MODERN LITERATURE-II
(1700 -1850)
(DEG04)
(M.A. ENGLISH)

ACHARYA NAGARJUNA UNIVERSITY

CENTRE FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

NAGARJUNA NAGAR,

GUNTUR

ANDHRA PRADESH

FOREWORD

Since its establishment in 1976, Acharya Nagarjuna University has been forging ahead in the path of progress and dynamism, offering a variety of courses and research contributions. I am extremely happy that by gaining a B++ (80-85) grade from the NAAC in the year 2003, the University has achieved recognition as one of the front rank universities in the country. At present Acharya Nagarjuna University is offering educational opportunities at the UG, PG levels apart from research degrees to students from about 300 affiliated colleges spread over the three districts of Guntur, Krishna and Prakasam.

The University has also started the Centre for Distance Education with the aim to bring higher education within reach of all. The Centre will be a great help to those who cannot join in colleges, those who cannot afford the exorbitant fees as regular students, and even housewives desirous of pursuing higher studies. With the goal of bringing education to the doorstep of all such people, Acharya Nagarjuna University has started offering B.A., and B.Com courses at the Degree level and M.A., M.Com., M.Sc., M.B.A. and L.L.M. courses at the PG level from the academic year 2003-2004 onwards.

To facilitate easier understanding by students studying through the distance mode, these self-instruction materials have been prepared by eminent and experienced teachers. The lessons have been drafted with great care and expertise within the stipulated time by these teachers. Constructive ideas and scholarly suggestions are welcome from students and teachers involved respectively. Such ideas will be incorporated for the greater efficacy of this distance mode of education. For clarification of doubts and feedback, weekly classes and contact classes will be arranged at the UG and PG levels respectively.

It is my aim that students getting higher education through the Centre for Distance Education should improve their qualification, have better employment opportunities and in turn facilitate the country's progress. It is my fond desire that in the years to come, the Centre for Distance Education will grow from strength to strength in the form of new courses and by catering to larger number of people. My congratulations to all the Directors, Academic Co-ordinators, Editors and Lesson - writers of the Centre who have helped in these endeavours.

Prof. K. Viyyanna Rao
Vice-Chancellor
Acharya Nagarjuna University

M.A. English, 1st Year
Paper IV : MODERN LITERATURE - II (1700-1850)

Syllabus

Detailed Study:

1. Keats: Ode to Nightingale; Ode on a Grecian Urn; Ode to Autumn; Ode to Melancholy; Ode to Psyche.
2. Wordsworth: The Prelude Book-I
3. Johnson: Preface to Shakespeare
4. Sheridan: The Rivals

Non-detailed study:

5. Pope: The Rape of the Lock
6. Coleridge: Rime of the Ancient Mariner
7. Shelly: Adonais
8. Lamb: Essays of Elia First Series
9. Austen: Emma
10. Goldsmith: She Stoops to Conquer

CONTENTS

Lesson - 1

AUGUSTAN AGE

Contents:

4.1.1. Objective :

To make the students familiar with the tenets of the Augustan age- its literature, life and times.

4.1.2. Defination And Background Of The Age :

The Oxford Dictionary of English defines the term "AUGUSTAN" as being derived from the prestige of Latin literature in the age of Augustus. It also adds that the term is usually "applied to the period of highest refinement of any national literature." In England, it usually refers to the years from about 1680 to 1750. Therefore, it is not easy to give a clear account of this period. We have to go back a bit further to around 1660, to clearly understand the tendencies of the age.

The Restoration : The restoration of King Charles II marks a decisive change in literature. The king was received with extreme joy on his return from exile. The nation underwent a change of government from Commonwealth to Kingship. The change brought about a difference in life and literature. The natural instincts which were suppressed during the Puritan period saw a sudden outburst. Therefore, it was an age of moral laxity. The king himself had numerous mistresses and children. He was surrounded by corrupt sycophants as a result a which profligacy grew. The great fire of 1665 and the plague that followed were considered to be suitable punishments for the moral shallowness of the age.

Political Climate : It was a significant time, since two major political parties the Whigs and the Tories. Parties arose The Whigs preferred to use the king's power in order to upgrade the condition of the people. The Tories supported the "Divine Right" rule. Both the parties tried to woo men of letters into their fold. Nearly every writer had political loyalties.

The Religious Climate of the land was indeed bitter. While the Puritans were fanatically persecuted, the Catholics were put to harassment. The nation was predominantly Protestant. The king's faith was itself suspected. His brother James was a Roman Catholic. As Charles II had no legitimate heir, it almost seemed certain that his brother, a Catholic, would succeed. Therefore, numerous efforts were made to throw him away. The controversy led to the Popish plot. Charles II worked hard to overcome the hudles created against his brother. Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* aptly reflects the religious and political strifes of the times.

After James II ascended the throne in 1685, his Roman Catholic prejudices made him unpopular, and within three years, the nation rebelled against him. Through the bloodless revolution of 1688, the Protestant William and Mary of Orange ascended the throne. Order was therefore restored once again. The literature of this period reflected the political life of England rather than the religious one. It was also an age wherein the classical ideals were once again being vindicated.

Literary climate : The Augustans basically believed in the dictum" follow nature." This was not a concept that the Augustans had innovated but was the idea expressed by Classical thinkers. As Arthur Humphreys mentions", the classical stoics had expressed through it man's duty of following moral law as the central cosmic reality." The universe was thought of as being governed by law, with the human nature as its microcosmic model. It means that human behavior has a precedent truth, which man should follow. Therefore, the term "follow nature" meant portraying the world as one truth. They did not aim at depicting the temporary truths of life, but wanted to show the permanent truths which remain eternal despite the varieties of human nature. Thinkers like Dennis and Rhymer also advocate this fact. The aim of Augustan literature was a proper study of mankind. Literature was therefore a responsible art. It had to reflect a higher order that prevailed in nature.

The Augustans had a passion for order. Dennis asserts that there is "nothing in nature that is great nd beautiful without rule and order." It was secondary to the energy of creative genius, particularly in poetry. A major classical influence on Augustan criticism is Longinus *On the Sublime* which praises passion and ecstasy. In his preface to the *Iliad,* Alexander Pope also mentions that only "common critics will prefer a dicious and methodical genius to a great and fruitful one." Moreover, he adds that "Invention is the very oundation of poetry."

"Wit" is an important aspect of Augustan thought and creativity. Dryden defines it as "deep thoughts in common language. Alexander Pope considers it as "what oft was thought but near so well expressed." It does not merely respect the familiar truths, but it also discovers new realms of presentation and in the process, may discover new truths.

It is not just the matter, but the manner of presentation that was also important John Hughes essay *Of Style* (1698) defines the Augustan aims: "propriety perspicuity , elegance and cadence." These have also been clearly laid bare in Horace's *Ars Poetica* and Boileaus *L' Art Poetique*. Dryden in his *Defense of the Epilogue* (1672) rates the Restoration style higher than the Elizabethan, because it proceeds from conversation. Therefore, clarity, coherence, polite idiom and a genteel tone were considered to be the appropriate ideals to effectively express truth.

Classical Models : In their quest for higher models, the Augustans relied heavily upon the ancients and not the Elizabethans. Longinus *On the Sublime*, Horace's *Ars Poetica* and numerous other classical writers continued to inspire them. They strongly believed in the view that these classical writers had reached the zenith of excellence and hence the production of great literature must be modeled on it. Thus grew the classical school of writing. However, Virgil, Aristotle and other Classical writers were freely translated and available. Therefore, there were numerous attempts at re-creating the classical models. But what remained beyond their comprehension was the fact that there was a wide chasm between their ideal expectations and the start realities of existence. They failed to attain the great heights and also remained impotent to delve deep into human emotions. This tendency grew during the times of Dryden and deepened during the times of Pope that he even laid it down as a rule.

French Influence : Since Charles II spent most of his exile in France, the French influence of the times can ever be undermined. Shakespeare and the other Elizabethans were considered to be out-moded. Pepys wrote in his *Diary* that he was bored to see Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and it was the "most insipid ridiculous play that I [he] ever saw in my [his] life. French writers like Pascal, Bossuet, Fenelon, Corneille, Racine, Moliere and Boileau were imitated. The French influence is evident in the coarseness of the Restoration Comedy of Manners as seen in Dryden, Wycherley and Congreve. In 1698, Jeremy Collier vigorously attacked the immorality and indecency of such plays.

4.1.3. POETRY :

Much before the Augustan age, the English poets had fused thought with feeling A critical impulse in poetry was evident even towards the latter part of the seventeenth century. In the Augustan age, Waller, Denham and others aimed at preciseness of versification. While Dryden, infused a new vigor to it. Pope perfected it. S.A. Brooke has commented that "The artificial style..... extinguished the natural... a merely intellectual poetry finally overcame a poetry in which emotion always accompanied thought." Since the Augustan poets aimed at preciseness, the heroic couplet as a form of versification flourished. The change of style was accompanied by a change of subject, and therefore Dryden and Pope wrote about the intellectual social and political instincts in man. Therefore, poetry became satiric, didactic, philosophic and also political.

A typical representative of the age was. John Dryden (1631-1700), who was born in London, educated at West Minster school and later at Cambridge. He was made the Poet Laureate in 1668. At first a member of the Church of England , he later turned to Roman Catholicism. With the 1688 revolution, when the nation was more or less completely Protestant, Dryden suffered for his Roman Catholic faith. He died in 1700 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Dryden began his creative career as a poet his poetry belongs to the category of pure classicism and was not of the pseudo-classicistic bind. In fact, great classical works were made of restrained and self-disciplined romanticism. Dryden was a great adviser of Cromwell till the Restoration. His early work of importance is *Pre-Restoration (1659),* which praised Cromwell. The next important work *Astraea Redux (1660)* which celebrates the return of justice in the reign of Charles II. Following restoration, he was amply rewarded for his loyalty to the king. Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis* (1667) gives an elaborate account of the great fire and the war with the Dutch in the previous year. It clearly proves Dryden's metrical ease, vigor, as well as his weakness for fantastic conceits.

Around 1680, political and personal conside ations made him write *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), a fine political satire. His aim was to bar the suc cession of James and substitute him with the Duke of Monmouth. The satire was written in mockery of the Popish plot and the Exclusion bill. Absalom is the Duke of Monmouth, the unfortunate aspirant to the succession and a Achitophel is the daring, but not- too-wise adviser Shaftsbury . They are surrounded by a group of politicians, each of whom is given a biblical name which suits him perfectly. The poem is highly acclaimed for its satirical content, force, range metrical felicity and precision. Stopford A. Brooke remarks that "It was the first fine example of that party poetry which became still more better and personal in the hands Pope." *Medal* (1682) was another attack on Shaftesbury. *Macflecknoe* (1682) was a scathing personal attack on a former friend Thomas Shadwell. He had earlier attacked him in the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, under the name of Og.

Dryden has also tried his hand in doctrinal poems. *Religio Laici* (1682) defends and states the argument for the Church of England. *The Hind and the Panther* is an allegorical poem wherein the Panther, the Church of England is gently treated initially, but lashed with severity in the end. The Hind is the Roman Catholic faith while the *Fables* (1699) reveals.

Dryden's narrative skill, his song for *St. Cecilia's Day* (1687) and On *Alexander's Feast* (1697) prove his mastery of melodious verse and a powerful style.

As a dramatist, Dryden was the exponent of a new type of tragedy which gained popularity after restoration. The Heroic play usually dealt with a great heroic figure who was the central character. Numerous stage incidents of an exalted nature were reduced to a state of ridicule through their extravagance. His famous plays include *The Rival Ladies* (1663), *The Indian Emperor* (1665), *The Conquest of Granada* and *Auren – ga – zebe* (1675). His *All for Love* is a work of exceptional merit since the style is noble and restrained.

As a prose writer, he was a theorist of new poetry. His essays, prologues and epilogues prove his faith in Classicism. Basically, a humanist at heart, Dryden was influenced by the French Critics. There were two qualities which he found to be exceptional among the ancients: "imitation" and "truth": He does believe in the Aristotlean theory of poetry as imitation; but beyond being an imitator, a poet according to Dryden, is a creator. Nature may be his raw natural, but a creative medium – the superstructure is both alike the original and yet creatively different. Dryden's classical leanings is also best illustrated in his *Essay on Dramatic*

Poesy which is a quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, wherein he prefers the ancients for their rules, order and harmony. Despite his love for ancients, Dryden rebels against the unities of time and place. As a liberal classicist, he appreciates Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher. On the whole, his is a mixed art "in which the soundest and the truest liberties of the romantics are grafted on to a general background of order and choice."

2. Samuel Butler (1612 – 1680) : Butler's *Hudibras* was a successful satire against the Puritans. The poem is a lineal descendant of the comic doggerel of Skelton, who was a model for the Restoration satirists. It is an attack on the parliamentary party. The name "Hudibras" has been borrowed form Spenser's Faerie *Queene*. Sir Hudibras is a grotesque–looking, bright-riding knight, riding with his Squire Ralph. While the former is a Presbyterian, the latter is an independent. They set out in a pseudo-romantic manner. Soon, they crusade against anti- bear -baiting activities. The poem is remarkable for the contrast between the real self of Sir Hudibras and the other self that he projects outside. In reality, he is sensual, cowardly, greedy and pedantic. But he pretends to be good. His hypocritical nature makes like a true representative of the age.

3. Alexander Pope : Born in 1688, he was the son of a London tradesman. His faith in Roman Catholicism influenced his career as a poet. After little formal education, he imbibed immense love for the classics which he records with pride: "As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame."

The First Period (1704-13) : Largely an experimental period, his *Pastorals* (1709) is an important work of this period where he handles the heroic couplet with metrical skill. He further succeeded in *An Essay in Criticism* (1711) where he reiterates the classical literary values as seen in Horace and Boileau. The epigrammatic terseness of the poem is significant through a few memorable proverbs like.

"A little learning is a dangerous thing."

"For fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

"To err is human, to forgive is divine."

The *Rape of the Lock*, first published in 1712, and later enlarged in 1714, shot him to fame. Written in the mock-epic style, the occasion of the poem was a trivial. One Lord Petre had cut a lock of hair of one Arbella Fermour. The quarrel which arose between the two families was indeed a hot topic of gossip in the eighteenth century London. On the insistence of Lord Caryll, Pope wrote the poem to patch up the quarrel between the two families. He was successful. Modelled on Boileaus *Le Turin*, the poem aptly mirrors the artificial life of the age, its shallow morals, the parties, card games, snufftaking, tea and coffee drinking and the unnecessary vanities. Rickett aptly comments that "the satirical tone of the age, the frivolous aspect of feminity, is nowwhere. more exquisitely pictured than in this poem. It is the epic of trifling, In short, the veritable apotheosis in literary guise of scent, patches and powder."

b) The Middle Period (1713 – 25). The period is remarkable for his translation of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* wherein he interpreted Homer in the elegant and artificial language of his own age.

e) The Last Period : (1725 – 40) : He wrote masterly satire during this period. The most reputed works of this period, include *Of the Use of Riches.* of *The Characters of Women* and *An Essay on Man*. The final work is important, since it deals with the relation of man with the universe, to society and ultimately to a state of happiness. The essay abounds in numerous epigrammatic and quotable lines.

"Hope springs eternal the human breast,

Man never is, but always to be blest."

"Know thyself, presume not god to scorn,

The proper study of mankind is man."

Another famous satire during this period is the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.* After this, he wrote *The Dunciad.* Pope died in 1744, and was buried at Twickenham.

4.1.4. PROSE :

The Augustan age marks the beginning of Modern prose. Matthew Arnold remarks. "The Restoration marks the real moment of birth of our modern English prose. It enables us to be clear, plain and short, it finds the true laws of prose and becomes modern." The establishment of modern English prose is the single greatest achievement in the Augustan age. Numerous factors contributed towards its growth.

Science grew at a fast pace during these times. The scientific temper greatly helped in cultivating a taste for precision, and clarity of expression. The establishment of the Royal Society (1662) further increased the penchant for a directness of expression. Sprat rightly remarked that the members of the Royal society have exacted from all its members a close, naked, natural way of speaking, positive expressions, clear sense, a native easiness, bringing all things as near as the mathematical plainness as they are, and preferring the language of Artisans, Countrymen and Merchants before that of wits or Scholars." The increased scientific temper was clearly visible through the different ways by which the world was perceived. Scientists like Galileo and Kepler had already propounded their scientific discoveries. Sir Isaac Newton (1642 – 1727) demonstrated the laws of gravitation and motion by which the planets moved in an orderly course.

The legal mind of Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626) inculcated the method of inductive reasoning based on observation and experiment. The French philosopher Descartes (1596-1650) applied the inductive reasoning method to prove the existence of God and the soul. Hobbes also believed in inductive reasoning all these facts together have culminated in the age of prose, reasoning and journalism. There were numerous prose writers of this age.

1. John Dryden (1631- 1700) Dryden's works can be best understood with the help of the critical essay prefixed to his plays. *On the Historical Poem. On Heroic Plays* and his *Essay on Dramatic Poesy* are his remarkable pieces. S.A. Brooke calls him as both the "leader of modern literary criticism" and the "leader of that modern prose in which the style is easy, unaffected, clouded to the subject, and in which the proper words are put in the proper places."

2. John Bunyan (1632 – 1704) : Kipling calls Bunyan as "the father of the novel." Although he may not be the creator of the English novel, he is a distinct forerunner. His religious autobiography *Grace Abounding* (1660) was the work of his captivity. The first part of *Pilgrim's Progress*, appeared in 1675 and the second part in 1084. The work is about the journey of Christian the Pilgrim from the City of Destruction to the celestial city. S.A. Brooke considers the work to be his masterpiece on account of its "imaginative fervour, imagery and in its quality of naturalism." The Biblical themes and the allegorical mode continue in his later writings like the *Life and death of Mr. Badman* (1680) and *The Holy War* (1682).

3. Lord Halifax (1633-95) : An outstanding figure in the house of Lords, an eminent orator and writer of political tracts, his *Miscellanies* is noted for its simple, elegant and direct style.

4. Sir William Temple (1628 – 99) : A politician and diplomat, his *Memories* (1691), *Letters* (1700) and *Miscellanies* contain articles on general and literary topics in melodious and rhythmic prose.

5. Thomas Hobbes : An important political thinker opposed to the Divine Right Theory his treatise the *Leviathan* (1651) declared that the origin of all power was in the people and that the end of all power was the end of the common suffering of mankind.

6. Sir John Locke (1632 – 1704) A significant political thinker, he was a opposed the Divine Right theory. In his treatise on *Civil Government*. he contented that people had a right to take away the power given to the ruler. Locke also held the view that the ruler should act in a responsible manner on account of the trust that his subjects reposed in him. In a democratic system, Locke firmly believed in the supremacy of the elected members as they authentically reflected the voice of the people.

7. Daniel Defoe *: (1661-1731) :* Defoe is an important pioneer both in the fields of journalism and fiction. In his periodical essay, one finals the rudiments of the novel. A born journalist and pamphleteer, he wrote on numerous subjects with remarkable felicity. His writings in *The Review*, *The Little Review* and journals like *Mist's Journal* and *Applebee's Journal* in fact influenced *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*.

