



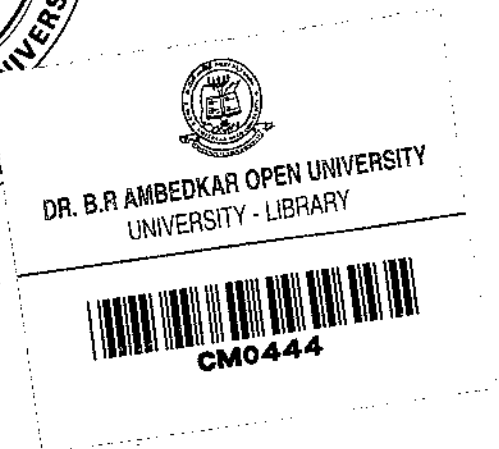
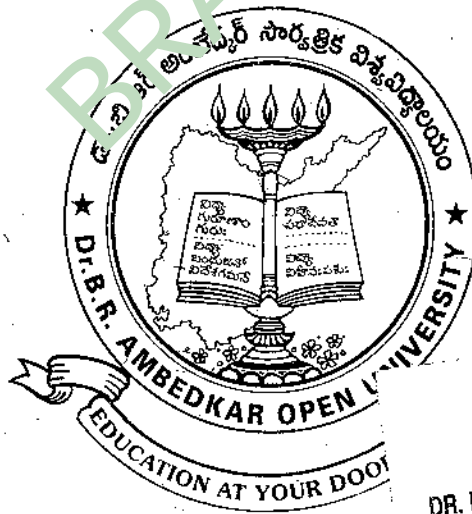
ENGLISH LITERATURE

3-E4

B.A. - THIRD YEAR COURSE

PAPER-IV : POETRY

BLOCKS : I to V



DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR OPEN UNIVERSITY
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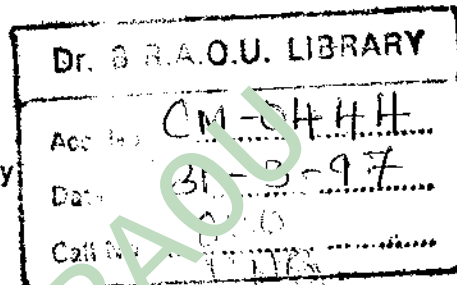
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PREFACE

The poems you are reading here, with the exception of Ramanujan's are to be found in any conventional anthology. The selections are rather mechanical, but you can make something of them - you can get a sense of poetry, if you read them with concentration. One good point seems to be their being chosen from different periods ranging from the Elizabethan to the modern times. Ramanujan is a light-minded choice in these selections; of late, the Indian mind takes up Indian writing in English with sentiment and an accommodating spirit. He deserves to be there in this collection of poems only by our own will, and he can be studied to find out our prejudice against standards. I have taken pains to write an introduction on poetry and its importance, on the conditions unfavourable to it in India, and on the discipline for reading and understanding it.

No doubt, the introduction is heavy fare; the best thing to do is, first, to skip it and study your ten poems with our notes, and then, come back to it. You have to work on the introduction carefully, for it deals with many complex questions on poetry and its relation to the Indian civilisation and to the Indian mind. First of all, it sets forth the hostile conditions to the proper study of poetry. They are actually the conditions of the modern age, supporting the modern spirit, but they hamper the mind's growth. So, you must study them in order to realise their hold on our mind. But once you see that questions about poetry are bound up with questions about the mind and civilisation, you cannot escape from the relevance of the introduction, whatever you might reject therein.

It is difficult to talk on any matter in its perspective; I think it is still more difficult regarding poetry about which anything can be said responsibly. Very, very few can check what they say with a sense of responsibility. The word, 'perspective' is often combined with the adjective, 'right', and one habitually accuses another of not seeing the debated matter in the 'right perspective'. Here the 'right perspective' stand for one's view of references, in which there is too much of personal and commonly accepted relations. What I mean by perspective is very different. The subject under consideration has its own perspective; thought about it discloses the perspective, whereas ideas on the subject go with one's view of references, which one calls the right perspective. As far as I know, it is not a perspective, though it might, for all purposes, appear to be one. It appears to be a perspective to one who imagines it as the image of things in which one expects the debated subject to be seen. One can see a thing from different perspectives; but to see it in its own perspective is the point. Image-perspective is quite different from thought-perspective. A thing seen in both is not the same. Usually, people quarrel over a thing by seeing it from different image-perspectives. Here the difference is insignificant but the quarrel acquires its own force because people are self-important. On the other hand, between the mind accustomed to seeing a thing in the image-perspective, and the mind which can see it in its own or the thought-perspective, there is indeed too wide a gulf. The gulf exists because of the relation in which the mind stands to the industrial civilisation-the relation in which it satisfies its drives. In this relation the mind is too individualistic and self-dominated to capture a thing in the thought-perspective. The mind has two processes one following the other, but they do not take place now in the age of commercial industrialism. One, the mind acquires knowledge it has acquired. I think, the mind is absolutely self-dominated now so that it finds no occasion to

know itself and it serves only the interests we have at heart for our own sake. It is proud of knowing so many things, but it cannot even suspect that its knowledge is dissociated, lacking in a living principle, and that it is crude and ideological having superficial ideas and believing in them. What can be learnt to live well is impossible for it; to live with ability for feeling, perception and thought in the interests of life is unimaginable in its case. Industrial progress affects human life, changing and leading it in a commercial direction or into anarchy with a force that conquers the mind. Self-interests conquer the individual mind, and the industrial interests conquer the Mind of the nation, in which the individual minds are represented. More than ever, the mind is fettered by self-interests and ideological beliefs to be free and natural. It is now abstracted from living contacts and lives in its own world of self-interest and imaginings. That is what the mind comes to be in commercial industrialism.

One who sees a thing in the image-perspective demands every point to be seen with a visible referent rather than understood in thought. Such a one relies on observation as if it is the highest virtue. For such a one empirical thought - thought as inference from a visible assembly of things, when inference can also be 'seen' - is the highest thought guaranteed by science. 'Inference' kind of thought is science for him, but a different kind of science. Even a slightly more abstract thought upsets one such and provokes its dismissal as abstract and untrue. Therefore, the common way of thinking in that manner related to one's ideas and interests while ignoring the demands of the object of thought cannot easily be resisted. Poetry refers itself to other things by its very nature. Let us recognise them. It is they which constitute its perspective.

I tried to put down the essential points of thought on the relation between poetry and human life and to work them up into a basic discipline for not only reading poetry but also understanding those other things which are related to poetry, though they may not seem to be related to the academician. I may claim here that the introduction is a way of talking intelligently on poetry without being academic in spirit and with the interest of life at heart. I am, as well, offering it as a discipline - forming statement on poetry, having covered the topic of essential issues on it. Do not read it once only, but work on it, reading it more than once. I must, however, warn you that you will find it strange and even hurtful. Therefore, you might well be disposed to condemn it out of hand and satisfy yourself that you have better ideas than anything the introduction offers. You can, of course, choose to ignore it. But I think it sane to attack it by counter-argument without misrepresenting it. The right way to work on it is to realise that, after going through it, it doesn't offer ideas but meaningful statements. You must make up your mind as to the status to be given to the exposure of ideas and shall be peculiar to the modern Indian mind under the circumstances. I have attempted to explain the true state of this mind and its consequences in the introduction. Two things must be done and I hope they are done in my attempt: criticism of our conditions as they have come into existence, and the explanation and defence of the value of poetry for the sake of living a fuller life. But if you fail to see the point of it you have been less than fair to me.

CHIEF EDITOR

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BRAOU

INTRODUCTION

What exactly does poetry offer to us ? That is the question that engages us hereafter. Many things can be said and have been said about poetry. But the point is to tell the relevant from the irrelevant. Rather, we must get a point relevant to poetry, and not ideas about it. Usually poetry is a tempting subject for loose discourse generalities or for academic discourse of theories and ideas. Poetry must prove its value by what it offers. As human achievement, it must justify its claims. Here we must avoid saying things which are external to it; usually, high-sounding impressive ideas on poetry, which were once common, and also admired, are now at a discount. Theories still hold their ground in the academic world. Ideas of philosophy, psychology, and anthropology are a matter of changing fashion in the literary criticism of poetry. Metaphysical theories of poetry are rare nowadays, but abstract statements on the nature and importance of poetry seem unavoidable. It is common to talk about poetry without reading much of poetry. Many people make insufferable remarks on poetry as if it is national pride. Usually they speeches on arts; it is note-worthy that most of them are public figures. In India there is a quaint discourse of self-elating statements of idealism and spiritualism on poetry. I say that for the Indian, the best things on poetry are the inspirational ideas, lofty ideas, and spiritual intimations. I forget to mention in this context, the deep-rooted habit in many academics of making self-flattering comments on poetry. My own observation is that poetry is now so unimportant that no one makes an effort to say something worthwhile, and that no one can be engaged in it. In such a condition false things will be said on the question of poetry. Great poetry is the greatest achievement, whether you accept Shelley's wider definition of it or not. Such a praise of poetry will receive sentimental approval but poetry will not be read with any concentration. The condition in which we can be meaningfully related to poetry doesn't exist: poetry requires concentration but our interests and preoccupations do not allow for it. An educated man must have read a few poems at school for the sake of his examinations. As an adult he has neither the taste nor the time for poetry. But he can engage himself in sensational fiction. Yes, his level of mind is a great condition against poetry. There is then only an academic concern for poetry, but it lacks the spirit of life: we will have a few more things later to say on this point. What is relevant to conclude here is that in our circumstances poetry is not a true object of attention, influencing the mind. Of course, poetry is praised as the teaching profession is praised in India, though no one wants to be a teacher if one can get a job of position elsewhere. Let me not be considered harsh if I remark that you are reading these poems without a real interest in poetry. I won't blame you for that. At your age you do certain things, for which you are not always responsible. You didn't grow up in a country in which the reading of poetry was a vital part of finer life-you are not receiving your education in a country with a finer life impinging on you. But this country should have been one in which you could be cultivating habits related to a finer life. But the Western impact changed the fate of India, and you wish to read poetry for the enrichment of your mind. Your effort to read these poems must be related to another effort you have to make in altering your mind; let me warn you that your first effort will be wasteful without this later effort for producing good results. Until we create the condition for changing our life-style of modern choices by learning-by perception and thought poetry will be read mechanically without its effect, and it will not be noticed as important.

Our present consciousness cannot perceive that poetry offers us life which is vital to the mind. There can never be a finer life without the impact of poetry. Poetry may not reach each mind, but its

power to enrich us is there in the Mind in the civilization. We don't judge a value like poetry or music or philosophy by deciding whether it is a requirement for each mind or whether or not the majority of minds want it. On the other hand, we judge the value by its being essential for the Mind. There is no civilisation without the mind and vice versa. The individual minds are related to the Mind and to the civilisation; they cannot survive without this relation. Life is directed by the Mind, which is the energy of intelligence, perception and thought within a given civilisation. Only in pre-civilisation times and in degenerate times after the advent of civilisation do minds act without the force of the Mind acting on them. No doubt, the mind is individual, but how is it a mind? Where does it get its power and its intelligence? Surely it gets it from outside it - well from the Mind from which life and energy for perception, intelligence and thought can be drawn. An individual mind, to achieve a finer life, has to go on knowing more and more and feeling deeper and deeper by receiving fresh energy every time from the Mind. There is no Mind in any race which cannot boast of great achievements, and the Mind, embodying great achievements, is creative of intelligence and the power to feel and think. By its generative principle, the Mind transforms the individual minds. Poetry belongs to the mind, but commerce doesn't. Science, up to the end of the Nineteenth century, belonged to the Mind, but not in this century. What belongs and what doesn't belong to the Mind is determined by testing if it fosters a vital relation between the Mind and the minds. Today, look at any one, you will find something inhuman in his face, well, anyone like the educated Indian: it is because he doesn't belong to the Mind, and is not in a vital relation to it. He cannot even conceive of experiences, which link each one with the other; and cannot even understand that living means learning, knowing, and feeling, which are possible for the mind drawing its nourishment from the Mind. Learning, knowing and feeling which are essential for living, cannot be possible except in a vital relation to the Mind; to understand the points here, let them be emphasized and identified as such. In and through them, human life expresses itself by contrast, it does not express itself in and through the knowledge of commerce, medicine and engineering, which aren't inessential by any means, but which do not engender power for the mind, strengthening it in its learning, knowing, and feeling. Certainly, poetry belonging to the Mind does generate this power, which raises the level of living, and vitalises the humanity of man. Poetry is not knowledge like the subjects which I mentioned above; but their use is so much in evidence that poetry without any use like theirs, appears to the Indian philistines little more than a trifle. The Indian philistine, who is the real and major problem in India is one with a mind separated from the Mind mainly by the changes produced by the Western impact. Whatever is to be conceived of in thought and whatever is to be felt by sensibility is taken to be abstract and unreal, because he cannot observe them as physical items. Note here something interesting; what is true and essential is dubbed as abstract and unreal, but at the same time, in his ideological discourse, he makes abstract and ridiculous here, because they are his own, but what he cannot understand, is condemned as abstract. He loves rhetorical speeches on pseudo-problems facing humanity and on unidentifiable moral questions- particularly, he enjoys thundering speeches aimed at society in the abstract and at human vices, like the Turkish bath. Knowledge for him, is the knowledge of physical items; it is to this effect that science has influenced him. Ideas mean ideas of social justice and political organisation, and of course, scientific ideas. Thinking is planning and programming- it is debased thinking, nothing more than a civil servant's ideas and a contractor's planning. Acting for the philistine is more important than anything else, as if reading and learning when they are not connected with utilitarian subjects, is insignificant. This philistine, with his ideas, his spirit, his will, and his self-estimate cannot identify the value of poetry nor can he recognise its identification, if pointed out, and the majority being on his side he can afford to dismiss the value of poetry with his nose in the air. Possessing a mind which

has broken off with the Mind, he cannot imagine a value for anything which doesn't justify itself by its use in practical affairs. Living is conceived of as planning, acting, and possessing; but the sense of human relations in a finer life is too abstruse for his clear, practical mind. That human life is both living in human relations, and planning and acting doesn't seem to be rational to the Indian philistine. What is rational for him is planning, acting, and possessing and what is most unimportant is the consideration of human relations. That there is a mind which is not a mind unless it has undergone growth and formation, and that for its growth and formation, civilisation with its achievements, the Mind, is indispensable, won't carry weight with him. His attention is too fixed on wealth and status and on industrial progress to be sensitive to the defence of poetry, and he is too preoccupied with ideas of social reform, scientific ideas, and democratic ideas, to grasp a point about poetry and to be struck by its power. He is too fixed on them to be intelligent. What we oppose is the philistine line of being brought up to be an individualist, a careerist, and perhaps later, a psychological case; but we favour the line of an Indian being brought up and educated to be an Indian in vital relation to the values of the Indian civilisation, let him be what he wants to be - a doctor or an engineer or a civil servant or an industrialist. I believe that a true consciousness of the Indian philistine's character is very important for reading and understanding poetry. India is dominated by the Indian philistine, and so poetry is not a matter of importance in India. What he holds to be important is against the values which we are defending. By learning now those things in India to which we have been specially blind, we must take a position and relate ourselves to poetry as men with a capacity to know and feel more deeply.

Poetry is not a question of knowledge like medicine, engineering, and commerce. It is a power, essential for living. As long as we don't desire finer life, we can do without it, as in fact we do now. By preparation we have access to this power, and the most important thing we have gained for preparation is the position in which we place ourselves after learning about the conditions following the Western impact which have brought about the growth of the Indian philistinism. We need not read poetry any longer as philistines, and we aren't unconscious of the conditions that make us false. But still we have to acquire the discipline for reading poetry, as in our education there is no provision for it. What we have mainly learnt so far is about the conditions outside poetry hostile to it and about poetry as value to the Mind. We have also observed the place of poetry within the civilisation, while touching on what poetry offers to us. We have to learn a good deal more and by practice in reading poetry, we might be equal to assessing it. To think that it is easy to read and judge poetry would be self-deceiving. That poetry is difficult to read is natural. Reading and discussing it without being false in spirit is a transforming activity in which the value to our mind lies. Since poetry is power, it has to be drawn, as if it is a struggle to do so; the reward is that the power drawn and absorbed makes us men of our civilisation and it creates in us a desire for finer life. To live without the impact of poetry is the same as to live a prey to psychological impulses of individualism and to ideological ideas, not knowing ultimately where we are going. The power of poetry is against the false spirit, false moves and illusions. By it, the mind can become creative, acquiring and reviewing its own position. Poetry gives us a chance to live a fuller life, like classical music, Man as god creates poetry, and men must read it in order to live as passionate men. It is man turned clever, selfish, and nasty who furnishes the knowledge of commerce. Man must be greedy to work for the knowledge of science. Knowledge of these subjects is dangerous to the mind unless it is empowered by cultural habits and education to assess its scope and limitations. In our time there is no chance that the mind could ever be empowered so as to be possessed of the discriminating and judging ability. So, we have to struggle with poetry to make it yield its results to us.

If we drop the idea that poetry is knowledge and consider that it is a power with its effect which is valuable to us, we have made only some advance, and there are still many confusions to be cleared. There are confusions because there are one-sided or far-fetched or false ideas on poetry, which are mistaken to be true. Conceiving of poetry rightly is a challenging task for one has to do hard work to achieve it. We have to conceive of it rightly to be influenced by it. In considering and appraising the nature and importance of poetry which we hold to be a power in helping us to know and feel more deeply, and in estimating the worth of the knowledge of any subject, our point of departure is the mind in vital relation to the values of its civilisation. Our consciousness is often a false consciousness because for one thing it lacks a true point of view from which it can learn about a matter and make a point on it, and for another it satisfies itself with ideas, refusing to go further to perceptions and thought. It is mainly false, because it does not take the trouble to learn that truth cannot be seen but must be thought about. Learning is very important for living, particularly learning related to thinking and feeling; and it must be distinguished from many crude forms of knowledge, as what is claimed to be knowledge is hardly ever stated in a form in which it can be a value. Learning is knowledge which has become a value. We very much suffer from false identification in recognising and approving of knowledge. Here, two distinctions must be carefully kept in view. Real knowledge must be distinguished from pseudo-knowledge, and the power of poetry from real knowledge. From real knowledge you can sense the power of poetry. In argument you cannot establish a clear-cut distinction between real knowledge and pseudo-knowledge but one's mind must be so trained as to sense the distinction unmistakably. Here, an example that comes to my mind now might be helpful. Compare Arnold's essay on Wordsworth with any of the essays written on him by modern academic critics. Arnold's essay is a true knowledge of perception and standards from which you can sense the power of Wordsworth's poetry, while, though not all of the academic essays are phoney, yet they have too little life, too little spirit, and too little thought. Lionel Trilling's essay cannot stand comparison with Arnold's for Trilling has no mind equal to grasping the power of Wordsworth's poetry to demonstrate to the reader. Trilling with his American academism could not approach Wordsworth with the spirit of civilisation and with concern for civilisation and had to choose ideas in Wordsworth. On the contrary Arnold could read Wordsworth with the spirit of civilisation and with concern for the civilisation, why? because he has a very fine and deep consciousness of literature with a real interest in life - and he can estimate poetry by its life. It is difficult to elaborate the vital difference between the two, and grasping the difference is an excellent preparation for reading poetry. It is an excellent preparation or rather discipline for reading and understanding poetry, well, because you will observe two different minds with differing interests, and you will perceive that one has the vitality of the past and a deep interest in human life and the other has no more than an academic interest, and little more than a false spirit, to bring to bear upon his reading of Wordsworth. The difference in their reading poetry consists in reading poetry with a real interest in life till you acquire the habit of reading of Wordsworth. The difference in their reading of Wordsworth is vital to the students of poetry. The discipline for reading poetry consists in reading poetry with a real interest in life till you acquire the habit of reading it and the ability to judge it by its life. Poetry is a great achievement of civilisation; by reading and understanding it it is possible not to have a false consciousness and a false spirit, and we acquire a sense of life, disregarding self-interest. It is a big claim for poetry but you can see that it is not an exaggerated claim, if you are a disciplined reader of poetry. With self-interest dominating the mind (Self-interests are just the same as philistine interests) you can never get anything out of poetry. Poetry must interest you in such a way that it should affect your other interests. You cannot read poetry with your interest in poetry being kept aloof from any other interest. Trilling kept his interest in poetry aloof

from his other interest, but in Arnold there was no such division. Poetry is useless unless it affects and modifies your life. It mustn't change you like an attractive idea but act like the subtle pressure of intimation.

There is another point of discipline on which I insist. It is this: when one talks, for instance, on Hamlet, one forgets the poetry in which one reads his character and expresses opinions as if there is no difference between Hamlet in poetry and Hamlet in prose. Hamlet in prose is worth nothing to us. The poetry of Hamlet is far more important than Hamlet the character. We agree that both are inseparable-as an idea-but when we consider the character, the poetry fades away from our mind. Here, we meet with one danger, namely, the danger of reading ideas into the poetry of the character, and still worse, of applying theories. What the character intimates in poetry is what concerns us; in this sense, the word 'character' is misleading, since it evokes in us certain references, the range of which is so wide that the richness of character is lost to us as we, in a scholarly fashion, consider Hamlet in many irrelevant ways. Then, the spirit that sends us to Hamlet is not the spirit of life, we read Hamlet as pseudo-scholars. Judge Hamlet by his life in poetry. Academic interpretation kills the life of the character. Hamlet is a problem not a literary problem for us because he means so much. A sense of Hamlet's life in its puzzling richness is the priceless gift Shakespeare has left to us. It must affect the organising principle of our mind. Mastering Hamlet's poetry is necessary not only to have a standard for poetry itself, but also for conceiving of life. Its power is greater than you can possess by any other means. It is not an isolating but integrating power, which is contrary to the effect of the knowledge of other subjects. Not the broad tendency but the subtle points in a character, are what make the are rich. If you don't master Shakespeare's poetry, Hamlet gets out of control, and you find him fitting many ideas and theories in your head. It is very difficult to read Hamlet meaningfully without a hard-earned discipline. To be disciplined in reading and interpreting Hamlet is to be disciplined in living. The mind which acquires this discipline is a human mind in vital relation to the mind, but when the mind is without this discipline and outside any positive relation to the Mind, it is psychological, individualistic, and inhuman - it is the modern mind which has no use for the power of poetry; that makes it feel and know more deeply. It is the mind of practical affairs in commercial industrialism between which and values of human achievement there is an inevitable break-up. As great human achievement poetry yields power, essential for life, but no knowledge of any subject on which we place so much premium because of its application in practical affairs can do that for us. Since we do not have a sense of life in which we perceive the role of poetry, we are not convinced of the claims here made for it. To have a sense of living that the more refined and vitalised a mind is, the finer the life it can lead, will alone convince us of the importance of poetry. One must have a consciousness of the necessity of values to be sensible in any argument on poetry. The human mind cannot be human unless it is grown up and organised on the basis of human achievements. Consider the human mind to be found everywhere now, that has nothing other than modern education, science or commerce subjects, and later a job in commercial industrialism; consider it carefully in its character of modernism absolutely estranged from the past and its achievements, doesn't it appear hideous! you might never have considered it in this light before, you yourself being possessed of the progressive spirit and the progressive ideas of the Indian philistine. Poetry, when it is read with the right discipline, can recover us from the modernism of the philistine mind. You may not read Hamlet; but if you read it as a philistine, you will only know Hamlet's story and some ideas perhaps. You must read it while liberating yourself from philistinism: here lies the secret of the discipline for pursuing literature. The organisation of such poetry as we have in Hamlet is bound up with the growth and organisation of our mind. Describing,

then, Hamlet, in academically established terms or in literary jargon, could be very misleading, and it may never allow you to get involved with the play. Reading an achievement like Hamlet is fighting for life and opposing what must be opposed in the interest of life. Reading it is an event of incalculable importance. Reading it is living differently, and more fully than before and its mastery is one of the great values of human life. Here, there are two things to be gained from an awareness of an academic discussion on Hamlet; we will see its degree of relevance and we will learn the details of the play more sharply.

What we must guard against is the usual practice of getting a surface sense of a poem and a few ideas in addition, which could be very distorting or very inadequate to the content of the poem. I talked earlier of hardened discipline, it alone helps us. But we must give up our accustomed idea of discipline being identified with obedient behaviour, or with the prudent spirit, or with the superficial manners one gets in a missionary school. The discipline I think of is quite opposed to the philistine idea of discipline. It is a preparation and a force of energy for living, for perception and thought in the interest of life; by this discipline you can have access to the power of poetry. The reading of Culture and Anarchy is infinitely far better preparation and a force of energy for getting access to the power of poetry than all the ideas and theories bandied about in the American academic discourse. The preparation one has for a career in commercial industrialism in the modern Indian circumstances sends one away from poetry as well as from other achievements. It is very much akin to the training that circus animals receive. There is no mistaking here; we must be firm on Indian philistinism, which is ruinous to the Indian life and the Indian mind. Reading poetry is the point (so also listening to classical music) at which today we face the problem of losing the values of civilisation by the threat of the modern spirit of the modern life-style. Poetry, like music, is the sustenance for the human mind to keep its human character. To be roused against the Indian philistinism is to be sane and the spirit so roused will draw its strength from the values ignored by philistinism.

We said that poetry is a human achievement, that it is a power essential for living, and that it is one of the values of civilisation. This is praise enough for poetry, but it can be objected that it lacks content, being tainted by abstractness and an insufficient basis. Surely, it is difficult to convince any one that they are the remarks that apply to poetry in general. But that they are the remarks that apply to poetry in general. But that they are the remarks that apply to the best poetry could be shown to anyone who has sensed the real connection between values and living. It may here be noted unambiguously that anyone with a false spirit would not take poetry seriously or heed any argument in its favour, which contradicts common place or fashionable or academic ideas on poetry. One who wants validity for my statements at the level of unquestionable data with supporting inferences will be so disappointed that he may find himself to be right as well as relieved by accusing me of having made facile or sweeping generalisations. If one is guilty of being false in spirit my statements put such a one on the defensive, and one behaves strategically side-stepping the issue and inciting attitudes rather than arguing the case. There is a great scope for misunderstanding in the discussion of poetry, and a number of bad points for justifying any stand one pleases to take for any reason are readily available. The possibility of making statements which are neither generalisations nor logical inferences does not strike us at all, for we are accustomed to easy-to-follow statements. Moreover it seems to be our habit to be pleased with statements when they have an appeal for us or when we can dispute them by clutching at their weak point. The point of discipline for reading poetry is to liberate oneself from the false spirit one naturally comes to be possessed of in this age, and the knowledge of this false spirit that dominates one is a knowledge which is discipline itself. Knowing

the spirit here means changing and disciplining oneself. By this spirit we don't at all learn enough to talk sense, since we get ideas easily and believe in them, being denied the ability to question them. Here, the effect of our ideas on our use of language is disastrous. Because of these ideas we couldn't be relevant in our discourse, that is, instead of getting the relevant categories to advance in argument, we end up in the circularity of argument; and again, because of them we cannot use words with definite references, and our terms are vaguely relevant but even then in appeals only. In a way we are bound to misuse language though unconsciously. The condition of our ideas and of our misuse of language evidently cannot make us good readers of poetry. A nation with commercial industrialism and its spirit, with newspapers, with cinema, with the progressive views attracting every mind, and with its mind attracted towards Westernisation, cannot produce a good reader of poetry. One has to be a man to be a good reader. Now we have to be men through the discipline required for poetry. We don't care for poetry, being philistines. And we are too bad, as men, to be good readers, to be frank about our modern condition. But desiring to be men, we must care for it, and learn things patiently to be good readers of poetry. To know the value of poetry and desire a change by its power is no less than to save our civilisation.

I must make a point here. But our philistines use of language is a great hindrance which we must overcome if we wish to read poetry, and benefit by reading it. It distances us from the creative use of language. Our lack of respect for language and our lack of concern for it go to show that poetry is far from being a serious matter for us. Take, for example, this philistine idea of language (you meet it every where in India) that "after all it is only for the communication of ideas" - meaning that up to whatever degree we know it, it is good enough for such a communication and that no special effort is needed to learn it. Note the dismissal of the value of language by 'after all' "For the communication of ideas" is one of the many phrases used in India for their impressiveness and for inciting an attitude so that a disturbing argument can be attached. It is a phrase, however impressive and sufficient in its apparent meaning in common parlance, that ignores the richness of achievements in language and their claim for our attention. It originates from our false spirit preferring science, technology and commerce. If Shakespeare is ignored, nothing may happen; but it is being cretin to say that we learn a language for "the communication of ideas" and so, can exclude Shakespeare (or any great achievement) since learning him doesn't make any difference to this purpose of language. Our hold on language is proportionate to our hold on past achievements. We cannot be interested in either without having the interest of life at heart. But we only seek our philistine interests with scant respect for language and without any sense of the past achievements. At the most our words have only the communicable sense very much related to practical affairs but they have not the energy of perception, thought, and feeling. Our discourse has been so little vitalised by the potential creativity of the spoken idiom that when we speak, we are not sane and vigorous speakers, but we are affected or stilted, or official, or formal, or more often crankish. There has been no standard for our speech, for there has been no standard setting centre of intelligence. Some people have such wild emotions as to storm like mad dogs or to indulge in sentimental palaver; some others are only strategic and not forward; however, like the earlier, these also have only a false spirit in expression. But rarely do we meet with a subtle distinction or delicate feeling or compelling perception or forceful thought in our expression. Both in our modern living and in our modern discourse we have nothing but habits hostile to poetry. From creative achievements if we set our mind on getting what they can offer, our living as well as our discourse will be changed. The emotions related to practical affairs have so great a sway over us that our mind presently has no linking objectives with feeling, thought, and perception. Our sentences with their ideas look like links in an iron chain, because they don't have the marrow of real spirit and intelligence. Our modern style of

living and our modern discourse betray the cretinism of the so-called progressive views or ideas; we are by this too many levels below that of reaching poetry and sensing its power. We have to get the strength of the past achievements for our mind and we have to get the spirit of living in vital human relations in order to be good readers of poetry. Another way of putting it is that we must be real men placing ourselves in a vital relation to our civilisation, since we have been displaced from that relation by the Western impact. You cannot read poetry with your mind as it is now and with your spirit as it is now. You must undergo some vital change, and you must see the necessity of it, coming to the awareness that instead of being Indians with the spirit and vitality of the Indian Civilisation, you have been deIndianised by the great historical event of the Western impact and that you have been self-blind and unable to see how much life you have lost and how you are without the force of identity, being fascinated by modernism and absorbed in practical affairs. Historically speaking, there has been a willful, arrogant denial of the Indian values by the Indians. Unless this historical change is changed, there is no possibility of becoming sane. The condition of sanity is the first and foremost condition for reading and understanding poetry.

Let me tell you that I took pains to convey to you the true nature of the conditions governing our relation to one of the values of civilisation, poetry, of course. Let it not shock you if I say that it is very rare that a poem is ever taught well and learnt properly. If the case is otherwise, I should have confined myself to poetry without going into a critique of the conditions related to it. Usually, poetry is not read as a cultural habit, and our learning of English is not up to the mark for reading English poetry. I am here thinking of the teacher's and not the student's English alone. The most notable disadvantage for poetry in India is that no one recognises its real worth for human life. It gets something like the sentiment of an heirloom. So, it is prescribed in schools and universities, but suffers from a lack of prestige with the result that the teacher's and students's relation to it is most spiritless. There might be a crankish enthusiasm now and then, but that is all. One doesn't read and teach poetry with a feeling of its importance. We have seen at length what conditions are responsible for the non-existence of the feeling of its importance. We take it up in a false spirit in academic discourse. The consequence is that false and pretentious explanations regarding poetry are inevitable, so also false and shabby answers to questions. To use a sociological expression, this academic syndrome perpetuates itself because the academic results actually conceal it to our view. To speak in my own language, this academic disaster is never understood and exposed because of the poverty of our modern mind.

As a teacher I have only some bitter experiences to communicate concerning my own limitations and the students' failure to relate themselves in a normal way to any poem presented to them. Usually I try to draw their attention to what is there in the given poem according to my understanding of it. The students are habitually prone to see lofty ideals in any poem without the least relevance to its content, and if asked to give their account of the poem, they write only broken English expressing these lofty ideals. They have no ear for the language, to start with. They can never overcome this difficulty; and they don't show a normal relation to it, of reading it and getting close to its sense-but they read off all sorts of ideas in terms of soul spiritualism and idealism. Their talking about the poem is a ridiculous affair. Some of them become teachers of English without any substantial change. All this description might be disheartening to you but then don't you think it would be an act committed in bad faith to gloss over this terrible condition? I.A. Richards once said that it is the most difficult thing to read a poem in the modern times. But what attention do we pay to it? and how do we read it now in our educational institutions? Richards meant that we ignore the complexity of the poem, as it needs the utmost effort. Credit goes to him if we today recognise its complexity and the work necessary to capture the richness of the poem. But in spite of Richards,

English teachers of the university go on with their false explanations, because they have no interest in their own job. That doesn't send them to his invaluable work done on the understanding of poetry. If at all they read him they get a few ideas from him but their usual work of dealing with the poem the wrong way doesn't suffer any change. If you want to test the truth of what I am saying, do try this. Look at the teacher when he counts money and engages in calculations, and look at him when he reads a poem. How much he is rapt in the first work! Oh! but how much he is indifferent in the second!

BRAOU

COURSE - IV POETRY

Block - Wise Introduction

Course IV - Poetry has V Blocks.

Block - I is made up of five units.

- Unit : 1 deals with John Donne and his importance as a poet.
- Unit : 2 gives the text and explains Donne's poem 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning'. This poem is fairly well-known in Donne's collection of 'Songs And Sonnets' and it is popular in the 20th century. The text is provided here.
- Unit : 3 is about John Milton and his poem 'Lycidas'. The text and glossary are given here. The unit says that Milton deserves to be read because he was highly ranked among the English poets.
- Unit : 4 explains the nature and the theme of the poem in detail. It mentions the severe criticism levelled against Milton.
- Unit : 5 with Alexander Pope's 'The Rape of the Lock' discusses the literary tradition of the poem and also Pope's poetic method. It provides the text and the necessary glossary.

Block: II has four units.

- Unit : 1 deals with William Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey'. It gives the text, glossary and notes.
- Unit : 2 explains the poem - 'Tintern Abbey'.
- Unit : 3 is about John Keats - his life and works. It also gives the prescribed text - 'Ode To A Nightingale', the glossary and notes.
- Unit : 4 elaborately explains the poem Ode To a Nightingale.

Block - III consists of five units.

- Unit : 1 discusses Matthew Arnold's poetry in general.
- Unit : 2 contains the text - 'Dover Beach', the glossary and notes. It discusses the poem explaining certain stanzas in detail.
- Unit : 3 introduces Alfred Lord Tennyson as a major Victorian poet, as a real representative of his age.
- Unit : 4 has the text of Tennyson's poem, 'Ulysses' along with the glossary and notes. It discusses the poem elaborately.
- Unit : 5 is about Robert Browning and his poems. It gives the prescribed text 'My Last Duchess', its glossary and notes. It explains the poem in detail.

Block - IV has three units.

Unit : 1 discusses W.B.Yeats as the modern poet.

Unit : 2 gives the prescribed text of the poem 'The Second Coming' along with glossary and notes. It explains the poem in detail.

Unit : 3 discusses T.S.Eliot as a modern poet.

Block - V has three units.

Unit : 1 discusses Indo-Anglian poetry before and after independence.

Unit : 2 discusses A.K.Ramanujan's poems with a special reference to his Small-scale Reflections on a Great House.

Unit : 3 discusses Kamala Das and her poetry as an example of modern Indo-Anglian poetry.

* * *

BRAOU

BLOCK - I

Unit - 1: JOHN DONNE : A Valediction Forbidding Mourning.

1.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * see the reasons why you should study John Donne - an Elizabethan poet being popular in the 20th century too.
- * discuss conditions under which Donne wrote poetry.
- * realize that Donne's poetry is spontaneous and it ranges over many kinds of feelings.

1.1 Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Contents
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 John Donne
- 1.4 The characteristics of Donne's poetry
- 1.5 Let's sum up
- 1.6 Sample questions
- 1.7 Answers to self-check exercises.

1.2 Introduction

This unit discusses John Donne as an Elizabethan and Jacobean poet who is popularly regarded in the 20th century too. It talks about the subtle effects of the poem which are important to realize the real value of the poem 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning'. It shows the special circumstances and conditions under which Donne, wrote his poetry.

1.3 John Donne

There might be two reasons for Donne being included in your syllabus. His being popular in the 20th century and his being an Elizabethan and Jacobean poet, both reasons, could have been taken into account. In any case, the series which you have to study begins with Donne's poem, which is fairly well-known in his collection of 'Songs and Sonnets'. If you read it by yourselves, you may

not understand it. It is not an easy poem by any means. In fact Donne's poetry is rather difficult to understand and a special effort is essential for making sense of it. It may be all the more difficult for you, as you have very little experience in reading English poetry and so, you have to be prepared now for it. We must remember this as a rule, that we cannot grasp and enjoy the poetry of great poets without it, you cannot feel the subtle effects of a poem, in which alone we find the value of the poem. Ask this question when you read a poem, "what are the effects which I feel and remember, of it?" If you can answer the question by giving an account of your reading of the poem, you are on the right tack. You must be able to say that "this poem means this to me, and so I think it is worth reading or it is not very rewarding". Although we may not like to say that such discipline as enables us to read and enjoy poetry is now missing in our education nevertheless it is true. You could see that poetry is now rarely read as an engaging vital activity of life. Poetry carries very little importance with us. It is rather ignored by us. You will see my point, if you remind yourself of the great importance given to other subjects and not to poetry.

