfrey, but his strange behaviour has made her insensitive towards him and

when he asks her pardon, she replies that she will be glad to see anyone improve and give up all conceited ways. On the other hand, Godfrey's wife, Molly, has decided to revenge herself for his ill-treatment of her, and she sets out with their child to meet him at the dance.

Coincidentally, she loses her way in the snow, and at last she fortifies herself with opium, to which she has become captivated. The opium only makes her more sleepy, and Molly sinks down in the snow. Her child slips from her arms and is innocently attracted to a radiance that comes from the open door of Marner's cottage, where he stands, unaware of the child's presence. He has been looking out to see if his money might return and has been stricken by one of his hysterics. When he gains consciousness, he sees gold by his hearth and thinks his money has come back, but on taking a closer look, he discovers that the gold is the hair of a child. At last he overcomes his wonder enough to realize that the child has come in out of the snow, and there outside he discovers Molly's body. He is utterly surprised to see all this. He takes the child and hurries to Squire Cass' house to get the help of a doctor for this desperate child. This causes Godfrey both terror and optimism because he recognizes that the child is his own, and he hopes that he may be free at last. He goes with Doctor Kimble and finds that the woman Marner found is indeed his wife and that she is dead.

Molly is buried that week as a stranger to everyone. Godfrey does not disclose his relation to the woman who is buried as a stranger. Silas feels that the child has been sent to him by Providence, and he is resolute to keep it. This determination causes even warmer feeling for him in Raveloe, and he is given much well-meant advice. Dolly Winthrop gives him real aid with the child and offers some old clothes that belonged to her son Aaron. Godfrey is very happy to see that his daughter is being cared for. He offers financial support but never declares that he is the father of this mysterious child.

Silas names the child Hepzibah or Eppie for short after his mother and little sister. He is very happy to realize that, unlike his gold, Eppie makes him constantly aware of the world and of other men. He gives her his unconditional love, and everywhere he finds kindness from the other villagers. In this manner, he gains a very positive image in the neighbourhood. Sixteen years pass. Nancy and Godfrey are married, and Eppie has grown into a beautiful young woman. Silas is liked and appreciated in Raveloe. His life with Eppie has been close and happy with the cordial assistance of Mr. and Mrs. Cass. Eppie treats Dolly Winthrop as her godmother, and she is a close friend of Silas. The two of them have discussed his old problem at Lantern Yard and considered the great differences in religion between the two places.

Dolly's son Aaron is interested in marrying Eppie, and Eppie has agreed on the condition that Silas will live with them. She has been told of her mother, but she knows nothing of any other man who could possibly be her father, and she cannot bear to be parted from Silas. Godfrey and Nancy are childless. Their one child died in infancy. This state of childlessness is a great dilemma for Godfrey because he has always wanted children. He wanted to adopt Eppie, but Nancy did not agree, feeling that it would be going against Providence to adopt a child when none was given naturally. Nancy, however, has tried to compensate for this defi-

ciency to Godfrey in other ways, and their marriage has been happy but for this single reason Godfrey was afraid to tell her that Eppie was his own child.

Then comes a particular Sunday, Nancy is thinking over the old problems of her life when Godfrey becomes very much distressed. It so happened that the Stone Pits near Marner's cottage are being drained, and Dunstan's body has been found there with Silas' gold. Now Godfrey is forced to tell Nancy that his brother was a robber. Moreover, his newfound honesty convinces him that all truths come out sooner or later, and he admits that Eppie is his own child. Nancy's reaction is that of a noble soul. Instead of being dismayed with him, Nancy is sorry that she refused to adopt Eppie sooner. The two of them go that night to Marner's cottage to claim Eppie. The girl however, does not wish to be claimed. Both she and Silas feel that no claim of blood can outweigh their years of life together. She does not want to leave Silas nor to be rescued from her low station and the prospect of marriage to a workingman. Godfrey returns empty-handed and bitterly disappointed. He realizes that he is being punished now for his earlier sins, but he is determined to try to fulfill his duty at last and to do all he can for Eppie even though she has refused to accept his paternal authority.

Silas feels able to return to Lantern Yard to try to settle the matter of the old theft because he has his own gold in hand that was stolen by Dunstan. He goes there with Eppie, but they find everything changed. The chapel is no more there because a factory has been set in its place. Only the prison is left to remind Silas that this was where he once lived. He returns home no wiser than when he set out. He shares his views with Dolly that there is reason to have faith in spite of the darkness of the past and one always finds a ray of hope somewhere in the dark.

On a fine sunny and auspicious day, Eppie and Aaron are married. with the wedding at Mr. Cass' expense. The young couple comes to live with Silas at his cottage, where the villagers join in harmony that Silas has been consecrated through his kindness to an orphaned child. All the characters are happy with their lot.

---

## **13.4 Analysis of the text**

---

### **13.4.1 Plot and Structure**

The story of the novel covers a long span of time, which covers over thirty years. This time has been concentrated into three relatively short periods. The first of these, the time on which the story opens, shows Silas living his lonely existence at Raveloe. This period is followed by a flashback to the time fifteen years earlier when the hero was driven from Lantern Yard. The time then skips quickly back to its original point, settling on a November afternoon. The proceedings between this time and New Year's time take up the first part of the story, although the storyteller briefly mentions some events that follow as Silas begins to raise Eppie.

A long span of sixteen years is then jumped over, and the results of the early events are seen. The in-between years are filled in mostly by the narrator or by dialogues between char-



acters. There are only a few spectacular portrayals of proceedings during those years, for example, the consideration between Godfrey and Nancy regarding the adoption of Eppie. After the past is updated, the time remains at the same Sunday on which this portion of the story opened, until the main plot considerations are disposed of. These are: Dunstan's disappearance, Godfrey's paternal bondage to Eppie, and the shape of Eppie's future. Some incidents occur after that like: Silas goes to Lantern Yard a few days later to settle the old accounts that had marred his reputation, and still later Eppie is married, but they are dealt with in very short descriptions. The three times on which Eliot focuses mainly contain five main events: the Lantern Yard robbery, the theft of Silas' gold, the death of Molly which also implies the arrival of Eppie in the life of Silas, the return of Silas' gold, and Godfrey's endeavor to claim his daughter.

Reflection of these basic dealings gives a broad view of the composition of *Silas Marner*. They are all inter-related, either in the mind of one or more characters, or by cause-and-effect. The last four events of the novel fall into pairs: the theft of the gold and the coming of Eppie in its place; the return of the gold and Godfrey's claim on Eppie. The first two are not related in fact, as the reader knows, but Silas and the other residents of Raveloe consider them to be a kind of cause-and-effect, which gives rise to a symbolic relationship between them. The latter pair is related strictly through their cause which is the discovery of Dunstan's body with the gold leads Godfrey to confess that he is Eppie's father. But the symbolic relationship that has been recognized carries over from the earlier period. The first event, the robbery at Lantern Yard, is of course the circumlocutory cause of the rest, for it sends Silas to Raveloe, but it also provides the basis for Silas' reactions at the time of the second robbery, it causes his feeling of being plagued by a hidden supremacy. As such, it is responsible for the figurative values of later dealings.

There are two plots in *Silas Marner*: Silas' denunciation of humanity and his emancipation, and the plot involving Godfrey and his two wives. The two plots are closely related. In the beginning, there is little correlation between them, but by the end of the tale they are inseparable. A quick look at the events outlined above shows how this happens. The structure of the story might be thought of as a cone, with Godfrey and Silas on opposite sides at first but gradually being carried by events into the same course as if they were contents flowing at different ends in a funnel, but finally flowing through the same channel. There are many similarities between their lives. At first these parallel events are distant, but they come closer and closer until at last they join. For instance, Godfrey is cheated by Dunstan as Silas was cheated by William Dane. Godfrey has two wives to correspond to Silas' two treasures; in both cases, the first is the cause of their devastation, and the second is the source of their deliverance. Their first real association is the gold: Dunstan is trying to obtain money by threat from Godfrey, and when he fails to get it, he steals it from Silas. Eppie comes to substitute the gold, and she is the second and far closer relationship between Silas and Godfrey. Godfrey is her real father, but Silas becomes like a father to her and eventually the girl loves him more than her biological father. What's more, the event that brings Eppie to Silas is looked on as God's approval by

both Silas and Godfrey, for it frees Godfrey to marry Nancy.

It is also noticeable that the meanings of the novel and its figurative standards or symbolic values are completely bound up in the contrasts and comparisons between these two plots. The nature of a “blessing,” the meaning of good and bad in relation to social conduct, these and other problems become involved in the working out of events. Godfrey and Silas are not the only persons involved in these events. Their lives are linked most of all through the society in which they live. The community of Raveloe is a mediator of their acts as well as a spectator and commentator. When Silas discovers the robbery, he reports it to the Rainbow, and Godfrey hears of it from there. A cross-section of the neighborhood is present to receive the news of Molly’s death. Eppie provides a relating link not only between Godfrey and Silas, but between Silas and the society as well. Communal opinion is never the final power in the novel; Eliot often treats it sarcastically; but it is an important factor in the lives of the major characters and in the implementation of the plot.

### **13.4.2 Technique**

It was a literary trend in the days of Eliot to use an omniscient point of view, which means that the novelist views the action from any point she finds suitable, whether from the narrator’s perspective, as a disinterested bystander might see it at a glance, or as seen or felt by any character existing in the fabric of the story. This viewpoint has many benefits, and it is well-matched to Eliot’s proficiency as a novelist. This technique enables her to depict what any character thinks or feels and to show an act and its after-effects with great richness of expression. Eliot uses this technique to increase the reader’s consideration and understanding of characters and of the situations they find themselves in. It also allows better control of the reader’s alertness, which is the main foundation of the irony so important in Eliot’s novels.

In the way the events are exposed, we see that the reader generally knows more than any single character, for instance, about Godfrey’s secret marriage and that Dunstan is the thief, whose single act of theft matters a lot in moulding the events of the story; and this superior knowledge lends ironic humor to the things the characters think and do in their unawareness. Nevertheless, the reader is not told everything outright. The news of Dunstan’s death is perhaps less of a surprise than to Godfrey, but it has never been a certainty. This allows the reader to feel something of the shock that Godfrey must experience at that instant.

### **13.4.3 Characterization**

George Eliot’s art of characterization is par excellence. The distinction of her categorization depends partly on this omniscience, but the most significant feature is Eliot’s deep understanding of human psychology. She presents her prominent characters in great

depth. Their roles and reactions are varied: they are capable of astounding, yet they never seem illogical. If we analyze their actions and reactions, we find that the reactions which seemed surprising in them are consistent with their previous actions. They do not remain stagnant, but their expansion builds on the past. Let us take the example of Silas. His faith in God goes through a series of developments that are related to his past happenings. Throughout all these changes, he invariably clings to some sort of support: his church, his work, his gold, or his daughter. It is noteworthy that his character shows both change and constancy, and this makes him noticeably the same person even as he changes. His character does not merely change, rather, it develops.

Eliot's style allows her to use several aids to determine the characterization of her novels. The omniscient standpoint sometimes does this by giving the reaction of an unbiased observer, a person whom the reader will accept as true. The Miss Gunns find Nancy charming; and since they are neutral toward her, the reader readily and believingly accept their view.

Another important mechanism of influence is metaphor, which is expected to go unnoticed by the reader, but which has an ever-increasing effect. In the initial chapters, Silas is compared to a spider in a number of ways, and this "insect-like existence" provides authenticity to the withering of his humanity.

A third tool of characterization is speech. The characters do not all talk alike. Squire Cass' speech is coarse but influential. Priscilla sounds almost like a man and it is evident that she is trying to fill a man's place. All of the characters with the exception of Godfrey speak a bucolic dialect, but it is more pronounced when Eliot is calling attention to the narrow-mindedness of the community, as can be seen at the gathering at the Rainbow. Godfrey's speech is always more refined than his neighbors' or his father's, demonstrating that he is trying to hold himself above a life of "conviviality and condescension." The way the characters have been moulded throughout the story to suit the requirement of the events is remarkable. More information about the individual characters can be had from the Glossary section that follows in this unit.

#### **13.4.4 Themes**

The most significant theme of *Silas Marner* is the power of "pure, natural human relationships". There are a number of other minor themes as well. Some of these never occur as a direct statement, but are brought to the forefront by constant repetition. One of these themes is the function of religion in society. Another is the use of custom and tradition. There is a more direct consideration, focused on Nancy, of the extent to which "principle" should predominate over sympathy in human relationships. This is closely connected to the question of luxury versus restraint in human life, as illustrated by the home life of Godfrey and Nancy as a couple.

Sometimes the theme is indirect yet explicit. One such in *Silas Marner* is the effect of industrialization on English society in the nineteenth century. After the factory is set up, Lantern Yard is a dirty, dark place crowded with unwholesome people. There is a sharp contrast between the unsociability of Lantern Yard and the community spirit of Raveloe, between Silas' life as a spinning insect and the fresh air of the open fields. The novel explores the issues of redemptive love, the concept of community, the role of religion, and the significance of the gentry and family. While religion and religious devotion play a strong part in this text, Eliot concerns herself, with issues of ethics, and evidently for her, ethics exist apart from religion.

On the face value, the book has a well-built moral zone; the bad characters like Dunstan Cass get their just deserts, while the good characters like Silas Marner are handsomely rewarded. A first-hand reading projects it as a simple moral story with a happy ending, yet it includes several pointed criticisms on organized religion, the role of the gentry, and the impact of industrialization. Since it was written during Industrial Revolution, it may be a reaction against it.

### 13.4.5 Symbolism

A symbol is an object or a situation that refers to another object or to a concept which can only be thought-of by deep thinking. The tale of *Silas Marner* certainly must be understood symbolically. Eppie is unambiguously a replacement for Silas' treasure, and this raises questions of the temperament of treasures literal and spiritual. Dunstan steals Silas' gold and in the process falls into a pit, the pit may be considered as the pit or hell that waits for all sinful humans. Silas' open door is symbolical of his spiritual condition, and evil and good influence him simultaneously. Silas' regeneration of faith and human contact in this way becomes a symbolic renaissance. Both through his fits and through his alienation from other men, he is a man who has seemed dead and has come back to life. If we interpret these situations of the novel thus, we find a richer and deeper sense in the story.

---

## 13.5 *Silas Marner*: A concrete work of Transition

---

Shirley Galloway in her critical analysis "About the Novel" has asserted that *Silas Marner* is undisputedly a story based on the theme of transition in its various phases. She has pinpointed the various aspects and episodes in the novel which prove the hypothesis authentic.

The story of the novel is a condensed and solemn literary work, wherein the issues of class-conflict, industrialization, and religion are logically dealt with in the framework of Eliot's time using a series of contradictory parallels. Through both the structure and content of the novel, Eliot proves the common conviction of the latter 19th century wrong that association with the upper classes indicated moral supremacy, makes the implied argument that industrialization dehumanizes and alienates workers, and suggests a "religion of humanity" founded on community as a replacement for the failure of organized religion. The prominent structural feature of the novel is its dual story line. Silas' story, his loss of humanity and faith and his

gradual recovery, is kept entirely separate from the relating of Godfrey Cass' story. Not only do the dual story lines structurally mirror class divisions, but Eppie's choice between Silas Marner and Godfrey Cass at the end symbolizes an ethical choice between the values purveyed by each of the classes.

Eliot has a soft corner for the working class, whereas the landed gentry are cast insensitively. Squire Cass is shown to be emblematic of his class in his "extravagant habits and bad husbandry", and his only statement on public affairs is that he wishes the war with France continues because he is making money due to the consequential high prices. This indicates his concern with profits rather than with his struggling countrymen. Dunstan, is characterized as having a "...taste for swopping and betting", as well as being bizarrely vindictive. He steals Silas' money for gambling. Godfrey, who is otherwise the most decent of the Squire's sons, is expressively summed-up in the statement, "His natural irresolution and moral cowardice were exaggerated by a position in which dreaded consequences seemed to press equally on all sides". The picture that emerges of this most important family of the neighborhood is one of laziness, waste, and moral bankruptcy. It is also noteworthy that Eliot does not allow these characters to go unpunished. Dunstan drowns in the marsh following his theft attempt, and Godfrey suffers of childlessness in his marriage for refusing to admit that Eppie is his daughter.

On the other hand, the depiction of the working class is extremely compassionate. Silas is portrayed as a calm, unpretentious man who is endowed with a "loving nature", and the other well-known villagers, like Dolly Winthrop and Mr. Macey, are painted with the colours of charity and fellowship they offer to Silas and Eppie, and to other members of the community who are in need. Silas adopts Eppie even when her own father, Godfrey, does not. For this, he is rewarded by love and social-support, and the recovery of his gold. Eppie's ultimate decision in favor of Silas and to marry someone of her own class is the final, paradoxical statement of the greater morality of the working class and is a simultaneous rejection of the bourgeois passion to rise socially. As far as class-distinction is concerned, George Eliot decisively refutes the hypothesis that morality is related in any way to class. This novel makes clear that the only distinctions between classes are monetary and there is no moral rationalization for such divisions.

The second set of analogous but divergent worlds dealt with in the novel is that between the growing industrial urban centers of the early 19th century and the comparatively unaffected pastoral, agrarian communities. Though Silas is "self-employed" as a weaver, yet, specialized weaving was a product of the emergent, mass industrialization of textiles as opposed to former, local production. Karl Marx asserts that the professionalizing of an activity, the commodification of what had formerly been a craft, creates estrangement. To the people of Raveloe, weaving was an art in which they got involved whole-heartedly. Therefore, professional weaving was a strange and foreign way of working. Not only this, it produced "pallid, undersized men who, by the side of the brawny country-folk, looked like the remnants of a disinherited race".

The novel shows a perceptive of how mechanization imposes itself on the worker. Silas is described as working in his loom, which finally turns him into a constituent of the machine, “so that he had the same sort of impression as a handle or crooked tube, which has no meaning standing apart”. The years of weaving have converted his posture and given his body a “bent treadmill attitude” and have bereft him of his eyesight. His outward show of physical distortion gives rise to doubt in the people of Raveloe who recognize the difference between mechanical aids and mechanized industry. For them, the rhythms of their machinery are more natural, “the cheerful trotting of the winnowing machine and the simple rhythm of the flail”. Moreover they do not enforce any ill-effect on the worker. The machinery is their servant. This assessment undoubtedly highlights the dehumanization of machine toil. Silas no longer looks “human” because of the kind of work he does and the effect of machines on him.

The final antagonism shown in the novel, which relates with the subject of Marner’s loss and recuperation of the good judgment of human community, is that between a narrow, religious sect of town-dwelling Dissenters, and the pagan, superstitious, but more honest religion of neighborliness in Raveloe. Though Raveloe’s citizens are a part of the Anglican Church, they do not observe any type of strict Christianity. At places in the story, they are shown to be badly informed of the meaning of common Church rituals and depend on conservative and conventional common-sense and a community spirit to guide them in their moral decisions. In spite of such lacuna, this basic “religion of humanity” proves to be more advantageous than the trivial-mindedness of the urban sect’s rigid strictures. The fact that the sect wrongly convict Silas of a theft shows they are not guided by consideration, thoughtfulness, or clemency. The process of dehumanization begun through his alienating form of work is completed when Silas is thrown out from this constricted society. On the other hand, the secular hospitality shown by the people of Raveloe is proven a truer spirituality in the concluding phase of the story. Through Eppie, Silas is reunited to the neighborhood because of the townspeople’s assurance to help him in bringing up the child “rightly.” The standard of the countryside is closely founded on a communal concept peculiar to a countryside way of life where teamwork, rather than rivalry, is fostered. Mutual cooperation is necessary for endurance. Because of freedom from principles, these unprompted expressions of community are exactly the type of atmosphere that is able to restore Silas to human society. In this juxtaposition, Eliot demonstrates the fruitlessness of organized religion in contrast to simple, human sympathy which supersedes all religions.

Shirley Galloway opines that *Silas Marner* focuses on 19th century England as a time of transition: political power moved from a dominant landowner class to a dominant bourgeois class, agrarian economies were replaced by urban industrialization, and Christianity became more and more weak and secular. All of these transitions were largely complete by the end of the century, yet many like George Eliot recognized that much was being lost. The actuality that Silas must leave the city and the growing fervor of religious agitation and physically return to a rural, older way of life to maintain his humanity indicates that the pace of transition, and the modes of transition, was extremely harmful for many. The fact that Silas is permanently distorted foretells that industrialization would be an increasingly deforming fact of life.

The novel is down-to-earth in the Marxist sense because it not only underlines the alienating effects of industrialization and urban life along with the over-enthusiastic religious groups they generate, and points out the debauchery of the trivial bourgeois landowning class while asserting the value of rural, communal life that need not be religious to be virtuous, but it deals with these issues together because they did, historically work in combination. The formal aspects of a dual story line and juxtaposed settings dole out the content by bringing these tensions into even sharper relief. In this way, the novel makes a sharp focus on the major cultural transitions and contradictions of its own time and prophetically pinpoints the forces of class, capitalist industry, and Protestantism as the forces that would change the face and nature of future society. These forces dictate the cultural background much more intensely in the late 20th century and the effects are commensurately alienating and dehumanizing as Eliot first portrayed almost a century and a half ago. This is indicative of her foresight. However, one difference between Eliot's time and ours is that there are few if any meaningful remnants of an older way of life to return or escape to. Instead, we are forced to move forward and perhaps re-imagine and recreate a society in which respect for nature and community are highly valued once again.

---

## **13.6 Major/Minor Characters**

---

In order to comprehend a novel, it is very important to be well-versed with the characters and the fabric of the story. The fabric on which the weaving of the novel has been done has been discussed in detail in the analysis of the text. For the convenience of the student, the major as well as minor characters are being discussed here.

### **13.6.1 Silas Marner**

The hero of the novel, Silas is not a heroic character. He is not particularly sharp, daring or generous. He is in fact, an artifact of Eliot's desire to provoke compassion for ordinary deficient humanity going about its day-to-day business. The common man, as a reader, finds it easy to relate himself to the characters who are close to his own life.

The character of Silas changes greatly as the events in the story of the novel progress, yet part of him always remains "the same Silas Marner who had once loved his fellow with tender love and trusted in an unseen goodness." Silas has inbuilt goodness in him, which is crushed by the evils which befall him, but they come back with even greater potency, and it seems natural that they should do so. The changes in Silas' character are never illogical. They are deeply rooted in the circumstances in which he is entangled; they develop as you would expect from his past. The unfaithfulness by William Dane costs Silas his faith in men, and the betrayal of the drawing of the lots takes his faith in a just God. The occurrence of the second robbery sets in place of the just God a hallucination of a "cruel power." Yet because he does believe in a power, Silas is able to believe that Eppie is sent for his deliverance, and through Eppie's influence he finds new conviction in

the goodness of other people.

The static part of Silas' character is that which requires some support on which he can lean, something to support his courage to face life. We find him taking strength to sustain his existence from one source or the other. When he loses his religion, he turns to his work, and then to his gold. When he is deprived of his gold, he finds a better support in a child, which leads eventually to his faith in his fellow men and in his own power.

Silas is always truthful, both with himself and with others. He is not capable to question the appropriateness of church doctrine, and he will not straightforwardly believe that William would betray him. Further in the story, he cannot oblige himself to imagine anything distrustful about the strange peddler even when he needs to believe that the man might have been the robber. But while he retains some good qualities, he loses his consideration for men, and then all his affections are in risk of diminishing away. He becomes stone-hearted to the people around him. But when he emerges in the concluding part of the novel as a man with new faith, he has not been merely restored to his original position, rather he has gained maturity and inner strength. He has the courage to give up his daughter, his treasure, for her good. His faith is not based on unquestioned set of guidelines; rather, it survives in spite of doubts. His is no awe-inspiring accomplishment, but a believable, human one, very near to the real life of the common man.

### **13.6.2 Nancy Lammeter**

The character of Nancy, like Silas, is a round character as it changes during the course of the story. Her change is not the obvious consequence of the force of events. But to a certain extent, it is the consciousness of something that was inborn in her, which can also be interpreted as a simple process of maturing. It is all authentic and spontaneous.

Nancy as a young girl is charismatic and elegant. The author highlights these qualities by disclosure, by description of her actions, by the authentication of other characters, and by her own narration. We find that Nancy is a lady who has high and strict principles: she does not care to unite with any man of poor moral fiber but at the same time, her love for Godfrey continues to survive

It is also evident that Nancy's youthful "principle" is girlish self-dramatization. When this disappears with her ripeness, it leaves a base of real principle, but it is sweetened by a love that can become sympathy. Nancy's principle refrains her from adopting a child, but her love for Godfrey makes her try to make it up to him in other ways. When it comes to her notice that Eppie is Godfrey's own daughter, she is no more governed by her principle as Godfrey had feared, but is overtaken by love and sympathy. The insight into her character that has been given through the scenes presented from her point of view has prepared for this improvement.



### **13.6.3 Eppie**

Among all the major characters in the novel, Eppie is the least developed. This is so because hers is a well-designed role, and it hardly requires a fully characterized individual to fulfill it if we read the role of this character intently. During half the time she is in the story, she is a small child. There is no endeavor to make her a special sort of child, except in Silas' affectionate eyes. All her habits are like that of a normal child and she also shows childish cuteness. This is all that is required in her role, which is only to bring Silas into contact with his neighbours, because she is supposed to recreate the goodness in the hero through the nobility of her persona.

When she is shown as a young woman, Eppie has a more difficult part to play in the novel. In order to show the sort of life Silas has achieved, it is necessary for Eppie to have some semblance of an individuality. Her character has been given very little time in which to achieve any complexity. Eliot takes some pains to give Eppie depth by showing incidents that are emblematic of her character rather than by providing a full background of her life. Eppie's fondness for animals stands for all of her affectionate nature towards all living beings. Eliot very dramatically puts her in the dilemma of having to choose between her two "fathers". This interesting situation demonstrates that her affection has depth and she solves the purpose of the novelist by deciding to stay with Silas.

A small touch of complexity is introduced in her character by her wish to have one slight advantage over Aaron. In the end, Eppie is most significant for the consequence her presence has on the lives of the two important characters, i.e. Silas and Godfrey. The character she is given is suited to her functional role, but it does not go far beyond that, yet, there is no denying the fact that she plays the pivotal role in the novel.

### **13.6.4 Godfrey Cass**

Godfrey Cass is considered to be one of the major characters in the sense that his correlation to all the other characters directly affects the course of events. He is Eppie's father. He had secretly married a lady of not so sound a character and social reputation. She begot him a lovely daughter, but he regrets his secret marriage and wishes to marry Nancy Lammeter whom he had always loved secretly. He lacks the moral courage to try to find any solution to his problems. He prefers to wait on chance. He is afraid of disclosing his secret marriage to Molly to his father and is blackmailed by his brother, Dunstan for this reason. Later, he decides to admit his marriage but Molly dies and his daughter dramatically enters the barren life of Silas. His marriage to Nancy, his not being able to have a child of his own, his realization of doing wrong in not accepting the fatherhood of Eppie and later his determination to do all that he can for his daughter who has refused to leave Silas to whom she is deeply attached, all these events make his character readable.

### **13.6.5 Dunstan Cass**

Dunstan is set as a direct contrast to Godfrey. Godfrey is a man who is merely weak, but Dunstan is completely bad. He is worthless, haughty, and self-seeking, as well as fraudulent. Much like his brother Godfrey, he is interested in fulfilling his selfish motives, but he lacks any saving virtues. Dunstan suspects his own worthlessness: while he thinks what a fine person he is, he fears the opinions of others on that subject. This tendency of self-absorption or narcissism is put symbolically by George Eliot, by having Dunstan take Godfrey's whip, as it has a better outward show than his own.

Technically, Dunstan's character is similar to that of Eppie because he is just the sort of person needed to fulfill his role and serves no other purpose. He no doubt stands as a contrast to Godfrey, as a means of relieving Silas of his gold, and as a reminder to Godfrey that truth will sooner or later disclose itself. When not needed, he can be easily removed from the story without being missed. He is an example of static characterization because he shows no growth in the course of the story and comes on the scene in a full-blown state. However, he has a certain complexity: his reticent understanding of his faults gives him a psychological interest that Eppie lacks to the reader.

### **13.6.6 Dolly Winthrop**

Although Dolly is one of the minor characters of the novel she plays a very important role through her attempts to change his heart. She has a natural faith that contrasts with Silas' initial distrust of Heaven. She represents the best of Raveloe, the community spirit and real interest and concern for others. She is She is not the typical stereotype; because through her discussions with Silas, she reveals a full personality, slow in thought but steady in faith and strong in her compassion. She is considered as her godmother by Eppie and later-on her son Aaron marries Eppie

### **13.6.7 The Choral Characters**

#### **Macey, Dowlas, Snell, Lundy, Tookey, Winthrop**

This is a group of those characters who exist as a cementing factor in the story but do not carry any individual significance. These characters represent the variety of Raveloe character and opinion, from Macey, the self-admiring respected old-timer, to Tookey, the defensively vague newcomer. Dowlas is the "negative spirit" of the group, almost a non-conformist. Snell, the property-owner, is the arbitrator, and Ben Winthrop is simply an average well-established inhabitant of Raveloe. None of the group is developed to any depth, but they are different individuals. Some of them, Macey and Dowlas, especially, are among the more influential characters of the story. As a group, they give information about the backdrop of the story, comment on the action, and are a source of broad comedy. They weave the events in a harmonious whole and can not be eliminated from

the basic fabric.

---

### 13.7 Let Us Sum Up

---

Thus you were able to understand the intellectual, political and social significance attached to the author 'George Eliot' and her age. Novelistic approach in penning down her childhood recollection, her comprehension of both Anglican worship and Christianity.

---

### 13.8 Review Questions

---

1. Write a note on the birth, education and life of George Eliot.
2. The Victorian Age was rich in literary productions. Elaborate this idea.
3. Comment on the plot and structure of Silas Marner.
4. How and where does Eliot make use of Biblical allusions and their functions in the novel Silas Marner?
5. Write a note on the dramatic unity in Silas Marner?
6. Discuss the various methods which Eliot uses to develop the characters of her novels.
7. Contrast the methods used to characterize Silas and Mr. Macey.
8. How does religion affect the lives of the characters in the novel? Is there any indication of Eliot expressing her personal religious beliefs?
9. How does the novel offer its comments on contemporary industrial conditions?
10. Is it appropriate to refer to Silas Marner as a "fairy tale."? What fairy tale elements does it have?
11. Comment on the technique used in the novel.
12. Write a note on Eliot's use of comic irony in Silas Marner.
13. Is coincidence used in the right proportion in the plot of Silas Marner?
14. What is the technical significance of introducing the peddler as a suspect in the robbery?
15. Would the novel have been substantially richer if Eliot had not intruded in the story?
16. Read one more novel of Eliot and compare the technique or style of Silas Marner to that of the other novel.
17. Eliot says, "No man can begin to mould himself on a faith or an idea without rising to a higher order of experience." Apply this statement of hers to Silas Marner.
18. Which character in the novel appeals you the most? Give reasons for your answer.

19. How far do you agree that *Silas Marner* was written to make a philosophical point?
20. Evaluate the various themes and use of symbolism in the novel.

---

### 13.9 Bibliography

---

- 1 Beer, Gillian. George Eliot. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.
2. Beer, Gillian. "Music and the Visual Arts in the Novels of George Eliot," The George Eliot Fellowship Review, 5 (1974)
3. Bloom, Harold. (ed.). Modern Critical Interpretations: George Eliot's Middlemarch. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.
4. Carpenter, Mary C. "George Eliot and the Landscape of Time."
5. Chard, M. Joan. "Sacred and Secular: George Eliot's Concept of Pilgrimage." George Eliot Fellowship Review 20 (1989)
6. Cross, John Walter. George Eliot's Life as Related in Her Letters and Journals. Cabinet Edition. 3 vols. Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1885.
7. Deegan, Thomas. "George Eliot's Novels of The Historical Imagination." Clio 1 (1972)
8. Ermarth, Elizabeth. "George Eliot's Conception of Sympathy." Nineteenth-Century Fiction 40, 1 (June 1985)
9. "George Eliot." Dictionary of Literary Biography, ed. Ira B. Nadel and William E. Fredeman. Detroit: Gale Research, 1987. Volume 21.
10. George Eliot: The Critical Heritage, ed. David Carroll London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.
11. Haight, Gordon S. George Eliot: A Biography New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968.
12. Handley, Graham. "George Eliot and Marriage." George Eliot Fellowship Review 20 (1989)
13. Perlis, Alan. A Return to the Primal Self: Identity in the Fiction of George Eliot. New York: Peter Lang, 1989.
14. Smalley, Barbara. George Eliot and Flaubert: Pioneers of the Modern Novel. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1974.
15. Stump, Reva. Movement and Vision in George Eliot's Novels. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959.
16. Uglow, Jennifer. George Eliot. New York: Virago/Pantheon Press, 1987.

17. Witemeyer, Hugh. George Eliot and the Visual Arts. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.
18. Alley, Henry. "Silas Marner and the Balance of Male and Female." *Victorians Institute Journal* 16 (1988)
19. Bonaparte, Felicia. "Carrying the Word of the Lord to the Gentiles: *Silas Marner* and the Translation of Scripture into a Secular Text." *Religion and Literature* 23, 2 (Summer, 1991)
20. Cohen, Susan. "'A History and a Metamorphosis': Continuity and Discontinuity in *Silas Marner*." *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 25, 3 (Fall, 1983)
21. Fisch, Harold. "Biblical Realism in *Silas Marner*." *Identity and Ethos*, ed. Mark H. Gelber. New York: Peter Lang, 1986
22. Hawes, Donald. "Chance in *Silas Marner*." *Journal of the English Association* 31, 141 (Autumn, 1982)
23. Knapp, Shoshana, "George Eliot and W. S. Gilbert: Silas Marner into Dan'l Druce." *NCF* 40 (1985)
24. John, Joseph. "Aspects of George Eliot's Characterization." *Unisa English Studies* 26, 1 (April 1988)
25. Levine, George. "George Eliot Studies: 1980-84." *Dickens Studies Annual* 16 (1987): 377-407.
26. Marks, Louis. "Silas Marner: Filming the Novel." *George Eliot Fellowship Review* 18 (1987)
27. Preston, John. "Silas Marner: The Community of the Novel." *George Eliot Fellowship Review* 11 (1980).
28. Rechelson, Meri-Jane. "The Weaver of Raveloe: Metaphor as Narrative Persuasion in *Silas Marner*." *Studies in the Novel* 15, 1 (Spring, 1993)
29. Roberts, Janene. "Literature on PBS: Three 'Masterpiece Theatre' Productions of Nineteenth-Century British Novels." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 9, 4 (Oct., 1989)
30. Shuttleworth, Sally. "Fairy Tale or Science? Physiological Psychology in *Silas Marner*." *Languages of Nature: Critical Essays on Science and Literature*, ed. L. J. Jordanova. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986.
31. Swindon, Patrick. Silas Marner: Memory and Salvation. Twayne's Masterwork Studies. New York: Twayne, 1992.
32. Wiesenfarth, Joseph. "Demythologizing Silas Marner." *ELH* 37 (1970)

## UNIT-14

---

### EMILY BRONTE : WUTHERING HEIGHTS(I)

---

#### Structure

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 About the Age
- 14.3 About the Author
- 14.4 Introduction to the Novel
  - 14.4.1 Detailed Summary
  - 14.4.2 Critical Analysis
  - 14.4.3 Symbolism
  - 14.4.4 Uniqueness
- 14.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 14.6 Review Questions
- 14.7 Bibliography

---

#### 14.0 Objectives

---

In this unit we propose to initiate you to read and understand the development of fiction written in English. You will be made familiar with the development of novel, especially in nineteenth century scenario of England. Emily Bronte has a special place amongst Victorian novelists. She had mystic vision as well as the yearning of a passionate soul. Her masterpiece entitled *Wuthering Heights* is prescribed for your study. This novel is a glorious piece of writing as vitally organised with sustained symphony. You are advised to read about the Victorian Age and works of Bronte to develop capability to :

- (i) read about the characteristic features of the Victorian Age,
- (ii) read and understand the novel in nineteenth century,
- (iii) understand Emily Bronte's special place in the realm of Victorian novel,
- (iv) read and understand *Wuthering Heights* various concepts and qualities of Emily Bronte as a novelist, and
- (v) answer the questions in your own words.

You have been given an introduction about the Age and development of novel. An

introduction to the novel *Wuthering Heights* follows a detailed summary and critical analysis of the novel. You will be required to read the novel in original, in order to understand it. The sections on structure of the novel and symbolism will help you to understand it in a better way. After reading and understanding various sections of this Unit, you will be able to :

- (a) understand the development of English novel,
- (b) understand Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* in a better way, and
- (c) appreciate and evaluate the prescribed text.

---

## 14.1 Introduction

---

The novel as its name unwittingly suggests, is a comparatively recent form of literature. The latest born of all literary arts, it can truly be said to have come on its own in the seventeenth century. It blossomed in eighteenth century for the first time with the distinction of individuality in the works of Henry Fielding and Richardson. In just two centuries the novel became the most popular and prolific of all English literary forms. It was in large measures the product for the middle class, appealing to the middle class ideals and sensibilities, a pattering of imagined events set against a clearly realised social background and taking its view of what was significant in human behaviour from agreed public attitudes.

Very soon the novel acquired a protean capacity for changing its shape varying and needs. This elasticity and freedom from rigid literary rules was largely due to the absence of the inhibiting power of formal criticism.

The novel was born very late, but the art of story telling, unwritten as well as written, and of written, in prose and verse alike, is as old as the sea and the hills. The story is the first literary art which a child is made to hear and understand. In England, for example, the people in the middle ages were extremely fond of story telling and we have a vast body of written stories of that age, in prose and in verse in varied moods, which have survived the wear and tear of time.

The novel is a picture of real life and manners and of the times in which it is written. The Romance, in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen. The Novel gives a familiar relation of such things as pass every day before our eyes, such as may happen to our friends, or to ourselves ; and the perfection of it is to represent every scene, in so easy and natural a manner, and to make them appear so probable, as to deceive us into persuasion that all is real until we are affected by the joys or distresses of the persons in the story, as if they are our own.

Many currents came together to produce the English novel. Medieval romances and collection of ballads, especially those concerned with the legends of King Arthur, were the germinal sources of the modern novel. They were fiction of a picturesque and lively kind, through rambling in the story. They were people of stock characters such as the wicked wizard

and the damsel in distress. But they catered to the human longing for fiction and imaginative stimulation. The Italian novels and stories came in an unimpeded flood and were quickly translated into English. The English drama written during the Elizabethan age itself had all the elements of the novel in the numerous prose works produced during this fertile period and one can easily discover all types of currents in fiction to be found in the novels of later ages.

---

## 14.2 About The Age

---

The whole Victorian age may be described as a peaceful one. In the earlier stages the lessening surges of the French Revolution were still felt; but by the middle of the century they had almost completely died down, and other hopes and ideals, largely pacific, were gradually taking their place.

It was an age alive with new activities. There was a revolution in commercial enterprise, due to the great increase of available markets, and, as a result of this, there was an immense advance in the use of mechanical devices. The new commercial energy was reflected in the Great Exhibition of 1851, which was greeted as the inauguration of a new era of prosperity. On the other side of this picture of commercial expansion we see the appalling social conditions of the new industrial cities, the squalid slums, the exploitation of cheap labour (often of children), the painful fight by the enlightened few to introduce social legislation and the slow extension of the franchise. The evils of the Industrial Revolution were vividly painted by such writers as Dickens and Mrs Gaskell, and they called forth the missionary efforts of men like Kingsley.