In the world of ficition his major works include *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), *Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana* (1724). His fiction is usually labeled as "fictitious biographies," with Leslie Stephen calling them "history minus the facts." His realistic imagination was indeed remarkable since it gave his works a matter-of- fact aura. The realistic imagination is equally supported by the power of detail. The details are narrated effectively and lucidly, without losing artistic control. His comprehensive knowledge of the numerous aspects of human nature makes him realistically portray the pirates, pickpockets and loose–moraled women. Despite a certain element of crudeness in his style, there is an element of vigorousness which adds vibrancy to his works.

8. Jonathan Swift (1667 – 1745) : In Swift one finds a sense of humour which was indeed grim and sardonic. By nature, he was not an essayist. His initial essay in *The Talter*, *The Spectator*, *The Journal to Stella* and *Drapier's Letters* was not much. Occasionally, he displayed the gifts of the periodical essayist as in *Meditation upon A Broomstick*. His satire like *The Battle of Books* (1704) and *The tale of a Tub*

(1704) rank among the finest prose satires in the annals of English Literature. His greatest satire is Gulliver's *Travels* (1726) where he satirized the political life and social customs of Europe. All the techniques needed for satire, like the allegory, fable, irony, digression etc. are well used to highlight the satirical effect. The lucid, direct and vigorous style of Swift is highly suggestive. Hudson remarks: " As a master of simple direct, colloquial style... he has a few rivals and no superiors." What is unique in Swift is his ability to drive across his object with fierce conviction and power. His plain style, adds to his power. W.J. Long rightly remarks: "He was born to write great prose as Milton was born to compose epic poetry."

The Periodical Essay : This is a unique contribution of the age. As a piece of journalism, it began towards the end of the seventeenth century, maintained immense popularity in the eighteenth century and disappeared in the nineteenth century. Its popularity was phenomenal. A.R. Humphreys observes: "If any literary form is the particular creation and the particular mirror of the Augustan age in England, it is the periodical essay." The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature lists ninety periodicals founded between *The Tatler* in 1709 and 1720. It suited the genius and taste of the rising middle classes. It was the literature of the bourgeoisie.

Normally, it contained not more than the two sides of a folio half sheet. The topics were usually concerned with issues like social and political conduct of the times. The women who were to hitherto neglected in literature were also given importance in the periodical essay. Sir Richard Steele and Joseph Addison were the greatest contributors of the periodical essay.

a) Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729) : Steele was in many ways inspired by Defoe's *Review* which he developed into *The Tatler*. This was the first periodical which dealt with morals and manners. The first issue of the periodical was released on April 12th 1709. In one of his letter to his friends, he expounds the purpose of the *Tatler:* "The general purpose of this paper is to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning , vanity and affectations and to recommend general simplicity in our dress, our discourse and our behaviour." The comprehensive scope of the journal was to discuss issues like gallantry pleasure entertainment, poetry, learning, foreign and domestic news. Much like a social humourist, he depicts the complete society of the Augustan, age the political conflicts between the Tories and the Whigs the fine gentlemen, ladies and every aspect of contemporary life. It appeared three times a week , being practically written by Steele alone Initially Steele wrote under the name of Mr. Bickerstaff, which he borrowed from Swift. Addison also contributed to *The Tatler*. Despite its immense popularity, the journal was discontinued (for various other reasons) on the 2nd January 1711. By that time, Steele had contributed 170 papers.

b) Sir Joseph Addison (1672-1912) : Steele and Addison made a collaborative effort in creating *The Spectator* in 1711. Unlike *Tatler*, this appeared daily. The object of *The Spectator* was to portray the eighteenth century life in a graceful, humorous elegant style , so that the people would adopt self - corrective measures. Addison himself stated that the purpose of the paper was to "enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality." Like *The Tatler*, *The Spectator* also dealt with the social life of England during the Augustan age : people thronging the churches, the beaus in the coffee houses, their gossips, and life in the drawing rooms, the women indulging in fashionable parties. But underlying this cavalcade of life, one cannot miss the moral objective of the essay which was to give a jolt to the manners of the age and set them on the right track. What particularly distinguishes *The Spectator* from *The Tatler* are the fine character sketches of Sir Roger de Covertly, Sir Andrew Freeport, Captain Sentry and Templar who give a human tou

Spectator which is absent in *The Tatler*. Sir Roger de Coverley is indeed one of the immortal creations of English literature in whose characteristic portrayal, may be regarded as the precursor of the novel of character.

After the *Spectator*, there was a flood of periodical literature in England like Steele's guardian Dr. Johnson's *Idler*, Rambler and Goldsmith's *Bee* But hone of these could surpass the masters of the periodical prose – Addition and Steele.

4.1.5. DRAMA :

Like the other genres, the theatre of the Augustan age also reflected the general temper of the age. Moody and Lovett call it a "mirror of the upper classes of the nation and as such it has a sociological as well as a literary interest." Mostly comedies were written. As a contrast to a typical Shakespearean comedy, which is romantic in spirit, the drama written during this period reflects the external aspects of life, the fashions of the time and its manners. The setting is usually a familiar place and not remote ones like drawing rooms, gardens the coffee houses etc., of London. The characters are also mostly types, with love intrigues for plots. It was a reaction against the earlier Puritanic spirit and the sexual repression that it enforced. Both native and foreign influences shaped the Augustan theatre specially Beaumont, Fletcher, Ben Jonson, Moliere and the Spanish Calderon. While Moliere influenced the Augustan age with the brilliant ideas of plot and comic characterization, Spanish drama gave that the love of intrigue and incident, which was already there in the English comedy.

Apart from comedy, there was also tragedy. Love and honour are the two themes involved. It is also artificial in the sense of "the flagrant unreality of the emotions involved." It may not correspond with experience, but it creates a world of its own in which life is lived at a heightened level: Therefore, real suffering is difficult to perpetrate. It is necessarily a heroic world though not a tragic one. But the form was classical, though the themes may be love, beauty and valour. It tried to use the forms which were hitherto employed by Ben Jonson and Racine. Apart from the observation of the classical unites, there was also the intermixture of the tragic and comic elements. Plot was the soul of this tragedy and the object was also to make the fable pleasing, apart from giving it a certain amount of verisimilitude. Despite its adherence to the classical from, Bonamy Dobree mentions that still, 'the passions expressed in at are only always the romantic passions, in it the limitation of human nature, or might also say of nature are disregarded and even flouted."

Both heroic couplet and blank verse were used to write the plays which was full of sensationalism tragic pity and terror.

Therefore, Augustan theatre could clearly be divided into tragedy and comedy.

TRAGEDY :

(a) John Dryden : Dryden was undoubtedly one of the masters of the force, as seen in his major plays like *All for Love* (1667) and *Conquest of Granada* (1670). Written in the heroic style, he has used the blank verse with great ease. Allardyce Nicoll mentions that " Dryden clearly stands forward as the popular, if not

the prime mover of this type of drama." His *All for Love* is modeled on Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. The dramatist has attempted at fusing the formal elements of the psuedo-sclassical theatre with the richness of the Elizabethan theatre. The feelings of the characters; their passion love etc., have been cut down to a great extent. He further mentions that " all attempts were made to avoid Romantic profusion of material, and gradually, with the simplification there disappeared that richness of passion, that excess of emotion, from which the romantic genius takes it rise. Still the importance of the play cannot be considered since it signals the emergence of the new sentimental tragedy. It is indeed the first tragedy of the Augustan age." Moody and Lovett mention, "Although the infinite variety of Shakespeare's Cleopatra is lost on Dryden depiction of a royal intrigante, there is undoubtedly a tremendous gain in focus and momentum, lucidity and order, consistency and dignity. It deserves its reputation as the finest English tragedy on the neoclassical model."

The other dramatists who wrote tragedies are Thomas Otway, whose *Alcibades* (1675) and *Don Carlos* (1776) were written in rhymed couplets. Nathaniel Lee's popular tragedies are *Nero*, and *Mithridates*, which are full of bombast and conceit.

Augustan Comedy : This new comedy is important for its intellectual and refined tone. The exuberance of a romantic comedy is absent here, and emotion is replaced by wit, as poetry is substituted by a clear prose. It presents a fashionable and aristocratic life of pleasure. The aim is to show the manners of the aristocratic society in a cremonial candour. Basically, it presents characters who are aldermen, soldiers, clergymen, tableaus, belles, rakes, naughty old men and women, fops etc., All the men and women are morally shallow and therefore virtues like goodness, morality and religion are presented only to be mocked at. The follies presented are of the refined aristocratic gentlemen. The world as they present has fashionable parks, coffee houses, drawing rooms, and places of social prominence like Hampton's Court, James Park, Hyde Park and Mulberry Garden.

Because the chief subject of these plays is the personal relationship between men and women, sex is treated with frankness. Society remained both lax and experimental, after the rigidity of the Puritanic age. Therefore, the comedy reflects the readjustment of the English society in terms of their moral values. Despite these short comings, restoration comedy has a strong rate of honesty in depicting people as they really existed along with their moral frivolities.

Jeremy Collier strongly reacted against this form of comedy in his pamphlet *A Short view of the Immorality and Profaneness of theEnglish Stage* wherein dramatists like Dryden, Wycherley and Congreve were attacked. He attacked the presentation of immorality on the English stage. "Their liberties in the following particulars are intolerable, viz., their smuttiness of expression their swearing, profaneness, their making their characters libertines and giving them success in their debauchery." The fault of Collier was his deliberate endeavourer to discover a moral meaning in drama. Charles Lamb in his essay O*n the Artificial Comedy of the Last Century* does not agree with the view of Collier. "The Fainfalls and the Mirabells, the Dorimants and the Touchwoods, in their own sphere, do not offend any moral sense, in fact, they do not appeal to it at all. They seen engaged in their proper element. They break through no laws. They know of none. They have gone out of the Christendom into the land what shall I call it ? of cuckoldry – the utopia of gallantry, where pleasure is duty and manners, perfect freedom. In fact, Augustan comedy in amoral."

a) **William Congreve** (1670 – 1729) : One of the major dramatists of the eighteenth century, his best comedies were all written before he was thirty. His first play *The Old Bachelor* which was performed in 1693 was extremely successful followed by *The Double Dealer* also in 1693. The most, important play of was *The Way of the World* (1700) which was considered as a pure Comedy of Manners. The play has numerous artistic excellences to its credit like the brilliant wit and interesting dialogue. Arthur Compton Rickett praises the play for its construction, dialogue and characterization." "Such scenes as those where reputations are murdered by gossip such characters as Mrs. Millamant and Mirabell, such flashes of wit in the talk between Mrs. Marwood and Mrs. Millanant are to the fore reveal the drama at its highest point." Congreve's plays depict a world of gallantry and pleasure which had its own code. Life was not seen in a state of totality. His dramatic world was one of cynicism and merriment. His close prose style calls for brevity as his style is also laden with irony. The light, gay and bright atmosphere of the plays is a reflection of Congreve's ability to capture the essence of his time

(b). **George Etherege** (1635-7-91) Though little has been known about the life of Etherege, he was a courtier who had also served abroad in diplomatic service. His three plays *Love in a Tub* (1664), *She Would if She Could* (1668) and *Sir Fopling Flutter* (1676) established the comedy of manners wherein he paints a true picture of the licentious upper classes of the period with natural and brilliant dialogues that conceal the defects in the plot.

(c). **Sir John Vanbrugh** (1664-1726) : With a chequered career as an architect, soldier and herald, his best comedies like *The Relapse* (1696), *The Provok'd Wife* (1697) and *Confederacy* (1705) use all the familiar features of Augustan Comedy : the beaus belles, fools and an aristocratic society. His best play is *The Confederacy* about which an apt tribute has been paid by Rickett : " In sheer intellectual force, Vanbrugh's work is on a lower plane than Congreve's ; but by way of compensation he has a more genial humour and a genius for farcical development denied to Congreve, who excelled in satire. "

(d) **George Farquhar** (1678 – 1770) : A versatile genius, he was an actor, soldier and a clergyman who lived only sir twentynine years. His famous comedies include *Love and a Bottle*, *The Inconstant* (1703), *The Way to Win Him*, *The Recruiting Officer* (1706), and *The Beaux Stratagem* (1770) . The innovative aspect of Farquhar's comedy was his ability to include a wider aspect of life. Apart from aristocratic characters, he also includes ordinary ones. His epilogues, is also near the normal conversation. Farquhar has a greater amount of humanity and a penchant for standards which according to Edward Albert Makes him " look forward to the drama of Steele and the succeeding age."

Later, the Augustan drama declined. The appeal of these types of plays was considered to be highly restricted. Not many plays and playwrights remained successful. Colly Cibber wrote about 16 plays. Later Addison's *Cato* is a work of immense importance in the field of tragedy, along with Steele's *The Constant Lover* and George Lillo's *London Merchant* and *Fatal Curiosity*.

4.1.6 Let Us Sum UP :

On the whole, the August an age was remarkable for the growth science, reason and prose. It was a true that it was a time at which England was consolidating itself. The literature of this period could be

considered as progressive in the sense of heralding a modern, scientific and rationalistic outlook. But like any other period, this age had its own serious limitations. The curb imposed upon imagination and fancy indeed led to the decay of this literature. True, Augustan literature caters to our wits and wisdom. Still, a literature divide of spontaneity and freedom could not sustain for ever. Therefore, the excess sanctions laid down upon freedom and spontaneity did indeed produce an opposite effect, for, the next age (i.e. the romantic age) gave a free rein to these qualities.

4.1.7 TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the major tendencies of the Augustan age ?
2. "The Augustan age is an age of reason and act rather than imagination and fancy" – 'Discus'.
3. Write a note on the Periodical Essay.
4. Why is satire an integral part of Augustan literature.
5. Discuss Augustan theatre.

4.1.8. Suggested Reading

1. Leguouis and Cazamian , *A History of English literature.*
2. Boris Ford . *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature.* Vol. 4, From Dryden to Johnson.
3. Browning, J.D. *Satire in the Eighteenth Century.*
4. Bonamy Dobree. *English literature in the Early Eighteenth Century.*
5. Humphreys, A.R. *The Augustan world.*
   Arthur Compton and Ricket. *A. History of English Literature.*

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Lesson - 2

Alexander Pope – the rape of the lock.

Contents :

4.2.1. Objectives:

- to make the student familiar with the tradition of mock-epic
- to study Rape of the Lock
- to understand its important issues and critical reception

4.2.2. Pope's Life :

Alexander Pope was born on the 21st May, 1688, in London, as the son of a linen draper. As his parents were Roman Catholics, Pope himself practiced the faith till the end of his life, in spite of the stiff resistance against Catholicism during the eighteenth century in England. Apart from the religious battle that Pope waged throughout his life, he also had to wage a continuous war with his ill- health. At the age of twelve, he was the victim of a disease which crippled him. As a result, he had a short physical stature – less than five feet tall. Pope was therefore mocked for both his religious sentiments and his physical appearance. Since he

was unduly made the butt of laughter at all places, Pope developed a cynical and bitter attitude towards life, which he often described as a "strange, long disease." To such a person, marriage was never a reality. Throughout his life, he was deeply attached to one Martha Blount later, to one Lady Mary Wortley Montague laughed at him when he proposed to her.

His Catholic faith did not permit his entry in to the ox ford and Cambridge univer – sites. Therefore, he remained mostly self- educated. Even at the age of ttwelve, he devoured classical works like those of Homer and Virgil. He had a few friends alone with whom he would freely share his literary interest and tastes, the notable among them being Joseph Addison and Jonathan Swift. On account of his bitter nature, he made more enemies than friends. His greatest workss include *The Rape of the Lock*, his translation of Homer's *Iliad and Odyssey* and *Essay on Criticism*. He died at the age of 56, in 1744, and was buried at Twickenhan, twelve miles from London.

4.2.3. The Age Of Pope :

With the closing years of William III and the ascension of Queen Anne (1702), England witnessed remarkable political changes. The Whigs and the Tories were the two prominent political parties which rose power. While the former emphasized on personal freedom, the latter supported the Royal Divine Right. Literature therefore became a vehicle for the parties to propagate their political ideologies and as a consequence, literary figures were employed for that purpose. It was an age of prose and political pamphleteering. In the words of Stopford A. Brooke, " Being a party literature, it naturally came to study and look sharply into human character and human life as seen in the great city. The topics of debate were subjects of literary, scientific and philosophic inquiry. But these issues were debated with little depth."

The establishment of the Royal Society, the growth of Deism and the development of a rational attitude towards life shifted the focus of the age from external "nature" to human "nature." Human nature was thoroughly dissected in all its socio-political ramifications, since the social life of Englishmen was undergoing a transformation.

During these times, a Turkish Merchant established the first coffee house in Lombard Street, London. With the drink becoming popular, more and more coffee houses mushroomed and these places also slowly gained political colouring. The Tories never visited the coffee houses of the Whigs as well as the vice versa. Swift once declared that the party spirit "infected even the cats and dogs." The coffee houses also gave birth to many literary associations. In the first number of *The Tatler*, Richard Steel announced that much of the activities of the new journal would be based upon the clubs. "All accounts of gallantry, Pleasure and entertainment shall be under the White's Chocolate there; Poetry under that of Will's Coffee House; leaving under the title of the Grecian; Foreign and domestic discussion you will have from Saint James' Coffee House." The discussions took place in lucid and elegant style, with a sense of refinement and urbanity which spread to the period's literary creativity like prose and poetry.

The rising economic stature of England under queen Anne also saw a considerable increase in the size of the reading public. Prominent publishers during these times were Edmund Curll, Jacob Tonson, John Dunton who published translations, adaptations and other popular works of the times. They are the precursors of the modern publishing houses. The rising middle classes were associated with nobility in the exercise of power and political influence. The manners were genteel conversations and writing became urbane and polished.

At the same time, warmth, passion, intensity and subjectivity had become outmoded. As Hudson remarks. "The same temper marks the literature of the age, which exhibits a similar coldness and want of feeling, and a similar tendency towards shallowness in thought and formality in expression. Being a literature of fancy and wit, emotion, passion, simplicity and spontaneity are all surrendered at the altar of precision."

4.2.4. Pope's Major Works :

First Period : Among the early works of Pope, the *Pastorals* are noteworthy. It was published in 1709 in Tonson's *Poetical Miscellanies* . His *Essay on Criticism* (1711) shot him to fame in the literary world. In 1712, his *Messaiah* was published in the *Spectator* . In the same year, *The Rape of the Lock* was also published and the poem was re- published in 1714, with additions. His O*de on St. Cecilia's Day* (1733), a lyrical poem, was not very successful. *Windsor Forest.* also written during this period laid the foundation for his friendship with Swift.

Second Period : This period begins with his translation of Homer's *Iliad* (1720). By 1726, he had also completed his translation of Homer's O*dyssey* . These translations made him rich. Another major work of this period is *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1735). In 1725, his edition of Shakespeare's works appeared. Lewis Theobald exposed the numerous faults in Popes scholarship with regard to this work. Little did Thebold know that he would be later satirised by Pope, in *Dunciad*.