These are not the conditions when Donne wrote poetry. Life was different then because the values of that life were different from those of ours. Poetry then was an engaging vital activity for those who were interested in it, and they formed an important community of the society; if poetry was a value to them and not to others, remember, the others honoured it in a feeling manner. A good deal can be said on the difference between the two ages, between the Elizabethan and the modern age, and a sense of the difference which we could gather would be very useful. Poetry was an irreplaceable value then, but it is not so to us. An educated man was a cultured man in the Elizabethan age who could respond fully to the fine points of Donne's poetry. Nothing of the sort exists today: you cannot presuppose culture in the educated person now. Reading poetry, like listening to music, was a cultural habit; but we exist today almost without any cultural habit. Language was then vital to communication, when subtle effects were attended: at no other period has the spoken idiom been so marvellously exploited as in that age. It is difficult to imagine another age with such a living speech and with such a mind to exploit it. People then didn't feel empty and bored as they do now; they lived a fuller life, even if theirs was a tragic one. Life then was the life of heroes: and it was religious for all. Words were used with definite content; you can always recognise their language by the fullness of content. Men were real, they felt their emotions like passionate men. They weren't ruined by our mental ideas, by the spread of journalism and by the psychological drive for entertainment and by the other psychological drives which our individualistic spirit works to satisfy, degenerating us. I said it was religious life then; this means that there was fullness of relation for anyone. Here I am not interested in relating to progressive views which are a gospel truth to the modern superficial mind, the poetry of the Elizabethan age is a great human achievement in the world itself. The conditions of life from which we have this achievement can not be such as we can imagine now. To know them inwardly is a kind of inward learning very helpful to our understanding of the poetry of that age. What I am interested in showing is that it is possible to relate their poetry to their life with such details as throw light on our mode of living in which there is no poetry to be related to our life, poetry must be read for a serious purpose which is related to the mind: for such a purpose it can be best approached by learning the conditions of life in which it was possible.

* *Metaphysical conceits: Metaphysical conceits are only found in the poetry of the school of Donne. The word 'Metaphysical' is not a very complementary word in the context. It is used to describe the strange and far-fetched ideas employed by the poets of Donne's school. 'Concept' in its general meaning, is idea, but here it refers to the many rather out-of-the-way images, metaphors and 'bold strokes' in the manner of speaking. Sometimes it may be a boastful conceit as, for instance, we have "Busy old fool, go catch a falling star" in the Sun-Rising.*

I make these remarks on the vital character of the Elizabethan age for getting Donne's poem into the right focus. Donne is a great poet in English literature, but you must know that he was popular in his time. Whereas till the beginning of this century, he has been neglected. In this century he has acquired so much status that he is placed higher, by some readers, than Milton. Whether he is higher in rank than Milton or not shouldn't concern us here. On the otherhand what we must be clear about is what has interested the modern mind in his poetry. I refer to the characteristics of his poetry that compel admiration from the modern readers.

Self-Check Exercise - 1 (SCE-1)

What does the writer say about the Elizabethan poetry?

1.4 The Characteristics of Donne's poetry

1. First and foremost is the extraordinary ability Donne has possessed in fusing different kinds of experiences in his poetry with a stunning effect on us. Hence his poetry sounds very strange, but it is very different from conventional sort of poetry. This difference has been jarring to many readers, but to many others it is the mark of his genius. However, there are few objections to his poetry to today. This ability in fusing different experiences is all the more admired and valued because after Donne and his contemporaries who wrote in his vein—that is, after Donne's school of poetry in the first part of the 17th century no poet could exhibit it. It is an ability which is recognised as belonging to the Elizabethan and Jacobean mind, which has changed losing it, on account of many complex political, social, and psychological events. It may be claimed that the strength of the Elizabethan age nourished its poets who could achieve so much.

2. Secondly, if we say that Donne broke with conventional poetry we mean that he wouldn't write like Petrarch and Spenser. The colouring we notice in the sentiments and emotions of the conventional poetry of Petrarch and Spenser and their tiresome generality are rejected by Donne. There is as much difference between the two as there is between Browning and Tennyson. Donne's effects are never poetical, but they are of surprise. One reason for the difference is that Donne feels differently and his mode of feeling makes his poetry a special value to the modern mind. The school of Donne's poetry is distinguished by what are termed as Metaphysical conceits* as well as the frequent use of hyperbole, which might be incongruous in conventional poetry.

3. Thirdly, Donne uses, like many of his contemporaries, the colloquial idiom. What the Indian students find difficult to realise is the sense of the spoken language and of how it becomes art-speech. Elizabethan poetry is a good example of great poetry drawing on the spoken idiom. Let us note that the spoken idiom has life, and it is more suited to poetry of life than say the poetical and conventional language. It offers dramatic possibilities, which are fully exploited by Donne.

Subtle effects by variation in tone are possible in such an idiom, over against a type emotion and its modifications in poetical language. Through such effects you can have several points of contact with life: the mind is acted on and worked up to details in feeling instead of being dulled by poetical emotion. The mind finds itself in a relation rather than being pleased by what is said. By the spoken language and its rhythms the Elizabethan poetry has an animation peculiar to itself, rarer in later poetry, and it achieves directness and intimacy with the reader. Words in this poetry are full and definite in the content of their references and suggestiveness; they are never muzzy, general and inflated with soothing sort of emotions and sentiments. One has human bearings in the poetry of this period.

4. Fourthly, it is playful and serious at the same time, because Donne's poetry has the thrust of life and not ideas that the mind entertains. The spirit of communication is spontaneous, and how different it is from the false, advertising spirit of the modern time; Variety is an important character of it, and Donne's poetry ranges over many kinds of feelings, making use of such verbal form as scholastic logic and so on.

SCE -2

How can one say that Donne's poetry is playful and serious at the same time ?

1.5 Let's sum up

This unit has discussed Donne's importance as a great poet, the need to study him and also how he should be studied. It has explained the Elizabethan life, culture and how poetry was regarded at that time. It has shown that language was then vital to communication and that the spoken idiom was marvellously exploited in his age.

1.6 Sample Questions

1. How can one grasp and enjoy the poetry of great poets ?
2. What do you know about the Elizabethan age ?

1.7 Answers to self-check exercises

1. The writer is of the opinion that the poetry of the Elizabethan age is a great achievement in the world.
2. One can say that Donne's poetry is serious and playful at the same time because it has the thrust of life and not the ideas that the mind entertains.

Unit - 2 : A Valediction Forbidding Mourning: Critical Analysis

2.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * see that the poem expresses feelings of love as a human relation
- * explain that the poem is playful and serious with an unexpected feeling of intensity for the love relationship.

2.1 Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Contents
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Explanation of the poem: 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning'
- 2.4 Text, Glossary and notes
- 2.5 Let's sum up
- 2.6 Sample questions
- 2.7 Answers to self-check exercises

2.2 Introduction

This unit explains that this poem expresses feelings of love and the occasion for the poem seems to be Donne's parting from his wife. This unit explains that poet's love for his wife is not affected by his absence that is the intensity of love: the unit explains the poem stanza by stanza.

2.3 Explanation of the poem - A Valediction Forbidding Mourning.

This poem expresses feelings of love as a human relation. Before you can profit by it, you must read it several times. You might immediately see that it isn't a poem which agrees with any idea or impression you have of a poem. But on that account, don't reject it. Since you have no experience by the help of which you could be sensitive to its merits, wait and learn to perceive them; you mustn't give up. It has been offered for serious consideration, and note, it has been judged to be a fine poem. Therefore, you must be patient to have a personal experience of it doesn't matter at all, if you cannot see those merits, which a trained reader could, on first reading of it, but do try to understand why he is able to see them. Have a contact with the poem, and you will soon get a personal experience

of it, which is very valuable. You had better be warned that you shouldn't pick up ideas or theories about the poem from any source. Allow yourself time to feel its impact. It is essential to avoid discussing the poem in abstractions and to get down to the details of sense in the poem. There is work to be done beforehand on the poem for grasping its special features.

The occasion for this poem seems to be Donne's parting from his wife, whom it pained very much. It is a poem addressed to his wife. A conventional love poem would be very different, having an emotion with the generality of content and appeal. As a song, it might be moving. But, here, Donne's poem has a different content, and different appeal, whose level is very crucial. It is playful and serious with an unexpected feeling of intensity for the love relationship. He asks his wife not to take his absence as absence unbearable to her, for according to him there is no absence of love in it. His parting doesn't affect his love for her, so, it isn't a parting in the sense in which ordinary lovers take it. The idea of absence on his part is absorbed into the intensity of love—that is what the poem does.

The first stanza suggests the manner of the peaceful death of the virtuous men, and the common possible report of it. The idea that, at death—the separation of the soul from the body,—there is no painful and violent wrench suffered by the virtuous people is important, serving as the opening of the poem. The stress on the virtuous is related to the nature of peaceful death. This emphasis anticipates the second stanza with its imploration (to his wife) for restraint. "Let there be no show of grief at my parting", says the poet. Their love is such that ordinary men shouldn't know of it through any vulgar display of it. There is the suggestion of a higher-level in their Love-relationship with a suitable appeal to refrain from expressing any pain or grief. Their joys which were the fruit of their love would only be desecrated if the personal emotion of grief is vented. The third stanza elevates their love by polarizing between the feeling aroused by an earth-quake and its consequences (only devastation) and the feeling related to the movement of spheres (with its consequence of music) to which their love correspond. This elevation of their love is still heightened in the fourth stanza by a level contrast. To ordinary lovers, love means the sensual pleasure so they cannot endure absence because it removes the effects of sensual love for them. The contrast is between sense and spirit, but there is no harm to mean by sense sensual effect. Where love is a relation of sense and not of spirit, there absence is unendurable to lovers. The fifth stanza confirms the love of spirit. By describing their love as very much refined but as unknowable a feeling of mystery as well as pride is invoked. Both, sure of each others love of spirit would not think of sensual effects or contact. The idea is this : "we are so much better than ordinary lovers, that we don't care for what they desire". The sixth stanza continues his discourse on higher love in which their two souls are actually one. The inseparability of one from the other is suggested to claim that absence isn't a gap or break but an expansion (this expansion is like gold beaten out to thinness).

The last three stanzas have earned a fame for Donne for the famous comparison of the twin compasses he has made to lovers. In a love relation this comparison with its image brings in unexpected feelings of love. What is so striking is the alertness of the poet's mind and the intensity of love feelings implied in the pressure with which such a conceit is employed. Take the last but one stanza; how it moves suggesting the movement of the compass, and this movement in the spoken idiom reflects the strength of genuine feeling.

And though it in the centre sit

Yet when the other far doth roam

It leans, and hearkens after it,

And grows erect, as that comes home.

Well, the love feeling suggested here in that movement of art-speech with that pressure is a feeling too deep to be exhausted by textual interpretation. It is an achievement in life. To learn to feel it is to feel the strength of life. Introduce an idea or a theory to explain Donne's poetry, you will break your contact with the feeling. A true relation to the feelings evoked is the best reward of reading his poetry.

A mastery of this poem can tell us many things. For instance, you can read a poem by another poet and know if he uses languages feelingly or emotionally or theoretically and so on and you can notice, also the stamp of the period on the poem; by mastering poems like this, you get the ability to discriminate between what is good poetry and what is not, you can live with this ability. That is what great poetry can do to our minds. The ability you could get from great poetry is incomparable with any other abilities you acquire for whatever purpose.

Communication about poetry is a very important communication for it is communication of subtle points of criticism, but it must touch one's spirit, and set one's mind in motion making it feel the impact of the poem. To feel its impact fully is to feel a power for living, but one must first acquire the discipline of habits to feel the merits of the poem. And that discipline is lacking to us. You have to work hard for it if you wish to make poetry meaningful to you. Living sanely is essential for reading poetry with intelligence, but in our conditions our mind is too unbalanced-really insane-by the chaotic impulses that sway us hourly, to be related intelligently to a powerful poem.

SCE - 1

What sort of love does the poet discuss in the poem ?

2.4 Text and Glossary and notes

A VALEDICTION : FORBIDDING MOURNING

As virtuous men pass mildly away,

And whisper to their souls, to go

Whilst some of their sad friends do say

The breath goes now, and some say no,

So let us melt, and make no noise.
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move.
Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love,
Moving of the earth brings harms and fears,
Men reckon what it did and meant,
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far is innocent,
Dull sublunary love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented,
But we by a love, so much refined
That our selves know not what it is,
Inter assured of the mind
Care less, eyes, lips and hands to miss.
Our two souls therefore, which are one.
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to aery thinness beat.
If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two
Thy soul the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do
And though it in the centre sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home,
Such wilt thou be to me, who must
Like the other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I begun.

GLOSSARY

Valediction	:	the act of saying goodbye, especially on very important or formal occasions.
Pass mildly away	:	die peacefully
tear-floods	:	floods of tears
sigh-tempests	:	storms of sighs
'Twere	:	it would be
Profanation	:	treating (something holy) disrespectfully
laity	:	common people
trepidation of the spheres	:	regular movement of the planets
sublunary lovers	:	lovers of lower status; earthly
breach	:	separation
aery thinness beath	:	beaten into a thinness which is almost invisible. The thinness is emphasized by the idea of invisibility
hearkens	:	pays attention to it
grows erect	:	becomes alert
Oliquely run	:	Moves slantingly like the moving leg of a pair of compasses
makes my circle just	:	makes my journey complete like the firm led of a compass makes the circle take a proper round.

JOHN DONNE (1572 - 1631)

John Donne was the greatest of the 'Metaphysical' poets. He was the son of a well-to-do London ironmonger, brought up as a Catholic. He attended both Cambridge and Oxford Universities and studied law. When he came of age, he left the Catholic religion; wrote satirical work and enlisted for foreign service. Upon his return in his mid-twenties, Donne became a private secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal. At that time he became the man about town enjoying worldly life. As he was described then he was a great visitor of ladies, a great frequenter of plays, a great writer of conceited verses. In 1601 he eloped with his master's niece, Anne More, and married her secretly, as a result of which he lost his job.

He wrote his love lyrics over some twenty years of his life and they were widely circulated and admired. But worried by debts, oppressed by poverty and faced with the problems of a large family, he turned to writing polemical prose, religious tracts, hymns and verse letters to his friends and patrons. He was ordained as a priest in 1615, he wrote religious poems such as the Holy Sonnets. He became the Dean of the St. Paul's Cathedral and preached great sermons during the last ten years

of his life. Some of his work was published during his life, but the most important of it, including his poems, appeared in print only after his death.

2.5 Let's sum up

The unit has discussed the views of John Donne regarding love between wife and husband. It has pointed out the occasion for which the poem was written. It has explained the theme of the poem and also given a stanza - wise explanation. It has provided the glossary and necessary information about the poet.

2.6 Sample questions

1. What is the content and appeal of the poem 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning' ?
2. What sort of love does Donne advocate in his poem 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning'?

2.7 Answers to self-check exercises

SCE-1 The poet discusses 'higher love' in which he feels, the two souls of lovers are actually one.

Unit - 3 : John Milton - Lycidas

3.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * see the Miltonic strain in English poetry from the middle of the 18th century.
- * discuss Milton as a puritan and also a staunch republican
- * realize that Milton's 'Paradise Lost' has been praised as the only epic in English Literature.

3.1 Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Contents
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Milton - a puritan and also a staunch Republican
- 3.4 Milton's rank as a poet
- 3.5 Criticism against Milton
- 3.6 Text - 'Lycidas'
- 3.7 Let's sum up
- 3.8 Sample questions
- 3.9 Answers to self-check exercises.

3.2 Introduction

This unit discusses that Milton enjoyed a great reputation as a poet. It says that Milton was a great scholar. It explains how Milton is a Puritan as well as a Republican. It says that he was a district participant in the contemporary history of England. It discusses the criticism levelled against Milton.

3.3 Milton - a Puritan as well as a Republican.

No curriculum in English literature can leave out Milton. He is so popular being very highly ranked. He has not only enjoyed a great reputation but also has been very influential we find the Miltonic strain in English poetry from the middle of the 18th century, beside his reputation for his controversial political and religious commitment in that turbulent age of the 17th century. The student should know that he was a puritan and at the same time a staunch republican. He stands out

among the English poets by his strong will and his committed position in religion and politics. In addition, he was a great scholar not matched by any English poet. It is difficult not to admire him, for he is so different from the professional poet who has none of Milton's heroic commitment. But often he would invite disapproval of his opinions, which he held with contempt for his opponents. He could be charged with want of flexibility in his temper, but one must be careful about merits and demerits in a representation of Milton as a man. For one thing, he was greatly involved in his age exhibiting a character consistent with his role. In his role, it was not possible for him to be like Marvel; Milton lived as a participant in the history of that age. Surrendering the virtues that such a participant couldn't cultivate and acquiring the temper and single-minded will necessary for his role. Surely, he couldn't participate in that history as a gentleman, and his trump card was that he was committed to an order, even if unselfconsciously, to an order that must come of struggle. There was a spirit in him which was historical, it means his distinction, as a man, but his limitations too. This historical spirit of his was the shaping spirit of his poetry. It must be accepted, even if we criticise it. Any criticism of his poetry will have to consider the relation it bears to his poetry. Milton can not escape from the ideas he favours on account of this spirit, and inevitably they sway him, for they serve his purpose, the purpose implied in his role as a puritan and republican. It would be less than fair to criticize his poetry by setting up standards for his ideas. But our standards for his poetry would make us know the character of it, which might be due to the ideas that his spirit favours. We decide, then, the merits of his poetry by our standards set up for it. We judge the man by the distinction of his being a participant in the contemporary history. Dr. Johnson judged Milton's poetry well, but he judged the man wrongly: Dr. Johnson was a great author, but still he was not a participant in the history of his own period, and it was very difficult for him to understand Milton's historical spirit. Voltaire, on the other hand, as a participant in the history of his own times, was more likely to appreciate the Miltonic spirit than Dr. Johnson, but I do not suggest he is greater in value than Dr. Johnson. The point here is that whatever one comes to think of Milton's role, spirit, and his participation in the history of his age, and whatever ideas Milton is supposed to have expressed in his poetry as a puritan and so on, one ought to take care not to discuss him or his ideas in his poetry but concentrate on his poetry. I hold that discussing what is inside poetry is different from discussing what is outside poetry. We mustn't push poetry from its place of primacy for discussion. There are features of his poetry to be discussed in order to set a value on it. It is least profitable to be discussed in order to set a value on it. It is least profitable to discuss such topics as the Renaissance humanism or the spirit of Reformation in his poetry, because even if they are there, what we ask about his poetry is what kind of poetry it is, or what power has it to be of value to us. We mustn't by pass the difficulty of discussing the right thing in poetry. Let us remind our-selves that if we wish to judge a piece of pottery, its measurements would be least useful to us so we must get down to what is worth discussing, and perceive what makes up the poetry of a poem. A fundamental distinction must be made to get at the poetry of any poem: between the ideas consciously worked into the poem and those which believing to be in the poem, we take up for whatever purpose, and the content of the poem which has the power of affecting our mind- the evocative power which cannot be caught in ideas but in the retention of feelings roused and in the change of mind caused by it.

SCE - 1

Why does Milton stand out among the English Poets?

3.4 Milton's rank as a poet

Milton's rank as a poet rests on his 'Paradise Lost' which is the only epic in English literature. Why no one else but he succeeded in writing an epic might appear a fruitful question, but a discussion of it would be fruitless. One might as well ask why no other country has Pyramids like Egypt! That he could write such an epic did bring him the fame he enjoys. It doesn't mean that his other works do not have their merits. Certainly they have his stamp and are worthy of being read with concentration but they alone wouldn't have brought him the present fame. He is a great poet because of his epic. But still his other works are as popular as 'Paradise Lost', even if not read as often. It is less taxing to read them than 'Paradise Lost'. In them-the minor poems, 'Comus', 'Samson Agonistes' and 'Paradise Regained' - there is something engaging and enjoyable, where as 'Paradise Lost' is very heavy-going and it seems the least rewarding of all important works in English for the Indian readers of it. To go through 'Paradise Lost' is like swimming across a flooded river with no other purpose than to reach the other shore. It poses many difficulties for the Indian students, who wouldn't overcome them, even by reading it over and over again. It might possess qualities that make it famous, but it cannot keep our attention long for it is not moving and inspiring to the mind engaged in it. You have to carry on as if you are machine-minded without a source of animation. If you could be accustomed to it, you could sense its merits. Surely, for me, it doesn't have the penetrating subtleties of great poetry and the movement of statement, however heightened it may be as declamation or description, can not draw me in as I find that it does not have a compelling, suggestive power. At one level, it is as unreadable as his prose. Many Indian teachers swear by Milton, but they never have sense in their understanding of his work, except that they reel off a few lines from him and praise him highly on every occasion. They have conventionalised him as a great poet without feeling his greatness anywhere. Nowadays, Milton like any poet or author is put into the scholarly frame of critical jargon, ideas and theories. The usual fare the Indian teachers offer on Milton is wasteful, being palaver only, and the critical fare offered by the younger sort of teachers is still more wasteful, being phoney.

SCE - 2

Why does the writer say that Paradise Lost cannot keep our attention for long though it is a famous epic of Milton ?

3.5 Criticism Against Milton

There has been much adverse criticism of Milton, even though 'Paradise Lost' has been consistently praised. From Blake and others we learn that there is more to it than meets the eye-what is found is the difference between Milton's conscious intention and his unconscious performance. More than ever in the 20th century, there is a hard questioning of Milton's reputation and many attacks are made on his handling of language. Milton stands accused of leaving too wide a gap between his use of English and the spoken idiom, and his poetry of 'Paradise Lost' doesn't read like English you will find a good contrast in another famous work by Milton's contemporary-namely, in Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan in which the spoken idiom is creatively exploited. The question of Milton's peculiar way of using English is a complex question, and it isn't necessary for you at present to worry over it. The charge against Milton is true, but it is also true that his epic is no less successful for his use of English. Successful as it is, the question we ought to ask of it is, how much life has it for us? What we are expected to say of it is the real profit we derive from reading it. Adverse judgment on 'Paradise Lost' doesn't mean the non-recognition of its success as an epic in the circumstances of English literature, but it aims to express that something that belongs to great poetry is not felt in it, and that when one reads it one is impressed, yes, by its grandeur, by its declamation and also by the quality of its being great poetry, but with all that, one is never struck by what it says about life. Poetry is poetic statement about life, and I don't find the connection with life I am looking for in 'Paradise Lost'. It is possible to establish this connection in abstractions but it wouldn't be a connection convincing to me. It must here be remarked that this hard questioning of his reputation coincided, not inexplicably, with the sense in this century of the discovery of many great merits in the Metaphysicals, which Milton's poetry doesn't have. The consequence is that Milton is not discredited but his reputation is lowered in the estimate of critics like Ezra Pound, Eliot and Leavis. There is then a reaction too; a host of academics took up cudgels for Milton, offering ideological or ingenious explanations rather than making a real point against Milton's adverse critics. They seem to aim at plausibility in their defence of Milton and not at producing a true argument; and they concentrate on external and technical matters, deploying pseudo-points, much more than on the poetry of 'Paradise Lost'. Recently I read Christopher Ricks on Milton. His poetry confirms Milton's value to us. It is sense to say that the Metaphysicals and Milton are not mutually exclusive; they do not minimise the value of Milton as Lawrence does to many twentieth century novelists, including Joyce, making them unimportant and unreadable. Milton deserves to be read with concentration but not for the reasons his apologists advance in order to dismiss his adverse critics, who are far more valuable than the former, for praise of Milton is in general academic but an attack in general seems to be sincere showing his real strength.

SCE - 3

Why does the writer feel that the criticism against Milton is as important as the appreciation of his poetry?

3.6 Lycidas - Text and Glossary

LYCIDAS

A LAMENT FOR A FRIEND DROWNED IN HIS PASSAGE FROM CHESTER ON THE IRISH SEAS, 1637.

YET once more, O ye laurels, and once more
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year. 5
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due:
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer:
Who would not sign for Lycidas? He knew 10
Himself to sign, and build the long rhyme.
He must not float upon his wat'ry bier
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,
Without the meed of some melodious tear.

Begin then, Sisters of the sacred well, 15
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string
Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse,
So may some gentle Muse
With lucky words favour my destined urn, 20
And as he passes turn,
And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud.
For we were nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill.

Together both, ere the high lawns appeared 25
 Under the opening eyelids of the morn,
 We drove afield and both together heard
 What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn,
 Batt'ning our flocks with the fresh dews of night,
 Oft'till the star, that rose, at ev'ning, bright, 30
 Toward heav'n's descent had sloped his westering wheel.
 Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,
 Tempered to th' oaten flute;
 Rough Satyrs danced, and Fauns with clov'n heel
 From the glad sound would not be absent long 35
 And old Damoetas loved to hear our song.

But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,
 Now thou art gone and never must return!
 Thee, Shepherd, thee the woods, and desert caves,
 With wild thyme and the gadding vine o'ergrown, 40
 And all their echoes mourn.
 The willows, and the hazel copses green,
 Shall now no more be seen,
 Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.
 As killing as the canker to the rose. 45
 Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,
 Or frost to flowers, that their gay wardrobe wear
 When first the white - thorn blows;
 Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.

Where were ye, Nymphs, when the remorseless deep 50
 Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas ?
 For neither were ye playing on the steep,
 Where your old bards, the famous Druids, lie,
 Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,
 Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream : 55
 Ay me, I fondly dream,

Had ye been there! - for what could that have done?
What could the Muse herself that Orpheus bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son
Whom universal nature did lament,
When by the rout that made the hideous roar,
His gory visage down the stream was sent,
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?

Alas! what boots it with incessant care
To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade, 65
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
Were it not better done as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise 70
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst into a sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears, 75
And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise",
Phoebus replied, and touched my trembling ears:
"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glittering foil
Set off to th' world, nor in broad rumour lies. 80
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heav'n expect thy meed".

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honoured flood, 85
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood.
But now my oat proceeds,

And listens to the herald of the sea

That came in Neptune's plea.

90

He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,

What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain ?

And questioned every gust of rugged wings

That blows from off each beaked promontory;

They knew not of his story,

95

And sage Hippotades their answer brings,

That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed ;

The air was calm, and on the level brine

Sleek Panope with all her sisters played.

It was that fatal and perfidious bark

100

Built in th' eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,

That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next Camus, reverend sire, went footing slow,

His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,

Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge,

105

Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.

"Ah, who hath reft", quoth he, "my dearest pledge ?"

Last came, and last did go,

The Pilot of the Galilean lake;

Two massy keys he bore of metals twain

110

(The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).

He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake :

"How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,

Enow of such as for their bellies' sake

Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold !

115

Of other care they little reck'ning make,

Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,

And shove away the worthy bidden guest.

Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold

A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the least

120

That to the faithful herdman's art belongs !

What reck's it them ? What need they ? They are sped ;

And when they list, their lean and flashy songs

Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;

The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed, 125

But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,

Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread ;

Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw

Daily devours apace, and nothing said;

But that two-handed engine at the door 130

Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more".

Return, Alpheus, the dread voice is past,

That shrunk thy streams ; return, Sicilian Muse,

And call the vales, and bid them hither cast

Their bells, and flow'rets of a thousand hues. 135

Ye valleys low where the mild whispers use,

Of shades and wanted winds, and gushing brooks

On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks,

Throw hither all your quaint enameled eyes,

That on the green turf suck the honied show'rs, 140

And purple all the ground with vernal flow'rs.

Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,

The tufted crowtoe, and pale jessamine,

The white pink, and the pansy freaked with jet,

The glowing violet, 145

The musk-rose, and the well - attired woodbine,

With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,

And every flower that sad embroidery wears :

Bid amaranthus all his beauty shed,

And daffodillies fill their cups with tears, 150

To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies.

For so to interpose a little ease,

Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise;

Ay me! whilst thee the shores, and sounding seas

Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled,

155

Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,

Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide

Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world ;

Or whether thou to our moist vows denied,

Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,

160

Where the great vision of the guarded mount

Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold :

Look homeward, Angel, now and melt with ruth ;

And, O ye dolphins, waft the hapless youth.

Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,

165

For Lycidas, your sorrow, is not dead,

Sunk though he be beneath the wat'ry floor ;

So sinks the day-star in the ocean bed,

And yet anon repairs his drooping head,

And tricks his beams, and with new-spangled or,

170

Flames in the forehead of the morning sky

So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high.

Through the dear might of him that walked the waves

Where, other groves and other streams along,

With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves.

175

And hears the unexpressive nuptial song

In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.

There entertain him all the saints above,

In solemn troops and sweet societies

That sing, and singing in their glory move,

180

And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes

Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more:

Hence forth thou art the genius of the shore,

In thy large recompense, and shalt be good

To all that wander in that perilous flood.

185

Thus sang the uncouth swain to th' oaks and rills,
 While the still morn went out with sandals grey :
 He touched the tender stops of various quills,
 With eager thought warbling his Doric lay :
 And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,
 And now was dropt into the Western bay ;
 At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue :
 Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures anew.

190

GLOSSARY

Forced	:	constrained by grief
rude	:	rough
dear	:	touching near closely
melodious tear	:	musical lament
Muse	:	Poet inspired by a muse, (an ancient Greek goddess, one of nine who each represented an art or science)
warndrobe	:	dress
steep	:	mountain
Mona	:	Anglesey, island of North-West Wales
Deva	:	the river Dee
meditate	:	practise (Latin sense)
clear	:	free from sin
mortal soil	:	earth
aloft	:	in heaven
Oat	:	shepherd's pipe
in N'splea	:	on N's behalf
of rugged wings	:	rough-winged
sanguine	:	blood stained
pledge	:	child (Latin use)
recks it them	:	do they care
list	:	wish

serannel	:	thin, meagre
swart	:	burning (making swarthy)
quaint enamelled eyes	:	dainty bright coloured flowers
rathe	:	early
Sad embroidery	:	sober colours
daffodillies	:	daffodils
laureate hearse	:	poet's bier
monstrous world	:	ocean full of monsters
moist vows	:	tearful prayers
tricks	:	adorus
ore	:	golden rays
nectar	:	water of the gods
Oozy	:	covered with soft mud
unexpressive	:	inexpressible
genius	:	guardian spirit
uncouth	:	unknown
quills	:	shepherd's reed pipes
Doric	:	pastoral

3.7 Let's sum up

This unit has discussed Milton as a Puritan, a republican and a great scholar. It has pointed out that Milton was a spirited participant in the history of his age and hence we have to regard his poetry keeping in view the spirit of his age. This unit has discussed that 'Paradise Lost' as an epic brought him fame. This unit has brought out the criticism levelled against Milton by various scholars and said that it is this criticism which helps to show the real value of Milton.

3.8 Sample Questions

1. Why is Milton called a Puritan ?
2. What was Milton's role and participation in the history of his age ?
3. What do you know about 'Paradise Lost' ?
4. What is 'Lycidas' about ?

3.9 Answers to self - check exercises

1. Milton stands out among the English poets by his strong will and his committed position in religion and politics.
2. The writer says that 'Paradise Lost' can not keep our attention for long because he feels that it not moving and inspiring to the mind and it does not have the compelling suggestive power.
3. The writer declares that the criticism against Milton helps to confirm the value of Milton's poetry to us. The attack against Milton seems to be sincere showing his real strength. So the writer gives equal importance to appreciation of individual work as well as criticism

Unit - 4 : Lycidas - Critical Analysis

4.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * read the poem and interpret it.
- * see the way Dr.Johnson criticizes Milton intelligently and rewardingly.
- * divide the poem into a number of movements
- * realize that repetitions have a rhetorical effect
- * see that Milton's poetry is relevant to us as poetry and for the spirit in which it was written.

4.1 Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Contents
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 'Lycidas' demonstrates Milton's skill and spirit
- 4.4 Different movements of the poem
- 4.5 Milton's attack on the Anglican Church
- 4.6 Let's sum up
- 4.7 Sample questions
- 4.8 Answers to self-check exercises.

4.2 Introduction

This unit discusses Lycidas as one of the earlier poems of Milton. It says that the poem is a tribute to Edward King who was a friend of Milton at Cambridge. It discusses the intelligent criticism of Milton by Dr.Johnson. It divides the poem into several movements showing the importance of each movement.

4.3 'Lycidas' demonstrates Milton's skill and spirit

You have to read 'Lycidas', which is one of Milton's earlier poems demonstrating his skill and spirit and anticipating his future creative work. He wrote it as a young man, paying a tribute to a friend called Edward King, who studied with Milton at the same college in Cambridge, and who was

drowned in his sea journey to Ireland. This friend appears to have been a talented, promising young poet. But the poem is written in the convention of what is known as pastoral elegy. This convention has come down from the Greeks through the Romans to the Renaissance English poets. 'Pastoral' refers to the life of Shepherds and elegy is a lamentation over the dead : the poet who feels sorrow for the other dead poet expresses his feeling like one shepherd bemoaning the loss of another shepherd. The convention doesn't have scope for allegory, and it sounds out of the way, for the assumption of a shepherd's character for such a serious purpose might formalise one's feelings, depriving them of their intensity. Lycidas is the conventional shepherd's name here used for Edward King. In fact we will notice that Milton's feelings of sentiment for his friend remain formal in this convention. Surely, there is not much of sentimentality, and it is a credit to the poet but Milton expresses sentiments which have no strength of feeling, for us. The poem has drawn admiration from many modern critics, but I think all this admiration is insincere. No doubt, the poem has merits, of which we will speak later. But I think it has to be understood by attack.

Dr. Johnson is the most intelligent of Milton's critics and the most rewarding of all, even if he is very harsh and dogmatic. I will quote from him on 'Lycidas', and offer a proposition for a discussion of the poem. You will love Dr. Johnson if you come to like his manner, for the great thing in him is that he speaks with life and speaks about the life of the work, because his learning doesn't affect his ability to feel adversely but he is enriched by it, on the other hand.

"One of the poems on which much praise is bestowed is 'Lycidas', of which the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers displeasing. What beauty there is, we must therefore seek in the sentiments and images. It is not to be considered as the effusion of real passion; for passion runs not after remote illusions and obscure opinions. Passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethuse and Minceus, nor tells of rough satyrs and fauns with cloven-heel. Where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief."

Such a criticism is welcome for something is said on them. Even if it is wrong, it cannot be false. Of course Dr. Johnson discusses the poem with the impatience he left at its main shortcomings. It must note that if there is merit, he is the first to recognise it. Consider the level of his criticism, it has validity; it is non-academic, and Dr. Johnson makes his remarks in a true relation to the poem, but they could upset the academician as much as anyone who believes in Milton's general reputation with a sentiment for Milton, having only some ideas of his work but not an engaging relation to it. Taking my cue from Dr. Johnson, I have made this proposition to discuss the poem in terms of poetry. 'Lycidas' is a poem in form having the attributes of the convention of pastoral elegy, but failing to impress on us that in its substance it is poetry. It appears that it has only verse lines with sentiments. Quite a few qualifications have to be made, but the proposition is challenging and worth discussing. Our discussion must show whether there is poetry or not in the poem. We need not allow ourselves to be daunted by the number of critics who have praised it, but, on the contrary, we don't refuse to see any merit in it. One merit it has is that it is not so bad to be rejected like for instance, all the other contributions to the volume of elegies dedicated to Edward King have been rejected. It is marked by Milton's skill in organisation, by a few felicities of expressions, and by his varied knowledge. 'Lycidas' was by no means a discredit to Milton when he wrote it; clearly it demonstrated the power and maturity of his mind in handling a theme. For all that it isn't poetry, and the profit we derive from reading it isn't the profit we desire from reading poetry. It is forceless except in one or two movements,

which are actually unrelated to the theme - very few lines have the tension of meaning and suggestiveness, however impressive they appear to be.

SCE - 1

What does 'Lycidas' clearly demonstrate ?

4.4 Different movements of the poem - 'Lycidas'.

Take the opening lines in the first movement of the poem. There are two sentiments, one, that he comes to the Muse of poetry, not being well prepared for it and that the occasion forces him to write these lines, being as he is, for whom anybody would sing, must not go unwept in verse. Both sentiments are formal without any striking effect of feelings, and the language is like the orator's padding. These lines haven't the rhythmic movement of poetic idiom and poetic originality, but they move on like rhetorical flourishes. Let me quote them.

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more
Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
And with forced fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
Compels me to disturb your season due ;
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas ? He knew
Himself to sing, and built the lofty rhyme.
He must not float upon his watery bier.
Unwept, and welter to the parching wind.
Without the meed of some melodious tear.

The repetitions have only the rhetorical effect and the language does not have the effect of poetic force in its phrasing. As you read it, you don't get warmed up by any feeling touching you, perhaps words are placed here to express a sentiment and not to be suggestive. Take any statement here, it lacks points as well as power. Let me repeat, Milton is here incapable of poetic originality.