There can be little doubt that in many cases material wealth produced a hardness of temper and an impatience of projects and ideas that brought no return in hard cash; yet it is to the credit of this age that intellectual activities were so numerous. There was quite a revolution in scientific thought following the works of Darwin and his school, and an immense outburst of social and political theorizing which was represented in this country by the writings of men like Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill. In addition, popular education became a practical thing. This in its turn produced a new hunger for intellectual food, and resulted in a great increase in the productions of the Press and of other more durable species of literature.

The cheapening of printing and paper increased demand for books, so that the production multiplied. The most popular form of literature was the novel, and the novelists responded with a will. Much of their work was of a high standard, so much so that it has been asserted by competent critics that the middle years of the nineteenth century were the richest in the whole history of the novel.

During the nineteenth century the interaction among American and European writers was remarkably fresh and strong. In Britain the influence of the great German writers was continuous, and it was championed by Carlyle and Matthew Arnold. Subject nations, in particular the Italians, were a sympathetic theme for prose and verse. The Brownings, Swinburne,



Morris and Meredith were deeply absorbed in the long struggle of the followers of Garibaldi and Cavour ; and when Italian freedom was gained the rejoicings were genuine.

With all its immense production, the age produced no supreme writers. It revealed no Shakespeare, no Shelley, nor (in the international sense) a Byron or a Scott. The general literary level was, however, very high ; and it was an age, moreover, of spacious intellectual horizons, noble endeavour, and bright aspirations.

---

### **14.3 About The Author**

---

She was born on 30 July 1818 at Thornton, near Bradford in Yorkshire, as the fifth of the six children of the Reverend Patrick Bronte and his wife, Maria. The two eldest children, Maria and Elizabeth died in childhood ; the third child was Charlotte ; the fourth Branwell, and the sixth Anne. In April 1820, a few months before Emily's second birthday, Patrick Bronte moved his family to the small town of Haworth, which lies between Bradford and Keighley, and here, except for three short intervals, Emily stayed for the rest of her life. She died at the age of thirty from the family disease, tuberculosis, on 19 December, 1848, having survived the publication of her novel by one year.

Emily Bronte was cut off from the world outside her family circle : "She knew little about the outside world and was even more unfamiliar with literary society than her sister Charlotte. Her reluctance to venture outside her family circle is partly explained by the extreme awkwardness and constraint felt by all three Bronte sisters when they met strangers. But it seems that she experienced a special need for the freedom of the wild moorland country surrounding her home. She pined when she was obliged to leave it : first in 1835, when at sixteen she went to Roe Head School and was released after three months because her unhappiness had begun to affect her health ; then in 1837 when she tried once more to endure a period of exile, this time as a teacher in Miss Patchett's school at Law Hill ; and finally in 1842, when from February to November she studied with Charlotte at the Pension at Heger in Brussels.

Emily was not cut off from literature. She and her family knew the older authors, Shakespeare especially, and, nearer their own time, Cowper ; they also grew up on a diet of Scott, Wordsworth and Byron, and read the articles, reviews and stories – many of the latter strongly 'Gothick' in flavour – published in Blackwood's Magazine. Romantic influences are strongly felt in the stories which the Bronte children made up for themselves, and, above all, in the fantasy worlds which they created and kept alive from their childhood to their early maturity : in Angria, created by Charlotte and Branwell, and in Gondal, created by Emily and Anne. When Emily eventually turned to the task of writing a novel for publication, she must certainly have given some thought to the kind of story and to the manner of telling it that would be most likely to interest and hold a contemporary audience.

---

## 14.4 Introduction to the Novel

---

To many a reader *Wuthering Heights* may appear a rude and strange production. The wild moors of the north of England can for them have no interest ; the language, the manners, the very dwellings and household customs of the scattered inhabitants of those districts must be to such readers in a greater measure unintelligible and where intelligible repulsive. Men and women who, perhaps, naturally very calm, and with feelings moderate in degree, and little marked in kind, have been trained from their cradle to observe the utmost evenness of manner and guardedness of language, will hardly know what to make of the rough, strong utterance, the harshly manifested passions, the unbridled aversions, and headlong partialities of unlettered moorland hinds and rugged moorland squires, who have grown up untaught and unchecked, except by mentors as harsh as themselves. A large class of readers, likewise, will suffer greatly from the introduction into the pages of this work of words printed with all their letters, which it has become the custom to represent by the initial and final letter only – a blank line filling the interval. I may as well say at once that, for this circumstance, it is out of my power to apologize ; deeming it, myself, a rational plan to write words at full length. The practice of hinting by single letters those expletives with which profane and violent people are wont to garnish their discourse, strikes me as a proceeding which, however well meant, is weak and futile. I cannot tell what good it does – what feeling it spares – what horror it conceals.

The general contemporary reaction to this novel was a mingled one. In 1847 to 1848 there was more than one commentator expressing in the same breath his disapproval of the book's subject matter and his acknowledgement of its originality and genius. Clearly *Wuthering Heights* was something more than only a 'novel' to, for instance, the *Britannia*, *Jerrold's weekly Newspaper* and the *Atlas*, from all of which Newby was able to cull commendatory passages for use when puffing *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Each of these periodicals contains bewildered allusions to the book's gloom, its so-called 'coarseness' of language, but at the same time it was felt to be 'strangely original'. 'It reminds us of *Jane Eyre*. The *Britannia*, in spite of blindness to the author's considerable powers of craftsmanship, which are now usually taken for granted understood that the book's weaknesses and strengths were both related to its origin in 'a mind of limited experience but of original energy and of a singular and distinctive cast'.

Interest in this novel was revived with the publication of the 1850 edition. Other factors which worked in this direction were the death of Charlotte Brontë in 1855 and Mrs. Gaskell's biography of her published in 1857. This biography was widely read and reviewed by influential writers. These reviewers "took this opportunity to survey all the Brontë novels and were eager to incorporate references to Emily's individual achievement as a poet and novelist. But even before the 1850 edition, though in the same year, *Wuthering Heights* had received the first of what were to be a growing number of tributes from practicing authors. Sidney Dobell's article in the *Palladium* of September 1850 and Mary Ward's excellent study of 1899 are important landmarks in the history of the critical standing of *Wuthering Heights* in

the nineteenth century.

The world in which *Wuthering Heights* is placed is remarkable and unique not only geographically but also emotionally. The moors are inviting and beautiful to Catherine and Heathcliff who love it in life and haunt it in death, but they must appear forbidding and even repulsive to others. *Wuthering Heights* seems to be situated miles away from anywhere. It is to be noted that Thrushcross Grange, although also situated on the moors, is in a soft valley below.

### **14.4.1 Detailed Summary**

The novel has 34 chapters. A detailed summary is given for your study here. You are advised to read the full text of the novel after this summary to be able to understand it in a better way.

#### **Chapter 1 to 10**

The story begins in 1801 with the arrival of Mr Lockwood as a tenant of Thrushcross Grange, a property rented from Mr Heathcliff of *Wuthering Heights*. During the first days of Mr Lockwood's tenancy, he has occasion to make two calls on his landlord, an unsocial man who keeps a pack of vicious dogs. On his second visit Lockwood meets two other members of the strange household, a rough unkempt young man, Hareton Earnshaw, and the pretty, but moody, young widow of Heathcliff's son.

The weather had become so bad that Lockwood had to spend the night at *Wuthering Heights*. He was to sleep in the bedroom upstairs which was in disuse.

There was little furniture. A large case containing the bed and forming a private closet, stood against the window. He climbed in, and placing his candle on the window ledge, noticed the names Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Heathcliff, and Catherine Linton scratched on the paint. He looked through some old books, the blank pages of which had been covered with childish writing – obviously the diary of a girl called Catherine Earnshaw, written many years before. Then he fell into an uneasy sleep.

In his nightmare it seemed that he put his hand through the windowpane to break off a branch, and it was grasped by the icy fingers of Catherine herself. He dragged her wrist across the broken pane until the blood ran. Driven to frenzy by her moaning and begging to come in, he screamed aloud. Heathcliff, hearing a noise, ran into the room in a state of great agitation, muttering "at last" and cursing soundly on finding his guest in the oak closet. Lockwood declared he would stay no longer in this haunted chamber, described his nightmare, dressed as quickly as possible and went out.

He set off at dawn, Heathcliff following to see him safely back to the Grange. When Nelly DEan, the housekeeper at Thrushcross Grange, brought in his supper that evening, Lockwood persuaded her to sit down and tell him what she knew of the neighbours at *Wuthering*

Heights. She was very ready to do so, for in her younger days almost all of her time had been spent at the Heights. She told how, many years before, Mr Earnshaw, father of the children Hindley and Catherine, returned from a visit to Liverpool, carrying a great bundle in his arms. It turned out to be a dirty, ragged, black haired child, whose language no one could understand. He had found the child homeless and starving in the streets of Liverpool and felt he could not leave it there. His wife and children first refused to have anything to do with this gypsy child, but after a time Cathy became very friendly with him. They christened him Heathcliff, after a son who had died, and he soon became Mr Earnshaw's favourite. Hindley hated him, so from the beginning he bred bad feeling in the house.

Hindley treated the boy brutally, but Heathcliff could get what he wanted by threatening to tell Mr Earnshaw of his ill-treatment. Mr Earnshaw grew progressively weaker. Three years after Hindley's departure he died quietly. Hindley Earnshaw returned and surprised the neighbours by bringing with him a wife, Frances. She was a young, rather thin creature, with eyes that sparkled like diamonds. She was easily pleased and seemed to Nelly to be rather silly. Her troublesome cough indicated a serious illness. During the three years of his absence, Hindley had altered considerably; he had grown thinner, lost his colour and spoke and dressed differently. Eventually Frances grew peevish, and Hindley grew tyrannical. Heathcliff was driven to the company of the servants, his lessons from the curate were discontinued, and he was forced to work outside as a common farm lad.

One Sunday when Catherine and Heathcliff had been banished from the drawing room for being noisy, they made their way across the moors to the light which shone from a window at Thrushcross Grange. As they stood observing the Linton Children, Edgar and Isabella, who were crying after a fight over a pet dog, Catherine and Heathcliff were attacked by a watch dog, who bit the ankle of the girl and prevented her escape. She was taken into the house by a servant, and her wound was attended to.

On the following day, Mr Linton paid a visit to Wuthering Heights and rebuked Hindley for his lack of control over Catherine and Heathcliff. Heathcliff was not beaten, but he was informed that his first word to Catherine on her return would result in his dismissal from the house. After staying for five weeks at Thrushcross Grange, Catherine returned to Wuthering Heights at Christmas. She appeared to Nelly to be a changed girl. She looked more lady-like, more beautiful, and more gentle.

The Lintons were to come to celebrate the holiday on the following day. While Joseph retired to his room to pray, Nelly made preparations for the next day in the kitchen. Catherine was shown the gifts for the Lintons, which Hindley had bought for her to give; and Heathcliff remained in the stable, grooming a pony and feeding the animals. Nelly's invitation to join her in the kitchen was rejected by Heathcliff.

At the death of Frances, the child Hareton fell wholly into the hands of Nelly Dean. Hindley grew desperate. "He neither wept nor prayed ; he cursed and defamed : execrated

God and man, and gave himself up to reckless dissipation.” His evil conduct caused the departure of all the servants except Nelly and Joseph. The former remained to care for the child; the latter, to “hector over tenants and labourers.”

Hindley’s treatment of Heathcliff was “enough to make a fiend of a saint,” and it seemed that the lad was possessed of something diabolical. He became more savagely sullen and fierce, and delighted to see Hindley’s self-degradation. Catherine who received an occasional call from Edgar Linton, was “queen of her country-side” at fifteen, a haughty, headstrong creature. Her affection for Heathcliff continued.

Catherine had kept up her acquaintance with the Lintons and won the affection of the parents and children since she did not show the rough side of her nature in their company.

She could not decide whether or not she should marry Edgar. Nelly told her that she would marry for all the wrong reasons if she loved Heathcliff as she said she did. Maintaining that in spite of her love for Heathcliff she could not bear the degradation of marrying him and becoming a beggar, Catherine revealed her decision to marry Edgar. Unknown to her, the conversation was overheard by Heathcliff, who silently slipped from the room.

Edgar married Catherine. All seemed to run smoothly for some time. Catherine seemed almost over-fond of Edgar and treated Isabella with affection ; the Lintons were very attentive to her comfort, yielding to the new bride’s wishes on all occasions. Edgar was particularly concerned that the servants should not cross his wife and ascribed her moods of depression and gloom to her recent illness.

After an absence of three years, Heathcliff put in an appearance at Thrushcross Grange one evening in September. He had grown to become a tall, athletic, well-formed man ; his bearing was upright, and his face appeared intelligent and older, bearing no signs of his former degradation. His ferocity was more subdued, and his manner was dignified.

At first Heathcliff used the liberty of visiting Thrushcross Grange cautiously, and Catherine judiciously moderated her expressions of pleasure in receiving him. Edgar’s uneasiness concerning her experienced a lull, partly because he had perceived that his sister, Isabella, was showing a “sudden and irresistible attraction toward the tolerated guest.” This upset him, for a number of reasons ; he had no desire for his sister to marry a nameless man ; he knew that his property, in default of male heirs, would pass into Heathcliff’s hands ; and he believed that the character of Heathcliff had not essentially changed.

## **Chapter 11 to 20**

One day Nelly decided to go to the Heights. Hareton was at the gate and did not recognize his nurse. He threw a stone at her and cursed, and behaved like a young savage. From his remarks she gathered that Heathcliff encouraged his bad behaviour, especially towards his father. When Heathcliff next called at the Grange, Nelly and Cathy happened to look out of the kitchen window and saw him trying to make love to Isabella. When he came in,

Cathy remonstrated with him and he turned on her angrily, accusing her of treating him insufferably. She was torturing him and he would torture others.

Edgar soon arrived and a quarrel ensued between them. Heathcliff escaped. Catherine was disturbed on witnessing all this and fell ill. For two months she lay ill with fever of brain, during which Edgar nursed her tenderly. During this time Isabella ran away with Heathcliff and married him. Six weeks after her departure Isabella wrote to Edgar for reconciliation. Edgar did not reply. Then she wrote to Nelly. Nelly went to the wuthering Heights that afternoon and found the house untidy and Isabella in very bad state of affairs. Heathcliff was very sad to hear of Catherine's illness. He gave a letter to Nelly for Catherine.

Cathy's appearance was greatly altered and there was some unearthly beauty in the change. Her gaze seemed fixed beyond the things of this world. She seemed not to understand when Nelly gave her the letter, but at the mention of Heathcliff's name she gave a start and there was a troubled gleam of recollection. Heathcliff, without waiting to be summoned, entered and took her in his arms, kissing her with passion and agony, for he could see there was no chance of her recovery. Each accused the other of torture and both were violently overcome with emotion. They seemed broken-hearted.

Presently Edgar returned. Heathcliff would have risen, but Cathy refused to let him go, clinging to him and crying. "It is the last time. I shall die". Edgar was furious at finding them together, but Cathy collapsed completely and it was some time before they were able to restore her. She sighed and moaned and knew nobody. Heathcliff told Nelly that he would keep watch from the garden.

At about twelve o'clock on the evening when the events of the preceding chapter took place, Catherine gave birth to "a puny, seven month's child" – Catherine Linton, the girl whom Lockwood had seen at the Heights. Two hours later the mother was dead, not having regained sufficient consciousness to miss Heathcliff or to know Edgar. The latter's distraction at her bereavement was great, especially since he was left without an heir. Nelly abused old Linton who secured his estate "to his own daughter, insisted to his son's".

One evening as Nelly sat rocking the baby, Isabella burst into the room breathless, bleeding, and wet with the snow. She asked Nelly to have a few bits of clothing fetched for her from her wardrobe and to order the carriage to take her on to Gimmerton. She had escaped from the Heights and "that incarnate goblin", Heathcliff. She dared not delay her flight for fear he might follow her and cause trouble at the Grange.

Isabella departed never to return. She took up residence somewhere south of London, and a regular correspondence was begun between her and Edgar once things became more settled. A few months after her escape, she bore a male child, Linton, "an ailing, peevish creature". Heathcliff eventually succeeded in discovering the place of Isabella's residence and learned of the existence of the child. He did not molest them, however, said that he would take the child when the time arrived. He did so some thirteen years after the death of Catherine,

when the child Linton was twelve years old.

Before her death, Isabella wrote to her brother of the fever which was consuming her life and begged him to come to her. She wished to bid him farewell and deliver the boy, Linton, safely into his hands. Bidding Nelly to be particularly vigilant with Catherine during his absence, Edgar departed. He was absent for three weeks.

The day of Edgar Linton's return to Thrushcross Grange was announced by a letter edged with black. Isabella was dead, and Edgar was returning with his youthful nephew. Catherine was almost wild with excitement; her father was returning after an absence of three weeks and with him he was bringing her "real cousin." When the carriage arrived, the young boy was asleep, wearied by the long journey. He was a pale, delicate, effeminate boy and bore a remarkable resemblance to Edgar. There was, however, a sickly peevishness in his aspect that Edgar never had.

Edgar ordered Nelly to take Linton to his father at Wuthering Heights on the following morning. She was to say nothing of the boy's whereabouts to Cathy, lest she should be anxious to visit the Heights. Accordingly, the next morning Nelly roused the reluctant Linton from his bed and told him that he was going to spend some time with his father. He was puzzled, for Isabella had never mentioned the name of Heathcliff to the child. But eventually they were on their way.

### **Chapter 21 to 30**

Time wore on, and Cathy reached the age of sixteen on March 20. Since her birthdays were also anniversaries of Catherine's death, Edgar was accustomed to spending the day alone in the library and walking to the churchyard in the evening, remaining often until midnight. On this particular day he had given Cathy permission to go with Nelly for a ramble on the edge of the moor, provided they returned within the hour.

In spite of Edgar's care, Cathy paid a visit to Wuthering Heights, learned that Hareton was her cousin, discovered that Linton was staying there, and was told that Heathcliff was her uncle and that he and her father were not on good terms. A devilish plan formed in the mind of Heathcliff; he would arrange a marriage between his ailing son, Linton, and his enemy's daughter, Cathy, thereby gaining possession of Thrushcross Grange and control over the girl after the death of her father, Edgar.

Edgar Linton fell ill. During his illness Heathcliff arranged meetings at Wuthering Heights between Cathy and his son, Linton. By means of treachery, Heathcliff lured Cathy, who had been forbidden by her father to visit Wuthering Heights, into the house keeping her there as a prisoner for five days, and refusing to allow her to go to the bedside of her dying father unless she agreed to marry Linton, who was also at the point of death. Finally the marriage was performed, and Cathy managed to get to her father before his death, but too late for him to alter his will to prevent his property from falling into the hands of his enemy through Linton and Cathy.

Edgar died blissfully, kissing his daughter's cheek and saying, "I am going to her ; and you, darling child, shall come to us!" Cathy sat at his bedside until noon, apparently incapable of shedding any more tears.

At dinner time the lawyer appeared, having stopped off at the Heights first to get his instructions. He had sold himself to Heathcliff. All the servants, save Nelly, were given notice of their dismissal. If the lawyer had had his way, Edgar would have been buried in the chapel with his family, instead of beside his wife. But there were instructions in the will, and Nelly protested. The funeral was hurried over, but Nelly and Cathy (now Mrs. Linton Heathcliff) were permitted to remain at the Grange until Edgar's body had left it.

On the evening after the funeral, Nelly and Cathy sat together in the library at Thrushcross Grange. They agreed that the best destiny which could await Cathy would be permission to live on there during Linton's lifetime with Nelly as housekeeper. Their conversation was interrupted by the announcement by a servant that Heathcliff had arrived.

Although she has paid a visit to the Heights, Nelly continues she has not seen Cathy since her departure from Thrushcross Grange. She has, however, learned something of the events at the Heights from Zillah, whom she has met in the village occasionally. According to Zillah, Cathy was cold and aloof on her arrival at the house. She shut herself up in Linton's chamber and remained there for the night. The following morning she asked Heathcliff to send for a doctor to attend to Linton. He was dying, she said. Heathcliff refused, and for some time after, Catherine kept to herself, caring for Linton as best as she could.

One evening Catherine came to Zillah's chamber declaring that Linton was dying. By the time the housekeeper had called the master the son was dead. "He's safe, and I'm free," Cathy said ; "you have left me so long to struggle against death alone, that I feel and see only death".

As time went by Cathy was forced to have the company of the inhabitants of the house, although she had "no lover or liker" master of the Heights, the more venomous she grew. It seemed that the only hope for Cathy lay in another marriage and her escape from the house.

### **Chapter 31 to 34**

On a claim and frosty day Lockwood makes his way to the Heights. Heathcliff is not at home and is not expected to return before dinner time. Lockwood decides to wait for him. As he speaks to Hareton he notices that he is a handsome "rustic", who apparently makes the least of his advantages. Cathy he finds to be beautiful, but not an angel. She seems to be more sulky and less spirited than on his earlier visit.

Lockwood informs Heathcliff of the reason for his visit, and after some sarcasm Heathcliff invites his guest to remain for dinner. Cathy is ordered to take her meal in the kitchen with Joseph. Lockwood makes a cheerless meal with the grim Heathcliff and the silent Hareton



and departs early. As he rides back to the Grange he reflects : “What a realization of something more romantic than a fairy tale it would have been for Mrs. Linton Heathcliff, had she and I struck up an attachment, as her good nurse desired and migrated together into the stirring atmosphere of the town.”

The following autumn Lockwood happens to be in the neighbourhood of Wuthering Heights. On an impulse he decides to visit the place again and spend the night at Thrushcross Grange. On his arrival at the Grange, he discovers a new housekeeper ; Ellen Dean is again serving as housekeeper at Wuthering Heights. Making his way to the house, he discovers that Cathy and Hareton are now in possession. From his former servant he learns the details of Heathcliff’s strange death three months before. It seems that he had deliberately starved himself to death, haunted by the ghost of Catherine, and longing to be united with her in death. Freed from their oppressor, Cathy and Hareton have become friends. The girl is teaching the ignorant boy to read and improve his manners, and the chances of their affection developing into love and ending in marriage seem bright.

After his conversation with Ellen Dean, Lockwood departs, returning to the Grange by way of the church. There he sees three headstones side by side : that of Catherine in the middle, half-hidden by vegetation ; that of her husband, Edgar, partly covered with moss; and that of her beloved and tormented Heathcliff still new and bare. In the surrounding countryside a legend is prevalent that the ghosts of Cathy and Heathcliff roam the moors. Travellers and shepherds claim to have seen the spirits of Catherine and Heathcliff wandering the moors. But as Lockwood lingers by the graves, watching the moths fluttering among the heath and harebells and listening to the sound of the wind through the grass he wonders “how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth.” Thus the narrative is both opened and closed by Lockwood. We learn that after marriage Cathy and Hareton are to move to Thrushcross Grange and Nelly also with them. Old Joseph is to remain as caretaker at the Heights.

#### **14.4.2 Critical Analysis**

The opening chapter of the novel has the function of showing the setting of the story and introducing some of the main characters in the story. Lockwood is seen right at the start to be something of a misanthrope. He has ironically come to this locality in search of calm. He seems to like the place and even its air of loneliness and desolation. The next character to be introduced and described is Heathcliff. He is seen as a dark, handsome but rather careless man.

The element of the supernatural enters the novel with the third chapter. Lockwood sees the ghost of Catherine in a dream. But it is made clear that Heathcliff also has some premonition of that, and he is anguished by the fact that the spirit refuses to enter the room. The books which Lockwood reads have jottings in them which bring before our eyes the childhood of Catherine and Heathcliff. The impression of the strangeness of the place reaches the point of climax in this chapter. With the fourth chapter begins that narrative of Nelly Dean. She

reveals herself to be not only highly imaginative but also a natural-born story-teller.

With the fifth chapter the complication in the plot is well under way. The artificial peace at Wuthering Heights comes to an end with the death of the master. The developing relations between Catherine and Heathcliff also do not augur well. Catherine is as passionate as Heathcliff and takes delight in tormenting those whom she loves. We see that Joseph is like a blight on the lives of the children at Wuthering Heights.

Hindley and his wife now return to Wuthering Heights. The result is that Heathcliff has to lose his place as the favourite in the house. The reader can easily see that Heathcliff is not going to submit to the ill-treatment which is meted out to him by Hindley, and that Heathcliff must be brooding on some dark revenge that he must wreak on his tormentor. From now onwards revenge becomes the major motive in the novel. The characters of Heathcliff and Catherine now emerge more distinctly.

The climatic moment in the relations between Catherine and Heathcliff is reached when Catherine speaks to Nelly about the fact that Heathcliff is so brutal and uncouth, and Heathcliff overhears the whole conversation and leaves Wuthering Heights. He remains away for full three years. In his absence Catherine and Edgar are married. With the moving of Catherine to Thrushcross Grange it is as if the storm and passion now move to displace the poise and calm of the Grange. The two principles will eventually be harmonised with the marriage of the second Catherine and Hareton.

Heathcliff begins to assert his influence on many characters in the novel. He gradually gains the confidence and love of Isabella which was necessary for the furtherance of his plan of revenge on Edgar. He even entraps Hareton and asserts that he would see whether he can make the son become as degraded as the father. There is a great deal of tragic inevitability in the fate of Isabella because not only Edgar but even Catherine does her best to warn her away from Heathcliff. At the same time it is also made clear that Heathcliff still possesses a great deal of influence on Catherine.

Isabella takes full advantage of the confusion resulting from the illness of Catherine and elopes with Heathcliff. So demoralised does Edgar feel himself to be before Heathcliff that he makes no attempt to pursue the runaway couple or have their marriage prevented. We see that Heathcliff's plan of a comprehensive revenge is going along perfectly.

Although Catherine had married Edgar by her own choice she is a complete misfit at the Grange. According to Heathcliff it is as if an oak was planted in a flowerpot. In spirit Catherine is completely isolated when she is away from Heathcliff and Wuthering Heights. The long and passionate conversation between Catherine and Heathcliff in Chapter 15 makes it clear that the two are inseparable in spite of Catherine having married Edgar Linton.

Catherine gives birth to a premature child and passes away without regaining consciousness. Both Edgar and Heathcliff love her, though in different ways and it is made clear

that Edgar suffered no less than the passionate Heathcliff by the death of Catherine. There is a touch of great horror and unearthliness in Heathcliff's wish that the spirit of Catherine may haunt him and that she may never rest in peace because she had rejected his love by marrying Edgar Linton.

It seems that Heathcliff's efforts to pervert the nature of Hareton are succeeding splendidly because we find that Hareton is imitating Heathcliff by hanging a whole litter of puppies. Isabella takes up residence in the south of London, and gives birth to a son who is named Linton. Two characters pass out of the story with their death, namely, Isabella, and Hindley.

Linton is suffering from tuberculosis. The plans of Heathcliff concerning him are revealed in a conversation that the former has with the house-keeper, Nelly Dean. He means to use the child to get possession of the property of his enemy, Edgar Linton, just as he has already succeeded in possessing the property of his other enemy, Hindley.

A new interest enters the story with the revelation that Hareton takes an unusual interest in his cousin, Cathy. Inevitably there is a fierce rivalry between him and Linton. Cathy mortifies Hareton when she discovers that he cannot read or write. We also see that Hareton is determined to improve himself in this respect.

Heathcliff's plans met with swift success. Linton was found by Catherine to be mortally ill and all her attempts to have a doctor called in proved unavailing. Heathcliff had made his son leave everything to him so that when he died Cathy had lost all her worldly possessions.

The narrative is now linked back with opening chapters of the novel and we find that Lockwood has recovered sufficiently to pay another visit to the Heights. The purpose of this visit, however, is not to satisfy his curiosity as on the previous occasions but to tell his landlord, Heathcliff, that he has had enough of the countryside and wishes to leave for London.

Lockwood returned to the locality in September 1802. He decided to spend the night at the place where he had lodged during his previous visit i.e. Thrushcross Grange. He learnt that Nelly now lived at Wuthering Heights so he decided to pay a visit to the Heights and talk to Nelly Dean there.

Heathcliff confessed to Nelly that although he had now the power of reducing both the Earnshaws and the Lintons to utter poverty he had no longer the ability to take delight in this destruction. He saw images of Catherine all around him. Revenge was no longer important to him because all his life was now ruled by one thought – that of being united with Catherine at the earliest. He was sure that he would not have to wait very long to see his wish fulfilled.

It was believed that the spirits of Heathcliff and Catherine haunted the moors but when Lockwood visited the graves he found the place to be so peaceful that he refused to believe that those who lay underneath could have troubled sleep. Nelly decided that she would no longer live at the Heights because Hareton and Cathy were to be married on New Year's day and shift to the Grange. The sour-tempered Joseph, quite befittingly, was to continue to stay at

the Heights as the caretaker.

### 14.4.3 Symbolism

There is symbolic presentation of the duality of human and non-human existence, of the 'otherness' of the natural as opposed to the human. The violent figures of Catherine and Heathcliff portions of the flux of nature, children of rock and heath and tempest, striving to identify themselves as human, but disrupting all around them with their monstrous appetite for an inhuman kind of intercourse, and finally disintegrated from within by the very eagerness out of which they are made. Against the wilderness of inhuman unreality' she sets the 'quietly secular, voluntarily limited, safely human concourse of Nelly Dean and Lockwood.'

*Wuthering Heights* as I understand it, means to be a work of edification : Emily Bronte begins by wishing to instruct her narrator, the dandy Lockwood, in the nature of a grand passion ; she ends by instructing herself in the vanity of human wishes. This seems a curiously simple moral to emerge from such a disturbingly complex novel, and while it may well represent in some degree part of Emily Bronte's conscious intention in writing the book it hardly accounts for all that is actually there.

### 14.4.4 Uniqueness

Emily Bronte's achievement is of an intrinsically different kind from that of any of her contemporaries. Like that of Dickens, indeed, it is specially distinguished by the power of its imagination. And like his, hers is an English imagination ... The imagination that informs it is characteristically English, violent, un-selfconscious, spiritual. But though Emily Bronte is characteristic of England, she is not characteristic of Victorian England. She stands outside the main current of nineteenth-century fiction as markedly as Blake stands outside the main current of eighteenth-century poetry .... Like Blake, Emily Bronte is concerned solely with those primary aspects of life which are unaffected by time and place.

Emily Bront's vision of life does away with the ordinary antithesis between good and evil. To call some aspects of life good and some evil is to accept some experiences and to reject others. But it is an essential trait of Emily Bronte's attitude that it accepts all experiences. It concerns itself not with moral standards, but with those conditioning forces of life on which the naive erections of the human mind that we call moral standards are built up.

---

## 14.5 Let Us Sum Up

---

When you have fully read and understood the *Wuthering Heights* and studied about the Victorian Age and life and creative genius of Emily Bronte, you will be able to :

- (i) appreciate and critically analyse a novel,
- (ii) understand the plot, structure and theme of the novel,

- (iii) evaluate Emily Bronte's position as a novelist
- (iv) discuss qualities of a novel,
- (v) discuss and evaluate various influences and reflections of the Age in the novel, and
- (vi) evaluate and appreciate theories and concepts of Emily Bronte.

---

### **14.6 Review Questions**

---

1. Discuss some of the means used by Emily Bronte to secure structural unity.
2. Comment on the sense of form in *Wuthering Heights*.
3. How far is it proper to regard *Wuthering Heights* as a work of edification?
4. Write a note on Heathcliff's revenge.
5. Compare and contrast Lockwood and Nelly Dean as narrators.
6. What is the significance of Lockwood's dream?
7. Discuss the view that Heathcliff is redeemed by his love for Catherine.
8. Write a note on the language and expressions of *Wuthering Heights*.
9. Discuss the theme of passion versus love in *Wuthering Heights*.
10. Write a note on realistic elements in *Wuthering Heights*.

---

### **14.7 Bibliography**

---

1. Hewish, John, Emily Bronte, 1969.
2. Lal, D.K., The English Novel, Agra, L.N. Agrawal, 1968.
3. Laura L., The Brontes, 1947.
4. Mendilow, A.A., Time and the Novel, London, Peter, 1952.
5. Peters, M., Unquiet Soul : Biography of Emily Bronte, 1975.
6. Simpson, Charles, Emily Bronte, 1929.
7. Sampson, G., Cambridge History of English Literature, London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1941.
8. Visick, Mary, The Genesis of Wuthering Heights, 1958.
9. Water, J.D., The Outline of Literature, Jaipur, Bookman, 1992.

## UNIT – 15

---

### EMILY BRONTE : WUTHERING HEIGHTS(II)

---

#### Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 About the Age
- 15.3 About the Author
- 15.4 Bronte : The Myth-Maker
  - 15.4.1 The Narrators
  - 15.4.2 Major Characters
    - (a) Catherine Earnshaw
    - (b) Heathcliff
    - (c) Edgar Linton
    - (d) Catherine (Cathy) Linton
    - (e) Isabella Linton
  - 15.4.3 Minor Characters
    - (a) Hindley Earnshaw
    - (b) Hareton Earnshaw
  - 15.4.4 Structure
  - 15.4.5 Universality
- 15.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 15.6 Review Questions
- 15.7 Bibliography

---

#### 15.0 Objectives

---

In this unit we will have further study of Emily Bronte's novel the *Wuthering Heights*. In the previous unit you have understood the theme, concept, structure, format and story of *Wuthering Heights*. You were also given practice to critically analyse the novel. After acquiring knowledge about Victorian Age you have studied about the life and literary career of Emily Bronte. You have also read and understood the novel *Wuthering Heights*.

In this unit we would initiate you to understand various major and minor characters of the novel and study major literary characteristics employed by Emily in this masterpiece. After reading and understanding you will be able to :

- (i) have an insight to understand the novel in a better way.
- (ii) understand the characters in the novel,
- (iii) understand literary qualities of the novel.
- (iv) appreciate and evaluate the text in a better way,
- (v) understand classical & literary allusions, and
- (vi) answer the questions based on text.

---

## 15.1 Introduction

---

A novel is an aggregate effect of various elements. These are so interwoven that they are inseparable from one another. They are character, incident, narrative, plot, sub-plots, and artistic unity. All of these make the novel a special genre of literature liked by intellectuals and common man alike. With these expectations in mind, we judge the merits of a novel from whatever period and author it originates.

The novelists were more free, mainly because their aims were more limited and allowed a pragmatic approach. They did not need to feel that they had to solve the mystery of life or come to terms with history before they could put them to paper. There was an obvious demand for their work, for entertainment and edification. There were tasks to be done, causes to be championed.

We must be grateful that succession of women novelists, beginning with Fanny Burney and Jane Austen, recorded their deep feminine acceptance of, and involvement in, life before its special social conditions disappeared in the changes and emancipations of the latter part of the century. The novelists of the nineteenth century, by multiplying the number of objects to be enjoyed and appreciated by the imagination, immeasurably strengthened the Victorians' hold on life. In the province of the novel, though there are discriminations to be made, one may justifiably speak of major achievements of a creative period. The novel, like the Elizabethan drama, served a popular need; in this case, for influences which would soften and make intelligible the harsh conditions of Victorian life.

Only the influence of Dickens is comparable with that of the women novelists in deciding the special qualities of the English novel. They helped to give it a bias away from the intellectual comedy of moral paradox which we find in Fielding, and towards a more profound portrayal of the variety and pathos of common experience. By the end of the eighteenth century the novel had begun to be a considerable influence on the moral perceptiveness of the reading public, exemplifying, as no ethical treatise could do and as no other form of literature

since the Elizabethan drama had done, the reality of the feelings and moral issues involved in given situations.

The Victorian novel helped to people the imagination, to exercise the moral sympathies and strengthen the feeling of human solidarity at a time of disruptive social change. The growth of a considerate, unhysterical, liberal, and responsible humanism in the course of the century was certainly helped by the work of the novelists. At its best the novel presented, with wonderful inwardness, different kinds of moral possibility and the actuality of choice; it formed an extension of consciousness, and gave life to life.

---

## **15.2 About The Age**

---

The Victorian literature from the point of view of writer-reader relationship can be categorised in to two groups. The first is of compromise in which literature has come close to the social conditions and a delicate balance has been maintained between the writer and the reader. Even the criticism of society becomes only a symptom of this balance. The second is the tendency of the writer to question the taste and values of the readers. The Age is remarkable for the growth of democracy and the progress of science.

From 1830 onwards, the parallel and simultaneous development of all the sciences of mind and matter proceeds with the rapid, imperious, irresistible trend of great historical changes. A vast combination of forces is felt to be in play; and such a combination as will of necessity transform life, modify the condition of man, and definitively establish his place in nature. From the very beginning there is evidence of the ambitious quest for an all-embracing synthesis, a supreme theory, a central point towards which the highest attainable results in each science would increasingly tend to converge. And when Spenser, continuing the biological hypotheses of Darwin, organizes knowledge in its entirety into a philosophy of evolution, the whole scientific movement seems to reach its inevitable conclusion.

English literature, therefore, in the years which follow 1830, will be deeply moulded by the authority of a reason which has grown more exacting and active, and which finds its direct and main outlet in science. But it must not be understood that this character alone defines the literature of the period. Far from it the prestige of knowledge, as of its ally industrialism, may seem more and more to be taking hold upon society ; but social life is still very far from becoming a willing victim to the severe dictates of the scholars of reason. In fact, the Victorian age does not bring science, in the full sense of the word, into the actual life of every day, and cannot, because the great majority of the nation are not interested in anything beyond empiricism, whether of the lowest or of the most refined kind. Compromise stamps this type of civilization ; and monetary gain rather than the love of truth is the magnetic force which spurs on its activity. It bears within itself the hope of progress through self-controlling thought; but with the masses this hope is only perceived, or understood, as a desire for enjoyment or money-making, which, in order to be satisfied, turns to the popularized elements of knowledge.



The Victorian age would seem to correspond to the decisive, perfected ripeness of the original English genius; to the phase when this originality, in full possession of itself, and having more than once gone through the whole cycle of its rhythmic course, has through experience realized all its powers, and gathers in its depths the cherished possession of them all. During the middle and in the final years of the nineteenth century the English mind knows deeper and fuller vibrations than at any other moment in the history of its growth ; one feels in it at once the refreshed and still living remembrance of its Elizabethan youth, the lucid self-mastery which it owes to the long schooling of classicism, and the renewed vigour of the Romantic revival. All these influences and these memories combine in the thought and the art of a literary age which, when the ephemeral injustice of reaction has spent itself, will probably come to be looked upon as the most powerful and the greatest among all the periods of English culture.

---

### **15.3 About The Author**

---

Emily Bronte (1818-1848) was younger to Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855). Their younger sister Anne (1820-1849) was also a novelist, but was the least famous of the three sisters. Their father Patrick Bronte, an Irish clergyman lived in Yorkshire. Financial difficulties made the eldest Charlotte become a school teacher and then a governess. Along with Emily, she visited Brussels in 1842 and then returned home, where family cares kept the sisters closely tied.

Though she wrote less than Charlotte, Emily is in some ways the greatest of the three sisters. Her one novel, *Wuthering Heights* (1847), is unique in English literature. She, like her sisters, first tried her hands on poetry. A few of her poems reach the very highest levels, though the majority lack distinction. They reveal the great courage and strength of her passionate nature, and, at her best, she uses simple verse forms with great intensity and a certain grandeur. Her finest poems are probably “No Coward Soul is Mine” and “Cold in the Earth”.