Third Period : Pope's first version of *Dunciad* was published in 1728, whereas three other editions were later published in 1729, 1742 and 1743. In the completed *Dunciad* , the dramatist Colly Cibber replaced *Theobald* . Between 1733-34, Pope published *An Essay on Man* . In *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, he attacked Addison under the name "Atticus" since he had sponsored a translation of *Iliad*, which Pope considered a rival edition of his 1715 version of *Iliad* . Despite Addison's death in 1719, Pope never forgave him, and he ultimately published the poem in 1735.

4.2.5. The Neo-Classical Spirit :

The age of Pope is after branded as a neo -classic age. What does the term "Classicism" mean ? Is it a classic age like those of Homer and Virgil or is it a classical age like those of Augustus and Dante? Generally, the true "Classic" refers to writters of the highest rank in any nation. The simple, noble and inspiring works of these writers, complimented with a totality of vision and elevated style are some of the Core qualities in these writers. During the age of Pope, Elizabethan literature was considered to be inferior owing to its disregard for precision. The fine feelings, flights of imagination and romantic emotions were synonymous with lack of precision. The neo-classic quest for precision made them adhere to the need that poetry should follow exact rules. They professed to have discovered these rules in the classics of Aristotle and Horace. Dryden and Pope have together made pioneering efforts in reviving the spirit of classicism (though not in its totality since it ignored the freshness of vision and spontaneity prevalent in those writers). The principle of classicism is best expressed in Walsh's letter to Pope that "The best of the modern poets in all languages are those that have nearest copied the ancients." Pope has himself laid bare this principle in his oft-quoted lies from the *Essay on Criticism:*

Those rules of old discover'd, nor devis'd

Are nature still, but nature methodiz'd

With the neo-classic penchant for rules and precision, the old English creative modes were disregarded for being excessive and as lacking precision. As Addison has aptly remarked : "Wit and fine writing" did not lie much "in advancing things that are new, as in things that are Known, an agreeable urn."

4.2.6. The Neo-Classical age and the Mock-epic :

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the neo-classics aimed at the epic, but landed on the mock-epic. The discovery of ancient rules in Aristotle and Horace, the French influence and the freely available translations of classics made the eighteenth century intellectuals feebly attempt at creating epics. Aristotle in his *Poetics* considered tragedy as the loftiest of genres. Dryden for instance in his *Dedication to Aeneis* pronounced that " A Heroic Poem... is undoubtedly the greatest worh which the soul if man is capable to perform."

The English neo-classicists of the seventeenth century felt a compulsion that such epics should be written in their own time. Intellectuals like John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave and George Littleton hoped that an epic would be "a lasting column to [their] country's praise," like Homer's were for Greece and the *Aeneid* for Rome. They considered the age worthy as that of the great classical poets. They glorified the English victories in the various wars that they waged. They hoped that the English "Augustan Age" would produce a second Virgil.

But all this remained a mere wishful thinning since there lay an immense gap between aspiration, and reality. Samuel Butler rightly commented that "No age ever abounded more with Heroical poetry then (sic) the present, and yet there was never any wherein fewer Heroicall actions were performed." In spite of such ambivalence, epics were still being written during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Richard Blackmore's *Prince Arthur* (1695). *Kirg Arthur* (1697), Glover's Leoniadas and William Falconer's Shipwreck (1762) were some of the attempts being made in this genre. Still, great epics could not be written. Dryden planned epics on the Black Prince and on King Arthur, but he could not go beyond the planning stage. The vain quest of the neo-classics in the direction of the epic, did not remain totally unproductive. Soon, it landed up in the direction of the mock-epic. Therefore, as Ulrich Broich rightly mentions, "English neo classicism sought the heroic epic, and found the comic."

Pope's Indebtedness to Ancient Forms : The mock – heroic poetry is an entire tradition that mimics the whole class of poetry known as "epic." In this genre, it is not merely the classical poetry that is ridiculed. In fact, it is often an attack on the contemporary society, its shallow values, vanities and the moral snobbery of the age. It is crucial to note that writers of the mock epic do not mock at the sublime moral values implied in an epic, since the purpose of most mock-epics also basically remains moral, as they mock at certain value systems which degenerate the society. Western literature had numerous models which Pope could emulate for inspiration. Classical Greek literature had a mock-epic poem *The Battle of the Frogs and Mice* which was written in Homeric style. The poem not only treats insignificant subjects in a lofty manner, but it also reduces noble topics to ludicrous proportions. In the sixteenth century, an Italian poet Vida wrote a mock epic called *A Game of Chess* which influenced Pope. In the seventeenth century, another Italian poet Tassoni Published

The Rape of the Bucket (1622) in which the people of Bologna and Clodena engage in a war over a missing bucket. Boileau's famous *Le Turin* was yet another major influence on Pope, since Boileu was actually creating an epic that would confirm to the standards he had laid down in his *Art Poetique*. There is satire in the poem, but the satire is subservient to the moral content in the poem, which inspired Pope to write Clarissa's speech in canto V of *The Rape of the Lock*. Garth's *Dispensary* (1969) was yet another major influence on Pope since it blended both the serious and the comic and it also made satirical references to the "baumonde" – the beautiful world of Augustan Society.

4.2.7. THE RAPE OF THE LOCK

The poem was written when Pope was only twenty four. He wished to patch up a bitter public quarrel between the Petre and the Fermour family. One Lord Petre had cut away a lock of hair of Arabella Formerer. Pope wrote the poem when Lord Caryll asked him to write something so that the event could be patched up. Pope wrote the poem in 1711, published is in 1712, in two cantos. The quarrel was settled and the poem became a great success. In 1714, he expanded the poem into five cantos, by including the supernatural machinery. The poem remains important, since Pope has not only mocked at the frivolity of one family, but through them, the entire eighteenth century society.

CRITICAL SUMMARY

Canto I – critical synopsis : The Poem begins with Pope's statement of the theme of the poem, He proposes to write of conflicts of triviality but the acclaim that needs to be lavished to the poem is great.

"Slight be the subject, but not so the praise!

If She inspire and He approve my ways"

The purpose of the poem is satiric. As per the classical conventions, apart from the statement of theme, Pope also dedicates the poem to Caryll muse, since it was Caryll who had requested Pope to write the poem so that the quarrel between the two families could be patched up. The heroine, Belinda continues to doze till noon and the prolongation of the sleep is explained by the fact that her guardian sylph has caused a dream in which a handsome young man appears. The guardian Sylph Ariel assures Belinda that she would be protected by the numerous spirits who roam through the airy region. The sylphs are entrusted with the task of guarding the honour of Belinda.

The canto is significant for allowing us to have a glimpse o the artificial values that given the lives of these people. Through an effective use of hyperbole, Pope explains that Belinda's eyes "far excel the dazzle of the sea." She is "the finest of mortals." As she is being warned by Ariel, her lap dog wakes her up by licking her face. Belinda wakes up to see a "billet-doux" first, and proceeds to get dressed. Pope elaborately describes the toilet scene. The excessive importance given to her external appearance is an indication of her moral shallowness. The "Silver vase", the "casket" which contains "India's glowing Gems", "the perfumes of Arabia, the combs made of tortoise shells and elephant tusks" are all a splendid array. Critics have interpreted this description of Belinda as a parody of Achilles preparing for battle in the Iliad.

"Here files of pins extend their shining rows,

Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles Billet – doux".

Therefore, religion also becomes a mere cosmetic meant to cover the inner flaws. The canto ends with the sylphs working busily around Belinda. While some fix her hair, others fold her sleeve and some work on her gown. Belinda is now fully dressed to make her appearance in the aristocratic society, with all her radiance.

Canto II :

The second canto begins with a comparison of Belinda's beauty to the rising sun. She is accompanied by the lovely young ladies and well dressed young women for the social events of the day. Indeed, she is an embodiment of beauty and gaiety as she floats down the thanes in her barge, with her young men and women. The fashionable beaux and belles meet at Hampton court. All eyes are upon Belinda, who in turn, like the sun, shines. The two locks of hair that hang behind her are described as "shining ringlets" on her "smooth Iv'ry neck? Pope declares that "mighty hearts are held in slender chains." The scheming Baron, enamoured by the golden locks, determines to seize the hair by fair or foul means. The traditional epic hero is devastated with the help of irony. The Lord now builds an altar to the Goddess of Love, which consists of twelve French romances, three garters and a glove, all of which are actually relics of his past love affairs. He lights a fire with love letters and fans the flame with sighs. Throwing himself in front of the altar, he prays for victory and possession of the hair. While half of his prayer is granted, the winds blow away the other half. The baron is satirised in following the rituals of the ancient epic heroes. Praying to the Gods before a battle is waged, is a conventional epic ritual which is made ludicrous here. The Lord's building process is similar to Chaucer's *Knights' Tale*, while the wind blowing half the prayer has a similar reference in Virgils' *Aenied*.

While Belinda continues to smile in the course of her boat-ride, Ariel alone has premonitions over the forthcoming tragedy. Pope repeatedly employs the classical device of the Gods directing human destiny. By making Ariel closer caller than the rest, Pope once again remains closer to the epic traditions wherein the hero was always taller than the rest. Like the speeches rendered by Aeneid, Odysseys, and also Satan in Book I of *Paradise Lost*, he outlines the task at hand for the assembled spirits. Zephyretta guards the fan, Brillante the earrings; Momentilla the watch; Crispissa the favourite lock of hair; while Ariel himself has the honour of protecting Shock. Fifty selected sylphs are specifically deployed to take care of Belinda's petticoat which is compared with Achilles' shield. Severe punishments are announced for those who fail to perform their duties. They may be sealed in vials, or "transfixt with pins", or "plung'd in lakes of bitter washses", "gums and ponatums" may restrain their flights. The canto closes on a note of tension.

"With beating hearts the dire event they wait,

Anxious, and trembling for the birth of fate."

They are all awaiting the dire event. The reader is left in suspense and looks with solemnity the description of the sylphs descending on Belinda "orb in orb". This is once again a parody of the angels in Paradise. The last event the, which anticipates catastrophe is alike Iliad wherein there are nervous portents of an impending war.

Canto III :

The canto opens with a description of the beauty and grandeur of Hampton court. Belinda, sailing in the boat is ironically an implied comparison of Cleopatra in her barge. Hampton court is an important social and political landmark. Since it is here that Pope in that

"Britain's Statesman oft the fall fore doom
Here Thou, Great Anna! whom three realms obey
Dost sometimes Counsel take and sometimes Tea."

Tea, snuff and playing cards were the important post times of the eighteenth century aristocratic society. Another favorite past-time of the was gossip since "At every Word a Reputation dies."

This canto describes in immense detail, the game of ombre, which is a card game. Geoffrey Tillotson mentions that this game "employs the full pack minus to 8's, 9's and 10's, and of this forty, each of the three players is dealt nine cards."

As soon as the cards are laid down, the sylphs immediately descend on Belinda's important cards. While Ariel sets on a Matador, the other sylphs sit on cards in order of their importance.

Like women, the sylphs are also conscious of their social positions. The description of the card game is parodied with the major battles in all the epics. It is not just battles, but the great feasts described in epic poetry that are also mocked at. Cups and spoons arrive on the table where the game of cards in being played. After a lamp is raised on to a lacquered table, coffee is prepared and poured into china cups. The fumes from the coffee generate new ideas in the banks brain whose mind is engrossed in devising numerous methods to possess the lock of hair. Pope warns the Lord of the punishment which fate imposed on Scylla, who was transformed into hair for plucking Nisus hair. Clarissa presents a pair of scissors to the lord, similarly as ladies in romances arm their knights. He carries it near Belinda as she bends her head over a steaming cup of coffee. Immediately, a thousand sylphs warn her by healing their wings and twitching the diamond in her ear. Belinda turns her head thrice as the scissors approach her head. Ariel makes a frank attempt to reach her mind. But since her mind is engrossed in thoughts of her lover, Ariel's power fails.

The Lord brings the scissors closer to Belinda's head, and the lock is severed for ever. Lightning flashes from the eyes of Belinda and screams of horror fill the air. Pope describes the pair with caustic irony:

"Not louder shreiks to pitying Heav'n are cast
When Husbands or when Lap-dogs breathe their last."

The lord celebrates his triumph. The canto ends with Pope paying rich tributes to the power of steel. Since both men and monuments fall under the power of steel, Belinda could not hope to avoid it.

Canto IV : Belinda is now full of anger and shame over the loss of her lock of hair. The kings captured in war, disdainful virgins who survive their charm, passionate lovers deprived of joy, old ladies whom people refuse to his, tyrants who die unrepentant or Cynthia when her mantua is wrongly worn will also not experience the grief.

Umbriel, a gloomy spirit makes a journey underworld to the Cave of Spleen which is similar to journeys to the underworld by epic heroes. Along with Spleen there is pain and magrin. Ill-nature and affectation are also beside her. Numerous unnatural events take place: teapots become alive, pipkins start walking, jars sigh, a goose-pie starts talking and belles who have been transformed into bottles, ask for corks. Umbriel tells Spleen that Belinda screens the powers of Spleen, which Spleen ignores. But she binds a bag like the one used by Ulysses to hold the winds where she places the power of female lungs, sighs, sobs, passions and gossip. A vial is filled with fears, sorrows, griefs and tears. Umbriel carries the bag to the world and opens it before Belinda, thereby letting loose the furies. Belinda is filled with super--human rage and further regrets her loss of hair. She details the fateful day on which she went to Hampton Court. She requests Sir Plume to retrieve the lock on her behalf. Umbriel once again enters, breaking Spleens vial, from which sorrows burst out. Belinda recollects her own neglect of omens and continues to hour.

Canto V : Belinda's tears melt her listener's hearts to tease. But the baron remains firm. He is more hardened than Aeneas who ignored Dido's plaintive pleas for him to remain in Carthage. A war is waged with the help of fans, snuff boxes and ruffled shirts. Clarissa rises to plead for common sense and sanity. She raises a rhetorical question as to why beauty is frail; the locks would turn gray, painted faces would fade and haughty women would continue to remain virgins. That which matters is virtue which is alone eternal. This appeal for common sense being ignored, Thalaestris asks Belinda to declare the war. The comic battle is parodied in being compared to the heroic battles that epic heroes waged in wars. In the ensuing confusion, the lock is lost. Some think that it is on the moon, but the muse sees the lock being drawn into the heavens, where it would remain for the fashionable world to see. Her hair is compared to that of Berenice, a heroine of classical literature. Even her hair had not been so bright. The curl is consecrated to fame by the please of poetry and Belinda thus becomes immortal.

The poem under on a note of epic exultation. It ends with a sense of reiteration for good sense to rule over passions.

4.2.8. Characters in the poem :

The poem is replete with personal references and contemporary personalities. Even the queen does not escape the attack of Pope. All the people are given fictitious names which was actually a thin disguise since every contemporary of Pope knew them.

Belinda : This was Arabella Fermor, daughter of Henry Fermor of Oxfordshire and Ellen Browne of that. The Fermors were a well–to-do Roman Catholic family. Around 1714, she married Francis Perkins of Berkshire and together they patronized numerous figures, including Pope. She died in 1737.

The Baron : This was Robert, the seventh Lord Petre, of Essex. In 1711, after cutting Arabella's hair, he married Catherine Waromsley of Lancashire. He died in 1713 of small pox. The family was also the subject of Spenser's Prothalamion.

The Muse : This was John Caryll of Sussex. Pope first met him in 1709. It was he who persuaded Pope to write The Rape of the Lock.

Sir Plume: Sir John Browne, Cousiin of Arabella's Mother. The caricature is quite scathing.

Thalestris: This was Lady Browne, wife of Sir George Browne. The satire becomes more pungent since she was an Amazon and Sir Plume was a fop.

Clarissa : Disputes continue to remain with regard to the true identity of Clarissa.

Structure of the Poem : The first draft of the poem was written in 1711, and published only in 1712 in two cantos. On understanding the tremendous success of the poem, he re-wrote it by adding the supernatural machinery, and the final poem in five cantos appeared in 1714.

It has a total of 794 lines, broken up into 148, 142, 178, 176 and 150 lines in each canto respectively. Written in rhyming couplets, it contains all the main features of Augustan poetry. In the 1714 edition, Pope also added Clarissa's speech to reinforce moral values to an age which saw its fast depletion. It may seem uneven when compared with the 1712 version, but it was necessary to fulfill all the functions of mock – heroic poetry.

4.2.9. Heroic Couplet :

"It comprises rhymed decasyllables, nearly always in iambic pentameters rhymed in pairs: one of the commonest metrical forms in English poetry but of uncertain origin. It is generally thought that it developed with Chaucer, possibly because he was familiar with the decasyllabic rhymed couplets. However, it is just a possible that as the old alliterative meters were adapted and modified so the rhyming couplet emerged. But there can be no doubt that Chaucer was the first poet to make extensive and successful use of this verse form. The 15th C. poets used the couplet occasionally but it is not until the 16th and 17th c. that it becomes firmly established. One can see poets gradually exploiting its possibilities and gaining a mastery of it. Of the many poets who used it at some time or another the most memorable are Spenser, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Hall, Drayton, Fletcher, Beaumont, Donne, Waller, Denham and Oldham.

Therefore Dryden, and then Pope made it their own. One might say that Dryden wrought it into shape; and Pope was the silversmith who, with elegance, wit and subtlety, polished and refined it to near perfection.

Throughout the 18th c. the heroic couplet was the most favored verse form, and some of the best verse was written in it especially by Johnson, Goldsmith, Crabbe and Cowper. In the 19th c. it was used much less; nevertheless, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Browning, Swinburne and Wiliam Morris all made use of it. In the 20th c. the heroic couplet is rare but mention should be made of Roy Campbell's Georgiad – a satire in the Augustan manner." J.A. Cuddon *Dictionary of Literary Terms* Penguin, 1988.

4.2.10 Supernatural machinery :

The second edition of the *Rape of the Lock* was enlarged into five cantos from the original two cantos. This was possible mainly by adding the supernatural machinery. This was a classical device used by epic writers like Homer and Virgil. The supernatural machinery or the deus –ex-machine often added to the grand style of even a religious epic like Paradise Lost.

Pope's choice of the supernatural is a proof of his literacy scholarship. The sylphs were not an original poetic creation of pope. He found the sylphs in Le Conte de Gabalis, a *roman* written forty years ago in France which was twice translated into English by the time of pope. This machinery of this serious epic was derived from the mythology of the Rosicrucian.

The *Gabalis* discusses the existence of a particular system of elemental spirits.

"The earth is filled almost to the center with

Gnomes or Pharyes... As for the Salamanders,

the Inhabitants of the region of Fire.....

The wives of the salamanders are fair...."

Passages like these are a proof of Pope's indebtedness to such established mythology. Pope also borrows another idea that transmigrated souls protect their friends on earth and guard them against their enemies. The sylphs therefore guard spirits. The sylphs in *Gabalis* have the powers to change their sex and shape, Milton's angles can also "either sex assure, or both" and so are pope's sylphs. Even if cut, they come together again. Geoffrey Tilllotson mentions that Pope borrows even the idea of regimentation from Gabalis : "The light militia of the lower sky" "The lucid Squadrons, "the" Aerial Guard".