"He knew himself the lofty rhyme" is a foretaste of his later habit to put English into Latin syntax. The last line is positively bad; you cannot read "without the meed of some melodious tear" without feeling the awkward effect of the alliteration and of the sense, which has no animating power. I feel it is a sickly expression. He writes as if to suit the convention and as if he could not exploit the convention for original expression. But there is no mistaking the fact that the lines carry with them musical effects, proving Milton's skill with language. Perhaps one's attention is drawn to this musical effect of the poem while reading it, and one may not be alert enough to apply the standards of poetry to it.

The second movement is similar in its effect with the invocation of the "sisters of the sacred well" (they are the muses) and with the hope that some poet would sing of him bidding peace to him after death. The reflection on his death is certainly inappropriate. The third movement of the poem attempts in vain to create an ideal pastoral climate in which he and his friend worked together with the suggestion of mutual pleasure. Dr. Johnson's objection to it that it has no sense of truth, is unanswerable. Note how the fourth movement opens.

But O the heavy change, now thou are gone.
Now thou art gone, and never must return ;

The heavy change is not followed by any sharp feeling to take on any meaning with us. It appears to be a heavy change for him but there is not pressure of it inside him. What is said afterwards - common place gesture in grammatical exclamation and inversion - doesn't reinforce the 'heavy change'. What follows then is the ornamental statement that Lycidas is mourned by the woods, trees and plants and that his loss, described not very effectively in similes, is unbearable. Again we have an instance of the language of sentiment which, though not wild, doesn't have a suggestive appeal. I believe that the poet is play-acting. The fifth movement has no change for the better. It addresses the nymphs (the muses) asking them where they were at the moment when Lycidas was drowned. Suppose they had been on the scene where he was lost, any way, what could they have done? The movement ends with the classical allusion to the inability of Calliope, the muse of epic poetry, to save her famed son, Orpheus, who was thrown into the river, Hebrus. These fourteen lines in this movement of the poem are a good example of padding, since they do not add to the strength of the poem by an advance in the feelings related to the theme.

The sixth movement has some lines of poetry. The poet's true feeling breaks out here, and the expression of it has the power of drawing the reader in. What use is it to work hard, and to suffer in order to write serious poetry? May it not be better to give up such an endeavour for the lighter and enjoyable labour of writing? So asks the poet in a mood of despair about the results of hard work and achievement. After asking those questions, the poet records a feeling, the ground of which could be true, and it is a feeling which overcomes us if we contemplate the uncertainty of life, and the reward that hangs over a serious enterprise we undertake. There is the point of his feeling that is very striking - the line in which it is expressed became famous; it has the effect of surprise and of being a truth - it is a feeling invoked about fame which as motivation does sustain us in our enterprise, even though we feel depressed that it (the enterprise) has no chance of success. The emphasis on the desire for fame is in place here. We better examine, look at the lines and see how they are poetry in contrast with formal verse lines which we have been considering so far.

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
 (That last infirmity of noble mind)
 To scorn delights, and live laborious days ;
 But the fair guerdon when we hope to find.
 And think to burst out into sudden blaze
 Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears,
 And slits the thin spun life.

The desire for fame is described as an energising motivation and at the same time is it condemned as that last infirmity of noble mind, yes, but it is condemned and also justified as that last infirmity which can be allowed for in the case of the noble mind. There is subtlety and force in the feeling structure evoked around the desire for fame. It is followed by melancholic reflection that after so much sacrifice when one is about to get his reward, one meets the fate of death prematurely. The language has pressure even if it is only the pressure of self regarding anxiety. As I said above, the feeling-structure has an appeal which is unmistakable, and you sense that you are made to feel the right way-and you remember it for the impact it has on you. But in the second half of this movement there is a fall-off-the reply of Phoebus is moralistic and ineffectual for Milton here paganises Christian Judgment. It smacks of puritanical exclusiveness (Calvinistic idea of the Elect). The answer is here least dramatic, and without any animation; only when it is dramatic, can it be effective in this context.

The next movement is one of the worst parts of his last poem, very insipid and pathetic; the poem makes a self-reflection that he is singing in a higher pitch with the hint that such a rather lofty mood is out of place. Now he turns to his theme and enquiries are made as to the cause of Lycidas being drowned. Both the sea Gods and the wind God make prompt reply that neither the sea nor the wind is responsible for his death. The final conclusion is that the ship itself being 'Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark', brought about the fatal end of his life. I don't know what purpose the sea Gods and the wind Gods being cleared of the charge of causing his death and the conjuring up of the superstition about the ship will serve.

The following eight movement has the famous attack on the Anglican Church. It is irrelevant yet it is poetry, making 'Lycidas' a well known poem. This attack displays Milton's spirit, to which I referred earlier, and it shows itself creatively for the first time. It is the spirit with which we joined forces against the King and the Anglican Church and with which he contemplated his creative work. It is unmistakable. It is this spirit which cannot be imagined in the Metaphysicals. Here we must be clear, Milton with such a spirit writes poetry, and his poetry is relevant to us as poetry, but we must beware of touching on the spirit and discussing it. What is crucial is the recognition of the spirit without being false to it. The attack is poetry, and that alone matters for us. Airing opinions on Milton without regard to his poetry is reprehensible.

SCE - 2

What was the superstition conjured up by Milton against the ship that carried Edward King ?

4.5 Milton's attack on the Anglian Church

First, Cambridge, personified as Camus, laments over the death of Lycidas : there is no irrelevance here, for he was a student of Cambridge. After Cambridge St. Peter is introduced as mourning for Lycidas; but what he actually does is to attack the Anglican Church. We enjoy the attack usually as an attack, but we must take it in a poem with its significance. A reader who doesn't like Milton's spirit may not like it. We will now examine if it is poetry or not. Here are the lines which Peter speaks in his mourning for Lycidas.

How well could I spare for thee, young swain,
Enow of such as for their bellies sake,
Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold :
Of other care they little reckoning make,
Than how to scramble at the shearer's feat,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
Blind mouths; that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook or have learned ought else the least
That to the faithful herdmen's art belongs !
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped :
And when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw :
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,
But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread ;
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Daily devours apace, and nothing said,
But that two-handed engine at the door,
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more.

First of all, this movement cannot be paraphrased as most other movements, and it has a rhythm of poetic originality for as you read the lines you are gripped by the power of the sense. The power of the sense is there in the number of powerful feelings vividly, sharply, and memorably evoked against the worldliness of the Anglican priests. It isn't a report on them so that we can test if Milton's remarks are true or not. Poetry here is the ground of the truth of the feelings evoked - it is this we must capture. If such an attack is made in slogans or in accusations, it doesn't concern us. Let me assert this, there is in that attack life - the feelings which are roused enrich life. Take this line,

"Creep and intrude and climb into the fold!"

There is nothing of sentiment here, The three verbs suggest the sharp practices of any worldly person to come up in the world-the sharp practices which entail so much ruin to others. Strip the lines of surface meaning of the pastoral convention, the swell of feelings against the worldliness of the Anglican priests - the poetry here changes the priests into the generality of worldly men ____ is a memorable experience. I mean here is something to carry with us and test the character of human beings. This satire on the Anglican clergy is related as a test to the character of human beings and it increases our preceptive ability. Look at the marvellous effect of this line, when he exposes the brutish indifference of the priests as a class.

"What recks it them? What need they?"

They are sped,"

It is old and pointed, and by that we feel the power of life-contact. One danger must be averted here, namely that of feeling emotions in those lines and of falling into the posture of commenting on them. If we do not avert this danger, we miss the five points of poetry here. The truth of life often can be communicated only in the finer points of poetry. To miss poetry is to deny oneself the possibilities of life. I use the word truth not in the sense that these lines express a philosophical truth or some ultimate truth, no, not in this sense at all, but in the sense that what is said in that poetic statement is so penetrating with a value to us-that you are made to recognise, feel, and remember those things that clear the mind and influence living by the distinction they make. Such a truth is condition, which has the power of enabling us to see the condition, such as it is. Let it be remembered that you don't see anything pointed out in the poetic statement as an observer but as a man heightened by the way you are led to it. Our mind is alerted, as I put it earlier, by the swell of feelings such that the poetic statement reconstructs the mind. The level of our mind is changed by what happens to us. Poetic statement, therefore, preserves life; it is most essential for living: to live without poetry as we do in this age is to live self-ruinously. I am sure that 'Lycidas' is a poem worth reading for the poetry of the two movements I have pointed out for your attention, and for the further benefit of seeing it as a phase of development in Milton's career as a poet. It is mastering the poem that is very crucial. Don't just read the poem for getting ideas into your head about it. You work on the poem as if it is a hard task to get through for some unexpected reward, reading poetry must be a matter of growing, and one must be patient to be able to acquire a habit of reading it in order really to benefit by it.

After this movement which is a degression, Milton returns to the pastoral theme, but the poetry is gone. Keeping to the style in which he began he now calls upon nature-the rivers, plants, and flowers to pay homage to Lycidas who is dead. For a diversion, he suggests many places where he now might be; this part is a poetical peroration in sentiment inspiring rhetoric. The poet, then, introduces the Christian sentiment for consolation and it has no force, not being integral to the elegy.

"So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,

Through the dear might of him that walked the waves".

What I find is that you don't feel much for the poet who is dead and whose mourning is the

theme of the poem. On the other hand, you feel that Milton is talking about himself, and the death of his friend seems to be a pretext for self-regarding outbursts.

I offered Dr. Johnson's criticism of this poem as genuine starting point. I think you will find it very helpful if you read his life of Milton. Now I shall quote from a modern critic on Milton. "But the author of *Lycidas*, attended into his project by so much of the baggage of tradition, cannot, by a universal way of thinking, have felt, exactly, free. I shall risk saying that he was not free. Little chance is there for him to express the interests, the causes which he personally and powerfully was developing; the poem too occasional and too formal for that. Of course the occasion was a fundamental one, it was no less than Death; and there is nobody so aggressive and self-assured but he must come to terms with that occasion. But a philosophy of death seems mostly to nullify, with its irony the philosophy of life."

I should have thought that John Crowe Ransom would have written life also with capital 'L'. Perhaps he couldn't remember it. I quoted the above remarks of his from his appreciation of 'Lycidas' (A poem nearly Anonymous), which he holds to be a work of great art for the most part. Compared with Johnson's criticism, Ransom's is false and maddening. In the whole of his essay, you cannot get a single sensible statement and this modern critic is tiresome and jejune.

SCE - 3

What does the writer say about on Milton's outbursts of grief for his friend ?

4.6 Let's sum up

This unit has discussed Milton's skills and spirit demonstrated in his earlier poems like 'Lycidas'. This unit has discussed the manner in which the pastoral convention has come to English poetry. It says that many critics have admired 'Lycidas' and many criticised Milton. It has discussed the several movements of the poem important and unimportant as well. The writer has felt that 'Lycidas' is a poem which has the attributes of the pastoral elegy but which has failed to impress on the reader that in its substance it is poetry.

4.7 Sample questions

1. What is the difference between an elegy and a pastoral elegy ?
2. What does Dr. Johnson say about 'Lycidas' ?

3. What are the two sentiments expressed by Milton in 'Lycidas' ?
4. What does John Crowe Ransom say about Milton ?

4.8 Answers to self-check exercises

1. 'Lycidas' clearly demonstrates the power and maturity of Milton's mind in handling the theme - an elegy.
2. The superstition conjured up against the ship was that it was built in the eclipse and it was rigged with dark omens.
3. The writer feels that Milton is talking about himself in the poem and the death of his friend seems to be a pretext for self-regarding outbursts.

BRAOU

Unit - 5 : Alexander Pope - The Rape of the Lock

5.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * discuss the life and the social background of Alexander Pope.
- * explain the literary tradition of the poem 'The Rape of the Lock'.
- * describe Pope's poetic method
- * analyse the poem 'The Rape of the Lock'.

5.1 Contents

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Contents
- 5.2 Introduction
- 5.3 Alexander Pope
- 5.4 The Literary Tradition of the poem - 'The Rape of the Lock'.
- 5.5 Pope's poetic method
- 5.6 Some criticism on 'The Rape of the Lock'
- 5.7 'The Rape of the Lock' - Canto.1 - Text
- 5.8 Glossary and Notes
- 5.9 Let's sum up
- 5.10 Sample questions
- 5.11 Answers to self-check exercises.

5.2 Introduction

This unit discusses the life and the social background of Alexander Pope. It points out the literary tradition of the poem 'The Rape of the Lock'. It explains Pope's poetic method. It provides the text - 'The Rape of the Lock' and the necessary glossary and notes.

5.3 Alexander Pope

Alexander Pope was born in London on 21st May 1688. His father was a Roman Catholic linen draper ; his mother was of a good middle class family. He was the only child of his parents. He inherited a tendency to nervous headaches from his mother and a weak body from his father. Owing to his health or his religion, which was Roman Catholic, he did not attend any school or college, but was privately educated.

Very early he devoted himself to literature. While still young he wrote plays and poems and was considered by the elderly poets of his age as a young genius. As he himself declared in one of his later poems

Why did I write? what sin unknown

Dipped me in ink, my parents or my own?

As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,

I lisp'd in numbers, for numbers came

I left no calling for this idle trade.

No duty broke, no father disobey'd :

The Muse but served to ease some friend, not wife,

To help me through this long disease call'd life

As a poet Pope was long immoderately praised, and then the tide turned and he was duly depreciated. He has been attacked as a corrupter of taste and the founder of a school of machine-made poetry. The truth is that he was the chief ornament of a school of poetry rather than its head or founder. Pope simply brought to perfection the poetical methods of Waller, Dryden and others of the Restoration Age.

The Social Background

Alexander Pope and his parents belonged to the minority community of Roman Catholics. They had few cherished family friends. Among them were the family of the Petres and the Fermors. The noble family of the Petres and the rich middle class family of the Fermors were also mutual friends.

But sometime during the summer of 1711, the circle of prominent Catholic families in the nearby countries of London were disturbed by the rash act of Robert, 7th lord Petre in removing part of Miss Arabella Fermor's hair-do. Miss Arabella Fermor was a famous beauty of the time. As Pope himself told his first biographer Joseph Spence.

The stealing of Miss Belle's hair was taken too seriously, and caused an estrangement between

the two families, though they had lived long in great friendship before. A common acquaintance and well-wisher to both families desired me to write of a poem to make a jest of it, and laugh them together again. It was in this view that I wrote my 'Rape of the Lock' which was well received and had its effect on the two families.

The well-wisher referred to above in Pope's account was his intimate friend John Caryl to whom the poem's invocation alludes. (See line 3). The circulation of the poem in its manuscript form among the families apparently succeeded in healing the rift between them.

The poem was first published anonymously in two cantos in 1712. Later in 1714 an enlarged and revised version of the poem was published but it also contained a new material and new poetic design which Pope calls the machinery.

The social milieu as reflected in the poem.

Though 'The Rape of the Lock' has its origins in a contemporary event, its significance reaches beyond the topical and the ephemeral. The poem derives its strength from the socio-cultural attitudes and values of the time.

Very early in the poem we notice that an atmosphere of opulence and luxury pervades the scene. It is a world of the aristocratic leisured class. The description of the bedroom and the morning activities described in lines 14-19 is intended to emphasize the ease and idleness of the class of people to whom Belinda belongs. The elaboration with which she dresses herself (lines 121-148) is an indication of the limits of her world.

What are the concerns and pre-occupations of such a class? Pursuit of pleasure and social recognition. It is a world of gilded chariots (line 55), and of pastimes like games of cards ('ombre' of line 56) of courtly balls and midnight masquerades (line 72). It is world where

"Wigs with wigs, with sword knots sword-knots strive

Beaux banish beaux and coaches coaches drive". (lines 101-102).

SCE - 1

What sort of world does the poet describe in the poem 'The Rape of the Lock'?

5.4 The literary tradition of the poem 'The Rape of the Lock'

Pope himself describes the poem at the beginning of his Dedication to Mrs. Arabella Fermor as an heroi-comical poem. The description applies more aptly to the poet's handling of the subject rather than to the subject itself. It is in his treatment of the European and English tradition of the mock heroic.

There is a tradition of epic poetry in the European Literary culture beginning with Homer's *Illad*, *Odessey* and Virgil's *Aenid* and culminating in the English tradition in John Milton's 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained'. The epic poet's theme is lofty, heroic dealing with the primal fears and joys of great heroes. Gods and demi-gods people the epic world. Incidents and events of higher magnitude involving royal personages provide the substance of the epic plot.

As for style, the language is elevated and purified of its common, day-to-day associations. A sustained tone of high rhetoric pervades the epic rhythm. An example from Milton will show this. Here is Milton's description of Satan's shield and spear. Note the sustained and lofty tone of the language and, note particularly, the long-drawn epic simile.

"He scarce had ceased when the superior fiend
Was moving toward the shore; his ponderous shield
Ethereal temper, massy, large and round;
Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung 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 descry new lands.
Rivers or mountains in her spotty globe.
His spear, to equal which the tallest pine
Hewn of Norwegian hills, to be the mast
of some great ammiral, were but a wand..."

'Paradise Lost' Book I

Satan, by virtue of his being the arch enemy of God, has to be presented in superhuman terms. Therefore everything with and around him has to be of superhuman dimensions. His shield, for example, is like the vast surface of the moon as it was seen by Galileo (the Tuscan artist) through his telescope (optic glass). His spear is also of superhuman size. Compared to it the tallest of the tall pine trees would appear like a mere walking stick (a wand).

The vocabulary, the grammar, in short the style, in keeping with epic dignity, is lofty. There is not a single touch of the colloquial. To appreciate the sonorous music of this style we need to read it slowly, deliberately and with solemnity.

Compare this style, for example, with the following, from 'The Rape of the Lock'. You should be able to note the point of similarity in the slow and deliberate rhythm and the simile.

"A constant vapour over the palace flies;
Strange phantoms rising as the mists arise;
Dreadful, as hermit's dreams in haunted shades,
Or bright, as visions of expiring maids.
Now glaring fiends, and snakes on rolling spires,
Pale specters, gaping tombs, and purple fires :
Now lakes of liquid gold, Elysian scenes,
And crystal domes, and angels in machines....."

The Rape of the Lock, Lines 39-46, Canto IV

This is part of a description of the 'Cave of Spleen' to which Umbriel a dusky, melancholy sprite goes to collect female furies for the benefit of Belinda when she has been assaulted. Note how the serious rhetorical tone is sustained by the long, musical phrases e.g. 'hermit's dream in haunted shades'; note again the unearthly fantastic visions and their description. This passage is worthy to be part of a serious epic poem.

The way the Seventeenth Century poets and critics looked at the epic decided the way they looked at the mock-epic. The epic was seen first as a didactic (moralistic) poem; its chief end being the formation of manners. Technically it must consist of a single fable or action, which has its beginning, middle and end and which covers a long time. The epic must arouse the emotions of wonder, particularly through its machinery. The machinery may be theological as in Milton to justify the ways of God to Man, or physical representing the external nature as in Virgil, or moral-representing virtues and vices as in Homer. The epic also should have the other minor elements: armies, fights, journeys by land or sea, a visit to the underworld, an army of heroes, heroines, the narration with its 'proposition' and 'invocation', its commentary on the action, its passages of historical or scientific disquisition, etc. Then again, the action of the epic should belong to the poet's own time.

Isn't this very much like what we find in the Indian Puranas? The puranic poet, it was expected, should build his poem around the life and time of great, divine beings and avatars like Rama and Krishna. Stylistically, the purana was expected to contain 'ashtadasha varnanas' (eighteen types of descriptions) and certain 'Kavi samayas' (poetic conventions).

To come back to the epic, the mock epic was expected to include as many of these epic

ingredients as possible. The mock-epic included these epic elements in one of the two ways either by taking them as they stood or by inverting them for comic purposes.

English literature in the eighteenth century has had its tradition of the mock epic - both in prose and verse. John Dryden's (1631-1700) 'Absolom and Achitophel' and Jonathan Switt's 'Battle of the Books' are two of the most notable among the many mock epic of the earlier times. The tradition in England also has its continental European support. Boileau who had perfected the mock epic in his poem 'Le Lutrin' (1688) was the best among them. In his poem Boileau included many of the epic ingredients. But the poem, for all its comedy, is seriously moral. This moral element in Boileau is transformed from the epic unchanged. Boileau's machinery might almost be of the later Latin poets like Virgil and Tasso. He employs allegorical figures instead of gods, treating them seriously since they are the machinery of his moral as well as of the fable. The epic elements, the elevated plot or the story, its unity of treatment, its beginning, middle and end go unchanged into the mock epic. The mockery lies not so much in its strict adherence to the epic conventions as the diminution of the size and time, in the meanness and drabness of the facts on which the plot is based and that of the characters; in the incongruity, the mismatch of the epic manner and its narration.

Samuel Garth (1661-1719) is the most important poet connecting the mock epic of Boileau and Pope. Garth in his poem 'The Dispensary' (1699) may have failed to improve on Boileau, but he helped Pope to improve on him. The Dispensary derived its theme from the dispute which arose between the doctors and the apothecaries (chemists and druggists). When the latter were ordered to dispense drugs freely to the poor. Pope is certainly indebted to Garth for his descriptions, the satiric method in the poem for the occasionally comic and the moral.

SCE - 2

What are the technical elements of an epic ?

5.5 Pope's poetic method

When Pope came to write the poem, he had very little left to invent. The abstract form of the Rape was already there to a great extent in Boileau's 'Le Lutrin'; he had also been given his theme and the theme required that it should be set in the fashionable society. The society also has been described by the writers like Joseph Addison in his Coverly papers, by Richard Steele, Waller and other poets and prose writers. In creating the unified form of the mock epic Pope has mainly to attend to the ending, that is, the metamorphosis (transformation) of Belinda's lock into a star.

Pope had been given his theme complete with its setting, and he seized it as a chance to sharpen

the mock heroic and give finishing touches to the form. He faithfully followed the mock epic conventions in including references in the poem to a voyage (lines 1.15, Canto II), a battle (lines 37-100 - Canto II), threats of torture (lines 123-136, Canto II), and so on. Pope turns these into real poetic metaphors to embody the society of the time. What Pope mainly does is to continue the mock epic process of diminution. He makes most things smaller in size and more femininely exquisite in quality. He makes his hero a woman, and not simply any woman but Belinda herself. In the old epics the heroes were god-like persons like Hector and Achilles in "The Iliad"; in earlier mock epic the heroes were common men. Pope completes the mockery in the mock-heroics by changing the perspective-from the hero to the enemy; from Hector and Achilles to Belinda, the fashionable belle. Here are a few more mock-heroic transformations that Pope brought about in the poem;

The epics	The rape of the lock
i. The rape of Helen in the Iliad	The 'rape' of a lock
ii. banquets	coffee drinking
iii. heroic weapons	petty coats
iv. gods and goddesses	sylphs and gnomes
v. epic battles	past-times like a game of cards
vi. battle fields	card table

Pope's method of diminution combine with his method of magnification also. We have already seen how the description of Belinda's ornaments and jewels evokes associations of vast spaces as in lines 133-136 in Canto I ; here are some more examples of magnification;

"Whatever spirit careless of his charge

his post neglects.....

.... as Ixion fixed, the wretch shall feel

The giddy motion of the whirling mill,

In fumes of burning chocolate shall glow

And tremble at the sea that froths below". (Lines 133-136, Canto II)

"For lo! the board with cups and spoons is crowned,

The berries crackle, and the mill turns round :

On shining altars of Japan they rise

The silver lamp : and the fiery spirits blaze :

From silver spouts the grateful liquors glide,

While China's earth receives the smoking tide". (Lines 105-110, Canto III)

You will notice how the coffee spoon and the saucer become the classical instruments of torture and the flood, respectively. Diminution and magnification are the two technical strategies that Pope uses throughout in the poem. The comic effect is maintained and sharpened by his skilful use of the heroic couplet.

The heroic couplet is a verse of two rhyming lines, each of ten syllables with five iambic feet i.e., each foot is made up of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. For example, study the following analysis :

In these lines 'spring' rhymes with 'things'. Each line has five iambs though the verse structure seems to be rigid and seems to restrict the freedom of the poet to manipulate the language Pope does marvellous things with it. He exploits the very restrictiveness of the verse structure to make his meanings sharper, more contrasted and precise. As a result, the poem abounds in statement balanced for meaning and rhythm. Here are a few examples of how Pope achieves some startling effects of anti-climax in couplet :

"Slight is the subject, but not so the praise". (Line 5, Canto I)

"The glance by day, the whisper in the dark..." (Line 74, Canto I)

"Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,

And like the sun, they shine on all alike. (Line 13&14, Canto II)

"Whether the nymph shall break Diana's law,

Or some frail china jar receive a flaw ... (Lines 105&106, Canto II)

Or stain her honour, or her new brocade

.....

Or lose her heart, or necklace, at a ball (Line 107&109, Canto II)

"Here thou great Anna ! Whom three realms obey,

Did sometime counsel take-and sometimes tea". (Line 7&8, Canto III)

In the above examples, notice how one half of the line contrasts with the other half. Anti-climax as it is used here, is a result of the contrast between two statements with two different and opposed sets of signification, the one half signifying the big, the magnanimous, and the other half suggesting the trivial and the ordinary. The basis of such contrast is some slight similarity between the two things contrasted. For example, Belinda and the sun both have one thing in common : the bright light of the eyes of Belinda and the rays of the sun. And here is the punch-both shine alike on all. Whereas the sun's impartiality is a natural phenomenon, Belinda's shining is a result of conscious coquettishness.

What the two technical strategies that Pope uses throughout in the poem 'The Rape of the Lock'

5.6 Some critics on 'The Rape of the Lock'.

Here are a few excerpts from the critical comments on the poem by some important critics. Study them carefully and try to substantiate them by quoting and analysing the relevant parts of the poem.

I. In this work are exhibited, in a very high degree, the two most engaging powers of an author. "New things are made familiar, and familiar things are made new". Dr. Samuel Johnson.

II. "The description of the toilette.... is judiciously given in such magnificent terms, as dignity the offices performed by it. Belinda's dressing is painted in as pompous a manner, as Achilles arming". Joseph Warton.

III. "The balance between the concealed irony and the assumed gravity is nicely timed.... The little is made great, and the great little. You hardly know whether to laugh or weep. It is the triumph of the insignificance, the apotheosis (the perfect example) of foppery and folly. It is the perfection of the mock epic". William Hazlitt.

IV. "Shakespeare gives us drama and Milton epic, and Pope builds from both in 'The Rape of the Lock'". G. Wilson Knight

V. "Pope takes over from the serious epic another element which he does not mock at : the element of serious technical care. He spent on his eight hundred lines as much devotion as, say, Milton spent on one or more of the books of Paradise Lost... with the economy (of words) for which he is the supreme poet, he makes the same vehicle (of language) carry both human and epic mockery" Geoffrey Tillotson.

VI. One is tempted to insist upon these ambiguities and complexities of attitude (of the poet).... This fact should be plain : regardless of what we make of the 'purer blush' (line 134, Canto I), it is true that Belinda's dressing table does glow with a special radiance and charm, and the Pope, though amused at the vanity which it represents, is at the same time thoroughly alive to a beauty which it actually possesses.

There is a further reason for feeling that we shall not err in taking the niceties of Pope's description quite seriously. One notices that even the metaphors by which Pope characterises Belinda are not casual bits of decoration, used for a moment, and then forgotten. For instance at her dressing table Belinda is not only a priestess of the sacred rights of pride (line 128, Canto I) but she is the warrior once more at the card-table in her conquest of the two adventurous Knights, and again at the end of the poem, she emerges as the heroic conqueror in the epic encounter of the beaux and belles.

To take another example, Belinda, early in the poem, is compared to the sun. Pope suggests that the sun recognises in Belinda a rival and fears her.

" So I through white curtains shot a timorous ray,
And opened those eyes that must eclipse the day". (Line 13 & 14)

But the sun's fear of Belinda has not been introduced merely in order to give the poet an opportunity to mock at the polite cliché. The sun comparison appears again at the beginning of Canto II;

" Not with more glories in the etherial plain,

The sun first rises over the purpled main,

Then issuing forth, the rival of his beams.

Launched on the bosom of the silver Thames". (Line 14, Canto II)

Belinda is like the sun, not only because of her bright eyes, and not only because she dominates her special world (But every eye was fixed on her alone (line 6, Canto II). She is like the sun in another regard :

" Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,

And, like the sun, they shine on all alike".

Is this general munificence (largeness of heart) on the part of Belinda a fault or virtue ? is she shallow and flirtatious, giving her favours freely to all ; or, does she distribute her largesses impartially like a great prince. Or, is she simply the well-bred belle who knows that she cannot play favourites if she wishes to be popular ? The sun comparison is able to carry all these meanings, and therefore goes past any momentary jest". Cleanth Brooks.

SCE - 4

What does Dr. Johnson remark about the author of the poem ?

5.7 The Rape of the Lock - Canto I - Text

What dire offence from amorous causes springs,

What mighty contests rise from trivial things.

I sing-This verse to Caryl, Muse! is due :

This, even Belinda may vouchsafe to view :

Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,

If she inspire, and he approve my lays.

Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel

A well-bred lord to assault a gentle belle ?

O say what stranger cause, yet unexplored

Could make a gentle belle reject a lord ?

In tasks so bold, can little men engage,

And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage ?

Sol through white curtains shot a timorous ray,

And oped those eyes that must eclipse the day :

Now lap-dogs give themselves the rousing shake,

And sleepless lovers, just at twelve, awake :

Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knocked the ground,

And the pressed watch returned a silver sound.

Belinda still her downy pillow pressed,

Her guardian sylph prolonged the balmy rest :

Tw'as he had summoned to her silent bed

The morning-dream that hovered over her head :

A youth more glittering than a birth-night beau,

(That even in slumber caused her cheek to glow)

Seemed to her ear his winning lips to lay,

And thus in whispers said, or seemed to say,

'Fairest of mortals, thou distinguished care

Of thousand bright inhabitants of air !

If ever one vision touched the infant thought,

Of all the nurse and all the priest have taught;

30

Of airy elves by moonlight shadows seen,

The silver token, and the circled green.

Or virgins visited by angel - powers,

With golden crowns and wreaths of heavenly flowers :

Hear and believe thy own importance know,

35

Nor bound thy narrow views to things below.

Some secret truths, from learned pride concealed,

To maids alone and children are revealed;

What though no credit doubting wits may give !

The fair and innocent shall still believe.

40

Know, then, unnumbered spirits round thee fly,

The light militia of the lower sky ;

These, though unseen, are even on the wing

Hang over the box, and hover round the ring.

Think what an equipage thou hast in air,

45

And view with scorn two pages and a chair.

As now your own, our beings were of old,

And once inclosed in woman's beauteous mould;

Thence, by a soft transition, we repair

From earthly vehicles to these of air.

50

Think not, when woman's transient breath is fled,

That all her vanities at once are dead :

Succeeding vanities she still regards,

And though she plays no more, ov'rlooks the cards,

Her joy in gilded chariots, when alive,

55

And love of ombre after death survive.

For when the fair in all their pride expire,

To their first elements their souls retire :

The sprites of fiery termagnants in flame

Mount up, and take a salamander's name

60

Soft yielding minds to water glide away,

And sip, with nymphs, their elemental tea.

The graver prude sinks downward to a gnome,

In search of mischief still on earth to roam.

The light coquettes in sylphs aloft repair,

65

And sport and flutter in the fields of air.

Know further yet; whoever fair and chaste

Rejects mankind, is by some sylph embraced :

For spirits, freed from mortal laws, with ease

Assume what sexes and what shapes they please.

70

What guards the purity of melting minds

In courtly balls, and midnight masquerades

Safe from the trecherous friend, the daring spark,

The glance by day, the whisper in the dark,

When kind occasion prompts their warm desires,

75

When music softens, and when dancing fires ?

Tis but their sylph, the wise celestials know,

Though honour is the word with men below.

Some nymphs there are, too conscious of their face,

For life predestined to the gnomes' embrace.

80

These swell their prospects and exalt their pride,

When offers are disdained, and love denied ;

Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,

While peers, and dukes, and all their sweeping train,

And garters, stars, and coronets appear

85

And in soft sounds "Your Grace" salutes their ear.

Tis these that early taint the female sound.

Instruct the eyes of young coquettes to roll,

Teach infant-cheeks a bidden blush to know,

And little hearts to flutter at a beau.

90

Oft, when the world imagines women stray,

the sylphs through mystic mazes guide their way,

Through all the giddy circle they pursue

And old impertinence expel by new.

What tender maid but must a victim fall

95

To one man's treat, but for another's ball ?

When Florio speaks, what virgin could withstand,

If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand ?

With varying vanities, from every part,

They shift the moving toyshop of their heart,

100

Where wings with wings, with sword-knots swordknots strive

Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.

This erring mortals levity may call ;

Oh blind to truth ! the sylphs contrive it all.

Of these am I, who thy protection claim,

105

A watchful sprite, and Ariel is my name.

Late as I ranged the crystal wilds of air,

In the clear mirror of thy ruling star

I saw, alas! some dread event impend,

Ere to the main this mornings sun descend,

110

But heaven reveals not what, or how or where.

Warned by the sylph, O pious maid beware!

This to disclose is all, but most beware of man!

He said; when Shock, who thought she slept too long,

Leaped up, and waked his mistress with his tongue, 115

'Twas then, Belinda, if report say true.

Thy eyes first opened on a billet-doux ;

Wounds, charms, and ardours were no sooner read,

But all the vision vanished from thy head,

And now unveiled, the toilet stands displayed, 120

Each silver vase in mystic order laid.

First, robed in white, the nymph intent adores,

With head uncovered, the cosmetic powers.

A heavenly image in the glass appears, 125

To that she bends, to that her eyes she tears ;

The inferior priestess, at her altar side,

Trembling begins the sacred rites of pride

Unnumbered treasures ope at once, and hers

The various offerings of the world appear ; 130

From each she nicely culls with curious toil,

And decks the Goddess with the glittering spoil

This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,

And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.

The tortoise here and elephant unite, 135

Transformed to combs, the speckled, and the white.

Here files of pins extend their shinning rows,

Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet-doux.

Now awful beauty puts on all its arms ;

The fair each moment rises in her charms, 140

Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace,

And calls forth all the wonders of her face ;
 Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,
 And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.
 The busy sylphs surround their darting care,
 These set the head, and those divide the hair,
 Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown ;
 And Betty's praised for labours not her own.

145

5.8. Glossary And Notes

- Line 1-6 What dire offence lays : This is the invocation part of the poem. It is an epic convention to begin with an invocation. For his mock-epic poem, Pope follows the same convention. But here the invocation is to the friend, Caryl, who suggested the idea of the poem.
- Line 13 Sol : sun
- Line 15-16 Lap-dogs.... awake : Lap -dogs are kept by fashionable society women. Thus these two lines indicate the social class of Belinda. Note the irony in "just at twelve", the waking time of these people !
- Lines 27-114 Fairest of mortals.....beware of man: This is the longest section of this canto. It contains Ariel's speech to Belinda. It is here that the machinery part of the poem is introduced. By machinery is meant the role of the spirits. Note that Pope introduces here four orders of spirits, satyrs, fauns, nymphs, gnomes and sylphs, corresponding to the elements, fire, water, earth and air. Sylphs are light-hearted spirits. Ariel is one such spirit.
- Lines 67-68 Who are fair and chaste.... sylphs embrace : Ariel says that women like Belinda are protected by the sylphs. Belinda has rejected 'man-kind' that is, she is vain and proud of her beauty, and appears to ignore the advances of men. Naturally, she becomes the ward of sylphs.
- Lines 91-91 When the world imagines ----- way: Ariel explains that the sylphs are responsible for every one of the actions of women like Belinda. Men, however, do not know it, and attribute the actions to women.
- Line 114 Beware of all but beware of men: The purpose of Ariel's speech is to warn Belinda of some impending danger. It tells her to be careful about men. In this warning note we notice a tone of mock-seriousness, which is the characteristic tone of the whole poem.
- Line 115 He said : another epic manner of writing
 Shock : name of the dog.
- Line 139 Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet-doux : This is a famous line in the poem. Pope is describing the toilet chamber of Belinda. There are perfumes from Arabia, gems from India, and all kinds of expensive ornaments. They are all displayed there. Included among them are also Bibles. In other words, Pope wants to emphasize that

such a serious book like the Bible has no value for her. Billet doux means 'love-letters'.

Line 148 And Betty is praised for labours not her own. Actually, the sylphs attend to Belinda's make-up and accomplish it. But people are not aware of it, and praise Betty for a job not done by her, but by others i.e., the sylphs.

'The Rape of Lock' is a well-known poem of Pope's. It was written to laugh off an incident that had resulted in bitterness between two families. A lord by name Petre cut off in a playful mood a lock of hair from the hair do of a lady called Miss Arabella. This had offended Miss Arabella and her family. Pope was asked by a common friend of the two families to write a poem and laugh off the affair. The result was 'The Rape of the Lock'.

The poem is written in the manner of an epic in a high tone but the subject matter of the poem is a trivial thing-the cutting of the lock of hair. The effect is naturally comical. Such a poem is called a 'mock-epic' poem (or a 'mock-heroic' poem).

The poem is written in five cantos. In the first canto we are introduced to the heroine of the poem, Belinda. Normally an epic begins with an invocation to the Muse (Goddess) of Poetry. This poem also begins with an invocation, but it is to Caryl, the friend who asked Pope to write the poem. He is thus truly the inspirer of the poem.