---

### **15.4 Bronte : The Myth-Maker**

---

If Charlotte reminds us of Byron and Wordsworth, her sister, Emily, recalls the spirit of Blake, the mystic and the myth-maker. Like him she was rooted in Earth but wrapped above the skies, gifted with an imagination replete with vast and wild forms, symbols of cosmic forces and powers, of the primal contraries meeting in a war-like embrace, but conceived with the vivid intensity of living beings. In her strange masterpiece, *Wuthering Heights* (1847) she has embodied her mystic vision as well as the yearnings of her impassioned soul, which she had poured out in her poems also. She always regarded them as her most secret personal diary.

The basic idea of this myth-like novel rests upon the recurrent conflict and struggle at some sort of reconciliation between two opposing cosmic forces which may be symbolized by the storm and the calm. The recognition of this fact led the ancient Greeks to the conception two deities of contrasted attributes, Dionysus and Apollo. The former symbolized the unbridled force of primordial energy, bursting out with a shattering and resistless power and

sweeping away all restraints and obstacles in its way ; while Apollo represented repose, tranquility and calm dignity.

The love between Catherine and Heathcliffè, which even death cannot quench, is the symbol of that ‘elective affinity’ which may be described as the attraction of ‘like’ for ‘like’. That is how Catherine views it in her confession to Nelly :

“Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton’s is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire ..... If all the else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be ; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger : I should not seem a part of it. Nelly, I am Heathcliffè.”

The background itself is a fit symbol for both the opposing forces, of which characters are the mere emanations. Heathcliffè, as his name implies, is at home in the storm swept barren moors and rugged rocky cliffs while the Lintons are the quiet children of the sheltered leafy valley below the heights.

The characters are the creatures of rude elemental passions and their language is naturally and spontaneously poetical like the dialect of the primitive people, vivid, colourful, metaphorical, rich in images which come as naturally as the leaves of a tree. The novel is a glorious piece of poetry as vitally organized as a sustained symphony.

The novel is full of excitement, of intense passion and vivid natural scenes, instinct with life and movement. There is nothing static here and the story itself moves at the top speed. For passion of this kind and for poetry which is its most appropriate language we have to go back to the Elizabethan and Jacobean tragic stage, to the plays of Ford, but a Ford made natural and elemental, swept clean of all sophistication by the bracing breeze of the mountain and of wide moor.

### **15.4.1 The Narrators**

The most important distinction between a novel and a drama is that the former has a narrator and a point of view. *Wuthering Heights* was the work of a young and inexperienced novelist, yet it shows a remarkable complexity and command over the art of narration. Although there are several narrators in *Wuthering Heights*, who take over the narration from time to time, yet the most important of them are Nelly Dean and Lockwood.

Nelly Dean is the narrator for a major part of the story. It is she who has the best access to the information which is vital for knowing and understanding the inhabitants of the Grange and the Heights. It is only where Nelly does not have first hand information that other narrators or means of narration are employed by the author. Nelly’s way of looking at things has an important impact on the reader even where he does not agree with her view of things.

Nelly is only a narrator, whereas Lockwood is narrator only in part, otherwise he is a listener. In fact *Wuthering Heights* is told as a story within a story. Lockwood’s encounter

with Heathcliff and Hareton Earnshaw and the second Catherine so arouses his curiosity that he asks Nelly, his housekeeper, to tell him their history. She brings him, and us, up-to-date. Then, after an interval, he comes back and sees the end of the story with his own eyes, with a little further narration from Nelly which fills the gap of his absence. He not only begins the story, and but also ends it. Both as a storyteller and as a listener, he is a character of some importance, endowed by the novelist, with characteristics which make him a good medium for conveying certain essential effects.

Nelly's is no artless gossip's tale both Lockwood and Heathcliff, incidentally, affirm that she is no 'gossip' – but a tale where reflection plays its part as well as action. Nelly has not only to respond to the significance of some of the events – though not by any means to all of them – but she also intersperses her story with much explicit comment and judgement. What is important and definite is that story and storyteller seem to be perfectly matched. Emily Bronte draws our attention to the qualifications of the story teller, though she is doing other things as well. She also makes Lockwood explain that he will keep the story in Nelly's own words, condensing a little, but not needing 'to improve her style' and he is made to object when Nelly suggests skipping a year or two and begs her to leave out nothing.

Nelly has guided us through the story, slowly developing her sound principles and her strong affections, but both her weaknesses and her strengths are made at times to be unreliable guides. It is indeed 'another species' on which she comments, and we should be less aware of the extraordinary passions of the story if they did not come to us through the voice and mind and heart of Nelly Dean.

## **15.4.2 Major Characters**

### **(a) Catherine Earnshaw**

Catherine is described in the novel as a wild, wicked slip with the bonniest eye, the sweetest smile and the lightest foot in the parish. She is a lover of life in the wild and open moors. Although she shows some selfishness and vanity she is on the whole loyal though passionate. These opposing qualities are a cause of fierce conflict in her life. She seems to have great insight into her own nature, its similarity with Heathcliff's and her staunch love for Heathcliff.

Catherine's history is very much similar to that of Heathcliff. She is a wild and passionate character both as a girl and as a woman. As a child, we are told, she "could ride any horse in the stable." Arrogant and wilful, she is at times capable of real heartlessness. In spite of her affectionate relationship with Heathcliff, she decides to marry Edgar, knowing full well that it is a misalliance.

During her illness with brain fever, she becomes dreamy and melancholy and seems to long to escape life. She has no desire to go to Heaven, for she knows that she would not be at home there. She belongs to the moors and the stormy elements of nature. Before her death she states that she wants Edgar and Heathcliff to suffer as they have caused her to suffer. Edgar

has been unable to understand the nature of her affection for Heathcliff.

She wants Heathcliff that her spirit will not let him rest until they are reunited in death. Actually, her death does not mean her disappearance from the novel any more than Heathcliff's does. Their spirits continue to brood over the scenes which they once knew so well. Catherine's rebelliousness and passion make her an interesting character.

### **(b) Heathcliff**

Heathcliff's appearance is very striking and quite uncommon. His black hair, dark skin and bushy eyebrows make him look like a gypsy. Even when he later acquires the outward appearance of a gentleman his natural ferocity does not quite leave him. He has something darkly fascinating in his nature. The moving principle of his life is his relationship with Cathy. Injustice and illtreatment, joined to his own passionate nature make him a cold and crafty revenger.

In the early part of the book, we are led to suspect him of nothing worse than a hot temper, a proud nature and a capacity for implacable hatred. Indeed until he is sixteen the balance of sympathy is with him, since he has been treated too ill. However, when he returns after three years' absence to find Catherine married to Edgar, it is clear that his character has changed.

The characters set in opposition to him are gentle to the point of weakness. Isabella, the younger Catherine and his own son are powerless to resist him, Hindley seems a frail old man, Edgar is not a man of action, and Nelly herself, who is Heathcliff's most persistent opponent, often behaves foolishly at vital points in the action. The reader is thus tempted to admire Heathcliff, as the Romantic critics adore Satan, for his energy and decisiveness, even his ruthlessness.

If we discount highly romantic views of the Hero, what is to be found in *Wuthering Heights* itself which may be supposed to influence the reader in Heathcliff's favour? It is frequently argued that Heathcliff is redeemed by his passionate love for Catherine Earnshaw.

### **(c) Edgar Linton**

Edgar Linton is presented during most of the novel as a deliberate contrast against Heathcliff. He is unlike Heathcliff in both his qualities and his defects. Whereas Heathcliff is courageous to a superhuman extent. Edgar is effeminate and whines like a child. He is gentle and kind whereas Heathcliff is strong and almost brutal. He is also contrasted with Heathcliff in respect of the latter's vulgarity. One must not forget that he also loves Catherine deeply though his love is not fierce and demonstrative like that of Heathcliff. A profound change takes place in him after the death of Catherine. One must almost say that he is ennobled by the sufferings through which he passes. Similarly, he has a deep love for his daughter Catherine Linton.

Catherine is impressed by the outward charm and sophistication of Edgar. Although

she loves Heathcliff and not Edgar, she marries the latter, because she cannot think of marrying a penniless uncouth man like Heathcliff. Edgar, in his own way, loves Catherine as sincerely as does Heathcliff. He shows remarkable tolerance in satisfying the wishes of his wife during her last days, so far as meeting Heathcliff is concerned. Her death comes as a great shock to him and turns him into a recluse. He bears this loss in a way which contrasts him with both Heathcliff and Hindley.

Edgar knows in marrying Isabella Heathcliff is doing so only as a step in wreaking his vengeance. He forcibly confines Catherine Linton and makes her marry his dying son, Linton Heathcliff. He does his best to see that Catherine does not meet her dying father, but fails in this. Through the marriage of Catherine Linton and Linton Heathcliff he secures all the property of Edgar also. Of all the characters in the novel Edgar Linton perhaps suffers most at the hands of Heathcliff, but for the most part he bears his agonies bravely. The only consolation in his life is that he dies peacefully in the arms of his beloved daughter.

#### **(d) Catherine (Cathy) Linton**

Catherine Linton is her mother's child in the sense that she has inherited in full measure her charm and fascination. In particular she has the bewitching eyes of the elder Cathrine, and it is this fact which saves her from being more brutally treated by Heathcliff, for he cannot stand the sight of her eyes which remind him of his own Catherine. It appears also that she has inherited the best qualities of both the Earnshaws and the Lintons.

Where the elder Catherine was somewhat lukewarm or indifferent towards her father, Catherine Linton has obviously great affection for Edgar Linton. She watches over the ever-complaining Linton Heathcliff almost like a mother, though his cowardliness moves her to contempt. Her rough treatment of Hareton at first reminds us of the more unruly aspect of her mother but we see that she soon makes amends.

The fact that Cathy who by marriage first becomes Mrs Heathcliff and then Mrs Earnshaw, has features of the Earnshaws as well the Lintons is symbolic of the fact that she is fated to bring about a reconciliation between the two antagonistic families. She has genuine affection for the sickly Linton Heathcliff, although he deliberately torments her. She reclaims Hareton and sets at naught. Heathcliff's plan of bending him to his own evil purposes, as he had done in the case of his father, Hindley. It is possible to view the union of Heathcliff and elder Cathrine as prohibited by the fact that they are almost in the relationship of brother and sister to each other. However, there can be no such objection to the marriage of Hareton and younger Catherine because they are only cousins.

Inheriting Edgar Linton's gentleness without his weakness, Cathy's spirit without her savagery, Cathy is a fuller and more balanced human being than either.

#### **(e) Isabella Linton**

Isabella is a typical Linton. She has all the weakness, and colourless goodness of her

family. She is clearly spoiled by being pampered. Her fate in life seems to be that of becoming the medium through which Heathcliff can wreak his vengeance on the Lintons. There is a terrible element of inevitability in the way in which she becomes infatuated with Heathcliff.

Heathcliff does not take much time in revealing his true nature to her because the first act that he commits after Isabella has consented to elope with him is that of hanging her pet Spaniel, and saying that he wishes he could have the hanging of everyone connected with the Lintons except one—that is, Catherine Earnshaw who has married her brother Edgar. There is great pathos in the fate, largely undeserved, that engulfs this luckless girl.

However, in spite of being treated most cruelly by him she does not join Hindley in his proposed conspiracy to murder Heathcliff, but rather warns him off so that Heathcliff is able to save himself from being attacked by Hindley. She is able to see through Heathcliff's nature ultimately, realising that if she did not show that she was suffering acutely he would not trouble her much.

### **15.4.3 Minor Characters**

#### **(a) Hindley Earnshaw**

Hindley Earnshaw is the only son of Mr Earnshaw and as such the heir to his estate of *Wuthering Heights*. Since Mr Earnshaw meets with early death, Hindley comes into his property soon enough. He proves to be a very cruel master, especially in his attitude to Heathcliff. He is a perfect representative of the Earnshaw unruliness, which stands in need of being tempered with the Linton gentleness and sweetness, as we witness in the character of the Cathy.

Hindley has mortally hated Heathcliff ever since he was brought by his father. This hatred was of course much increased by the fact that Heathcliff took full advantage of Mr Earnshaw's partiality for him and made Hindley yield to him on every point. Hindley was nursing a grudge against Heathcliff and the moment his father dies he gets an unfettered opportunity to wreak his brutal vengeance on Heathcliff. The brutalisation of Heathcliff can no doubt be partly ascribed to the cruel treatment of him by Hindley.

The only redeeming feature in Hindley's character is his love for his wife, Frances. He is passionately fond of her and attends to her devotedly when she suffers from tuberculosis. There is something pitiable in his reaction to her death, because for long he does not admit that her condition is growing worse ; he in fact believes that she is improving, and the shock of her death is too much for him.

#### **(b) Hareton Earnshaw**

Hareton Earnshaw is the son of Hindley and Frances. It is significant that his name is the same as that of the original owner of *Wuthering Heights*, whose name is written on the building. It is equally significant that his life is saved, though instinctively, by Heathcliff, as he falls out of the hands of his father.

Heathcliff's revenge on Hindley extends to his son Hareton also. He resolves to keep him brutal, uneducated and uncivilised. To some extent his efforts succeed, because Hareton is found hanging a whole litter of puppies and abusing and stoning the visitors to the Heights. It is astonishing, however, that in spite of Heathcliff's cruelty the lad has a great attachment for him, of which Heathcliff also is aware. He is the only person who feels the death of Heathcliff. In his last days Heathcliff looked upon him as an incarnation of his own past.

Hareton is jealous of the attentions that Catherine Linton, who becomes Catherine Heathcliff after her enforced first marriage, pays to Linton Heathcliff. His own interest in her, which he evinces after Linton Heathcliff's death, is rebuffed by her. His efforts to educate himself are scoffed at by Catherine. Later, however, she relents towards him and helps him in educating himself, liberally rewarding him with kisses when he makes progress. It seems as if the unhappy love of the older Catherine and Heathcliff relives in the persons of Hareton and the younger Catherine. The novel closes with the information that Hareton and Catherine are to be married on New Year's day and to shift from Wuthering Heights to Thrushcross Grange.

#### **15.4.4 Structure**

It is not really true to say that the chief characters exist in virtue of their attitude to the universe and the huge cosmic landscape. It would hardly be possible to create a novel in those terms. True, we are never far from the natural world. Although Emily, unlike Charlotte in *Jane Eyre*, gives no long descriptive accounts of the moors, yet they are fused into the life and language of the characters on every page; their winds, skies and streams, their rock-ribbed surface and rolling stretches of heather and bluebells, their sunlight and moonlight, their stillness and storms, their many birds, their "suffocating snow", and summer days with "the whole world awake and wild with joy". Though one dimension of the book is cosmic in sweep it deals directly with human relationships, which differ intrinsically from natural forces in that they are inevitably bound up with emotional and moral problems and conflicts and choices. The novel moves indeed on three levels, all interfused; the realistic, the emotional and moral, and the world of pure spirit. We shift from one to another within a few lines.

#### **15.4.5 Universality**

The chief characters exist in virtue of their attitude to the universe and the huge cosmic landscape. It was possible to create a novel in those terms. True, we are never far from the natural world. Although Emily, unlike Charlotte in *Jane Eyre*, gives no long descriptive accounts of the moors, yet they are fused into the life and language of the characters on every page; their winds, skies and streams, their rock-ribbed surface and rolling stretches of heather and bluebells, their sunlight and moonlight, their stillness and storms, their many birds, their "suffocating snow," and summer days with "the whole world awake and wild with joy."

Emily's experience, though more intense, is on a level with our own. But there is no "I" in *Wuthering Heights*. There are no employers. There is love, but it is not the love of men and

women. Emily was inspired by some more general conception. The impulse which urged her to create was not her own suffering or her own injuries. She looked out upon a world cleft into gigantic disorder and felt within her the power to unite it in a book. That gigantic ambition is to be felt throughout the novel – a struggle, half thwarted but of superb conviction, to say something through the mouths of her characters which is not merely “I love” or “I hate” but “we, the whole human race” and “you, the eternal powers...” the sentence remains unfinished.

At the same time, like all other novels, it deals directly with human relationships, which differ intrinsically from natural forces in that they are inevitably bound up with emotional and moral problems and conflicts and choices.

---

## 15.5 Let Us Sum Up

---

After reading and understanding the story, structure, symbolism, techniques and style of the novel and then understanding the major and minor characters and their behaviours, you will be able to :

- (i) appreciate the characters in the novel,
- (ii) evaluate and analyse the characters,
- (iii) understand the style, techniques and symbolic narration by the novelist,
- (iv) discuss characteristic features of different characters,
- (v) analyse various influences in the novel and
- (vi) evaluate and analyse Emily Bronte’s position as a novelist.

---

## 15.6 Review Questions

---

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of Wuthering Heights.
2. Write a note on the connection between theme and structure in Wuthering Heights.
3. Discuss the means used by Emily Bronte to secure structural unity.
4. Attempt a defence of conduct and character of Heathcliff.
5. Comment on Nelly’s role as narrator.
6. What is the significance of Lockwood’s dream?
7. Comment on novelty and effectiveness of Emily Bronte’s technique.
8. Point out how Wuthering Heights rises above the works of the Gothic School of fiction.
9. Write a note on Emily Bronte’s understanding of the darkness inherent in poorer sections of society.



10. Comment on the significance of the recurrence of domestic routine in *Wuthering Heights*.

---

### **15.7 Bibliography**

---

1. Baker, E.A., History of the English Novel, 1940.
  2. Ewbank, I.S., Their Proper Sphere : A Study of the Bronte Sisters, 1966.
  3. Hindkley, Laura L., Emily Bronte, 1947.
  4. Holbrook, Jackson, Great English Novelists, London, 1998.
  5. Johnson, R.B., Women Novelists, London, 1918.
  6. Kavanagh, C., The Symbolism of Wuthering Heights, London, 1920.
  7. Rai, V., Landmarks in the History of English Literature (3 Volumes), Varanasi, Bhartiya Vidya Prakashan, 1967.
  8. Sampson, George, A Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, CUP, 1972.
  9. Verma, S., Origins and Offsprings of English Literature, Nagpur, Viswa Bharti Prakashan, 1970.
-

## UNIT-16

---

### WILLIAM MAKEPIECE THACKERAY: VANITY FAIR-I

---

#### Structure

- 16.0 Objectives
- 16.1 Main Literary Characteristics of Victorian Age
- 16.2 About the Author
- 16.3 Introduction to the Novel
- 16.4 The Story in Brief: ‘Vanity Fair’
- 16.5 Selected Passages from the text
- 16.6 Waterloo
- 16.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.8 Review Questions
- 16.9 Bibliography

---

#### 16.0 Objectives

---

The Nineteenth Century was a great age of the English novel. It was the best vehicle equipped to present an apt picture of the society. It truly fulfilled the demands of art and expectations of its audience. At large, there was a restless search for some new society with modification of the old forms. William Makepiece Thackeray was considered to be the major novelist of the time. Therefore, it becomes imperative for the students of literature to study about Thackeray.

---

#### 16.1 Main literary characteristics of Victorian age

---

‘Strictly speaking, the Victorian age ought to correspond with the reign of Queen Victoria and extend from 1837 to 1901. But one should keep in mind that literary movements rarely coincide with the exact year of a royal accession or death. Without ignoring the influence of Queen on English Society we must think mainly of the social, economic, political factors including the customs and the life of the Victorian People.’

The literature of the reign of Victoria presented a great social change and intellectual advancement. Among the many circumstances that were responsible for sweeping change the chief one was the growth of democracy. The reform bill of 1832 placed the political power of England in the hands of the middle classes. Elementary Education became accessible and the

number of readers increased. All the great Victorian Writers attempted to instruct or inspire the huge mass of society.

**1. The Humanitarian Sprit**

The humanitarian spirit that was an integral element in the Romantic Movement was stirred by the social and economic consequences of the Industrial Revolution.

**2. Revolt against Materialism**

There is a note of revolt against the deification of material progress. The revolt is explicit in Tennyson, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold and in most of the novelists.

**3. Revival of interest in past ages**

The poets turned to the other ages for inspiration, Tennyson's finest work is to be in his classical poems. Arnold and Swinburne turned towards the Greeks. Browning's interest was in the Renaissance. The chief historical interest of the time was in the middle ages.

**4. Great speculative activity**

Writer's flight to other ages, in their denunciations of commercialism, they were in search of the great need of the time a new faith.

**5. The Oxford movement**

The Oxford movement was an attempt to recover a lost tradition. The theologians of the movement wished to rediscover and restore the virtues by directing their attention to the history of middle ages. They also tried to rediscover the ritual and art of the medieval church. This movement had a tremendous impact on the intellectual life of the time and it definitely influenced the writings of the most of the great writers.

**6. Moral Purpose**

Moral purpose is the keynote of the literature of the Victorian age. William .J. Long remarks: 'The marked characteristic of the age is that literature both in prose and in poetry seems to depart from the purely artistic standard, of art for art's sake and to be actuated by a definite moral purpose.'

"Even the novel breaks away from romantic influence and studies life as it is and then points out what life may and ought to be. Whether we read the sentiments of Dickens, the social miniatures of Thackeray or the psychological studies of George Eliot, we find in almost every writer a definite purpose to sweep away the error and reveal the underlying truth of human life. So the novel sought to find the truth and show how it might be used to uplift humanity."

---

## 16.2 About The Author

---

William Makepeace Thackeray: was born at Calcutta in 1811. He entered the charter house in 1822 and went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1829 leaving in the following year. He spent sometime in Paris and Weimar studying French, German and Drawing. On returning to England he read for the Bar but found this uncongenial, so he entered into journalism. He came to literature through journalism and his early work consist of sketches, essays, satires much humorous and descriptive writings. His fame as a novelist was assured by the publication of *Vanity Fair* but he also won great success with his lectures (in England and America) He became editor of *Cornhill* and died in 1863.

**His major works include:** *The yellowpinsh* correspondence (1837-38), *The Book of Snobs* (1849), *The History of Samuel Titmarsh* and *The Great Hoggarty Diamond* (1841), *The Fitzboodle papers* (1842-43), *The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon* (1844) In *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) the genius of Thackeray reaches high watermark. His other important novels are: *Pendennis* (1849-1850), *Henry Esmond*(1852) *The New Comes*(1855), and *The Virginians*(1859).

---

## 16.3 Introduction to the Novel

---

The term “Vanity Fair” originates from the allegorical story ***The Pilgrims Progress***, published in 1678 by John Bunyan, where there is a town fair held in a village called vanity. For Bunyan, Vanity Fair comprises all the worldly activities which distract the Christian from salvation and lead to damnation, they are vanities which bring risks to the immortal soul. The phrase “Vanity Fair” came to mean a place where all is frivolity and empty show; the world or a section of it as a scene of idle amusement and unsubstantial display (Oxford English Dictionary or OED). Thackeray believed that everyone lives in Vanity Fair or society; Vanity has become the desire for society’s approval and rewards; the individual seeks success, wealth instead of spiritual salvation.

This novel is a Novel without a Hero by William Makepeace Thackeray that satirizes society in early 19th-century England. The novel has inspired several film adaptations.

*Vanity Fair* was published as a serial before being sold in book form; it was printed in 20 monthly parts between January 1847 and July 1848. The parts resembled pamphlets, and contained the text of several chapters between outer pages of steel-plate engravings and advertising. Woodcut engravings, which could be set along with normal moveable type, appeared within the text. The same engraved illustration appeared on the canary-yellow cover of each monthly part; this colour became Thackeray’s signature. *Vanity Fair* was the first work that Thackeray published under his own name, and was extremely well-received at the time. The original monthly numbers and later bound version featured Thackeray’s own illustrations, which at times provided plot hints or symbolically freighted images which made it easier to

understand the text.

The novel is considered a classic of English literature, though some critics claim that it has structural problems. Thackeray meant the book to be both instructive and entertaining and this intention is demonstrated through the book's narration.

---

#### **16.4 Story in Brief: 'Vanity Fair'**

---

The story opens at Miss Pinkerton's Academy for Young Ladies, where the protagonists Becky Sharp and Amelia Sedley have just completed their studies and are preparing to depart for Amelia's house in Russell Square. Becky is portrayed as a strong-willed and cunning young woman determined to make her way in society, and Amelia Sedley as a good natured, loveable, though simple-minded young girl. At Russell Square, Miss Sharp is introduced to the dashing and self-obsessed Captain George Osborne (to whom Amelia has been betrothed from a very young age) and to Amelia's brother Joseph Sedley, a clumsy and vain-glorious but rich civil-servant fresh from India. Becky entices Sedley, hoping to marry him, but she fails because of warnings from Captain Osborne Sedley's own native shyness, and his embarrassment over some foolish behavior of his that Becky had witnessed at Vauxhall.

With this, Becky Sharp says farewell to Sedley's family and enters the service of the baronet Sir Pitt Crawley, who has engaged her as a governess to his daughters. Her behaviour at Sir Pitt's house gains his favour, and after the premature death of his second wife, he proposes to her. However, he finds that she is already secretly married to his second son, Rawdon Crawley. Sir Pitt's half sister, the spinster Miss Crawley, is very rich, having inherited her mother's fortune of £70,000. How she will bequeath her great wealth is a source of constant conflict between the branches of the Crawley family who vie shamelessly for her affections; initially her favorite is Sir Pitt's younger son, Captain Rawdon Crawley. For some time, Becky acts as Miss Crawley's companion, makes an attempt to establish herself in favor before breaking the news of her elopement with Miss Crawley's nephew. This enrages Miss Crawley, and as a result she disinherits her nephew in favour of his elder brother, Pitt Crawley. The married couple constantly attempts to reconcile with Miss Crawley, and finally she relents a little. She agrees to see her nephew and refuses to change her will.

While Becky Sharp is prospering, Amelia's father, John Sedley, is bankrupted. The Sedleys and Osbornes were once close allies. The relationship between the two families disintegrates, and the marriage of Amelia and George is forbidden. George ultimately decides to marry Amelia against his father's will, primarily due to the pressure of his friend Dobbin, and George is consequently disinherited. While these personal events take place, the Napoleonic Wars have been ramping up. George Osborne and William Dobbin are suddenly deployed to Brussels, but not before an encounter with Becky and Captain Crawley at Brighton. The holiday is interrupted by orders to march to Brussels. The newly wedded Osborne is growing tired of Amelia, and he becomes increasingly attracted to Becky.

At a ball in Brussels, George gives Becky a note inviting her to run away with him. He regrets this afterwards and reconciles with Amelia, who has been deeply hurt by his act. The morning after, he is sent to Waterloo with Captain Crawley and Dobbin, leaving Amelia distraught. Becky, on the other hand, is virtually indifferent about her husband's departure. She tries to console Amelia, but Amelia responds angrily, disgusted by Becky's flirtatious behavior with George and her lack of concern about Captain Crawley. Becky resents this snub and a rift develops between the two women that lasts for years. Becky is not very concerned for the outcome of the war. She plans to become the mistress of one of his marshals, if Napoleon wins and meanwhile she makes a profit by selling her carriage and horses at high prices to Britons seeking to flee the city, where the Belgian population is pro-Napoleonic.

Captain Crawley survives, but George dies in the battle. Amelia bears him a posthumous son, George. She returns to live in genteel poverty with her parents. Meanwhile, since the death of George, Dobbin, who is young George's godfather, gradually begins to express his love for the widowed Amelia by small kindnesses towards her and her son. Most notable is the recovery of an old piano, that Dobbin picks up at an auction following the Sedleys' ruin. Amelia mistakenly assumes this was done by her late husband. She is too much in love with George's memory to return Dobbin's affections. Saddened, he goes to India for many years. Dobbin's infatuation with Amelia is a theme which unifies the novel and one which many have compared to Thackeray's unrequited love for a friend's wife.

Meanwhile, Becky also has a son, named after his father, but unlike Amelia, who dotes on and even spoils her child, Becky is a cold, distant mother. Her success is unstoppable despite her humble origins, and she is eventually presented at court to the Prince Regent himself.

Becky and Rawdon appear to be financially successful, but their wealth and high standard of living are mostly smoke and mirrors. Rawdon gambles heavily and earns money as a billiards shark. The book also suggests he cheats at cards. Becky accepts trinkets and money from her many admirers and sells some for cash. She also borrows heavily from the people around her and seldom pays bills. The couple lives mostly on credit, and while Rawdon seems to be too dim-witted to be aware of the effect of his borrowing on the people around him, Becky is fully aware that her heavy borrowing and her failure to pay bills bankrupts two innocent people: her servant Briggs, whose life savings Becky borrows and fritters away, and her landlord Raggles, who was formerly a butler to the Crawley family and who invested his life savings in the townhouse that Becky and Rawdon rent. She also cheats innkeepers, milliners, dress-makers, grocers, and all kinds of people who do business on credit. She and Rawdon obtain credit by they tricking everyone around them into believing they are receiving money from others. At different times, Becky and Rawdon buy time from their creditors by suggesting Rawdon received money in Miss Crawley's will or are being paid a stipend by Sir Pitt. Ultimately Becky is suspected of carrying on an extramarital affair with Lord Steyne, allowed by Rawdon to prostitute herself in exchange for money and promotion.

At the summit of her success, Becky's relationship with the rich Marquess of Steyne is discovered by Rawdon afterwards. Rawdon is arrested for debt. His brother's wife, Lady Jane, bails him out and he surprises Becky and Steyne in a compromising moment. Rawdon leaves his wife and through the offices of Lord Steyne is made Governor of Coventry Island to get him out of the way, after Rawdon challenges the elderly marquess to a duel. Becky, having lost both husband and credibility, is warned by Steyne to quit England and wanders the continent. Rawdon and Becky's son is left in the care of Pitt Crawley and Lady Jane. However wherever Becky goes, she is followed by the shadow of Lord Steyne. No sooner does she establish herself in polite society than someone turns up who knows her disreputable history and spreads rumours; Steyne himself hounds her out of Rome.

As Amelia's son George grows up, his grandfather relents and takes him from poor Amelia, she knows that the rich and bitter old man will give him a much better start in life than she or her family could ever manage. After twelve years abroad both Joseph Sedley and William Dobbin return to England. Dobbin professes his unchanged love to Amelia, but although Amelia is affectionate, she tells him she cannot forget the memory of her dead husband. Dobbin also becomes close to George, and his kind firm manner are a good influence on the spoilt child. While in England, Dobbin mediates a reconciliation between Amelia and her father-in-law. The death of Amelia's mother prevents their meeting, but following Osborne's death soon after, it is revealed that he had amended his will and bequeathed young George half his large fortune and Amelia a generous annuity. The rest is divided between his daughters, Miss Osborne, and Mrs Bullock, who begrudges Amelia and her son for the decrease in her annuity.

After the death of old Mr. Osborne, Amelia, Joseph, George and Dobbin go on a trip to Germany, where they encounter the destitute Becky. She meets the young George Osborne at a card table and then enchants Jos Sedley. Becky has unfortunately deteriorated as a character. She is drunk heavily, has lost her singing voice and much of her looks, and spends time with card sharks and con artists. The plot suggests that Becky has been involved in activities even more shady than her usual con games, but does not go into details. There have been earlier hints about Becky's early life with her father, some of which suggest that Becky was a child prostitute. Following Jos' entreaties, Amelia agrees to a reconciliation, much to Dobbin's disapproval. Dobbin quarrels with Amelia and finally realizes that he is wasting his love on a woman too shallow to return it. However, Becky, in a moment of conscience, shows Amelia the note that George had given her, asking her to run away with him. This destroys Amelia's idealized image of George, but not before Amelia has sent a note to Dobbin professing her love.

Becky resumes her seduction of Joseph Sedley and gains control over him. He eventually dies of a suspicious ailment after signing a portion of his money to Becky as life insurance.

By a twist of fate Rawdon Crawley dies weeks before his older brother, whose son

has already died. Thus the baronetcy descends to Rawdon's son. Had he outlived his brother by even a day he would have become Sir Rawdon Crawley and Becky would have become Lady Crawley - the title she uses regardless in later life.

The reader is informed at the end of the novel that although Dobbin married Amelia, and although he always treated her with great kindness, he never fully regained the love that he had once had for her.

---

## 16.7 Selected Passages from the Text

---

The readers should alert themselves while reading the text they should read between the lines and beyond the lines to derive at the better understanding of the intellectual and emotional state of the character besides getting the view of socio-political and economic conditions of then England.

### Passage 1

How is this? some carping reader exclaims. How is it that Amelia, who had such a number of friends at school, and was so beloved there, comes out into the world and is spurned by her discriminating sex. My dear sir, there were no men at Miss Pinkerton's establishment except the old dancing-master; and you would not have had the girls fall out about him? When George, their handsome brother, ran off directly after breakfast, and drifted from home half-a-dozen times a week, no wonder the neglected sisters felt a little vexation. When young Bullock (of the firm Hulker, Bullock & Co., Bankers, Lombard Street), who had been making up to Miss Maria the last two season, actually asked Amelia to dance the cotillion, could you expect that the former young lady should be pleased? (Chapter XII, page 130).

**Comment:** The passage conveys the moral vanity, weakness and emotional jealousies of women towards Amelia.

### Passage 2

The best of women (I have heard my grandmother say) are hypocrites. We don't know how much they hide from us: how watchful they are when they seem most artless and confidential: how often those frank smiles which they wear so easily, are traps to cajole or elude or disarm—I don't mean in your mere coquettes, but your domestic models, and paragons of female virtue. Who has not seen a woman hide the dulness of a stupid husband, or coax the fury of a savage one? We accept this amiable slavishness, and praise a woman for it: we call this pretty treachery truth. A good housewife is of necessity a humbug; and Cornelia's husband was hoodwinked, as Potiphar was—only in a different way (Chapter XVII, page 197).

**Comment:** This passage reflects the hypocrisy of women characters and it is a comment on Becky and Amelia as wives.



### Passage 3

All which attacks the poor companion bore with meekness, with cowardice, with a resignation that was half generous and half hypocritical—with the slavish submission, in a word, that women of her disposition and station are compelled to show. Who has not seen how women bully women? What tortures have men to endure, comparable to those daily repeated shafts of scorn and cruelty with which poor women are riddled by the tyrants of their sex? Poor victims! (Chapter XXXIII, page 354-5).

**Comment:** The writer has used third person narrative to convey the atrocities committed at the hands of Miss. Briggs and Miss. Crawley.

### Passage 4

I know few things more affecting than that timorous debasement and self-humiliation of a woman. How she owns that it is she and not the man who is guilty; how she takes all the faults on her side; how she courts in a manner punishment for the wrongs which she has not committed and persists in shielding the real culprit. It is those who injure women who get the most kindness from them—they are born timid and tyrants and maltreat those who are humblest before them (Chapter L, pages 590-1)

**Comment:** These lines reflect the selfless concern about Georgy. She analyses how selfishness prevents Georgy to have education and pleasures from his Grandfather.

### Passage 5

The illness of that old lady had been the occupation and perhaps the safeguard of Amelia. What do men know about women's martyrdoms? We should go mad had we to endure the hundredth part of those daily pains which are meekly borne by many women. Ceaseless slavery meeting with no reward; constant gentleness and kindness met by cruelty as constant; love, labour, patience, watchfulness, without even so much as the acknowledgment of a good word; all this, how many of them have to bear in quiet, and appear abroad with cheerful faces as if they felt nothing. Tender slaves that they are, they must needs be hypocrites and weak (Chapter LVI, page 674).

**Comment:** Amelia seeks solace by nursing her dying mother.

### Passage 6

O you poor secret martyrs and victims, whose life is a torture, who are stretched on racks in your bedrooms, and who lay your heads down on the block daily at the drawing-room table; every man who watches your pains, or peers into those dark places where the torture is administered to you, must pity you—and—and thank God that he has a beard.... if you properly tyrannize over a woman, you will find a h'p'orth of kindness act upon her and bring

tears into her eyes, as though you were an angel benefiting her (Chapter LVII, pages 678-9).

**Comment:** This paragraph is a comment on Amelia's sacrificing nature. She accepts money from Osborne after Georgy goes to his Grandfather. She needs protection and money for her survival. This also reflects her poverty, humility, and suffering.

---

## 16.6 Waterloo

---

The novel is set up against the back drop of Waterloo. Hence, it becomes important for the reader to give attention to this element of the plot. At Brussels, Becky is a social success and moves in the highest military circles, though there is a suggestion of impropriety in the Crawleys' sharing a suite with General Tufto, which are "very close indeed to those of the General" (333). George the snob and egotist, pursues her and imagines he has made a conquest. At the Opera, he does not see the "queerest, knowingest look" Becky gives him, communicating that she is making a fool of the General, because George is "lost in pompous admiration of his own irresistible powers of pleasing" (chapter XXIX, page 331).

Honest Dobbin, neither a snob nor an egotist, like George sees the truth about Becky, who dislikes and fears him because of his clear vision and her inability to manipulate him. He sees her as a person who "writhes and twists about like a snake. All the time she was here, didn't you see, George, how she was acting at the General over the way?" (chapter XXIX, page 332). Thackeray uses the snake image to describe the note "coiled like a snake" in the bouquet George hands Becky (chapter XXIX, 338) and to describe Becky as a siren (chapter LXIV, pages 759-60). The snake image is also associated with Becky in two initial drawings: Becky as siren in Chapter LXIV and Becky as snake in Chapter XIV. The images convey a lot about Becky's character.

The call to battle comes during the ball. Thackeray chooses to describe, not the heroics and gallantry of a battle which determined the fate of Europe and England, but the varied reactions of civilians, soldiers setting off for battle and soldiers returned from battle. By and large, the civilians and soldiers in Brussels are selfish, venal, cowardly, hypocritical, and/or snobbish:

George writes to his father a farewell letter in which love is mixed with pride, snobbery, and selfishness. He temporarily feels regret at having squandered his money because Amelia will be left in poverty if he dies and at his plan to run away with Becky: "Good God! how pure she was; how gentle, how tender, and how friendless! and he, how selfish, brutal, and black with crime! Heart-stained, and shame-stricken, he stood at the bed's foot, and looked at the sleeping girl. How dared he—who was he, to pray for one so spotless! God bless her! God bless her!" (chapter XXIX, page 340). This is all well and good, but very soon he is relieved at parting from her and eager for the battle: "'Thank Heaven that is over,' George thought, bounding down the stair... his pulse was throbbing and his cheeks flushed: the great game of war was going to be played, and he one of the players. What a fierce excitement of

doubt, hope, and pleasure! What tremendous hazards of loss or gain! What were all the games of chance he had ever played compared to this one?" (chapter XXX, page 350).

**Comments:**

Becky pretends distress at Rawdon's going off to war; but once he is gone, she promptly falls asleep. Later she reviews her financial position with satisfaction, light-heartedly visits Amelia, and extorts a small fortune from Jos for her horses.

The cowardly Jos and Bareacres, like large numbers of their compatriots, decide to flee. The image of Lady Bareacres and company sitting in their stately coach without horses and in all her pride of rank is unforgettable. These characters represent the middle class and aristocracy.

Amelia, in her selfish devotion to George, is utterly useless as he prepares to leave for battle. She wallows in misery, so that she becomes a burden to others, who must look after her. "No man writhing in pain on the hard-fought field fifteen miles off, where lay, after their struggles, so many of the brave—no man suffered more keenly than this poor harmless victim of the war" (chapter XXXII, page 375)? Though helping to nurse the wounded Stubble keeps her from brooding over her fears, she listens to him only when George is mentioned and when George isn't, she thinks about him.