Pope's originality lies in the way in which he presents the sylphs. Apart from de villars Gabalis, he borrows ideas from Shakerpeare's Ariel and the devils and angles of Milton. Above all, he uses this device, not to add to the grand style of the epic, but to project the triviality of the restoration morals and manners. We generally think of only the "sylphs" when we refer to the term "epic machinery". But in fact, it is a wide term, embracing all the other aspects of classical epics which Pope mocks here. Like Helen of Homer's Iliad, Belinda is the heroine of this eighteenth century mock epic. Like Homer feeding his guests with giant beef steaks in a large banquet, Pope pours tea and coffee at Hampton court. Like Achilles holding his gigantic shield and Satan walking with a large shield in Milton's *Paradise lost* Belinda is guarded by her petticoat which is a sure sign of pope's genius for trivialities.

4.2.11 Craftsmanship :

The subject of the poem may be trivial, but not the praise lavished upon it. Pope has taken extreme care with his craft as any other classical epic poet. He had even played solitary games of Ombre until he had strategically worked out every move of Belinda, to achieve the ultimate effect. The metre and rhyme scheme of the poem is precise and flawless. His understanding of the classical epics and his grasp of the moral frivolities of the times have together produced this mock epic.

Wit : The Augustans do not mean "humour" when they speak of wit. They mean the cleverest and the most skillful way of saying something. The poem is outstanding in its use of wit. It glitters with cleverness of presentation which makes the poem highly effective. His humour is subtle and sharp and a sense of fun (the purpose with which the poem was written) runs through the entire poem. Although the Augustan Age did not stress the free display of intense personal emotions, Pope does give a free rein to righteous anger, his hatred for moral shallowness, sloth and the age's obsession with trivialities.

The classical epic conventions used in the poem or the poem as a mock epic:

i. **The invocation** – contrast between classical epics and this mock epic.

ii. The choice of the **theme**

iii. Use of **epic similes.**

iv. Use of **supernatural machinery**

v. Use of **journey motif**

vi. The **long speeches.**

vii. The ultimate **triumph of good over evil.**

As a satire of eighteenth century life : - The age was an age of satire on account of the establishment of the Royal Society in England. This had led to a more rational outlook towards life. Traditions were scoffed at. The growth of Deism was an added factor. Because of his religion and physical deformity, Pope developed a bitter and cynical attitude towards his fellow men. But despite the bitterness, the poem also shows Pope as an uncanny judge of human nature sustained by qualities like honesty, integrity, he is genuinely concerned with the moral vacuum of the age. He projects this concern through satire.

He confirms his own view that "the proper study of mankind is man". The controlled fluidity of style and his dexterous handling of the theme along with precise craftsmanship make him the master satirist of the age. The social, political and religious hollowness of the age is exposed through the manners, customs and habits of a single family. His use of poetic devices like hyperbole and zeugma in the rhymed couplet make the poem highly memorable.

4.2.12 Critical opinion :

a) F.R. Leavis in his revaluation (1947) pointed out that the lofty formality in the poetry of Pope was only natural to him because the contemporary age also approved of it. Though the "Correctness" of his works may appear superficial to us, it was "Reason" and "Nature" to the Augustans. Leavis also points out that Pope held the supreme poetic position between the 17^{th} and 18^{th} centuries.

b) Lord Byron went so far as to look on Pope as mankind's universal poet. "I will show more imagery in twenty lines of Pope than in any equal length of quotation in English poesy".

c) Lython Strachey praised him because he "turned his screams into poetry with the enchantment of the heroic couplet".

Topics for Discussion

1. **Consider the Pope's Rape of the Lock as a mock epic.**
2. How does the poem mirror the 18^{th} Century English aristocratic society

3. Comment on the satiric art of Pope.

Select Reading :

Humphrey's A.R. The Augustan World : Life and Letters in Eighteenth- Century England, 1954.

Tillotson. G. The Rape of the Lock

Tillotson. G. On the Poetry of Pope

Wiley, Basil The Eighteenth Century Background

Jack, Ian Augustan Satire 1660 – 1750

George, M.O. English Social life in the Eighteenth Century.

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Lesson - 3

Samuel Johnson's "Preface to Shakespeare."

contents:

4.3.1. Objectives

- To make the students familiar with the age of Johnson and his criticism.
- To study his celebrated work, "Preface to Shakespeare"

Samuel Johnson's Life : Samuel Johnson was born on 7 September 1709, at Richfield, Staffordshire, England. Having had his early education at the Richfield Grammar School, he entered Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1728 and left the place in December 1729, without a degree, on account o the failure of his father's business. After the death of his father Michael Johnson (a Richfield book seller) in 1731, he taught at Market Bosworth. In 1735 he married Elizabeth Jervis (the widow of Harry Porter), twenty year his senior. Despite the not-so-happy relationship that Johnson shared with her, he was utterly depressed when his wife died in 1752. A man of strong passions, Johnson hated loneliness. Moreover, he was constantly waging wars with poverty. His father's failure in business, his abortive attempt at running a school at Edial, near Richfield, the numerous poor relatives who were economically dependant on him, made his initial job of establishing himself in the literary world of London difficult. In fact, in his poem "London" he wrote, "slow rises worth, by poverty opprest." After his initial writings in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (1738) his next major work was his Dictionary, (1747) which was dedicated to Lord Chesterfield. It won him the honorary master's degree awarded by the Oxford University in 1755. His writings in *The Rambler* (between 1750`52) and the *Idler* (1758-66) won him immense initial acclaim. His accidental meeting of Boswell in Tom Davies' bookshop in 1763 is important since the former turned out to be his life – long friend and biographer. His *Lives of the Poets* (1777-79) gained for him immediate critical attention. Between 1779-81, he published prefaces and boxed on the 13th December 1784. In 1787, Sir John Hawkins, one of his admirers published *The Life of Samuel Johnson* while James Boswell's *The Life of Samuel Johnson* appeared in 1791.

4.3.2. Background : The Writer and the Period.

There existed two different tendencies in English criticism during the age of Johnson. The first tendency was that which emphasized on reason to be the principal test of literary values and the other with emotion and imagination as its main emphasis. In fact James Baker emphasized that "The literature of the age of Johnson reflects the conflicts between the two main factors in artistic creation. Unimpassioned reason on the one side, emotion and imagination on the other." Reason bad always been the predominant wave in literature ever since the seventeenth century. Emotion, imagination and spontaneity had come to be looked upon with suspicion. The Elizabethan idea of creativity was fast vanishing in the realm of art.

Dr. Johnson is often described a the "Literary dictator" of his age. Clay mentions how "other writers loved and feared him and delighted to have him as the "Grand Cham" of Literature, accepting his laws because they were based on his own solidity, sincerity and sense – and because the age of reason was a low abiding age." But at the sametime, Johnson cannot be classified as a pure representative of the English neo-classicism. Rene Wellek points out that "He does certainly hold to many of its common places and share most of its tastes. But he differs clearly from the neoclassical creed on some important issues." He is no romanticist, nor even an unconscious forerunner of romanticism. Rather, he is one -of the first critics to whom art is for life sake. He is a neo–classicist in the sense that be believed in the existence of certain rules to check the uncontrolled creativity of the poets imagination. At the same time, creative artists needed two types of rules: the indispensable and the convenient. The creative artist needed to follow the indispensable rules but he also had the liberty to use them as per his convenience.

Dr. Johnson therefore, aims at inculcating a deep appreciation of literature by upgrading its principles and critical tools. Beauty is not the ultimate litmus test to any literary work of art. Instead be emphasizes on reason, since, the task of criticism is "to distinguish those means of pleasing which depend on known causes and rational deduction from the numbers and inexplicable elegances which appear wholly to the fancy, from which we feel delight but know not how they produced" (Rambler, 92). Therefore, he aimed at liberating criticism from the tyrannies of fancy, ignorance and prescription. While Addison is of the opinion that a true critic focuses on beauties rather than faults, Johnson contends that the duty of a critic was "neither to depreciate nor dignity by partial representation but to hold out the light of reason, whatever it might discover" (Rambler 93). Johnson observes this rule strictly in his treatment of Shakespeare.

Another test that Johnson suggests is the **test of time**. Works which have stood test of time alone need to be considered since the long continuance of their reputation proves that they are "adequate to our faculties and agreeable to nature." This is possible only when the writers observes nature fully and represents it totally in their works.

In judging the merits of a work of art, we should also take into account the **historical consideration**. A right judgment of an author is possible only if we are able to "transport ourselves to his times and examine the wants of the contemporaries and what were his means of supplying them." This is the reason for George Watson labeling Johnson as the "true father of historical criticism in English." Our ultimate judgment of a work of artist complete only when we judge it as a whole and in parts. Johnson follows all these tenets in his criticism of Shakespeare.

4.3.3. The Major Works of Dr. Johnson.

Dr. Johnson had a great literary output and we find his critical remarks liberally scattered through all his works. His criticism, which was mainly written after the age of forty would be divided into four groups.

a. His interest in literary criticism could be clearly discerned in a dozen papers which appeared in the *Rambler* (1750 – 52) and also his remarks on poetry in *Rasellas*.

b. The *Dictionary* (1755), an original work of immense labour and scholarship. George Watson mentions the critical purpose of the works which is revealed through the title which Dr. Johnson originally gave it : *A Dictionary of The English Language in which the words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated in their different significations by example from the best writers.*

The book is significant in that it opens out into vast inquiries involving textual criticism, source studies and semantics'.

c. Johnson's *Proposals for Printing the Dramatic works of Shakespeare* (1756) and his edition of *Shakespeare* (1756) These works are tratceable for their range and discernment. He explains the numerous duties of an editor and critic of Shakespeare. Adam Smith considers it "the most manly piece of criticism that was ever published in any country". Commenting on his *Preface to Shakespeare* John Watson calls it "a brilliant exercise descriptive criticism".

d. His *magnum opus* is the *Lives of Poets* (1779-81) a collection of fifty two literary biographies. Boswell in his *Life of Johnson* considers it "the richest most beautiful, and indeed most perfect production of Johnson's pen. " In 1777, a committee of nearly 40 booksellers decided to publish a new and superior collection of the works of major English poets from Chaucer to their own times. Johnson undertook the job of writing the prefaces, but in his own terms. The entire gamut of medieval and Renaissance poetry was eliminated. Except Milton and Cowley, all the poets belong to the post – restoration period. Within four years (at an average of one preface per month), the entire *Lives* was completed.

It is the first systematic work of a biographical –cum-critical nature on fifty two poets from Cowley to Gray, covering a period of hundred years. John Bailley mentions that a "great part of the book, therefore, is criticism not only upon the important but upon what so far as we are now concerned, may be called non – existent". George Watson considers the structure to be a "tripartite one: biography, character, criticism". The work projects Johnson as both a scholar critic and also as a biographical critic like the French critic Saint Beauve, But George Watson mentions, "He is rather a critic who has discovered that criticism may usefully be practiced as an appendage to biography". On the whole, Bailley points out that *Lives* " is not only the most popular book of the permanent and real value".

Shakespearean Criticism before Johnson :

Shakespearean criticism in its budding stages is found in *Palladis Tamia. Wits Treasury* (1598), a commonplace book kept by Francis Mere (1565-1667), a clergymen, schoolmaster and critic. Although there is a reference to Shakespeare in this book, it is not a full-fledged account of the great writer.

Ben Jonson's (1572-1637) university education and love for classical studies in fact did not make him view Shakespeare in a favorable light. His statement that Shakespeare had "small Latin and less Greek" was

very popular up to the eighteenth century until Richard Farmer (1735-97) in his well known *Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare (1767)* referred to the "excellent fantasy, brave rations and gentle expressions" of Shakespeare.

Elizabeth Montagu (1720-1800) wrote a work entitled *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* where he has been compared with the Greek and French Dramatic poets. Maurice Morgann (1726-1802) made innovations in Shakespearean studies with his *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Falstaff* (1777) where he dispels the charge against Falstaff as coward. The Scottish writer William Richardson (1743-814) makes a significant intrigue into Shakespearean characters in his Philosophical *Analysis and Illustration of some of Shakespearean Remarkable Characters*."

Considering the plethora of critics who wrote nearly during the times of Samuel Johnson, it is indeed an achievement on his part especially his praise for Shakespeare for violating the unities and for mixing the hitherto compartmentalized tragic and comic elements. Moreover, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there were numerous editors of Shakespeare.

The First Folio (1623) was brought out by two fellow actors John Heminge (1630) and Henry Condell (1627). The Second Folio was a revised version of the earlier one. The Third Folio (1663), was printed by Thomas Cotes. Nicholas Rome's six volume edition of Shakespeare appeared in 1709. Alexander Pope used Rowe's edition and corrected it whimsically without any rational basis and it was published in 1725. Lewis Theobald, classical scholar and critic attacked it in "Shakespeare Restored" (1726). Other remarkable editions are those of the Oxford scholar Sir Thomas Hanmer 1743-44; that of Sir Bishop William Warbuton (1747) and the ten volume edition of Shakespeare by Edward Malone in 1790.

Samuel Johnson and Shakespeare : Johnson's first acquaintance with Shakespeare came in as a shock. As a young boy in Lichfield, he was frightened by the ghost scene in Hamlet when be read the play in the basement of his father's shop. In his early middle ages, he wrote *Miscellaneous Observations on the Tragedies of Shakespeare* in (1745). His involvement with Shakespeare lasted quite a large period of his life. Apart from his fear of the ghost scene in Hamlet, the death of Cordelia disturbed him to such an extent that he refused to re-read the last scene of *King Lear*.

In this beginning of his literary career he edited the plays of Shakespeare since he was dissatisfied the earlier editions of Pope and Theobald. In 1745, he issued his *Proposals* for it and ultimately in October 1765 Johnson's *Shakespeare* appeared in octavo volumes. Although many critics do not rate his edition of Shakespeare very high, most of item agree on the point that his *Preface* alone entitles him to be ranked as being among the foremost critics of Shakespeare.

4.3.4. Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare

Shakespeare as a supreme artist:

Johnson's remarks on Shakespeare's dramatic art in his *Preface* provide a clear indication of his original views as a critic. Although Johnson admired classical rules, he bypassed them and applied to the works of Shakespeare, the Longinian principle of "length of duration and continuance of esteem." There are numerous qualities in Shakespeare's art which have made him reign supreme. The foremost feature is Shakespeare's universal appeal. Johnson rightly remarks. "nothing can please many, and please long but just representation of general nature."

Other elements like fancy, wonder and novelty may delight us only momentarily. Since minds can repose, it only the universal quality of truth (which is found in abundance in Shakespeare), which can make an ever lasting impression on the minds of posterity.

A faithful reflector of the times : Another enduring quality of Shakespeare's works is his ability to hold a "faithful mirror of manners and of life." Shakespearean characters remain unmodified by the customs of particular places. As they do not belong to any one locale, they are the genuine representation of humanity at large. Therefore we may find them at all places. His characters act and speak the general emotions which run through all human minds: "In the writings of other poets, a character is too often an individual, in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species." In contrast with other dramatists, the dialogue of Shakespeare is also clearly determined by the incident which produces it. Its ease and simplicity do not make it appear fictitious but in fact seems to have been diligently selected out of common conversation and incidents.

Universal Treatment: Such a universal treatment is also found in Shakespeare's handling of the supernatural. The originality of Shakespeare lies in the fact that even when the supernatural elements enter into conversation, the dialogues remain in level with life." This is because "Shakespeare approximates the remote, and familiarizes the wonderful." Not all the supernatural events may probably occur, but if it were to happen, its effects would probably be the same as he has depicted. Therefore, Shakespeare has not only carefully presented human nature in its moments of crisis, but as it would be found in moments of exigencies to which it cannot be exposed.

Characterization : Shakespeare's art of characterization had come under much scrutiny and attack during the times of Johnson by Dennis Rymer and Voltaire. Dennis and Rymer have described Shakespeare's Romans as not sufficiently Roman." Voltaire on the other hand objected to Shakespeare's representation of the usurping king in "Hamlet" as a drunkard. To all these charges, Johnson gives a firm reply. "Shakespeare always makes nature predominate over accident." An apt delineation of human nature is his forte. Although his story needs Romans or kings his thoughts lie only in men. This is because, his insight tells him that "Rome, like every other city had men of all dispositions." The usurpers, murderers the kings love for wine, and its intoxicating effect over the kings are all found in Shakespeare. These petty qualities are found in all petty minds and Shakespeare the poet is like a painter who "satisfied with the figure, neglects the drapery."

Shakespeare's comic genius : Shakespeare's real power does not rest in the brilliance of particular passages, but by the progress of his fable and the tenor of his dialogue. Contrary to other critics who consider Shakespeare's tragedies to be superior to his comedies, Johnson rates Shakespeare's comedies higher: " In tragedy, he often writes with great appearance of toil and study, but in his comic scenes, he seems to produce without labour, what no labour can improve." Further, Johnson adds that while the tragedies of Shakespeare struggle for comic situations, there is a reposing attitude which is evident in his comedies. Johnson sees the tragic scenes of Shakespeare as always wanting in something, but in his comedies, he often surpasses expectation or desire. He succinctly sums up by saying. "His tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct.."

Style : Shakespeare's style also comes under the purview of Johnson His style is unique in the sense that his familiar dialogue is by and large smooth and clear. Yet, it is not totally free from ruggedness or difficulty. But no one can dispute the fact that his conversation is "above grossness and below refinement where propriety resides and where this poet seems to have gathered his comic dialogue."

Poetic Justice : While praising the merits in Shakespeare's plays, Johnson critiques the lack of poetic justice in Shakespeare's plays: " Because he sacrifices virtue for his own convenience, his aim is in pleasing rather than instructing." This is indeed a fault since to the neo-classical mind of Johnson, it is always a writer's duty "to make the world better and justice is a virtue independent on time and place."

Another aspect of Shakespeare's plays which Johnson censures is his plots. They are "loosely formed." He feels that the latter part of most of his plays do not receive the dramatist's initial care. As a result, Johnson feels that Shakespeare "shortened his labour to snatch the profit" Shakespeare's anachronisms or violation of chronology are also objected to.

Despite Johnson's admiration for Shakespeare's comedies he is not blind to its faults. Apart from the prevalence of certain "gross" and "licentious" elements, he also feels that neither Shakespeare's "gentlemen nor ladies have much delicacy nor are sufficiently distinguished from his clowns by any appearance of refined manner." He also adds that in tragedies his performance is worse as the dramatist's heavy labour is evident. While the passionate effusions are for the most part significant, the dramatist's intervention leads only to "obscenity and tediousness." All his declarative speeches are also "cold and weak." Even the Shakespearean quibbles only deceptively mislead the reader.

Shakespeare's blending of the tragic and comic elements : At the same time, Johnson deviates from his neo-classical creed in defending Shakespeare's blending of the tragic and comic elements in the same play. To Johnson, tragi-comedy is more representative of actual life. Johnson opines that "the end of writing is to instruct, the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing." This, according to Johnson, can be best achieved only by the tragi-comedy on account of its ability to blend diverse elements. In a tragi- comedy. The emotion of pleasure and pain do not alternate, since variety is the source of all pleasure. In fact, the scenes are mingled with both the elements "to produce the intended vicissitudes of passion." Such a fusion which unites the good and evil, joy and sorrow in numerous combinations is in fact able to reflect the real state of life with both good and evil.