It is morning and Belinda has not yet got up. Belinda is a beautiful woman, who is conscious of her beauty, and Pope presents her as if she is a rare woman guarded by angels. As Belinda lies in her bed, her guardian spirit whispers into her ear to wake up. It tells Belinda how she is carefully guarded by a large number of spirits called sylphs. It then proceeds to give an elaborate account of how there are various kinds of spirits hovering about and watching men's actions in the world.

According to it, when a woman dies, she becomes a spirit of one kind or another. What kind of spirit she becomes depends upon her nature. If she is fiery by nature, she becomes a salamander. A woman serious and grave by nature becomes a gnome, and the earth is her place. A light hearted human becomes a sylph, and she lives in air. Thus corresponding to the elements, fire, water, earth and air there are four kinds of spirits salamanders, gnomes, nymphs and sylphs.

The sylphs always support a fair woman who has rejected mankind for example, a woman like Belinda. These sylphs guide the actions of such women, and nothing happens that is not initiated by the sylphs, though men do not know it. Belinda herself is watched over by them, and their chief is Ariel, who is now addressing her. Ariel tells Belinda that it is a watchful spirit, forever looking after her protection. It warns Belinda that it has a premonition that some dreadful thing is going to happen to her that day. What kind of thing it will be Ariel cannot foretell, but it can give one warning, and that is, Belinda must beware of men. ("Beware of all, but most beware of men").

With these words Ariel wakes Belinda up. On getting up Belinda proceeds to her dressing table and begins her make up. There are all kinds of aids to beauty-puffs, powders, patches etc., got from various countries. (gems from India, perfumes from Arabia) and as she sets about her work, the invisible spirits around her assist her in it. Actually, it is the sylphs who complete her work, and "Betty is praised for labours not her own".

The first canto of the poem ends here. In this part of the poem, we have been introduced to Belinda. We come to know that she belongs an upper class, and that she is regarded as a beautiful woman. She is very much conscious of her beauty and spends a lot of time on her 'toilet'. And we get the idea that this is all the cares for in life-she is not shown as possessing any serious interests in life. For her the Bible and love letters (billet- doux) have the same value.

We are also introduced to what is generally called the 'machinery' part of the poem. Pope introduces a classification of different orders of spirits corresponding to different elements. Elsewhere pope explains that this classification is based on a doctrine called the Rosicruian doctrine. This is an important 'mock-epic' feature of the poem. Even as in an epic, gods and angels play an important role guiding the destinies of the heroes and heroines in this poem. Spirits of the lower order play an important role in shaping the destinies of the heroine, Belinda.

As we read the poem, we must not miss the note of irony and humour. For example in lines such as the following :

1. Her files of pins extend their shining rows, Puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billet-doux.
2. And Betty is praised for labours not her own.

5.9. Let's sum up

This unit has discussed the social context in which the poet had written the poem - and also the purpose of the poem. It has explained that the poem was written along the lines of a mock epic. It has pointed out the technical skills of the poet in using the techniques of diminution and magnification in the poem. It has explained the comic effect of the poem. It has explained Pope's use of irony and humour in the poem.

5.10. Sample Questions

1. "And Betty is praised for labours not her own". Explain.
2. What do you know about Belinda from the poem ?
3. What are the differences between the traditional epic and the mock epic ?

5.11. Answers to self-check exercises.

1. The poet describes a world of aristocratic leisured people with its opulence and luxury and emphasizes the idleness of this class.
2. The technical elements of an epic are a single fable or action which has its beginning, middle and end: it should be extending over a long period. The epic must arouse the emotions of wonder, particularly through its machinery.

3. Diminution (making the things smaller in size) and magnification (showing small things bigger in size) are the two technical strategies that Pope uses throughout in the poem.
4. Dr. Johnson remarks that the poem exhibits the two most engaging powers of the author. He could make the new things familiar and familiar things new.

BRAOU

BLOCK - II

Unit - 1 William Wordsworth - Tintern Abbey.

1.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * realize that the main purpose of the Romantic Revival was the revolt against the artificial and strenuous diction of the 18th century.
- * see that the Romantic movement led to an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility thereby returning to the natural world and humanity.
- * see that expression of individual genius gained ground.
- * discuss that the characteristics of the age reflected in the works of Wordsworth one of the Romantic poets.

1.1 Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Contents
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 The Romantic Movement and the Romantic poets
- 1.4 Tintern Abbey - The Text - Glossary and Notes
- 1.5 Let's sum up
- 1.6 Sample Questions
- 1.7 Answers to self-check exercises.

1.2 Introduction

This unit discusses the characteristics of the Romantic Revival. It says that the Romantic Poets were fond of simplicity of style and were incorporating the rhythms of everyday speech into their poetry. It explains that the Romantic poets endeavoured to make poetry fresh, direct and sincere. It explains briefly the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, John Keats, and Shelley.

1.3 The Romantic Movement and the Romantic Poets

The Romantic Age, to which the poet, William Wordsworth belongs, can be broadly said to encompass the first half of the nineteenth century. One of the main features of the Romantic Revival was the revolt against the artificial and laboured diction of the eighteenth century. The Romantic poets desired simplicity of style and consciously sought to incorporate the rhythms of everyday speech into their poetry. They discarded the conventions and formulas of eighteenth-century poetry, the bondage of rule and custom, and endeavoured to make them fresh, direct and sincere. This is especially true of Wordsworth, who approached his life and poetry through daily contact with the lives and habits of men and the forces of external nature.

The Romantic movement was also characterised by "an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility and a return to the natural world and humanity. The greatest poets of the Romantic Revival strove to capture and convey the organic relationship between Man and Nature, a fellowship and communion which brings joy and tranquility.

English Romanticism, again, is the active reawakening of the creative impulse. The poets believed in the "autocracy of the individual imagination" and the movement was the expression of individual genius rather than established formulas. It was, in many ways, a vindication or the triumph of the individual self.

The romantic revival also saw a development of the historical sense, and a belief in a national tradition. Interest in the past began to grow and an idea of the organic continuity between the past and the present gradually took shape. This development of the historical sense was instrumental in the creation of the historical novel of Sir Walter Scott which acquired a richness and colour from his historical knowledge and imagination.

Again in the poetry of all the Romantic poets, is a sense of wonder, of life seen with new sensibilities and fresh vision. A feeling of nostalgic strangeness is essential to this literature. The poets' exceptional view of life leads the reader to strange areas of human experience.

Some or all of these characteristics of Romanticism are exhibited in works of Romantic poets. Wordsworth is the great poet of Nature and he can be said to represent that side of the Romantic revival which is best described as a return to nature. Coleridge chose, instead, to write about the supernatural investing it with an "air of suggestion and indenfiniteness". His works the 'Ancient Mariner', and the fragments 'Christabel' and 'Kubla Khan' are all permeated with a sense of wonder and awe. 'Kubla Khan', for example, describes a vision seen by the poet in a dream ;

A damsel with a dulcimer

In a vision once I saw :

It was an Abyssinian maid,

And on her dulcimer she played

Singing of Mount Abora.

Could I revive within me,
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would built that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of paradise.

The vivid descriptions, the almost audible music make this supernatural vision convincingly actual and real. Coleridge was interrupted during the writing of the poem, and was never able to recall the rest.

The poems of John Keats, another great Romantic poet, all possess the romantic sensitivity of outward impressions. There is a feeling for beauty in nearly all his work, for the beauty of the senses sight, sound, taste and feeling.

In the following stanza from the poem 'To Autumn' for example:

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun ;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eve run ;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage trees.
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er brimmed their clammy cells.

The ripeness of the fruits, the warm, lazy days of summer, the drowsy murmuring of the bees—all these are brought to vivid life by Keats's turn of phrase and the almost tangible atmosphere of the scene. His gift for verbal evocation is unmatched.

Shelley's poetry, on the other hand, breathes the spirit of revolt. All his life, Shelley was a rebel and a non-conformist, and his poetry is "a progressive attempt to create a vision in which Reality, Man, and society could be synthesised". 'Ode to the West Wind', perhaps one of Shelley's most perfect poems, expresses this longing for freedom :

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be then, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! be thou me, impetuous one!
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like wither'd leaves, to quicken a new birth;
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth
The trumpet of a prophecy: O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

The West Wind, the "impetuous one" symbolises Shelley himself, his own tumultuous passions, his love of liberty and his longing for a new life for mankind, the drawing of a new age.

The Romantic Movement, then is represented in the works of these five poets. It differed greatly from the perfection of Classicism, and heralded the approach of a new era in poetry. Literature became less the prerogative of courts and more the possession of the individual man. The triumph of the self and the imagination is perhaps one of its most distinctive characteristics.

William Wordsworth, one of the foremost poets in the Romantic tradition, was born in 1770 at Cockermouth Cumberland. His life can be divided into four periods: (1) his childhood and youth in the Cumberland Hills, from 1770-1787; (2) a period of uncertainty, of storm and stress, including his university life at Cambridge, his travels abroad, and his revolutionary experience from 1787-1797; (3) a short but significant period of discovering himself and his work, from 1779-1799; (4) a long period of retirement in the northern lake region.

Perhaps the most interesting thing in Wordsworth's life at Cambridge was his contact with the revolutionary fervour of the young political enthusiasts of the time. However, two things rapidly cooled Wordsworth's early enthusiasm and ended this kind of interest. One was the excesses of the revolution itself and especially the execution of Louis XVI; the other was the rise of Napoleon and France's adulation for him. His coolness soon grew to disgust and opposition and he discarded his political affiliation forever.

The last part of Wordsworth's life was spent at Grasmere and Rydal Mount and was marked by steadfast purpose and continuous work. He was finally hailed by critics as the first living poet, and one of the greatest that England had ever produced. On the death of Southey (1843), he was made poet-Laureate. He died quietly in 1850, at the age of eighty years, and was buried in the churchyard at Grasmere.

Most of Wordsworth's best poetry was written in the ten years after the writing and publication of *The Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. The publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, a small volume of short poems by Coleridge and himself, is usually hailed as a literary event of the first order. The *Ballads* contained his first major achievements in poetry and were the product of a deliberate programme, set out in later editions in the famous preface :

The principal object.....proposed in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe, throughout as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men and to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them primary laws of our nature. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint and speak a plainer and more emphatic language ; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity' are more easily comprehended, and are more durable, and because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature.

One of the interests of *Lyrical Ballads* lies, in the choice of the subject-matter. For the first time, people considered totally insignificant the outcast, the maimed, the betrayed, the solitary, the defective become literary subjects in their own right. Coleridge's province was the supernatural or the romantic, which he was to endow with a human interest and a semblance of reality. Wordsworth

was to deal with events of everyday life, and his characters and incidents were to be such as would be found in every village and its vicinity. Thus Coleridge wrote 'The Ancient Mariner' and Wordsworth sang of 'Goody Blake' and 'Simon Lee'.

Some of Wordsworth's longer poems are 'The Prelude', treating of the growth of a poet's mind and 'The Excursion'. The best of his work appeared in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) and in the sonnets, odes and lyrics of the next ten years. Wordsworth's long poem, 'The Prelude', written between 1799 and 1805, was explicitly and consistently autobiographical. Wordsworth himself remarked that it was a thing unprecedented in literary history that a man should talk so much about himself. 'The Prelude' is the spiritual record of a single mind honestly recording its own intimate experiences, and its central theme is the growth and development of a poet's sensibility.

SCE - 1

- A. What made Wordsworth discard his political affiliations ?
- B. What is the distinctive characteristic of the Romantic movement ?

1.4 Tintern Abbey - The Text - Glossary and the notes

COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY
ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE
DURING A TOUR JULY 13, 1798

Five years have past ! five summers, with the length
Of five long winters ! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur - Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view

These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,

Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,

Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves

'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see

These hedge-rows, hardly hedge - rows, little lines

15

Of sportive wood run wild : these pastoral farms,

Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke

Sent up, in silence, from among the trees !

With some uncertain notice, as might seem

Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,

20

Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire

The Hermit sits alone.

These beautiful forms

Through a long absence, have not been to me

As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:

But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din

25

Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,

In hours of weariness, sensations sweet

Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,

And passing even into my purer mind,

With tranquil restoration : _____ feelings too

30

Of unremembered pleasure : such , perhaps,

As have no slight or trivial influence

On that best portion of a good man's life,

His little, nameless, unremembered acts

Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,

35

To them I may have owed another gift,

Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,

In which the burthen of the mystery,

In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world, 40
Is lightened: - that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on, -
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep 45
In body, and become a living Soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

If this
Be but a vain belief, yet oh! how oft 50
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the funeral stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart-
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee, 55
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee !

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint.
And somewhat of a sad perplexity, 60
The picture of the mind revives again :
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope, 65
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first

I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded over the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all. - I cannot paint
What then I was.

70

75

The sounding cataract

Haunted me like passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite: a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye. That time is past,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense, for I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,

80

85

90

95

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:

A motion and a spirit that impels

100

All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold

From this green earth; of all the mighty world

105

Of eye, and ear - both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense

The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,

The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul

110

Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,

If I were not thus taught, should I the more

Suffer my genial spirits to decay:

For thou art with me here upon the banks

Of this fair river: thou my dearest Friend,

115

My dear, dear Friend, and in thy voice I catch

The language of my former heart, and read

My former pleasures in the shooting lights

Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while

May I behold in thee what I was once,

120

My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,

Knowing that Nature never did betray

The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,

Through all the years of this our life, to lead

From joy to joy: for she can so inform 125
 The mind that is within us, so impress
 With quietness and beauty, and so feed
 With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
 Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
 Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all 130
 The dreary intercourse of daily life,
 Shail e'er prevail against us, or disturb
 Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
 Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
 Shine on thee in thy solitary walk; 135
 And let the misty mountain-winds be free
 To blow against thee: - and, in after years,
 When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
 Into a sober pleasure: when thy mind
 Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms, 140
 Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
 For all sweet sounds and harmonies : Oh! then,
 If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief
 Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
 Of tender joy wilt thou remember me, 145
 And these my exhortations ! Nor, perchance -
 If I should be where I no more can hear
 Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
 Of past existence - wilt thou then forget
 That on the banks of this delightful stream 150
 We stood together; and that I so long
 A worshipper of Nature, hither came
 Unwearied in that service: rather say

With warmer love - oh! with far deeper zeal

Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget

155

That after many wanderings, many years

Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,

And this green pastoral landscape, were to me

More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake !

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

Tintern Abbey is a ruined monastery situated in the valley of the river Wye in Monmouthshire, on the border of Wales. Wordsworth had undertaken a walking tour of the Wye country in 1793. He returned there with his sister Dorothy in 1798. He wrote the poem on his second visit.

The poet is resting under a dark sycamore hearing the waters of the Wye murmuring in the silence and looking at the steep and lofty cliffs and the green ground in the distance. He begins his meditation with a memory. Five years have passed.

- Five years : Wordsworth had first visited the Wye in 1793.
- Soft inland murmur : not the violent noise of mountain streams but the soft music of river flowing through the plains. The river Wye is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern. (Wordsworth's note) a sense of all-pervading silence is emphasized here.
- Steep and lofty cliffs : Near Tintern the bed of the Wye is very deep and runs in a sort of ravine.
- Dark sycamore : the early green would have passed away in July and the darker leaves would remain.
- orchard-tufts : in the distance the orchards would look like tufts of feathers or ferns.
- Little lineswild : small trees or bushes growing roughly in line but without the trim look of a man-made hedge. The words sportive and wild suggest rich growth, as also Wordsworth's habit of attributing human feelings to inanimate nature.
- pastoral farms : farms devoted to pasture! not arable land.
- With some uncertain notice : because in this quiet scene, the rising smoke alone suggests some kind of human habitation.
- vagrant dwellers : tramps or gypsies.

The poet though absent, has vividly seen the scene in his mind's eye. It is characteristic of him that some beautiful scene meant as much to him in memory ('recollected in tranquillity') as when he actually saw it.

- Mid the din....cities : Between his two visits to the Wye the poet had been living for some time in London.
- sensations sweet : the memory of these beautiful scenes filled him with pleasant feelings.
- my purer mind : the poet's mind which is made purer by 'sensations sweet', unremembered; means unconsciously remembered. In line 34 'unremembered' has its normal meaning of 'forgotten'.
- As have.....love : according to Wordsworth inner happiness makes a man kindly disposed toward his fellow beings.

The boy inspired by Nature has given him peace and calm and has exercised a salutary moral influence. The poet has also gained the mystic experience of completely losing consciousness of his physical self and, in that state, of seeing the inner meaning of all existence.

- corporeal : bodily

'This' refers to the idea that the visual memory of the Wye Valley has given him the three invaluable faculties just described.

- the fretful stir....world : Of Keats' 'Ode to a Nightingale': 'The fever and the fret'.
- sylvan Wye : the Wye flows through wooded hills
- gleams though : it is difficult for the poet to describe all that he experienced and gained during his first visit.
- Sad perplexity : He is sad because he feels that the prightliness of youth is gone for ever, and he is perplexed because the landscape does not appeal to him in exactly the same way as it did before.
- coarser pleasures : physical joys.

A valuable analysis by the poet of the three stages in the development of his attitude to Nature. See the introductory note on the poem.

- An appetite : appetite and passion in line 77 refer to his sensuous enjoyment of Nature at this first stage.
- faint : lose heart

This is the second stage of his response to Nature. See the introductory note on the poem.

These lines describe the stage of the poet's appreciation of Nature. See the introductory note on the poem.

- both what...perceive : The beauty we perceive is created partly by our imagination.
- genial spirits : genial is here the adjectival form of the noun 'genius' innate powers.
- friend : his sister Dorothy Wordsworth.

The poet sees in his sister his former self, as Dorothy still looks at Nature in the same way as he had done in former years.

- Nature...her : Nature is always a true friend to those that love her.

inform : shape; mould.

The dreary intercourse implies that too much human contact involves malices, rashness, and unkindness; it is ~~contrast~~ with Nature which saves us from being depressed by this and keeps us healthy.

These lines show how much the poet owed to Nature.

The assumption is that solitude, provided by things like mountains and the moon for company, is health-giving. The 'solitude' of line 143 must mean lack of compatible human beings.

wild ecstasies : aching joys, dizzy raptures (Lines 84-5).

Unfortunately for Dorothy Wordsworth, her mind was not destined for long to be a mansion for all lovely forms, for she became crippled both in mind and body, and had intervals of insanity, solitude or fear, or pain, or grief, became more and more her portion.

past existence : former days.

1.5 Let's sum up

This unit has discussed the special features of the Romantic Revival. It has shown the difference between Classicism and Romantic approach to poetry. It has pointed out that literature became the possession of the individual than of the courts and kings. It has traced the development of Wordsworth from a Romantic Revivalist to a Nature Poet. It has discussed the growth and development of Wordsworth's sensibility. It is also discussed in brief the other great Romantic poets - Coleridge, Keats and Shelley.

1.6 Sample questions

1. Write a note on 'The Lyrical Ballads'.
2. What are the four periods you can divide the life of Wordsworth into?

1.7 Answers to self-check exercises

1. A. Wordsworth discarded forever his political affiliations because he was fed up with the excesses of the French Revolution itself. Especially the execution of Louis XVI and also the rise of Napoleon and the adulation of the French for him. These things ended Wordsworth's interest and enthusiasm in the revolutions.
- B. The Romantic Movement differed greatly from the perfection of Classicism and adhered to a new approach in poetry. The individual and his imagination triumphed in this age.

Unit - 2 : Tintern Abbey - Critical Analysis

2.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * realize that Tintern Abbey is a poem about Wordsworth's response to Nature.
- * see that things in Nature inspire in Wordsworth a charity and affection towards his fellowmen.
- * discuss the feelings of Wordsworth that Nature is pure and benign. It gives him comfort and a solace which the real world fails to give.
- * see the philosophical expression of poet's relationship to Nature.

2.1 Contents.

- 2.0. Objectives
- 2.1 Contents
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 'Tintern Abbey'-critical analysis
- 2.4 Let's sum up
- 2.5 Sample Questions
- 2.6 Answers to self-check exercises

2.2 Introduction

This unit discusses the feelings of Wordsworth about the things in Nature. The scenic beauty of a landscape - the wild cliffs, the lofty sky, the murmuring waters and the pastoral farms. It says that Wordsworth is inspired by Nature and he is able to look into the essence of things penetrating the surface. This unit explains that Tintern Abbey is a poem wherein human nature and inanimate nature get unified.

2.3 Tintern Abbey - Critical Analysis

'Lines written a few Miles above Tintern Abbey' traces in microcosm the autobiographical development which Wordsworth later surveyed in 'The Prelude'. 'Tintern Abbey', then, is a poem about Wordsworth's response to nature. The poem is written in a reminiscent mood and charts his intellectual and emotional development and the many vicissitudes in his exploration of the natural world.

Nature, to Wordsworth, is first and foremost, the scenic beauty of a natural landscape - the wild cliffs, the lofty sky, the dark sycamores, the placid, murmuring waters, and the pastoral farms.

These pictures afford visual delight and pleasure, evoke a mood of serenity and tranquility, inspire in him a charity and an affection towards his fellow-men and induce a transcendental, almost sublime mood, where he nearly sheds his earthly body and sees into "the life of things":

These beauteous forms

Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration:.....
.....Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the weary weight
In which the heavy and the mystery,
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened - that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on---
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

Nature, in this description, works on two levels-the wordly level, where she is seen as a calming presence, inspiring man with charity towards his fellow-men, and the mystical or spiritual level, where

a transcendence and a sublimity gives Wordsworth the power to penetrate the surface and look into the essence of things. On both these levels, the influence of Nature is pure and bening, giving him a comfort and a solace which the real world fails to give. He could think of three distinct stages in his feeling for Nature. The first stage was animal consisting of sensations which he experienced as a country boy. In the second stage of youth (at the time of his first visit), Nature appealed to his feelings:

The sounding cataract

Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colour and their forms were then to me
An appetite..

There were no need of reflection or judgment to temper his feeling. But all that is changed now. And Wordsworth is not sorry, for other gains have followed:

That time is past,

And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur: other gifts
Have followed: for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity.
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels

All thinking things all objects of all thought

And rolls through all things.

Wordsworth now hears in nature the "still, sad music of humanity"

which prompts an attitude of humility and awe. The natural world takes on a profound and lofty presence, and he sees in nature a spirit, a pervading and all powerful spirit which becomes the link between conscious man and unconscious nature, between the animate and the inanimate world.

This famous passage also proclaims that Wordsworth now sees the world in its relationship to human needs. This is because the poet has now attained to a sense of the ultimate unity of the universe, and the one life that interpenetrates all things. Thus it is possible to affirm the belief that the world may be ordered and harmonised by the human mind, which itself is a part of the pervading spirit. By affirming the order, the poet puts his faith ultimately in his own powers of imagination. 'Tintern Abbey' is thus a poem about the unity of inanimate nature and human nature.

After this philosophical account of his relationship to Nature, Wordsworth again returns to the present. As he stands on the banks of the Wye with his sister, he sees in her a reminder of his own irrational love of nature in the past, a love which is now deeper though less passionate :

Not perchance,

If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay ;
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river ; thou my dear Friend
My dear, dear Friend, and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh: Yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister ! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her ;.....

Wordsworth's return to the Wye after five years is a return to a valley now seen "in the context of human love". Wordsworth's deep love for nature is strengthened by the presence of his sister and the love he has for her. In thus affirming his love for the valley Wordsworth proclaims the power of

the human imagination to make the whole earth habitable for man, to create a paradise in which man can be human:

Nor perchance -

If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence-wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
With warmer love-oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence these steep woods and lofty cliffs
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

The poem can be divided into four sections. The first section deals with Wordsworth's return to the Wye after an absence of five years. The second section shifts to the past, as Wordsworth describes his recollections of these scenes and the moods they have evoked - a serene, restful tranquility and a lofty, almost transcendental experience. The third section returns again to the present, as Wordsworth charts the gradual development in his attitude and response to nature-the transition from the unreflective, physical pleasures of boyhood to the adult realisation of an all-powerful spirit linking both the natural and the human worlds. The fourth section reflects Wordsworth's belief that human love (Wordsworth's deep love for his sister, Dorothy) enhances and strengthens his love for the natural world. 'Tintern Abbey' thus reconciles the natural and the human worlds and expresses Wordsworth's belief in the unity underlying all things and beings.

SCE - 1

A. What do the pictures of Nature evoke in Wordsworth ?

B. What was the belief of Wordsworth as expressed in the last section of his 'Tintern Abbey' ?

2.5 Sample Questions

1. 'Tintern Abbey' is a poem about Wordsworth's response to Nature. Explain.
2. According to Wordsworth Nature works on two levels. What are they ?
3. What are the four different sections that Tintern Abbey can be divided into and what do they reflect ?

2.6 Answer to self-check exercises

- 1.A. The pictures in Nature give visual delight and pleasure to Wordsworth and evoke a mood of serenity and tranquility. They develop in him a charity and an affection towards his fellow men.
- B. The last section of Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' expresses his belief that human love (his love for his sister Dorothy) enhances and strengthens his love for the natural world.

Unit - 3 : John Keats - Ode To A Nightingale

3.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * see that John Keats had shown signs of being a great poet at an early age.
- * realize that Keats is remembered by his great Odes.
- * see that Keats felt that poetry must surprise its readers by a fine excess.
- * see that Keats contributed a lot to English poetry through his longer poems, and his odes. etc.,
- * realize that Keats is also remembered for his letters in which he expressed his developing notions of poetry and his own aims as a poet.

3.1 Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Contents
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Life and works and longer poems
- 3.4 Keats and his odes
- 3.5 Ode to a Nightingale - the Text.
- 3.6 Glossary and Notes
- 3.7 Let's sum up
- 3.8 Sample questions
- 3.9 Answers to self-check exercises

3.2 Introduction

This unit discusses the life of John Keats. It points out his talents as a poet at a very early age. It gives the splendid examples of Keats' poetic powers. It explains that Keats was ambitious about doing the world some good and that he had achieved it in the short span of his life. It discusses in brief his longer poems, odes and letters for which Keats is best remembered. It gives the prescribed text of 'Ode to a Nightingale' along with glossary and notes.

3.3 JOHN KEATS - Life and Works - Longer poems

John Keats was born in London in the year 1795. He was the eldest son of Thomas Keats. Keats was ten years old when his father was killed by a fall from a horse; his mother remarried within a year, but was soon separated from her new husband and returned to her mother in Edmonton. During his boyhood Keats attended the school in Enfield, a suburb of London. His grandmother could not afford to send him to Harrow. Although he was finely built, he was not frail. At school he was well known as a fighter.

Keats' mother died of tuberculosis when he was fifteen and a guardian was appointed for John Keats and his brothers. At sixteen Keats was apprenticed to a surgeon of Edmonton and when he was nineteen he ran away to London where he studied irregularly at hospitals. Before he left Edmonton he got a copy of Spenser's 'The Faerie Queen' from Cowden Clarke a friend in his school days (son of the Headmaster John Clarke of Enfield school).

When Clarke came up to London, both the young men acquired a copy of Chapman's translation of Homer. They spent one whole night reading the rich passages aloud. As a result Keats wrote a poem, 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer', one of the most famous sonnets in English.

Although Keats was duly licensed, he never practised medicine. He soon retired from the contemporary world crowded with complicated experiences only to live in a world of antique dreams. He haunted the British Museum where he found a superfluity of Beauty to delight his romantic and sensation-loving spirit. He spent most of his time in rooms of the British Museum among the Greek vases, marbles and ruined portions of antiquities. "Poetry must surprise by a fine excess", Keats had declared. His 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' begins with "fine excess", beauty and reality - the beauty of the sensual world and the truth of the imagination - these are the two aspects of reality.

Keats, at the age of twenty one, met Leigh Hunt who generously recognised the younger and the better poets. It was Leigh Hunt who helped Keats to move into a wholly literary world. Through him Keats met Shelley, Coleridge and Wordsworth. His acquaintance with Leigh Hunt developed into real friendship. Keats, encouraged by Leigh Hunt, published his first volume, 'Poems', before he was twenty one. It was followed in a year by 'Endymion'.

Keats had gone to the countryside in the hope of curing his throat trouble which later turned out to be consumption that killed him after three years. On his return to London he found two critical reviews in Blackwood's Magazine and the Quarterly Review. These articles were critical and personal attacks. They pointed out his humble beginnings and commented harshly on his friendship with Leigh Hunt. He was treated as a vicious example of the Cockney School. Keats was really hurt by the offending reviews but he did not abandon literature. He had other personal troubles to worry about. His brother Tom whom he had nursed for months, died of consumption. Keats realized that he too was going to be a victim of that disease. To add to his troubles, he fell in love with Fanny Brawne. With feverish love and an uncertain future, Keats' life had become all the more miserable. He knew that his love for Fanny Brawne was futile due to his increasing illness. He tormented himself and her with his talk, letters and poems. He became a jealous lover. He expressed his anguish and agony in

his sonnet 'To Fanny'.

Keats is best remembered by his poems written in the happiest period of his life. Within a period of one year, 1819 he created most of the great odes. 'The Eve of St. Agnes', and the beautiful but archaic 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' are splendid examples of Keats' poetic powers.

Failing health took him to Rome in November 1820. He died on 23rd February, 1821 and was buried in a Protestant Cemetery in Rome. His poems were published when he was twenty one and he died when he was twenty six.

'I am ambitious of doing the world some good', Keats wrote to Richard Woodhouse; 'if I should be spared that may be the work of maturer years- in the interval I will assay to reach to as high a summit in poetry as the nerve bestowed upon me will suffer'. (The letters of John Keats, 1814-1821 ed. H.E. Rollins (2 vols) Vol.1p 387) Keats was gifted with a poetic life of an exquisite and powerful kind. He was the last of the great Romantics to be born and the first to die. (You have read about the Romantic period in Course III). His early death was considered as the greatest loss to English Poetry. His best poetry came as a result of the sustained and deliberate effort of his self-education and self-training. He developed self-discipline in both feelings and craftsmanship. His early poems are fervent expressions of his intention to become a poet. It was the time when he was troubled by the anxiety whether he had the talent to become a great poet. They exhibit the modes of sensibility prevalent at the time.

Keats, when he was training himself in the art of poetry, drew inspiration for his works from the Middle Ages and also from the work of Chaucer and Boccaccio. He believed in the importance of sensation and its pleasures. Keats had, perhaps, something in common with Leigh Hunt. A minor poet with a freshness of sensibility and a mastery of fluid rhythms especially from 'The Story of Rimini', but Keats worked out his own poetic destiny in his independent way. Like Hunt, Keats too derived, enthusiastic sensuous delight in small, easily overlooked details in the object described. He was delighted in the sensuous and enthusiastic descriptions of Nature made by Hunt. All that is best in the volume Poems of 1817 was inspired by Hunt. His "I stood tip-toe upon a little hill" and 'Sleep and Poetry' are examples of this inspiration. One can observe thereafter a steady development in Keats-his vision of life growing wider and deeper bringing a change in the technique of his verse. His early delight in poetry was for the sake of poetry. He had discovered the charm of poetry and left on record in verse and in prose letters a fresher picture of his period and left on record in verse and in prose letters a fresher picture of his period. He revealed in his discovery of imagery and the felicity of phrase in the older poetry. He approached as Spencer and the Elizabethans and Milton had used it, but like one who is free of it, not confined to the language of the age". He had the liberty to revive old words according to his fancy, to coin words and to use fresh compounds in his mythical works he makes use of the language of older poets - Chaucer, Spencer, Shakespeare, Champman, Browne etc. In the sonnets where he expresses his own feelings, his diction is simpler "such as men do use".

Let us now look into his major works. Keats wrote his longest poem 'Endymion' (1818) in four books of 4000 lines. The poem develops with a wealth of invention, the story of Endymion, brain-sick shepherd prince of Mt.Latmos, with whom the moon goddess (Cynthia or Phoebe) falls in love. She bears him away after luring him, weary and perplexed, through 'cloudy phantasms' to eternal life with

her. With this story, the legends of Venus and Adonis, of Glaucus and Scylla, and of Arethusa, are mingled. The poem includes in Book I the great 'Hymn to Pan', and in Book IV the beautiful roundelay, (a short simple song or poem with a refrain) 'O Sorrow'.

In his preface, Keats described this work as 'a feverish attempt rather than a deed accomplished'. It is regarded as the product of sensation rather than thought-the work of an immature genius. The allegory, occasionally of a Spenserian style, is somewhat obscure with its moral as a message. It represents the poet pursuing ideal perfection but distracted from his quest by human beauty. The poem was violently criticized in 'Blackwood's Magazine' and the 'Quarterly'. 'Endymion' is a rather poem in which every critic can detect faults but in which a young genuine lover of poetry will always find much to his delight. The reader would not bother about the moral but could enjoy the poetry. Keats had taken over from Leigh Hunt the easy movement and the abundant flow of the decasyllabic couplet and also a good deal of his descriptive manner. Keats was himself a sound judge of his own poetry. He realized the faults of 'Endymion' before he could finish it. In his preface he admitted that it was written in that dangerous period between his childhood and full manhood, in a stage of adolescent mawkishness. (There is a novel by Disraeli, Endymion, published in 1880).

After 'Endymion', Keats' genius as a poet reached a rapid maturity. He realized his failing health. There was a sense of urgency expressed in his letters to his friends to do something good and a desire to find a place among great English poets before his short life ended.

Keats 'Isabella', or the Pot of Basil was published in Lamia and Other Poems in 1820. The poem is based on Boccaccio's Decameron IV. The proud brothers of Isabella, a Florentine lady discover the love of Lorenzo and their sister. They decoy Lorenzo away, murder him, and bury his body in a forest. Isabella knowing the fact, by vision, finds his body, places the head in a flower pot, and sets a plant of basil over it. (the word basil is derived from Greek meaning 'royal', perhaps because the plant was used in royal baths or medicines). Her brothers, observing how their sister cherishes the basil, steal the pot, discover Lorenzo's head and fly stricken by conscience. Isabella pines and dies. Keats rendered this strange tale of love and death and devotion in a primitive idiom. The emotions in it are carefully chosen images. It is an example of the poet's craftsmanship. It is unburdened by any message. In this pure and simple story, the poet's function was not to preach but to communicate a fuller and deeper vision of the tragic mystery and beauty of life. In this regard he followed the path of Shakespeare, not of Wordsworth or Milton.

Keats wrote two versions of his poem 'Hyperion' and each remains an uncompleted fragment. In the first, the story of Hyperion is told in simple narrative, in the other in the form of an allegorical vision granted to the poet. In the former, Saturn is presented mourning his fallen realm, and debating with the Titans how he may recover it. They look in vain to Hyperion, the sub- god, who is still not deposed, to help them. Here the young Apollo is introduced. He is the god of music poetry and knowledge. At this point the fragment ends.

In the other form of the poem, 'The Fall of Hyperion' the poet in a dream, passes through a garden towards a shrine, approach to which is granted to no one.

'But those to whom the miseries of the world

Are misery, and will not let them rest'.

Then the fate of Hyperion, the last of Titans, is revealed to him by Maneta, the mournful goddess of the 'wither'd race' of Saturn. By then Hyperion is deposed by Apollo. The tale is left unfinished by the poet (in Greek myth - Hyperion is a son of Uranus and Ge). He married Thea, by whom he was father of Aurora, the sun, and the moon. Hyperion is often taken by the poets to be the sun itself. (There is a prose romance by name Hyperion by Longfellow).

Keats began 'Hyperion' (the first poem) on Miltonic lines - an epic in blank verse on a war in Heaven, opening in the middle of the action and among the fallen in the combat. Milton's 'Paradise Lost' opens in a similar way. Keats reveals an amazing power of conception and command of language and verse which can impress even the most sceptical readers and critics. After he had got as far as the first apparition of Apollo Keats realised that for the conflict he wanted to develop in his poem - the overthrow of the Titans by the new order of Gods - the most suitable medium was not the Homeric - Virgilian epic, of which the central theme is war. He even felt that to tread in Milton's steps - using blank verse - brought a artificiality to his style. But both the poems remained fragments whatever be the poet's impediments.

In the 'Eve of St. Agnes' (1819), to which Keats turned on laying aside the fragment of Hyperion he chose a simpler theme, a more single central emotion. It is along the lines of the Odes. The theme had two sources, a popular superstition regarding St. Agnes' Eve, and the theme treated tragically by Shakespeare in Romeo and Juliet, gaily by Scott in 'Young Lochinvar', a passion which transcends the barriers of a family feud. The poem is about Madeline and her lover Porphyro: Madeline has been told the legend that on St. Agnes' Eve maidens may have visions of their lovers. Her lover Porphyro is of hostile lineage, and she is surrounded by 'hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords'. Yet he gets in stealthily on this night, and she finds him at her bedside. They escape together from the Castle (Tennyson also wrote a poem 'St. Agnes' Eve' describing the rapture of a nun in her convent garden on that night).

The third and the last of the verse tales of Keats was 'Lamia' composed in the summer and autumn of 1819. It was meant to present a 'serious idea' a 'vast idea'. The source of the story is Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy. It is the best told of the tales moving from point to point carefully it has less of decoration and less of the eloquent, sympathetic note of Isabella. The year 1819 marked the culmination of Keats' productive work. In 1818 he had composed and sent to his brother and sister in America, the most delightful of his lighter poems in octosyllabic verse: 'Robin Hood', 'Lines on the Mermaid Tavern', 'Fancy and Bards of Passion and of Mirth', and had also written the fragmentary 'Ode to Maia'.