Jos's servant, Isidor, looks forward to appropriating all of Jos's clothes after the British are defeated. The cowardly Belgian soldiers, represented by Pauline's admirer, flee, lie about their bravery under impossible conditions, and spread rumors of a British defeat. Anticipating Napoleon's victory, a vast number of Belgians reveal their hypocrisy and their true sympathy for Napoleon.

Not all the characters lack kindness and concern for others. The good-hearted, if comic, Peggy O'Dowd prepares her husband's clothes and coffee, thinks of the "bad dinner those poor boys will get" (chapter XXXII, page 364), and tends to the self-incapacitated Amelia. Rawdon takes what actions he can to provide for Becky's financial situation should he not return and rides off to battle quietly, thinking of her. It is Dobbin, not George, who extracts a promise from Jos to take care of Amelia if the British lose.

Thackeray's handling of Waterloo develops his central theme and title; the most momentous events are a continuation of *Vanity Fair*. All is vanity, down to the ostentatious monuments that are mass produced for the war dead. Carved on George's monument are the "pompous Osborne arms" and the Latin motto, "It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country" (chapter XXXV, page 417). The motto is especially ironic because George's death is stripped of any military glory or heroism; it is relegated to a subordinate clause after a series of ordinary, subdued details—Brussels is quiet, night falls, Amelia is praying, and George lies dead. Although Mr. Osborne loved his son and grieves for him, his vanity and selfishness do not allow him to forgive George for not apologizing: "Old Osborne did not speculate much upon the

mingled nature of his feelings, and how his instinct and selfishness were combating together. He firmly believed that everything he did was right, that he ought on all occasions to have his own way” (chapter XXXV, page 420).

Not even death releases the hold which Vanity Fair has on us.

---

## 16.7 Let Us Sum Up

---

Thus we see how William Makepeace Thackeray came more slowly, by way of satiric journalism, to the full possession of his power in *Vanity Fair*. Satire is still the determining bias of this great creative picture, and the novel is ‘without a hero’, not merely because the ‘hero’ is a woman. By his ridicule and his creative work he brought the novel once more into the stream of realistic tendency, where since ‘pickwick’ it had not kept a steady course.

---

## 16.8 Review Questions

---

1. Assess the structural merits or weakness (if any) of *Vanity Fair*.
2. Comment on the title of Thackeray’s novel ‘*Vanity Fair*’.
3. Why is *Vanity Fair* regarded as a novel without a hero?

---

## 16.9 Bibliography

---

1. Colby, Robert A., Historical Introduction, in *Vanity Fair*, Garland, 1989.
2. Ferris, Ina. William Makepeace Thackeray. Boston: Twayne, 1983.
3. Karlson, Marilyn Naufftus, William Makepeace Thackeray, in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 55: Victorian Prose Writers Before 1867*, edited by William B. Thesing, Gale Research, 1987.
4. Mitchell, Sally, Daily Life in Victorian England, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996
5. Monsarrat, Ann. An Uneasy Victorian: Thackeray the Man, 1811-1863. London: Cassell, 1980.
6. Peters, Catherine. Thackeray’s Universe: Shifting Worlds of Imagination and Reality. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.
7. Peters, Catherine, Thackeray: A Writer’s Life, Sutton Publishing, 2000.
8. Praver, Siegbert S.: W. M. Thackeray’s European sketch books : a study of literary and graphic portraiture. Oxford ; New York : P. Lang, 2000.
9. Ray, Gordon N., ed., The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray, Vol. 2, Harvard University Press, 1945 – 1946.
10. Ray, Gordon N. Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity, 1811-1846. New York: McGraw-

Hill, 1955.

11. Review of Vanity Fair, in *London Review*, Vol. XVI, No. XXXII, July 1861.
12. Rigby, Elizabeth, Review of Vanity Fair, in *Quarterly Review*, December 1848.
13. Ritchie, Anne Thackeray. Introductions to the Biographical Edition of the Works of William Makepeace Thackeray. New York: Harpers, 1899
14. Shillingsburg, Peter. William Makepeace Thackeray: A Literary Life. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.
15. Thackeray, William Makepeace, Thackerayana, Haskell House, 1970.
16. Williams, Ioan M. Thackeray. London: Evans, 1968.
17. William Makepeace Thackeray: Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero, in *Characters in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Gale Research, 1993.

---

## UNIT-17

---

### WILLIAM MAKEPIECE THACKERAY: VANITY FAIR-II

---

#### Structure

- 17.0 Objectives
- 17.1 Introduction to Major Characters of the Novel
- 17.2 Themes of Vanity Fair
- 17.3 Illustrations From Vanity Fair
- 17.4 The Subtitle: A Novel Without a Hero
- 17.5 Critics on Vanity Fair
- 17.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 17.7 Review Questions
- 17.8 Bibliography

---

#### 17.0 Objectives

---

- To comprehend the various themes given in the novel
- To gain experience of reading and understanding the characters
- To understand the novel through a series of guided illustrations and passages.

---

#### 17.1 Introduction to Major Characters

---

##### Becky Sharp Crawley

The heroine, Becky is an intelligent young woman with a gift of satire. She is described as a petite redhead with green eyes and a great deal of wit and fluent in both French and English. Becky has a beautiful singing voice, piano, and great talent as an actress. She is also completely amoral and without conscience. She does not seem to have the ability to get attached to other people, and lies easily and intelligently to get her way. She is extremely manipulative and after the first few chapters and her failure to attract Jos Sedley is not shown as being particularly sincere.

She has not known financial or social security even as a child. Everything she does is with the intention of securing a stable position for herself and her husband after she and Rawdon are married. She advances Rawdon's interests tirelessly, flirting with men such as General Tufto and the Marquess of Steyne in order to get him promoted. She also uses her feminine wiles to distract men at card parties while Rawdon cheats them blindly.

Becky makes a few mistakes. Marrying Rawdon Crawley in secret was a mistake, as was running off instead of begging Miss Crawley's forgiveness. She also fails to manipulate Miss Crawley through Rawdon so as to obtain an inheritance. Although Becky manipulates men very easily, she does not even try to cultivate the friendship of most women. Lady Jane, the Dobbin sisters, and Lady Steyne see right through her.

Becky has much more appeal than Amelia for most readers, as Thackeray acknowledged:

The famous little Becky Puppet has been pronounced to be uncommonly flexible in the joints, and lively on the wire; the Amelia Doll, though it has had a smaller circle of admirers, has yet been carved and dressed with the greatest care by the artist... (x).

Born with no advantages, in a society that values rank and wealth, Becky makes her way to the highest levels of society through her own resources, with determination, intelligence, hard work, and talent. She is resourceful and bounces back from every reversal. At the same time, her behavior and character are morally indefensible; she constantly manipulates others, she lies, she cheats, she steals, she betrays Amelia, and perhaps she even commits a murder. As the novel progresses, some readers feel that she becomes more dangerous and villainous.

Dyson explains Becky's appeal in terms of the corrupt nature of society and her role in that society:

..surely we do admire Becky, and legitimately, however glad we are to be outside the range of her wiles? The fact is that she belongs to Vanity Fair, both as its true reflection, and as its victim; for both of which reasons, she very resoundingly serves it right. Like Jonson's Volpone, she is a fitting scourge for the world which created her—fitting aesthetically, in the way of poetic justice, and fittingly moral, in that much of her evil is effective only against those who share her taint. Dobbins is largely immune to her, since he is neither a trifler, a hypocrite nor a snob. The other characters are all vulnerable in one or other of these ways, and we notice that those who judge her most harshly are frequently the ones who have least earned such a right.

### **Amelia Sedley**

Amelia is Becky's opposite: pale, passive, and emotionally devoted to her husband and son. Amelia seems to be the conventional heroine—sweet, passive, self-sacrificing, gentle, tender, and loving. And Thackeray calls her a heroine—at times, but he contradicts himself at other times and says she is not a heroine. In addition, he repeatedly calls Amelia “weak” and “selfish.” Of Dobbin's faithful love and decades-long submission to her, Thackeray wrote to a friend that finally “he will find her not worth having.” Thackeray wrote his mother that :

“My object is not to make a perfect character or anything like it. Don't you see how odious all the people are in the book (with the exception of Dobbin)—behind whom all there lies a dark moral I hope. What I want is to make a set of people living without God in the world

(only that is a cant phrase) greedy pompous mean perfectly self-satisfied for the most part and at ease about their superior virtue”.

She marries George Osborne against the wishes of George’s father, and when George dies at the battle of Waterloo she brings up little George alone while living with her parents. She is completely dominated by her spendthrift father (who steals and sells the annuity George’s friends put together to try to support her) and her mother. After George Osborne’s death, Amelia is obsessed with her son and with the memory of her husband. She ignores William Dobbin, who courts her for years, and treats him shabbily until eventually he leaves. It is only after Becky shows her George’s letter to her that Amelia realizes what a good man Dobbin is, although she has already written to him to ask him to come back. She eventually marries Dobbin.

### **Rawdon Crawley**

Rawdon, the younger of the two Crawley sons, is an empty-headed brunette cavalry officer who is his wealthy aunt’s favorite until he marries Becky Sharp, who is of a far lower class. He permanently alienates his aunt, who leaves her estate to Sir Pitt instead. Sir Pitt inherits father’s estate, which leaves Rawdon quite poor. Rawdon has a few talents in life, most of which have to do with gambling and dueling. He is very good at cards and pool, and although he does not always win, he is able to earn cash by betting against less talented gamblers. He is heavily indebted throughout most of the story, not so much for his own expenses as for Becky’s. Not particularly talented as a military officer, he is content to let Becky manage his career. Although Rawdon knows Becky is attractive to men, he believes her reputation is spotless even though she is widely suspected of romantic intrigue with General Tufto and other powerful men. Nobody dares to suggest otherwise to Rawdon because of his temper and his reputation for dueling. Yet other people, particularly the Marquess of Steyne, find it impossible to believe that Crawley is unaware of Becky’s tricks. Steyne in particular believes Rawdon is fully aware Becky is prostituting herself, and believes Rawdon is going along with the charade in the hope of financial gain. After Rawdon finds out the truth and leaves Becky for an assignment overseas, he leaves his son to be brought up by Sir Pitt and Lady Jane.

### **Sir Pitt Crawley**

Rawdon Crawley’s elder brother inherits the Crawley estate from his father, and he also inherits from his wealthy aunt, Miss Crawley. Sir Pitt is very religious and has political aspirations. Somewhat pedantic and conservative, Sir Pitt does nothing to help Rawdon or Becky even when they fall on hard times. This is chiefly because Lady Jane hates Becky.

### **Miss Crawley**

The elderly Miss Crawley is everyone’s favourite wealthy aunt. Rawdon is her favourite



nephew until he marries Becky. While Miss Crawley likes Becky and keeps her around to entertain her with sarcasm and wit, and while she loves scandal and particularly stories of unwise marriage, she does not want scandal or unwise marriage in her family.

### **George Osborne**

George Osborne, his father, and his two sisters are close to the Sedley family until Mr. Sedley (the father of Jos and Amelia) goes bankrupt following some ill-advised speculation. Since George and Amelia were raised in close company and were childhood sweethearts, George defies his father in order to marry Amelia. Before father and son can be reconciled, George is killed at the battle of Waterloo, leaving the pregnant Amelia to carry on as well as she can.

Raised to be a selfish, vain, profligate spender, George squanders the last of the money he receives from his father and sets nothing aside to help support Amelia. After marrying Amelia, he finds after a couple of weeks that he is bored. He flirts with Becky quite seriously and is reconciled to Amelia only a short time before he is killed in battle.

### **William Dobbin**

The best friend of George Osborne, William Dobbin is tall, ungainly, and not particularly handsome. He is a few years older than George but has been friends with him since his school days even though Dobbin's father is a fig-merchant and the Osbornes belong to the genteel class and have become independently wealthy. He defends George and is blind to his faults in many ways although he tries to force George to do the right thing. He pushes George to keep his promise to marry Amelia even though Dobbin is in love with Amelia himself. After George is killed, Dobbin puts together an annuity to help support Amelia, ostensibly with the help of George's fellow officers.

Later, Dobbin discreetly does what he can to help support Amelia and also her son George. He allows Amelia to continue with her obsession over George and does not correct her erroneous beliefs about him. He hangs about for years, either pining away over her while serving in India or waiting on her in person, acting like a door-mat and allowing her to take advantage of his good nature. After Amelia finally chooses Becky's friendship over his in Baden-Baden, Dobbin leaves in disgust. He returns when Amelia writes to him and admits her feelings for him, marries her, and has a daughter whom he loves deeply.

### **Jos Sedley**

Amelia's older brother, Joseph "Jos" Sedley, is a minor government official who made a respectable fortune as a tax collector in India. Obese and self-important but very shy and insecure, he is attracted to Becky Sharp but circumstances prevent him from proposing. He never marries, but when he meets Becky again he is easily manipulated into falling in love with her. Jos is not a courageous or intelligent man, in fact he displays his cowardice at the Battle of

Waterloo by trying to flee and purchasing both of Becky's overpriced horses. Becky ensnares him again near the end of the book.

---

## **17.2 Themes of Vanity Fair**

---

Thackeray had a keen eye for the social pretension, for the disparity between professed and actual motives, for all the hypocrisies with which social man learns to cover up his true intentions. *Vanity Fair* is the study of the way in which the demands of society operate on human character and vice versa; in this world, the meek are not blessed, but are pushed to the wall, wit, opportunism and unscrupulousness. His object was "to sweep away the cult of sham heroics and sham sentiments then popular in fiction". It deals with London Society in the period of the Napoleonic wars. He called it "a novel without a hero", and justly enough, for its central figure is a woman, Becky Sharp. The moral purpose of exposing the hypocrisies has a back drop of great events that culminated in the battle of Waterloo. Arnold Kettle points out: "the artistic motive force of *Vanity Fair* is Thackeray's vision of bourgeois society and of the personal relationships engendered by that society. That is what his novel is about. He pierces the hypocrisies of *Vanity Fair* and reveals the disgusting, brutal, degrading sordidness behind and below its elegant glitter; it's the heyday of bourgeois society that he paints". The novel highlights various issues which can help the reader to understand the text.

### **Vanity**

Vanity, which takes a variety of forms, is a major motivation of individuals and characterizes society. There are various definitions of Vanity. Vain and unprofitable conduct or employment of time"; "The quality of being foolish or of holding erroneous opinions"; "The quality of being personally vain; high opinion of oneself; self-conceit and desire for admiration." Another meaning of vanity could possibly be the vanity mirror; this meaning relates to the use of mirrors in the text and the drawings.

### **Society's values**

Individuals and society are looking for wealth, rank, power, and class and are corrupted by them. Consequences of this worship are (1) the perversion of love, friendship, and hospitality and (2) the inability to love.

### **Selfishness**

Everyone is selfish in varying degrees. The selfishness of characters like Becky, Jos Sedley, and Lord Steyne is obvious; however, even apparently selfless characters like Amelia, Dobbin, and Lady Jane are selfish.

### **Illusion and reality**

The dichotomy of illusion and reality runs through out the novel. Motivated by self-

interest, the characters practice hypocrisy, they misrepresent themselves both to others and to themselves, and they lie. Some characters deliberately choose their illusions or fantasies over the truth. Thus, every character deludes others and/or is self-deluded.

### **Heroism**

Men and women are not heroic; the heroic poses and pretenses of characters, literature, and society are consistently deflated in this Novel.

### **Fiction versus reality**

The false portrayal of human nature and activities in novels, romance, and literary conventions is distinguished from real life. The subtitle, *A Novel Without a Hero*; Thackeray's identifying various characters as the hero or heroine; the marriages of Amelia and Becky early in the novel—all violate novelistic conventions.

### **Married and parental relationships**

In a novel of domestic life, there are no happy marriages because of the egotism, selfishness, folly, and false values of individuals and of society. Similarly, selfishness, vanity, snobbery, and/or materialism affect every child-parent relationship.

### **The gentleman**

Thackeray rejects the older concept of a gentleman as a man of rank and leisure, i.e., a member of the gentry or aristocracy. The true gentleman, as well as the true lady, is recognized by moral character, being considerate, benevolent, and diligent. Amelia, Lady Jane, and Dobbin are among the few real ladies and gentlemen in this novel.

### **Time**

Thackeray's concern with time has caused him to be called the novelist of memory. The action is set in the past, and the narrator compares and contrasts the past with the present as he moves between them; occasionally he tells us a future event or outcome. The characters' memories of the past help to characterize them in the present. Thackeray shows the effect which the passage of time has on the characters. The concern with time is reflected in the structure; the narrator occasionally interrupts the chronology, jumps back in time, and returns to the point where he stopped the chronology.

---

## **17.3 Illustrations from *Vanity Fair***

---

Thackeray, who intended his illustrations to be an integral part of the novel, filled it with drawings. The first letter of every chapter is incorporated into a drawing; almost every chapter includes a full-page drawing with an inscription at the bottom and one or more draw-

ings of various sizes. The drawings supplement or complement the text in various ways

### Example 1(Photograph)

Thackeray's drawing of himself holding a mask and a fool's scepter is relevant to the discussion.

The mask suggests the possibility of changing guises or identities. Is Thackeray a narrator?



### Example 2(Photograph)



Becky is angling for a fat fish, Jos in chapter 4. There is irony in the fact that Jos, who distinguishes himself by how much he eats and drinks, is himself in danger of being caught and eaten by Becky. Continuing the fish metaphor, Mr. Sedley tells his wife, “But mark my words, the first woman who fishes for him, hooks him” (43). Besides flattering Jos with references to his knowledge of foods, Becky lures Jos by knitting a green purse, the purse symbolizing money and the green perhaps suggesting Becky's envy of the Sedley's affluence; she shyly implies that she is making it for him. Though Becky is in a natural setting in the drawing, Thackeray's emphasis on society is maintained by the buildings in the background.

### Example 3(Photograph)

Chapter 5 deflates the “epic” fight between Cuff and Dobbin. The boys carry wooden swords, wear paper hats, and Cuff rides a rocking horse. Interestingly, in a novel which deals with the Battle of Waterloo, a watershed in European history, their fight is one of the most violent actions presented.



### Example 4(Photograph)

Likewise there are some drawings in the text such as the drawing of Becky using the

dolls as puppets to mimic Miss Pinkerton and her sister, and others which are highly suggestive and convey obvious meanings. These certainly make an interesting study of the text.



---

#### **17.4 The Subtitle: A Novel Without A Hero**

---

The subtitle, ‘A Novel without a Hero’, is apt because the characters are all flawed to a greater degree; Thackeray illustrates human weaknesses which are mostly to do with greed, idleness, and snobbery, and the scheming, deceit and hypocrisy which mask them. Though none of the characters are wholly evil, Becky, who is amoral and cunning, is thrown on her own resources by poverty and its stigma. (She’s the orphaned daughter of a poor artist.) Thackeray’s tendency to highlight faults in all of his characters displays his desire for a greater level of realism in his fiction.

The novel is a satire of society as a whole, characterized by hypocrisy and opportunism, but it is not a reforming novel; there is no suggestion for social or political changes, or greater piety and moral reformism. It paints a fairly bleak view of the human condition. This bleak portrait is continued with Thackeray’s own role as an omniscient narrator, and offers a view to his characters.

The work is often compared to the other great historical novel which covered the Napoleonic wars: Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*. While Tolstoy’s work has a greater emphasis on the historical details and the effect the war has upon his protagonists, Thackeray instead uses the conflict as more of a backdrop to the lives of his characters. The heroic moments do not influence the behavior of his characters. This is in contrast to the redemptive power conflict has on the characters in *War and Peace*. For Thackeray, the Napoleonic wars as a whole can

be thought of as one more of the vanities expressed in the title.

The suggestion, near the end of the text that Becky may have killed Jos is argued against by John Sutherland in his book *Is Heathcliff A Murderer? : Great Puzzles In Nineteenth-century Fiction*. Although Becky is portrayed as having a highly dubious moral sense, the idea that she would commit premeditated murder is quite a step forward for the character. Thackeray principally objected to was the glorification of a criminal's deeds; it therefore seems strange that he would have depicted Becky as such a villainess.

Though Thackeray does not settle definitively whether Becky murders Jos, such a development is in keeping with the overall trend of character development in the novel.

The tone of *Vanity Fair* seems to become serious as the story proceeds. At the novel's beginning, Becky Sharp is presented as a bright girl with an eye to improve herself a lot through marrying; though she is thoroughly unsentimental, she is portrayed as being a good friend to Amelia. By the end of the novel she is (implied to have become) an adulterer and a murderer. Amelia begins as a warm-hearted and friendly girl, though sentimental and naive, but by story's end she is portrayed as vacuous and shallow person. Dobbin appears first as loyal and magnanimous; by the end of the story he is presented as a tragic fool, a prisoner of his own sense of duty who knows he is wasting his gifts on Amelia but is unable to live without her. Regardless of its provenance, the novel's increasingly grim outlook can take readers aback, as characters whom Thackeray — and the reader — at first hold in sympathy are shown to be unworthy of such regard i.e. to be called a Hero.

Critics say that the character of Becky Sharp is based in part on Thackeray's maternal grandmother Harriet Becher. She abandoned her husband and children when she eloped with Captain Charles Christie. In a sense, Becky is an autobiographical character.

---

## 17.5 Critics on *Vanity Fair*

---

### **E.D.H. Johnson**

**E.D.H. Johnson** attributes the shifts of the narrator in the novel to Thackeray's ambiguous relationship to his world. Johnson believes that Thackeray had difficulty in combining his satiric bent and his moral purpose, a difficulty which resulted in confused aims:

“.....The curious alternations of attraction and repulsion manifest in Thackeray's handling of Becky and Amelia characterize his attitude towards the entire world of the novel. As a satirist, he castigates the manners and morals of that world; as a moralist, he is more taken in by its standards than he is presumably aware. Unlike Fielding, he was never able artistically to harmonize his twin purposes, because again unlike Fielding he lacked any compelling vision of forces making for unity and poise within the social organism. ....”

## **Arnold Kettle**

**Arnold Kettle**, on the other hand, attributes the difficulty in determining Thackeray's intention and views to his cowardice, "from a desire to expose illusions and yet keep them."

## **Harold Bloom**

**Harold Bloom** calls Thackeray's narrator "that supreme fiction" and sees the point of view as one of the strengths of the novel.

## **Kathleen Tillotson**

**Kathleen Tillotson** believes that the narrator's commentary serves other purposes. It bridges past and present.

"..... Without Thackeray's own voice, the melancholy and the compassion of his attitude to *Vanity Fair* might escape us. It is needed merely as relief, from a spectacle that might otherwise be unbearably painful. And not only morally painful, but mentally impoverished. The characters, the best as well as the worst, are almost without ideas; the intellectual atmosphere of the novel is provided by the commentary. By presenting the narrator's comments and reactions as well as the characters' feelings and reactions, Thackeray gives the novel a richer, more complex, and subtle texture....."

## **Juliet McMaster**

**Juliet McMaster** believes that the narrator's commentary is alternately inane, snug, cloying, or cynical which forces the reader to react, thereby giving the characters a kind of life and making them feel like autonomous beings.

---

## **17.6 Let Us Sum Up**

---

Thus in this unit we were able to understand-

- allegorical aspect of the novel.
- to know about the social life during that age.
- human slaves of follies and weakness of materialistic society.

---

## **17.7 Review Questions**

---

1. Discuss Thackeray as a satirist and sensor of morals.
2. Thackeray is often called a cynic. Do you agree? Give reasons for your opinion.
3. Show by a careful analysis of the character of Becky sharp that *Vanity Fair* has moral rather than a human plan.

4. Thackeray is often called a cynic. Consider what in *Vanity Fair* gives color to this charge.
5. “Thackeray’s realism is that of the observer, not that of analyst.” Expound and illustrate.
6. Consider if Thackeray’s realism is cynical.
7. “Vanities Vanitatum: Vanity of Vanities: all is vanity”. Do you consider this to be correct appraisal of Thackeray’s attitude of life, as shown in *Vanity Fair*?
8. “He (Thackeray) savagely fastens upon the infirmities of human nature, while all the time he has a profound belief in the essential goodness of things.” From your study of “*Vanity Fair*,” consider the justice of their view.
9. ‘Becky sharp keeps the story together. Every booth in the fair is visited, and every inhabitant is disturbed, by her. And yet, she is more of a marvelous invention than a true creation.’ Examine this view.
10. ‘Thackeray is the first novelist to use the novel to express a conscious, considered criticism of life.’ Discuss.
11. Discuss the character of Amelia Sedley.

---

## 17.8 Bibliography

---

1. Colby, Robert A., Historical Introduction, in *Vanity Fair*, Garland, 1989.
2. Ferris, Ina. William Makepeace Thackeray. Boston: Twayne, 1983.
3. Karlson, Marilyn Naufftus, William Makepeace Thackeray, in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume 55: Victorian Prose Writers Before 1867*, edited by William B. Thesing, Gale Research, 1987.
4. Mitchell, Sally, Daily Life in Victorian England, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996
5. Monsarrat, Ann. An Uneasy Victorian: Thackeray the Man, 1811-1863. London: Cassell, 1980.
6. Peters, Catherine. Thackeray’s Universe: Shifting Worlds of Imagination and Reality. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.
7. Peters, Catherine, Thackeray: A Writer’s Life, Sutton Publishing, 2000.
8. Praver, Siegbert S.: W. M. Thackeray’s European sketch books : a study of literary and graphic portraiture. Oxford ; New York : P. Lang, 2000.
9. Ray, Gordon N., ed., The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray, Vol. 2, Harvard University Press, 1945 – 1946.



10. Ray, Gordon N. Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity, 1811-1846. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955.
  11. Review of Vanity Fair, in London Review, Vol. XVI, No. XXXII, July 1861.
  12. Rigby, Elizabeth, Review of Vanity Fair, in Quarterly Review, December 1848.
  13. Ritchie, Anne Thackeray. Introductions to the Biographical Edition of the Works of William Makepeace Thackeray. New York: Harpers, 1899
  14. Shillingsburg, Peter. William Makepeace Thackeray: A Literary Life. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001.
  15. Thackeray, William Makepeace, Thackerayana, Haskell House, 1970.
  16. Williams, Ioan M. Thackeray. London: Evans, 1968.
  17. "William Makepeace Thackeray: Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero, in Characters in Nineteenth-Century Literature, Gale Research, 1993.
-

## UNIT-18

---

### THOMAS HARDY: THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE (I)

---

#### Structure

- 18.0 Objectives
- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 About the Novelist
- 18.3 Summary of each book of the novel Return of the Native
- 18.4 Hardy's Art of Plot Construction.
- 18.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 18.6 Review Questions
- 18.7 Bibliography

---

#### 18.0 Objectives

---

The Objective of this unit is to prepare the candidates for an in-depth study of Hardy's novel *The Return of the Native*. Hardy is an important later Victorian novelist and his present novel has been taken to be one of his great successes. The novel seeks to displace some of the Victorian ideals and values. If the candidate masters the material presented here it is hoped that he should be able to answer the questions asked in his examination. In this respect the material should prove useful for the candidates.

---

#### 18.1 Introduction

---

In this unit you will find a detailed and useful summary of each book of the novel and also comments on Hardy's art of plot construction. The background of the story is the place known as Egdon Heath which is also a character that moulds all the characters and events to its own shape and size and thus makes its contribution to the plot of the novel. This is the unique feature of the novel and it is Hardy's contribution to the novel form.

In the other unit devoted to Hardy's novel you will find a discussion of the characters of the novel but the discussion of plot is intended to support the discussion of the characters while the discussion of characters adds further information about the story of the novel. Thus both units on Hardy should be read as being complementary to each other.

---

#### 18.2 About Hardy the Novelist

---

Born at upper Bockhampton in Dorset on 2nd June, 1840 and the son of a master

mason, Hardy first went to a village school and from there to a school in Dorset. Hardy's mother loved to read Greek and French poets and Hardy also studied Greek by himself. He was first apprenticed to an ecclesiastic architect and there he took the restoration work of many churches but finally went to London and won some prizes for the restoration of churches there. In London he went to art galleries and concerts and attended some evening classes. From 1870 to 1874 he wrote such novels as *Desperate Remedies*, (1871) *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872), *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873) and *Far from The Maddening Crowd* (1874). He was married to Emma Leavis Gifford and having given up his job as an architect devoted himself entirely to literature. The married couple first lived at Sturminster Newton, then in London and at Windborne and finally at Max Gate in Dorchester.

From the year 1871 to 1897 he wrote a series of novels which are called the 'Wessex Novels'. His last novel 'Jude the Obscure' was given such a rude welcome in the year 1897 that he consequently gave up writing novel and took to writing poetry. His fame began to spread wide and his merit was recognised. In the year 1910 the State conferred upon him the Order of Merit. He was also presented with the freedom of Dorchester, his native town in the same year. He died at his own house in the year 1928 and he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

---

### **18.3 The Summary of the Novel**

---

#### **Book-1**

The novel opens in the middle of situation. There is a reddleman whose name is Diggory Venn. He is riding his van and is going in the direction of Egdon Heath. In the back of his van is Thomasin Yeobright whose marriage was to be performed on the same day with Wildieve at the Angleberry church but because of an error in the marriage license it could not be done. She was then alone walking her way from Angleberry church and there she met Diggory Venn and told him of her plight and fainted. Diggory Venn put her in his wagon. On the way he met one Captain Vye and told him that there was a lady in his wagon. About two years ago Diggory Venn who at that time was a dairyman had proposed marriage with Thomasin and through a letter Thomasin had politely refused. Since then he had given up his dairyman's profession and become a reddleman who sold reddle chalk to the farmers for redding their sheep.

When Diggory Venn learnt of the romance between Thomasin and Wildieve and knew that Thomasin liked Wildieve he thought it was his duty to help Thomasin in whatever way he could to get her married to Wildieve. The cause of the failure of the marriage between Thomasin and Wildieve at Anglebury was a mistake in the marriage certificate engineered by Wildieve himself. As Diggory Venn with Thomasin in the back of his wagon was driving Mrs. Yeobright was herself going to Wildieve's place to bless the married couple and there on her way met Diggory Venn who told Mrs Yeobright that he himself was going to her house and informed her of what had happened to Thomasin's marriage and that Thomasin was sleeping in

the back of the wagon. Mrs Yeobright found Thomasin there who just woke up and she and Mrs Yeobright leaving Diggory Venn there moved on foot to their house. On the way Mrs Yeobright came to know from Thomasin what had happened. In the meantime Diggory Venn met Mrs Yeobright and he offered to marry Thomasin adding that earlier also he had made a proposal to Thomasin but she had politely declined on the ground that Mrs Yeobright would not agree to the marriage. The reddleman also informed Mrs Yeobright that Wildieve had secret meetings with Eustacia Vye who was the grand daughter of Captain Vye who lived at Mistover Knapp.

Armed with Diggory Venn's proposal to marry Thomasin Mrs Yeobright who was a shrewd and intelligent lady approached Wildieve and asked him whether he really intended to marry Thomasin adding that she had another suitor for Thomasin who had sought her permission to marry her. This was done purely with the intention to make Wildieve jealous of Thomasin but Wildieve wanted a little more time to make up his mind. On the other hand the reddleman, who sincerely wanted to help Thomasin in whatever way he could, went to Captain Vye's cottage and told him that he wanted to have a word with his grand daughter. On meeting Eustacia Vye he told her that she had a great power on menfolk of the area and that she should persuade Wildieve to marry Thomasin but she rejected the request and said that though she had power over Wildieve but she would not lower her position to favour a woman who was inferior to her in rank and position. She also informed the reddleman that she did not care for Wildieve much and would care for him less if there had been a better man than him on the heath. She also informed him that she herself was very unhappy to be on the Egdon Heath and would like to go away from there if she had any such opportunity.

The same evening Wildieve went to Mistover Knapp to meet Eustacia Vye and offered to take her to America. The offer had been made earlier also to Eustacia Vye by Wildieve and she had asked for a week's time to think over the proposal. She had been flattered by the fact that she had been the cause of Wildieve's not marrying Thomasin. But then Thomasin had another suitor and could be married to some other person was enough reason for Eustacia Vye to reject Wildieve. If Thomasin could reject why not she ?

It so happened that the same evening after his return from a walk from the heath Captain Vye told Eustacia that Clym was coming to celebrate Christmas with her mother and cousin from Paris. Her grandfather further told her that Clym was Mrs Yeobright's son and had been living in Paris. This greatly excited Eustacia Vye's curiosity about the new comer. She however, decided to have more information about the new comer on her own.

## **Book -II**

The second book begins with Humphrey and Sam who had been called by Captain Vye to bring furze faggots and build a stack for him. It was a beautiful afternoon and Captain Vye had been talking to them while Eustacia Vye was inside the house listening to the conversation which was going on outside and was of great interest and information to her. The work-

ers were talking about Clym Yeobright and they informed Captain Vye that Clym was a studious fellow with strange ideas and had established himself as the manager of a diamond merchant in Paris and that he was coming there to celebrate Christmas with his family. They also commented that Clym and Eustacia would make an excellent couple as both were highly educated and talked on high subjects and ideas. All this further excited Eustacia's curiosity about Clym. On the day Clym was to arrive Mrs Yeobright and Clym's cousin, Thomasin, had been excited and were making preparations to receive him. Thomasin had requested her aunt not to let Clym know about her marriage mishap. They then went to receive Clym and as it was evening time and Eustacia wanted to see the face of Clym. She was standing on their way where he was to pass from. Soon she heard the sound of two women and one man coming on the road and she slightly moved herself away from the way so that without being seen she could see the face of the new comer. As the three passed from there Clym wished good evening to Eustacia who in return made some murmur but it left a great impression on Eustacia though she had not been successful in seeing Clym's face. Now Eustacia was very keen to see Clym closely. Soon it so happened that some of the rustics decided to stage a mummers show at Mrs Yeobright's house on the evening of 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec., a day before Christmas, to celebrate Christmas on Clym's arrival. In that show the part of Turkish knight was to be played by Charley who sentimentally adored Eustacia and so she called him and offered to pay him five shillings in case he agreed to let his part be played by her in a man's disguise. Charley who adored Eustacia sentimentally first refused to accept the money but agreed to the proposal on condition that he would hold Eustacia's hand for half an hour and in the end be allowed to kiss it. Finally it was agreed that he could hold her hand for fifteen minutes only and kiss it if he would not tell it to anyone else. Before proceeding to Mrs Yeobright's house the party wanted to rehearse in Captain Vye's fuel house. Then the party proceeded to Mrs Yeobright's house and there every one performed well. At the end of the show Eustacia had a good look at Mrs Yeobright's house and also at Clym's face.

When the play Saint George was over all the mummers were entertained with good food and wine. In the pantry Eustacia saw Clym talking to Thomasin and that aroused her jealousy, fearing that being in close proximity with Thomasin, Clym may be attracted to her. As the food and wine was being served Eustacia refused to eat anything though Clym entreated her much but on persuasion from Clym she agreed to have some drink from him. The mummers then went away and as Eustacia was going alone she was approached by Clym who asked her if he was not seriously mistaken that she was a woman in a boy's disguise. Eustacia admitted it to be so and said that because she wanted some excitement she had undertaken that adventurous route.

It so happened that that very evening of the mummers show Wildieve was to meet Eustacia for his proposal of elopement. Accordingly Wildieve waited for Eustacia for a long time at the appointed place but could not see her. Being disappointed he returned while all this time the reddleman had been watching him. On her return from Mrs Yeobright's house accidentally Eustacia happened to meet the reddleman who informed her that Wildieve had waited

for her the whole of that evening. Now Eustacia really wanted that Wildieve should marry Thomasin and so she asked the reddleman to deliver a letter to Wildieve in which she clearly stated that she was not interested in him and also returned a box with some gifts which Wildieve had given her. Wildieve accepted Eustacia's refusal but he was puzzled to know why the reddleman was to be the man to bring the letter and the gifts because the reddleman himself had wanted to marry Thomasin. Fearing that the reddleman should succeed in winning Thomasin he himself went to her to say that he was sincerely interested in marrying her. Thomasin was very happy to hear it and accordingly informed Mrs Yeobright of Wildieve's decision.

When Wildieve went to Thomasin, Clym had been away for some days to meet his friend who lived a few miles away and there he came to know of the failure of Thomasin's marriage with Wildieve from his friend. At this Clym wrote a letter to his mother why she had not informed him about it and that it was a great disgrace to the family. Thomasin now wanted to have the marriage with Wildieve performed at the earliest and in any case before Clym returned home. She also requested her aunt to remain at home and not to accompany her to her marriage. On hearing the news of Thomasin's failure of marriage from his friend Clym thought of returning home immediately and he reached just when her marriage was being performed. On finding that his mother had not accompanied Thomasin to be given to her husband he prepared to go himself to give away Thomasin in marriage but by the time he reached the church the marriage had been over. The reddleman had persuaded Eustacia to give away Thomasin to Wildieve and Clym came to know about it only afterwards.

### **Book - III**

The book reveals Clym's idealism. As the true son of Egdon he found the life in Paris to be "the idlest, vainest, the most effeminate business that ever a man could be put to" and he now wished to follow some practical and fruitful career in his life. He wanted to do something for his Egdon and being of a studious nature thought of starting a school there. He thought that by some more study he would be a perfect schoolmaster. He told his mother about his plan and also that he had no interest in carrying on his business in Paris. Hearing this Mrs. Yeobright was very much grieved.

The same evening Clym went to Captain Vye's house on hearing that a bucket had fallen into the well. There he met Eustacia and asked her whether she was interested in teaching school children of the heath. Eustacia did not agree to it and said that she was more interested in the life of the people of Paris where she would like to go. Clym informed her that so far as he was concerned for him the heath was a very good place and that he would rather live there for the rest of his life than to think of anywhere else in the world.

When Clym told his mother that he had been to Captain Vye's place she was naturally much troubled and said that having been to Paris and having been accustomed to see the most attractive and fashionable ladies in Paris and elsewhere how could he be so interested in a girl who lived on the heath. She even accused his son that he had been bewitched by Eustacia and

that his plan to start a school was just an excuse for continuing to stay on the heath for the sake of Eustacia. Clym now almost everyday went to meet Eustacia and the latter informed him that his mother would not approve of a marriage with her. But Clym said that despite all this he was willing to marry her. .

Mrs Yeobright was very unhappy at this hour because Clym was shattering all her dreams about his success. Added to this was the love affair of Clym with Eustacia which was now to result in their marriage. She fully knew that the two natures were different and that the marriage will cause unhappiness to Clym whom as a boy she had given lot of attention and care. But nothing could be done to change Clym's mind and his plans to start a school at Egdon.

Clym's problem was that he wanted the two opposites to meet everywhere. He could not abandon Eustacia nor his mother nor his plan to be a school teacher. Mrs Yeobright was quite clear in her mind that the marriage with Eustacia would result in unhappiness for everyone concerned but Clym was bent upon all his plans. Clym then decided to leave his mother and find a new house for himself until Eustacia, after marriage with him, was to join him. The very next morning Clym went towards a village at Egdon to find a house for himself. Having fixed one he came back and told his mother that he would be leaving her and getting married on the twenty fifth of the month with Eustacia. After the departure of her son Mrs Yeobright wept much and spent the hole day in walking absent mindedly down the garden Path. The next day she felt a little comforted when Thomasin paid a visit to her. After some time Thomasin said that she needed some money as her husband should not give her any. Mrs Yeobright then told her that she had a hundred guineas which were to be equally divided between Thomasin and Clym and that the time had come that it should be so distributed. Clym's marriage day came but Mrs Yeobright was sitting at her home very much unhappy.