Shakespeare's non-observance of the unities of time and place : Not only does Johnson go beyond the set tenets of the neo-classical age, but he also defends Shakespeare's non observance of the unities of time and place. Aristotles *Poetics* places great emphasis on the unities of time, place and action. The Aristotlean formula asks for a plot with a beginning, a middle and an end wherein all the events are linked in a proper manner. The conclusion usually arises from what has already gone before. In the past, these rules were strictly followed since it was thought that these rules made drama credible. But Johnson opines that the imagination of the spectators who watch plays is rather immense. If the spectator can place himself at Alexandria imaginatively, or if he is able to transport himself to the times of Antony and Cleopatra, he can even stretch his imagination much further. In fact, the spectator also takes part of the creative rapture of the dramatist. Johnson sees no reason "why a mind wandering in ecstasy should count the clock or why an hour should not be a century in calenture of the brains that can make the stage a field."

Therefore, Johnson firmly defends the liberties which Shakespeare takes with unities with regard the unity of place. He says that the spectators are also aware of the fact that the stage is only a stage and that the players are only actors. The events may take place either in Athens or Sicily. They know that the space is neither both. So there is no absurdity if the events take place in more than a single place.

Similarly, the unity of time is also not considered essential for drama. Like the liberty place, for freedom may be extended to time also. Despite the lapse of time between acts, the play is still considered as being poetical and real. Although there are preparations on the stage for instance, a war, we know that there is no actual war before us. Places like Rome and Pontus, and characters like Mithridates and Lucullus are also illusory. Moreover, as Johnson aptly mentions, "Time is of all modes of existence, most obsequious to the imagination, a lapse of years is as easily conceived as a passage of hours." The credit of drama also lies with all the credit due to a drama. Even the pleasure one receives from tragedy according to Johnson, arises from the audiences own consciousness of fiction." If only spectators consider murders to be real, drama would fail to please. Johnson remarks in this connection that "Imitations produce pain or pleasure, not because they are mistaken for realities but because they bring realities to mind." Therefore the writer of time and place could always be sacrificed to the nobler, ideals of "variety and instruction." A play following rules meticulously could be "superfluous and ostentatious art" wherein what is possible is projected at the cost of what is necessary.

No work of art according to Johnson exists in isolation. It should be judged with reference to the conditions of the age in which he lived and also on the basis of the opportunities available to him. Analyzing on these lines, he places Shakespeare at a transitional stage. The English nation was struggling to "emerge from barbarity." Literature remained the monopoly of the aristocracy. The commoners were not much educated. Under such conditions, had not Shakespeare given the thread of story in his audience's hands, it would have been very difficult for them to follow the plays. The numerous incidents in his plays always caught the attention of people much more than "sentiment or argumentation." The uniqueness of Shakespeare according to Johnson is his vastness, While other writers cultivate merely gardens, "Shakespeare is a forest. Here, along with oaks and pines, there are also weeds and brambles." But even these plants have a purpose since they give shelter to" myrtles and roses." Such a metaphoric description is highly significant, since to Johnson, even the so called not so great works of Shakespeare do seem to have their own place in the schemes of their own existence. While other poets spend their lives chiselling individual works to a state of perfection, Shakespeare on the contrary "opens a mine" which contains inexhaustible supplies of gold and the other metals. He appeared on the English stage when it lacked great tragedies and comedies. He gave it both thereby elevating English stage to its utmost height."

Johnson's criticism of Shakespeare is important since he was one of the pioneers in viewing Shakespeare's plays within the parameters available to the Elizabethan stage. Despite Johnson's strict predilection for the neoclassical rules, he has the good nature to appreciate Shakespeare's flaunting of them. The limitations of Johnson's appreciation of Shakespeare are also apparent. Perhaps a different disposition is needed for appreciating Shakespeare's tragedies. But his sincere appreciation of Shakespeare's comedies is a welcome criticism, since Shakespeare's comedies have indeed been, as a Grierson mentions the "Cinderella of the critics." He is undoubtedly indebted to his predecessors. While later critics have had a fuller understanding of Shakespeare's art, Atkins mentions that the value of Johnson's contribution to Shakespeare criticism is considerable. It must rank as one of the greatest works in English critical history." The unerring rhetorical skills in his *Preface* and his seasoned judicial methods have in fact given a fresh in impetus to Shakespeare's criticism.

4.3.5. Critics' Opinion on Jhonsan's merits and demerits:

Johnson's criticism of Shakespeare is remarkable for its clarity and rational approach. John Bailley writes. "Shakespeare has had subtler and more poetical critics than Johnson but no one has equalled the insight, sobriety, lucidity and finality which Johnson shows in his own field".

John Atkins also pays a tribute to Johnson's "Unerring skills in indicating essentials, his seasoned judicial methods, and the sound foundations he laid for future textual and aesthetic developments".

T.S. Eliot is of the opinion that he is "one of the three greatest critics of poetry in English literature the other two being Dryden and coleridge".

As a critic he has focused on the importance of biographical, historical and comparative methods of forming critical judgments. By and large, his criticism is balanced and rational, Bosker appreciates his criticism for its "strong individuality, the sanity and independence of judgement".

It is to the eternal credit of Johnson that he does not yield to his veneration for neo-classical rules. He does not mind the violation of unities.

Similarly he categorically refutes the orthodox objection to the mixture of laughter and tears that it interfered with the emotional impact of drama.

Like any other critic, Johnson's criticism is also not free from a few defects. Dr. Johnson seems to contradict himself when he says that no other poet has kept his characters distinct from each other. In the same text, he also declares that Shakespeare's characters are not individuals. Similarly, it would be difficult for us to agree with the fact when Johnson calls Shakespeare's tragedy as "skill" his comedy "instinct". A thorough study of all the plays of Shakespeare reveals the fact that Shakespeare had a versatile creative instinct for both. It is a matter of fact that he soars highest in his tragedies.

One of the basic contentions of Johnson is that Shakespeare is always a poet of nature. His " above all... the poet of nature, the poet that holds up to his readers, a faithful, mirror of manners and life", Johnson agrees with the fact that Shakespeare's plays reflect life as it is lived. It is rather incoherent when the latter refers to the lack of moral judgment in the plays of Shakespeare The fact remains that in real life, the vice are not always punished, and the virtuous are not often rewarded. The neo-classical mind of Johnson, along with its rigid rules of morality makes him view Shakespeare's plays as overtly lacking a didactic perspective. This seems to be against the naturalness which he praises in Shakespeare. Johnson's criticism is by itself judicious since he assumes the position of passing judgments outer a work of art. Therefore, it is difficult for us to agree with Johnson's statement that Shakespeare's "sacrifices virtue to convenience and is so much more careful to please than to instruct that he seems to write without any moral purpose".

Similarly, at yet another place Johnson mentions that "A play read affects the mind like a play acted". The fact remains that drama is the most public of all genres since it is meant for staging. Moreover, the levels of impact which a play makes when it is witnessed when it is staged is extremely great.

Nearly all the defects of Johnson's criticism of Shakespeare arises from the fact that his genius exists mostly within the parameters of the neo-classical times where reason dominates over artistic creativity. In many ways, like Shaw, and Tolstoy, Johnson also is an ardent advocate of overt morality.

These minor defects not withstanding, Johnson is undoubtedly one of the greatest critics of Shakespeare.

4.3.6. Topics for Discussion

1. Critically evaluate Johnson's views on Shakespeare in his "Preface."
2. How does Johnson support Shakespeare's violation of classical unites.
3. Would you accept Johnson's view that Shakespeare's comedies are superior to his tragedies.

4.3.7. Select Reading :

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Lesson - 4

The Age Of Sensibility

Contents :

4.4.1 OBJECTIVES :

- to give an account of the "Age of Sensibility"
- to give a short account of the Classicism – Pseudo – Classicism, Pre-Romantics and Romantics.

4.4.2 BACKGROUND OF THE AGE :

The Revolution of 1688, which banished the last of the Stuart kings and called William of Orange to the throne marks the end of the long struggle for political freedom in England .Since then the Englishman spent his energy, till then spent on fighting for freedom, in endless political discussions and in efforts to improve his government. For ushering in reforms, England had to be equipped with ideas, arguments, information, the need, which led to the birth of the newspaper and the magazine which in turn became the chief instrument of a nation's progress. The first half of the eighteenth century is remarkable for the rapid social development in England. Till then men were governed by the narrow isolated standards of the Middle Ages and when they differed they fell to blows. Gradually they began to learn the art of living together, of course, with differences of opinions. The new social life had a marked effect on men's words and manners.

Politically, government still had its opposing Tory and Whig parties, and the Church was divided into Catholics, Anglicans and Dissenters, every writer almost, busied himself with religion as well as party politics, the scientist Newton as sincerely as the churchman Barrow, the philosophical Locke no less earnestly than the evangelical Wesley. But nearly all tempered their zeal with moderation, and argued from reason and scripture, or used delicate satire upon their opponents, instead of denouncing them as followers of Satan. Though there were exceptions, the general tendency of the age was towards toleration. Man had found himself in the long struggle for personal liberty; now he turned to the task of discovering his neighbor, of finding different parties on a par with himself. This good work was helped, moreover, by the spread of education and by the growth of the national spirit following the victories of Marlborough on the continent.

The period of English history between 1700-1798 is referred to as the Pseudo Classical Age or Neo Classical Age and if further divided into two, the first half may be called the Age of Pope, while the second half- the Age of Dr.Johnson who dominated the age. During this period, first Queen Anne and then the three Georges ruled over England. Matthew Arnold refers to the period as 'Our admirable and indispensable to the century:, because the age saw the rise of the social Essay and the Novel, and the development of the modern prose style. The age was marked by tension and stress between rural and urban people, the puritans and courtly upper class and fierce political and civil strife. Political debates were aplenty and even woman participated in these debates. Addison tried his best to humanize the age, and calm political passions through his articles in the "Spectator". Political parties tried to obtain the help of authors; and so the authors became important and began to exercise their authority on different matters. They slowly became independent of the grip of the rich and the powerful. There was a great increase in public houses which were centers of activity and public life. This increase resulted in a number of vices like drinking and gambling. Nearly the whole society became prone to drinking habit or gambling. Writers like Pope made a mention of these in their books such as 'The Rape of the Lock".

During the first half of the 18th century England was not very civilized in many respects. There was insecurity coupled with the dominance of the politicians. Some poets like Pope were attacked when they wrote satires reflecting the societal evils. Women were not held in great respect and their social status was also considerably low. There was obscenity around in matters related to the treatment of women who were looked upon as inferior to men. Women were considered to be without common sense, always craving for external beauty and appearance. The frivolity of women was one of the themes for the writers.

Corruption and immorality were rampant. Lack of ethics accentuated the seriousness of the problem. Some women also lacked in moral sense inviting sarcastic remarks from men of letters.

Despite these negative aspects, there were merits also. The Age of Pope was also a period of stabilization, tolerance and the growth of wealth and prosperity. The age also witnessed the emergence of constitutional monarchy in England and the supremacy of Parliament. The rich middleclass became politically important. The authority of the King was curtailed and the Parliament became the real ruler of the Country. The impact of the Industrial Revolution was not yet manifest and the country was free from class-struggle. People were content and the aristocratic rulers ruled in co-ordination of and with the support of the middle class . It was an age of common sense, which in cultured circles at least sought to refine manners and introduce into life the rule of sweet reasonableness. The church was also tolerant in its attitude following a middle way and the religious life was free from strife and fanaticism. This middle way of control and reason, and the distrust of "enthusiasm" are faithfully reflected in the literature of the period".

Further, the rising middle class exercised a moderate influence on the manners and morals of the people. They loved discipline, tradition, order and also morals. R.C. Churchill says, "Just as in the Restoration period, there was a strong reaction against Puritanism ;so also in the Augustan Age there was a violent reaction against the debauchery and immorality of the Restoration". Immorality was criticised and attacked. William III was a stern moralist and so was Queen Anne. Literature began to be didactic. Steele and Addison strove hard," to enliven morality with wit and temper with morality'. Women were respected. Though there was still an element of unethical practices, on the whole, a great lot of improvement was to be noticed.

Education grew prominent with a number of new education institutions springing up. Reading had undergone some changes. Education created an awareness related to reading among traders, manufacturers and even household servants. Literature attained more significance and the book -seller or publisher exercised his influence on literature and literary trends. Philosophers like Locke and Thomas Hobbes insisted on 'reason' 'decency', decorum and good sense in addition to order and balance in human as well as social life. Their ideas were taken up by the other writers of the period.

The second half of the eighteenth century can be called an age of reaction and an age of transition, an age in which there is a marked conflict between the old and the new. People during Pope's time protested against the immorality of the Restoration and the extremities of the metaphysicals. They followed reason and good sense, developed a rigid formalism, distrusted emotion and enthusiasm. In the age of Dr Johnson, we find that there is a reaction against the self- complacency, the artificiality, the formalism and intellectuality of the previous age. Hudson states, "The emotions, long repressed, were now reinstated, and all life was modified in consequence'. Altogether, there seemed to be general awakening all around like religion, politics and culture.

In the field of religion, there was broad-mindedness. Preachers cared not for propriety and correctness but for feelings and emotion. The sentimentalism of the age is reflected in the novels of Richardson and Laurence Sterne. It is also seen in the revived love of Nature. The Gothic novel or the novel of terror is yet another form of this sensibility.

The emergence of the middle class became important in politics, life and also society. It started sharing social powers, moral authority and responsibility. It consisted of merchants, businessmen and industrialists. The upward rise in money led to a more comfortable life style raising the general standards of man. Research and creativity were encouraged along with the rise of sensibility the rise of concern and sympathy for all the living beings. Man became kind and humane. Democratic spirit spread. Man but not his background was important. Liberty, equality and fraternity gained prominence. People became conscious of their rights. But everything was calm and settled without any violence or unrest. Rousseau and other writers inspired people with their new or revolutionary ideas.

4.4.3 MAIN LITERARY CONCEPTS OF THE AGE

The Age of Pope and Johnson had different names as people referred to it differently. Just as the rule of King Augustus in Italy was regarded as the golden age of Latin Literature, the early part of the eighteenth century saw the glorious period in English Literature. Therefore, the name "The Augustan Age". Eminent writers like Swift, Pope, Addison, Steele, Defoe, Fielding, Burke and Dr.Johnson, to name a few, lived in this age and produced remarkable pieces of literature. The Press and novel, besides pamphlets also were on the path of progress. It was Matthew Arnold, to reiterate the point, who called the age, "The age of prose and reason'. Especially prose witnessed much growth as magazines, pamphlets and newspapers, apart from the other's works were in prose. "Poetry itself becomes prosaic, for it is used not for creative works of imagination but for ethical essays, for satire, and for criticism". Though poets used poetry as a vehicle for their expression, it possessed more qualities of prose than of poetry. Drama almost gave place to the novel. The congenial social conditions for the growth of prose and novel contributed to its further advance.

A striking feature of the literature of the age is the emergence of the social essay and the 'middle style' in prose. A style to suit the requirements of the day began with Addison and Steel who used it for the improvement of social manners and ethics.

The Age also was called 'The Classical Age'. It was probably called so because probably a) the term 'classic' was used for writers who formed a class by themselves. These writers created great works and got the name for the age as the classic age of Latin literature during Dante's period and the age of Pope, the Classic Age of Latin literature during Dante's period and the age of Pope, the Classic Age of England (b) The writers claimed to have followed the classics of the Greece and Rome which insisted on perfect form, certainty of expressions. They also followed the classical features of moderation, tolerance and good sense and (c) The writers felt poetry should be according to correct rules laid down by ancient writers such as Horace and Aristotle.

In fact, the age of Augustus could be called 'pseudo- classicism" as there was no harmonious balance between form and substance. The subject, thought and feeling were subordinate to form. It was the literature of the town and the fashionable upper circles of the city of London. They followed "nature" but that of human beings. Drama and epic were not prominent and lacked lyric intensity. They wrote mainly satiric poetry depicting the undesirable political and social elements. Heroic couplet is the only verse form used extremely and excellently. However monotony and rigidity were the consequences.

At such a juncture, the second half of the century showed the conflicts of the old and new. There was a powerful protest against the traditional school and a new kind of literature, different in the matter, spirit and form emerged. Legouis and Cazamian felt, "The study of this age will, therefore, mean a continual swing between movements men and works that are animated by the spirit of yesterday, or by a spirit that has scarcely changed, and others in which the new inspiration is predominant, between a literature of reason and a literature of sentiment'. Duality could be seen in the poetry of the age : sticking to the classical tradition and the rise of romanticism. Many writers were inclined to follow the policies of the romantics who sought fresh subjects, forms, expression and emotion. The new school wanted to (a) depict the real 'nature' not 'human nature', (b) break away from the artificial 'poetic diction' of Pope's age and be simple in diction (c) to reject 'heroic couplet', (d) to search for new things including the supernatural and d) to follow individual inspiration and intuition based on imagination.

The age of Johnson thus marked the transition between the classicism, pseudo -classicism of the early eighteenth century and the romanticism of the early years of the nineteenth century. The new characteristics born along with this change were followed by writers. They expressed though rooted in classical tradition, with new spirit. Letter- writing cultivated as a form of literature becomes the order of the day. Dr.Johnson's Letter to Lord chesterfield is a masterpiece. Gray also wrote fine letters. Prose branched out into various form. Johnson made a vital contribution to the development and refinement of English prose as he compiled the first dictionary of the language and left "a monument of strong, masculine and dignified prose," in his "Lives of the poets".

4.4.4 THE AGE OF JOHSON (1745-1798) :

To study the depth the age of Johnson it is essential to get a better idea of the age of sensibility. If we take general prose into picture, firstly there were many changes taking place in the spirit of the English society. As already stated, reason and good sense became the guiding principles. Pope's ridiculous optimism expresses the easy going mood of the self-complacent age; the kindly, but thin and superficial social criticism of the Addison and Steele reveals the same temper in a different form; while the fierce misanthropy of Swift, striking a discordant note, is in part at least to be interpreted as the measureless scorn of a strong man for that petty world about him which had bound him down as his own Gulliver by Lilliputians. The new generation reached against self-complacency, the darkness and dryness of the age. They were discontent with the old ideas and narrowness of thought and controlling ideals. They were bored with artificiality existing and craved for something more natural and spontaneous both in thought and language. They were awakened into a renaissance of feelings. This is perhaps beyond all others the one capital fact in the history of this period of transition. The emotion, long expressed, were now reinstated and all life was modified in consequence. We see this in the case of religion. In Pope's time, religion itself, partaking the general tendencies of contemporary society, had been formal, utilitarian and unspiritual. In the great evangelistic revival, let by Wesley and Whitefield, the old formality was swept away, the utilitarianism abandoned and a mighty tide of spiritual energy poured into the church and out among the masses of the people. These evangelists made their appeal directly to the emotional nature and they did not seem to care for decorum and propriety. A natural accompaniment of this revival in religion was a widening and deepening sympathy with man as man. The spread of the humanitarian spirit and the increasing frequency and vigor of the protests which were now made not only against the brutality of society, but also against its general callousness, are historically of much importance. But all these things were only aspects of a great comprehension movement-the rapid growth of democracy more than ever, the individual man was now recognized in his essential manhood and the stress laid upon those qualities of character which have nothing to do with factitious associations of birth and breeding though in the history of the literature of the age of Johnson it is difficult to mark out the lines of its evolution.

LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON : Samuel Johnson, the greatest Englishman of letters between Pope and Wordsworth, was born at Lichfield in 1709. In 1738 he published a poem called 'London' and formed a connection with "Cave's Magazine" to which he regularly contributed the parliamentarian reports for a number of years, though he himself was never in the gallery of the house, and merely worked up his debates from the notes of others. Amid much miscellaneous drudgery, during the next few years he produced the " Vanity of Human Wishes"(1749) and a tragedy, Irene (1749), on the neo-classic model; and in March, 1750, began a periodical, 'The Rambler', in imitation of 'The Spectator', which appeared on Tuesday and Saturdays till march,1752. This was followed later by two other series – 'The Adventure' and 'The Idler'. Meanwhile he was occupied for eight years(1747-55) by an immense task—"A Dictisonary of English Language", in which he undertook not only to define, but also to illustrate his definitions by quotations taken from the whole range of English literature. Though weak in etymology and philology, this work laid the foundation of English lexicography. He published his didactic tale " Rasselas" in 1759; an edition of Shakespeare in 1765; an account of his tour to the Hebrides with Boswell under the title of Journey to the Lestern Islands of Scotland in 1775, and his largest and his greatest work, " The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets with Critical Observation on Their Works" in 1779-81. He died in 1784 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

As Macaulay puts it, " The Memory of Johnson keeps many of his works alive". He lives in the pages of his biography by his hero worshipping friend, James Boswell (1742-95) the greatest book of the kind in our own or any other literature.Every detail of his physical and mental behaviour is portrayed. He was great both as a critic of literature and as a critic of life. As a critic of literature he is almost always penetrating and stimulating, though acted on prejudices sometimes. In all his tasks and standards, he was a thorough-going conservative; holding fast to the principle of the Augustan school of poetry, and stoutly resisting every moment of revolt against what he regarded as the orthodox literary creed. 'As a moralist he is characterized by remarkable sanity and massive common sense. He is a pessimist. "Life" he declared, " is a progress from want to want, not from enjoyment to enjoyment".

As a prose writer, he did not follow the lead of the Augustan masters, and in place of the easy grace of addition and the vigorous idiomatic colloquialism of Swift, he gives a style which is highly Latinised in vocabulary and in sentence structure is marked by elaborate balance and antithesis.

GOLDSMITH : In the literature of the Johnsonian era , the writer who stands nearest to Johnson himself, both in personal and in historical interest is Oliver Goldsmith. The most eccentric of an eccentric family, Goldsmith was born in 1728 in Ireland, where his father was a protestant clergyman. In early life he gained an unenviable reputation for wildness and stupidity, and after just contriving to take his degree at Dublin he spent some years in idleness before he was sent by his relatives to Edinburgh to study medicine. Then he went to Leyden. There he pursued his medical studies and earned money by teaching and lost it at all the gaming tables. In 1756 he reached London without money and friends, became corrector for the press, and so at thirty drifted into literature. His career was mainly that of a hack-writer, and the larger portion of his output belongs to the class of what are popularly known as 'pot-boilers' . He wrote two poems, "The Traveller"(1764) and "The Deserted Village" (1770), one novel "The Vicar of Wakefield" (1766) and two comedies –" The Good Natured Man" (1768) and " She Stops to Conquer" (1773), a number of essays under the title, "The Citizen of the World" (1760-62).

His wok is very miscellaneous in character, and he is a great contributor in Johnsonian age. His two comedies are historically interesting because they mark a reaction against the dull and vapid moralisings of sentimental comedy, and a return to real humor and life. The charm of his writings is the charm of the man himself. Some of his works are basically autobiographical in theme. As a critic and theorist he was even more consistently conservative than Johnson, and stoutly maintained the supremacy of Pope. Uninfluenced by the more elaborate rhetoric which Johnson has brought into vogue, he wrote in an easy, informal way which may be said to carry on the tradition of Addison and Steele.

OTHER GENERAL PROSE WRITERS OF THE PERIOD :

DAVID HUME (1711-76) He is even better known as a skeptical philosopher, wrote a " History of England" which is characterized by polished clearness of style, but greatly marred by carelessness in regard to facts and by strong Tory bias in favour of the Stuarts and against the Puritans.

WILLAM ROBERTSAN (1721-93) made a great mark with his " History of Scotland", "History of Charles V" and "History of America". Incomparably the greatest historian of the time was Edward Gibbon (1737-94) whose " History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" begins with the reign of Titus, 98

A.D. and closes with the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. He thus built a 'Roman road' through fourteen centuries. In this execution of this vast design he united laborious research, accuracy and the most wonderful power of organizing enormous and chaotic masses of material into a well-ordered whole. Somehow he lacks feeling and sympathy and his style is too monotonously laboured and grandiose.

EDMURD BURKE (1729-97) A man of noble nature and extraordinary breadth of outlook, Burke carried into political controversy passionate moral earnestness, vivid imagination and splendid logical powers, while his rich and highly wrought rhetorical style gave a gorgeous colouring to everything he wrote. His principles were those of philosophic conservatism, and a profound sense of historical continuity was one of the central elements of his thought. He supported the cause of the American colonies in his speeches "On American Taxation" (1774), and 'On Conciliation with America'(1775) and bitterly opposed the French Revolution in his "Reflections", "Letter to a Noble Lord" and "Letters on a Reginde Peace" (1796-97).The first of these was answered by Thomas Paine (1737-1809) in his "Rights of Man". William Godwin (1756-1836) was another philosophical supporter who set forth the most extreme revolutionary ideas with a mathematical demonstration; he exercised an enormous influence upon the younger generation.

During Johnson's age there was also great activity in the literature of theology, philosophy and political economy. In lighter prose the most important names are those of the letter –writers, for letter-writing was at that time cultivated both as a pastime and as an art of these, three call for mention- Lady Mary Wortley Montagu , Philip Dormer Stanhope and Horace Walpole.

THE NOVEL : It was with Richardson that prose fiction passed definitely into its modern form. Most of this fiction had been purely romantic, as with Sidney, Lodge, and Greene; or didactic as with More, Lyly and Bacon; but a slight tendency of realism had been shown in the picaresque work of Nash. A number of extraneous influences were at work, all contributing to the transformation of prose fiction into something which was to be essentially unlike any of its previous varieties. The work of the character - writers and Addison and Steele, Bunyan contributed much in this aspect. Bunyan' s effective use of fiction as allegory has to be recognized, and emphasis must also be laid upon the increasing popularity of biography, the forms and methods of which could every easily be carried over from historical into fictitious narration.

Before we turn to Richardson, we may pause to realize the historical significance of the novel from both the literary and the social points of view. The periodical essay depended upon the growth of a miscellaneous reading public and of public in which wornen were becoming increasingly numerous and influential. As practically a new form of literary art, the novel was a sign that literature was beginning to out grow the cramping limitation of classicism, and to abandon the doctrine that modern genius was bound to go in the leading strings of tradition . Modern writers began to work independently. The rise of the novel was one result of the democratic movement in eighteen century England.

RICHARDSON (1689-1761) was a prosperous printer. Two friends of his who were publishers asked him to prepare for them 'a little volume of letters in a common style' as models for 'country readers who were unable to indite for themselves and at his suggestion, guidance in conduct was to be combined with introduction in the art of composition. He books are extremely long and are incumbered with endless repetition and masses of unimportant detail. He is the art of the infinitely little, and his effects are built up out of thousands of small and seemingly trivial things. His first hand knowledge of the world was small and his view extremely narrow.

FIELDING : Henry Fielding (1707-54) was the second of the eighteenth century novelists and by far the greatest of them all. His was a virile, vigourous and somewhat coarse nature, and his knowledge of life, as wide as Richardson's was narrow, included in particular many aspects of it from which the prim little printer would have recoiled shocked. Unlike Richardson, he started with a good preliminary preparation in technique. He wrote "The Adventures of Joseph Andrews" (1742). This was followed in 1749 by "The History of Tom Jones". He was much concerned about the structural principles of prose fiction. To him the novel was quite as much a form of art as the epic or the drama.

SMOLLETT : A third writer Tobias Smollett (1721-71) was not as prolific a writer as Richardson and Fielding. He wrote half a dozen novels, the most important of which are – "The Adventures of Roderick Random " (1748), " The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle (1751) and The Expedition of Humphry Clinker" (1771). He conceived the novel as 'a large diffused picture' of life and made little attempt to organize his materials into an artistic whole. He was the real creator of the English novel of the sea and of sailors, and successfully and systematically exploited the national peculiarities of Irish, Scotch and Welsh.

OTHER NOVELISTS OF PERIOD : There were a number of other novelists – Oliver Goldsmith, Rev. Laurence Sterne, Henry Mackenzie , to cite a few names. Interestingly the growth of the novel took a new turn as women began to take part in it . Francis Burney (1752-1840) laid the real foundations of the woman's novel. In many ways it belonged entirely to the eighteenth century school. Her books are " Evelina or The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World" and " Cecilia". The woman's point of view was depicted in the novel.

Slowly, there was a revival of romantic spirit. In this revival, the most important name is that of Horace Walpole. Sensationalism of the most extravagant kind was the general characteristic of the romantic fiction which was produced in enormous quantities during the closing decades of the eighteenth century.

VERSE : The history of the later eighteenth century poetry is the history of a struggle between old and new and of the gradual triumph of the new. There were writers who followed the school of Pope and aimed at producing the kind of verse which Pope had brought to perfection and made popular .On the other hand, there was a marked tendency among writers of the rising generation to abandon the practice of the school of Pope, respond to a different range of influences, and seek fresh subjects, forms, feelings and expressions, breaking away from the Augustan tradition.

Thus the Age of Johnson, in respect of its poetry is obviously an age of transition, innovation and varied experiment. Emphasis must be laid on the strong conservative tendencies of Johnson and Goldsmith. Johnson took it for granted that the kind of poetry which flourished in his own time was the best kind of poetry. Goldsmith was convinced that the writers of the Augustan age provided " the true standard for future imitation". They wrote their poems in the old tradition sometimes. But they tended to deviate from it while they were didactic and philosophical, the thesis was often an excuse for digression of the purest poetry and the argument a mere thread upon which the writer hung pictures, reflections, and reminiscences.

There was a reaction against the Augustan tradition, for instance, in form. In technical quality and aesthetic effect, both blank verse and the Spenserian stanza the very antithesis of the terse, epigrammatic closed couplet and appealed to the new generation both by contrast with this, and by their elasticity and

opportunity. They afforded for the free movement of the poet's mind while many writers rejected the couplet, the couplet was allowed to remain intact in the particular shape which it had finally assured in the hands of Pope. There was also the growth of the love of nature and development of naturalism in the poetry of Johnson's age. On the side of both of matter and of style, simplification was much aided by the spread of an interest in old ballad literature. Natural and spontaneous poetry sprang up. At this point mention may be made of William Blake, who was a poet, mystic and a visionary. His plain and realistic handling of materials taken from actual life and his total repudiation of all the pastoral conventions which had long stood between the poet and the world of reality about him, give him special importance in the naturalistic reaction against the Augustan tradition. During the Romantic Revival, numerous poets expressed their feelings in verse, for instance, Keats, Gray, Burns, Cowper, and later Wordsworth, Byron and others.

4.4.5 LET US SUM UP :

M.H.Abrams says, "The novel of sensibility, or sentimental novel, of the eighteenth century emphasized the tearful distresses of the virtuous either at their own sorrows or those of their friends". According to him when a literary historian talks of the literature of sensibility, he refers to a particular cultural phenomenon of the eighteenth century. In short the age of sensibility is the age of Johnson which marked the transition between Augustan or classical Age and the Romantic Age.

4.4.6 SAMPLE QUESTIONS :

1. Why is the eighteenth century regarded as the age of reason and sense ? Elucidate.
2. "Johnson's age marked the transition between Augustan or Classical Age and the Romantic Age". Delineate your views with support.
3. Give an account of the changes the novel witnessed in the age of sensibility.
4. Does sensibility appear in verse in the eighteenth century ? Give examples.
5. Attempt an essay on the Johnsonian age.
6. Trace out the reforms in novel and fiction throwing light upon various writers belonging to the eighteenth century.

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Lesson - 5

ANTI - SENTIMENTAL COMEDY

Structure :

3.5.1 Objectives :

To make the students familiar with anti-sentimental comedy to provide the background for understanding the comedies of Goldsmith and Sheridan.

3.5.2 Introduction :

Conflicting versions remain about seventeenth century drama. Some like Dale underwood feel that it deals with "problems fundamental not only to the seventeenth century, but to the nature of man". Many others consider the theatre of this age as being trivial, dull and concerned with the every one aspects of life.

The basic theatrical trends during the eighteenth century are Restoration comedy, Restoration tragedy, Sentimental comedy and the excess of which produced the anti sentimental comedy. These type of plays do slightly over-lap. The common features of seventeenth century drama are

(a) a reflection of the social, intellectual and political issues of the times

(b) the concern with the external nature of man as proposed to the study of man in the setting of nature

(c) a gross depiction of the immorality of the times.

At the same time, it would be wrong to conclude that the entire Restoration society was immoral. The entire nature was not rurally decadent. Bunyan's Piligrim's progress has sold nearly ten editions by the year 1688. The middle classes continued to lead decent lives as during the early common wealth period.

But the life in the court was different from the life amongst the common middle classes. Plays like wycherleys The country Wife (1675) and Etheregis The Man of Mode (1676) which had scenes of lewd conservation, cuckhold husbands and reduced wives were enjoyed by the court. But, the Revolution of 1688 ushered a new social and moral ethos wherein the aristocracy in the old sense almost remained dead. Trevelyan observes "The whitehall of the Merry Monarch now lay in

ruins, never to rise again. John Roftin in his comedy and society from Congreve to Fielding analyses the importance of the bourgeoise power. In 1698, Jeremy collier in his short view of the immorality and profaneness of the English stage (1698) denounced the comedy of manners for its (whereing) "whoring, pimping, gaming, profaneness". After this, the attitude of the law and government regarding the stage changed. Around the turn of the century, there was a change. Dramatists like Southern, Vanbrugh and Farquhar wrote plays which were free from the lyrical coarseness of the earlier dramatists. Congreve's Mirabell in the way of the world (1700) is relatively both sober and sententious when compared with the early Restoration heroes.

In order to meet the demands of the middle-class public, Southerns, Vanbrugh and Farquhar consciously strove to achieve a sentimental and moral effect in their plays.

3.5.3 The Advent of sentimental comedy :

In order to understand the nature of anti-sentimental comedy, it is essential for us to understand sentimental comedy, since without this, the reaction against it would have been impossible. Moreover, a queer irony lies in the fact that in the process of wanting to go against this for all of comedy, it followed the self-same features which contrarily made it no different from it.

It is an established fact that the eighteenth century drama was deeply influenced by the social and literary sentimentalism as by the aim to reform the society. The term "sentimental" is not easy to define. Nettleton in his English Drama of the Restoration and Eighteenth Century and A.W. Ward in English Dramatic Literature trace the origins of sentimental drama in pity. E. Bernbaum in "The Drama of sensibility discovered in it a certain belief in the essential goodness of human nature. Allardyce Nicoll finds in it qualities of pathos and a moral problem.

The titles of these plays in a way are highly deceptive : The careless Husband, The conscious Lovers, The foundling and plays like these appeal not to our sense of comedy, but to our sentimentality. Sentiment is substituted for laughter. It aims at giving tender and tearful joy, instead of a comic denouncement. Like the sentimental novels of the time, it contains a sympathetic and emotional treatment of something serious, although the play has a happy ending. The major characters have tender minds and soft hearts, appealing more to the heart, rather than the intellect. Didacticism is its forte and therefore, morality is pre-dominant. The comic spirit is also **netertiary** to a position.

Sentimental drama has been in (nature) reaction against the bawdiness of the comedy of manners. Steele was one of the advocates of this moral, sentimental comedy. In numerous issues of the Jatler and Spectator, he attached the profanity of the comedy of manners. In spectator no. 51, for instance, he lashes at the bead of play in which "a fine gentleman ..... lies with half the women in the play, and is at last rewarded with her of the best of character in it." He also advocated for a new way of writing. The ideals of Steele were satisfied by serious comedies like Cibber's "Lady's last State and The careless Husband. In Tatler no. 134, he wrote "To be apt to shed tears is a sign of great as well as little spirit". He further added that feelings like tenderness, humanity and compassion were as important as reason and intellect.

The type of comedy which was advocated by Steele and favoured by the middle-classes, became very popular. The contemporary audience enjoyed the "gentle tears" as they wept for the pathetic scenes in these plays. Allardyce Nicole rightly remarks that " 'Sympathetic tears and

'Sentimental" tears were almost synonymous terms for the eighteenth century". Plays like 'Love's Last shift, The Conscious Lovers, The Tuneral, The Careless Husband or 'The Lying Lover contained all the typical features of sentimental comedy.

The Nature of Sentimental Comedy :

The aim of sentimental comedy was to elevate human nature by depicting moral excellence, Steele, in his Spectator No. 446 drives home this point precisely. "whatever vices are represented upon the stage, they ought to be so marked and branded by the poet, as not to appear laudable nor amiable in the person who is tainted with them".

The themes of sentimental comedy therefore arise from a general protest against the unethical attitude of human beings towards moral codes of conduct. This is precisely the difference between Restoration comedy and Sentimental comedy. While the (further) former mocks at traditional values, the latter upholds them. The plays are therefore loaded with lofty sentiments, emotional situations and didacticism, matters of private life, problems of love, courtship, marriage, erring husands and wives, erring, but essentially good-hearted characters, wayward husbands, virtuous wives and the ultimate re-conciliation between the two form the themes of marriage.

Another much repeated theme in sentimental comedy is the ultimate victory of a conscientious and true lover over wealth and villian. An example of this kind of theme could be seen in the Conscious Lovers, where Bevil maintains a deep and enduring love of Indiana. Yet another oft-recurring theme in sentimental comedy is that of innocent and virtuous characters who despite their troubles, ultimately triumph over male waywardness. This is because, an ill-treated wife or a woman in woe gives the play a sentimental touch. These sentimental scenes are an integral part of all sentimental comedies.

Therefore it is clear that the themes of sentimental comedy centre around moral issues and its main aim is to upgrade the moral standards of the age. As B.S. Pathania mentions, "The immorality and amorality of the Restoration comedy sprang from an essentially shallow and cynical view of life on which no truly great art could be founded. "Therefore, sentimental comedy, as Allardyce Nicoll points out, attempts to dramatize a moral problem.

3.5.4 Limitations of Sentimental Comedy :

But the basic problem with sentimental comedy lies in the fact that the moral aim is never fully or sufficiently brought out in the play. The moral pronouncements made by the characters are indeed (too) loud. The preacher and the didactic element in the play are only too obvious. In fact it is an artistic flaw, since direct preaching mars the appeal of a pure comedy. (This) The consciously instructive plots have moral aims, which often stand out as an artistic blemish.