Keats wrote three experimental sonnets 'To sleep' 'How fevered is the man, and 'If by Dull Rhymes'. He was hoping to find a more satisfactory form for the sonnet provided he was to continue to write sonnets at all. He wrote to his brother while copying the 'Ode to Psyche' that he was "endeavouring to discover a better sonnet stanza than we have" - the Petrarchan or Italian forms he meant.

In the powerful short lyrical ballad "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" Keats develops the folk theme of the beautiful but evil lady into a powerful expression of a sense of loss, mystery and terror.

SCE - 1

What can you say about the language Keats used for his poems?

3.4 Keats and his Odes

A great deal has been written about Keats' Odes (April 1819). Keats is at his best in his Odes. By now Keats then overcome his feverish desire for poetic fame and cease had to be obsessed with his love. He managed to see life more steadily. Keats himself expressed this in one of his long letters to George and Georgiana ('Letters' P. 315). Sensory richness fills all his odes. Keats advanced from the status of a charming minor poet to a great genius of the first order. Keats himself tells us in one place - "I think a little change has taken place in my intellect lately - I cannot bear to be uninterested or unemployed. I who for so long a time, have been addicted to passiveness". His 'Ode to Psyche' had a bit of his sonnets as it was written when he was frustrated with writing sonnets. 'Ode On Indolence' was the last Ode of Keats. His odes 'On Melancholy', 'To a Nightingale', 'On a Grecian Urn' and 'To Autumn' are different in kind from their predecessors. These are enlarged and complicated by a dimension of human experience. This aspect was unknown in the earlier poems. Some critics feel that a greater influence of Shakespeare on Keats is seen in the Odes.

Keats seems to have written 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' in a leisurely mood. The theme of this poem is the same as that of W.B. Yeats' "Byzantium". Both deal with the attempt to escape from change and decay into eternity into the world of unchanging art. In the 'Ode on Grecian Urn' beauty and permanence remain with the figures on the urn, but they are after all only part on an 'Attic shape', an Attitude, a "breed of marble men and maidens", and the whole picture is a "cold pastoral". The 'Ode to Autumn' stands apart. It exudes a "mellow fruitfulness" and the "drowsy fume of poppies", "while small gnats mourn" in a wailful choir.... and the gathering swallows "twitter in the skies". The 'Ode on Melancholy' is one of the shortest as well as the most poignant of the Odes. The 'Ode To A Nightingale' is more a personal, subjective poem. It is the often quoted, as the most carefully elaborated poem. Charles Armitage Brown, with whom Keats stayed in 1819 at Wentworth gave the following account of the poem's genesis: "In the spring a nightingale had built her nest near my house. Keats felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song; one morning he took his chair from the breakfast table to the grass plot under a plum tree, where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books. On inquiry, I found those scraps, four or five in number; the writing was not well legible and it was difficult to arrange the stanzas. With his assistance I succeeded and this was his Ode To A Nightingale".

This Ode is generally admired for its rich and slow-moving verse and for its expressions of emotions proper to Romantic poetry. We shall deal with this ode in detail in our next lesson.

Keats' reputation stands high not only through his poems but also through his letters which he sketched out to his correspondents and in which he expressed his developing notions of poetry and his own aims as a poet. They are the invaluable clues to our understanding of the genius of Keats in his works. They stand as the important documents in the history of criticism-criticism which deals with the relation of art to sensation and to thought and moral concern of one's fellow beings. Keats was always concerned with this relationship. Wordsworth had expressed his view of this relationship in "Tintern Abbey", where he showed how he finally learned to look on nature hearing "the still, sad music of humanity". Keats could not solve his problem as clearly as Wordsworth. His poems do not strive for a personal solution to the problem. Keats' letters survived in such profusion largely because their special quality was realized by every one who received them. They were circulated among friends, copied and quoted in his own life time. These letters bring us close to the nature of the poet and his times in a way that few other documents do. The letters that have survived, either in Keats' own hand or as manuscript and printed copies, number a little over two hundred and forty. His letters have provided texts for innumerable essays in aesthetics and criticism. These letters, according to Robert Gittings, are a gallery of living people, gathered around a person, who as he himself said, was "at home amongst men and women".

Keat's short life is regarded by his admirers as a 'flash of painful ecstasy' and the intensity of his nature is felt 'pervading all through his poetry'. His early poems are too profuse in sensuousness and too detailed. His later works are brilliant where he communicated complex and luxuriant sensations.

SCE - 2

What is the 'Ode to a Nightingale' admired for ?

3.5 'Ode To A Nightingale' - the Text

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains

My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,

Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains

One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:

'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,

But being too happy in thy happiness, _____

That thou, light-win'ed Dryad of the trees,

In some melodious plot

Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,

Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

10

O for a draught of vintage, that hath been

Coold a long age in the deep-delv'd earth

Tasting of Flora and the country-green,

Dance, and Provencal song, and sun-burnt mirth!

O for a beaker full of the warm South,

15

Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,

With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,

And purple stain'd mouth;

That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,

And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

20

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget

What thou among the leaves hast never known,

The weariness, the fever, and the fret

Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;

Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,

25

Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies

Where but to think is to be full of sorrow

And leaden eyed despairs;

Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,

Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow.

30

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,

Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards.

But on the viewless wings of Poesy,

Though the dull brain perplexes and retards :
 Already with thee! tender is the night, 35
 And haply the Queen - Moon is on her throne,
 Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays ;
 But here there is no light,
 Save what from heaven is with the breezes blow
 Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways. 40
 I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
 But, in embalme'd darkness, guess each sweet
 Wherewith the seasonable month endows,
 The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild; 45
 White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
 Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves;
 And mid-may's eldest child,
 The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves. 50
 Darkling I listen ; and for many a time
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,
 Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
 To take into the air my quiet breath ;
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die, 55
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
 In such an ecstasy!
 Still wouldst thou sing and I have ears in vain --
 To thy high requiem become a sod. 60

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!

No hungry generations treat thee down;

The voice I hear this passing night was heard

In ancient days by emperor and clown :

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path

65

Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,

She stood in tears amid the alien corn;

The same that oft-times hath

Charm'd magic casements, openings on the foam

Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

70

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell

To toll me back from thee to my sole self.

Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well ,

As she is fabled to do, deceiving elf,

Adieu! Adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades

75

Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

Up the hill-side ; and now 'tis buried deep

In the next valley-glades:

Was it a vision, or a waking dream ?

Fled is that music : - do I wake or sleep ?

80

3.6 GLOSSARY AND NOTES

Ode	-	Originally a poem meant to be sung ; rhymed (rarely unrhymed) lyric, often in the form of address usually of exalted style and enthusiastic tone, often in varied or regular metre (between 50 or 200 lines in length)
drowsy numbness	-	Sleepy unconsciousness
hemlock	-	Poison used as a powerful sedative
Opiate	-	opium working as intoxicant
Lethe-wards	-	towards oblivion : Lethe a Greek word meaning 'oblivion', the name of one of the rivers of Hades, of which the soul of the dead

	(about to be reincarnated) were supposed to drink. It had the power of making them forget their past lives.
Dryad	Wood-nymph, tree-nymph (A wonderful way of calling the bird a woodland spirit).
beechen green	The colour of beech trees indicating freshness and coolness.
full-throated ease	singing heartily, without effort or strain and in ecstasy.
Vintage	essence of grapes wine
Flora	Roman goddess of flowers, (here) fresh as the fragrance of the flowers.
South	Wine of the south
Provençal	Province in Southern France was the home of the troubadours of medieval times, old poetry of love and chivalry was sung by the troubadours of Provence.
Blushful Hippocrene	red wine
Hippocrene	fountain sacred to the Muses on Mount Helicon (here) a source of energy and inspiration
beaded	like beads
palsy	paralysis or trembling due to impairment of nerves
spectre-thin	as thin as a ghost
lead - eyed	revealing heaviness and dejection, where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes.
Bacchus	Greek god of wine
Queen-Moon	Diana
Poesy	A poem
Fay	Fairy
Verdurous glooms	black, luxuriant and lovely woods.
incense	scented
sweet	sweet smelling flower
eglantine	sweetbrier - a prickly plant or shrub
Darkling	Nightingale as the night bird
requiem	any musical composition or church service for the dead
sod	grassy surface and soil held together by the matted roots and weeds.

clown	-	(here) peasant
Ruth	-	the principal character of the Book of Ruth of the Old Testament. Ruth was a Moabite, the widowed daughter-in-law of Naomi of Bethlehem, who reaped in the fields of the wealthy Boaz and later became his wife and the ancestress of King David.
forlorn	-	abandoned, deserted
Couplet	-	a pair of successive lines of verse which rhyme together and have the same length.
decasyllabic	-	having ten syllables - a decasyllabic verse or couplet
Petrarch	-	Italian poet and scholar
Italian sonnet	-	a form of sonnet popularized by Petrarch. It is divided into two definite parts : the first 8 lines rhyme abba abba, the last six lines rhyme by two or three in various combinations.

3.7 Let's Sum Up

This unit has elaborately discussed the life and longer poems of John Keats. It has explained the contribution of Keats to English poetry. It has discussed the importance of the Odes to a student literature. It has clearly pointed out that Keats will always be remembered for his letters apart from his poems. It has explained the occasion which had prompted Keats to write his 'Ode To A Nightingale' - a very personal and subjective one.

3.8 Sample Questions

1. What do you know about Keats' early poems ?
2. Write briefly on Keats Odes.
3. Compare 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' with W.B. Yeats' 'Byzantium'.
4. Keats' letters bring us close to the nature of the poet and his times in a way that few other documents do. Explain.

3.9 Answer to self - check exercises

1. Keats approached poetry as an art rather than as a vehicle for prophecy. He used the language as Spenser and the Elizabethans and Milton had used it, but he was free of it, not confined to the language of his age. He was delighted in discovering imagery and felicity of phrase in the older poetry.
2. The 'Ode to a Nightingale' is generally admired for its rich and slow-moving verse and for its expressions of emotions suitable to Romantic poetry. This ode is more a personal, subjective poem. It is a poem most carefully elaborated.

Unit - 4 : Ode To A Nightingale - Critical Analysis

4.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * see that Keats addresses the nightingale directly in the ode.
- * realize that the poet feels enraptured sensing the happiness of the bird in its song.
- * analyse the contrast made by the poet between the happily singing bird and the unhappy sad world where one has to face many problems.
- * discuss that the poet's experience of the world formed the subject matter of the ode.
- * study the effect of the bird's song on the poet's mind.
- * describe the effects of the phrases used by Keats.

4.1 Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Contents
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 Ode To A Nightingale - Explanation - 1
- 4.4 Explanation - 2
- 4.5 Let's sum up
- 4.6 Sample questions
- 4.7 Answers to self-check exercises

4.2 Introduction

This unit discusses 'Ode To A Nightingale' in detail. It shows the personal and subjective element of the Ode. It says that the poet finds absolute happiness in the song of the bird. It points out the contrast made between the blissful song of the bird and sad world full of problems. It says that the poet's mood changes from misery to ecstasy in the poem.

4.3 Ode To A Nightingale - Explanation -1

Read the poem 'Ode To A Nightingale', two or three times before you start reading the

explanation in the study material.

The poem is about the poet's experience of the nightingale's song. In the first stanza Keats addresses the nightingale directly. He expresses an impoverished state to his mind. His heart aches and he feels numb as if he had drunk an opiate (opium used as an intoxicant). He is in a drugged stupor. He feels as if he were sinking into the deepest incongruousness - utter forgetfulness - 'Lethe wards had sunk'. The key words in the stanza are: 'aches', 'drowsy numbness', 'pain', 'dull opiate', 'Lethe wards had sunk'. It is the poet's heart that 'aches - aches' has the connotation of a lasting, throbbing and feverish pain (we should not take 'aches' literally). He feels as though he had drunk of a poison-hemlock. The 'opiate' is dull and there is the feeling of fading from the mortal world into a world which is richer in sensation. Keats longs to be one with bird but his inability to do so pains him.

In the second half of the stanza the poet goes on to explain the sensation expressed in the first half. He derives great happiness by listening to the bird's song. The bird is perched among the countless green leaves on a beech tree. Its kingdom? and is cool if sings melodiously about the summer. It sings ecstatically. (Keats here refers to summer because he likes summer and hates rain and the winter season is also unsuitable to his failing health. It is late spring, summer has yet to begin).

The poet says that he is not jealous or envious of song or of the life of the bird. In fact he is enraptured with the happiness of the bird. He pushes himself out of numbness towards the light-winged bird and lightheartedness too. The effect of the song is intense on the poet, almost the effect of a 'drug'. He feels the pain because he sees the contrast in the blissful song of the bird and the unhappy, sad world in which one has to face many a problem. Hearing the song induces Keats to forget and also remember what is gloomy in life-it brings oblivion which, at a deeper level, is keener knowledge of the reality of life. He feels that the bird's wholehearted song represents the art and the bird amidst "shadows numberless" also represents Nature-the varied beauties in Nature.

The first four lines describe the effect of the song as so intense that it resembles a drug, which leads to oblivion. This anticipates the desire to escape the miseries of human life which can be taken as one of the reasons for following the bird.

The change in the poet's mood from misery to ecstasy seems to continue in the second stanza. The poet suddenly longs for wine, something different from the hemlock of the first stanza. In the first stanza the stimulant is the bird's song, and in the second, it is wine. These two will help him to escape from consciousness to achieve a state of ecstasy. Wine serves as an agent of intoxication but it is also the pure essence of the fruits of the earth and hence the poet goes on to other associations connected with wine. For example: the place where the rich vintage is seasoned and preserved is precisely located in the fragrance of flowers (Flora the goddess of flowers is referred to): the warmth of the southern climate (the wines from the South of Europe are noted for their excellence) dance (merry making) and Provencal song (a reference to the medieval troubadours of Southern France) and the mirth and festive mood of the simple who live close to the sun are, as it were, distilled into the rich essence of the wine which the poet is craving for. A sense of all this on the part of the poet show that he is not totally "Lethe-wards sunk". Wilson Knight feels that though Keats seeks ecstasy beyond this world, he is not totally severed from the earthly ties. He refers to troubadours who sing

and live among people. The link between the poet and his audience is not snapped.

In the next three lines of Stanza II the poet's mind works in a different direction. Instead of seeking over-flowing happiness the poet aspires towards a different kind of intensity to attain self-forgetfulness.

Full of the blushful Hippocrene

.....

And purple stained mouth,

The poet links wine with the inspirational water of Hippocrene. He wants to drink the red wine which makes his mouth purple as his cup is full to the brim. He wants to fly with the bird to the dim forest, unobserved. His desire to be with the nightingale is very intensely expressed in Stanzas II, III, IV. Stanza II bridges the gap between the depth of unconsciousness "Lethe-wards", beyond Elysium and the ordinary awareness.

Keats starts his second stanza with a repetition "fade and fade far away" which he had already used in 'Endymion'. This stanza with its grim picture of reality expresses an urgency of the mind's release from the mortal condition of this world-sickness, sadness, and fatigue etc. He wants to dissolve like the spirit in Isabella (XLI.I), or perhaps renews the wish that this stolid flesh would melt. This sort of pain and despair of the human beings is not known to the nightingale which cannot, like human beings, remember the past. It is a part of nature and has no individual identity. The poet would like to escape from the sorrows of the world "the weariness, the fever and the fret". Palsy, paleness, premature decay and death are strange things to the bird living in the Arcadian world. But the poet watched "youth grow pale and spectre-thin and old".

Keats did not need to take the idea for this stanza from anywhere outside. His own experiences of the world formed the subject matter. Keats himself had nursed his younger brother Tom who had died of tuberculosis. This reality of human suffering where the luster of the eyes fades, and human beauty withers too soon was too close to his own life. This experience gives a special urgency to the need for escape. So this stanza comes from a tortured heart. Here in the world people talk to each other about the inevitable decay of youth and beauty and the consequent flight of happiness. They can only think of their sorrows. So he would like to run away to the Nightingale's forest as an escape from actuality.

The idea of death makes its appearance here in this stanza. In the fourth stanza the determination to escape becomes yet more urgent in the form of a sudden but illusory union with the bird. Vintage as an agent to reach the nightingale's world as proposed in stanza II is rejected here. The poet does not take the help of wine and intoxication 'not charioted by Bacchus and his pards in the Roman myth the wine god's chariot is drawn by leopards or panthers' ('pard' is an archaic word) but wants to reach the bird by means of poetry though his dull brain may not be as brisk as he wishes it to be. "But by the viewless wings of poësy", he takes recourse to poetic fancy dismissing his earlier gloomy thoughts. The poet wants to depend very much on the potency of the mind's resources, on

the imaginative powers-no external stimulant is needed here poetry seems to have stronger wings!

By the fifth line the desired escape is achieved "Already with thee! "He is with the Nightingale in the depths of the forest, a forest so dark that even the presence of Queen Moon (Diana) does not help him to see what is there. The night is tender, a calm serenity is felt. The day time of the first two stanzas is succeeded here by night. The poet envisions (visualises) a moon- lit sky full of stars as beautiful as fairies. But this radiance is contrasted with the darkness of the 'verdurous' bower in which the poet now finds himself. After his union with the bird he seems to have retreated into the thicket. He does not express his total identification with the bird. But he is happy to be drawn out of the harsh - world. The heavenly light is solid enough to be blown through the land. Night could permeate the thicket sidelong from the outskirts. The liquid, creamy light suddenly becomes strong enough to hang like moss from the branches.

SCE - 1

What effect does the bird's song have on the poet ?

4.4 Explanation - 2

The fifth stanza runs very easily as a piece of pure description. A reference to darkness is already made in the previous stanza. Here the darkness is sweet-scented and rhapsodic. He says that he cannot see the flowers at his feet as the place is dark, but he acquires a strange insight into the whole mystery. As he cannot see he forces his other sense into action. The scent of the flowers from the branches of the trees makes him visualise them very vividly. He does not describe each scent of flower separately but forms an image of a collection of all types of flowers. He calls the incense 'soft' and darkness 'embalmed'- anoints with fragrance. He guesses the flowers and fruit of that season by their scent. He refers to the grass, the thicket, the wild fruit trees, white hawthorn (rose family with white or pink flowers), and the sweetbrier. He forms an image of dead violets covered by the leaves on the trees or under his feet and also of musk-roses ('mid - May's eldest child') which are full of dewy wine. He even listens to the murmuring of flies that gather on the summer evenings.

The reference to summer has already been made in stanza I where he said that the nightingale sings of summer. Critics see the reference to death by Keats in this Stanza in the expressions like 'flowers are at my feet', 'embalmed darkness', 'fast fading violets', 'Covered up in leaves' etc. The death wish is given full expression in the next stanza. Darkness taken as a corpse which is treated with aromatic drugs so that it may be preserved from decay (embalmed darkness). The fourth stanza is concerned with Keats' attempts to leave the world and join the nightingale on some imagined higher

plane. And as he does so, on the viewless wings of poesy ; he imagines the loss of the physical world, and sees himself dead-he uses a harsh word for it in stanza VI a 'sod' over which the nightingale sings.

Stanza VI resembles the third stanza in that it is a record of Keats own experience and the state of his mind at that time. His abrupt transition from the sensuous response of nature's beauty to being 'half in love with easeful Death' sounds paradoxical because it expresses a desire to live and a death wish. In Stanza IV the reader feels that Keats longing for the nightingale's world is both a wish for a more intense life and a wish to escape life's troubles. But here he emphasizes the death wish. He discovers death as a solution to life's fretful experiences and also as a reward. He listens to the Nightingale in the dark. Many a time in his poems he says that he is half in love with easy painless death. He says that he has used delicate words there to refer to death. For example :

"Yet would I on this very midnight cease"

(Keats' sonnet - Why did I Laugh)

and the concluding line of the same sonnet is as follows :

"Death is life's high meed"

In his sonnet 'To sleep' he writes about death

"O soft embalmer of the still midnight

shutting with careful fingers and benign

Our gloom pleas'd eyes embowered from the light

Two months after he had written this he wrote to Fanny Brawne :

"I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks,

your loveliness and the hour of my death"

In his "Sleep and Poetry" he writes :

"That I may die a death of luxury"

He refers to quietness in death in 'Endymion' :

"How quiet death is"

(Endymion ii159)

"With a balmy power

Medicined death to lengthy drowsiness :

The which she fills with visions and doth dress in all this quiet luxury"

(Endymion ii 483-6)

In all the above poems Keats expresses his desire to die quietly without any pain or obvious suffering. But death under an impact of the nightingale's music is a rich and ecstatic experience. The

nightingale will go on singing unendingly and the poet will cease to breathe-he will die quietly in the midnight without any pain. He will no more be able to listen to the joyful song of the bird as a dead man and will be insensitive to the music as he will be a mere lump of clay-a lifeless "sod". The song will then be a "high requiem" a mass in the name of the dead. John Keats saw his brother, Tom die. But after leaving the bird "pouring forth thy soul abroad" he feels he has achieved the fullness of experience, and has achieved peace.

Here the poem seems to take a different turn. Till now the poet has been describing the impact of the song and his attempt to remain in its ecstasy, but in fact he is trying to come out of it. Keats' critics feel this at the end of the Stanza VI. We note how the poet ultimately rejects the idea of death which would make him "impervious to the exquisite melodies of the song. The song has a permanent beauty worth living for. The critics interpret it as the idea that the poet realizes that death is only an evil-it is not a fulfilment or a luxury. Such contradictory images and symbols pervade the Ode.

In the seventh stanza the poet addresses the bird directly as he does in the first stanza and that the bird is immortal (not born for death). The music of the nightingale represents the principle of beauty in the immortal bird. In every generation it is a perpetual source of joy and comfort to people from different walks of life.

The voice which the poet heard on that passing night must have been heard both by Emperors and the common people from time immemorial. The beauty of the song produces a sense of common humanity and the high and the low are united in their need for this, the beauty and peace of this song. The Emperors have gone, the peasants have gone but the song continues to have the same spell on its hearers. The poet here brings in the story of Ruth from the Old Testament of The Bible. Ruth the widowed daughter-in-law of Naomi of Bethlehem had to work in alien (some body else's) fields far away from homeland. The nightingale's song, says the poet, must have soothed her when she felt homesick. Her sad isolated ears were eased by the song which brought her a message of hope (her story ended happily, the corn belonged to Boaz who married her later and thus the land remained no more alien to her). The sorrowfulness of the girl takes us back to the pain and misery of the human lot referred to in Stanza II. The song not only works as an anodyne for the sorrows and despairs of men it is also a work of an art and beauty, a symbol of permanence. Here Keats moves from myth to history (the song is immortal-heard through all ages by emperors and commons etc). The song is the self-same one identical at all periods of history. Robin Mayhead, *John Keats*, Cambridge University Press, 1967) and Pettel *On the poetry of Keats* two critics, are of the opinion that endurance is the theme of the stanza. The nightingale endures from the age to age. It is not the bird that is immortal as such, but it is the song that has the sense of permanence. Generations pass but they cannot silence nightingale. H.W.Garrod in his study *The Close Connections of Thought in the Spring Odes*, 1926; suggests that the reference to Ruth echoes Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper". Wordsworth doesn't exactly mention Ruth but he writes of a girl reaping corn and singing. He was moved as Keats was moved, by a song arising out of mystery. Wordsworth's experience comes very near to Keats! But Keats is more closely aware of the bird's song. Keats had never before used the story of Ruth anywhere in his poetry.

Ruth is a type of perfect woman suffering through no fault of hers. She suffers through self sacrifice and loyalty. Her suffering is undeserved and it indicates the nature of the world of pain.

Some critics go to the extent of saying that Ruth is the symbol of Keats' own soul and this song of the self is a song actually within his own soul which is suffering from its own home sickness. The last three lines of the stanza show the song's power of reaching, beyond all human history, beyond the Book of Ruth, beyond all imaginative experience of a human being, into a mythical world. Man's soul can reach 'faery lands forlorn' when all the sense of the real world is in the ecstasy of the song.

The song has always been able to open the windows of the enchanted world. Though the bird is in the garden, its song reaches beyond its limitations taking the imagination to the fairy lands beyond one's mental view to absolute illusion ---- to the lands forlorn (deserted) where humanity is forbidden and even destroyed (perilous seas). His old thoughts and fancy give way to reality and his understanding of his position as a human being.

The last stanza is something of an anti-climax. The poetic ecstasy is over and the poet comes back to reality in all his weariness. The word 'forlorn' itself tolls a bell in his inner self thus bringing him back from all imaginary ecstasy and forgetfulness. He bids farewell to the bird and its song. His experience is brought down to earth. Thus far he had explored his experience to the furthest extent possible and he now returns to normal awareness. This awareness comes as a flash-a sudden awakening. The connecting link between the inner experience (from the first stanza to stanza VII) and the experience of every day living is snapped. He loses the feeling of immortality. He comes back to his original self. Poetry, which he calls a 'deceiving elf' had promised to lead him into oblivion but she has now failed to do so. Poetry cannot keep him in perpetual ecstasy. The magic of the nightingale's song has fled. He rebukes the song as a false escapism. He complains against the brief spell of aesthetic experience. Hence he calls poetry a 'deceiving elf' (a cheating spirit). He bids 'good bye' to the nightingale. Her sad song fades, the ecstatic experience has lived only for a short time. He tries to hold it, but it cannot be captured. Not even the poetry, however promising it may be can sustain its effect. It has its moments of ecstasy but those moments come to an end. He realizes that the pleasure he had experienced cannot be permanent. Like a dream it leaves, leaving the man to wakefulness and to the reality. Hence he questions

Was it a vision, or a waking dream,

Fled is that music:

Do I wake or sleep?

The poet describes the powerful impact of the nightingale's song. He is too dazed to judge or define his experience in positive terms.

In stanza VII the poet sets up the nightingale as a symbol of permanence, of immortality.

Before I conclude the explanation of the "Ode to a Nightingale", let me summarise the salient features of the poem here.

The first three verses express the poet's reasons for his desire to unite himself with the bird-these reasons help us to understand the actual effect on Keats of the bird's song. We try to visualise the kind of experience the poet is actually looking for when he says that he wishes to take up a journey into the nightingale's world on the viewless wings of poesy. We will not take the word

'immortal' literally when Keats says Thou was not born for death, immortal Bird. As far as the bird's life is concerned the lines :

"Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain

To thy high requiem become a sod"

are described by some critics as pure music in Keats' poetry. When the poet says 'Already with thee !' he gives us the impression that he is with the bird in terms of touch, smell and hearing, rather than sight. Do you see any significance in it here? You do fall in love with Keats' phrases like drowsy numbness, dull opiate, light-winged Dryad, full-throated ease, sun-burnt mirth, soft incense, embalmed darkness etc. Not only that, you will further be tempted to read the other odes by Keats, and his other poems too!

SCE - 2

Quote some of the phrases from the 'Ode To A Nightingale,' which create word picture are images.

4.5 Let's sum up

This unit has discussed the Ode at length - stanza wise. It has explained the ecstasy experienced by the poet while listening to the bird's song. It has pointed out the total identification and unification of the poet with the bird, feeling happy to be drawn out of the harsh world. The unit has discussed that the poetic ecstasy was over and the poet had come back to the reality of the weary world. It is something of an anti-climax in the last stanza of the Ode. The unit has explained the beautiful phrases used in the ode.

4.6 Sample Questions

1. John Keats longs to be with the bird. Why ?
2. The death wish is given full expression in the Ode. Explain.
3. Describe Keats' attempt to leave the world and join the nightingale on the imaginative higher plane.

4.7 Answers to self-check exercises

1. The effect of the bird's song on the poet is intense. He is enraptured by the happiness of the bird. He pushes himself out of numbness and towards the light-winged bird and light - hearted feelings.
2. Drowsy numbness, dull opiate, light-winged Dryad, full-throated ease, embalmed darkness etc. are some of the phrases which create word pictures.

BRAOU

BLOCK - III

Unit - 1 : Matthew Arnold : Dover Beach

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * discuss the general characteristics of Arnold's poetry
- * see that Arnold strove to relate poetry to life.
- * realize that Arnold was able to analyse his own mind objectively and identify his own strengths and weaknesses.
- * study Arnold's poetry and analyse it critically.

1.1 Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Contents
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Matthew Arnold and his poetry
- 1.4 Let's sum up
- 1.5 Sample questions
- 1.6 Answers to self-check exercises

1.2 Introduction

This unit discusses Arnold's life in brief. It explains the special characteristics of his poetry. It says that Arnold was self-critical. It sums up by saying that Arnold could become a great poet because of his quest for excellence in feeling and, thought and that these formed the basis of his poetic content.

1.3 Matthew Arnold and his poetry

Matthew Arnold was born on Christmas Eve in 1822 at Lalaham-on-Thames. His father, Thomas Arnold, was a reputed scholar and most famous head-master of Rugby school. Later, he wrote a poem "Rugby Chapel" on his father. Young Matthew went to school at Winchester Oriel College in 1845. He worked as Secretary to Lord Landsdone. He accepted the job of Inspector of Schools because it provided him money for his marriage to Lucy Wightman. He continued in the post till he retired in 1886. He was appointed Professor of poetry at Oxford University in 1857 and he held the chair till 1867. His travels included three educational missions to the continent and a six months

lecture tour to America. His first poems were published in 1849. It was the third volume, "Poems: A New Edition" (1853) that made his reputation. His poems included 'Empedocles on Etna', 'Sohrab and Rustum', 'Thyrsis', 'Scholar Gipsy', 'The Forsaken Merman' and 'Dover Beach'. He was a good poet and an excellent critic. His poetry was all written by the time he was 45. Then he turned to prose, a more analytical instrument, which offered him a congenial medium for criticism and creation of an enlightened public taste. He became an outstanding writer, master of prose and critic on literary, social, cultural and religious matters. His prose works included 'On Translating Homer', Essays in Criticism, 'Study of Poetry', 'Culture and Anarchy', 'Literature and Dogma', 'Friendship's Garland', 'God and the Bible'. He had an affectionate family life. He died in 1888.

The general characteristics of his poetry are as follows: He continuously strove to humanise man in society and to relate poetry to life. His poetry exposed the shams and shows of modern life and condemned his contemporaries' preoccupation with material values and all that was trivial "the strange disease of modern life with its sick hurry and divided aims".

Arnold was self-critical. He analysed his own mind and identified his own strengths and weaknesses with rare objectivity. In 1852 he could say of his own poems: "As for my poems, they have weight, I think, but little or no charm. But woe upon me if I analysed not my situation". On another occasion, he said "I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigour than Browning. Yet, I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied it to the main line of modern development". True, he was not predominantly a lyric poet. He lacked romantic sensibility and creative imagination. What makes Arnold ultimately a great poet is his content, his quest for excellence in feeling, thought and form, his honest explorations of life's experience.

He was essentially a meditative poet. His poetry convinces us that he took poetry seriously, as a thinking man he took upon himself the difficult mission of civilising his fellowmen and reforming the society.

A survey of his poems in their chronological order brings out two important facts - the early maturity of his genius and his reliance upon certain very definite ideals of poetic art. With the exception of 'Sohrab and Rustum' his longer poems including his tragedy 'Merope' interest only the scholar. It is the shorter poems like 'Dover Beach', 'Thyrsis' and 'Forsaken Merman' that make him one of the most distinguished poets of his Age. His poems are all reflective and melancholy, giving evidence of "the distinctive Arnoldian pathos". In fact, some people considered him as the best of the elegiac poets.

His poems show his love of Nature and the countrysides. For Arnold, Nature's secret was not joy but peace. He loved her in quiet and more subdued moods in contrasting background to the feverish activity and turmoil of the world.

In most of his poems, contrary ideas are discussed or contrasted: feeling and reason ; Age and youth ; Religious faith and Doubt : Contemplation and Action; Freedom and Need, Integration and Division, The Ideal Past and Ugly present; the inward lonely self and distractions of the outer world.

In general, he uses the plain language of speech and prose. His rhythms are solemn and often lax. His language is restrained to suit his meditative poetry.

SCE - 1

A. How can you say that Arnold was self-critical ?

B. What is Arnold's attitude to Nature ?

1.4 Let's Sum Up

This unit has clearly stated the special features of Arnold's poetry. It has pointed out that Arnold exposed the exhibitionism of modern life and condemned his contemporaries for their preoccupation with material values. The unit has brought out the excellence of Arnold's poetry. It has explained that Arnold had taken upon himself the difficult task of civilizing his fellow men and reforming the society.

1.5 Sample Questions

1. Arnold was essentially a meditative poet. Explain.
2. If you survey Arnold's poems in their chronological order two important factors can be brought out. What are they ?

1.6 Answer to self-check exercises

- 1.A. We can say that Arnold was self-critical because he was able to analyse his mind and identified his own strengths and weaknesses as a poet with great objectivity.
- B. Arnold's poems show his love of Nature and the countryside. He felt that peace was the secret of Nature. He was fond of the quiet and subdued moods of Nature.

Unit - 2 : Dover Beach

The Text - Glossary and Notes - Analysis

2.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * see that the poem starts with a pleasant description of nature and atmosphere.
- * wonder at the way Arnold draws moral instruction from a natural scene.
- * realize that the poet turns to a close and analytical observer from a casual spectator.
- * discuss the technical proficiency of Arnold - his language, syntax and metrical devices.

2.1 Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Contents
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 Dover Beach - Text - Glossary and Notes
- 2.4 Analysis of the poem - part 1
- 2.5 Analysis of the poem - part 2
- 2.6 Let's sum up
- 2.7 Sample Questions
- 2.8 Answers to self-check exercises

2.2 Introduction

This unit gives the text of 'Dover Beach' with the glossary and notes. It analyses the poem. It describes the sea as viewed by Arnold initially - calm, fair, tranquil, sweet, moon - blanced etc. It also explains that the sea is not always calm, the poet hears 'the grating roar' of the pebbles, thus this unending process of pushing forward and pulling, backward brings the external note of sadness in. It says that Arnold's craftsmanship consists in the skillful use of imagery which makes 'Dover Beach' one of the best poems of Arnold.

2.3 Dover Beach - Text - Glossary and Notes

The sea is calm to-night.

The tide is full, the moon lies fair

Upon the straits; ----- on the French coast the light

Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,

Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay,

Come to the window, sweet is the night air!

Only, from the long line of spray

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

Listen! you hear the grating roar

Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,

At their return, up the high strand,

Begin, and cease, and then again begin,

With tremulous cadence slow, and bring

The eternal note of sadness in,

Sophocles long ago

Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought

Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow

Of human misery; we

Find also in the sound a thought

Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith

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

Lay like the folds of a bright girdle fur'd.

But now I only hear

Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating to the breath

Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear

And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true

To one another ! for the world, which seems

To lie before us like a land of dreams

So various, so beautiful, so new,

Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,

Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;

And we are here as on a darkling plain

Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,

Where ignorant armies clash by night.

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

The adjectives used to describe the moonlit sea, calm, full, fair, vast and tranquil, all suggest a feeling of peace and stability, threatened by the real world described a few lines below.

- the straits : a comparatively narrow passage of water connecting two seas, or two bodies of water
- bay : part of sea filling wide-mouthed opening of land; as the Bay of Bengal.
- Come to the window : The person addressed could either be the poet's beloved Marguerite, a French girl, or his wife, Frances Lucy, whom he married in 1851.

The second stanza, beginning with 'only' sounds a note of disturbance. It points to the noisy movement of the waves, the 'grating roar' which cancels the effect of silence established in the first stanza. Taken together, these two stanzas are suggestive of the poet's desire for peace, and the frustration of this desire in actual life.

- Spray : water particles flying from waves dashing against the shore.
- moon-blanch'd : Arnold's favourite coinage, appearing also in his poems, 'The Scholar-Gipsy' and 'A Summer Night', it means bleached, or made white by the moonlight.
- grating roar : harsh, noisy sound.
- draw back, and fling / At their return, up the high strand : the verse aptly suggests the advancing and retreating of waves.
- strand : shore.
- tremulous cadence slow: low, rhythmic sound of the sea. In the sound of the waves breaking on pebbles - which is an eternal occurrence, Arnold hears the sound of

eternal human sorrow. The lines recall Wordsworth, Arnold's favourite poet, who, too, in 'Tintern Abbey', hears the still, sad music of humanity in the sounds of nature.

Sophocles (492-406 B.C)	:	Greek dramatist and tragic poet, a favourite of Arnold.
The Aegean	:	part of the Mediterranean sea, between Greece and Turkey.
turbid	:	muddy ; (figurative) confused.
ebb and flow/Of human misery	:	ups and downs of life.

Arnold imagines that Sophocles must also have heard in the sound of the Aegean sea, what he is now hearing at Dover, an echo of human misery.

The sea of faith which was in the past at high tide, like the actual sea at Dover, has now ebbed and lost its original strength.

folds of a bright girdle furled	:	the image suggests the warm, protective quality of religious faith.
melancholy, long, withdrawing roar	:	note the use of long, slow- moving vowels, which are effective in evoking the actual sound of the retreating waves. See Tennyson's 'Ulysses'.
vast edges drear/And naked shingles of the world	:	The world, having lost its faith in God and religion is reduced to a waste land, cold, barren and stony.
shingles	:	pebbles.