The same evening Wildieve paid a visit to Mrs Yeobright and told her that Thomasin was expecting something from her and that if she so wished he could carry it to Thomasin. Wildieve then went away and Mrs Yeobright summoned a boy name Christian Candle and handed over a bag to him to be delivered to Thomasin. When the boy was going to Thomasin's place Wildieve himself met the boy and tempted him to play with him with money that Mrs Yeobright had handed over to him. When all the money had been lost to Wildieve by the boy he consoled himself with the idea that ultimately it had gone to Thomasin's husband. While the game was going on in the light of the lantern, Diggory Venn, the reddleman, had been hiding himself behind a bush and when the boy had gone he came out from the bush and because he had heard the boy say that the money was meant to be handed over to Thomasin he now invited Wildieve to gamble with him and so the game between them began.

For the first few minutes the game was equally divided between them but soon thereafter Diggory Venn started winning. When Wildieve had lost sixty guineas to Diggory Venn he became greatly upset and at that very time the lantern light in which the dice was being cast went out. Frantic as Wildieve was at his loss, he gathered some glow-worms and in the light of

them the dice was now cast. Ultimately Wildieve lost all the hundred guineas which he had won from the boy.

The next day when Diggory was standing there Clym and Eustacia were returning from their marriage at the church and seeing them he asked Eustacia about Thomasin who told him that she was coming seated in Captain Vye's carriage. Soon Thomasin came there and the reddleman gave her the money telling her that Mrs Yeobright had sent that money to her. Thomasin, when she opened the bag, was greatly surprised to find so much money in it.

### **Book-IV**

After a few weeks of his marriage Clym thought about his new profession seriously. But the marriage had been with contrary aims and ideas. Though Eustacia had earlier declined to be a teacher, Clym had secretly thought to himself that after the marriage she would agree to be a school teacher while Eustacia had agreed to marry him with the secret hope that once married she would prevail upon Clym to return to Paris with her.

Having waited for a few days after sending the money through Christian Candle Mrs Yeobright got a note from Thomasin thanking her for such a big amount but she received no such acknowledgement from Clym. In that state of uncertainty Mrs. Yeobright decided to go to Clym's house herself to inquire about the money but as she reached there she found there Eustacia only and asked her if she had received some amount of money from Wildieve. Eustacia thought that Mrs Yeobright wanted to insult her by implying that she still received gifts and money from her former lover. Eustacia thereupon became furious and charged her of injuring her marriage and reputation. Mrs Yeobright, after the quarrel with her daughter-in-law, came home. Eustacia then complained about it to Clym about his mother's insult to her and asked Clym again to take her to Paris but Clym outright refused.

The weakening and loss of Clym's eyesight was immensely depressing to Eustacia. Clym now for his earnings had to take up the job of a furze-cutter but the way he took to it so lightly and without any sense of humiliation was almost stinging for Eustacia. At this time Eustacia suffered from a lot of depression and was looking for some opportunity to lessen it. Towards the end of August a village festival was being held at East Egdon and Eustacia asked her husband to go to see the fair but Clym refused. Thereupon Eustacia herself went there where a dance performance was being held and young men and young girls were fully enjoying themselves as dancers. Surprisingly Wildieve was also there and coming to Eustacia he proposed to her to dance with him. After some reluctance Eustacia agreed. The reddleman was also around and he had seen the two dance together. After that the reddleman went to Mrs Yeobright and told her that Wildieve was bent on ruining Thomasin and also Clym's marriage by meeting Eustacia secretly. He also suggested that Mrs Yeobright should get reconciled to her son and daughter-in-law to which she agreed.

Being tired of Diggory's efforts to destroy his plans to meet Eustacia secretly Wildieve



decided that as her brother-in-law he would boldly go to Clym's house to meet Eustacia. When Wildieve knocked at Clym's door, Clym at the time was sleeping soundly and Eustacia opened the door and admitted him in the house. She took him into another room away from the one in which Clym had been sleeping. Just then Mrs Yeobright reached Clym's house and knocked at the door. Eustacia then looked out of the window and finding that there was her mother-in-law knocking she was greatly disturbed because of Wildieve's presence there. Mrs Yeobright had seen Eustacia looking at her through the window but as Eustacia sent Wildieve from the backdoor of the house which caused much delay Mrs. Yeobright concluded that her son was not inclined to meet her. Having waited there for some time and feeling much tired she went away and on her way back sat down to have some rest. There she was bitten by a serpent and was lying there in a painful condition.

When Mrs Yeobright was returning from her son's house she had met a boy Johnny Nonsuch and Mrs Yeobright wanted him to move with her as she was very much tired and told him that she was a "totally broken lady having been discarded by her son in her old age."

At about two in the afternoon Clym woke up from his sleep and told Eustacia that he had seen a dream about his mother and that he would immediately go to Blooms Berry to see her. When he had travelled about three miles or so he heard the sound of someone breathing and moaning from a nearby spot and out of curiosity moved in that direction. Reaching there he found that an old lady had been moaning there and coming close to her he found that there was his own mother in a miserable condition and perfectly unconscious. He immediately lifted her and placed her in an abandoned cottage and went to the nearby village to call for some help. The villagers applied some ointment on the swollen foot of Mrs Yeobright but nothing could be done to save her and she died.

When Clym had gone to see his mother Eustacia's grandfather paid a visit to her and informed her that Wildieve had received a fortune of eleven thousand pounds left to him by one of his uncles who had been living in Canada. Eustacia was much surprised by this fact because last time when Wildieve had met her he did not tell her about it. Wildieve was now a rich man and that made great impression on Eustacia.

## **Book - V**

After his mother's death Clym had been seriously ill and he blamed himself for being the cause of his mother's death. One day after about a month Christian Candle came to inform Clym that Thomasin had given birth to a girl child. There Clym asked some questions from him concerning the circumstances of his mother's death and from the reply he received it became necessary to collect some more information. But the reddleman had gone away from the heath for some months. When the reddleman returned and met Clym he informed him that it was on his suggestion that Mrs Yeobright had gone to his house for reconciliation. It now became all the more necessary for Clym to find more details from Johnny Nonsuch and on meeting him he got the information that on the day Mrs Yeobright had knocked at his house he had seen Clym

getting into his house and after a little while he saw another man for whom Eustachia had opened the door and he also got in and when Mrs. Yeobright knocked at the door Eustacia had peeped out from the window but did not open the door. Finding no response from the house his mother returned very weak and tired and asked him to accompany her for some distance. Clym was greatly puzzled regarding the identity of the other person who had entered the house after him when he had gone to sleep.

On reaching home Clym was extremely furious and wanted to know why Eustachia had not opened the door to his mother when she had come to their house and asked her who the other man was who had entered the house soon after he had gone to sleep. He also said that the other man could not have been anyone else but Wildieve and that she was still having attachment with him and not being faithful to her husband. Eustachia was not the kind of woman who would hear so much reproach from anyone and so she decided to go away from him to her grandfather's house by terminating all her relationship with Clym. On reaching her grandfather's house Eustachia's first thought to shoot herself with her grandfather's pistol but soon Charley was there and she dropped the idea of shooting herself. There to please Eustachia Charley one evening lit a bonfire at the same place where Eustachia used to lit whenever she wanted Wildieve to meet her. When Eustachia saw the fire from her window she immediately came out of the house and asked Charley to put out the fire at once. But Wildieve in the meantime had seen the bonfire and took it as an invitation from Eustachia to meet her. As she was standing there she heard the sound of a stone falling into the nearby pond which was a signal that he was there at her call. Soon Wildieve moved towards Eustachia. She told him that the fire was lit by Charley without her knowledge and also asked him to take her to Budmouth and from there she would manage to go to Paris alone. Wildieve agreed to the proposal and said that he would be ready whenever signalled by her exactly at eight o'clock so that he would be ready with his cart and horse to take her to Budmouth.

Eustachia was now determined to leave for Paris while all this time Clym had been expecting her to return to his house. After some days he wrote a letter to her inviting her to return to him. On the sixth of November the signal came to Wildieve from Eustachia to leave for Paris at midnight. He took the lamp and got the horse and carriage ready. Just at that time Thomasin came to Clym and told him that her husband had drawn a very large sum of money from his drawer and was keeping the horse and carriage ready and it seemed that he was going out on a long journey without informing her. Clym then went out in search of Wildieve near Eustachia's place where the reddleman happened to be there already.

At that very moment there was a sound in the dark of some one falling into the weir and Wildieve saw that it was Eustachia. He also jumped into it to save Eustachia from drowning but they were both carried away by the current of the stream. Diggory Venn immediately rushed to the nearby village and called two swimmers from there. Clym himself entered the stream from the other end but he too was swept by the current of the stream. Soon Diggory Venn asked the two swimmers to rescue the bodies of the drowned persons and they brought

out two bodies of Wildieve and Clym. While Wildieve had lost his breath Clym was still breathing. Soon the swimmers entered the stream again to save the third drowned body and they succeeded in getting the body of Eustacia who had died.

## **Book - VI**

Originally the novel was to end after book V only but the Victorian public made a hue and cry that the novel must end on a happy note and Hardy was compelled to add one more book to give it a happy ending. .

Thomasin at this time was greatly unhappy because her husband had not been faithful to her. She now paid her best attention to her little daughter. Clym thought himself as the murderer of two ladies and there were severe dents on his body though his grief was internal. Thomasin had now to stay with Clym. When Clym had somewhat recovered from his grief and illness one day Diggory came to his place as a completely changed man. The red colour of his body had disappeared and he informed Clym that he had taken again to dairy farming.

One day Thomasin herself told Clym that she was thinking of marrying Diggory Venn to which Clym after some thought agreed. While Thomasin was one day going for her walk in the evening she happened to meet Diggory. During the conversation Thomasin told Diggory that he was a self-sacrificing person whose exterior was not as deep as his heart. Diggory then said that Thomasin had become greatly rich because of Wildieve's money to which Thomasin replied that she had written all her money to her daughter keeping just enough for herself. To this Diggory said that he was much relieved to hear it and added that in that case it would be easier for him to be friendly with Thomasin. At this Thomasin blushed but after that every evening Thomasin met Diggory at the end of the Roman Road. Finally Thomasin was married to Diggory Venn.

Clym had now nothing to do. His passion to be a school teacher had revived but instead of starting a school he decided to be a preacher. At the end of a week on Sunday a strange sight was seen. Just where Eustacia used to stand at that very spot stood Clym surrounded by men and women to listen to his first lecture. Clym had now become a moving open-air preacher. The novel ends with the following remarks by the novelist.

“Some believed him, and some believed not : some said that his words were commonplace, others complained of his want of theological doctrines while others again remarked that it was well enough for a man to take to preaching who could not see to do anything else. But everywhere he was kindly received, for the story of his life had become generally known.”

---

### **18.4 Hardy's Art of Plot Construction**

---

Being the son of a mason and himself an architect in London, Hardy was a successful architect and this quality has been well reflected in his art of plot-construction. He works out

all his scenes and characters in great details and none of these details is unnecessary and no detail can be taken out without injuring the plan of the novel as a whole. His characters have been subjected to the vagaries and ironies of chance and circumstances. Sometimes even a single event is sufficient to change the whole course of other event.

All Hardy's novels with the exception of *The Return Of The Native* are love tragedies and all the important characters happen to be the tragic ones. In Hardy's novels the tragedy usually is in the fact that either two women are in love with one man or that two men are in love with one woman and this causes the tragedy of the main characters of the novel. In their love conflicts and sex politics much of the psychology of the chief characters is automatically revealed.

One of the defects of Hardy's novels pointed out is their improbability. In *The Return Of The Native*, Egdon Heath becomes itself a character that controls the lives and destinies of its people and this in itself is an improbability. Diggory Venn being present every time and everywhere when an important event is to take place is an impossibility in real life. Then there are chance happenings. Eustacia's failure to open the door to her mother-in-law when the latter goes to them for reconciliation that leads to her death looks like an improbability. Clym's near blindness just when he is preparing for further studies in order to better equip himself for the job of a schoolmaster and he and Eustacia continuing to misunderstand each other and Wildieve always deceiving Clym, Eustacia, Thomasin and even Mrs Yoabright are too fictional events. Wildieve giving up his job as an engineer only for the sake of Eustacia is also one such event and Clym's giving up his job in Paris for being a schoolmaster at Egdon Heath is also in the same line. But the most contrived event towards the end of the novel is its happy ending managed for it. We know that Thomasin's marriage with Diggory Venn was a demand made not by the novel or the novelist but by its reading public. Though the novel is well constructed these improbable happenings make it less realistic.

---

## 18.5 Let Us Sum Up

---

This unit gives us a fairly detailed idea of the story of the novel. We have also been able to have a critical look at Hardy's unique art of Plot of construction.

---

## 18.6 Review Questions

---

1. Shakespeare says 'love is not love/ that alters when it alterations finds'. How far is it true of the love and marriage relationship in Hardy's novel *The Return of the Native* ?
2. Sex is desirable in marriage but not sex politics. How far is it applicable to Hardy's novel *The Return of the Native* ?
3. On the basis of your study of *The Return of the Native* would it be correct to say that Hardy is advocating Rousseau's cause of the return to nature ?

---

## 18.7 Bibliography

---

1. L. Abercrombie, Thomas Hardy : A Critical Study (London, 1912)
  2. J.W. Beach, The Technique of Thomas Hardy (London, 1922)
  3. Lord D. Cecil, Hardy the Novelist (London, 1943)
  4. F. Chapman, 'Hardy the Novelist' in Scrutiny (1934)
  5. S.C. Chew, Thomas Hardy : Poet and Novelist (Bryn Mawr, 1928)
  6. H.C. Duffin, Hardy : a Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems and the Dynasts (rev.ed., London, 1937)
  7. A.P. Elliott, Fatalism in the Works of Thomas Hardy (Philadelphia, 1935)
  8. A.J. Guerard, Hardy : the Novels and Stories (Cambridge, Mass., 1949)
  9. C.G. Harper, The Hardy Country (London, 1925)
  10. D.H. Lawrence in Phoenix (London, 1936)
  11. A.S. MacDowell, Thomas Hardy : a Critical Study (London, 1931)
  12. 'The Southern Review', Thomas Hardy Centennial Issue, summer 1940 (Louisiana State University)
-

## UNIT-19

---

### THOMAS HARDY: THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE (II)

---

#### Structure

- 19.0 Objectives
- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 Hardy's Principal Works
- 19.3 Hardy's Art of Characterisation
- 19.4 Main characters in *The Return of the Native*
- 19.5 Egdon Heath as a place and a character
- 19.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 19.7 Review Questions
- 19.8 Bibliography

---

#### 19.0 Objectives

---

In the previous unit on Hardy you have been introduced to the important details about the plot and story of the novel *The Return of the Native*. In the present unit you will now be introduced in particular to the important characters of the novel. A list of Hardy's works has also been provided here so as to make the study of Hardy complete for you. A list of relevant questions on Hardy has also been added here for your benefit to help you to prepare yourself well in advanced so that at the time of examination you can expect the kind of questions you will be required to answer. A consolidated bibliography on Hardy has also been provided so that the curious student can add further information to his fund of knowledge about Hardy.

---

#### 19.1 Introduction

---

This unit on Hardy is mostly devoted to a discussion of Hardy's characterisation with reference to his novel *The Return of the Native*. Hardy is a master craftsman and all his characters are broadly divisible into those that basically belong to Egdon Heath but there are others also who come there from outside and for whom Egdon is their Hades. These later characters are all the time planning to escape this place Egdon Heath. Instead of being a place only, it becomes a dominant character watching and moulding every event there and also every character. Those who love this place are its favourites and those who come from outside can live there peacefully provided they start belonging to the place which means that they should live the life which Egdon Heath likes and provides for them.

---

## 19.2 Thomas Hardy's Principal Works

---

### 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

### Short Stories

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

### Poetry

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

### Epic Poem

The Dynasts (1903-1908) : an epic poem describing the course of the Napoleonic Wars

from 1805 to 1815.

---

### 19.3 Hardy's Art of Characterisation

---

At first sight Hardy's art of characterisation appears to be simple and limited. All the characters of this novel can be easily divided into three groups: those who are wholly affected by modern education and civilization and have adopted the urban values. They come to the country side only to disturb and destroy the calm and placid peaceful life that prevails over there. In the present novel Wildieve and Eustacia Vye represent this class totally and some village men and women are attracted to them and have to suffer for truly loving them. While these modern characters make love to the country folk for their comfort and sexual satisfaction they have no real intention of loving and marrying them.

In the other class are the characters who are sincerely in love with these urbanised people and are attracted to them Thomasin and Clym can be said to be representative of this class. Though Wildieve is much older than Thomasin yet she loves him and is eager to marry him against the wishes of her guardian aunt Mrs Yeobright. In the last group are all the country folk who have their simple ways and are fully content with their surroundings and they are interesting because of their carefree drinking and dancing and merry making and they observe the traditions, superstitions and share the belief in the community life of the country side.

Thus the villain in Hardy's novel is not an individual but the modern education and civilization and it is the cause of the tragedies of those who suffer there. Apart from modern civilization there are the elements of chance, heredity and such other uncontrollable forces that also victimize them. These elemental forces affect not only the life of those who are affected or attracted by modern civilization but those also who in one way or the other come in contact with them. Thus, as in Shakespeare so in Hardy's novel the good ones are also made to pay the price of the evil. The total impression is that of utter wastefulness and this is the basis of tragedy of both good and bad characters in Hardy's novel.

Though Hardy portrays his characters as types but he takes sufficient care to individualize them, Mrs Yeobright, Eustacia and Wildieve, for example, are of the modernity group yet all these are different and individual characters and the same can be said about Clym, Diggory and Thomasin as a group. Even Hardy's rustic characters too have been sufficiently individualized. Thus being types Hardy's characters do not cease to be individual creations.

---

### 19.4 Main Characters

---

#### **Eustacia Vye**

With all her faults and weaknesses of character Eustacia Vye, the granddaughter of Captain Vye, is the heroine of the novel. She is a perfect contrast to Thomasin and represents modern woman very different from the Victorian doll concept of a woman. She has her courage and will and knows how to meet them. Once determined nothing can deter her from



actualising it. She is bold and daring and these are the qualities that the Victorian public least expected in a woman. Being married she continues her illicit relationship with Wildieve and even thinks of eloping with him. Her life-long desire is to be in Paris and to be loved to madness there.

Being a modern woman she hates Egdon Heath and its people and also herself for her being there. She is passionate and has her sense of superiority over others. She had been well educated during her early age at Budmouth before her grandfather came to settle at the heath. Being young and passionate she starts her courtship with Wildieve though she thinks him inferior to her and keeps him only as a stop gap arrangement. She confesses to Diggory that she hates Egdon Heath and would not care for Wildieve if there had been a better man than him on the heath. Being bold she is not afraid of playing the male role also because of not finding an opportunity to see Clym's face closely. Before being married she already determines that she would become Clym's wife and she ultimately succeeds in being so.

But she is proud and vain also. When the reddleman comes to her with the suggestion that she should persuade Wildieve to marry Thomasin her reply is that "I will not be beaten down by an inferior woman like her" and that she would never allow Wildieve to marry her." She finally tells the reddleman "but I lose all self respect in talking to you." She is not worried about what other people think of her and there are many women in that area who think that she is a witch and exercises great power over menfolk. The situation is very piquant when disguised as a boy she goes to Clym's house and there she sees Thomasin talking to Clym and feels jealous of Thomasin for she harbours the apprehension that Thomasin may tempt Clym into marrying her.

It is, however, her beauty and her figure over which even the novelist grows ecstatic: "She was in person full-limbed and somewhat heavy. To the touch she was as soft as a cloud. To see her hair was to imagine that a whole winter did not contain darkness enough to form its shadow : it fell over her forehead like night descending upon the evening glow in the western sky."

It is not only imaginatively that she is a resident of Paris but her physical beauty too qualifies her for the enchanting city of fashion and perfection. A complete picture of her beauty can be met in such chapters as "Queen of Night" or "Drink to me only with thine eyes". Every detail of her personality has been described as, for example, her eyes were "pagan and full of nocturnal mysteries" and the lines of her lips were "exquisite". The only fault in her character is her impulsiveness and unruly passion. But this is a trait which she has inherited from her parents and her grandfather. Her father had been a bandmaster in the army. She has been much misunderstood also. Having once vowed faithfulness to Clym she does not sexually surrender to Wildieve. She is always conscious that she is a married woman and asks Wildieve to leave her as far as upto Budmouth and the rest she will herself manage. But when she finally prepares to leave she realizes that having no money she would have to be Wildieve's mistress. This is unbearable for her and finding no escape she drowns herself into the Shadewell Weir and ends

her life. With all her weaknesses she leaves an impression on her readers' minds.

## **Wildieve**

Before his arrival at Egdon Wildieve had been an engineer but he gave up that position to come to settle at the Egdon. He is now the keeper of an inn known as "Three Quite Women".

It is in the third chapter of book-I that we come to know about him. Mrs Yeobright, Thomasin's aunt, had forbidden Thomasin's marriage with Wildieve who was much older than her. From the conversation of the rustics one gets to know more about him. One of the rustic woman had remarked that Thomasin was a fool to have chosen Wildieve for her marriage but another woman contradicted her by observing that Wildieve was a good looking, clever, learned fellow as clever as Clym. She also adds that a hundred women would like to marry such a man as Wildieve.

Wildieve as a man cannot decide what is best for him. Though he is settled as an inn-keeper for Eustacia's sake yet Eustacia had kept him only as a stop gap arrangement waiting for some better person to arrive at Egdon. Having waited for a long time to marry Eustacia successfully he gets married to Thomasin just to make Eustacia marry him out of jealousy. This shows what a dashing schemer he is.

Wildieve has no control over his passions and likings. Though he had been married to Thomasin his longing for Eustacia has not subsided. He is out and out a sentimental person—"to be yearning for the difficult, to be weary of that offered, to care for the remote, to dislike the near" had been his nature always and this brings tragedy in the lives not only of his own and of Eustacia but of other characters such as Clym and Mrs Yeobright.

In the novel Wildieve appears in the position and character of a villain but it must be admitted that there is nothing villainous in him. He has his own points of strength and weakness. He has been charged with being mediocre and ordinary but these charges befit Clym better. The truth is that he has been infected by the evil of modern civilization. Clym too is well educated but he is unaffected by modern civilization and culture. Clym came to Egdon as its son and he loves its tracts and terrains and is in perfect harmony with its traditions. Wildieve, on the other hand, has his moods and passion and is always eager to escape Egdon with Eustacia. Wildieve and Clym can make interesting study as opposition. Clym abandons Paris for his Egdon but Wildieve wants to abandon Egdon to seek the life of pleasure and Paris.

At core Wildieve is a dashing youngman and of independent and anti-religious values. He was brought up to better things in life than keeping the "Three Quite Women". His manners are charming and his outward appearance and behaviour are sufficiently attractive. Though he can win Thomasin's heart he fails to be sufficiently attractive to Eustacia. All in all he is what the novelist Hardy says of him — "Altogether he is one in whom no man would have seen anything to admire, and in whom no one would have seen anything to dislike."

## **Diggory Venn**

The readers are introduced to Diggory Venn earliest of all other characters. He is a reddleman and sells reddle chalk to farmers to colour their sheep. This is a profession fast going out of use mainly because of the spread of modern education. He is a youngman with an attractive personality. Though first rejected in his love by Thomasin he remains faithful to her throughout his life. He harbours no ill - will against Thomasin as any other suitor in his place would have done in such a situation. Even Eustacia is puzzled to see such a self - sacrificing person as him.

If Clym is the true son of Egdon it must be said that the reddleman is the moving and operating spirit of the place. At all critical moments and important events he is invariably present. He is true not only to Thomasin but to everyone else. He may be against Wildieve but not as a person but against his modern ways. Wildieve's education has taught him no moral qualities. He checks Wildieve's unruly passion also because he is Thomasin's husband. For him Wildieve's passion for Eustacia is unjust because he is Thomasin's husband.

Diggory Venn, like Egdon Heath whose spirit he is, does no harm to anyone without sufficient reason. When Mrs Yeobright seeks his advice regarding her reconciliation with her son and daughter-in-law he gives her his best. When Eustacia asks him to carry the letter and gifts of Wildieve to be returned to him as an indication of her termination of love and marriage he agrees to do so. It must be acknowledged that he is never against Eustacia and asks her to intervene in the matter of Thomasin's marriage with Wildieve and to that extent knows Eustacia's influence and power over Wildieve. He finds nothing humiliating in his career as a reddleman just as Clym Yeobright saw nothing humiliating in being a furze - cutter.

## **Clym Yeobright**

Clym is the only son of his mother and his father had been a farmer on Egdon Heath. After the death of his father when he was a little boy his mother had taken good care of him and got him well educated. He has a cousin named Thomasin. At the beginning of the novel we find him employed as the manager of a diamond merchant in Paris, a city which is world over renowned as one of great fashion and taste. He is doing well in his profession. He is also the hero of the novel *The Return Of The Native* for it is he who is the native of Egdon Heath returned from Paris after finding his job there as the idlest and most effeminate. Accordingly he now wants to take up to teaching the children on the heath. Though his mother is against the choice of this change of profession yet he does not listen to her.

The flaw in his character is that he is a great idealist and once determined he is careless about consequences. Wildieve is quite right in the estimate of his character when he tells Eustacia "that's because you don't know him. He is an enthusiast about ideas and careless about outward things. He often reminds me of the Apostle Paul" and Wildieve further comments : "Yes, the worst of it is that though Paul was excellent as a man in the Bible he would hardly have

done in real life” (p.288). It must be recognized that Mrs Yeobright could not understand her own son better than Wildieve could.

It cannot be denied that Clym’s own nature is much to blame and he is the cause of the tragedy of two women. Temperamentally Clym and Eustacia are different natures. Temperamentally Mrs Yeobright and Eustacia are of different natures and for all his love of his mother even Clym and his mother are of contrary natures and Hardy, the novelist, comments that for Clym “These antagonistic growths had to be kept alive : his mother’s trust in him : his plan for becoming a teacher and Eustacia’s happiness. His fervid nature could not afford to relinquish one of these.”

The difficulty with Clym is that he too much complicates things. Before one plan is on its way he would introduce another. “Though his love for Eustacia is as chaste as that of Petrarch for Laura” says the novelist, “it had made fetters of what previously was only a difficulty.” His passion to be a school master is greatly complicated by the addition of Eustacia. “Just when his mother was beginning to tolerate one scheme he had introduced another still bitterer than the first and the combination was more than she (his mother) could bear.” (p.208-09).

The outcome of all this is that with his best intentions he does his most to save both his mother and his wife but could save neither from their ruin and it is only after losing both of them that he becomes an open - air wandering preacher.

### **Thomasin**

Thomasin, also called by the name of Tamsie, Clym’s cousin and niece of Mrs Yeobright under whose guardianship she lives is a simple girl and when the novel opens we find that she has been attracted towards Wildieve, the keeper of the inn ‘Three Quiet Women’. She has been to the Anglebury church for her marriage with Wildieve but has been tricked by Wildieve as a result of which her marriage has failed. Earlier to this Diggory Venn had been attracted to her and had made a marriage proposal to her but because she had been attracted towards Wildieve and wanted to marry him she had made a polite refusal to Diggory Venn.

Though finally she succeeds in being married to Wildieve after the first debacle, she could not succeed in getting the love and care of Wildieve, her husband, whose infatuation for Eustacia did not diminish even after his marriage with Thomasin. Thomasin is perfectly faithful in love to her husband Wildieve but Wildieve, always sexually politicking with Eustacia, is never faithful to his wife Thomasin. Wildieve’s first choice is Eustacia and not Thomasin and he marries Thomasin only when finally rejected by Eustacia.

Thomasin has been portrayed as being in perfect contrast to that of Eustacia Vye. If Eustacia keeps Wildieve to show her power over him and other menfolk of the heath Thomasin is too simple and unassuming to do so. She is generally nice and good to everyone. She always consoles and comforts her aunt by her advice when the latter is very unhappy. She helps her

aunt when she is preparing to receive her son who is coming from Paris. She is quiet conscious of the fact that Diggory Venn is always kind and helpful to her and thinks only of her welfare and frankly admits this fact to Diggory in his face. She tells him that his exterior is not as deep as his heart. She is not complaining to any one about her husband's indifferent behaviour towards her although she is not ignorant of his advances to Eustacia.

Thomasin is basically and out and out a child of Egdon Heath and is familiar with every nook and corner of the place. By looking at the bonfire she can tell the area in which it is being lit. When the Christmas mummers come to perform at Mrs Yeobright's house she entertains them with ample food and drink.

In every sense she is a simple good hearted girl. She never thinks ill of anyone and can adjust herself in every situation. If she is attracted to Wildieve it is because she sincerely and genuinely likes him. When a country woman remarks that Thomasin is a fool to marry Wildieve another woman retorted by saying Wildieve is an educated person and that a hundred women would like to marry him. Wildieve is a good reader of other people's character and his judgement about Thomasin also cannot be questioned when he tells Eustacia that she is a "confoundedly good little woman". In all Hardy's novel she is the only woman who, after her marriage with Diggory Venn, lived happily under the loving care and love of her new husband.

### **Mrs Yeobright**

When Mrs Yeobright appears in the novel she is already a middle aged lady and the mother of Clym. She is intelligent and upright and can be rigid in her attitude when she thinks that she is right. She had been married to a small farmer on the heath although she had been the daughter of a curate. After marriage she has been totally devoted to her family. Under her guardianship is her niece Thomasin. She has been a devoted mother and has provided the best education and attention to her son Clym who is the manager of a diamond merchant in Paris. He is now coming to Egdon to celebrate christmas with his family.

On coming over there he decides to settle at Egdon permanently and this greatly pains Mrs Yeobright. She asks him not to give up his job in Paris but Clym does not listen to her and wants to become a school teacher. While he is at Egdon he falls in love with Eustacia Vye and this also pains Mrs Yeobright because she knows that Eustacia has her love affair with Wildieve. But here again Clym does not listen to her mother's advice and leaves her to find another house for himself and Eustacia after their marriage. Mrs Yeobright is again very unhappy and she comments, "O, it is mistake and he will rue it some day and think of me". All this is because she knows that her son loves her intensely.

Mrs Yeobright is also very considerate to her niece. She wanted her to be married to Clym but finding that Thomasin is in love with Wildieve she gives her permission to marry him. When she finds that Eustacia continues her relationship with Wildieve after her marriage with Clym she thinks of getting reconciled to her son and daughter-in-law. When she reaches their house she finds herself rejected and utterly broken returns from there. On the way she is bitten

by an adder and soon after dies. She is full of dignity and conducts herself gracefully throughout.

---

## 19.5 Egdon Heath

---

Egdon Heath is the fictitious name given by Hardy to Shadland Heath which is an area of moorland between Dorchester and Bournemouth in Dorset in England. It is the background for the whole of Hardy's novel *The Return of the Native*. The novelist views the place in its historical perspective. "It is pleasant" says the novelist, "to dream that some spot in the extensive tract whose south-western quarter is here described may be the heath of that traditionary King of Wessex—Lear which is the place described in Shakespeare's tragedy of that name.

The novel opens with a description of Egdon Heath. It is the place which had existed even prior to Roman and Norman conquests of England. It presents a face upon which time has made no mark and civilization has never been its ally. Its nature is dark and except in summer it is hateful of day light.

Because of the vividness of its description it has been suggested that instead of being only the background for human drama Egdon Heath is a living identity that makes its contribution as an active agent in that drama. It has its own character. Night falls here earlier than anywhere else. Furze-cutting has been the traditional occupation of its favourite inhabitants and they have never been ambitious. "Looking upward", writes Hardy about the place, "a Furze-cutter would have been inclined to continue to work : looking down he would have decided to finish his faggot and go home" (P.71). Since night falls here earlier lighting bonfire in the evening has been the customary practice of the people of this place. It is only when March approaches that there is some visible change on the face of Egdon. Egdon then shows "its first faint signs of awakening from winter trance. The awakening was almost feline in its stealthiness" and the sound of bumblebees that "flew hither and thither in the thickening light, their drone coming and going like the sound of a gong"(P.198).

The powerful influence of the Heath is pervasive. The Greek drama with the unities of place and purpose is enacted here. The rustic characters, as in a Greek drama, provide the chorus and they are free to comment on the behaviour and action of the major characters. Civilization is the villain and it comes to disturb the placid quality of its unruffled life. Those who love it and surrender to its charms are its chosen sons and daughters and those who are against and hate it cannot escape its powerful hold.

What is most hateful to Egdon is the onslaught of civilization on it. From this point of view Wildieve is the only villainous character in the novel. It is he who plays havoc with his modern ideas and disturbs the peaceful life of its inhabitants. The hateful point from Egdon's point of view is that Wildieve being himself married plays sexual politics with Euastcia who is herself married to Clym.

But apart from the reddleman Egdon Heath is much better represented by its simple

folk consisting of low characters like Timothy Fairways, Olly Dowden, Willy Orchard, Christian Candle and others. They are the true representatives of Egdon for they represent the eternal life of Egdon. Characters like Clym, Wildieve, Euastcia may come and go but these low rustic characters have been living there for ever. These low characters maintain the traditions, customs, superstitions, the simple and unadorned ways of their living and their archaic and their unsophisticated low expressions and their rustic language keeps Egdon eternally alive, living and animating.

---

## 19.6 Let Us Sum Up

---

Thus we have seen how Hardy has successfully individualized various characters in the novel. Moreover we have seen how Egdon Heath appears as a living identity that contributes as an active agent in the human drama.

---

## 19.7 Review Questions

---

1. Clym Yeobright is an impractical person. Do you think that such a person deserves to be the hero of the novel ?
2. The traditional heroes and villains have disappeared from the modern novels. Is this true of Hardy's *The Return of the Native* ? Give reasons.
3. Mrs Yeobright is first and foremost a curate's daughter and it is only with difficulty that she can remind herself that she is the wife of a simple and ordinary Egdon Heath farmer and that too when it is rather too late. Discuss.
4. Do you agree that Wildieve and Eustacia Vye are themselves responsible for their tragedies ? Give a reasoned answer.
5. Thomasin is a typical Victorian woman while Eustacia for all purposes is a modern woman. Explain and justify.
6. Clym's near blindness reflects a kind of deeper internal blindness. He fails to understand other people's motives. How do you react to this estimate of Clym Yeobright ?
7. About Thomasin Wildieve says that she is a "confoundedly simple girl". Give other examples of Wildieve as a reader of other people's character.
8. Diggory Venn is the moving and watching spirit of Egdon Heath Discuss.
9. Diggory Venn may be the spirit of Egdon Heath but Egdon lives in the lower characters of the novel who are the cause of its eternity.
10. About Egdon Heath Hardy says that it is a place on which Time has made little impression. How far is it true of Egdon Heath with reference to *The Return of the Native*?
11. Had Wildieve not come to Egdon Heath it would have been good for all concerned.

How far would you justify this estimate of Wildieve?

12. While some rustic characters say that Thomasin is a fool to marry Wildieve, Molly says that a hundred women would like to marry him. Which of the two is the more balanced opinion about Wildieve according to you ?

---

## 19.8 Bibliography

---

1. L. Abercrombie, Thomas Hardy : A Critical Study (London, 1912)
2. J.W. Beach, The Technique of Thomas Hardy (London, 1922)
3. Lord D. Cecil, Hardy the Novelist (London, 1943)
4. F. Chapman, 'Hardy the Novelist' in Scrutiny (1934)
5. S.C. Chew, Thomas Hardy : Poet and Novelist (Bryn Mawr, 1928)
6. H.C. Duffin, Hardy : a Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems and the Dynasts (rev.ed., London, 1937)
7. A.P. Elliott, Fatalism in the Works of Thomas Hardy (Philadelphia, 1935)
8. A.J. Guerard, Hardy : the Novels and Stories (Cambridge, Mass., 1949)
9. C.G. Harper, The Hardy Country (London, 1925)
10. D.H. Lawrence in Phoenix (London, 1936)
11. A.S. MacDowell, Thomas Hardy : a Critical Study (London, 1931)
12. 'The Southern Review', Thomas Hardy Centennial Issue, summer 1940 (Louisiana State University)



## UNIT -20

---

### R.L.STEVENSON:TREASURE ISLAND

---

#### Structure

- 20.0 Objectives
- 20.1 Introduction
- 20.2 The Story
  - 20.2.1 The Story in a nut-shell
  - 20.2.2 A Note on Captain Flint-The Buccaneer and his Crew
- 20.3 The Historical Perspective
  - 20.3.1 The Real Life Inspiration
  - 20.3.2 Some Facts Stranger than Fiction
- 20.4 Concluding Remarks
- 20.5 Annotations and References
- 20.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 20.7 Review Questions
- 20.8 Bibliography

---

#### **20.0 Objectives**

---

R.L.Stevenson's *Treasure Island* is a fascinating novel on the adventurous life of buccaneers, pirated and buried treasure. The purpose of this study on this novel is to place on the proper perspective in the plethora of books on sea voyages, perodous seas, pieacy, hidden and buries treasures, etc. there is an unfailing note of suspense and mystery throughout the novel. I have tried my best to unravel and unfold the sidister mystique of R.L.Stevenson's *Treasure Island* which appeals to the old and the young alike. The novel has been dexterously written.

---

#### **20.1 Introduction**

---

*Treasure Island* (1883) by Robert Louis Stevenson is an adventure novel. It narrates a tale of buccaneers and buried gold. The novel was originally serialised in the children's magazine *Young Folks* under the title *Sea Cook, or Treasure Island* in 1881-1882. The tale is known for its suerb atmosphere, character and action. It is also a wry commentary on the ambiguity of morality as seen in Long John Silver. *Treasure Island* is one of the most frequently dramatised novels. The influence of *Treasure Island* on popular perception of sea

pirates is vast. The novel is as interesting as Edgar Allan Poe's *The Gold Bug* and R.L. Stevenson's work, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. R.L. Stevenson was thirty years old when started writing *Treasure Island*. It was his debut as a novelist. The first fifteen chapters of it were written at Braemar in the Scottish Highlands in 1881. It was a cold and rainy late summer when Stevenson was with five family members on holiday in a cottage. Lloyd Osbourn-Stevenson's stepson- passed the rainy days painting with water colors. Lloyd Osbourn wrote in his memoirs: ".....Busy with a box of paints I happens to be tinting a map of an island I had drawn. Stevenson came in as I was finished it and with his affectionate interest in everything I was elaborating the map and it. I shall never forget the thrill of skiletton Island, Spyglass Hill, nor the heart-stirring climax of the three red crosses ! And the greater climex still when he wrote down the words "*Treasure Island*" at the top right hand corner ! And he seemed to know so much about it too- the pirated the buried treasure, the man who had been marooned on the island....." Oh for a story about it, "I exclaimed in a heaven of enchantment." <sup>1</sup>

Written three days of drawing the map for Lloyd, Stevenson wrote the first three chapter of the novel and read them about to his family members who came out with certain suggestions. Lloyd insisted that there should be no woman character in the story. Stevenson's father took a child like delight in the story and spent a whole day writing out the exact contents of Billy Bones's sea-chest, which Stevenson adopted word-for-word; and it was his father who suggested the seem where Jain Hawkins hides in the apple barrel. Two weeks later a friend, Dr, Alexander Japp, brought those chapters to the editor of *Young Folks* magazine who agrees to publish each chapter weekly. Stevenson wrote a chapter a day for a fortnight or so. Then he ran dry of words. His ill health was a not, however factor in this. He had been feeling rather depressed and despondent as he was not able to earn his keep even upto the age of thirty-one. He thought he would not finish the novel. He turned to the proofs, corrected them, took his morning walks alone and read other novels. With the onset of autumn in Scotland, the Stevenson left their summer holiday retreated for London. Stevenson was a chronic patient of bronchitis. It troubled him rather too much. He travelled in October to Davis in Switzerland where the treak from routine and serene mountain air improved his condition wonderfully. He was now able to continue writing a chapter a day and determined to complete the novel.