Yet another major flaw of sentimental comedy is the predominantly pathetic scenes. Edmund Burke, in Reformer No. 10 (1748) mentions our Authors reverse the Business of the Drama and are fond of introducing scenes of Distress in comedy. Who were the first inventors of this weeping comedy, I cannot tell. "The predominance of the pathetic over the humourous element in sentimental comedy was endorsed by its major practitioners like steele. According to him, comedy need not arouse laughter by exposing a person's folly to redicule. In the epilogue to The Lying Lover, he praises pity, but depises laughter which he calls the issue of "sudden self-esteem and sudden scorn". In fact, according to Steele, comedy must give a joy too exquisite for laughter.

The humourous element in the play is not totally absent, but it is only secondary to the predominantly sentimental, serious and pathetic elements in the play. Ward and Mettleton therefore define it as a kind of comedy that arouses pity in the mind of the spectator. Bernbaum points out that the sentimental playwrights "destroyed forever the tradition that the pathetic must be excluded from comedy.

Such sentimental themes are susceptible to emotional treatment. Nearly all sentimental comedies contain emotional passages that are tender and touching. The heavily loaded elements of pity and didacticism make the plays neither genuine comedies nor tragedies. S.T.Williams mentions that both humour and satire in sentimental comedy "seem like forbidden guests in a house of mourning". The final acts of most of the sentimental plays were saturated with pathos, which was vindicated in its own time. Bishop Hund, for instance, wrote that "all Distresses were not improper in comedy".

Many of the heroes of such sentimental comedies were presented as being extremely virtuous and grave. They were unlike the licentious heroes of the Restoration comedies. As personification of honesty, modesty, compassion, benevolence they promoted virtue and instructed the audience in a moral path.

Some such examples are Bevil Jr. in The Conscious Lovers, Sir John Dorilant in The School are some examples to prove this point. Ultimately, all these characters are rewarded for their virtue. It is not just the heroes, but the heroines are also projected as forelorn maidens, who remain in distress despite their virtues. They are rewarded for their virtues only after their suffering arouses necessary pity in us. Indiana, the heroine of The Conscious Lovers is one such typical heroine.

Apart from the heroine and hero, another typical character found in sentimental comedy is and elderly person, who is the embodiment of benevolence, Morals and sentimental feelings. Often, the character is involved in the process of clearing the difficulties of virtuous characters. Sir Friendly Moral in The Lady's Last Stake is a typical example of this type of character. He succeeds in bringing about a reconciliation between Lord and Lady wrong Love. The sentimental good samaritan of these plays is actually a personification of the shaftsburian faith in the essential goodness of every human being. The character of such a person is duly indicated in the course of the play. As a "friend of mankind", numerous erring characters in the play are reformed and in the due course of time he is rewarded.

The eighteenth century sentimental comedy was not easy to respond to, on account of its uncritical optimism. The morality expressed in the plays being rather shallow, the characters also appear quite ridiculous in their benevolence. The complex nature of human life was ignored and the scenes of reconciliation also remain too simple and continued which is far from the stark realities of human existence. J.W. Donabue Jr. is therefore right in complaining of "the single-minded artificiality of the sentimental comedy. Moreover, the action of these comedies are often marred by sermon-like dialogues on moral issues and frequent display of pity, as in The Lying Lover, The careless Husband or The Conscious Lovers. The comic element is indeed too sparse to relieve the sentimental, didactic and moral elements of the play. Therefore, the proponents of anti-sentimental comedy mocked at these elements of sentimental comedy by using these characteristic features in a mocking

tone. The best proponents of the anti-sentimental comedy are undoubtedly Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, whom we shall now discuss in detail.

3.5.5 Oliver Goldsmith :

In 1768, Samuel Toote, an actor and dramatist complained that the sentimental theatre was directed by the genius of insipidity". His puppet - show Piety in Patterns (1773) ridiculed the sentimental desire to idealize common life. Goldsmith had a poor opinion about the type of plays that were predominantly enacted during his time. This is clearly enunciated by him in chapter IX of An Enquiry into the present State of Polite Learning (1759) where he complains of the impossibility of satisfying critics with a comedy meant to induce laughter. He blames for making poetry dull. In Chapter X he maintains the fact of the general decline of European culture which even the British theatre shares. Such views of Goldsmith, wherein he makes an indictment against sentimental comedy is prevalent in his other works too.

In letter XXI of The citizens of the world (1762), Lien Chi Altangi mentions the attitude of the spectators during the performance of a fine-act tragedy. His companion in Block comments thus, "not one in a hundred of them knew even the first principles. If criticism ..... they assumed the right of being censors because there was none to contradict their pretensions" In Chapter XVIII of The Vicar of Wakefield, the player tells primrose that the spectators have no high expectations regarding a theatre" they only go to be amused, and find themselves happy when they can enjoy a pantomime under the sanctions of Johnson's or Shakespeare's name".

The uniqueness of Goldsmith's theatrical works springs from the fact that he refused to budge to contemporary tastes. Fergusson says that when Goldsmith wrote his major dramatical works, they were contrary to the contemporary tastes and fashions. Many of his contemporaries wrote sentimental plays only because they catered to the needs of contemporary fashion. In his well-known "Essay on the Theatre or A Comparison between laughing and sentimental comedy, he openly expressed his opposition to sentimental comedy. Published in Westminister Magazine in January 1773, shortly before the publication of She Stoops to Conquer the essay is an important landmark in the genre of anti-sentimental comedy. In this essay, Goldsmith asserts the fact that the sole object of comedy is to entertain by portraying the imperfections of human nature. But this is not an original comment of Goldsmith, since earlier dramatists had also tried to, identify the comic spirit with some sort of human imperfection. The comic aspect of life has not been altogether given up in sentimental comedy. In the "Essay", Goldsmith quotes Aristotle who said that comedy is "a picture of the frailities of the lower part of mankind", while tragedy deals with "the misfortunes of the great". This classical writer is quoted to emphasize the point that true comedy should rouse our laughter by ridiculously exhibiting the vices and follies of mankind. The point that goldsmith misses here is the fact that the spirit of comedy is one of joy, faith and hope through laughter. When Goldsmith remarks that comedy and tragedy are distinct and seperate genres, he seems to have forgotten Shakespearean comedy which does not limit itself to the comic and the ridiculous alone. It views life in a holistic manner, by including the serious along with the lighter moments of it. In the 18th Century, John Dennis also held similar views, which he expressed in his "Remarks on the conscious Lovers where he called laughter and ridicule as the distinguishing features of comedy.

Goldsmith finds it hard to accept a typical sentimental comedy which is loaded with the pathetic instead of sentimental elements. The insipid dialogues and the heavily dosed sentiments do apall him. Goldsmith's "Essay" remains an important statement of his artistic intentions. He protested against the English imitations of the French Comedy larmoyante which excluded humour and substituted it with sentiment. In fact, Goldsmith pleaded the cause of laughter at a time when he felt that genuine humour had almost vanished from the French stage. Goldsmith's friend Dr. Johnson also agreed that "the great end of comedy is to make an audience merry". Allardyce Nicoll also agrees with this. It is the laughter that we look for in comedy, not the sense of moral right or of moral wrong, not the purpose or the significance of the play." He follows these rules in his greatest anti-sentimental plays like The Good-Natured Man and She Stoops to Conquer.

The Good-Natured Man :

Goldsmith wrote this first comedy around 1766-77 and gave it to Garrich to be presented at Drury Lane. Goldsmith's genuine contempt for sentimental comedy is clear from his observations made in the preface to the printed edition of The Good Natured Man.

"When I undertook to write a comedy, I confess I was strongly prepossessed in favour of the poets of the last age.

..... The term genteel comedy, was then unknown amongst us, and little more was desired by an audience than nature and humour in whatever walks of life they were most conspicuous.

Goldsmith had written this play with the goal of presenting nature and humour by delineating character. The proper function of true comedy to him, is to rouse laughter throught comic situations and characters. The dialogue also aids laughter by creating the requisite mood. The Good Natured Man has all these qualities. It is not comedy larmoyante and therefore it is not loaded with false sensibility and superficial refinement. As a rule, sentimental comedy excluded "low" & "mean" characters. But in this play, Goldsmith has introduced a drunken butler and two bailiffs.

On the first night of the performance, the audience which was accustomed to sentimental writings resented the language of the bailiffs. William Coobe has remarked it as being "low" and "dam'nd Vulgar". On the second night, the offensive scene was omitted. Therefore, many critics consider the play as being sentimental. Gosse, for instance remarks that the play "shows to a considerable extent this sentimental quality". Allardyce Nicoll complains that "elements of sentimentalism mar its general tone".

A point that most of the critics ignore is the fact that although the play has a few sentimental elements, it is indeed a gay comedy. Characters like Miss Richland, Honeywood are comically conceived when compared with the stock gloomy characters of the sentimental comedy. Mr. Goaker, for instance, is an all-time pessimist; who delights us by thriving on woe. Another amusing satirical portrait is that of lofty.

Gallaway analyses the anti-sentimental mind of Goldsmith which consistently pervades his works. "Goldsmith was instinctively sensitive and in the non-technical sense of the word, sentimental, he was able to keep from being entangled in the doctorinaine sentimental movement of Shatesbury, Richardson and Rousseau." Even the sub-plot of the play avoids the excesses of sentimentality.

Professor Quintane observes that the play "is a true comedy and a fitting prelude to "She stops to conquer".

The play conforms to Goldsmith's theoretical ideals.

She Stoops to Conquer :

First produced in 1773 at convent garden, the play also had another title : The Mistakes of a Night. The play was dedicated to Dr. Johnson who later said " I know of no comedy for many years that has so much exhilarated the audience". Loaded with humour, delighful incidents, character and dialogue, the play dealt a death blow to sentimental comedy.

The opening dialogue of the play between Mr. and Mrs. Hard Castle is full of humour. While Mrs. Hard Castle complains that even ordinary and insignificant people go to London every winter, they alone continue to live in their house which is "an old rumbling mansion that looks for all the world like an inn." We are amused when Mrs. Hardcastle resents being called "old" by her husband, and always prefers to be only "forty" despite her husband calling her "fifty-seven". Towards the end of the act, Marlowe and Hastings lose their way to Mr. Hardcastle's house. They meet Tony (the son of Mrs. Hard Castle through her first husband) ask him for the way without knowing his identity. They also add that Mrs. Hard Castle has a son who is "an awkward body, reared up and spoiled at his mother's apron string". Much of the comedy in the play is in Tony. Most of the fun revolves around his practical jokes on Marlowe and Hastings.

The total impression of She Stoops to conquer is a cumulative effect of its comic situations, characters and language. In fact it is a "laughing comedy" and not sentimental "weeping comedy" that Goldsmith attacked in his "Essay on the Theatre".

It is a sharp contrast to the sentimental comedy, which Goldsmith regarded as a bastard version of tragedy on account of its pathetic scenes, serious characters and dull speeches. Initially, Colman, the manager of covent garden theatre feared that the play would not please the audience. Horace Walpole, in a letter to his friend Mason called the play" the lowest of all forces". But Cumbeland mentions as to how when Dr. Johnson laughed, "everybody thought themselves warranted to roar".

Contrary to Colman's fears, the play was a total success. Macaulay mentions how "Pit, boxes and galleries were in a constant roar of laughter. If any bigoted admirer of kelley and Cumberland ventured to hiss or groan, he was speedily silenced by a general "turn him out", or "Throw himout".

Yet, Goldsmith was not the only dramatist who was against sentimental drama. His contemporaries like Arthru Murphy, Charles Mablin, David Garrick and R.B. Sheridan also worked against sentimental theatre. The prologue for the tenth night of The Rivals (1775), clearly suggests Sheridan's opposition to sentimental comedy. Prof. Friedman observes that "sentimental comedy" and "laughing comedy" may not be mutually exclusive. In fact, many of the plays which Goldsmith would designate as "weeping sentimental comedies" were not actually meant for weeping.

The "laughing comedy" was not totally absent on the English stage. Such a blend of satire, humour an geniality are also found in the plays of Murphy, Colman and Garrick. Prof. Quintana mentions that this is a characteristic feature of numerous Georgian plays. Richard Brinsley Sheridan is another major dramatist of this mode of comedy.

Legouis and Cazamian mention with regard to Sheridan that "with him, however, comedy regains, in addition to the shining beauty of form, almost all the ease of movement it had with Congreve". Sheridan's style is also on par with the classical writers. Sheridan also possessed a critical independence towards sentiment. Sheridan had frequently visited Bath and London and was therefore familiar with the fashionable circle of the times. The innate wit and irony in Sheridan was transformed into a mockery of the class he knew very well. In Sheridan, one sees a strain of revolt against artificiality. His best comedies are written against such an elite drawing room circle.

Like Goldsmith, Sheridan also revolted against the excessive sentimentality projected on the stage. He denounces the excesses of sentimentalism and hollow moral preaching. Similarly, Sheridan does not approve of pretensions of heroic tragedy which could be presented with elaborately conceived eloquence and sublimity.

Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in 1751 in Dublin. Literature and theatre was genetically inherited by him. His grandfather, Dr. Sheridan, a clergyman was a goodfriend of Swift and himself an author. His father, Thomas Sheridan, an actor, also became the manager of the Theatre Royal in Dublin. Later, he became a teacher of elocution and rhetoric. He was an acquaintance of Dr. Johnson. Richard Bringley Sheridan's mother Frances Chamberlain had written two plays and a novel Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph (1761). Sheridan was himself educated at Harrow and later sent for a career in law. But Sheridan lacked the interest in the subject and therefore failed to make a mark for himself. In 1770, Sheridan's family moved to Bath - a centre for fashion and popular for its spas and health resorts. Sheridan clearly observed the life, manners and customs and wrote verses for the Bath Chronicle, which made him very popular. Later, he became acquainted with the family of Thomas Linley - the popular musician of the eighteenth century. After an elopement, he married Linley's daughter Elizabeth Linley.

Sheridan had theatre in his blood. Therefore he took up play- writing as a serious vocation. When he was barely twenty-four, Sheridan wrote The Rivals and staged it on the 17th January 1775 at London's covent garden Theatre. On account of dissatisfaction from the audience, Sheridan re-wrote the play and was ultimately a tremendous success. In May of the same year, Sheridan staged a hilarious farce St. Patrick's Day, which was a comedy of intrigue like the previous play. His third play Duenna, a successful comic opera was produced in November 1775. The material success offered by these plays made him purchase Drury Lane Theatre, owned by the famous actor Garrick. In February 1776, Sheridan produced A Trip to Scarborough at Drury Lane, an adaptation of Vanburgh's play The Relapse (1696). The play was not as successful as the other plays of Sheridan. His greatest play The School for Scandal was written in May 1777, which was enacted for three successive nights. Plays like The Critic (1779) and Pizzaro (1799), written afterwards were not very successful.

Sheridan and Goldsmith alike rebelled against the prevailing sentimentality of the eighteenth century English stage. Sheridan may not have written tracts against it as had been done by Goldsmith, but an analysis of atleast two of his major plays The Rivals and The School for Scandal, prove this point.

3.5.6 Sheridan :

Richard Brinsley Sheridan's love for the literature was hereditary. While his father wrote a popular farce, his mother Frances Sheridan wrote a couple of novels. His grandfather was also a man of letters. Therefore, it is said that Sheridan "inherited his grandfather's wit, his father's dramatic ability and his mother's literary talents.

His father Thomas Sheridan was himself a good actor and later, the manager of the Theatre Royal in Dublin. Later, he made an attempt to succeed on the London stage, which was a failure. It was but natural that Richard Brinsley Sheridan also inculcated a love for the theatre. Despite his father's attempts to send his son to Waltham Abbey in Essay, Richard's love for the theatre soon brought him to the English stage, which was stilted with sentimental comedy. The middle-class audiences wept over the distress of lovers. The course of their love never run smooth and the lovers were ultimately rewarded for their constancy and sufferings. Since poetic justice was strictly observed, good always triumphed over evil. Like Goldsmith, Sheridan also sneered at the artificiality of the stage, through his Rivals and The School for Scandal

The Rivals :

This is Sheridan's first play, and also an achievement in terms of plot which resembles a Restoration comedy. It was first produced on the 17th January 1775 at Convent Garden. As a protest against sentimental drama, the play is loaded with artificiality and brilliant wit. The equal proportions of satire, wit and gaiety make the play memorable. One cannot rule out the influence of Ben Jonson in terms of characterisation as in the names of Anthony Absolute, Captain Absolute, Mrs Halaprop and Lydia Languish. The plot is well developed until there is an ultimate resolution. Sheridan aptly depicts the shallowness of the 18th century aristocratic society in this play. The elite projected in The Rivals was undoubtedly a minority. But Sheridan aptly depicts the flaws and foibles of this minority group since this group was an important embellishment of the age. The depiction of the fashionable life at Bath was a product of Sheridan's first-hand knowledge of the same. In 1770, Sheridan had moved there with his father and wrote vesses for Bath Chronicle. Later he staged The Rivals, which presents an array of interesting characters, William Hazlitt considers the play as the "most agreeable of comedies", he opines that :

"In the elegance and briliances of dialogue, in a certain animation of moral sertiment, and in the masterly denouncement of the fable, The School for Scandal is superior, but the Rivals has more life and action in it, and abounds in a greater number of whimsical character, unexpected incidents and absurd contrast of situation".

True to the remark of Hazlitt, the play is replete with these elements. One does laugh over Lydia's notions of a romantic elopement and an idyllic love-marriage in an exotic and distant land. Her choice of books like The Reward of constancy, The Fatal connecion, The Mistakes of the Heart and The Delicate Distress indeed make Sir Anthony denounce the circulating library as "an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge" George H. Nettleton in his essay The Books of Lydia Languish's circulating Library (1905) mentions that 'Sheridan hits at the sentimentality of the day, expecially as represented by the popular novels of the circulating library" A.N. Paul calls Rivals as "an epitaph on the English

comic drama" He further adds that "it is one of the jaunty epitaphs that delight in rehearsing and summarising the main features and signal achievements of that which has passed from the world". Sentimentality hangs heavily about the play in the force of Lydia and Faulkland. While captain Anthony dispels the sentimentality in Lydia, Julia dispels the same in Faulkland. Sentimentality, in the play clouds not only the lead pair like captain and Lydia but also in Julia and Faulkland. It is of course dispelled by one of the lovers in each pair.

At times, sentimentality also clouds members of the older generation like Mrs. Malaprop's love for Sir Lucius who in turn courts Lydia. Traces of comedy of humours are also fused into this anti-sentimental comedy. A.N. Kaul refers to Sri Anthony Absolute as a case in point. His "blind absolutism" is evident when he threatens his son.

"Don't enter the same hemisphere with me!
don't dare to breathe the same air, or
use the same light with me, but get
an atmosphere and a sun of your own".

Kaul mentions that in Sir Anthony, one can "view him altogether as Sheridan's rendering of a Jonsonian humour after the manner of Restoration playwrights.