Faith in human love and personal relationships can alone provide a ray of hope in this dark, mechanistic world.

certitude	:	the state of being or feeling certain; conviction.
a darkling plain.....clash by night	:	This is Arnold's most memorable poetic comment on the modern world. The image was suggested to Arnold by his reading of the Greek historian, Thucydides, translated by his father, Dr. Arnold. The reference is to the battle of Epipolae, in which the Athenian soldiers confused in the night, killed each other in ignorance.

SCE - 1

What according to Arnold, can alone be a ray of hope in this mechanistic world ?

2.4 Analysis of the poem part - 1

The poem starts with a delightful description of nature and atmosphere as the poet stands at the window opening on the beach of Dover, which is a town in England, and observes the scene. It is a lovely natural scene. The sea is calm. The tide is full; the moon lies fair on the straits. At this stage, we do not have the slightest suspicion of Arnold's melancholy, of his gloomy nature or his tendency to draw moral instruction from a natural scene by relating it to the human experience of misery.

The first eight lines give us the scene as it appeals immediately to the sight of the poem viewing it from his chosen spot. It is a beautiful scene, one which the poet really likes. It appeals to his heart. There is no doubt of it, because the value of the scene is indicated by expressions of appreciation - adjectives like calm, full, tranquil, sweet, moon - blanchéd.

We should note that one could see from Dover, which is in England, the French Coast on the opposite side of the English channel which divides the two countries. In fact, there used to be frequent wars waged by the ambitious kings of the two countries because they were easily accessible to each other. The English Channel is like the narrow strip of sea standing between Ceylon and India.

The poet therefore, could see across the distance the light shining momentarily on the French Coast. The vast cliffs of England, however remain in his view "glimmering". He is so impressed with the charm of the sea that he invites his wife to come to the window and share the delights of the spectacle, "Come to the window, sweet is the night air". The long line of spray where the sea meets the moon-blanchéd land looks bewitching. Perhaps it resembles a gorgeous garland of flowers!

The "sadness" of the coming lines is already suggested in a subtle manner in this apparently cheerful and serene passage. If we make a close study of the opening lines, we find hints of what will follow. Against the initial experience of peace and stability are ranged the realities of the vanishing light and the glimmering cliffs which loom large on the horizon. The word 'tonight' in the very first line suggests that the sea is not always calm, the tide is not always full and the moon is not always fair. These objects of beauty and peace are subject to change. In the 9th line, we hear "the grating roar" of the pebbles drawn back and flung upon the shore. This unending process of pushing forward and pulling backward brings "the eternal note of sadness in". Unhappiness makes its first appearance with the harsh sounds produced by the erstwhile calm sea with its ebb and tide in "tremulous cadence".

With the word "Listen" at the beginning of the 9th line, our complacency receives a jolt even as the poet is shocked out of his unusual mood of serenity and satisfaction. The curtain falls on the visual world and rises on the auditory world. We cease to see and begin to hear. The poet is no longer a casual spectator. He becomes a close and analytical observer. Previously, he had been taken in by the surface charm of the natural scene. Now his penetrating eye assisted by the ear, discovers the inner workings and the hidden secrets of the Sea's encounter with the land. What is suggested to the reader is the idea that men are like pebbles, endlessly pushed back and forth by fate and circumstances over which they have no control whatever. This idea is suggested by the expression "eternal note of sadness" and later confirmed and further developed in the second stanza.

The language, syntax and metrical devices used by Arnold in these lines (9-14) prove his technical proficiency. He cared not only for excellence of ideas but also for ties of form.*

The shift from the eye to the ear is Arnold's technique of transferring us from the here and the now to the distant future or the by-gone ages. It is a transition from the temporary to the time-less and from the local scene to the new lands. In the second stanza the poet connects the past and the present by saying that this "eternal note of sadness" was also heard by Sophocles. **

* J.D. Jump said about these lines "We can cite 'grating roar' admirably conveying the two distinguishable but inseparable sounds made by waves breaking on shingle". We can acknowledge the almost physical stress given to the verbs 'draw back' and 'fling'. We can analyse up to a point the combination of syntactical and metrical means by which the ebbing and flowing motion of the waves is made actual; and we can admire the appropriateness of the Miltonic "tremulous cadence slow".

Murry Krieger : Speaking about the 9th line 'Listen' etc, said "with the word listen at the beginning of lines 9, we are to be shocked out of happy lethargy.....The sharp trochaic foot and the long caesura which follow reinforce this emphasis". The word subtly introduces the shift in the mood.

** Sophocles (496-406 B.C) : The Second of the three great Greek tragedians, born in a place near Athens. Although he had no special military training, he was made one of the special commissioners by reason of his great fame and popularity. Aristophanes said about him in one line 'Contented among the living, contented among the dead'. After his death he was worshiped as a hero. He wrote 120 plays, 18 tetralogies. Seven of his tragedies are extant: 'Antigone', 'Oedipus', 'Electra', 'Arax', 'Trachiniae', 'Philoctetes', 'Oedipus at Colonus'. He was an innovator in tragedy, and introduced the third actor and improved the stage scenery. In some respects his plays are different from and greater than those of Aeschylus and Euripides.

He gave greater importance to man's will in his plays. He is no philosopher or speculator on human problems but portrayed the tragic experience of human beings. His chief characters are heroic. Matthew Arnold described him elsewhere as one "who saw life steadily and saw it whole". Shelley had a volume of Sophocles in his pocket when he was drowned. Among Landor's imaginary conversations there is one between Sophocles and Pericles.

It is generally thought that 'Sophocles' here is a mask and the Arnold is really referring to Wordsworth, the Wordsworth of "Tintern Abbey" and "The Immortality Ode". The Aegean sea reminded him of "the turbid ebb and flow of human misery".

Sophocles, Arnold's favourite Greek dramatist, compared human calamities to the stormy sea (Trachinai 112f, 'Antigone' 583f). But Arnold's allusion, association of the tide with "the turbid ebb and flow of human misery", is based upon reason and experience. The sea is Arnold's favourite image. He has maintained this image throughout the poem with variation. 'Ebb and tide' is an appropriate image. He made an apt use of the word 'turbid'. When it is applied to the sea it means 'muddy'; when it is taken in the context of human beings, it means 'confused' or 'muddle-headed'; the image of the sea grew in his hands and acquired further meaning with each stanza.

Arnold's craftsmanship consists in the skilful use of imagery. His favourite symbolic images are: 'the plain', light (especially 'moon-light') 'the mountain' and the sea (in selected aspects). Symbols are more eloquent and effective than abstract words or adjectives, because they possess a pictorial value. What is seen (e.g. a picture) is remembered longer than what is heard. Besides, these images give coherence to his poems.*

Let us examine the third stanza which is the most significant one. Here we find contrasting ideas such as we had encountered in the first stanza. The first part of the stanza (lines 21 to 23) shows a very satisfactory state of things and also promises a sense of security. The image of the girdle creates the impression of protectiveness. The sea's over-spill of excellence even covers the deficiencies of the land. It appears to be a rosy picture. There comes the negative word 'but' at the beginning of line 24 and despondency. The visual image in the first part is now replaced by an auditory image. In the first part we see the fullness of the 'Sea of faith'. **

SCE - 2

What is the value of symbolic imagery in Arnold's 'Dover Beach'?

2.5 Analysis of the poem - part 2

In the second part we hear of its emptiness, its living waters having retreated down the dreary edges and "the naked shingles of the world".

The central idea of this stanza is the poet's sadness and disappointment as he notes the decline in religious faith. At one time the sea of faith was full. Arnold felt sorry that religion lost its hold over his country men. For him religion stood for morality. He defined religion as 'morality touched by emotion'. He was opposed to dogmatism. He believed that religion and poetry had to play a role which should be cultural as well as ethical.

The concluding stanza is a fitting finale to the poem. 'Ah, love, let us be true to one another'. Some critics are of the opinion that the last stanza does not fit in with the rest of the poem. They assert that the conclusion was written before the preceding lines 1-28. In the draft cited by these critics, the last line is 'And naked shingles of the world'. This evidence points to the theory that the last stanza beginning 'Ah, love, let us be true' had already been written. One important fact emerges. In this concluding stanza, there is no mention of the sea - it is a significant omission, indeed. What could be the possible reason? Did Arnold forget about the sea which developed in his hands as a dominant

*The use of symbols is discussed in Alan Roper's publications of the Modern Language Association 77 (1962). According to Douglas Bush (Dover Beach is a subtle mixture of short and five stress lines with irregular rhymes. Here the lines flow and ebb like the tide they describe".

image ? Perhaps, he might have thought that the sea had already served its purpose and he had no more need for it.

In the first line and a half of the final stanza, the poet addressed his beloved. This is not an unconnected 'extra' or a digression. He had already made a reference to her in line 6 of the first stanza when he invited her to "come to the window". In this stanza, the poet declares in unequivocal terms that this world, which lies before them deceptively like a land of dreams, is only a mirage. To speak the truth, it has no joy nor love nor peace. It has no solution to the innumerable problems of life. It can neither cure the pain nor relieve the suffering - and human misery. The world of joy and certitude now merely *seems* (line 30) whereas the world of turmoil and strife actually exists (line 33). There is a sharp contrast between the world of fantasy and the world of fact, ~~against~~ the modern world, devoid of the uplifting influence of 'Faith' are like "ignorant armies", clashing with each other on the plain enveloped in darkness. Arnold develops here the image of the battle which had started with the contact of the sea with the land in the first stanza. There is an allusion to an account of the battle in the book written by Thucydides the Greek historian (vi-43-44). He describes a disastrous night battle in Sicily. We find that the image of the battle displaces the image of the sea which has been continuously making its appearance with minor variations.

Successful use of imagery has made 'Dover Beach' one of the best poems of Arnold. The main characteristics of his poetry - criticism of life, pleasing melancholy, condemnation of the decline of religious values and analytical self-searching are all revealed in this poem. The poem also suggests (although it does not explicitly state) his sensitivity, self-consciousness, sense of loneliness, and nostalgia for the missing world of youth, faith and peace. These are indeed timeless things with universal appeal and therefore the fit subject of poetry. His view of life is marked by pessimism and realisation that happiness or peace on earth is only delusion. The apparent joy is rooted in sorrow.

Arnold's description of the disease of the modern world and its diagnosis are all right. But what is his prescription? What antidote does he recommend for this malady? He says "Ah, love let us be true to one another". 'True' here means 'faithful'. The poet is mentioning mutual love and fidelity as cure for the disease. It is a personal solution to a general problem. He seeks in human love a substitute for the vanished values. After this, he relapses into his melancholy and despair. Then follows the battle image of ignorant armies clashing with each other on the darkling plain. The world of apparent joy turns into a world of real chaos.

*Arnold uses 'Ah, (line 29) more often than any other-poet. The use of Ah, Italics and archaic expressions like 'thou' and 'hath' (line 33) are mentioned by some critics as minor blemishes of his poetry.

SCE -3

What is the poet sad and disappointed about as expressed in the poem ?

2.6 Let's sum up

This unit has discussed the delightful description of nature and atmosphere. It has referred to the quiet of nature and the peaceful atmosphere. It has described the calmness of the sea and also its grating roar. It has shown the poet both as a casual spectator and a close analytical observer. There has been a sharp contrast drawn in the poem between the world of fantasy and the world of fact. It is said in this unit that Arnold felt that men in the modern world are devoid of the uplifting influences of 'faith' and are like 'ignorant armies' clashing with each other. The unit has thus discussed the malady of the modern world and Arnold's cure for it in mutual love and fidelity. The unit has given the text of the poem with glossary and notes.

2.7 Sample Questions.

1. What is it that Arnold is worried about in the poem ?
2. Arnold's craftsmanship consists in the skilful use of imagery. Explain.
3. What do you know about Sophocles - Arnold's favourite Greek dramatist ?

2.8 Answer to self - check exercises

1. According to Arnold faith in human love and personal relationships can alone be a ray of hope in this mechanistic world.
2. The symbolic imagery in Dover Beach shows the skilful craftsmanship of the poet. The symbols ('the plain', 'light', 'Moon -light', 'the mountain') are more eloquent and effective than the abstract words. What is seen (e.g. a picture) is remembered longer than what is heard. These images give coherence to Arnold's poem.
3. The poet is sad and disappointed because he notes the decline in religious faith in the people.

Unit - 3 : Alfred Lord Tennyson - Ulysses

3.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * describe the main features of the Victorian age - an age full of experimentation and new awareness.
- * examine the claim that Tennyson was the best representative of his age
- * study 'Ulysses' as a typical Victorian poem

3.1 Contents

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Contents

3.2 Introduction

3.3 Tennyson and his age

3.4 Let's sum up

3.5 Sample Questions

3.6 Answers to self-check exercises.

3.2 Introduction

This unit introduces you to the Victorian age. It explains the speciality of the Victorian age. It says that Tennyson and some others of this age were uncomfortable as they were new to Democracy. It says that the scientists and social scientists of this age directed the attention of the people towards the real issues of the society.

3.3 Tennyson and his age

To be studied, any poet naturally deserves an introduction not only to himself but to his age. No poet, no dramatist, no novelist can escape the currents of the age. He may refuse to be consciously drawn into or consciously portray the events or the stresses and the strains of his age; but, he cannot be an outsider to his own age. This is the case with Tennyson, with Browning, or with Dickens. Tennyson and Browning are eminent Victorian poets.

Victorianism is an oversimplification in describing an age which was full of fervent experimen

tation and awareness. In fact, almost all periods in history for contemporary eyes are great approaches, though others coming later, need not feel the same tingling sensation or thrill as the contemporaries to any event. Tennyson, new to democracy and a worshiper of royalty, like many others, was perhaps, uncomfortable. On the other hand, Ruskin, who, as seen in 'Unto this Last' and 'The Crown of Wild Olive', felt that the workers, the agriculture labour, the 'farm labour' are exploited in a subtle way by making the workers believe that their work is noble, as is done by white collar executives and rulers at high levels. The firm emergence of concepts of 'capital' and 'labour' and 'The Economic Man' are two of the features of Victorian England. Never before was there such incisive social criticism as in that age. Darwin, Malthus, his theories regarding population and production, Bentham and J.S. Mill, to name a few, raised the general levels of thinking and discussion in regard to society's real issues. Both J.S. Mill and Matthew Arnold declared that what the age desperately needed was reducing the brutalizing social conditions and injecting missionary zeal and faith in education and 'gradualism'. One can see this both in Mill's 'On Liberty' (1859) and Arnold's 'Culture and Anarchy' (1869) where the theme is so similar that we may call it by two names - Mill's 'Liberalism' and Arnold's faith in 'culture' and 'gradualism' for both of them. The one person who deserves better attention and study even today is Charles Dickens as a good representative of the age. So it is with the Roman Catholicism, Protestantism and the Anglican Church - a new discussion if not a new direction was another feature of the age. The last, was aspect of Victorianism is a realization even by Darwin that science and its pursuits should not mean the elimination of humanism, poetry and finer values of life and letters. Into this real ferment of the social scene came Tennyson and Browning though temperamentally and in upbringing, both of them were dissimilar. That Victorian writing was sentimental if not sanctimonious; that Victorian poetry was "derivative" in the sense shadows of other poets are cast on subsequent poets, may not be wide of the mark. But that from W.B. Yeats onwards, 20th century poets struggled pretty hard to go beyond Tennyson and Browning is the best direct tribute, the 20th century paid, willy-nilly to Tennyson and Browning for assuring their place.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, (1809-92) a very major Victorian poet, was born in Lincolnshire. The boy grew up in a sombre atmosphere where his mother's genial influence was strong and religious. He went to Cambridge; but left it without a degree. He won, nevertheless the Chancellor's medal for his poem. He also won the intimate friendship of Arthur Hallam Tennyson to compose 'Ulysses'. When Tennyson, like Keats, was attacked, in a review of his poems, he sank into silence for a decade. Rightly, this decade was his workshop. For, when in 1842 Poems was published, it was so well received by press and public, that he was justly famous. His other poems followed - 'The Princess', 'Medley' (1847) Maud and other poems (1855) Idylls of the King (1864) Enoch Arden (1864) Demeter and other poems (1889) The death of Oenone and other Poems (1892).

He became a peer and a poet laureate. He was never a financial success. Despite his hypochondria and dyspepsia and the well-known morbidity of the Tennyson family, he enjoyed excellent friendships with Edward Fitzgerald, Gladstone, Huxley, Jowett, Max Muller and Theodore Watts Dunton. He lived in Surrey and Isle of Wight, in later life. His old age was serene, healthy, tranquil and he died in 1892 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

He was a real representative of his age, which deserves an analytical understanding even today. What struck his friends was the scientist in him more than the poet. The age, its 'questionings', the

scientific enquiries, the general growing apathy to "metaphysics" of a vague type are all a part of the fabric of Tennyson.

SCE - 1

- A. What are the two firm concepts that are the features of Victorian England ?
- B. What is one of the most important aspects of Victorianism which eminent scientists like Darwin realized ?

3.4 Let's Sum Up

This unit has discussed the salient features of the Victorian age. It has discussed the eminent role played by scientists and social scientists of the age. It has said that there is more of a scientist in Tennyson than a poet as was believed by his friends.

3.5 Sample Questions

1. What are the salient features of Victorianism ?
2. Why were Tennyson and other royalists uncomfortable in the Victorian age ?

3.6 Answer to self-check exercises

- 1.A. The two firm concepts which are the main features of the Victorian age are the 'capital' and 'Labour' and 'The Economic Man'.
- B. Eminent scientists like Darwin realized that science and its pursuits should not mean the elimination of humanism, poetry and the finer values of life and letters. It is one of the most important aspects of Victorianism.

Unit - 4 : Ulysses : Text and Explanation

4.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * realize that Ulysses is one of the most popular poems of Tennyson because of its theme and form.
- * explain that a spirit of heroism and adventure is expressed in the poem.
- * see that the poem is a dramatic monologue in form but is more rhetorical than dramatic in nature.

4.1 Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Contents
- 4.2 Introduction
- 4.3 Ulysses the text - Glossary and Notes
- 4.4 Ulysses - explanation
- 4.5 Let's sum up
- 4.6 Sample Questions
- 4.7 Answers to self-check exercises

4.2 Introduction

This unit gives the text, glossary and notes of the poem 'Ulysses'. It explains that the poem is a dramatic monologue containing the speech of a single character, but it is not a soliloquy. It says that there is an audience implied in the poem to listen to the speaker. The unit says that the poem is appealing to the readers because of its rhetoric.

4.3 Ulysses - The Text - Glossary and Notes

It little profits that an idle king,

By this still hearth, among these barren crags,

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

Unequal laws unto a savage race,
 That hoard, and sleep, and feed and know not me.
 I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
 Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
 Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
 That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
 Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
 Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
 For always roaming with a hungry heart
 Much have I seen and known; cities of men
 And manners, climates, councils, governments.
 Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
 And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
 Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy
 I am a part of all that I have met;
 Yet all experience is an arch where through
 Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
 Forever and forever when I move.
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
 To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use !
 As though to breathe were life. Life piled on life
 Were all too little, and of one to me
 Little remains: but every hour is saved
 From that eternal silence, something more.
 For some three suns to store and hoard myself.
 And this gray spirit yearning in desire
 To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,
 Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
 This is my son, mine own Telemachus,

To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle-

Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil

This labour; by slow prudence to make mild

A rugged people, and through soft degrees

Subdue them to the useful and the good,

Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere

Of common duties, decent not to fail

40

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 toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me-----

That ever with a frolic welcome took

The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed

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

50

Old age hath 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,

T'is 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

60

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.
 Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
 We are not now that strength which in old days
 Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
 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.

70

GLOSSARY AND NOTES

1. An idle king : Ulysses known as Odysseus in Homer was the king of Ithaca. Ithaca was an island at the entrance of the Gulf of Corinth. Ulysses was one of the wisest and most capable of Greek leaders in the War of Troy. He faced wars, difficulties and bitter struggles succeeded in overcoming them and returned after twenty years, to his home. His wife, Penelope patiently waited to welcome him, with their son Telemachus.
- 3&4 mete and ...savage race administer rough and ready justice to the uncontrolled islanders of Ithaca, who are still to be civilized and made mild.
5. That hoard....., not me
because of their day-to-day existence, they cannot comprehend my experience of the Gods, warfare, and adventures.
7. life to the lees.....
Experience life to the full
- Lees : Sediment or dregs at the bottom of a cup. All times - at all times.
- 10 scudding drifts Cloudlets flying before the wind.
- the rainy hyades A group of seven stars whose setting and rising were believed to be accompanied by heavy rain. (Hyades means in Greek "The Rainers"). The daughters of Atlas who pined away and died when their brother Hyas was killed by a boar. They were placed among stars.
15. While I am not the least significant of men I saw and knew, I am honoured by them.
17. Windy Troy
Notice the adjective. It is a typical Homeric epithet. Troy or Ilium or Troha was the capital of Troas: In the Trojan war, Ulysses fought alongside Achilles, Ajax, Agamemnon, and other Greek heroes.

18. What I am is because of my experiences.

19-21 Experience is what we go through. The more we go through, the more we are interested and certainly the more we learn, the more remains to be learnt.

23. As in war,.....so in life. If we do not use a thing-a sword or a limb it gets rusted.

26-28 But every hour.....new things

Eternity is the entity, "One life is hardly enough for any achievement. Out of that one life, a little remains for me. Every hour is now very precious as it is snatched from death. It is something more, it ought to bring new things.

29. some three suns : very few years. "I am deeply desirous of doing something in the few years left for me".

33. Telemachus : Son of Ulysses and Penelope who was a baby when Ulysses left to join the War of Troy.

39.Centered : Devoted to

40. Decent: careful

41. In offices of : In services rendered to those around.
tenderness

42. household gods : typical of Greek families having Gods and Goddesses. The family of Ulysses for example had Minerva as one of the family deities

45-46 my marines :

Some editors feel it is inaccurate, for even in Homer the companions of Ulysses lost their lives. He returned alone. But as Hallam Tennyson wrote, that when Ulysses was seized of the fever of a fresh adventure after passage of time, he addressed the comrades who themselves were heroic. Ulysses, like a good manager (today) wanted to praise them to get things done.

47. frolic (original sense). 'Joyous, or 'sportive'.

48-49. Opposed free hearts, : Faced dangers as free and undaunted men.
free foreheads

53. Men that strove : These warriors, My men, are not ordinary men. These are great and
with Gods heroic and cast in a big mould, and they fought with gods in the Trojan war. (That Gods took sides in the battle of Troy is a known story. That Poseidon, the Sea-God was hostile to Ulysses, is a part of the same story).

58-59 In order smite : This is supposedly a Homeric echo from Ilaid. It is noteworthy that
the sounding Tennyson, with his fine musical ear is always fond of sounds, music,
furrows included. The line means, "the track made by a ship".

60-61 And the Baths of : the Western stars	The Western horizon. The Greeks believed that shores sank into the (Western) sea. The Greeks believed the earth is flat with sea all around.
62 The Gulfs :	The deep waters or the whirlpools.
63 The Happy Isles :	In the Greek mythology, the Isles of the Blessed lie in the Western Ocean, and the souls of the virtuous were sent there after death.
64 Achilles :	The bravest of the Greek warriors who fought in the war of Troy.
66 Strength :	That body of strong men
67 Moved earth and heaven :	Though it is imprecise, it obviously meant that we performed such deeds of heroism and valour that the world was shaken and perhaps forced the Gods too to take sides.
68 An army of equally heroic men	
69-70 but strong in will.....not to yield	The key note of Ulysses' philosophy of courage and action.

SCE - 1

What is the key note of the poem 'Ulysses' ?

4.4 Ulysses - Explanation

The poem 'Ulysses' was composed by Tennyson in October, 1833, in the wake of the tragedy he faced because of the death of his close friend, Arthur Hallam, engaged to Tennyson's sister, Emily. Although the poet put himself and his feelings into 'Ulysses' in a large measure, the readers need not be aware of it to enjoy it. The poem is in the form of a dramatic monologue. The speaker is Ulysses, the great Greek warrior. He expresses dissatisfaction with his idle life in Ithaca. He longs for a life of adventure. He expresses his feelings in the following way :

It doesn't profit me much that I should, with my aged wife Penelope sit here in Ithaca, and rule this kingdom and please the people. For, these people do not know me as a great warrior. They are satisfied with usual routine existence such as eating and sleeping. They are yet to be civilized. And, I should, if I choose to be their king, administer laws which are not equally applicable to all. I cannot rest contented unless I travel widely. I want to empty the cup of life, not just taste it. My life has been a great adventure; I enjoyed it all alone. I enjoyed it with my peers. Both when I sailed into stormy seas amidst rains and when I stayed ashore. I have been a hero, a celebrity. With curiosity I

wandered and also saw a lot and gained knowledge of men, their governments, their associations, their countries and climates. And wherever I went, I was honoured. I took part with my fellow heroes in the celebrated Battle of Troy. I became in the process, an integral part of all that I went through. But then, experience by nature, is such that the more you have the more you wish to have of what remains : experience is like an arch which is an opening to new worlds. In other words, experience leads to craving for more experience. A pause or an end appears so unreal and absurd. As with swords, so with men, we rust by standing; we shine, we shine, we gleam, by moving for life or living is nor merely existing or breathing. Every hour spent should be well spent as a unit in the life to seek new things, new knowledge and try to reach even beyond the realms of human thought. This is my real desire". Thus Ulysses expresses his longing for the life of action. Then he contrasts his own nature with that of his son Telemachus. He says : "Here is my worthy son, Telemachus to whom I give the authority to rule Ithaca. And he, by virtue of his upbringing and prudence will work hard to better the people who need to be civilized. Then they will become useful citizens. He is worthy of the tasks and duties that lie ahead. He will pay proper respect of family deities. I am aware of the difference in nature between him and me. We are, in fact, complementary to each other. He carries out his work and I mine. That is, he is for a settled life and I am for a life of action.

It is time. The vessel in the port is ready to sail on the wild blue seas. My marines are those great and valiant heroes who fought bravely along with me and took in their stride dangers and successes, as free men who trusted me. True, now, we are old. Old age has its compensations and rewards as also its struggles. Surely, death is the end of all this. But before the end there is still work to do, and something to achieve. For, the men who are going to be my companions are men of great courage they had fought side by side with Gods in the Trojan war. It is now time to go on voyaging on the seas in search of a new-world. Let us use our oars to smite the hoary sea with furrows. My intention is that we shall sail beyond the sunset, beyond the stars, beyond the visible horizon, till the last breath of my life. It is possible that we will be lost in the whirlpools. It may be that we shall reach the Happy Islès where virtuous men after death, are found. In that case, we shall meet the greatest of Greek warriors known to us-Achilles. Although we now don't have the strength we once had, when we shook up earth and heaven through our valorous deeds, we are still what we are though old and aged, we are yet very strong in will, and hence capable of striving, yearning and seeking new things and a new world and not bent in spirit or ready to capitulate.

'Ulysses' is one of the popular poems of Tennyson. It is well-known for two reasons : i) for its form and ii) for its theme.

In form, it is a dramatic monologue. A dramatic monologue contains the speech of a single character, but it is not a soliloquy, because in a soliloquy the speaker is not addressing anybody, while in a dramatic monologue there is an audience implied. In 'Ulysses', however, there is not much of a dramatic element it is more rhetorical than dramatic. For example, the reaction of the audience is not shown in the poem, as it is in Browning's 'Last Duchess'. Yet the poem has an appeal because of its rhetoric.

But what is more appealing in the poem is its theme---the glorification of a life of action and adventure. Ulysses, the great Greek hero, is a fitting example of a man of action. After his participation in the Trojan War, he finds his peaceful life in Ithaca dull and purposeless. By nature

he is not fitted to settle down as an mere administrator. He had taken part in great wars and had wandered all over the world. Wherever he went he had been honoured as a great hero. He is a man of great experience and his desire is to have more of it. He wants to voyage around the world in search of a new life. For him, experience is like an arch. That is, even as an arch is an opening to new grounds, so experience leads him to more experience. Ulysses finds no meaning in mere existence. He wants to live fully "to drink life to the lees". Ulysses is aware that not every one is a lover of adventure and action as he. His own son, Telemachus, likes to lead a settled life. He is eminently suited to be an administrator. In other words, Ulysses is keenly aware of the complementary nature of his son, Telemachus. That is all the more reassuring to him because he can safely leave the administration to his son and go on his voyage of adventure.

In the last section of the poem, Ulysses gives expression to his sense of exultation as he starts on his voyage. His companions in the voyage are great heroes, who had fought side by side with the gods in the Trojan war. It is true that they have all now become old, but still they are young in spirit. Ulysses means to sail very far - "to sail beyond sunset". It is not going to be an easy voyage. They may all perish in the course of it, or they may even have the good luck of touching the Happy Isles and meeting Achilles their great hero. They are weak in flesh, but sound in heart. And his principle is "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield".

It is as an expression of this spirit of heroism and adventure that the poem is very popular.

SCE - 2

- A. Who is the bravest of the Greek warriors mentioned in the poem ?
- B. What is the principle of Ulysses, as expressed in the poem ?

4.5 Let's Sum Up

This unit has described the poem as a dramatic monologue in form and it has said that there is a speaker (Ulysses) addressing the audience (implied) in the poem. The unit explained the dissatisfaction of Ulysses, the Greek hero with his idle life and his longing for a life of adventure. The unit has said that Ulysses was not satisfied with mere administration at home because he could not rest unless he travelled widely. The unit emphasized that it is the spirit of adventure and heroism that the poem is filled with. The unit has pointed out that glorification of a life of action and adventure is the theme of the poem 'Ulysses'. The unit has pointed out that Ulysses and his colleagues who set out on the voyage were weak in body but brave in heart. The unit explained that it is the spirit of heroism and adventure in the poem that made it popular,

4.6 Sample Questions

1. The principle of Ulysses is "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield". Explain
2. What is the difference in nature between Ulysses and Telemachus ?
3. What made Tennyson write this poem ?

4.7 Answers to self-check exercises

1. The key note of the poem 'Ulysses' is the spirit of courage and action and adventure.
2. A. Achilles who fought in the war of Troy.
B. Ulysses' principle is to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield to anyone.

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Unit - 5 : Robert Browning - My Last Duchess

5.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * discuss Browning's life in brief.
- * realize that the poem is a dramatic monologue as you have already studied a poem - a dramatic monologue prior to this

5.1 Contents

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Contents
- 5.2 Introduction
- 5.3 Robert Browning - An Introduction
- 5.4 My Last Duchess - The Text - Glossary and Notes
- 5.5 Let's sum up
- 5.6 Sample Questions
- 5.7 Answers to self-check exercises.

5.2 Introduction

The unit gives a brief life sketch of Browning. It says that Browning became a poet at a very early age. It says that Browning was greatly influenced by John Keats. It explains that the love between Browning and Miss Elizabeth Barrett (later his wife) was one of the immortal romances of literary history. This unit provides you with the text of the poem, glossary and notes.

5.3 Robert Browning - an introduction

Robert Browning, (1812-1889) one of the great English poets, was born to well-to-do parents, who were cultured, pious and dissenters in religion. He was born in Camberwell. His mother, according to Browning, was "a divine Woman". His early studies were in the Classics, especially the Greek ones, and from the beginning his prime interest was music. He became, no wonder, an admirable musician with lots of friends among the distinguished members of the profession. He had an excellent education at home and University College, coupled with physical accomplishments such as riding, fencing, boxing and dancing.

He entered the medical profession in the Guy's Hospital but he found that was not his vocation. He loved to become a stage actor. He became a poet at twelve. As in the case of others, so it was with Browning, Byron was the great initial influence. Then Shelley (his 'Queen Mab' excessively for a while), and then Keats. When Keats could so deeply influence Matthew Arnold, it is no wonder, he was a great influence on Browning. His love for Italy, Venice, started very early and lasted a life time. In 1845 he came into contact with Miss Elizabeth Barret and her poems. He loved them and loved her. She returned his love and it was one of the immortal romances of literary history. They, without the parents' consent, were quietly married, left for Italy. She was an invalid. But the happiness of married life and Italian sunshine made her health excellent.

She gave birth to a son in 1849. Browning's poems were written during the period. In 1861, Mrs Browning - Elizabeth Barrett Browning the gifted poetess died. That was a great loss to the Browning family as much as to the world of poetry. He returned to London with his son; but he was never the same again. In 1889 after his son married and settled down as an artist in Venice, his visits to Venice revived his first love for Venice and he died there in 1889. He was buried in the Westminster Abbey in the poets' corner, against his wish which was to be buried in Florence along with his wife.

His best poetry came between 1845 and 1861 --- the year 1845 he met and fell in love with Miss Barrett and the year (1861) Mrs. Barrett Browning passed away.

SCE - 1

What was the prime interest of Browning

5.4 My Last Duchess - Glossary , Notes And Explanation

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,

Looking as if she were alive. I call

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

Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

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

'Fra Pandolf' by design, for never read

Strangers like you that pictured countenance,

The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)

10

And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps

Fra Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much', or 'paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat': such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough

20

For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart ----- how shall I say? ----- too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went every where.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,

The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace ----- all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,

30

Or blush, at least. She thanked men - good! but thanked
Some how - I know not how - as if she ranked

My gift of a nine - hundred - years - old name

With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame

This sort of trifling ? Even had you skill

In speech - (which I have not) - to make your will

Quite clear to such a one, and say, 'Just this

Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,

Or there exceed the mark' - and if she let

Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set

40

Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse

- Ev'n then would be some stooping; and I choose

Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,

Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without

Much the same smile ? this grew; I gave commands ;

Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands

As if alive. Will't please you rise ? We'll meet

The company below, then. I repeat,

The Count your master's known munificence

50

Is ample warrant that no just pretence

Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;

Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed

At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go

Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,

Taming a sea horse, thought a rarity,

Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

GLOSSARY - NOTES AND EXPLANATION

lines

Ferrara : A city in Lombardi, Northern Italy, that was famous for its school of painting in the 15th and 16th Centuries. This poem is projected against this period.

1. The Duke speaks at once and goes on speaking a monologue.

2-3 I call that piece a wonder

The dramatic monologue and its most effective instrument the colloquial tone are significant.

3 Fra Pandolph :- An imaginary artist and painter "Fra" means Friar.

4 A day : for a whole day

6 By design : is there any hidden meaning which is dark behind these words (As in "sinister design") ?

9 Puts by : Opens, pulls apart

11 As they would : As thought they would

16-17 laps over : covers

25. favour : A gift, perhaps. Suggesting something expensive given as a favour not indicative, of love or affection, but indicative of wealth and affectation.

27-28 The reference to cherries and riding on the mule can mean that the Duchess was quite young.

31-32 Good butnot how: An aside, in parenthesis - The Duke seems to say "How can I put. I don't know. She thanked every one. No, without discrimination, without reference to rank or status".

The Duke's arrogance, egotism, and contempt for the Duchess are very clear almost from the beginning but especially so here.

40-41 Nor plainly..... yours : 'And did not start openly arguing with you'.

45-46 This grew - I gave commands etc.

Some interpret these lines to mean that the Duke commanded she be put in prison, some others interpret that the Duke commanded she be put to death. In either case, what is significant is that the proud crook that the Duke was, he was (1) not interested in advising her or talking to her to mend her ways which were offensive to him, and (2) that in contrast to all this, the Duchess, young, good looking, was simple, artless, and extremely courteous to one and all no wonder much to the annoyance of the insufferable bore that the Duke obviously was. Prof. Kenneth Allot points out that sometime must have elapsed between the events described by the Duke and the visit of the Count's envoy. (Browning's Selected Poems).

In this single line, Browning has very successfully brought out the heartlessness of the Duke. The Duke is so full of himself that he is incapable of human feelings.

48-53 Now that another girl is being offered to him by the Count, in a subtle way, the Duke is suggesting a large dowry, too.

50 pretence: claim

53 Nay, we "together down" A calculated lordly command

54-56 Notice Neptune, though.....for me

Was the Duke hinting that he knows, like Neptune taming wild horses, how to tame wild women ?

Also may be the Duke wants to impress the envoy and through him the Count, that the Duke was a patron of arts-paintings, sculpture etc.

56 Claus of Innesbruck

Like Fra Pandolf, Claus was an imaginary sculptor

Innesbruck was famous for bronze work in Austria.

"My Last Duchess" was first published by Robert Browning under the title 'Italy'. It was given this name in 1849. This, along with such other very popular poems, 'The Last Ride Together', 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin', 'A Grammarian's Funeral' was included in 'The Dramatic Romances' (1845).

"My Last Duchess" is one of Browning's famous dramatic monologues. Interestingly enough many consider Tennyson's 'Ulysses' as another dramatic monologue though in Tennyson's poem the conversational tone of Browning's poetry is not present.

The speaker in this poem is a duke-the Duke of Ferrara. He is addressing the envoy of a count, who is visiting the duke to negotiate the marriage of the count's daughter. The duke is a widower, and he talks to the envoy about his first wife and the nature of his relationship with her. He also wants to impress the envoy that he is a great patron of arts. This is the situation dramatically portrayed in the poem. In this poem, Browning very successfully brings out the proud and vain nature of the duke.