During its initial run in young Folks from Oct. 1881 to January 1882 it failed to attract any attention of the public. But when it was published as novel in 1883, it became immensely popular.<sup>2</sup> It was reported that Prime Minister Glastone kept awake up to o'clock at night to finish reading this novel. Critic were all praise for it. American novelist Henry James praised it as, "perfect as a well-played boys game."<sup>3</sup> Garard Manley Hopkins went to the extent of saying, "I think Stevenson shows more genius in a page than Sir Watter Scott in a volume." "The of *Treasure Island* on our perception of pirates cannot be over estimated. Stevenson linked pirates forever with maps, black schooners, tropical islands and one legged seamen with parrots on their shoulders. The treasure map with an X marking the location of the burried treasure is one of the most familiar pirate props,"<sup>4</sup> yet it is entirely a fictional invention which

owes its origin to Stevenson's original map. The term '*Treasure Island*' has now passed into the English language as a common phrase and it is used as a title for games, rides places..... etc.

We come to know a great deal about R.L. Stevenson's sources and inspirations from his letters and essays, the initial catalyst being the map with his manuscript to the publication. The island map was the very blue-print of *Treasure Island* representing the whole plot. The book publisher told him that the map had been lost. Stevenson did not have a copy of it. He had to prepare another map tediously from scratch, making sure that it fully matched the story. The new map had lost the charm of the first but it couldn't be helped. It can be mentioned that R.L. Stevenson had a wonderful memory. He also drew from his memory the works by Daniel Defoe, Edgar Allan Poe's story *The Gold-Bug* and Washington Irving's *Wolfert Webber* about which he acknowledged, "It is my debt to Washington Irving that exercises my conscience, and justly so, for I believe plagiarism was rarely carried farther..... the whole inner spirit and a good deal of the material detail of my first chapters..... were the property of Washington Irving."<sup>5</sup> Stevenson says that his key inspiration was the novel *At Last* by Charles Kingsley. The idea of the character of Long John Silver was inspired by his friend William Henley- a writer and editor who had lost his lower leg to tuberculosis of the bone. Lloyd Osborn described him as ".....a great, glowing, massive shouldered fellow with a big red beard and a crutch; jovial, astoundingly clever, and with a laugh that rolled like music; he had an unimaginable fire and vitality. He swept one off one's feet." In a letter to William Henley after the publication of *Treasure Island* Stevenson wrote. "I will now make a confession. It was the sight of your mainmanned strength and masterfulness that begot Long John silver..... the idea of the maimed man.....ruling and dreaded by the voice alone, was entirely taken from you,"

Other books which resemble *Treasure Island* include Robert Michael Ballantyne's *Coral Island* (1871), Captain Marryat's book *The Pirate* (1836) H.Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885). There was a bet between Rider Haggard and his brother that he could write a better novel than R.L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and consequently *The Lost World* was written. R.L. Stevenson had never encountered any real pirates in his life. However, his descriptions of sailing, sea men, sea life, etc are very convincing. His father and grandfather were both lighthouse engineers and frequently voyaged around Scotland inspecting lighthouses, taking Stevenson along with them. A couple of years before writing *Treasure Island* he had crossed the Atlantic ocean. The descriptions of sea-pirates were so impressive that even W.B. Yeats told Stevenson that *Treasure Island* was the only book from his sea faring grandfather had ever taken any pleasure. <sup>6</sup>

This novel is defined as a bildungsroman as it deals with the development and coming of age of its narrator- Jim Hawkins. Shall I add by way of amusing information that R.L. Stevenson was paid only 34 pounds 7 shillings and six pence for the serialization and 100 pounds for the novel in the book form.

---

## 20.2 The Story

---

### 20.2.1 The Story in a nut-shell

Principal characters

1. Jim Hawkins-a cabin boy of the Hispaniola
2. Dr. Livesey-a physician and Jim Hawkins's friend
3. Squire Treawney-an affluent
4. Mr. Smollett-Captain of the Hispaniola
5. Long John Silver-the leader of the mutineers
6. Ben Gunn-Pirate

Locale-England and the Spanish Main.

Young Jim Hawkins always remembered the day when the strange seaman Bill Bones came looking for lodgings at his father's inn: "The Admiral Benbow near British, in England." He came plodding up to the inn door where he stood for some time and looked around Black Hill Cove. Jim heard him singing snatches of an old sea song:

"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest,  
.....and a battle of rum." etc.

Bill Bones paid three or four gold pieces as advance and stayed there when he came to know from Jim's father that this inn was a calm and quiet place with little trade, he remarked that was just the berth for an old sea man. This man who called himself a retired captain- kept watch on the coast and land road by day and led a relaxed life here drinking, singing and swearing great oaths while he told horrible adventurous tales of the Spanish main. Cautious of all visiting seamen, he asked Jim Hawkins to be on the look out for one legged sailor in particular. He was so terrible in his speech and manners that Jim's father, who was not keeping well, never had the courage to ask him for the payment. He kept on staying without ever clinking another coin into the inn for his board and lodging.

The one-legged sailor never came to inn but another seaman a menacing figure named Black Dog did. The two pirates fought furiously in the parlour of the inn. Bill Bones muttered on captain Flint had given him the sea chest. He had a savant. Jim and his mother were terribly scared to see all this. Captain Bill Bones chased his visitor up to the road. The Black Dog was soon out of sight. Captain Bones fell down in a fit. He was treated by Dr. Livesey who treated Jim's father and Bones was advised to exercise moderation in drink. Jim's father expired.

On the very day of his funeral, a deformed blind man Pew tapped his way up to the

door of the inn- 'The Admiral Benbow. He insisted on meeting Bill Bones who was so terrible afraid that when the blind man gave him *The Black spot*- the pirates death notice, he had a stroke and died instantly.

Jim and his mother took the keys to his sea-chest from his pocket and opened to find the money which was long over due for his stay in their inn. As they were examining the contents, they heard the tapping of the blindman's stick on the road outside. Jim hurriedly pocketed an oilskin pocket. He and his mother left from the back-door of the inn as a gang of men broke in to look for Captian Bones's chest and ransacked the inn. In the meantime the revenue officers (Revenuers) came on horse back and dispersed the gang. Blind Pew was trampled to death by the changing horses. Jim handed the packet to Dr. Livesey and Squire Trelawney. The three discovered that it contained a map locating the hidden fabled treasure of the bloody buccaneer, Captain Flint. Squire Trelawney decided to out fit a ship in which to sail to get treasure. The docter also joined in the expedition and invited Jim to come along as a cabin boy. In Bristol naive in his negotiation Trelawney purchased a schooner,<sup>7</sup> The hispaniola and hired one Long John Silver who happened to be a former mate of Capt. flint. Silver promised to make available the crew. Jim went to Bristol and met Silver who had but one leg. He was alarmed when he saw Black Dog again in the inn operated by Silver but Silver's smooth talk suppressed Jim's suspicious.

The *Hispaniola* sailed into the sea. Captain Smollett, hired by Squire Trelawny to command the ship expressed his dislike of the crew and his first mate. Only Dr. Livesey and Trelawney servants- Hunter, Joyce and Redruth were loyal. One night Jim, overheard Silver discussing mutiny with the faithful crew commanded by capt. Smollett Before Jim had a change to expose the plot to Dr. Livesey and Squire Trelawny, the island was sighted.

The prospects of finding the treasure on the island caused the rehellious members of the crew pay little attention Captain Smollett's orders. Even the loyal ones were hard to manage. John silver was shrewd enough to keep his party under control. The Captain allowed some members of the crew to go asore. Landing at the island Captain Smollett decided a plan to get the mutineers off the ship. Jim also got off to spy on John Silver and the men on the island. When ashore Silver killed two of the crew who refused to join the mutineers. Jim, seeing danger to his life, ran away into the forest and happened to meet Ben Gunn who was with Captain Flint when the treasure was buried. Gunn who was a half crazedman told Jim that he had been marooned on the island three years earlier and he had served in Captain Flints crew while Jim was ashore, Dr. Livesey went to the island the scream of one of the men Silver murdered, the returned to the *Hispaniola*, where it was decided that the honest men would move to the fort within the stockade of Captain Flint. Several dangerous trips in an overloaded boat completed the move. During the last trip, the mutineers a board the ship unlimbered the ship's gun. Squire Trelawny shot one seaman from the boat. In the meantime, the gang ashore understood what was afoot and made efforts to keep Jim's friends from occupying the stockade. The enemy repulsed, Squire Trelawny and his men took their positions in the fort. The

mutineers on the *Hispaniola* fired shots into the stockade.

After leaving Ben Gunn, the marooned seaman, Jim made his way to the stockade. The *Hispaniola* now flew the Jolly Roger skull and crossbones. Carrying a flag of truce, Silver approached the stockade and offered to negotiate. Admitted by the defenders, he demanded treasure chart in exchange for the safe return of Squire Treawney and his party to Bristol England. But Captain Smollett would not concede. So John Silver returned to his men in anger. The stockade party prepared for confrontation. A gang of pirates attacked from two sides and engaged the defenders in hand-to-hand combat. In the close fighting, the pirates fled back to the gang in the forest. The loyal party consisted of Squire Trelawny, Dr. Livesey, Captain Smollett and Jim.

During the lull which followed the battle, Jim sneaked off and borrowed Ben Gunn's home-made coracle (boat). He rowed out in this boat to the anchored *Hispaniola* under cover of darkness with the intention of cutting it adrift thereby depriving the pirates of escape. While trying to return to the shore, he was caught offshore by coastal currents. He noticed when there was daylight that the *Hispaniola* was aimlessly drifting. He jumped into it. Ben Gunn's little boat was smashed. Jim found on the ship a wounded pirate Israel Hands. Jim took command but the wounded pirate (Israel Hands) wanted to stab Jim who climbed up the mast. Israel Hands threw his knife into the mast about a foot below Jim. In the meantime Jim loaded his pistol and shot the pirate who had thrown another knife which hurt his shoulder. Jim returned to the stockade at night, only to find himself abandoned by his friends. He was now in the hands of the pirates. When John Silver's parrot, drew attention to the boys' presence and the pirates captured him. Silver's men, dissatisfied with the buccaneer's methods of gaining the treasure, grumbled. One of them tried to kill Jim. But Silver took Jim's side. Silver's mates gave Silver *The Black Spot*<sup>9</sup> deposing him as their chief.

The pirate leader talked his way out of his difficulty by showing them, to Jim's amazement and their delight, Captain Flint's chart to silver. Following the directions of the chart, the last five pirates went to find the treasure. Silver was again re-elected as Captain with happy cries of barbecue over.<sup>10</sup> Approaching the hiding place, they heard a loud voice singing the pirate chantey.<sup>11</sup>

"Yo ho ho and a battle of roun." Also, the voice spoke the last words of Captain Flint: The men were terrified until they recognised Ben Gunn's voice. Then the pirates found the treasure cache<sup>12</sup> opened and the treasure gone. The sight had already been excavated. When they uncovered only a broken pick and some boards, they rushed to kill Silver and Jim once and for all. At this moment, Jim's friends with Ben Gunn, Dr. Livesey, Abraham Gray appeared from the bushes and fired on the pirate. Early in his stay on the island Jim was rescued. Silver argued that he had saved Jim earlier and therefore, he was accepted into the group. Ben Gunn had discovered the treasure and carried it to his cave. After Dr. Livesey had learned all this from Gunn, the stockade was abandoned and the useless chart was given to Silver. Squire Trelawney's party moved to Ben Gunn's safe and well-provisioned quarters.

The group left *Treasure Island* leaving behind three buccaneers.<sup>13</sup> They sailed to a West Indies port where, with the connivance of Ben Gunn, Silver escaped with a bag full of coins to join the voyage to a nearby Spanish American port. A full crew was taken on, and the schooner voyaged back to Bristol. There the treasure was divided among the surcicors of the expedition. Squire Trelawny and Dr. Livesey resumed their business as usual, though they were affluent now. Captain Smollett retired form the sea on his share and lively peacefully in the country. Abraham Gray wisely decided to invest his share in building a career as an honest seaman. He succeeded admirally and become owner of a ship by the time Jim Hawkins began to write his memoirs Ben Gunn spent his money rather extravagantly and was reduced to object poverty. However, he was given a small pension and a lodge to keep by Squire Trelawney and, thus, he was settled in the countryside. Jim Hawkins was able to run the Admiral Benbow on his own, but ne battled up mysterious gloom in his heart. He saw nightmares in which he sat up in bed the sharp voice of Captain Flint still ringing in his ears.

### 20.2.2 A Note on Captain Flint-The Buccaneer and his Crew

*Treasure Island* contains several references to fictional past events, which are gradually reveled in the story background concerns the pirate captain J.Flint The bloomthirstiest buccaneer that ever lived. He never appears in the story, being already dead before the main story begins. Flint was captain of the *The Walrus* with a long career of twenty five years operating chiefly in the West Indies and the coasts of the southern American colonies. His crew included the following characters who appear in the story: Captain Flint's first mate, William (Billy) Bones; his quarter master John Silver, his gunner Israel Hands; and among his other sailors were Ben Gunn, Tom Morgan, Pew, Black Dog, and Already who becomes Captain Flint's pointer towards the treasure. Many other formes members of Flint's crew were on the cruise of *The Hispaniola*. Flint and his crew were ruthless, formidable and successful. The treasure Flint made by piracy was 700000 ponds of gold, Silver bars and a chche of armaments. It was buried on a remote Caribbean island. Flint brought the treasure ashore from the *Waleus* with six of his soulors and built a stockde on the island for defence. When they had buries the treasure, Capt. Flint returned to the *Walrus* alone- having murdered all of the six sailors.

A map of the location of the treasure he kept to himself. The where abouts of Captain Flint and his crew were obscure thereafter. While they were at Savannah, a province of Georgia, Flint was taken seriously ill. His immoserate consumption of rum aggravated the malady. On his sickbed, he used to sing the chantey "Fifteen Men" and asked for pegs of rum, His last words were "Darby M'Graw ! Darby M'Graw....." "Fetch after the rum Darby!" Just before he died, he passed on the treasure map to the mate of the *Walrus* Billy Gones. After Captain Flint's death, the crew split up. Most of the seamen returned to England. They disposed of their shares of the unburies treasure diversely. John Silver kept 2000 pounds and deposited the amount in the bank and became a tavern keeper in Bristol (England). Pew spent his 1200 pounds in one year and then led the life of a beggar and starved. Ben Gunn with his intention to

unearth the treasure, went to *Treasure Island* and failed to find it. His crew mates abandoned him on the island and left.

---

## 20.3 The Historical Perspective

---

### 20.3.1 The Real-life Inspiration

There are a number of islands which could be the real-life inspiration for *Treasure Island*. One story goes that a mariner uncle had told young Stevenson tales of his sea voyages to Norman Island<sup>14</sup> in the British Virgin Islands. This could mean that Norman Island was an indirect inspiration for the books. There is a *Dead Man's Chest Island* near Norman Island. Stevenson read about it in a book by Charles Kingsley.<sup>15</sup> Stevenson remarked “*Treasure Island*” came out of Kingsley’s *At Last: A Christmas in the West Indies* (1871); where I got the “Dead Man’s Chest”- that was the seed.<sup>16</sup> There are some small islands called Queen street Gardens in Edinburgh. R.L. Stevenson lived in Hariot Row and he could see the wee pond from his bedroom window in Queen Street Gardens which provided the inspiration for *Treasure Island*.<sup>17</sup>

There a number of inns in Queen Street Gardens which must have been the inspiration for the inns decribed in *Treasure Island*. *The Adiral Benbow* pub is supposed to be based on the *Llandoger Trow* in Bristol.<sup>18</sup> *The Pirate's house* in Savannah, Georgia is where Captain Flint is supposed to have passed his lastdays,<sup>19</sup> and his ghost still haunts the property. In 1883, Stevenson had also published *The Silversdo Squatters* - a travel narrative of his honeymoon in 1880 in Napavalley, California. His experiences at Silverado were kept in a journal called *Silverado Sketches* and many of his notes of the scenario around his in Napavalley provided much of the descriptive detail for *Treasure Island*. In May 1888 Stevenson also spent a month in Brielle, New Jersey along the *Manasquan River*. On the river is a small wooded island and he was so impressed by it that he called it *Treasure Island* and carved his initials into a rock. It is now called Nienstedt Island, honouring the family that donated it to the borough.<sup>20</sup> The map of the island bears a close resemblance to that of the Island of Unst in Shetland. It is thought that Stevenson may have drawn the map as a boy while visiting his uncle David and father Stevenson were building the lighthouse at Muckle Flugga of Unst insland.

### 20.3.2 Some Facts Stranger than Fiction

The Admiral Benbow inn where Jim and his mother live is named after the real life admiral John Benbow (1653-1702) Five real life pirates mentioned are William Kind, Howell Davis, Blackboard, Edward England and Bartholomew Roberts. The unusual name ‘Israel Hands’ was lifted from that of a real pirate in Blackboard’s crew, whom Blackboard maimed by shooting him in the knee only to assure that his crew remained in terror of him. Allegedly Hands was taken ashore to be treated for his injury. The incident is also depicted in the novel *On Strange Tides* by Tim Powers. This saved Israel Hands from the gallows. Later, he lived



as a beggar in England.

Silver refers to a ship's surgeon from Robert's crew who amputated his leg and was later hanged at Cape Corso Castle- a British fortification on the Gold Coast of Africa. The Records of the trial of Robert's men list one Peter Scudamore as the chief surgeon of Robert's ship- Royal Fortune, who was found guilty of willingly serving with Roberts's pirates and various criminal acts as well as attempting to lead a mutiny to escape once he had been apprehended. He was, as Silver relates, hanged.

R.L. Stevenson refers to a ship The Viceroy of the Indies sailing from Goa (then a Portuguese colony). It was captured by Edward England off Malabar, while John Silver served as a board an English ship the Cassandra. No such exploit of an English ship is known. There is no record of any ship by the name of The Viceroy of the Indies. However, in April 1721, the captain of the Cassandea, John Taylor (originally England's second in command who had deposed him for being ruthless), captured the ship *Nostra Senhora de Cabo* near Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean. This Portuguese ship was returning from Goa to Lisbon with Cande da Ericira- the Viceroy of the- then Portuguese India. As the Viceroy had a large treasure with him, this capture was one of the richest pirate hauls. This is most likely the event that Stevenson referred to. The Cassandra is last heard of in 1723 at Portobelo, Panama, a place which also figures in *Treasure Island*. The Cassandra was in the Indian ocean during the whole time that Scudamore was surgeon on board the Royal Fortune, in the Gulf of Guinea. Captain Flint died at Savannah. Doctor Livesey was at the *Battle of Fontenoy* (1745) Squire Trelawney and Long John Silver mention "Admiral Hawke": Edward Hawke was a historical figure. The novel refers to Bow Street Runners. One Joseph Livesey was a famous nineteenth century temperance advocate. Founder of the tee-total "Preston-Pledge" and thus an inspiration for R.L. Stevenson's character, who warns the alcoholic Billy Bones that "the name of rum for you is death."<sup>21</sup>

One Edward Trelawney was Governor of Jamaica (1738-1752). One pirate who buried treasure on an island was William Kidd on Gardiner's Island. The booty was recovered by authorities soon afterwards. It is speculated by some people that Robert Louis Stevenson found the hidden Treasure of Lima on Upolu around 1890. Stevenson kept the date of the novel obscure. The year 1745 is established by Dr. Livesey's service at Fontenoy and in Billy Bones's log. Admiral Hawke is a household name and he would not likely have been known to the characters before the battle of Cape Finisterre. He was promoted admiral in 1747. Silver claims to be fifty years old. He sailed "First with England,<sup>22</sup> than with Flint." Which pushes the beginning of his career around 1720, the date of the surgeon Edward England's death. Silver says that the surgeon who amputated his leg was hanged with Roberts' crew at Corso Castle. This means he was disabled in 1722. About twenty years account for his considerable skill with the cut-throat. Both Silver and Israel Hands who had been in Captain Flint's crew together, claims to have had experience of the sea as pirates for thirty years prior to their arrival at Treasure Island. Squire Trelawney in his letter from Bristol (in chapter VII) indicates his wish

to requistaion a sufficient number of sailor.” This suggests that Great Britain was at that time at war with France.

The evidence of the text suggests that Billy Bones came to the Admiral Benbow in 1747. Captain Flint’s piracy seems to have lasted during (1720-1745) an unusually long career for a pirate. Flint death at Savannah must have taken place around 1745, with Ben Gunn present at his side. Gunn would be marooned on the island shortly after, not to be rescued for another three years. R.L.Stevenson’s map has mentioned “*Tresure Island* Aug.1, 1750 J.F.” and “given by above J.F. to Mr.W.Bones Master of Walrus Savannah this twenty july 1754 W.B.” 1 July 1750 is likely the date on which captain Flint left his treasure on the island and 20 July 1754 is just to his death. As Flint is reliably reported to have died three years before the events of the novel, its date cannot be placed earlier than 1757 to be consistent with the map. Many of the dates reconstructed from the novel itself deoend on the accuracy of the story that unretiable Silver tells Dick while Jim Hawkins listens to him in the apple-barrel. His descriptions of places are not trustworthy. Silver’s stories may be no more reliable than his claim to have lost his leg while serving under Admiral Hawke.

An alternative chronoligy would place the story during the seven years’ war (1756-1763) with 1757 the earliest year for the vovage of the Hisoaniola. The sates in Bones’s account book and Dr. Livesey’s history are not disturbed by this change. The stories of Silver about the pirates of captain Edward England and Roberts may be fabrications of stories he heard from other pirates. The period of piracy in the Caribbean Sea is roughly from 1560 to 1720. Pirates mostly came to the Caribbean Sea after the war Spanish Succession. They were mostly hunters and explorers. They resorted to serve tactics of piracy due to the frequent Spanish raids, and making a comfortable living was difficult fro them. It is obvious that the buccaneers on the Hispaniola were after Captain Flint’s treasure. Historically the real pirates of the Caribbean Sea were generally Dutch, French and English. There are several books- mostly English novels- which are based on pirates.

---

## 20.4 Concluding Remarks

---

Since its publication in 1853, *Treasure Island* has been a favorite book of boys everywhere. With action moving swiftly from beginning to end, the story is told in the first season for the most part by the boy hero; the rest is told by Dr. Livesey. The character of John silver dominated R.L.Stevenson so much that the outcome is not entirely acceptable from a convetionaly moral and ethical point of view. *Treasure Island* according to Stevenson, was born out of his fascination with a water-colour map he himself drew. It was about an imagined *Treasure Island*.

---

## 20.5 Annotations and References

---

1. R.L.Stevenson claims it was his map, not Lloyed’s that prompted him to write *Treasure Island*. (ed.) Emmaletly PP (vii-viii) Oxford World Classisc.1998

2. Jonathan Yardley: Stevenson's *Treasure Island*: Still A vast Delight in Washington Post (April 17, 2006)
3. See Guha Books (Octavia & Co. Press)
4. Cordingly, David: Under the Black Flag: The Romance and Reality of life among the Pirates. P.7.1995
5. Paine, Ralph Delahaye: "The Book of buried treasure; being a true history of the gold, jewels and the plate of pirates, etc, which are sought for to this day" (New York; Macmillan) 1911
6. cordingly, David: Under the Black Flag: The Romance and Reality of life among the Pirates. P.6-7.1995
7. schooner=Ship
8. stockade= a line of strong wooden posts built to defend a place.
9. The Black spot= a secret pirates message.
10. 'barbwe- A metal frame for cooking food on over an open fire shanty or outdoors.
11. Chantey = a song which the sailors often sing while pulling the ropes on the ship.
12. cache = a hidden store of weapons or coins.....
13. buccaneers = pirates.
14. see Where's Where (Eyre Methuen, London. 1974) w.r.t. Norman Island.
15. Cordingly, David: Under the Black Flag: The Romance and Reality of life among the Pirates.
16. Stevenson, R.L.: Selected Letters of R.L. Stevenson. (see letter to Sidney Colvin May 1884)
17. Brilliance of 'Worls' child' will come active at story telling event. Scotsman 20 oct.2005
18. see The History of Of Inns & Pubs of Bristol (1982)
19. see The Pirates House History.
20. Richard Harding Davis: Adventures and Letters of Richard Harding Davis. (Gutenbrg) P.5 1916
21. Read, Thomas L: The Transforming Draught: Jekyll and Hyde Robert Louis Stevensod, and the Victorian Alcohol Debate 2006 PP072-73
22. Captain Edward England.

---

## 20.6 Let Us Sum Up

---

1. *Treasure Island* by R.L.Stevenson is about the buccaneers of the Caribbean Sea. It is a novel full mystery and suspense.
2. R.L.based it on a map of the *Treasure Island* where Captain Flint's treasure was buried.
3. The novel was first serialised in Young Folks magazine and later on, it was published in a book form in 1883.
4. Prime Minister Gladstone American novelist Henry James, Irish poet W.B.Yeats, G.M.Hopkins etc liked it immensely.
5. Jim Hawkins narrates the story of the voyage of the Hispaniola to the Treasure Island.
6. Bill Bines- an alcoholic pirate- came to stay at The Admiral Benbow near Bristol.
7. One pirate Black Dog came there. Another blind pirate Pew also visited Bill Bones.
8. Bill Bones died of heart stroke. Jim recovered a mysterious map from his sea chest and handed it over to Dr. Livesey and Squire Trelauney.
9. Squire Trelauney purchased the Hispaniola to visit *The Treasure Island* with the crew which included Captain Flints men.
10. Captain Smottett commanded the ship but the mutineers created trouble.
11. Dr. Livesey, Squire Trelawney, Ben Gunn, etc went in search of the buried treasure on the island.
12. Jim fell in the hands of the pirates but he was rescued Silver rescued Jim.
13. Ben Gunn helped the team of Squire Trelawney out of the way.
14. Captain Flint who had died had buried his treasure on the island and before his death at he had passed on the map to Ben Gunn.
15. Squire Trelawney and his team returned safe and sound and divided the booty among the members of the crew.
16. The most clever and sharped person was John Silver who had one leg amputated. He changed sides as and when the occasion demanded.

---

## 20.7 Review Questions

---

1. Write an elaborate note on Captain Flint and his crew. (300 words)
2. Present a character sketch of Long John Silver. (250 words)

3. What do you know about Captain Billy Bones ? (250 words)
4. Who is the hero of this novel- Ben Gunn or Billy Bones or Jim Hawkins or John Silver. Discuss. (250 words)
5. What is the end of the story of this novel ? (250 words)
6. What is the background of *Treasure Island* Elaborate.
7. Describe the voyage of the Hispaniola to and from the *Treasure Island*.

---

## 20.7 Bibliography

---

1. Ballantyny, Robert Michael: Coral Island. 1871
2. Barrie, J.M.: Peter Pan 1911
3. Bryan, Francis: The Curse of Treasure Island. 2001
4. Calahan, H.A.: Back to Treasure Island. 1935
5. Cordingly, David: Under the Black Flag: The Romance and Reality of life among the pirates. (1995) P.7
6. Delaney, French: The curse of Treasure Island (2001)
7. Delderfield, R.F.: The Adventures of Ben Gunn (1956)
8. Haggard, H.Rider: King Solomon's Mines (1885)
9. Johnson, Roger L.: Dead Man's Chest: The Sequel to Treasure Island (2001)
10. Judd, Devis: Return to Treasure Island (1978)
11. Lasson, Byorn: Long John Silver (1999)
12. Marryat, Captain: The Pirate (1836)
13. Milligan, Spike: Treasure island according to Spike Milligan (2000)
14. Letley, Emma, (ed.) Treasure Island (Oxford Classics)
15. Paine, Ralph Delahaye: The Book of Buried Treasure: Being a true History of gold, jewels and plate of Pirates, galleons, etc. (New York. Macmillan 1911)
16. Kingsley: At Last: A Christmas in the West Indies (1871)
17. Poe, Adgan Allan: Great Tales and Poems of E.A. Poe (Washington Square Press. 1940)
18. Richard, Harding Davis: Adventures and Letters of Richard Harding Davis (Project Gutenberg. 1916)

19. Reed, Thomas L.: The Transforming Draught: Jekyll and Hyde, Robert Louis Stevenson and the Victorian Alcohol Debate. (2006) PP.72-73
  20. Stevenson, R.L.: Selected Letters. see (To Sidney Cilvin, May 1884) P.263.
  21. Stevenson, R.L.: Treasure Island. ed. Franklin to Bakes. (Columbia University. 1909)
  22. Stevenson, R.L.: New Arabian Nights (1882)
  23. Stevenson, R.L.: Island Night's Entertainments (1893)
  24. Stevenson, R.L.: A Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (1886)
  25. Stevenson, R.L.: An Inland Vovage (1878)
  26. Stevenson, R.L.: The Silverado Squalters (1883)
  27. Smith, A.D. Howdon: Porto Bello Gold. (1924)
  28. Watson, Harold: Coasts Treasure Island: A Study of the Background and Sources for R.L. Stevenson's Romance of the sea. (1969)
  29. Wibberley, Leanard: Flint's Island. (1972)
-

## UNIT–21

---

### JOHN STUART MILL: *THE SUBJECTION OF WOMEN*

---

#### Structure

- 21.0 Objectives
- 21.1 Introduction
- 21.2 Discussion of *The Subjection of Women*
- 21.3 Some Concepts Discussed
  - 21.3.1 Utilitarianism
  - 21.3.2 Associationism
  - 21.3.3 Consequentialism
  - 21.3.4 Mills Arguments against the Traditional Views of Women
  - 21.3.5 Mills Linking together ‘The Private’
- 21.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 21.5 Review Questions
- 21.6 Bibliography

---

#### 21.0 Objectives

---

This unit will introduce you to the ideas of one of the greatest thinkers of modern times– John Stuart Mill and offer a detailed discussion of his essay, *The Subjection of Women*. After reading this, you will have some idea of the status of women during Mill’s time and in what way Mill’s essay went against the prevailing public opinion and mindset of those times. *The Subjection of Women* is remarkable for being one of the earliest essays written on this subject by a male author. Mill was of the opinion that the oppression of women was a carryover from primitive times and was a set of prejudices that was a great impediment in the path of mankind’s progress towards a more civilised society. In this work, Mill states unequivocally that the status of women at that time was comparable to that of slaves and argues for equality in marriage and under the law. *The Subjection of Women* is considered an important work in the history of feminism.

---

#### 21.1 Introduction

---

John Stuart Mill (20 May 1806 – 8 May 1873) was a British philosopher, political economist, civil servant and Member of Parliament. He was one of the most influential liberal thinkers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was godfather to Bertrand Russell. He was a proponent of

**Utilitarianism**, an ethical theory developed by Jeremy Bentham, although Mill's conception of it was quite different from Bentham's.

Mill, born in London, was the eldest son of James Mill, a Scottish philosopher and historian. John Stuart was educated by his father, with the advice and assistance of Jeremy Bentham and Francis Place. He had an extremely rigorous upbringing, and was deliberately shielded from association with children his own age other than his siblings. His father, a follower of Bentham and a believer in **Associationism**, aimed to create a genius who would carry on the cause of Utilitarianism and its implementation after he and Bentham were dead.

John Stuart Mill learnt the Greek alphabet and long lists of Greek words with their English equivalents at the age of three and by the time he was eight, he had read Aesop's *Fables*, Xenophon's *Anabasis*, the whole of Herodotus and was, in addition, acquainted with Lucian, Diogenes Laertius, Isocrates and six dialogues of Plato. He had also read a great deal of history in English and had been taught arithmetic. At the same time, he also began learning Latin, Euclid and algebra and started tutoring the younger children in the family. While his main focus was history, he was introduced to all the Latin and Greek authors commonly read in schools and Universities at that time like Horace, Virgil, Ovid, Tacitus, Homer, Dionysus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes and Thucydides. By the time he was ten, he could read writers like Plato and Demosthenes with ease. His father also thought it important that he learn to study and compose poetry. Accordingly, and in keeping with the rest of his study regimen, one of Mill's earliest poetic compositions was a continuation of Homer's the *Iliad*. But Mill also enjoyed reading about natural sciences and popular novels like *Don Quixote* and *Robinson Crusoe*.

Mill's father published the *History of India* in 1818 and immediately after, Mill commenced an intensive study of scholastic logic while at the same time, reading Aristotle's logical treatises in the original. The next year, he was initiated into the concepts of political economy and studied Adam Smith and David Ricardo with his father. This bore fruit in the shape of a book by his father - *Elements of Political Economy* - which became the leading textbook exposition of doctrinaire Ricardian economics. Ricardo, who was a close friend of his father, used to invite the young Mill to his house for a walk in order to talk about political economy.

When he was fourteen years old, Mill went to stay in France with Jeremy Bentham's brother, Sir Samuel Bentham. The mountains of France left a lasting impression on his young mind, leading to a taste for mountain landscapes that stayed with him for life. The vivacious and friendly nature of the French people also had a positive impact on his impressionable consciousness. He attended courses on chemistry, zoology, logic of the *Faculté des Sciences* as well as a course on higher mathematics. He also met many leaders of the Liberal party and other notable people in Paris.

The arduous study routine however had pernicious effects on Mill's mental health and state of mind which resulted in his suffering a nervous breakdown at the age of twenty. As he



later wrote in his *Autobiography*, this was caused by rigorous study and the suppression of feelings that he might normally have developed in his childhood and youth. However, he began climbing out of this depression and found solace in the *Mémoires* of Jean-Francois Marmontel and the poetry of Wordsworth so that as he himself remarks, the ‘cloud gradually drew off’.

Mill declined to study at the Oxford or Cambridge Universities and instead followed his father to work for the British East India Company till 1858.

Earlier, in 1851, he married Harriet Taylor after twenty-one years of an intimate friendship. Harriet was married when they first met and they shared a close but platonic relationship in the years before her husband died. She was a brilliant woman and had a significant influence on Mill’s ideas and writing during the years of their friendship and later after their marriage. Mill’s relationship with Harriet strengthened his advocacy of women’s rights. He cites her influence in his final revision of *On Liberty*, which was published shortly after her death, and she appears to be obliquely referenced in *The Subjection of Women*. Harriet died in 1858 after developing severe lung congestion, only seven years after their marriage.

Between the years 1865-1868 Mill served as Lord Rector at the University of St. Andrews, where he gave an inaugural speech on the value of culture. During the same period, 1865-8, he was a Member of Parliament for City and Westminster, and was often associated with the Liberal Party. During his time as an MP, Mill advocated easing the burdens on Ireland, and became the first person in Parliament to call for women to be given the right to vote and argued in defence of this right in 1869. Mill became a strong advocate of women’s rights and such political and social reforms as proportional representation, labour unions, and farm co-operatives. In *Considerations on Representative Government*, Mill called for various reforms of Parliament and voting, especially proportional representation, the Single Transferable Vote and the extension of suffrage.

John Stuart Mill died in Avignon, France in 1873 and was laid to rest next to Harriet.

A few days after Mill’s death, Henry Sidgwick observed: ‘I should say that from about 1860-65 or thereabouts he ruled England in the region of thought as very few men ever did: I do not expect to see anything like it again.’ This reign over English thought did not come about easily. Mill established it through his writings in logic, epistemology, economics, social and political philosophy, ethics, metaphysics, religion, and current affairs. One can safely claim as one looks at the breadth and complexity of his work, that Mill was the greatest nineteenth century British philosopher.

---

## **21.2 *The Subjection of Women***

---

This was an essay written in 1869, possibly jointly by Mill and Harriet, stating an argument in favour of equality between the sexes. John Stuart Mill credited his wife, Harriet Taylor Mill, with co-writing the essay, although she is rarely credited on publications. When this work was published, the views contained therein went against the tide of conventions and

societal norms prevalent in the Europe of that time with regard to the status of men and women. The essay was not only a plea for social, legal and political reform, but also an attempt to change the way people thought and felt, the articulation of the need to change moral intuitions and emotional reactions.

Mill also goes to great lengths to explicate upon how the rule of might was enforced in the earlier societies and how, in spite of the dictates of the Church, human beings still forced their brethren into slavery. The powerful, the rich, could and did make the worse-off obey their every wish no matter how degrading or inhuman it may have been.

He makes a distinction between the practice of slavery or despotism and the subordination of women by saying that in the former case, the possession of power and its exercise is limited either to the person on the throne or to a specific class of society. In the case of the latter, however, it is common to the entire male species of humanity. Since men and women live in such close intimacy within the family and since women were and still are, to a large degree, dependent upon their menfolk for most of their needs, it was very difficult for them to protest against the established norms of that time. Indeed, Mill is surprised that there have been no revolts at all!

To argue in favour of an extension of the status quo, according to Mill, on the grounds that women did not protest, is begging the question. For, under the laws, any woman who protested against ill treatment by her husband, was then sent back to live under the same man's roof which, in many cases, increased the abuse being inflicted upon her. Under such circumstances, how many women would want to complain to the legal authorities?

As a political commentary, Mill's *The Subjection of Women* is not a product of his time, but rather a critique of the restrictions on women's political and civic rights; therefore, John Stuart Mill holds the distinction of being the first male philosopher to argue publicly in favour of women's rights. The book is an impassioned argument for the recognition of women's personal, legal, and political rights, including the right to work outside the home, the right to higher education, and the right to equal rights in the institution of marriage. As a utilitarian, Mill believed that prohibiting the potential contributions from half the members of society went against the general good.

Over a century has passed since then - one that has been marked by protest over inequality of the sexes and a resulting change in societal attitudes. Consequently, the realisation of the radical nature of Mill's call for women's equality, coming as it did at that point of time, is often lost sight of. What remains clear however, are the facts of women's subordination to men at the time that Mill wrote his piece. For instance:

Women were excluded from higher education, professional and political life. A woman's true vocation was believed to be marriage after which she ceased to be a separate person and became the property of her husband to do with as he pleased. The wife was bereft of legal personhood as the husband was considered as the representative of the family. This effec-

tively eliminated the need for women's suffrage. A British woman had fewer grounds for divorce than men until 1923. Before that, she had no right to separate from him and was forced to live with a man she did not want to live with and satisfy his sexual desires. Rape was considered impossible within wedlock and the right of a husband to use force against his wife was first denied by the courts only in 1891. In law, a woman's children were not considered hers. The children were always legally said to belong to the husband. Even after his death, she was not considered their legal guardian unless he had specifically willed it so. The personal property of the wife was controlled by the husband until the Married Woman's Properties Acts of 1870 and 1882 were passed. Although the couple were considered 'one person in law' for the purpose of inferring that whatever was hers was inevitably, his, the parallel inference was never drawn that whatever was his was also, just as inevitably, hers.

The above facts are sufficient to indicate how the idea of equality of the sexes, propagated by Mill, could upset or appear silly and laughable to the Victorians.

Mill's aim in writing the essay was to show that:

... the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other. (Mill, J.S. 1869, *The Subjection of Women*. Dent/Everyman 1929 with Introduction by G.E.G. Catlin, p.219. Subsequent citations are from this source.)

Mill thus appeals against the blatant injustice of the existing and societally sanctioned family equations of his age. He realises that his task is made more difficult by the fact that the opinions of the supporters of the existing set-up are deeply rooted in strong feelings and not in logic. It would therefore be all the more difficult to dislodge those opinions by the sheer persuasive power of argument. And this particular issue had more intense feelings gathered around it as generally happens with old institutions and customs when people want to protect them and consider them sacrosanct. Hence, no modern spiritual or social transition is successful in undermining or loosening the hold that these institutions have on the minds of the people. And he bears in mind that it would be of no avail if he were to demand from those who deny to women any freedom or privilege rightly allowed to men, proofs to be furnished in support of their beliefs and conduct.

He also refers to how this kind of equation had a negative moral bearing upon the mind and attitudes of the people who were forced by society to live within those parameters. There is a clear realisation on his part that the subjugation and suppression of women has a negative impact in a variety of ways not only upon the women themselves but also upon the men and children in the family. Mill felt that the moral and mental development of women was adversely impacted by their subordination and led to a stunting of these faculties. It effectively curtailed their movement in the various arenas of life and pushed them either into self-sacrifice or into

selfishness and pettiness. On the other hand, men too displayed negative traits like brutal aggression which marked their relationship with women or they became obsessed with achieving the kind of social recognition that might increase their desirability in the eyes of women, to the point where they neglected their own intellectual or moral growth.

He was thus, particularly concerned with the institution of marriage insofar as it had a direct bearing on the attitudes of men and the subordination of women:

It will be well to commence the detailed discussion of the subject by the particular branch of it to which the course of our observations has led us: the conditions to which the laws of this and all other countries annex to the marriage contract (p.246).

Mill felt that any social system that places men above women was wrong because it was based on the concept of physical superiority, on pure theory alone and had no rational justification for it. It had never been practically proved by comparison to other systems, that it was indeed the best. No attempts had ever been made to establish an alternative hierarchy (by placing women over men; placing them on an equal footing; other modes of social organisation etc) to find which system benefits society the most.

In addition, the adoption of this system of inequality never was the result of deliberation, or forethought, or any social ideas, or any notion whatever of what conduced to the benefit of humanity or the good order of society. It arose simply from the fact that from the very earliest twilight of human society, every woman owing to the value attached to her by men, combined with her inferiority in muscular strength was found in a state of bondage to some man. What was a mere physical fact was converted into law and given legal and social sanction that then became irrefutable, even irrevocable. Mill makes this important distinction between physical fact and legal right: the fact that women are physically weaker doesn't necessarily imply that they should be subordinate.

Whatever the reasons had been behind such a system in the history of human civilisation, Mill felt that it did not justify continuing to follow it even under the changing face of society's continuous evolution. For him, the whole of modern history was the gradual blurring of the distinctions between male-female, master-slave and the free-'unfranchised' (people who had no legal rights).

For Mill, the subjection of women was nothing less than slavery. In fact, it was an even worse form of subjugation as slaves were physically dominated by the use of fear and force but in the case of women, they were conditioned from childhood to accept this state of affairs and their very minds had been enslaved. They had been taught from childhood that the natural order required them to live for others. Since their education enslaved their minds, their actions, acceptance, reactions to this situation were not voluntary.

The fact that most men treated their wives with civility, or even with love, did not mean that the existing system should be allowed to remain. Comparing personal despotism to the despotism of kings, Mill argues that even a despotic regime has its good points and advantages

but these do not take away from the inherent evils of the system.

An important point that needs to be made regarding Mill's concern for the status of women is that it was not a separate or isolated concept but flowed into his other ideas, for instance, with associationism. By subscribing to the belief that minds are created by associative laws operating on experience, Mill implied that if the environment, upbringing and experiences of women were to be changed, their minds too would change. This was clearly going against the face of what was then commonly held to be true – that the subordinate position held by women was according to natural laws and that they were, by nature, not equipped to be on equal terms with men. Mill suggested that if many women were incapable of true friendship with noble men, it was so as the consequence of their impaired environments and not due to their natures.

Mill goes on further to express his views regarding the areas where women were not expected to participate or even dream of gaining expertise:

On the other point which is involved in the just equality of women, their admissibility to all the functions and occupations hitherto retained as the monopoly of the stronger sex, I should anticipate no difficulty in convincing anyone who has gone with me on the subject of the equality of women in the family (266).

His contention was that equality for women meant not just equal status within the four walls of their home but also equality of opportunity abroad. He felt that women should be allowed to seek expression for their creative energies and make choices regarding occupation in much the same way as men were allowed to. The only legitimate reason there could be for preventing women from competing with men for public jobs would be if the most talented women did not match the least talented men. But that is obviously not how the talents of men and women are divided.

It would be necessary for male society to first accept that women are equal before they can go on to admit that they are compounding a gross injustice by preventing women from taking up rewarding jobs or positions of power and status in the public sphere. Since they are unable to accept the basic premise of the equality of women, the pretext upon which they base their exclusion of one half of society from the general arena is that women are unfit for jobs outside of the family.

If one subscribes to the theory that slavery as a system of society is wrong, the natural corollary to that would be that it should not exist in the privacy of marriage life as well. Once an English woman had sworn her obedience to her husband at the time of marriage, it was enforced by law for the rest of her life. Mill felt that the family was a school in which children could be taught the difference between right and wrong. They should be made aware of cooperation and mutual respect and not the imbalances of power on one side and obedience on the other. Anyone who runs his household as a despot cannot be said to love freedom.

Freedom means different things to different people and also has various connotations

in the context of society. There are for instance, the notions of economic freedom, political freedom and intellectual freedom. But what Mill was most concerned about was personal freedom – the liberty to pursue a course best suited to one’s nature whether man or woman, a course that would lead to self-development and growth. Freedom is something all people – men or women - need for their personal development. Personal freedom is what Mill and Harriet called self-dependence and which could also be termed as self-determination. Mill further elaborates upon the idea of freedom by saying that

...after the primary necessity of food and raiment, freedom  
is the first and strongest want of human nature (311).

Mill’s comment that ‘The love of power and the love of liberty are in eternal antagonism’, should not be taken to mean that he views freedom merely as the absence of external constraints on the efforts of people to satisfy their desires. He challenges this negative concept of freedom and offers an important corrective to the view that freedom and power are inversely related. For Mill, the essential necessity for liberty was autonomy, ie., the presence of a ‘variety of situations’ and possibilities, and means and opportunities for self-development and self-government. He analyses the concept of liberty in relation to the power struggles that surrounded such issues as women’s suffrage and general rights; the working class; socialism; colonialism etc and places individual freedom in the context of the family, political, social and economic scaffolding that sustains each individual in society. He is clear that both freedom and power have both positive and negative facets and shows how they complement each other.

Mill firmly believed that the spirit of the imagination should not be suppressed and that it was necessary for healthy individuals, and by extension, healthy societies, to freely express themselves through creative pursuits. The free direction of our faculties is not just a matter of personal freedom but also one which has a lasting impact on the family and society:

There is nothing, after disease, indigence, and guilt, so fatal to the pleasurable enjoyment of life as the want of a worthy outlet for the active faculties (314).

Hegel suggested that the three pillars of society are the State, Civil Society (the economy) and Private Society (the family). His theory appears to look forward to the feminists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who claimed that ‘the personal is political’. Mill’s analysis also seems to adhere to this belief.

Whatever has been said or written, from the time of Herodotus to the present, of the ennobling influence of free government – the nerve and spring which it gives to all faculties, the larger and higher objects which it presents to the intellect and feelings, the more unselfish public spirit, and calmer and broader views of duty, that it engenders, and the generally loftier platform on which it elevates the individual as a moral, spiritual and social being – is every particle as true of women as of men (313).

Mill also poses a question regarding the gains to be made if the proposed changes

were to be implemented in Victorian society:

There remains a question, not of less importance than those already discussed... What good are we to expect from the changes proposed in our customs and institutions? (295).

With equality in marriage and equality of opportunity in civil and political society, Mill envisaged the advantage as being an important contribution to political virtue. He felt that the family would then become a school for freedom.

Long usage had sanctified the practice of the subjection of women. No one found anything wrong or unusual about it. Theorists like Filmer, Burke and Macaulay were among those, along with the common people, who wondered whether changes in man-woman equations – which were so old that they seemed to be part of the natural order of the universe – would be a wise move and doubted the good sense of changing the patterns of personal relationships. They were all in favour of continuing with tradition and cited the inviolability of established convention in support of their views. Poets like Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth bolstered their arguments who, although they began as political radicals inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution – freedom and self-determination – soon veered over to the view that the established order was of more value in supporting the natural life than radical political reason.

Although Mill appreciated the traditional outlook, he was against conservatism. He considered himself to be a progressive and for him, progress did not go hand in hand with the idea of conservatism of tradition, no matter how sanctified a place it may hold in the minds of contemporary society. He commented acerbically that it must not be assumed that

... the barbarisms to which men cling longest must be less barbarisms than those which they earlier shake off (219).

For Mill, the subjection of women was like a relic of an anachronistic society that relied on brute force to keep its members in check. Popular opinion, tradition in the context of women's subordination within the home and without – all lie exposed upon clear-headed analysis, as concepts that embraced the dogma of brute force, albeit cleverly concealed by ideas of 'naturalism'. In a society that used intimidation, the political motif would be hierarchy whereas, as mankind progressed towards a society of justice, it would be marked by equality. Mill felt that although brute force was a principal – perhaps even necessary – feature in older societies because protection was needed to survive, it was not a natural condition:

Command and obedience are but unfortunate necessities of human life; society in equality is its normal state (259).

When the general opinion of society seems to be that the natural calling of a woman is to be a wife and mother, Mill comments that

What women by nature cannot do, it is quite superfluous to forbid them from doing... (243).

Although men profess that what women would most like is to be wives and mothers, their actions are the direct opposite. It is as though they were actually saying that, given a choice, women would like to do something else and so, it is the unspoken doctrine that

It is necessary to society that women should marry and produce children. They will not do so unless they are compelled. Therefore it is necessary to compel them (244).

The oppressor always acts self-righteous and pious with regard to his oppressive acts. Thus, to restrict a woman's sphere in society and insist that it is her 'natural calling', would be but an exercise in paternalism. As Mill remarks caustically,

In the present day, power holds a smoother language, and whomsoever it oppresses, always pretends to do so for their own good (266)

Since there is no evidence to support the claim that women are in any way less talented than men or possess inferior abilities, it would be erroneous to justify men's exclusion of women from positions of power by claiming that their oppression is for their own - and society's (in reality, only men's) - good.

Mill's idea of the ideal relationship between all human beings in any situation is the Biblical adage of treating the other person as we would want to be treated ourselves. This is what, according to Mill, is the morality of justice towards which humanity is moving, away from the morality of submission. A domineering, oppressive family structure is based on the latter while the society of equal opportunity is a symbol of the former.

Mill feels active participation in the politics of democracy would help to develop the ideas of equality. However, to what degree does politics impinge on an ordinary person's life and thought? Therefore, the only area that has the potential to train people in democratic ideals is the family because it forms a significant part of the 'daily habits' of people, unlike the occasional impact of politics. Due to the inherently emotional and intimate nature of ties between family members, it can be specially conducive to the development of either despotic or democratic behaviour patterns:

...but citizenship fills only a small place in modern life, and does not come near the daily habits or inmost sentiments. The family, justly constituted, would be the real school of the virtues of freedom (p.260).

Thus, Mill's essay can be viewed as a clear-headed look at the status of women, the drawbacks in the thinking and attitudes of the society of his time vis a vis women's rights both inside as well as outside the family sphere. It is also a fervent plea to address these issues and rectify the wrongs being perpetrated in the name of naturalism and tradition on one half of humanity.



---

## **21.3 Some Concepts Discussed**

---

### **21.3.1 Utilitarianism**

Mill's concept of utilitarianism came from a long tradition although his own ideas were primarily influenced by his father and Jeremy Bentham. His views were so different from Bentham's that some modern thinkers contend that he demonstrated libertarian ideals and was not as much of a consequentialist as his mentor though he did not, like Kant, reject Consequentialism. Bentham's formulation of Utilitarianism is known as the 'greatest happiness principle'. It holds that "actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure." He prefers a distinction (one not found in Bentham) between higher and lower pleasures, with higher pleasures including mental, aesthetic, and moral pleasures. When we are evaluating whether or not an action is good by evaluating the happiness that we can expect to be produced by it, he argues that higher pleasures should be taken to be in kind (rather than by degree) preferable to lower pleasures.

Mill also makes a distinction between 'happiness' and 'contentment,' and claims that the latter cannot be said to possess the same value as the former and goes on to buttress his opinion with a witty comment that 'It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question.'

### **21.3.2 Associationism**

Associationism refers to the idea that mental processes operate by the association of one state with its successor states.

### **21.3.3 Consequentialism**

Consequentialism refers to those moral theories which hold that the consequences of a particular action form the basis for any valid moral judgment about that action. Thus, from a consequentialist standpoint, a morally right action is one that produces a good outcome, or consequence.

### **21.3.4 Mills Arguments against the Traditional Views of Women**

Mill argues that humans have a tendency to regard whatever is part of custom as being part of the natural order of things. Our plea is that our feelings or intuitions arise from what is naturally right. However, our feelings and ideas about any issue are in fact formed by the customs that surround us and what we grew up learning and believing and do not in any way, reflect natural truths. These customs came up in society out of exigency or force.

How can we make generalised assumptions of the nature of men or women when we have only seen them as they are, framed as it were, within a particular system of society, and denied direct access to nature because of society's opinions and institutions that surround them? This view goes contrary to Plato and Aristotle and is closer to Rousseau's thought. The so-called nature of women that is presented forth, is actually an artificial construct, fashioned largely by men. Given a different environment, who is to say that there would not be a female Aristotle, Michelangelo, Beethoven?

It is more important to trust in experience, to experiment, to try out other systems rather than rely on theory or custom alone. If there have been no such trials conducted – of sexual equality – there is no basis to reject it. At the same time, since theories of male superiority have never been put to the test, there is no valid reason to accept it blindly. It naturally follows that the only way to find out what a particular group or individual can do, is to allow them to try it out. The same goes for determining their nature.

### **21.3.5 Mills Linking together 'The Private'**

Mills Linking together 'The Private' and 'the Public' in the discussion of power and equality, Mill feels that the 'public' and 'private' are closely linked and that domination of anyone over another is wrong and dangerous in both spheres. The desire to maintain domination of men within the home also led indirectly to the barring of women from the public sphere. According to Mill, anyone who is truly free and secure and self-controlling, will never desire to control others. It is only a person deprived of freedom who will try to assert himself through the domination of others who are weaker or dependent.

Power corrupts both the domineering and the subordinate. The latter become passive and unable to function independently – or even truthfully – since they need to constantly please the one who is dominating. The former are unable to recognise their limitations and improve themselves because they labour under delusions of their grandiosity. Neither a slave nor a slave driver be.

Equality is good for the character and would lead to greater personal happiness, a more moral public, and social/cultural progress. Children would learn that all human beings are free and equal if they see it being practised within the family. This would thus serve as a school to nurture people fit for a democracy - free, self-assertive, selfless, gentle but resolute, recognising the rights of others but also able to stand up for their own rights against tyranny.

---

## **21.4 Let Us Sum Up**

---

In this unit we have studied 'The Subjection of women' as an important work in the history of feminism. Mill has successfully demonstrated how the oppression of women has been a carryover from the primitive times and has been nothing but a set of prejudices that were a great impediment in the path of mankind's progress.

---

## 21.5 Review Questions

---

1. Discuss Mill's views on power and equality and how they are bound together.
2. What are Mills' arguments against the traditional views of women?
3. What is Mill's position on human progress? What, according to him, is the special role that women play in human progress?
4. What types of liberty does Mill discuss?
5. What is to be gained or lost by "freeing" women?
6. Can *The Subjection of Women* be considered a revolutionary text? Explain.
7. Discuss Mill as a humanist rather than as a feminist.

---

## 21.6 Bibliography

---

1. John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism and Other Essays, ed. Alan Ryan (Viking, 1987)
2. John Stuart Mill, Principles of Political Economy: And Chapters on Socialism, ed. Jonathan Riley (Oxford, 1999)
3. The Cambridge Companion to Mill, ed. John Skorupski (Cambridge, 1997)
4. Roger Crisp, Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Mill on Utilitarianism (Routledge, 1997)
5. Jonathan Riley, Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Mill on Liberty (Routledge, 1998)

## UNIT - 22

---

### THOMAS CARLYLE: THE HERO AS POET

---

#### Structure

- 22.0 Objectives
- 22.1 Introduction
- 22.2 Thomas Carlyle: A Biographical Sketch
- 22.3 Carlyle as a Literary Critic
- 22.4 Heroes and Hero worship: An Introduction
- 22.5 The Hero as Poet: Critical summary
  - 22.5.1 Essential Qualities of a Hero
  - 22.5.2 Dante as a Model Poet Hero
  - 22.5.3 Heroic Qualities of Shakespeare
- 22.6 Carlyle's Prose Style
- 22.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 22.8 Review Questions
- 22.9 Bibliography

---

#### 22.0 Objectives

---

In this unit we shall

- consider the Hero in the shape of the Poet.
- make a comparison between the poet and the Prophet.
- discuss the transcendental glory of the two Saints of poetry - Shakespeare and Dante.
- discuss greatness and originality of Carlyle as a writer of prose.

---

#### 22.1 Introduction

---

In the opinion of Carlyle all the great events and movements in history have been the result of the actions and the influence of Heroes or great men. The phrase "Hero Worship" was originally Hume's but subsequently it became inseparably connected with the name of Carlyle. "The Hero as Poet" is the third lecture in the series of six lectures published in book form as "*Heroes and Hero - worship and the Heroic in History.*" The lecture is divisible into three

well defined parts: in the first part he considers briefly the history of the heroic ideal and the essentials of a hero and in part second and third he examines the heroic qualities of Dante and Shakespear whom he holds out as model hero - poets. For the complete text you may refer to Thomas Carlyle's "*On Hero Worship and the Heroic in History*" edited by Lincoln, Nebraska and published by university of Nebraska Press in 1966.

---

## 22.2 Thomas Carlyle:A Biographical Sketch

---

Thomas Carlyle was born at Ecclefechan, a village in the Scottish country of Dumfriesshire in December 1795. He was the son of simple Scotch peasant parents both of whose moral and intellectual qualities were inherited by the son.

Thomas Carlyle received his earliest education in the village school of Ecclefechan and the High school of Annan. At the age of fifteen he began to attend classes in Edinburgh university. His parents wished that Carlyle should adopt the church as a professtion but Carlyle felt that the profession of a priest was not suited to his temprament because of his religious scruples and doubts. His parents were considerate enough to allow him the dictates of his own conscience. After studying at Edinburgh for five years, he left the university in 1814 without a degree. After a brief school mastership till 1818, he again went to Edinburgh but was without any regular employment. He wrote a number of short biographies for an Encyclopaedia. During this time he was afflicted with dyspepsia a complaint form which he suffered all his later life. Now he found that he could not continue to believe the religious doctrines in which he had been instructed during his childhood. He enterd into the region of religious doubt. The whole universe seemed to him all purposeless, Godless, lifeless. However soon he experienced a sort of spiritual regeneration by reading the works of German writers like Goethe, Fichte and Kant. In them he found a philosophy which regarded spirit as the basis and reality of all things and matter as only an appearance. These studies determined Carlyle's future course as a prophet of political and ethical doctrines in direct opposition to those current in England at the time.

In 1827 Carlyle married Jane Welsh after a long curious and characteristic courtship. Although it was termed as the most fateful and controversial marriages of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, yet there seems to have been a strong mutual attachment between Carlyle and his wife. When in 1866 Jane died, Carlyle said that "the light of his life had gone out with her."

His first major work "*Sartor Resartus*" and some of his best essays were completed in 1830. In June 1834 he settled in London. The first two volumes of "*The French Revolution*" appeared in 1837 and these established his reputation. Emerson from America was a very good friend and admirer of Carlyle. Through his influences, American editions of Carlyle's work were brought out. In London at the suggestion of an another friend Miss Harriet Martineau, he delivered the first of several courses of lectures. The last course of lectures "*Heroes and Hero Worship*" was delivered in 1840. The lectures were a great success in every way and helped Carlyle to overcome his financial difficulties.

Carlyle was a tierless writer. The three works “*Chartism*” “*Past and Present*” and “*the Latter - Day Pamphlets*” and the essay “*Shooting Niagara and After*” had the most damaging criticism of political economy, Laissez - Faire, Radicalism and Constitutionalism. “*Sartor Resartus*” shows him as a political and social critic while “*The French Revolution, Cromwell* and “*Fredrick the Great*” show him as a historian. In 1874 he was awarded the Prussion order of Merit for his “*Fredrick the Great*”

Browning, Masson, Tyndall, Froude and Ruskin were some of his old age friends. In winter of 1880-81 his life was ebbing away slowly and peacefully. He died on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1881. A burial in Westminster Abbey was offered but Carlyle had expressed a wish to be buried at Ecclefechan and he was buried there by the side of his parents.

---

### 22.3 Carlyle as a Literary Critic

---

Carlyle marks the beginning of a new era in the History of literary criticism. The eighteenth century criticism consisted either of mere laudation or of mere censure. However in all his works Carlyle gives supreme importance to biography. In “*Heroes and Hero Worship*” he declares that “the history of the world is the biography of great men” There is no heroic poem in the world but is at bottom a biography, the life of a man. The biographic element may be purely spiritual as in Carlyle’s own ‘spiritual autobiography, ‘*Sartor Resartus*.’ Dante’s greatness as a poet is related to his suffering in exile.

The first qualification of the critic must be sympathy ie. the capacity to understand a literary work in the light of its creator’s purpose. A second qualification, equally necessary, is reverence.

Carlyle believed that the critic was inferior to the author. He says in the *State of German Literature*, criticism stands like an interpreter between the inspired and the uninspired; between the Prophet and those who hear the melody of his words and catch some glimpse of their material meaning, but understand not their deep import.” However in the same breath he also maintains that, “The greatest of men are faulty and their works imperfect, and it is part, though a subordinate part of the critic’s duty to paint out the imperfections.”

Three specific features mark the criticism of Carlyle: its profound humanity, its penetration and its reach. He had a firm conviction of the biographic character of all books. The man and his work are always viewed in relation - the one throws light on the other. Besides, the penetrative character of his criticism makes him work hard to understand the actual stand point - to reach the heart - of the author and interpret his works accordingly. Further he is never purely critical. He values those writers that give him an outlook over history and an insight into human nature. He cares little for mere elegance of form or phrase but values genuineness. The function of literature, in his opinion, is to reveal the Divine Idea of the world. Thus there is a touch of mysticism in his literary criticism, too.

---

## 22.4 Heroes and Hero Worship : An Introduction

---

In May 1840 Carlyle delivered a course of six lectures on '*Hero and Hero worship.*' He divides heroes into six categories : (i) the Hero as Divinity or God (ii) the hero as prophet (iii) The hero as poet (iv) The hero as priest (v) The hero as man of letters and (vi) The Hero as king. One lecture is devoted to each class of Hero. For the Hero as Divinity, he selected Odin; as Prophet, Mahomet as poet Dante and Shakespeare ; as priest, Luthers and Knox ; as man of Letters, Johnson, Roussean, Burns ; as kings, Cromwell and Napoleon. Thus he dealt with eleven great personalities whom he selected as illustrations of his doctrine. In his view they were all divinely inspired and were sent into the world to enlighten and guide mankind. The Hero is full of wisdom and is the man of duty who has a right to guide and even to drill his lesser fellows. Carlyle believes that history is nothing more than the study of great men. Democracy is the cult of incompetence and the absence of leadership. A revolution according to him is simply a hunt for a hero. We must submit ourselves before these great men of the world as they have a natural right to guide and govern us.

---

## 22.5 The Hero as Poet : A Critical Summary

---

'*The Hero as Poet*' is the third lecture in Carlyle's series of six lectures published in book form as '*Heroes and Hero - Worship and the Heroes in History.* The lecture can be divided into three well defined parts. The first part deals with the history of the heroic ideal and the essentials of a hero while in the second and third parts Carlyle examines the heroic qualities of Dante and Shakespeare whom he holds as model hero - poets.

### 22.5.1 The Heroic in History and the Poet - Hero

The age old conceptions of the Hero as divinity and the Hero as poet do not hold good in modern times. The hero appears as poet in the modern age. The poet is a heroic figure belonging to all Ages. All great men have all kinds of capacities but whether they would be gods, prophets or poets depends on the kind of environment in which they have to live and work. They are gifted with 'the great heart and the seeing eye.' They can experience and understand life in all its immense variety. The same Great Man has the capacity to become a warrior or a poet. The difference arises from their circumstances. In old languages both poets and prophets were called *Vates* and both do have much in common. Both understand the mystery of Nature and communicate it to others in their own particular ways. *The Vates* (singular -poet or prophet) performs this function by virtue of his sincerity. It is sincerity which enables him to see into the heart of things and gives expression to the divine mystery which he sees everywhere. Thus both Poet and Prophet are participators in the 'open secret'. At the superficial level Poets and Prophets may appear to be different as the Prophets see the divine mystery on the moral side while the Poets see it on the aesthetic side. However these two aspects of divine mystery are not entirely different, Prophets, too, are aware of the Beauty of the divine, and express it in their own way As a matter of fact, the truly Beautiful is also truly

good. (सत्यं शिवं सुन्दरं). Hence the difference between the two is not real but only apparent.

A really great poet, one who is near perfection has Infinitude in him, and he helps others to perceive that Infinitude. His expression of that Infinitude is musical both in substance and in manner. True poetry is an expression of the music that is in the Poets soul and also in the soul of the universe. False poetry is not musical in this sense. "Poetry, therefore, we will call musical thought. The Poet is he who thinks in that manner. At bottom it turns still on the power of intellect, it is a man's sincerity and depth of vision that makes him a Poet. See deep enough, and you see musically, the heart of nature being everywhere music, if you can only reach it."

Although our sense of admiration of the heroic has not died out yet it has adversely been affected by the emergence of triviality, scepticism and dilettantism of the modern age. Great men like Napoleon are worshipped and admired. Similarly the Scots believe that they have never heard a poet like Burns before.

### 22.5.2 Dante as Poet Hero

Shakespeare and Dante are saints of poetry and are worshiped as such. They have indeed been canonized, though not by any Pope or by any Cardinal. A certain transcendental glory belongs to these two.

Not much is known about the life history of Dante. His nature and heroic gifts are revealed only through his book *the Divine Comedy*. He was a long suffering man, living all alone in exile. His portrait, painted by Giotto, is marked by sorrow and loneliness. It is the face of a man who protested against injustice, suffered terribly but never surrendered. Divinity marks the face of Dante '*the singer of a mystic unfathomable song.*'

Dante was fairly well - educated, intelligent and hard working and rose to be one of the chief Magistrates of Florence. However his unsuccessful love for Beatrice embittered his whole life. The savage temper of his wife made his life miserable. It was Dante's suffering that made him the poet of the *Divine Comedy*. He was banished from Florence by his political opponents. Misery, humiliation and suffering were heaped on his innocent head. It was during this period of banishment that he wrote the *Divine Comedy*. The deeper he suffered the deeper was his insight into the eternal world. His exile from Florence, his suffering made him a denizen of the other world and made him burst into song, his "mystic unfathomable song", his '*Divine Comedy*'. Beside the other world, "*the world of Hell, Purgatory and Heaven was more real to him than this world and he could give it a definite, the fixed certainty of scientific form.*"

The *Divine Comedy* is a genuine song for its very thought and spirit are musical. It is the passion and sincerity of the poet that makes it musical. Its three part -Inferno, Purgatorio and Paradiso - are like three parts of a symmetrical and majestic building, solemn and awe-inspiring. Intensity is another dominant trait of Dante's epic. He is brief, precise and concentrated. His silence is more eloquent than his speech. "*The very movements in Dante have*



*something brief, swift, decisive, almost military. It is the inmost essence of his genius, this sort of painting. The fiery, swift Italian nature of the man, so silent, passionate, with its quick abrupt movements, it Spale rages, speaks itself in these things."*

Dante's power of vivid and picturesque painting arises from his sympathy, sincerity and essentially moral nature. His word painting is the outcome of a great soul. It is wrong to believe that Dante described certain souls as undergoing tortures in Hell because those were the souls of his enemies. *The Divine Comedy* is not a vindictive document. Dante's heart is ever full of tenderness and pity, but it is the pity of a very severe and stern man who has suffered intensely and endured bravely. About the scenes of love painted by Dante, Carlyle says, "It is tenderness, a trembling, longing, pitying love : like the wail of *Aeolian* harps, soft like a child's young heart : and then that stern, sore-saddened heart. these longings of his towards his Beatrice ; their meeting together in the *Paradiso*; his gazing in her pure *transfigured* eyes, hers that had been purified by death so long, separated from him so far :- one likens it to the song of angels; it is among the purest utterances of affection, perhaps the very purest, that ever came out of a human soul.'

Carlyle does not agree with the modern criticism of Dante's epic that its first part "*Inferno*" is much better done than the other two parts. "*Purgatorio*" and "*Paradiso*" In fact the three parts of Dante's epic are interdependent. The three together make up the 'unseen world', 'Dante's world of the soul's. Dante passes easily and swiftly from this physical world to this world of spirits as if it were something real, definite and certain. The poem has been called a christian allegory, embodying the christian concepts of good and evil of sin, repentance and purification through suffering. If at all it is an allegory, it is a moral allegory, not a sensuous one. It allegorises the christian concept of Duty and Morality and not the sensuous operations of nature. Dante is the spokesman of the middle ages, his epic is the voice of ten silent centuries. Dante, the Hero - poet, would last much longer than Mohammad, The Hero - prophet. "Dante speaks to the noble the pure and great, in all times and places Neither does he grow obsolete; as the other does. Dante burns as a pure star, fixed there in the firmament, at which the great and the high kindle themselves : he is the possession of all the chosen of the world for uncounted time. Dante, one calculates, may long survive Mahomet. In this way the balance he made straight again."

### **22.5.3 Shakespeare as Hero Poet**

While Dante embodied musically, the faith, the soul, the inner life of modern Europe, Shakespeare, on the other hand, gave musical expression to the outer life of the Europe of his time. He has expressed its ideals, its chivalry, its courtesies, its ambitions and its practical way of thinking Like Dante, Shakespeare too was a world - voice. "*Dante, deep, fierce as the central fire of the world; Shakespeare, wide placid, far- seeing as the sun, the upper light of the world. Italy produced the one world voice ; we English had the honour of producing the other*". Nature produced Shakespeare, who gave an enduring and musical

expression to the Elizabethan way of life which in itself was the outcome of Catholicism of which Dante sang in his divine poem.

Shakespeare is universally recognised as the greatest of all poets upto this time. He was endowed with intellectual greatness, rare power of vision, keen insight, faculty of thought, understanding and sympathy and a calm and tranquil soul. His plays, so perfect and faultless, are the resultant of these qualities. He was a divinely inspired poet. Shakespeare's knowledge of human mind and heart is superior to Bacon's knowledge as expressed in *Novum Organum*. Goethe comes nearer to him in this respect. He himself says of Shakespeare: "*His characters are like watches with dial plates of transparent crystal; they show you the hour like others, and the inward mechanism also is visible.*" It is the perception of the harmony that dwells in the heart of man and in the heart of things that makes the poet a hero. Shakespeare was destined by nature a Hero-poet, He was richly endowed by nature with the gifts of insight and sympathy which are essential for the heroic and which are resultant of man's intellectual and moral nature.

Shakespeare was an "*unconscious intellect.*" It was an inborn gift of whose virtues he himself was not fully aware. It is spontaneous, growing out of the depths of his own soul. He was a noble, sincere soul and Nature herself spoke through him. That is why new meanings and significances are constantly being discovered in him.

Shakespeare's joyful tranquility and spiritual calm is remarkable. He was able to triumph over his sorrows and misfortunes. Dante, on the other hand, too struggled against misery, but could not conquer it. Shakespeare's tragic drama clearly shows that he had a first hand experience of suffering. However it is even more remarkable that despite intense suffering his heart overflowed with mirth and gaiety as is revealed in his comedies. He could be sarcastic but his sarcasm is always moderate and controlled. Besides his laughter is always genial, kindly and good natured. He never laughs at poverty or misery; He laughs at affectation, hypocrisy and stupidity. His laughter is beautiful like sun shine on the deep sea.

Shakespeare's historical plays form a kind of national epic. The account of the battle of Agincourt in *Henry V* is praiseworthy. Shakespeare was heroic, and he would have fought heroically, if he had been called upon to do so.

Shakespeare was a prophet in his own way. Lines like "*We are such stuff as dreams are made of*" have a prophetic depth and insight. Dante was the musical priest of Middle age Catholicism while Shakespeare is the musical priest of true Catholicism. His works reveal the hidden beauty and divineness of nature.

Shakespeare was a greater and more successful prophet than Mohammad. He was a bringer of light from heaven and expositor of divine mysteries although he was not himself conscious of this role of his. Mohammad on the other hand, was too conscious of his own Prophethood. Shakespeare is the priest of all mankind and he will remain so for ages to come.

Shakespeare's appeal is as universal and perennial as that of Homer and Aeschylus "*The Great Man here too, as always, is a Force of Nature; whatsoever is truly great in him springs up from the inarticulate deeps.*" The days of Hero-worship are gone and so we do not worship Shakespeare as God. However the English will prefer giving up their Indian Empire to giving up their Shakespeare. "*Indian Empire or no Indian Empire, we cannot do without Shakespeare. Indian Empire will go, at any rate, some day; but this Shakespeare does not go, he lasts forever with us, we cannot give up our Shakespeare.*" Shakespeare is the strongest of unifying links among Englishmen and women. He is the voice of the English nation. He expresses musically what the English think and feel while Dante is the musical voice of Italy. Dante's voice unites the separate parts of Italy into a single whole. Such lasting unity can not be imparted by any administrative king. The military might of the Czars of Russia will soon be non-existent while the voice of Dante and Shakespeare will continue to be heard for ages to come.

---

## 22.6 Carlyle's Prose style

---

The style of Carlyle remains unique in English. It has invited both a great deal of sharp criticism and eloquent and hyperbolic praises. Wordsworth accused him of Germanising the English tongue calling him "*a pest of the language.*" Louis Cazamain, on the other hand comments on Carlyle's prose style saying, "*The reader has the impression of some great stream of burning lava pouring forth, and bringing with it a vocabulary that is rough, abrupt, mixed, thoroughly saturated with Saxon intensity and concrete vividness And this prose, when once solid, has the sharp edges, the breaks, the dislocated formation of cooled volcanic rocks.*"

There is no doubt that Carlyle's style is rugged and rough. It is full of grammatical lapses of the worst kind. Incorrect and unrefined formation of new words, frequent use of inversions and Germanised compounds, circumlocution, repetition, exaggeration etc, are only a few characteristic faults of his style.

However in Carlyle's case the dictum : "*The style is the man*" is wholly true. The style is as rugged as the personality of the writer. A torrent of powerful ideas and emotions urged him to write an impassioned prose having no time for polish and refinement. Carlyle's style is the expression of powerful emotion, rather than a train of reasoning. It was the style that came to be known as *Carlylese*.

Carlyle's spoken style bears an unmistakable resemblance to his written style. He had a sincere desire to be understood by the audience he was addressing. The opening paragraph of "*The Hero as Poet*" are as plain as possible to capture the attention of the audience.

*We are now to see our Hero in the less ambitious, but also less questionable, character of Poet; a character which does not pass. The poet is a heroic figure belonging to all ages; whom all ages possess, when once he is produced, whom the newest age*

*as the oldest may produce - and will produce, always when Nature pleases.*

How simple and lucid are these lines in the same lecture:

*A musical thought is one spoken by mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing; detected the inmost mystery of it; namely the melody that lies hidden in it; the inward harmony of coherence which is its soul, whereby it exists and has a right to be, here in this world. All inmost things, we may say, are melodious; naturally utter themselves in song. (Para 8)*

Carlyle's platform utterances have the manner of talk, not of oratory. Hence his style is conversational in "*The Hero as Poet.*" He is speaking to the audience, and therefore adopts a tone of familiarity. His lectures lack formal opening and rhetorical close. Look at the bare style of his opening and ending of the lecture:

*The Hero as Divinity, the Hero as prophet, are productions of old ages; not to be repeated in the new.*

*We must here end what we had to say of the Hero poet.*

Similes and metaphors flow out of his pen like sparks from a chimney fire: His imagery is highly sensuous-visual, pictorial, vivid and graphic. He makes his readers see what he has to describe. Here are a few examples:

- (i) The three kingdoms, Inferno, Purgatorio, Paradiso, look out on one another like compartments of great edifice.
- (ii) Thought, true labour of any kind, highest virtue itself, is it not the daughter of pain? Born as out of the black whirlwind :- true effort in fact as of a captive struggle 'to free himself: that is Thought.'
- (iii) Dante's painting is not graphic only, brief, true and of a vividness as of fire in dark night.
- (iv) A thing woven as out of rainbows, on a ground of eternal black.
- (v) Such laughter, like sunshine on the deep sea, is beautiful to me.
- (vi) Dante deep fierce as the central fire of the world; Shakespeare wide as the sun, as the upper light of the world.
- (vii) Let us honour the great empire of Silence, Once more! The boundless treasury which we do not jingle in our pockets, or count up and present before men!. It is perhaps of all things the usefulest for each of us to do, in these loud times.

He uses capital letters frequently to impart force and vigour to the style. However their excessive use has degenerated into mannerism and has become a serious fault. Thus the use of capital letters in Song Book, Biography, Speaker, Eternity, Painters, Divine, Idea, Pity is

unjustified and inexcusable. Using capital letters excessively to stress a point cannot be called judicious.

Let us conclude with quoting from Joseph Warren Beach (*English Literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries*) in which the author comments on the eccentric style of Carlyle:

*In manner Carlyle was irritable and impatient almost spasmodic in his nervous turns and plunges. His style is eccentric in the extreme, but individual and impressive in its fusion of diverse elements under control of his large and eloquent spirit. Biblical forms lend both elevation and homeliness to the tone, they blend with idioms drawn from his peasant background and from his readings in German. Lavish use of capitals and italics, inverted word - order and many other peculiarities tend towards excess of emphasis. The concrete and the picturesque join hands with philosophical abstractions personified. The historical present and other rhetorical devices give dramatic intimacy to his narratives, Ellipsis, roguish allusions and dramatic indirection made him hard reading for his contemporaries till they had learned his language. With Carlyle romantic individualism reached its extreme point in prose, as with Browning in verse."*

---

## 22.7 Let Us Sum Up

---

Thus in this unit we have studied what Carlyle had to say in his lecture on the Hero-poet. He has taken Shakespeare and Dante as examples of Hero-poets, compared them with Gods like Odin, Prophets like Mohammad, powerful rulers like Czars of Russia and demonstrated their superiority. This has been done by the constant use of visual imagery that the readers actually see what the author wants them to see.