The poem is very short (only 56 lines), but this has resulted in concentration of treatment. What is characteristic of the poem is the employment of the spoken idiom. This in fact, is Browning's strength as a poet-the introduction of a conversational tone in poetry. We may note that Browning in this respect anticipates many of the modern trends in poetry (T.S. Eliot's poetry for example)

The Duke of Ferrara addresses an envoy from a count, who has come with a marriage proposal. The duke shows the portrait of his former wife and proudly says that it was painted by a famous painter, Friar Pandolph. He praises the painting as being so life-like that it is difficult to believe that his wife is no more. The duke is in raptures about the portrait. He asks : "could any one except me make out the depth, the emotion contained in these looks ?"

The Duke then calls the attention of the envoy to a characteristic expression in her face—a blush. Commenting on it, he says ; "My dear sir, it was not just the presence of the husband that flushed the cheeks of the duchess with joy. Any flattering remark from any body would make her happy. Perhaps the painter would observe, My fair lady, your mantel covers the wrist too much, or paint and brush can never be expected to catch or reproduce the kind of half-flush of emotion that goes with you. This kind of talk she thought was courtesy to her and she had roses in her cheeks. She had a heart "ready to be gladdened and ready to be impressed".

According to the duke, it is this quality in her that offended him. Anything would please her, an expensive gift from him, an insignificant present of fruits from somebody else, or even such things as the setting of the sun with orange glow or riding on a mule.

The duke's complaint is that while she thanked as though she equated in rank his gift to her of a 900 years lineage to any gift by anybody, she did not fully seem to realize the greatness of the duke's lineage. Of course, he could have taught her all this. But he did not because that would be stooping , and he did not want to stoop to all that . The duke adds "whenever I passed by her, she smiled at me, but she would smile that way whenever any fellow passed by her. This went on. I issued commands; and all smiles stopped".

The duke then refers to the marriage proposal made by the envoy. He says; "Let me make myself once again clear to you, as envoy from the Count, that his daughter is my primary objective and not anything else, such as dowry in a large measure, though I know the munificence of the Count, your master, in this respect". He ends his speech by pointing to a bronze statue of Neptune taming the sea horse. "specially cast for me in the workshop of Austria, which is considered a rarity".

This is the situation presented in the poem. The monologue of the duke is in effect, a self portrayal. We come to understand his vain and boastful nature, and also his heartlessness, especially to his first wife.

"My Last Duchess" is one of the most successful poems of Browning. It exhibits all the characteristics that we associate with Browning as a poet.

First, we must note that it is a dramatic monologue—a form of writing that Browning pioneered. A dramatic monologue is a long speech by a speaker, but it must be distinguished from the soliloquy. In a soliloquy the speaker speaks to himself; he is not addressing his thoughts to anybody but to himself, but in a dramatic monologue the speaker is addressing an audience. In the present poem, the duke is the speaker and the envoy is the listener. The listener is passive, but his reactions to the speech of the duke are incorporated in the monologue of the duke itself. Thus there is an element of the drama in the poem the abrupt turns in the speech of the duke indicate this. Hence it is called a dramatic monologue. Most of Browning's poems, we may note, are cast in this form. Because of the dramatic treatment of the them, the poem has a compelling appeal.

The next point of interest in the poem is the character of the duke. We must note how his character is revealed very subtly through his speech. We note that he is of a boastful nature. He is proud that the portrait of his wife was done by a famous painter. Then he is proud of his 900 year old

lineage. He also boasts of the Neptune statue as having been specially cast for him.

He is so much self absorbed that he does not care for the feelings of others. He is heartless, and he got annoyed with his wife for her open nature. From his speech we come to know that she was innocent and polite by nature. But the proud duke could not bear the idea that she was not sufficiently appreciative of his status. She could have been taught to realize his worth, but he did not want to stoop to the level of educating her. Instead, he gave commands and stopped her smiling altogether. We understand what a cruel person the duke is. With a single command he blotted out all happiness for her. And he is proud of it!

Finally, the duke is avaricious. He says that the main consideration in marriage is the bride and not anything else; but at the same time he hints that he expects a large dowry from the Count.

The duke is, thus, a vain, mean-minded and heartless person. The point, we must remember, is that Browning has very successfully conveyed this impression within a small compass, and this is mainly because of the employment of the dramatic form.

SCE - 2

After reading the poem what can you say about the Duke?

5.5 Let's sum up

This unit has discussed the life of Browning, his love for his wife who was a poetess herself. It says that Browning lost interest in life after the death of his wife whom he loved immensely and whose poetry appealed to him greatly. It reveals that Browning's best poetry came between the years 1845-1861, he met Miss Barrett in 1845 and she died in 1861.

This unit critically analysed Browning's 'My Last Duchess'

5.6 Sample Questions

1. What are the characteristics of a dramatic monologue?
2. The Duke's arrogance, egotism and contempt for the Duchess are very clear from the beginning of the poem 'My Last Duchess'. Explain with examples.

5.7 Answer to self-check exercises

1. Browning's prime interest was music and he became an admirable musician.
2. We can say that the Duke is heartless and he is incapable of human feelings.

BRAOU

BLOCK - IV

Unit - I : W.B.Yeats : The Second Coming.

1.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * discuss the life and works of Yeats
- * See that Yeats became a public figure, became the member of the first senate
- * see that Yeats received the Nobel prize for literature.

1.1 Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Contents
- 1.2 Introduction
- 1.3 Yeats - life and works
- 1.4 W.B.Yeats - his achievements as a poet.
- 1.5 Let's sum up
- 1.6 Sample Questions
- 1.7 Answer to self-check exercises

1.2 Introduction

This unit discusses the early life of Yeats, his education, his mother's influence on him. It says that Yeats' father introduced him to a wide range of literature - the works of Shakespeare, Blake, Shelley and others. It discusses the development in Yeats' poetry. It points out that Yeats concern with old age decay, the cyclical change in history and inexorable events of time became central to his powerful verse.

1.3 Yeats - life and works

William Butler Yeats was born in Ireland in 1865. He was the son of an artist, John B. Yeats and Susan Pollexfen. Yeats' mother belonged to Sligo in Ireland and her influence upon her son's early experiences, both directly and indirectly was great. She herself was fascinated by the history and mythology of Ireland which she often heard from local story tellers and peasants. Yeats' early

life was also full of pleasant memories of his stay at his maternal grandfather's house at Sligo. Although he had very little formal education, the young boy, William, developed a keen sense of observation and a love for nature. "My first memories are fragmentary and isolated and contemporaneous.....it seems as if time had not yet been created for all thoughts are connected with emotion and place without sequence", he says. Irish stories about fairies, ghosts and strange happenings interested the young Yeats as much as the legends of Irish heroes. When he was about eight or nine years old the family moved to London.

In 1880 however, the Yeats returned to Ireland and the schooling of William continued. "I had not thought it possible that boys could work so hard.....we read Shakespeare for the grammar exclusively" says Yeats about his education at the Erasmus High school in Dublin. Fortunately J.B. Yeats had introduced his son to a wide range of literature including the works of Shakespeare, Blake and Shelley.

In 1884, Yeats joined the metropolitan school of Arts at Dublin. He had no great aptitude for drawing, but he was interested in writing poems. In the same year, he met George Russell and two or three years later, he made the acquaintance of other literary figures of the time like George Bernard Shaw William Morris and Oscar Wilde. In 1887 the Yeatses moved to London again. By then Yeats had begun to collect and publish Irish myths and stories. He also joined the Theosophical society of Madam Blavatsky. In 1889 he published his first collection of poems, the *Wanderings of Oisín* (pronounced Usheen). This year was also memorable for Yeats because he first met the lovely revolutionary, Maud Gonne who was to have a lasting influence upon his life. She inspired many of his poems and was responsible also for his involvements in the Irish Republican Movement.

In 1892 Yeats became the founding member of the first literary society and a few years later, (in 1896) he met Lady Gregory, a patroness of art and literature. It was at her home, Coole Park, that Yeats wrote many of his works.

Yeats asked Maud Gonne to marry him but she refused. She married Major Sean Macbride in 1930. This marriage came as a blow in Yeats personal life, but by 1950 Abbey Theater had been founded and the Irish Literary Theater launched, and he was already an Irish literary figure. He was thus pre-occupied with his work. Two years later, "The Playboy of the Western World" a play by John Millington Synge was staged at the Abbey Theater and was followed by riots. Yeats defended his fellow playwright and later toured the USA with the Abbey players.

The World War itself did not deeply affect Yeats personally but 1916 was the year of the Easter Rising in Ireland. Fifteen leaders of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, including the husband of Maud Gonne, were executed. To commemorate this historic event Yeats wrote 'Easter 1916' a poem which questioned the paradox inherent in heroic martyrdom. Now that Maud Gonne was a free woman, Yeats proposed to her again, but in vain. In the following year he proposed to Isolt Gonne, the adopted daughter of Maud Gonne, but she too rejected him. Soon afterwards he married George Hyde - Lees whom he had known for about five years. It was a marriage which was to prove extremely lucky for Yeats professionally. Shortly after her marriage Mrs. Yeats discovered that she had a gift for 'automatic writing' and it was through this rare quality that Yeats found the symbols for his later poems. *A Vision* too, was inspired by the automatic writing of Mrs. George Yeats.

By the 1920s Yeats had become a public figure. The Irish Civil War broke out in 1922 and he was a member of the first Senate. In 1923 he received the Nobel prize for literature at Sweden.

Four collections of Lyric verse which appeared around the 1920s, *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1919), *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921) *The Tower* (1928) and the *The Winding Stair and other poems* (1933), clearly show a development in Yeats' poetry. His concern with old age, decay, the cyclical change in history, and the inexorable events of time became central to his powerful verse.

'*Last Poems*' was published in 1938, and after a brief illness, Yeats, died in January 1939. His body was brought back to Ireland from France for a re-burial nine years later, in 1948. He was buried at Drumcliff. 'Under bare Ben Bulbin's head', with the following inscription which he himself had written :

Cast a cold eye
On life, on death
Horseman, pass by.

SCE - 1

What were the things that interested the young Yeats ?

1.4 W.B.Yeats - his achievement as a poet.

What kind of poet is W.B. Yeats ? if we ask ourselves this question and compare him with some of the other poets we have read we can assess him and his contribution to literature. Yeats has often been compared with the Romantic poets. There are, of course, great differences between him and the English Romantic poets like Wordsworth or Coleridge but it is also true that he put himself into the tradition of English Romantic poetry. He felt he belonged to it. In one of his poems he says:

We were the last Romantics - chose for theme
Traditional sanctity and loveliness
Whatever's written in what poet's name
The book of the people; whatever most can bless

He deplored the passing of that generation and the change that was coming. At the same time we must bear in mind the fact that Yeats spent the first thirty six years of his life in the Victorian era. Within it he has been linked with the counter- tradition of Victorianism it came to him through Rosseti, Walter Pater and William Morris. Yeats did not hold the major Victorian poets Tennyson or Browning in great esteem. Rather, he admired the poetry of William Morris who, as a symbolist, differed from the major poets of the age. In poetic practice Yeats' resentment of Victorian poetry was largely because.

"The revolt against Victorianism meant to the young poet a revolt against irrelevant descriptions of nature, the scientific and moral discursiveness of *In Memoriam*.....the political eloquence of Swinburne, psychological curiosity of Browning, and the poetical diction of every body" (Yeats, *Introduction to The Oxford Book of Modern Verse*, 1936). Yeats' own early verse however, was not entirely devoid of all these qualities he disapproved of. What the student of Yeats must remember therefore is that his was a complex reaction to the Romantics and the Victorians and categorizing him with one or the other school of poetry is not a simple matter. Notwithstanding all this complexity, however, the impact of William Blake and Shelley is evident.

"I who had made 'Prometheus Unbound' my sacred book was delighted with all he (Edward Dowden) read". (Yeats' *Autobiographies* p.87) he says, acknowledging his admiration for Shelley. And in the gradual development that he made from personal meaning to general meaning through the use of symbols, the debt to Blake is clear.

A study of Yeats as a poet must inevitably lead us to his *Autobiographies*, where he tells us "Indeed I remember little of childhood but its pain, I have grown happier every year of life as though gradually conquering something in myself, for certainly my miseries were not made by others but were a part of my mind". It is the poet's mind, sensitive and self-analytical. And later, in his 'A General Introduction for my work' he observes that, "a poet writes always of his personal life, in his finest work out of its tragedy, whatever it be, remorse, lost love, or mere loneliness he never speaks directly as to someone at the breakfast table, there is always a phantasmagoria" (p 509)

And this is the special quality of Yeats. His ability to feel life intensely and to write from out of his personal experience of things which are closest to him. T.S. Eliot extols this quality in the following manner

"There are two forms of impersonality; that which is natural to the mere skillful craftsman, and that which is more and more achieved by the maturing artist. The first is that of what I have called the 'anthology' piece of a lyric by Lovelace or Suckling or of Champion, a finer poet than either. The second impersonality is that of the poet, who, out of intense and personal experience is able to express a general truth; retaining all the particularity of his experience, to make of it a general symbol.

And the strange thing is that Yeats having been a great craftsman in the first kind, became a great poet in the second". (*Poetry and Poets* p.252-262). This is high praise indeed for Yeats to receive

from one of the keenest of English literary critics;

Yeats' account of his early life and the themes of his first few collections of poems reveal the influence of his personal experiences. In an early poem 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' he declares his deep love of the Sligo countryside in Ireland. Writing on the same in prose, he says.

".....and I planned to live some day in a cottage on a little island called Innisfree and Innisfree was opposite Slish wood where I meant to sleep". (*Autobiographies* p.72). The stories of Ireland its legends, myths and even its heroic figures found their way into his early verse. Aengus, Hanrahan, Fergus, Oisín---some of the characters who appear in his poems, are typically Irish and have a dream-like quality about them. But, by about 1899 the dream reality of Yeats' poetry took on a new life. He had met Maud Gonne and fallen deeply in love with her. But it was a love which was unrequited, and despair followed. The dream world of Irish themes and Irish surroundings became heightened by the presence of Maud Gonne. The illusory quality of his lyrics is quite close to the fresh and spontaneous verse of Shelley. The vitality of the verse in *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899) came from Yeats' Irishness and his unhappy experience of love.

Linked with Irish myth were the politics. The Irish Republican Brotherhood was founded in 1858, and Yeats attached himself to it and took its oath to

".....do my utmost to establish the national independence of Ireland and that I will preserve inviolable the secrets of the organisation". The Brotherhood was not content with the Home Rule movement but demanded complete national independence. John O'leary, Wolfe Tone and Parnell, were some of the many great Irish revolutionaries who were immortalized in the poems of Yeats. 'Parnell's Funeral' (1935) written about thirty years after his death remembers the great national hero and his martyrdom.

Under the influence of friends like Lady Gregory, George Russell (AE) and Standish O'Grady, Yeats was drawn into the Irish Literary Renaissance. Synge and O'Casey joined later, and the Abbey Theatre was founded in 1905. During his dramatic period, from about 1903 to 1913, Yeats began to write plays for a popular audience at the newly-founded theatre. Yeats' ambition was for a national theater which made Ireland beautiful in memory, and yet had been freed from provincialism by an exacting criticism and this ideal he found in the plays of J.M. Synge. In a letter to Florence Farr (1907) he explained how drama helped in his development.

"I at last find that I can move people by power, not merely as the phrase is by charm or speaking beautifully a thing I always resented. I feel this change in all my work-even things seemingly beyond control answer strangely to what is within".

As a result of his theatrical experience then, Yeats was able to forge a new style which went beyond the 'Celtic twilight' manner of his early verse. The mood of nostalgia, and frustration gave way to images of vitality and experiential reality and more direct confrontation with the subject matter followed. The speech too became more like the language of a waking real world.

About this time World War I broke out. But the Easter Rising of 1916 was stirring for Yeats

personally. His poem about the change of one emotion into another is a model of revolutionary change in general.

In 1917 after having been rejected by Maud Gonne yet again, Yeats had married George Hyde-Lees. Through her 'automatic writing' and 'automatic speech' Yeats received a message from his 'Communicators' that

".....we have come to give you metaphors for poetry"

The 1920s brought fame to Yeats and in 1923 he went to receive the Nobel Prize at Sweden. By this time Lyric poetry had become his central concern again and he turned to the theme on old age for most of his later verse.

As to a dog's tail

Decrepit age that has been tied to me

But even in the consciousness of physical ageing comes the awareness that the mind is free of such limitations,

Never had I more

Excited, Passionate, fantastical

Imagination nor an ear and eye

That more expected the impossible

One of the striking features of the new direction his verse took is his use of symbols. Despite a strong sense of the particular place for example, the tower at Thoor Ballylee or Lady Gregory's home 'Coole Park' the reader is given a sense of the widening of the horizon to include the cosmic and the Universal. The main symbol in most of Yeats' life poems was a sphere in which a pair of interpenetrating gyres or cones whirled (see lesson 2) the two are opposites and are at war with each other such that if one secures a victory for one period (2000 years) the other is triumphant for the next period of twenty centuries. Thus, what this symbol signified most clearly was conflict and change in movement. At the same time, the symbol stood for unity since it held two contraries within it. We shall see how Yeats used this symbol in 'The Second Coming' to suggest change of generations and the passing of time.

Some critics like I.A. Richards find Yeats' signs and symbols merely irritating and consider them to be simply machinery or a world of 'phantasmagoria'. But Yeats himself was convinced about the beliefs that he held and described. Perhaps it was Yeats' belief that the poet was a dreamer, a traditional belief, which made him give shape to an alternate reality.

In his comparative statement of the achievement of Thomas Hardy and Yeats, Donald Davie declares that Yeats' greatness lies in his ability to "exert himself repeatedly to transcend historical

time by seeing it as cyclical, so as to leap above it into a realm that is visionary, mythological, and (in some sense or to some degree) eternal" (Davie; *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry*, p.4) But while we may agree with Davie about Yeats' universality, we must also remember that, as we noticed earlier, Yeats is steeped in the events of his own life and times.

To conclude, let us return to T.S. Eliot's famous memorial tribute to W.B. Yeats.

"There are some poets whose poems can be considered more or less in isolation; for experience and delight. There are others whose poetry, though giving equal experience and delight has a large historical importance. Yeats was one of the latter. He was one of the few whose history was the history of our own time, who are part of the consciousness of our age, which cannot be understood without them".

SCE - 2

What did the symbol 'sphere' stand for in Yeats' poetry?

1.5 Let's sum up

This unit has discussed the early influences of his parents on Yeats. It has discussed his achievements as a modern poet. It has explained Yeats' resentment of Victorian poetry. The unit has explained that Yeats put himself into the tradition of English Romantic poetry though his poetry is greatly different from that of Wordsworth or Coleridge. It discussed Yeats' ability to live life intensely and write from out of his personal experience of things which are closest to him. The unit has discussed the use of symbols in his poems.

1.6 Sample Questions

1. What was the comment made by Donald Davie about Yeats?
2. What is the new direction adopted by Yeats for his verse?
3. What is the achievement of Yeats as a poet?

1.7 Answers to self-check exercises

1. The young Yeats took an interest in fairy tales, ghosts, strange happenings. The legends of

Irish heroes attracted his attention.

2. The symbol 'sphere' in Yeats' poetry signifies change and conflict in the movement of time. The symbol also stood for unity since it held two contraries within it. Yeats used this symbol (a pair of interpenetrating gyres) in *The Second Coming* to suggest change of generations and the passing of time.

BRAOU

Unit - 2: The Second Coming

2.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * see the influence of the theosophists upon Yeats.
- * explain the belief of Yeats that each era is constituted of two thousand years and the beginning of each new cycle is marked by the birth of a manifestation of God in physical form.
- * discuss Yeats' point that things in this world no more have a fulcrum or centre to keep them together and they fall apart and there is confusion and anarchy everywhere.

2.1 Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Contents
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3 The Second Coming - The Text - Glossary and Notes
- 2.4 The Second Coming - Explanation
- 2.5 Let's sum up
- 2.6 Sample Questions
- 2.7 Answers to self-check exercises.

2.2 Introduction

This unit discusses Yeats' view that God comes upon earth at regular intervals in different forms. It expresses his view that 'The Second Coming' (of God) will be accompanied by revolutionary changes in the world. It says that Yeats is concerned with this prophetic vision in this poem.

2.3 The Second Coming - The Text - Glossary and Notes

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The falcon cannot hear the falconer;

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

The blood dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
 The best lack all conviction, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity
 Surely some revelation is at hand;
 Surely the Second Coming is at hand
 The Second Coming; Hardly are those words out
 When the vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*
 Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
 A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
 A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
 Is moving its slow things, while all about it
 Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
 The darkness drops again; but now I know
 That twenty centuries of stony sleep
 Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
 And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
 Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born

- The Second Coming** : The birth of Jesus Christ is referred to as the coming of God upon the earth. The 'Second Coming' is a reference to a prophecy made in the New Testament of the Bible, Matthew XXIV, that God will manifest himself into human form once again. The description of the Antichrist follows St. John's description of Apocalypse in Revelations, the last book of the Bible. However, Yeats' prediction changes the form of the Antichrist into a rough beast.
- Gyre** : Literally meaning a reel or spool which is unwinding. A word which for Yeats becomes a symbol for the spinning movement of time in a cycle of history.
- Falcon** : A bird which was generally used for hunting smaller birds. Its flight is high and like that of the eagle or hawk but it was initially hooded and then set free to swoop down on its prey. Here, refers to man who has become a bird of prey.
- Falconer** : The hunter who trained falcons and released them to hunt prey. Here, God or Christ who had set man free into the world but over whom he has lost control now.

The centre	:	The fulcrum of the wheel
Anarchy	:	Confusion, Chaos
Blood - dimmed tide	:	Killing and blood shed has increased to such an extent that it is like a tide of blood, a sea of blood.
Ceremony of innocence	:	The quality of being simple-minded and free from evil has become like a formal ritual.
Conviction	:	A firm or sincere belief
Passionate intensity	:	Strong feelings or hatred or anger or bad temper
Revelation	:	Something secret or unknown. Here, about the future happenings which are revealed by a vision.
Spiritus Mundi	:	An original spirit from which all the images of the world have come.
Indignant	:	A feeling of surprised anger at something which should not be so. Here, the beast/man creature.
Darkness drops	:	The vision or revelation ends and everything becomes dark again.
Twenty centuries	:	Yeats believed that each cyclical pattern of history was made up of 2000 years.
Stony	:	Cruel, without pity or feeling
Vexed	:	Continually troubled
Slouches	:	Walks with an awkward stooping movement
Bethlehem	:	The birth place of Jesus Christ near Jerusalem.

SCE - 1

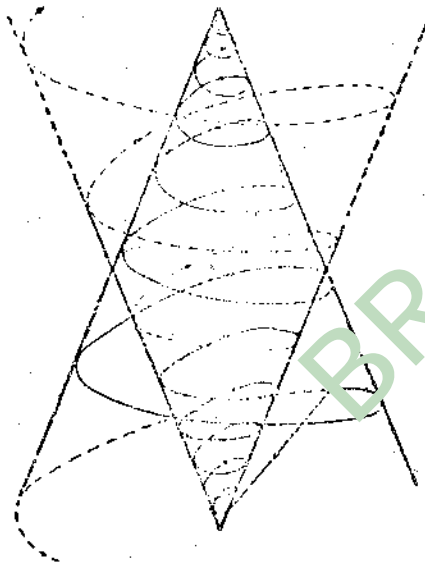
In the poem the word 'revelation' is used. What does it refer to ?

2.4 The Second Coming - Explanation

The Second Coming is one of the best known poems of W.B. Yeats. The title 'The Second Coming' indicates the influence the theosophists upon Yeats. The belief it points to is that God comes upon the earth at the regular intervals in different forms. The idea is also taken from the reference

Christ makes in The New Testament of the Bible, Matthew : 24 to his rebirth or 'Second Coming'. From his prose works, *A Vision* and his *Autobiographies*, and also from poems like 'Leda and Swan' and 'Gyres' we learn of Yeats' belief that an 'era' is constituted of two thousand years and the beginning of each new cycle is marked by the birth of a manifestation of God in physical form. The Christian era had begun with the birth of Christ and now, as it draws to a close, we have a 'vision' of an Antichrist which is to come in a half-man, half-beast form. In this prediction we can trace the influence of St. John's vision of the coming of the beast of Apocalypse. This birth or 'Second Coming' will be accompanied by revolutionary changes in the world. And it is with this prophetic vision that Yeats is concerned in this poem.

The cycle of two thousand years is represented in the first part of *A Vision* in the form of two triangles inverted one upon the other with the base of one touching the peak of the other. Within the triangle are spirals of gyres that unwind from the peak to the base. When the base of one triangle is reached and the spiral has unwound itself, the opposite movement begins in the second triangle whose peak lies on the base of the first triangle. The gyres are therefore, conical spirals within which historical events are supposed to occur.



If I call the unshaded cone 'Discord' and other 'concord' and think of each as the bounds of a gyre I see that the gyre of 'Concord' diminishes as that of 'Discord' increases, and can imagine after that the gyre of 'Concord' increasing while that of 'Discord' diminishes; and so on, one gyre within the other always.

(*A Vision*, p.68)

The unwinding gyres are specifically referred to in about six different poems of Yeats. Drawing upon the Irish language, he describes spinning movement as 'perned in the gyre' in 'Demon and Beast', 'perned in a gyre' in 'Sailing to Byzantium' 'the loaded pern' in 'Shepherd and Goatherd'. 'Hades bobbin' in 'Byzantium' and 'Gyre' in 'The Second Coming' are other references he makes to gyres.

The spiraling, unreeling motion suggested by the use of these words also hints at the uncontrollable or inexorable.

'The Second Coming' was published in 1921 in the volume entitled 'Michael Robartes and the Dancer'. Like the other very well known poem in the same volume, 'Easter 1916', this poem also records Yeats' horror at the turn of events in the world around. The destruction and terror of the Irish Civil War and the Fascist tendencies of the World War mark the out break of revolutionary changes everywhere. Yeats' anxiety at the disruption of peace is accompanied by his awareness that the forces affecting the world, like the unwinding gyres, are uncontrollable. What he comments upon

is the loss of all ideals and convictions. The poem to which he later refers in a letter to Esther Mannin, was symbolic to Yeats of 'the growing murderousness of the world'. His response to the Fascist movement and his concern at 'the blood-dimmed tide' is suggested by his fear that even the 'Ceremony' of innocence is drowned. Innocence is no longer what it should be, and being a mockery it is drowned, perhaps, in the blood-dimmed tide of murderousness. The centre or the fulcrum which had held together the turning wheel of time itself cannot hold firm. Man, the falcon (bird) had drifted farther away from the falconer, God. Things no more have a fulcrum or centre to keep them together and they all fall apart while everywhere there is confusion and anarchy. Those people who were steeped in the murdering of 'innocence' continue their hideous acts in the intensity of meaningless passion, while those who feared spiritual retribution and had some semblance of a conscience, also appear to have given up all their principles and convictions. The echoes of Shelley's poem 'Prometheus Unbound' (i.e., lines 625-8) are too obvious to be ignored.

'The good want power, but weep barren tears

The powerful goodness want; worse need for them

The wise want love; and those who love want wisdom:

And all best things are thus confused to ill,

The second part of the poem is almost an answer to the first part. The moment is ripe, then, says the poet, for some revelation. The time has come where one cycle of history must end and the other start. The time for the prophetic vision appears to have come and it is the poet who, prophet-like will see the Beast-God that is going to be born. This God must be the God that is going to mark the coming of a new civilization. So it is the 'Second Coming'. But this time the new 'God is an Anti-Christ because unlike the subjective Christian era of two thousand years this era will be an era of objectivity. Like the Greek civilization the 'new' civilization will be outward-looking and will be symbolized by a creature like the sphinx—half man and half-beast. As soon as the magical words, "the Second Coming", are uttered the revelation is made. A vast image comes out of '*Spiritus Mundi*', the spirit of the world which generates all the image. It is unlike the benevolent image that brought in the earlier civilization - the Christian era of two thousand years. It is an image which "troubles my sight". Very soon, however we understand why the poet is dismayed at the image. It is a shape (an indeterminate label) which has a lion's body and the hand of a man". This rough beast has none of the gentle innocence of infancy which are felt to be present in the child, Jesus Christ. The beast is like the ancient Egyptian Sphinx (male—the Greek Sphinx is female) with large eyes and "a gaze blank and pitiless as the sun". Its movement too is awkward. It does not walk, but 'slouches' towards Bethlehem to take birth. The movement of its 'thighs' has suggestions of the physical rather than the spiritual, and here is slow and deliberate. All round it the poet can see dark shadows of the desert birds. The birds, most certainly, are birds of prey and their movement is described as reeling a circular movement; the spiralling movement, we have already observed, suggests the inexorable or the unavoidable to Yeats and is therefore the movement by which he describes the unravelling of time and history: Moreover, the desert birds, themselves birds of prey, are 'indignant'. Could this be because of the greater bestiality of the creature that is moving towards Bethlehem?

Yeats himself says in a note to *Wheels and Butterflies* that from 1903 he was always imagining

"at my left side just out of the range of sight, a frozen winged beast that I associated with laughing destruction.....after-wards described in my poem, 'The Second Coming'.

Another significant feature is the place of birth of the 'rough beast'. It is proceeding towards Bethlehem to be born there, like Christ - a fact which in itself shocks the reader. This is the indication we have that the Christian humanitarian "twenty centuries" are coming to an end and another Christ is going to mark the beginning of a new era.

"The darkness drops again", the vision the poet was shown ends but he knows now that "the rocking cradle" of the beast has "vexed to nightmare" twenty centuries of stony sleep by its revelation of a new age. The prophetic vision which has come to the poet's mind has shown him the form of the rough beast that is to be born, now that "its hour has come round at last" the time for it to be born draws near.

This poem, then heralds a new manifestation of God in the shape of a rough beast. The poet does not know much more about the things that are to follow but the end of one cycle of two thousand years, he says, will be marked by revolutionary changes and, this is a fact which is frightening. The old assumptions and beliefs will be shattered by wars, tyrannies and murders. Describing his anxiety about the pressures of his time-his awareness of the forces affecting the world, the world war and the civil war-Yeats creates the mood within which the prophetic vision becomes more powerful. And in the recounting of the possible birth of the Anti-Christ, this is a personal prophetic role. *Spiritus Mundi* the archetypal store house of all images, brings out an image and the veil is lifted for the poet, who, like a seer, is to get a glimpse of it.

The powerful image becomes even more potent and ominous through Yeats' attention to minute detail. The incarnation like repetitive use of certain words charges the atmosphere with a sense of urgency 'turning and turning', is loosed, is loosed', at hand, 'at hand', 'The Second Coming' the Second Coming. In the physical description of the beast, Yeats uses his words very carefully. The 'rough' beast, 'slouches' and moves its 'slow thighs'. Its 'gaze' is blank and pitiless. The choice of all these words adds to the totality of a brutish monster lacking in any of the humanitarian qualities which Christ is traditionally believed to have possessed. The poet's own reaction to it is also suggested by expressions like 'troubles' my sight, 'vexed to nightmare'.

Further, what strikes the reader is the manner in which Yeats brings together contrary expectations, for instance, in an expression like the ceremony of innocence. The picture of a world which has lost all sense of values is most clearly brought out by the assumptions one has of 'ceremony' and 'innocence' and the manner in which Yeats puts them together. The world has become such a place that even innocence which we would consider a positive virtue has become merely a ceremony something without too much value-like a ritual which is mechanically performed.

SCE - 2

- A. What are the revolutionary changes that Yeats speaks of in the poem ?
- B. What does Yeats mean by the 'ceremony of innocence' in the poem ?

2.5 Let's Sum Up

This unit has given the text and glossary of the poem 'The Second Coming'. It has discussed the ideas of Yeats regarding time, his ideas of revolutionary changes in the world which are bound to disturb the peace and create chaos. It has explained the prophetic vision of Yeats which is the main concern in the poem. It has discussed the idea of Yeats that the Christian era has been subjective and the coming era (next two thousand years) will be an era of objectivity.

2.6 Sample Questions

1. What is the prophetic vision of Yeats?
2. What does the word falcon convey to you in the poem?
3. What does 'The Second Coming' refer to in the poem?

2.7 Answers to self-check exercises

1. The word 'revelation' refers to the future happenings which are revealed by a vision.
2. A. The revolutionary changes that Yeats speaks of are : the old assumptions and beliefs will be broken down and violence will result. The peace in the world will be shattered by wars, tyrannies and murders.
B. Yeats says that even 'innocence' which we regard as a positive virtue has become a mere ceremony - a ritual in the changing world.

Unit - 3 : T.S.Eliot (1888 - 1965) -

To the Indians Who Died In South Africa

3.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * discuss Eliot as a great poet of the 20th century.
- * see that Eliot is not only a poet but also a playwright and a literary critic
- * see that the poem 'To the Indians who died in South Africa' specially referred to here is an occasional piece.

3.1 Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Contents
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Eliot's poetry with a special reference to his poem 'To the Indians Who Died In South Africa'.
- 3.4 Let's sum up
- 3.5 Sample questions
- 3.6 Answer to self - check exercises

3.2 Introduction

This unit introduces to you Eliot a great 20th century poet, play wright and critic. It mentions some of his noted poems. It explains that Eliot very subtly brings out in the poem 'To the Indians Who Died In South Africa' the meaninglessness of war, the meaning of heroism and sacrifice etc.

3.3 Eliot's poetry with a special reference to his poem 'To the Indians Who Died in South Africa'.

T.S. Eliot is a well known modern poet. He wrote a number of poems which are looked upon as important landmarks in 20th century English poetry. He began writing in the first decade of the 20th century and he published his first collection of poems in 1922. Among his most important poems are *The Waste Land*, *The love song of Alfred Prufrock*, *The Four Quarters*. He also wrote a number of plays in the medium of blank verse. In addition to all these, Eliot wrote a number of critical essays on English poetry in general, and modern literature in particular.

We now have before us a very interesting short poem of four stanzas written by Eliot on Indian soldiers who died in South Africa. Obviously Eliot was responding to a public event and the poem is an occasional piece. It deals with soldiers who died on the field of battle, soldiers who are buried far from their motherland, and soldiers who may have their own village, their family and their children. Eliot tries to explore in a very subtle manner the meaning or the meaninglessness of war, the meaning of heroism and sacrifice, its value, and the implications of action, action pursued with a common purpose by a group of soldiers.

"The mother and the Motherland better than heaven even" so goes that saying repeated countless times by the people in India. Not only in India but elsewhere also, people refer to the mother and the motherland in reverential terms, man's initial and final sense of belonging, sense of rootedness and sense of intimate affiliation or connection is derived from his relationship with the mother and the motherland

Love thy country, said Gurajada. He spoke lyrically of the motherland. But today such lyricism, such affirmative attachment to the motherland seems to be suspect. We reflect ironically on the question of patriotism and love of the motherland.

Poets of old have always celebrated war and war heroes. Those who celebrated the heroism of war and of sacrifice are as many as those who called in question the meaning and the meaninglessness of war. For every poet who sang:

If I should die, think only this of me:

That there's some corner of a foreign field

That's for ever England

There are others who considered war an outrage on humanity.

Owen in *'The Pity of War'* and Hardy in *Drummer Hodge* brought into focus the suffering of the individual soldier and his sensibility. He talks of Young Drummer Hodge as one uprooted from his soil only to be thrown aside uncoffined and unsung.

Yet portion of that unknown plain

will Hodge forever be

Eliot performs a balancing act in the poem. He seems to offer a muted endorsement of sacrifice and honour that goes with it by universalising all space. If Hardy localises the event of death, Eliot seems to lift it from the limiting notions of space. He does this by making a subtle distinction between destination and destiny.

The heroism of war has been called in question right from times immemorial. We have the celebrated instance of Arjuna despairing on the field of battle. Patriotism is a virtue cultivated and nursed all over the world in schools and colleges.

What Eliot does here is to weave a philosophical web round the values of war, love of the

country.

Puts the individual human being in the centre, redempting his values/sacrifice in the face of senseless death & destruction.

Action, neither heroic nor the opposite; action pursued by a common purpose.

Action which is fruitful in spite of the fact that the common soldier is unaware of it.

Action ungoverned by any vested interest.

Action whose fruits are not known until the moment after death or only in death is the meaning or fruit of action known.

One's birth place, village may be regarded as the Beginning and the End the final destination, as the terminus of the journey that a man undertakes; But one may not reach one's destination after all.

It is possible that one meets one's destiny (one's fate) may be here or may be there. It could be South Africa or Vietnam or Latin America.

Destination need not necessarily be one's destiny. Questing, working towards his destination, a soldier may bravely encounter his fate/his destiny.

Where he meets his destiny shall be his destination. That soil becomes his; his land, his village. Let his people remember that.

SCE - 1

A. What does Eliot try to explore in this short poem ?

B. What does the poem deal with ?

3.5 Let's Sum Up

This unit has briefly discussed Eliot and his works. It has referred to Eliot's short poem 'To the Indians Who Died in South Africa' as an example of his short poems. It has given examples of other poets who wrote on a similar theme and who considered war an outrage on humanity. It has explained that Eliot made a subtle distinction between destination and destiny in this poem.

3.6 Sample Questions

1. Mention one or two poets who considered war an outrage on humanity.
2. Every country is home to one man' and exile to another. Explain.
3. A man's destination is not his destiny comment.