---

## 22.8 Review Questions

---

1. Examine Carlyle's concept of the Hero with reference to his lecture "The Hero as Poet."
2. How does Carlyle establish that Dante and Shakespeare were Heroes in the role of the poet?
3. "Poetry, therefore, we will call musical thought." Explain and amplify this remark by Carlyle. How far do you agree with him?
4. "Carlyle's prose-style is odd and eccentric." Discuss.

---

## 22.9 Bibliography

---

1. John Nicol : Thomas Carlyle
2. Jan Campbell : Thomas Carlyle

3. Hugh Walker : The Literature of the Victorian Era.
  4. Joseph Warren Beach : English Literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20th Centuries.
  5. Henry Larkin : Thomas Carlyle And The Open Secret Of His Life.
  6. David Mason : Thomas Carlyle Personally and in his Writing.
  7. David Alec Wilson : The Truth about Thomas Carlyle.
  8. F.Harrison : Thomas Carlyle's Place in Literature.
  9. Augustus Ralli : A Guide to Thomas Carlyle vol I & II.
  10. Batho and Dobree : The Victorian and After.
-

## UNIT-23

---

# WALTER PATER: STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE RENAISSANCE

---

### Structure

- 23.0 Objectives
- 23.1 Introduction
- 23.2 About the Author
- 23.3 Background of the text
- 23.4 Critical Analysis of the text
  - 23.4.1 Copious Critical Notes
  - 23.4.2 Concept of Beauty in Pater's preface to 'The Renaissance'
  - 23.4.3 Pater's Views on the Function of the Critic
  - 23.4.4 Pater's Views on the Critic as Scientist
  - 23.4.5 Pater's Views on De Vinci's art: A Door into the Mind
  - 23.4.6 Thought and Action in Walter Pater's Conclusion to The Renaissance
- 23.5 Important Critical Issues
  - 23.5.1 The Real Beauty
  - 23.5.2 The Function of a Critic
  - 23.5.3 Leonardo de Vinci as an artist
  - 23.5.4 Pater's Concept of the Renaissance
  - 23.5.5 The Controversial Walter Pater
- 23.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 23.7 Review Questions
- 23.8 Bibliography

---

### 23.0 Objectives

---

**The main objectives of this unit are:**

- That the student should have read, with care and understanding, this representative

work of one of the major critics of the Victorian Age in England i.e. *Walter Horatio Pater*.

- That the student should be able to give an account of the history of English criticism in the Victorian period especially with reference to Walter Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*.
- That the student should be able to identify and explain major events of English history and major literary and social issues relevant to the development of criticism in the Victorian Period.
- That the student should be able to demonstrate familiarity with the bibliographic tools and resources appropriate to the study of criticism in Nineteenth Century England and of the critic cited above, and to apply these tools and resources to literary research.
- That the student should be able to demonstrate capacity to develop critical analyses of criticism from Nineteenth Century England in the context of established critical approaches.
- That the student should be able to recognize, identify, and use accurately literary terms and concepts applicable to English criticism in the Nineteenth Century, and to understand and apply appropriate literary conventions.
- That the student should be able to express insights which relate his readings of the critical composition to fundamental questions of human behavior and value, and to contemporary thought.

---

### 23.1 Introduction

---

This unit based on Walter Horatio Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, has been written with an aim to provide to the student, the knowledge of certain aspects of the writings of the critic who was a leading exponent of his time. The scholars of English Literature rejoice in knowing about the author and his age because there is a lot of intellectual, political and social significance attached to the author and his age. An attempt has been made to analyze Walter Pater as a writer and a comparison with his contemporaries has been incorporated to ascertain the actual position of the writer during his own time.

The text dealt with here is the famous work, "*Studies in the History of the Renaissance*" which was written, revised and rewritten thrice. The background and analytical aspect of this work has been attempted to draw the attention of the reader to certain facts and factors, hitherto unknown and unrecognized. Copious critical notes have been provided for the sake of reference to enable the student to comprehend the background to this work, its historical significance and its current impact on the contemporary readers as well as those of the after-times. Questions have been framed for the students to review their comprehension of the subject matter. Some important questions have been backed by relevant answers while



some have been given for practice which the student are expected to do on their own by referring to the given text. They are also advised to take the help of books which have been mentioned in the bibliography section along with the list of reference books and books on literary criticism. The list of works by the author published during his lifetime and posthumously, will add to the knowledge of the students.

---

## 23.2 About the Author

---

Walter Horatio Pater was born on August 4, 1839 and breathed his last on July 30, 1894. He was an English essayist and art and literary critic. Born in Stepney, England, Walter was the second of four children, his siblings were William Thompson (1835-1887), Hester Maria (1837-1922), and Clara Ann (1841-1910). His father was Richard Glode Pater, a doctor by profession, who had moved there in the early 1800s and practiced medicine among the poor. Richard died while Walter was an infant, or to be more precise, only two years of age, and the family moved to Enfield, under the affectionate care of his mother Maria Hill, where he attended Enfield Grammar School.

In 1853 Pater was sent to The King's School, Canterbury, where he was greatly impressed by the beauty of the cathedral which made so strong an impression that would remain with him all his life. As a schoolboy he read John Ruskin's *Modern Painters* and was, for a while, attracted to the study of art, showing no signs of the literary taste which he was to develop at a later age. His progress was always gradual. He gained a school exhibition, however, with which he proceeded in 1858 to Queen's College, Oxford.

His undergraduate life was extraordinarily monotonous and devoid of any excitement. He was a shy "reading man", making few friends. The scholar Benjamin Jowett was struck by Pater's capability and offered to give him private lessons. In his classes, however, Pater was a disillusionment, taking only a second in *literae humaniores* in 1862. After graduating, he settled in Oxford and taught private pupils. As a boy he had treasured the idea of entering the Anglican Church, but at Oxford his faith in Christianity was shaken. By the time he took his degree, he thought of graduating as a Unitarian minister. However, in spite of his penchant towards the aesthetic, ritual elements of the church, he did not ultimately pursue ordination. Being offered a fellowship at Brasenose in 1864, he settled down into a university career.

However, it was not his intention to sink into academic inactivity or languor. As he began his career, Pater's sphere of interests widened rapidly; he became acutely interested in literature, and started to write articles and criticism. The first of these to be printed was a brief essay on Coleridge, contributed in 1866 to the *Westminster Review*. A few months later in January, 1867, his essay on Winckelmann, the first expression of his idealism, appeared in the same review. In the following year his study of "Aesthetic Poetry" appeared in the *Fortnightly Review*, to be followed by essays on Leonardo da Vinci, Sandro Botticelli, Pico della Mirandola and Michelangelo. These, with other similar studies, were collected in his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* in 1873. Pater, now at the centre of a small but interesting circle in

Oxford, gained respect in London and elsewhere, numbering the Pre-Raphaelites among his friends.

In 1874 he was turned down at the last moment by his one-time counselor Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol, for a previously-promised proctorship. The reason remained a mystery until recently, when such records were found, which revealed that he was involved in an affair with a nineteen-year-old undergraduate, William Money Hardinge. Hardinge had attracted adverse and hostile attention as a result of his outspoken homosexuality and sacrilegious verse, and was allowed to withdraw on his own, rather than be expelled. Many of Pater's works focus on male love, either in a Platonic way or in a more physical way; this may have been the outcome of his association with friends like Hardinge. Later on, he became a candidate for the Slade Professorship of Poetry at Oxford University but soon withdrew from the competition in the wake of personal criticism, part of it engendered by W. H. Mallock in a satirical novel entitled *The New Republic*. In it, Pater is depicted as a stereotypically effeminate English aesthete.

On the other hand, by the time his philosophical novel *Marius the Epicurean* appeared, he had gathered quite a following. This, his chief contribution to literature, was published early in 1885. In it Pater displays, with extensiveness and embellishment, his ideal of the aesthetic life, his faction of beauty as opposed to bare asceticism, and his theory of the stimulating effect of the pursuit of beauty as an ideal of its own. The principles of what would be known as the Aesthetic movement were partly traceable to Pater and his effect was particularly felt on one of the movement's leading proponents, Oscar Wilde, a former student of Pater at Oxford.

In 1887 he published *Imaginary Portraits*, a series of essays in philosophic fiction; in 1889, *Appreciations, with an Essay on Style*; in 1893, *Plato and Platonism*; and in 1894, *The Child in the House*. His *Greek Studies* and his *Miscellaneous Studies* were collected posthumously in 1895; his posthumous romance of *Gaston de Latour* appeared in 1896; and his essays from *The Guardian* were privately printed in 1897. A collected edition of Pater's works was issued in 1901.

It is noteworthy that as he was heading towards the end of his life, Pater exercised a growing and considerable influence. His mind, however, returned to the religious fervour of his youth. Those who knew him best believed that, had he lived longer, he would have resumed his youthful intention of taking holy orders. He died of rheumatic fever at the age of 55 and is buried at Holywell cemetery, Oxford.

Pater wrote with difficulty, meticulously and painstakingly correcting his work. "I have known writers of every degree, but never one to whom the act of composition was such a travail and an agony as it was to Pater," wrote Edmund Gosse, who also described Pater's method of composition: "So conscious was he of the modifications and additions which would supervene that he always wrote on ruled paper, leaving each alternate line blank." His literary

style, peaceful and lost in deep thought, suggested, in the words of G.K. Chesterton, a “vast attempt at impartiality.” The richness, depth, and acuity of his language was attuned to his philosophy of life. Idealists will find inspiration in his desire to “burn always with this hard, gemlike flame,” and in his pursuit of the “highest quality” in “moments as they pass.” This was how he was rated by his friends, contemporaries and critics of his own time as well as those that followed.

- 1866: Coleridge’s Writings published anonymously in Westminster Review (January)
- 1867: Winckelmann published anonymously in January issue of Westminster Review
- 1868: Poems by William Morris published anonymously in October’s Westminster Review
- 1869: Notes on Leonardo da Vinci published in the November Fortnightly Review
- 1870: A fragment on Sandro Botticelli printed in August Fortnightly Review
- 1871: Pico della Mirandola, October Fortnightly Review
- 1871: The Poetry of Michelangelo, November Fortnightly Review
- 1872: Review of Sidney Colvin’s Children in Italian and English Design in Academy (July 15)
- 1873: Studies in the History of the Renaissance, published February 15
- 1874: On Wordsworth in April’s Fortnightly Review
- 1874: A Fragment on Measure for Measure, November’s Fortnightly Review
- 1875: Review of John Addington Symond’s Renaissance in Italy: The Age of the Despots (1875) in Academy (July 31)
- 1877: The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry (2nd edition) published May 24 [the Conclusion dropped and The School of Giorgione added]
- 1877: The School of Giorgione in October’s Fortnightly Review
- 1885: Marius the Epicurean published on March 4
- 1887: Imaginary Portraits published on May 24
- 1888: The Renaissance (3rd edition) published in January [a revised version of the Conclusion reintegrated]
- 1889: Appreciations published on November 15
- 1893: Plato and Platonism published on February 10

**Posthumous publications of Walter Horatio Pater:**

- 1895: Greek Studies: A series of Essays published January 11

- 1895: *Miscellaneous Studies: A Series of Essays* published October 11
- 1896: *Gaston de Latour: An Unfinished Romance* published on October 6
- 1896: Essays from “The Guardian”
- 1900-1901: *The Works of Walter Pater, Edition de Luxe*, published in 8 vols. *The Renaissance* (vol. I) printed in September 1900
- 1910: *The Works of Walter Pater, New Library Edition* (10 vols.) *The Renaissance* (vol. I) appeared in June.
- 1919: *Sketches and Reviews* (New York)
- 1970: *The Letters of Walter Pater*, L. Evans editor (Oxford)
- 1974: *Selected Writings of Walter Pater* edited and with an introduction by Harold Bloom; Columbia University Press, New York
- 1980: *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry, The 1893 Text* edited, with textual and explanatory notes, by Donald L. Hill (illustrations)

---

### 23.3 Background of the text

---

Beginning in 1869, Pater wrote a series of articles for the *Fortnightly Review* on Italian renaissance art. Among these, his first “Leonardo da Vinci” (1869), contained his famous analysis of the Mona Lisa (“She is as old as the rocks upon which she sits”). Articles on Botticelli, Pico della Mirandola, and the poetry of Michelangelo appeared in succession. He collected these, along with the Winckelmann piece and new essays into his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873). However, Pater was forced to withdraw the work in 1877 because the anti-religious aspects still raised ire. Oscar Wilde termed *Studies* his “golden book,” promoting Pater’s works and reputation with his own career. Pater became associated in the public mind with the aesthetic school and the lives of other “decadents,” including the poet Algernon Swinburne (1837-1909) and Dante Gabrielle Rossetti.

Pater was, in fact, in a relationship with the painter Simeon Solomon (1840-1905) and Swinburne between the end of the 1860s and 1873. Solomon was jailed for “gross indecency” (the term which included homosexual violations). Pater himself faced expulsion when indiscrete letters came to the attention of the Oxford authorities, a fate meted out to another art-historical Oxfordite, John Addington Symonds in 1862. Pater was forced to withdraw his application for the professorship of poetry vacated by Matthew Arnold in 1877. His reprinting of the *Studies* (now retitled as *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*) in 1877 omitted the shocking “Conclusion” essay. Pater continued to publish in the *Fortnightly Review* and *Macmillan’s Magazine*, an essay on Giorgione. He issued studies in the 1880s on Greek and English poetry. Pater also began reworking the biographical writings contained in the *Studies* combining fiction and history into what he termed “imaginary portraits.” The first

appeared in 1878 titled, “The Child in the House,” an autobiographical piece in *Macmillan’s Magazine*. Pater moved to Rome in 1882 resigning his tutorship the following year. He had hoped to occupy John Ruskin’s Slade professorship of fine art in 1885, but was advised that his homosexual reputation would again prevent promotion at Oxford. Pater’s only novel, *Marius the Epicurean*, was published 1885. A third edition of *The Renaissance* appeared in 1888, this time including the formerly excised “Conclusion.”

---

### 23.4 Critical Analysis of the text

---

Pater was not a conventional art historian. Fritz Saxl (q.v.) notes that Pater made no attempt to question the reliability of sources, either Vasari or the attributions of the National Gallery. His *Renaissance Studies*, for example, examined art from as wide an area as provincial fourteenth-century France to eighteenth-century Germany. Pater could make wild assertions, as he did in “The School of Giorgione,” (*Studies*, 3rd edition) that the representation of sound and synaesthesia was central to early 16th-century Venetian painting. His subjective art history was influential because it espoused an art for art’s sake appreciation.

Pater’s art histories take their strength from what Laurel Brake calls their “transhistorical” nature. Wollheim characterized Pater as one of the first to apply psychology to art interpretation. Pater chose largely unfamiliar artists (he was one of the first to write in English on Botticelli, 1870), Moretto and Romanino, identifying qualities not yet appreciated in artists, as in the case of Watteau. Among the many who found him inspirational were Herbert Home (q.v.), who dedicated his book on Botticelli to Pater, and Roger Fry (q.v.) who wrote in 1898 that despite his many mistakes, Pater’s “net result is so very just.” William Butler Yeats considered their era the “Tragic Generation” of whom Pater and Oscar Wilde were the chief exponents. Bernard Berenson (q.v.) changed from the study of literature to art history because of Pater’s book and called Pater’s *Marius the Epicurean* his *vademecum* to the esthetic life. Yates selected Pater’s passage from the opening of the Mona Lisa as the first poem in Yate’s *Oxford Book of English Verse* (1939). Henry James referred to Pater’s writing as “the mask without the face.” More recently, the work of the art philosopher Richard Wollheim (1923-2003) has been linked to Pater’s by Michael Podro (q.v.). A caricature of Pater appeared as the form of the aesthete “Mr Rose” in W. H. Mallock’s satire *New Republic* of 1876.

We know by now that Walter Pater stands on a far higher plane of literature; but he, though influenced by Ruskin, is singularly different from the elder writer, and the difference sheds back a light upon the master’s theories. Although John Ruskin, was surrounded with factors that added dissatisfaction and discontent to his life, yet he remained unconquerably positive and constructive and, so long as he was capable of work, he laboured with even excessive hopefulness at schemes of social revival. Pater retires from the dust of conflict into an artistic seclusion. The conclusion of his *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* is, in the highest degree, significant. The student is required to focus his attention on the aspect of its teaching, which is that, to beings like men, beings under sentence of death, but with a sort of

indefinite reprieve, the love of art for art's sake is the highest form of wisdom. It is evidently clear in his manifestations that his belief is based on certain literary and artistic beliefs, "For art comes to you, proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake." It is also noteworthy that the Oscar Wilde development had not the good will of Pater any more than that of Ruskin; but it logically follows from Pater's principle which is a result of his own literary understanding.

Walter Pater was one of the most hard to please of literary artists. By his artistic theory he was driven to seek excellence and flawlessness of style. If art for art's sake is the highest thing of all, if life is a series of moments and its aim is to make each moment as wonderful as it can be made, it follows that each sentence, in a sense, is an end in itself. The result of his chase of perfection is a style beautiful indeed but overlaboured and a bit tiresome for the common reader. The purpose partly defeats itself. The whole suffers from the excessive pains bestowed upon the parts, and the reader shares the oppression felt by the writer. This makes it somewhat less attractive for the common reader.

The student is required to keep in mind that Pater's literary career began with the essay entitled *Winckelmann*, which he contributed, in 1867, to *The Westminster Review*, and this, with other papers contributed to periodicals, constituted the volume which was published in 1873. In the second edition, the conclusion which has been quoted above was omitted, because Pater felt that it might mislead young men. It was, however, subsequently restored; and the conceptions it indicates form the substance of the fine romance, *Marius the Epicurean*, which shows clearly that Pater's own epicureanism was of a very noble sort, but which fails, like every form of epicureanism, to show why any one kind of pleasure should be the pleasure of all. *Imaginary Portraits* followed, and then *Appreciations*, *Plato and Platonism* and the charming "imaginary portrait," *The Child in the House* happened to be the last volume published during Pater's lifetime, but several followed it posthumously which made a wholesome reading. Pater gave a colour of his own to everything he touched and converted it into something very exclusive. His criticism reveals so much of himself that the question is naturally suggested, whether it reveals as much of the artist or the writer criticized which can be sensed on reading the content of his works. But it must be remembered that the criticism that does not carry the atmosphere of personality is a singularly dull affair; and, also, that Pater was unusually well endowed with both the poignant and the academic gifts of the critic. There are few whose judgments deserve of closer attention. Only the student who reads Walter Pater intently can understand certain comments and observations made on the writing of a critic of such high calibre.

### **23.4.1 Copious Critical Notes**

Walter Pater's famous work, "The History of Renaissance" was later named as

"The Renaissance: Studies in art and poetry". As the name suggests, this work is a study in art and poetry. The major headings under which Walter Horatio Pater has shaped his

work of eminent significance are somewhat to this effect:

Preface

Two Early French Stories

Pico Della Mirandola

Sandro Botticelli

Luca Della Robbia

The Poetry of Michelangelo

Leonardo Da Vinci

The school of Giorgione

Joachim Du Bellay

Winckelmann

Conclusion

It is a full length work on the ideas that the author cherishes and his critical observation on the various aspects that he feels, need consideration. For the benefit of the students, we can summarize these points as given in the passages that follow.

#### **23.4.2 Concept of Beauty in Pater's preface to "The Renaissance"**

In his preface to *The Renaissance* Walter Pater begins with the assertion that beauty is not definable in the abstract, and instead it is relative. He states beauty can, or should, only be defined specifically and personally, the viewer should come to an individual understanding influenced by their specific situation and viewpoint. To define beauty, not in the most abstract but in the most concrete terms possible, to find not its universal formula, but the formula which expresses most adequately this or that special manifestation of it, is the aim of the true student of aesthetics.

Pater states later that the role of a critic is to reduce art to its elements in order to find the beauty and show it to others

“And the function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, to analyse, and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has

disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others.”

### **23.4.3 Pater’s views on the Function of the Critic**

Pater, in his introduction to *The Renaissance*, sets out to define the function of the critic of art. He determines that the art critic does not need to define beauty in the abstract; he needs only to recognize the sensations that various forms of beauty create within him, and to isolate the causes of these sensations from their immediate surroundings. In the case of an artistic text, such as a poem or novel, this process becomes a kind of extraction, a separation of the aesthetic quality, or what Pater calls the “active principle,” from the strict language of the text. In the following passage, Pater gives an example of how this critical method might be applied to a work by Wordsworth.

“Few artists, not Goethe or Byron even, work quite cleanly, casting off debris, and leaving us only what the heat of their imagination has wholly fused and transformed. Take, for instance, the writings of Wordsworth. The heat of his genius, entering into the substance of his work, has crystallised a part, but only a part, of it; and in that great mass of verse there is much which might well be forgotten. But scattered up and down it, sometimes fusing and transforming entire compositions, like the Stanzas on Resolution and Independence, or the Ode on the Recollections of Childhood, sometimes, as if at random, depositing a fine crystal here or there, in a matter it does not wholly search through and transmute, we trace the action of his unique, incommunicable faculty, that strange, mystical sense of a life in natural things, and of man’s life as part of nature, drawing strength and colour and character from local influences, from the hills and streams, and from natural sights and sounds. Well! that is the virtue, the active principle in Wordsworth’s poetry; and then the function of the critic of Wordsworth is to follow up that active principle, to disengage it, to mark the degree in which it penetrates his verse.”

### **23.4.4 Pater’s views on The Critic as Scientist**

In his preface to *The Renaissance*, Walter Pater outlines the role of the aesthetic critic. Because the same natural laws that apply to “a herb, a wine, a gem” also apply to art, the critic can act as a scientist in his analyses of beauty (p. 2). Such a writer has three main objectives: to reduce art to its most basic sensation-producing elements, to analyze these elements by removing them from the context of the work, and finally to present his findings to the reader in a clear and accessible manner. The critic that obeys Pater’s rules captures beauty in concrete definitions and brings it out of the realm of the abstract.

“The aesthetic critic, then, regards all the objects with which he has to do, all



works of art, and the fairer forms of nature and human life, as powers or forces producing pleasurable sensations, each of a more or less peculiar or unique kind. This influence he feels, and wishes to explain, by analyzing and reducing it to its elements. To him, the picture, the landscape, the engaging personality in life or in a book, La Gioconda, the hills of Carrara, Pico of Mirandola, are valuable for their virtues, as we say, in speaking of a herb, a wine, a gem; for the property each has of affecting one with a special, a unique, impression of pleasure. Our education becomes complete in proportion as our susceptibility to these impressions increases in depth and variety. And the function of the aesthetic critic is to distinguish, to analyse and separate from its adjuncts, the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure, to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what conditions it is experienced. His end is reached when he has disengaged that virtue, and noted it, as a chemist notes some natural element, for himself and others; and the rule for those who would reach this end is stated with great exactness in the words of a recent critic of Sainte-Beuve: — De se borner a connaitre de pres les belles choses, et a s'en nourrir en exquis amateurs, en humanistes accomplis.”

#### **23.4.5 Pater’s views on Da Vinci’s art: a door into the Mind**

Walter Horatio Pater describes the development of Leonardo da Vinci as an artist. He builds his argument that da Vinci was special and used his talent to paint characteristically deep and important pieces. Pater’s technique of referring to other artists of the Renaissance help to show the significance of da Vinci’s developments of specific artistic motifs, like sitting women or pictures of the Madonna. Da Vinci used images from his childhood, smiling women and the motion of water, to paint luxuriant and completely rendered art. Pater’s piece shows how art criticism can be an education in psychology, history, and religion to understand the relevance of art. Specifically, Pater focuses on the famous Mona Lisa, now housed in the Louvre, for its important contribution to how art can capture a mood in subtle ways.

“La Gioconda is, in the truest sense, Leonardo’s masterpiece, the revealing instance of his mode of thought and work. In suggestiveness, only the Melancholia of Dürer is comparable to it; and no crude symbolism disturbs the effect of its subdued and graceful mystery. We all know the face and hands of the figure, set in its marble chair, in that circle of fantastic rocks, as in some faint light under sea. Perhaps of all ancient pictures time has chilled it least. As often happens with works in which invention seems reach its limit, there is an element in it given to, not invented by, the master. In that inestimable folio of drawings, once in the possession of Vasari, were certain designs by Verrocchio, faces of such impressive beauty that Leonardo in his boyhood copied them many times. It is hard not to connect with these designs of the elder, by-past

master, as with its germinal principle, the unfathomable smile, always with a touch of something sinister in it, which plays over all Leonardo's work. Besides, the picture is a portrait. From childhood we see this image defining itself on the fabric of his dreams; and but for express historical testimony, we might fancy that this was but his ideal lady, embodied and beheld at last. What was the relationship of a living Florentine to this? creature of his thought? By what strange affinities had the dream and the person grown up thus apart, and yet so closely together? Present from the first incorporeally in Leonardo's brain, dimly traced in the designs of Verrocchio, she is found present at last in Il Giocondo's house. That there is much of mere portraiture in the picture is attested by the legend that by artificial means, the presence of mimes and flute-players, that subtle expression was protracted on the face. Again, was it in four years and by renewed labour never really completed, or in four months and as by stroke of magic, that the image was projected?"

#### **23.4.6 Thought and Action in Walter Pater's Conclusion to *The Renaissance***

In Walter Pater's "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance* the inward world of thought and the physical world of action stand at odds. In this passage Pater seeks the concrete, claiming that "to dwell in thought" inevitably leads to "the whole scope of observation" becoming "dwarfed." In three long sentences Pater is able to convince the reader that perhaps too much reflection in the mind could actually be negative and that the instability of impressions is and should be trumped by "objects in the solidity with which language invests them." Pater explains:

"At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. But when reflexion begins to play upon these objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like some trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions — colour, odour, texture — in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further: the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind."

The last two sentences in this passage are long, full of semicolons and dashes that lead us through his many points.

This is only a minute fragment of the conclusion which has been criticized at large by

critics. To get additional information please see the questions with answers which follow.

---

## **23.5 Important Critical Issues**

---

### **23.5.1 The Real Beauty**

When Walter Pater began his work on *The Renaissance* he was conscious of the concepts that were to be made clear to his readers. In the Preface itself he asserted that “beauty is not definable in the abstract, and instead it is relative.” He emphasizes that beauty can, or should, only be defined distinctively and individually, the viewer should come to an individual, personal and original understanding influenced by their specific situation and viewpoint. His idea is to define beauty in the conceptual form but in a way that it becomes comprehensive for the reader or the interpreter for that cause. Undoubtedly, beauty cannot be interpreted and handed over to us by someone else. It is something that we have to realize very individually and manifest it to others in a way that it allows the other person to develop his personal observation and opinion about it, meaning thereby that it has to be seen with our own understanding.

We can definitely see someone else’s distillation of art. It certainly is beauty even if it is not interpreted by us. The only important factor is that when we read anything written by someone else, we are influenced by the views of the other person. This partially inhibits our own creative thinking and originality and to a certain extent cripples the originality of our thoughts. But at the same time, if the reader or interpreter is strong enough to maintain the domination of his personal opinion over that of the writer, he may save himself from any such literary deterioration.

### **23.5.2 The Function of a Critic**

Pater wrote his introduction to *The Renaissance*, with this very viewpoint. He defines the function of the critic of art. He asserts that the art critic does not need to define beauty in the nonrepresentational or abstract; he needs only to be acquainted with the vibrations that various forms of beauty create within him, and to segregate the causes of these sensations from their instantaneous surroundings. In the case of an artistic text, such as a poem or novel, this process becomes a kind of withdrawal, a disconnection of the artistic quality, or what Pater calls the “active principle,” from the strict language of the text.

In his preface to *The Renaissance*, Walter Pater clearly mentions the role of the aesthetic critic. He is of the opinion that the same accepted laws that apply to “a herb, a wine, a gem” also apply to art, the critic can act as a scientist in his analyses of beauty. He elaborates this idea on page 2 of the book. An aesthetic writer has three main aims in mind: to reduce art to its most fundamental sensation-producing elements, to analyze these elements by removing them from the framework and context of the work, and finally to present his findings to the reader in a clear and reachable manner. The critic that obeys Pater’s set of laws captures

beauty in concrete definitions and brings it out of the dominion of the nonrepresentational or abstract.

### **23.5.3 Leonardo de Vinci as an artist**

Walter Horatio Pater has done us a favour by describing the growth and development of Leonardo da Vinci as an artist. He focuses his line of reasoning that da Vinci was extraordinary and used his talent to paint characteristically deep and important pieces. Pater's modus operandi of referring to other artists of the Renaissance helps to show the importance of da Vinci's developments of specific artistic motifs, like sitting women or pictures of the Madonna. Da Vinci used images from his childhood, smiling women and the motion of water, to paint luxuriant and completely of rendered art which undoubtedly turned out to be exclusive. Pater's piece shows how art criticism can be an education in psychology, history, and religion to understand the relevance of art. In particular, Pater focuses on the famous Mona Lisa, now housed in the Louvre, for its important contribution to how art can capture a mood in subtle ways.

### **23.5.4 Pater's Concept of the Renaissance**

Pater himself is of the opinion that the interest in the Renaissance chiefly lies in fifteenth-century Italy, he understands the term in "a much wider scope than was intended by those who originally used it to denote that revival of classical antiquity in the fifteenth century." For him, the Renaissance is a distinctive "outbreak of the human spirit" whose defining characteristics include "the care for physical beauty, the worship of the body, the breaking down of those limits which the religious system of the middle ages imposed on the heart and the imagination."

### **23.5.5 The Controversial Walter Pater**

In order to understand the controversy attached to so great a writer, it would be highly recommended to refer to "The New Criterion" by Roger Kimball. In his book, Kimball has dealt with art vs. aestheticism. He has given a very convincing account of the work of Pater as well as the public reaction that it generated. Kimball says that it was not only the atmosphere of Pater's book that shocked readers. Even more important was the blithe, aesthetic paganism that was implicit throughout *The Renaissance* and that Pater explicitly set forth in his conclusion. Dilating on "the splendor of our experience and its awful brevity," he recommended seizing the moment, regardless of the consequences: "Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end." Since "a counted number of pulses only are given to us of a variegated, dramatic life," "our one chance" lay in "expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time." Neither morality nor religion figured in Pater's equation. What mattered was the intensity, the ecstasy of experience. Consequently, we must grasp "at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the

spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colours, and curious odours, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend." For Pater, the measure of life was not its adherence to an ideal but the perfection of self-satisfaction. "To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life." Pleasure, not duty, was the cardinal imperative. Life was not a continuously unfolding whole but a series of lyric moments: "In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits."

It would be wise to depend on Roger Kimball's "The New Criterion" once again to reach a very authentic report on this issue. T. S. Eliot criticized Pater for propounding "a theory of ethics" in the semblance of a theory of art. What he meant was that Pater's formation of "aesthetic criticism" offered not a principle of criticism but a way of life. At the center of that way of life is the imperative to regard all experience as an occasion for aesthetic delectation: a seemingly attractive proposition, perhaps, until one realizes that it depends upon a narcissistic self-absorption that renders every moral demand negotiable. "The sense of freedom" is indeed the essence of aestheticism; but it is the cold and lonely freedom of the isolated individual. This was something that Kierkegaard exposed with great clarity in his anatomy of "the aesthetic mode of life" in *Either/Or*. Donoghue tells us that "the part of Aestheticism which should now be recovered . . . is its concern for the particularity of form in every work of art." The problem is that although aestheticism begins by emphasizing form, it ends by dissolving form into the "pleasurable sensations" and "pulsations" that Pater so valued. In this sense, aestheticism is the enemy of the intrinsic. Donoghue criticized Eliot's essay on Pater as "extravagant" and "cruel." But Eliot was right: the theory of "art for art's sake" is "valid in so far as it can be taken as an exhortation to the artist to stick to his job; it never was and never can be valid for the spectator, reader or auditor." Thus Pater's work underwent an anatomical interpretation by very keen readers.

---

## 23.6 Let Us Sum Up

---

Thus we have seen how Pater's Renaissance Studies examined art from provincial fourteenth century France to eighteenth century Germany. His subjective art history was influential because it espoused an art for art's sake appreciation. His artistic theory seeks excellence and flawlessness of style.

---

## 23.7 Review Questions

---

1. Write an essay on the birth, parentage and educational background of Walter Pater.
2. Write a short note on the condition of Literary Criticism before the Age of Walter Pater.
3. Write an essay on the state of Literary Criticism in the Age of Walter Pater.
4. According to Pater, is it possible for us to see the true beauty in someone else's distillation of art? If not why does he try to give us his if it is not as satisfactory as coming to

our own understanding?

5. What are the techniques that Pater uses to convey his distillation of beauty to his reader? Is the preface one of these techniques?
6. Pater describes the “active principle” of Wordsworth’s poems as a manifestation of the poet’s “unique, incommunicable faculty.” Is Pater thus associating or correlating the active principle of poetry or writing with authorial intent? Answer in your own words.
7. The art critic’s unique ability to immediately recognize the beauty of a poem or any piece of art places him in an elevated position from the rest of society, similar to that of a sage writer or wisdom speaker. Does his social power exceed that of the author or artist? How much does Pater himself assume the role of a critic in the passage on Wordsworth?
8. Why does Pater choose the example of Wordsworth? Oscar Wilde, Pater’s disciple, ridicules Wordsworth’s naturalism in his “Decay of Lying.” Why the two aesthetes take such opposing views of the poet?
9. What techniques does Pater use in this passage that reflect his argument for a scientific approach to criticism? Are there specific words, or sentence constructions that seem particularly scientific?
10. Does Pater follow his own rules when he analyzes Da Vinci’s Mona Lisa? Does Ruskin, in his critiques of Turner?
11. Can Pater’s critic-as-scientist approach be applied to social and cultural criticism? Do Wolfe, Didion, Carlyle or Thoreau follow any of his advice?
12. Pater had mentioned da Vinci’s talent for capturing the subtle nature of people’s expressions. How does Pater use the word “subtle” or “subdued” or a similar phrase, like “the expression beneath the human countenance” to convey the powerful control da Vinci has over his art?
13. Does Pater’s initial statement that the La Gioconda is da Vinci’s masterpiece bias the reader? Although it is a tremendous piece of art, does Pater leave enough reader to form his or her own opinion?
14. How has the tradition of non-fiction writing evolved, in regards to the respect of the readers’ opinions?
15. Pater uses “We” in the middle of this paragraph to describe a shared experience of our own childhood imagination and visual memory. Why does Pater shift here to include the audience in understanding da Vinci’s art from the inside?
16. Pater continues after this section to personify the subject of La Gioconda as an ancient

undead creature, who has had a mystical existence like other women of legend. Is this a technique to make his contemporary readers excited about art?

17. Does Pater use visual language to engage the readers mind as well as their senses? What does Pater stress: the biographical elements of da Vinci's art or a collective psychological experience?
18. Do the long sentences with all their twists contradict the points he makes in his writing? Would Pater's points be clearer if he wrote in short sentences so the reader does not "continue to dwell in thought?" 19. How does the image of "one trick of magic" function to make his point? Why does he use this image and is it effective?
20. Does the final line that, "the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind" prove a fair conclusion for Pater to make? Does he go too far in his argument?

---

### **23.8 Bibliography**

---

1. T. S. Eliot, The Place of Pater in The Eighteen-Eighties, edited by Walter de la Mare, Cambridge, 1930
2. R. C. Child, The Aesthetic of Pater, New York, 1946
3. Graham Hough, The Last Romantics, London 1949
4. Frank Kermode, Romantic Image, London, 1957
5. Rene Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism, 1750-1950, New Haven, 1955-1966
6. Wolfgang Iser, Walter Pater: Die Autonomie des Dsthetischen, Tbingen: Niemeyer, 1960. Translated by David Henry Wilson as Walter Pater: The Aesthetic Moment, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge Univesity Press, 1987
7. Donoghue, Denis. Walter Pater: Lover of Strange Souls. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995.
8. Eliot, T.S. "Arnold and Pater." Selected Essays. London: Faber and Faber, 1968. 431-443.
9. James, Henry. The Letters of Henry James. James Lubbock, ed. Vol I. London, 1920.
10. Johnson, Lionel. Fortnightly Review. 56. London, September 1894.
11. Pater, Walter. "Diaphaneitc." The Renaissance (1873). Oxford: OUP, 1998. 154-158.
12. Ward, Anthony. Walter Pater: the Idea in Nature. London: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd, 1966.

13. Whistler, Sarah. "Pater, Rio and Buckhurdt." Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage. R.M. Seiler, ed. London: Routledge, 1980. 97-108.
14. Wordsworth, Jonathan. Letter to Pater. Letters of Walter Pater. Lawrence Evans, ed. Oxford: OUP, 1970.
15. Yeats, W.B. Autobiographies. London: Macmillan, 1955.
16. Bann, Stephen, ed. A review of The Reception of Walter Pater in Europe (Thoemmes Continuum, 2004). Reviewed in Art Bulletin, Sept, 2005 by David Carrier.
17. Brake, Laurel and Ian Small. "Pater in the 1990s." From Number 6 in the 1880-1920 British Authors Series, 1988
18. Bullen, J.B. The Historiography of Studies in the History of the Renaissance. From Number 6 in the 1880-1920 British Authors Series, 1988
19. Coates, John. Controversial Aspects of Pater's 'Style. Papers on Language and Literature, Fall 2004
20. Donoghue, Denis. A review of Walter Pater, Lover of Strange Souls (Knopf, 1995). Review by Ruth Roberts, Univ. of Calif. Press reviews (removed)
21. Dowling, Linda. Foreword: Pater in the 1990s. From Number 6 in the 1880-1920 British Authors Series, 1988
22. Edmund Gosse: Critical Kit-Kats: Walter Pater-A Portrait 1903.
23. Higgins, Lesley. Essaying "W. H. Pater Esq.": New Perspectives on the Tutor/Student Relationship Between Pater and Hopkins [Walter Pater, Gerard Manley Hopkins]. From Number 6 in the 1880-1920 British Authors Series, 1988
24. Richards, Bernard. Pater and Architecture. From Number 6 in the 1880-1920 British Authors Series, 1988
25. Roger Kimball. The New Criterion: Art vs.aestheticism: the case of Walter Pater Vol.13, May 9,1995.
26. Spirit, Jane. Nineteenth-Century Responses to Montaigne and Bruno: A Context for Pater. From Number 6 in the 1880-1920 British Authors Series, 1988
27. Tucker, Paul. Pater as Moralist. From Number 6 in the 1880-1920 British Authors Series, 1988
28. Varty, Anne. The Crystal Man: A Study of "Diaphaniete". From Number 6 in the 1880-1920 British Authors Series, 1988
29. Ward, Hayden. The Last Thing Walter Wrote: Pater's "Pascal". From Number 6 in the 1880-1920 British Authors Series, 1988



30. Ward, J.P. An Anxiety of No Influence: Walter Pater on William Wordsworth. From Number 6 in the 1880-1920 British Authors Series, 1988
  31. Weiss, Theodore. "Literary relations: Pater, Hopkins, and me." The editor of the Quarterly Review of Literature pens an appreciation of Walter Pater and Gerard Manley Hopkins. *American Poetry Review*, Sep/Oct 2002
-