3.6 Answers to self-check exercises

- A. In his short poem Eliot tries to explore in a very subtle manner the meaning or the meaninglessness of War, the meaning and value of heroism and sacrifice.
- B. The poem deals with soldiers who died on the battle field and soldiers who were buried far from their motherland.

BLOCK - V

Unit - 1 : A.K.Ramanujan

Small- Scale Reflections on a Great House

1.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * discuss the Indo-Anglian literature briefly
 - * trace the history of Indo-Anglian poetry.
 - * have an idea of early Indo-Anglian poets.
 - * see that A.K.Ramanujan's poetry draws heavily from Indian myth, history, cultural heritage and environment.
-

1.1 Contents

- 1.0 Objective
 - 1.1 Contents
 - 1.2 Introduction
 - 1.3 Indo-Anglian poets before independence
 - 1.4 Indo-Anglian poets after independence
 - 1.5 Let's sum up
 - 1.6 Sample Questions
 - 1.7 Answers to self-check exercises
-

1.2 Introduction

The unit discusses that a major body of Indian Writing in English (Indo-Anglian literature) is mainly rendered in prose or verse. It traces the historical and political circumstances that led to Indo-Anglian literature before and after the Indian Independence. It is discusses briefly the Indo-Anglian writers and the nature of their work.

1.3 Indo-Anglian poets before Independence

Indian Writing in English, now a major body of literature, is mainly rendered in prose or verse.

Historical and political circumstances gave the educated Indian of the nineteenth century a certain proficiency in the use of English. Most of the early Indo-Anglian experiments in literature were in verse.

The history of Indo-Anglian poetry begins with Henry Vivian Derozio (1809-1831), who was part Indian and part Portuguese. He was born in 1809 and educated at a school in Calcutta. He had a taste for literature and philosophy, admired the poet Burns, and laid his trust in "the French revolution and British Radicalism". He was influenced by the English Romantic poets, and composed poems that reveal a love for the natural world and a pervasive wistful melancholy. His poems deal mainly with subjects such as "patriotism, death, love or the transitoriness of life". He died at the early age of twenty two. Some of his poems are *Poetry*, *Song*, *Sonnet to the Moon* and others. His poem, *Poetry*, for example may be taken as representative. The poem deals with the "sweet madness" of poetic inspiration which seizes the mind with a "delicious frenzy" and catapults it through the vicissitudes of creation :

Now in the deep recesses of the sea.

And now by highest Himalaya it mounts;

Now by the fragrant shores of Araby,

Or classic Greece or sweet Italic's founts,

Or through her wilderness of ruins.....

The themes which poetry lights upon are varied and range from melodious love-songs to the passionate lyricism of a seraph:

-- now

Gazing on beauty's lip, valour's brow;

Or rivalling the nightingale and dove

In pouring forth its melody of love;

Or giving to the gale, in strains of fire,

Immortal harping - like a seraph's lyre.

The poem, an eulogy to poetic inspiration, is reminiscent of eighteenth century English verse. There is nothing distinctively "Indian" here, and the poet draws widely on Western sources. Though Derozio's poetry does draw on Indian myths and sentiments, the inspiration is quite obviously "Romantic".

Toru Dutt, another early poet in English, was born in 1856 in a Hindu family in Calcutta. When Toru was six years old, her family turned Christian and later went to France and England. They

returned home in November 1873, and Toru at once began writing. She translated French lyrics into English, and these were published under the title *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*. However, her next collection of poems, *Arabian Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, turns to India for inspiration. Some of her poems are 'The Lotus, Mon Pere, Our Causarina Tree', which is, perhaps the most popular. The poem harks back to a past long gone, and the tone is strongly reminiscent of Wordsworth.

But not because of its magnificence

Dear it the Causarina to my soul !

Bencah it we have played though years may roll,

O sweet companions, loved with love intense,

For your sakes shall the tree be ever dear !

Blent with your images, it shall arise

In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes !

These lines in fact, call to mind certain lines from Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey', where Wordsworth voices the same sentiments in almost the same words. Like Derazio's her poems are essentially romantic in their treatment of themes.

Some other Indo-Anglian poets writing in the period before independence are Manmohan Ghose (1869-1924), Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1914), Sri Aurobindo Ghosh (1872-1950) and Sarojini Naidu (1857-1950).

Rabindranath Tagore wrote mainly in Bengali but occupies a firm place in Indo-Anglian poetry. He was a poet, a story-teller, novelist, philosopher and educationist. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913 for his *Gitanjali*, a collection of his English renderings of his own Bengali songs. *The Crescent Moon*, *Love's Gift* and *Sadhana* are some of his famous works. In his poem, *Heaven of Freedom*, Tagore sets forth his vision of a free world:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments

by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth.....

Tagore pleads for a land where reason overcomes superstitious custom and the mind is free to explore the vast frontiers of knowledge:

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening
thought and action
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,
Let my country awake.

An equally immense figure in recent Indian History, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh made a contribution equal to that of Tagore. He is best known for his *Savitri*, a prophetic epic in the vedic tradition of poetry. He combined Eastern mythology with Western literary forms, and sought to harmonize these two. His great philosophic masterpiece is *The Life Divine*, but there are others such as *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *The Social Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity* and *The Future Poetry*.

Sarojini Naidu started as a poet, but later entered politics, and played a leading role in the national movement. She published three volumes of poetry. *The Golden Threshold* (1950), *The Bird of Time* (1912), and *the Broken Wing* (1917). The poems are essentially Indian in tone and imagery. The poem, 'Village Song', describes the predicament of a village woman who has stayed behind too long, and is now afraid to go home since night has fallen:

Full are my pitchers and far to carry,
Lone is the way and long,
Why, O why was I tempted to tarry
Lured by the boatmen's song?
Swiftly the shadows of night are falling,
Hear, O hear, is the white crane calling.
Is it the wild owl's cry?

The verse runs smoothly, the images of the boatmen and the swift-flowing water, and the refrain at the end of the stanza all lend a distinctively Indian touch to the poem:

There are no tender moonbeams to light me.
If in the darkness a serpent should bite me,
Or if an evil spirit should smite me,
Ram re Ram: I shall die.

Another charming poem is 'Bangle-Sellers', which deals with the social and religious significance of bangles in the life of the Indian woman:

Some are purple and gold-flecked grey,
For her who has journeyed through life midway,
Whose hands have cherished, whose love has blest
And cradled fair sons on her faithful breast,
Who serves her household in fruitful pride,
And worships the gods at her husband's side.

One consequence of the Second World War and Indian Independence was the dawning of a new era of poetry quite different from the older mode practised by poets such as Tagore, Aurobindo and Sarojini Naidu. An overt declaration of such aims is found in *Modern Indo-Anglian Poetry* (New Delhi, 1959), by Lal and K. Raghvendra Rao. These two young poets formally rejected "propaganda" and the poetry of the older school in their statement: "We claim that the phase of Indo-Anglian Romanticism ended with Sarojini Naidu". Lal and his associates were not very much interested in discursive poetry, but in a poetry which was concrete rather than abstract, and precise and lucid in statement. They wanted a poetry that was individual and described personal concerns.

SCE - 1

What does Sarojini Naidu's Bangle Sellers deal with ?

2.4 Indo-Anglian poets after Independence

Post - Independence Indo-Anglian poetry begins with Nissim Ezekiel who was born in 1924, and comes of a Jewish family of Bombay. His first book of poems *A Time to Change* was published in London in 1952. His other volumes are *Sixty Poems* (1953), *The Third* (1959), *The Unfinished Man* (1960), *The Exact Name* (1965), *Hymns in Darkness* (1976) and *Latter - Day Psalms* (1982) which won him the Sahitya Akademi award. He had edited several books including *Martin Luther King Reader* and journals such as *Quest*, *Poetry India* and *Freedom First*.

Ezekiel acknowledges the major influences of Pound, Eliot, Yeats, Rilke, Macneice, Spender and modern American poetry in general, on his writing. His poetry centres on "Love, personal

integration, the contemporary Indian sense, modern urban life and spiritual values". In *Night of the Scorpion*, one of his better known poems, Ezekiel draws a picture of contemporary India, and emphasizes the important role of the community. The peasants who bring candles and lanterns, and chant incantations to drive away the "Evil One". Against the power of tradition, the poet juxtaposes scepticism and rationalism thus drawing attention to the two different philosophies of India, the religious superstition of the peasants and the scientific rationalism of the Indian exposed to Western education. The end of the poem reflects the attitude of the Indian woman who makes light of her own suffering, and thanks God that the scorpion spared her children.

Occasionally, Ezekiel explores philosophical issues in his poetry. One example is the poem *Philosophy*, where Ezekiel sets forth his attitude to and conception of philosophy. As he muses upon the history of the universe, and the beginning of creation, he comes to certain interesting conclusions:

The landscape in its geologic prime
Dissolves to show its quintessential slime,
A million stars are blotted out, I think
Of each historic passion as a blink
That happens to the sad eye of Time.

The basic opposition in the poem, however, is between the external world, the world of the senses, and the abstract philosophy of myth and meaning that seeks to arrive at a final clarity:

But residues of meaning still remain,
As darkest myths meander through the pain
Towards a final formula of light:
I, too, reject that clarity of sight:
What cannot be explained, do not explain.

In the ultimate analysis, Ezekiel seems to concede a victory to the sense-bound imagination, which triumphs (by virtue of concreteness) over the cold barrenness of the other:

The mundane language of the senses sings
its own interpretations. Common things
Become, by virtue of their commonness,
An argument against the nakedness,
That dies of cold to find the truth it brings.

Kamala Das, another well known Indo-Anglian poet, was born in Malabar in 1934. In 1963 she won the PEN's Asian poetry prize. Her first volume, *Summer in Calcutta*, was published in 1965, and *The Descendants* in 1967. *The Old Playhouse and other poems* was published in 1973.

Kamala Das's poems are mainly autobiographical. Her poetry centres on love, sex fulfillment and deprivation. *The Freaks*, a poem about a couple on the verge of sexual fulfillment is perhaps representative :

He talks, turning a sun-stained
Check to me, his mouth, a dark
Cavern, where stalactites of
Uneven teeth gleam, his right
Hand on my knee while our minds
Are willed to race towards love;

The poem is characterised by vivid imagery, and is deeply introspective. The drawing of passion in the first lines of the poem fades away into a full silence, as desire ebbs and recedes :

.....Can't this man with
Nimble finger-tips unleash
Nothing more alive than the
Skin's lazy hungers Who can ?
Help us who have lived so long
And have failed to love ?

The defiant honesty of the last lines seems a tired, futile gesture, the last flickering before the fire dies :

it's only

To save my face, I flaunt at
Times, a grand, flamboyant lust.

A.K.Ramanujan, another Indo-Anglian poet, was born in 1929. He now lives in the United States of America. He had published only three volumes of poetry - *The Striders, Relations* (1971) and *Selected Poems* (1976). He has also translated some of the *Vachanas* from Kannada and some love poems from the Tamil classic, *Kurunthohai*.

Ramanujan's poetry draws heavily on Indian myth, history, cultural heritage and environment. His poems are precise and controlled, and his style is limpid and clear.

R. Parthasarathy is another poet in the Indo-Anglian tradition. He was born in 1934, studied at Bombay and then at Leeds. His great love for English literature led him into conflict with his own heritage, and in his poetry he seeks to come to terms with himself and his cultural past. In *Home Coming* he deals with precisely this theme:

My tongue in English chains,
I return, after a generation, to you.
I am at the end
of my dravidic tether,
hunger for you unassuaged
I falter, stumble.

Parthasarathy returns after a sojourn in foreign climes tired and longing for home. Unaccustomed as yet to his native language, Tamil, he speaks in an alien tongue:

Speak a tired language
Wrenched from its sleep in the *Kural*
teeth, palate, lips still new
to its agglutinative touch
Now, hooked on celluloid, you reel
down plush corridors

Here, he sets forth the conflict, explored in all his poetry, between his Indian background and his long exposure to the West.

Other poets in the Indo-Anglian tradition are, to name a few, P.Lal, Keki N. Daruwalla, Arun Kolatkar, and Gieve Patel. This by no means exhausts the list, which is still being added to. Indian poetry in English is still a living tradition.

SCE - 2

What do you know about Kamala Das's poems ?

2.5 Let's sum up

This unit has clearly discussed the Indian poets in English in early days - before Independence. It has said that stalwarts like Tagore, Aurobindo and Sarojini Naidu made major contributions to Indian poetry in English. The unit has discussed the works of Nissim Ezekiel extensively. It has discussed the poets Kamala Das, A.K.Ramanujan in brief describing the nature of their poetry. It has said that Indian poetry in English is still a living tradition, and many more names may be added to the list of Indo- Anglian poets.

2.6 Sample Questions

1. What do you know about Tagore's poetry in English.
2. Write a note on Nissim Ezekiel.
3. Comment on Indo-Anglian literature before and after Independence.

2.7 Answers to self-check exercises

1. The poem *Bangle Sellers* by Sarojini Naidu deals with the social and religious significance of bangles in the life of an Indian woman.
2. Kamala Das's poems are mainly autobiographical. Her poems centre on love, sex fulfillment and deprivation.

Unit - 2 : Small Scale Reflections on A Great House

2.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * see that A.K.Ramanujan's work is regarded as some of the best that Indo-Anglian poetry has produced.
- * realize that the poet uses English with high competence.
- * discuss that family life and relationships in India form the dominant theme in Ramanujan's poetry.

2.1 Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Contents
- 2.2 Introduction
- 2.3. Small Scale Reflections on A Great House - The text, and glossary
- 2.4 The Poetry of A.K. Ramanujan
- 2.5 Let's sum up
- 2.6 Sample questions
- 2.7 Answers to self-check exercises

2.2 Introduction

This unit gives the text and glossary of A.K.Ramanujan's poem 'Small-Scale Reflections on a Great House'. It explains the theme of his poetry. It expresses the view of the poet himself that his poetry is a product of the interpretation of his "inner" and "outer" forms. It says that the title indicates the theme of the poem, the "Great House" of Indian Tradition. It discusses the poem dividing it into three parts or sections. The unit summarizes the poem for you.

2.3 Small-Scale Reflections on A Great House - the text and glossary

Sometimes I think that nothing
that ever comes into this house
goes out. Things come in every day
to lose themselves among other things

lost long ago among
other things lost long ago;

lame wandering cows from nowhere
have been known to be tethered,
given a name, encouraged
to get pregnant in the broad daylight
of the street under the elders'
supervision, the girls hiding
behind windows with holes in them.

Unread library books
usually mature in two weeks
and begin to lay a row
of little eyes in the ledgers
for fines, as silverfish
in the old man's office room
breed dynasties among long legal words
in the succulence
of Victorian parchment.

Neighbour's dishes brought up
with the greasy sweets they made
all night the day before yesterday
for the wedding anniversary of a god,
never leave the house they enter,
like the servants, the phonographs,
the epilepsies in the blood.

sons-in-law who quite forget
their mothers, but stay to check
accounts or teach arithmetic to nieces,
or the women who come as wives

from houses open on one side
to rising suns, on another
to the setting, accustomed
to wait and to yield to monsoons
in the mountains calendar
beating through the hanging banana leaves.

And also anything that goes out
will come back, processed and often
with long bills attached like the hooped bales of cotton
shipped off to invisible Manchesters
and brought back milled and folded
for a price, cloth for our days
middle-class loins, and muslin
for our richer nights. Letters mailed
have a way of finding their way back
with many re-directions to wrong
addresses and red ink marks
earned in Tiruvalla and Sialkot.

And ideas behave like rumours,
once casually mentioned somewhere
they come back to the door as prodigies
born to prodigal fathers, with eyes
that vaguely look like our own
like what Uncle said the other day:
that every Plotinus we read
is what some Alexander looted
between the malarial rivers.

A beggar once came with a violin
to croak out a prostitute song

that our voiceless cook sang
all the time in our backyard.
Nothing stays out: daughters
get married to short-lived idiots:
sons who run away come back
in grandchildren who recite Sanskrit
to approving old men, or bring
betelnuts for visiting uncles
who keep them gaping with
anecdotes of unseen fathers,
or to bring Ganges water
In a copper pot
for the last of the dying
ancestors rattle in the throat
And though many times from everywhere.
recently only twice:
once in nineteen-forty-three
from as far away as the Sahara,
half-gnawed by desert foxes,
and lately from somewhere
in the north, a nephew with stripes
on his shoulder was called
an incident on the border
and was brought back in plane
and train and military truck
even before the telegrams reached.
on a perfectly good
chatty afternoon.

GLOSSARY

Tethered	-	tied by a rope or chain and free to move in a limited area
Silverfish	-	a small type silver - coloured wingless insect harmful to paper and cloth
succulence	-	thick and fleshy
Phonographs	-	record players
Epilepsies	-	a disease of the brain causing sudden attacks of uncontrolled violent movement and loss of consciousness
Bales of cotton	-	tightly tied masses of cotton
muslin	-	a very fine thin cotton material, used for dresses
Prodigies	-	persons with unusual and very noticeable qualities
Prodigal father	-	who spends a careless wasteful life
Croak out	-	utter hoarsely
Short-lived idiots	-	fools who will not live long
Anecdote	-	a short interesting or amusing story
Ancestor's rattle in the	-	the last sounds produced by the dying person throat
Chatty afternoon	-	afternoon in which the family members can sit and chat or gossip

SCE - 1

What does the poem mean by 'Chatty afternoon' ?

2.4 The poetry of A.K. Ramanujan

Attipat Krishnaswamy Ramanujan, one of the Indian poets in English, was born in Mysore in 1929 and was educated at D.Bhanumaiah's High school, and Maharaja's College at Mysore. He was a fellow of the Deccan College, Poona, from 1958-1959 and a Fulbright Scholar at Indiana University for the years 1960-1962. He lectured on English literature in Quilon, Belgaum and Baroda for a period of eight years. Since 1962, he has been at the University of Chicago, where he is now Professor of Dravidian Studies and Linguistics. His works include *Fifteen Tamilian Poets* (1965), *The Striders*

(1966), *The Interior Landscape* (1967), *No Lotus in the Navel* (1969), *Relations* (1971), *Speaking of Siva* (1972) and *Selected poems* (1976). His book of poems, *The Striders* was a poetry society recommendation. He was awarded the Gold Medal of the Tamil Writers Association for *The Interior Landscape* in 1969. He has contributed to such magazines as the *Atlantic Monthly*, *London Magazine*, *Poetry* (Chicago) *Quest* and *The Penguin Book of Love Poems*. (Penguin Books, 1974).

He has lived in the United States for the past fifteen years. His verse, however, deals mainly with his Indian experience, which is often described against its original setting. India and America remain two separate entities in Ramanujan's verse, and come together only infrequently as, for example, in *Still Another View of Grace*.

Ramanujan's contemporaries in India, Nissim Ezekiel, Dom Moraes and R. Parthasarathy regard his work as the best that Indo-Anglian poetry has produced. Ezekiel remarks that Ramanujan has enriched the Indo-Anglian tradition of poetry; while Moraes believes him an Indo-Anglian poet whose sensibility is aware of "the world as it is" and whose competence in the use of English is of a high order. From Parthasarathy's point of view, Ramanujan's poetry possesses an individual voice. Such critical approbation from contemporaries who are established poets in their own right, gives Ramanujan's poetry an endorsement which it richly deserves. His poems originate in a mind both Indian and Western, and therefore succeed in opening more passages to India.

This is especially true of poems on Indian themes, particularly those about family life. Family life and relationships in India is, in fact, so dominant a theme in Ramanujan poetry that it has led Parthasarathy to remark that "the family of Ramanujan is one of the central metaphors with which he thinks".

This theme is found in the collection of poems entitled *Relations* and particularly in *Small-Scale Reflections on a Great House*, *Love Poems to a Wife*, and *Of Mothers, Among Other Things*.

Ramanujan's poetry, as he himself remarks, is a product of the interpenetration of his "inner" and "outer" forms:

English and my disciplines (Linguistics, Anthropology) give me my "outer" forms linguistic, metrical, logical and other such ways of shaping experience, and my first thirty years in India, my frequent visits and field trips, my personal and professional preoccupations with Kannada, Tamil the classics and folklore give me my substance, my "inner" forms, images and symbols They are continuous with each other, and I can no longer tell what comes from where.

This is well illustrated in the poem *A River*. The poem is about the Vaigai River, hallowed by story and legend, which flows through the temple-town of Madurai, in Southern India:

In Madurai,
city of temples and poets
who sang of cities and temples
every summer
a river dries to a trickle
in the sand.....

In a sequence of precise images, the poet compares the wet stones on the banks of the river to "sleepy crocodiles" and the dry ones to "shaven water-buffaloes". All these images combine to create a picture of a natural landscape drenched with the heat of the sun;

under the bridges with patches
of repair all over them,
the wet stones glistening like sleepy
crocodiles, the dry ones,
shaven water-buffaloes lounging in the sun

The almost conversational tone of the poem and its easy narrative mode, sharpen and highlight the events that take place, and the phenomenal power of the floods:

He was there for a day
when they had the floods.
people everywhere talked
of the inches rising
of the precise number of cobbled steps
run over by the water, rising
on the bathing places,
and the way it carried off three village houses,
one pregnant woman,

and a couple of cows named Gopi Brinda, as usual.

The poet draws an ironic contrast between the mighty but inanimate river, whose ravages call forth the admiration of poets, both ancient and modern and the suffering of countless men and women, which is negligently dismissed and rarely spoken of in verse :

The new poets still quoted
the old poets, but no one spoke
in verse
of the pregnant woman
drowned, with perhaps twins in her
kicking at blank walls
even before birth.

The river may also be regarded as metaphor for change, and the slow, relentless passing of Time. But in the sleepy town of Madurai, where tradition continues and the past still survives, time seems not to effect a major upheaval. The poem testifies to the strength of the past.

Ramanujan's concern with the past, especially a personal family past, is a dominant theme of his poetry. A number of his poems are based on recollected emotion, and deal with the poet's memory of his relations. One such poem entitled *Of Mothers, Among other Things*, reveals the detachment of the poet, who views the subject as only one among a number of others. This ironic de-emphasizing of the subject serves, paradoxically, to throw it into sharper focus. The readers' attention is caught and held as Ramanujan views his mother, both with distance born of an ironic detachment and through the long vistas of the past. The images are vivid, almost photographic in their clarity, as the portrait takes form and shape;

I smell upon this twisted
blackbone tree the silk and white
petal of my mother's youth.
From her ear-rings three diamonds
Splash a handful of needles,
And I see my mother run back
From rain to the crying cradles.

The impression is that of a young woman nursing her children, and growing imperceptibly

older as the years pass and the seasons change. Her garments, once carefully tied, now hang carelessly, a further reminder of age, as she stoops to pick a grain of rice from the kitchen floor:

Her saris

do not cling: they hang, loose

feather of a onetime wing.

My cold parchment tongue licks bark

in the mouth when I see her four

still sensible fingers slowly flex

to pick a grain of rice from the kitchen floor.

This is a sympathetic portrait, evoking both the past and the present and the long passage of years between. The child's vision of the mother is filtered through an adult consciousness, retaining traces of both.

Another piece evocative of the Indian family scene is the long poem entitled *Small-scale Reflections on a Great House*. The title indicates the main theme of the poem, the "Great House" of Indian tradition.

The poem may be divided into three sections the first section dealing with the things that come into the house and never go away again, the second dealing with the things that leave the house temporarily, but return; while the third section deals with the things that never go out but always belong.

The first section is by far the longest in the poem. In this, the poet catalogues the things that come in-cattle, old books, sweets sent by the neighbours, servants, phonographs, inherited epilepsies, sons-in-law and wives. All these come into the house and stay, to be assimilated among the other objects collected over the years:

sometimes I think nothing

that ever comes into this house

goes out. Things come in everyday

to lose themselves among other things

lost long ago among

other things lost long ago:

The repetition of the phrase "lost long ago" lends an impression of age and antiquity, which is reinforced by the legacies the objects bequeath to Posterity - the cows that give birth to calves, the

old books that breed dynasties of silverfish, and the wives, who, in course of time, become mothers. In these verses, the poem strongly hints at a cycle of life and growth, manifesting itself on three levels-the inanimate level, where the lifeless books and ledgers yet harbour life within them:

Unread library books

usually mature in two weeks

and begin to lay a row

of little eggs in the ledgers

for fines, as silverfish

in the old man's office room

breed dynasties among long legal words

in the succulence

of Victorian parchment.

the level of the *animals*-the cows who are encouraged to get pregnant and beget calves:

lame wandering cows from nowhere

have been known to be tethered,

given a name, encouraged

to get pregnant in the broad daylight

of the street under the elders'

supervision, the girls hiding

behind windows with holes in them.

and finally on the *human* level-the wives who produce sons and daughters :

or the women who come as wives

from houses open on one side

to rising suns, on another

to the setting, accustomed

to wait and to yield, to monsoons

in the mountians' calendar

beating through the hanging banana leaves.

This endless cycle of growth and reproduction contrasts with the timeless stolidity of the great

house itself and testifies to the slow passing of time. The events themselves take place against the background of the changing seasons, the patter of rain "beating through the hanging banana leaves". The second section which deals with things that leave the house only temporarily, but return, introduces a sense of history which results in a perceptible widening of the poem's horizons. To the dimension of time and its passing, is added the dimension of place. The poem now expands to encompass England and North India:

And also, anything that goes out
will come back.....
like the hooped bales of cotton
shipped off to invisible Manchesters
and brought back filled and folded.....
.....Letters mailed
have a way of finding their way back
with many redirections to wrong
addresses and red ink marks
earned in Tiruvalla and Sialkot,

The East and the West are here juxtaposed, and the physical widening is echoed by an intellectual expansion. On yet another level, the realm of ideas and philosophy is mentioned, thus expanding the intellectual boundaries of the poem:

And ideas behave like rumours,
once casually mentioned somewhere
they come back to the door as prodigies
born to prodigal fathers, with eyes
that vaguely look like our own,
like what Uncle said the other day:
that every Plotinus we read
is what some Alexander looted
between the malarial rivers.

The third section deals finally with the things that always belong. The daughters of the house come back as widows and the sons come back in their children;

Nothing stays out; daughters
get married to short lived idiots;
sons who run away come back
In grandchildren who recite Sanskrit
to approving old men, or bring
betel nuts for visiting uncles
who keep them gaping with
anecdotes of unseen fathers.....

For the first time, the theme of ageing and death make an appearance, as the poet talks of ancestors and grandchildren and the traditional rites of death:

or to bring Ganges water
in a copper pot
for the last of the dying
ancestor's rattle in the throat.

Death, however, appears in another form in the hostility of military war :

and lately from somewhere
in the north, a nephew with stripes
on his shoulder was called
an incident on the border
and was brought back in plane
and train and military truck
even before the telegrams reached.
on a perfectly good
chatty afternoon

But the nephew who leaves for the front and the war returns at last to the ancestral home-to the place whence he came. In the final analysis, the Great House emerges as a central factor unifying the three sections of the poem. It' in fact, stands for the continuing tradition of India - a land where old habits and customs are still pervasive, and where outside influences are gradually assimilated

into the dominant tradition. A sense of historical change thus comes filtering through, as the tradition is exposed to new civilisations, new dimensions of military war.

In spite of the change occasioned by circumstances, a sense of permanency is retained in the flux. A stability that comes of the endless growth and multiplication of life, continues irrespective of the passing of time. Even death, though inevitable, seems to have no major impact, for the great house endures it all. The long continuing tradition of an ancient land seems unperturbed by the passing of time, the slow but inexorable forces of change, and the finality of death.

SCE - 2

What do the three sections of the poem deal with ?

2.5 Let's sum up

This unit has discussed the fact that Ramanujan's verse mainly deals with his Indian experience. It has pointed out that though the poet has been living in America, India and America remain in his verse as two separate entities and they come together infrequently. It has explained that the poet's contemporaries regard his poetry highly. The unit has referred to other poems of Ramanujan, and discussed 'Small-Scale Reflection on a Great House' in detail.

2.6 Sample Questions

1. Ramanujan's concern with the past especially a personal family past, is a dominant theme of his poetry. Discuss.
2. Family life and relationships in India is a dominant theme in Ramanujan's poetry. Explain.
3. What do the contemporary poets feel about Ramanujan's poetry ?

2.7 Answers to self-check exercises

1. By 'chatty afternoons' the poet means the afternoon times when the family members can sit and chat or gossip.
2. The first section is by far the longest section of the poem. In this the poet gives a catalogue of things that come in-cattle, old books, sweets sent by the neighbours, servants, inherited diseases, sons-in-law and wives - they come and stay, to be assimilated among other objects collected over the years.

Unit - 2: Kamala Das (1934 -) as a poetess

3.0 Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to

- * recollect that you are already familiar with Kamala Das' poetry as it has been referred to in Unit 1 of Block V.
- * see that the poet hints at things instead of elaborating what she wants to say
- * realize that she communicates naturally and freely in her poems.

3.1 Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Contents
- 3.2 Introduction
- 3.3 Kamala Das' poetry with a special reference to 'An Introduction'
- 3.4 Let's sum up
- 3.5 Sample Questions
- 3.6 Answers to self-check exercises

3.1 Introduction

This unit introduces to you Kamala Das as a modern Indo-Anglian poet. It explains the general nature of her poetry and her linguistic freedom. It explains her feelings about a woman's position in life. The unit talks about human relationships as viewed by Kamala Das.

3.3 Kamala Das' poetry with a special reference to 'An Introduction'

The poem by Kamala Das appears to be very simple and straightforward.

It has a very deceptive exterior. The poem is more than a mere 'introduction' to an Indian woman's debut as a poet in English. It deals with serious issues relating to the problems of self, identity, freedom and the tragedy of human relationships. The poet does not elaborate on the implications of these issues. She is content at hinting only.

In the process of introducing herself as a poet, as one groping for an identity unfettered by conventional attitudes, she succeeds in affirming the need to be 'free', the need to keep herself 'involute' from intruding and well-meaning relatives and friends - the need, in short, to write in the language of her choice.

She would communicate naturally and totally only when she feels 'free'. In order to be sincere to herself, and in order to be authentic, she has to affirm her linguistic freedom. One could notice this unobtrusively operating in the fluency of the lines, the apparent ease seen in the pauses of the lines and so on.

From the feeling of irritation and annoyance of the opening, we pass on to a different mood. The poem modulates into a serious mood now, offering a compressed account of 'growing' and 'growing up', involving loss of innocence and the burden of knowledge.

The person in the poem is forced to come to terms with her biological destiny as woman, however much she may protest, trying to ignore her 'womanliness'.

Fit in, conform, belong, they all said.
She merely wants to be. Would she be able to fulfill herself?
Just BE? can she? would she be allowed to discover her freedom? These are some of the issues implied in the dialogic part of the latter half of the poem.

The last movement of the poem introduces the tragic dialectic of love and betrayal and the problem of the 'ego', the ubiquitous 'I'. In the hungers of the flesh and beyond, the tyranny of the 'I' remains, refusing to be subdued. The poem concludes on the universal predicament of the 'I', preventing this is the destiny to which all human beings have to reconcile themselves. Whether it is inevitable, the poet does not make any statement.

Although the poem can exist by itself, it would be helpful to see its meaning in the context of Kamala Das's pervasive preoccupation with the intricacies of human relationships. As a woman poet, she tends to highlight the unequal nature of the man-woman relationship; she tends to regard woman as being exploited, as being at the receiving end without benefit of freedom or fulfillment. It is a measure of her honesty and maturity that she does not underestimate the difficulty of forging vital relationships. Very frequently she tends to focus attention on both, the victim and the exploiter, urging the reader to decide for himself or herself who the winner or the loser is in this zero-sum game called love.

As I said in the beginning, the poem could be read as some kind of 'manifesto'; as a linguistic celebration of freedom on the part of an Indian poet in English; even as a 'feminist' plea for a proper understanding of what Eliot calls the ignominy of growing - up, 'the rending pain of re-enactment'; the tragic inevitability of betrayal in the very act of taking pains to forge a meaningful human relationship; as an intemperate tirade against Mr. Grundy, well-wishers all who coerce you into conformity; in short, as a very clever affirmation of one's poetic identity without recourse to elaborate frameworks derived either from mythology or past literatures. From this point of view, perhaps, the poet has succeeded after all in choosing to BE.

SCE - 1

What does Kamala Das highlight in this poem ?

3.4 Let's sum up

This unit has discussed briefly Kamala Das and her poetry. It has mentioned 'An Introduction' as an example to show that the poet expresses herself naturally and freely. It has explained the anguish of the poet about the status of woman.

3.5 Sample Questions

1. What is the general theme of Kamala Das' poetry ?
2. What sort of man - woman relationship does the poet talk about in the poem ?

3.6 Answers to self-check exercises

1. Kamala Das highlights the unequal nature of the man - woman relationship. She says that woman is exploited.

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III YR DEGREE COURSE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Paper IV : Poetry

Assignment - 1

Section - A

- (a) Answer the following in about 250 words each
- (1) What are the special characteristics of the poem 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning' with reference to its content and appeal ?
- (2) Write an appreciation of the sentiments expressed in the poem 'Lycidas'.

Section - B

- (b) Answer the following with reference to the context in about 125 words
- (3) Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to aery thinness beat.

* * * *

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Paper IV : Poetry

Assignment - 2

Section - A

- (a) Answer the following in about 250 words each
- (1) How does Tennyson glorify the philosophy of action in 'Ulysses' ?
- (2) Discuss the merits of 'The Rape of the Lock' as a mock-heroic poem.

Section - B

- (b) Answer the following with reference to the context in about 125 words
- (3) There entertain him all the saints above,
In solemn troops, and sweet societies
That sing, and singing in their glory move,
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes

* * * *

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Paper IV : Poetry

Assignment - 3

Section - A

- (a) Answer the following in about 250 words each
- (1) 'Tintern Abbey' is a celebration of Nature's educative influence on man. Explain the statement.
- (2) Explain Keat's responses to the song of the nightingale as expressed in the poem 'Ode To A Nightingale'.

Section - B

- (b) Answer the following with reference to the context in about 125 words
- (3) Ah, Love, let us be true

To one another! for the world, which seems

To lie before us like a land of dreams

So various, so beautiful, so new,

Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,

Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;....

* * * *

BRAOU

FACULTY OF ARTS
DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR OPEN UNIVERSITY
B.A. III YEAR EXAMINATION
ENGLISH LITERATURE

Paper IV : Poetry

Model Paper

Time : 3 Hours

Max. Marks : 100
Min. Marks : 35

Section - A

Answer any four of the following:-

4x15 = 60

- (1) What are the special characteristics of the poem
'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning' with reference to its content and appeal ?
- (2) Point out the personal element in Milton's 'Lycidas'.
- (3) What do you know about William Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' ?
- (4) Write the summary of 'Ode To A Nightingale'
- (5) What is the theme of 'Dover Beach' ?
- (6) What impression do you get about the Duke's first wife and his treatment of her from your study of Browning's 'My Last Duchess' ?
- (7) Does 'The Second Coming' show that Yeats was preoccupied with peace and religious values ?
- (8) "Sometimes I think that nothing that ever comes into this house goes out". Expand this statement from your study of Ramanujan's poem "Small-Scale Reflections on a Great House".

Section - B

Answer any five of the following :-

5 x 8 = 40

- (9) Explain with reference to the context:
Dull sublunary lovers love
(whose soul is sense) cannot admit absence.
- (10) Explain with reference to the context:
The best lack all conviction. While the worst are full of passionate intensity.

- (11) Explain with reference to the context.

Forlorn: the very word is like a bell

To toll me back from thee to my sole self.

- (12) Explain with reference to the context

Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel

A well-bred lord to assault a gentle belle?

O say what stranger cause, yet unexplored,

could make a gentle belle reject a lord ?

- (13) Consider the different categories of the spirits figuring in 'The Rape of the Lock'.

- (14) What does Ulysses think of old age ?

- (15) What is the difference between an 'Ode' and an 'elegy' ?

- (16) What are the characteristic features of an epic ?

In what manner does Alexander Pope introduce them in 'The Rape of the Lock' ?

- (17) Illustrate Wordsworth's interest in human nature.

- (18) "Was it a vision or a waking dream" ?

What exactly is it in the case of 'beats' ?

Point out the difference between 'Vision' and 'Dream'.

* * * *

B. A. DEGREE
THIRD YEAR COURSE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

PAPER - III

**THE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
AND LANGUAGE AND FORMS OF
LITERATURE**

BLOCK1.	The History of English Literature
BLOCK2.	The History of the English Language
BLOCK3.	Forms of Literature
BLOCK4.	The Study of the Novel
	Jane Austen Pride and Prejudice
	R.K. Narayan A Tiger For Malgudi

PAPER - IV : POETRY

BLOCK1	John Donne	'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning'
	John Milton	'Lycidas'
	Alexander Pope	'The Rape of the Lock' - Canto 1
BLOCK2	William Wordsworth	'Tintern Abbey'
	John Keats	'Ode to a Nightingale'
BLOCK3	Matthew Arnold	'Dover Beach'
	Lord Alfred Tennyson	'Ulysses'
	Robert Browning	'My Last Duchess'
BLOCK4	W.B. Yeats	'The Second Coming'
	T.S. Eliot	'To The Indians Who Died In Africa'
BLOCK5	A.K. Ramanujan	'Small-Scale Reflections on a Great House'
	Kamala Das	'An Introduction'

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