A major theme in all sentimental plays is that of marriage for love against marriage for money. The issues of "love" and "Money" are often treated as seperate ones. But Kaul mentions that "The problem of Lydia and captain is that for them the two happen to be identical. "His father wants him to marry the rich girl with whom he plans to run away. In making Lydia discover the truth and in forcefully shattering her romantic illusions, he becomes" an embodiment of manly confidence and good sense. He also does not confuse between financial prudence and filial duty, as he does not see them "opposed to low", but rather necessary supports for life.

Truly, as Mark S. Auburn mention, it is "perhaps the most durable of English stage comedies". The School for Scandal :

Also produced in 1777, the first review of the play raised it to the pedestal as it was considered "almost a matter of danger to offer a single objection to it." It added that it was " a work of great genius" Many cirtics consider it to be one of the two best comedies (the other being Goldsmith's She stoops to conquer, to be written in England during the 17th and 18th centuries.

It is difficult to classify and label the play as it does not conform to any one type of comedy. But the overall pattern of the play is that of an effective and satiric attack on the sentimental comedy of the times. H. Mannel mentions that "Sheridan has gone much further than Goldsmith in ridiculing the sentimental comedy of his day which led the audience through a morass of sentiment and feasted them on a plentitude of pathos. Joseph surface, the chief Villian of the play is an instance to prove this point. He marks his villainous self with sentiments in order to conceal his hypocritical nature. Like Iago who is ironically called as "honest Iago" in Shakespeare's Othello, Joseph Surface is mistaken by one and all "as a man of sentiment". His ultimate exposure and dismissal from the stage is a symbolic dismissal of sentimental theatre from the English stage.

Charles Lamb wrote that "Amidst the mortifying circumstances attendant upon growing old, it is something to have seen the School for Scandal in its glory". Sir Peter Teazle is a human character who genuinely loves his wife despite her interest in scandal. His major fault lies in his misreading the characters of Joseph surface and Peter. He discourages his wife from dealing in scandal, and wishes that the Parliament produced a law for the preservation of fame.

Lady Feazle is indeed modelled on the 18th century aristocratic women whose daily occupation is to "inspect the dairy, superintend the poultry, make extracts from the family recept book, and comb [a] lap-dog". Her marriage with the rich and elderly Sir Peter Jettisons her into London's fashionable world wherein she remains dizzily engrossed in its artificial world.

In order to project the sentimentalities of the age, Sheridan, as Lamb says "gathered some alloys of the sentimental comedy", which we see in the choice of names, characteristics and dialogue.

During the 1948 production of the play, Lawrence Olivier recollects the quote of an earlier actor Sir Herbert Benbohm Tree that the play "is the most brilliant comedy that has been given to the world". While many critics look over the lack of moral virtue in the play, Jack D. Durant calls the play "A theatrical tour de force ..... an analogue of Sheridan's most searching insights into vice and virtue.

3.5.7 To Sum up :

The movement against the extremities of sentimental comedy did not merely stop with Goldsmith and Sheridan. Later day critics also frequently focussed on the major artistic blemishes of sentimental comedy. David Daiches mentions that the "sententious speeches of the characters" are not natural enough for the illusion of realism". Quintana condemns sentimental comedy because it "preaches insistently and indulges in a characteristic rhetoric of sententiousness and emotionalism".

Goldsmith and Sheridan are therefore right in censoring such emotional excess in art.

3.5.8 Suggested Reading :

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Mrs. T. Sarada.

Lesson - 6

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN
THE RIVALS

Contents :

4.6.1. Objectives

- to study Rivals
- to describe the social milieu of the play

4.6.2. Life of Sheridan :

Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born is Dublin in September 1751. His father Thomas Sheridan was a popular actor and orator which makes Sheridan's love for the theatre hereditary. Literature was also an inherited actor, since his, father had written a popular farce and his mother Frances Sheridan wrote a couple of novels *The Historie of Miss Sidney Biddulph* as well as a couple of popular comedies *The Discovery* and *The Dupe*.

Richard was not a very bright student at Harrow, where he had his schooling. After his school days, he lived with his family at Bath, a popular and fashionable health resort of his times. Sheridan's been observance of the social life at Bath during this period is reflected in many of his plays. It was here, that he fell in love with a young sixteen year old girl Elizabeth Linley, the daughter of Thomas Linley, who was a popular musician of the famous spa. Both Elizabeth and Sheridan escaped from Bath as she was forcefully engaged to an elderly Squire, Long Sheridan had to wage a duel with Thomas Mathews in July 1772, during which he was considerably wounded. Sheridan in fact enjoyed his period of convalescence, since he felt tickled to read the blown up

versions of newspaper gossip on both the cause and consequences of the quarrel. He understood the extent to which reputations could be damaged through malicious gossip. On account of his father's interest in the legal profession, Sheridan was forcibly sent to Waltham Abbey. Within a short time, he married Elizabeth, much against parental consent. Since he did not have an innate interest in the legal profession and also because he loved theatre both instinctively and genetically, it was only natural that Sheridan turned to the theatrical profession. *The Rivals*, was produced on 17th January 1775, at convent garden. This was Sheridan's first play. The first version of the play not being quite successful, the second version was subsequently brought out which turned out to be a greater success. Her other important works include. *St. Patrick's Day* (1775), *A Trip to Scarborough* (1777), *The School for Scandal* (1777), and his last play *The Critic* (1779).

His interest in politics made him seek it. When in 1780 , he was elected member of parliament for Stafford, his fame as a parliamentarian and his skilled orator made him occupy numerous official positions as the Treasurer of the Navy, Under Secretary of state for Foreign Affairs, Secretary to the Treasury. In 1812 he lost his seat in the parliament. Some time ago he had incurred heavy economic losses when his own Drury Lane theatre was destroyed by fire on the 24th February 1809. He died in a state misfortune on 7th July, 1816, at Saville Row and was buried with due honour in Poets Corner, Westminister Abbey on 13th July 1816.

4.6.3. The Social background of the play :

Sheridan aptly portrays the shallowness, the reality and the luxurious lives of the eighteenth century English aristocratic society. The elite projected in *The Rivals* was undoubtedly a minority. But Sheridan vividly portrays the flaws and foibles of this minority group, since this group was an important embellishment of the age. Insincerity, vanity lack of morality and pride were the integral qualities of this class.

The growing economic power of the English made them spend time and money at famous places at Bath and Turnbridge Wells. During particular periods of the year, life was full of pleasure trips, duelling, chats, gossip and fun from late morning to midnight. At the same time, external politeness was cultivated and they were fond of pets, and appreciated fine arts and literature. Book reading was popular and so lending libraries flourished. At the same time, there was large–scale lack of morality, prevalence of diseases like small pox, improper sanitation, numerous anti-social elements and severe punishment to the powerless.

Basically, Restoration Comedy remained lax and licentious. The neo-rich classes followed the footsteps of the aristocrats, and their influence on the dramatists made them emphasize on the need for love, happiness and goodness. As a consequence, sentimental comedy grew. Sheridan and Goldsmith reacted against this and as a consequence, the anti-sentimeatal comedy was written. In fact towards the end, of the seventeenth century, Jeremy Collier published *A Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage* (1698). Sentimental drama was actually going extremely serious that it tended to stifle the comic spirit. As Allardyce Nicoll puts it "In place of laughter they sought tears; in place of intrigue, melodramatic and distressing situations; in place of gallants and unity damsels, pathetic heroines and serious lovers."

Goldsmith vehemently protested against the "tearful comedy" in *The Present State of Polite Learning (1759)* and later in The Good-natured Man (1968) as also in *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773). Sheridan also agreed with Goldsmith on principle. But in attacking the sentimental comedy, he lapses into it as in the case of Lydia Languish, Julia and Faulkland.

4.6.4 The Major works of Sheridan

Despite Sheridan's father sending him to Waltham Abbey in Essex to prepare for the Bar, he did not develop any interest in the legal profession. This first play *The Rivals* was produced on the 17th January 1775 at Covent Garden Theatre. Although the first version of the play was not very successful, the second version was more successful. The second play, a farce, called *St. Patricks Day* produced at the same theatre on May 2nd 1775 was also not a great success. Subsequently dame fortune smiled on him and in 1776 he became the principal manager with a share in Drury Lane theatre, Succeeding the famous actor – manager David Garrick.

In 1777, he revised Vanbrugh's comedy *The Relapse* under the title *A Trip to Scarborough* which was popular.

Earlhier, he had written two sketches *"The Slanderer's* and *The Teazles* which he now revised and cleverly included them in The School for Scandal (1777). The play established him as a comic genius.

His last play *The Critic* was acted at Drury Lane theatre on October 30th 1779.

In 1780 he was elected Member of parliament for Stafford on 12th September. His orations in the Parliament shot him to eminence until he lost his seat in 1812, a little before, 13th July 1816, when he did at Seville row and was later buried at the poets corner, Westminster Abbey.

4.6.5. The Rivals : This is Sheridan's first play and is an achievement in terms of plot, which resembles a Restoration comedy. There is a great deal of artificiality and brilliant wit. There are equal proportions of satire, wit and gaiety. One cannot rule out the influence of Benjonson in terms of characterization as in the names of Sir Anthony Absolute, Captain Absolute, Mrs. Malaprop and Lydia Languish. The names indicate their characteristic features. The plot is well developed until there is an ultimate resolution.

The genre of the play : Comedy can be basically divided into numerous types : the satirical, farcical, romantic, comedy of manners, comedy humours, and sentimental the purpose of each comedy is different.

Satirical comedy like Jonson's *Volpone* aims at purging people of their follies. The comedy of humours develops characters based on the medieval theory of humours. The aim of this type of comedy is also satiric, since it exposes the faults of the "humourous" characters to a state of ridicule. Romantic comedy is like a Shakespearean comedy, full of songs, dance, an idyllic setting an atmosphere of general gaiety and the complications involved. in a love story. Sentimental comedy which dominated the eighteenth century, indeed turned out to be what Goldsmith would label as "weeping comedy" wherein the pathos of lovers and the heavy doses of moralizing failed to entertain the audience. Goldsmith and Sheridan revolted against this type of comedy since they resented exaggerated feelings and heavy doses of sentiment. Their plays are an authentic reflection of the contemporary times. Full of word–play and a mockery of tone, these anti-sentimental plays also purified the unwanted elements of sentimental theatre.

4.6.6. Structure of the play :

The aim of comedy is laughter, which is raised by presenting characters who are drawn from real life. The situations are cleverly contrived and the disparity between the real selves of the characters and their

appearance forms the core of the comedy. The situations are on par with the comic potentialities which the play offers, thereby laying bare the contradictions in the characters and exposing them to ridicule.

The theme of the play also projects the ludicrous aspects of both the situations and the character while at the same time, the dramatist may aim at moral reformation or castigation through a projection of the flaws and foibles of the characters.

Restoration comedy was loaded with complicated plots, wit, novelty and cleverness. Both in terms of plot and characterization, there is much artificiality. The profligacy, manners, shallowness and morals of miniscule aristocratic society alone formed the theme, plot and characterization of the play. Sheridan's prototype was the comedy of manners since, like them he also preferred intricate and artificial plots. The Rivals is a play of situations and intrigue. These deliberately contrived situations lead to intrigue which is the nucleus of the play's dramatic interest Even the title of the play suggests the nature of intrigue.

The main plot of the play is structured in each a fashion that we see Captain Absolute stooping to conquer Lydia Languish - "A lady of a very singular taste". A sensible, practical and a clever young bachelor, he maneuvers the situation in a strategic manner so that he may not lost both Lydia and her fortune, despite her romantic aberrations. Sheridan follows the traditional five – act structure wherein there is the introduction of the theme, complications in the main and sub plots, and all differences are ultimately resolved wherein the wedding bells ring for captain Absolute – Lydia and Julia Faulkland pairs.

The theme of rivalry is indicated in the first scene of the play wherein rivalry for the hands of Lydia Languish is hinted at. The novelty of the theme lies in the rivalry of captain Absolute against his imaginative self Ensign Beverley. This fantastic theme of rivalry is further complicated in the second act where Bob Acres and Sir Lucius O' Trigger also court the hands of Lydia. The plot concerning Sir Lucius is further intrigued when he also falls in love with Lydia but is responded by her aunt under the name "Delia" whom he considers as Lydia.

The play moves to its zenith in the third and the fourth acts when Captain Absolute discovers the fact that the girl whom he loves and that of his father's choice are the same. But the captain is in no position to reveal the fact as it may lead to Lydia's break – up with him. He professes to accept Lydia out of filial piety which does raise an element of doubt in his father. His suspicions are confirmed in the record scene of the fourth act when he discovers the intelligent plot of his son.

Towards the end of the third act, there is a preparation for the duel wherein Bob Acres, the dandy, challenges the ensign asking him to wage a duel against him at Kings mead fields. Sir Lucius also Challenges captain Absolute at the same place and time. The core of plot is the theme of rivalry being complicated by the dual identity of captain Absolute. Both his selves are drawn to a duel at the same time and place. At the end of the act, the audience remain stranded with a sense of expectation over the future course of events.

The fifth and the final act brings all the intrigues to an end. Along with the main plot, the sub – plot regarding Jutia and Faulkland faces numerous odds. In fact, the complication between the duo which is meant to be a satire on sentimental lovers finds its ultimate resolution only when Faulkland realizes the genuinety of Julia's love in the final act, which runs parallel to Lydia's understanding the earnestness of the Captain's love. But the fact remains that Sheridan also had to project sentimentality even if it was meant to satirise it. He had

to use the same pompous, stilted and heavy language in order to mock it. The play ends with Julia's words on moderation which also seems to be titled towards sentimental comedy.

On the whole play is an interesting mixture of four different shades of comedy of manners, sentimental, anti – sentimental and also comedy of humours. Names like "Absolute", "Languish" are suggestive of their actual natures. The play remains memorable for the skilful blend of the plot with the sub-plot, along with the fusion of the different shades of comedy.

4.6.7. A Critical Analysis of the Play

Act I, Scene (i).

This scene lays bare the them of rivalry, as well it also introduces hero, heroine, and all the major characters. Sir Anthony Absolute, Julia, Lydia, Faulkland and also Captain Absolute. Minor characters like Lucy and Fag, the valet of captain Absolute are also introduced. Thomas, the coachman of Sir Anthony meets Fag and informs him of his sudden decision of visit Bath. Fag gossips about his master who is smitten by the arrows of Cupid, since he is in love with "a lady of a very singular taste", who is Lydia Languish, She prefers to romantically fall in love with a dashing young and poor man. The tough nature of Mrs. Malaprop is also discussed.

The cleverly contained dual roles of Sir Anthony is clearly delineated since it is necessary to impress Lydia whose mind is filled with the romantic notions of love. Fag and Thomas represent the gossip typical of the eighteenth century minds, as well, as their oaths which are synonymous with their times.

Act I, SC (ii),

Lucy, the maid brings for Lydia her favorite books from the circulating library; *The Reward of Constancy, The Fatal Connections*; The *Mistakes of the Heart* The *Delicate Distress* and *The Memories of Lady Woodford*. The titles remain significant since they indicate their sentimental content.

The visit of Julia reveals to us their love affairs. Julia, the ward of Sir Anthony is engaged to Faulkland. He is a sentimental, whimsical and egoistic lover who always doubts Julia's constancy. When his sentimental demands evoke a mild response, he taunts her with his complaints.

As a foil to the balanced of love of Julia are the giddy romantic, sentimental illusions of love as seen in Lydia. Her romantic perversity makes her consider notions of marrying someone very poor although it may mean disinheritance of her ancestral property. She dreams of an elopement, secret marriage and married have life in an unknown land. The ultimate happiness in love arises only which there would be a quarrel between herself and her lover. To falsely create a quarrel, she writes. anonymous letters to Beverley, falsely accusing him of faithlessness. Her aunt also imposes strict rules and restricts her from meeting him. Lydia pours out her "sorrows" to Julia. Meanwhile she also understands the secret correspondence of her aunt, under the name "Delia" with Sir Lucius 'O' Trigger with whom she has fallen in love. But she herself strongly disapproves of the love between Lydia and Ensign and Ensign Beverley. She also dismisses Bob Acres, as a simpleton.

Mrs. Malaprop, despite her malapropism, is indeed an interesting character. Since her presence makes the stage lively, she is the Dogberry and Verges of Shakespeare, like Mrs. Slipslop (is Fieldings *Joseph Andrews*), and MRs. Tryport (in Sheridan's *A Journey to Bath*).

Sir Anthony is domineering but kind. He chooses Lydia for his son Captain Absolute which is immediately accepted by Mrs. Malaprop. After his departure, Mrs. Malaprop sends a love – letter to Sri Luicus through the maid Lucy, who delivers the letter to him, as being sent from Lydia who has signed as Delia. This adds one more rival in the process of wooing Lydia's hand in marriage.

ACT II (SCI)

This scene opens with the dialogue between Fag and Captain Absolute who discuss their purpose of visiting Bath. The Captain asks Fag to never disclose the truth to any one. When Faulkland joins them a bit later, he is informed of the arrival of his beloved Julia's visit to Bath. Bob Acres, who does not know the suspicious nature of Faulkland, praises the grace and manners of Julia which is enough to create tension in Faulkland. Captain Absolute amusedly watches the reactions in Faulkland, while Acres continues to display his eagerness in courting Lydia's hand.

Sir Anthony arrives and he discusses with to his son his plans to get him married to a beautiful young woman who is also an inheritor of a large estate. But he refuses to disclose the name of the girl, since he believes that the choice should be absolutely his. The son should be ready to marry even the ugliest woman in the world. He allots his son "six hours" to decide, and also threatens him at of dire consequences if the decides otherwise. But the Captain reveals his love for Lydia. Towards the end, he plans to marry Lydia, inherit the fortune and also to prepare her gradually for the discovery.

ACT II SCENE (II)

In this rather short scene, the plot moves further when Lucy meets Fag. She is on the way, after getting her reward of money and kisses from Sir Lucius, to be given to Lydia. She discloses the fact that Sir Anthony has chosen Lydia as a bride for Sir Anthony. Lucy is under a false impression that Captain Absolute was a rival for Ensign Beverley.

Act III (i)

On knowing that his father wants him to marry Lydia Languish, the very woman he loves, Captain Absolute resolves to tell his father that he would do anything for sheer filial piety. He pretends to know nothing about Lydia. The father calls Lydia as an epitome of beauty and when the son professes "love breathing seventeen" the father indeed becomes slightly suspicious. In the process of describing Lydias beauty he tells him that if the son were to refuse Lydia he would himself marry her. He promises to pass his son's consent to Mrs. Malaprop. The son continues to act as a paragon of perfection. Although the father (Sir Anthony) is seemingly happy, there are doubts lingering in his mind about his son's sudden outburst of filial piety. His suspicions are confirmed in the next act where he discovers his son's shrewdness and tact.

ACT II– (ii)

The scene focusses on the sub-plot, regarding the Faulkland –Julia affair. The pair are a contrast to Lydia and Captain Absolute. In the case of the latter, it is Lydia who cherishes sentimental notions of love whereas in the former, Faulkland does the same. Similarly in the latter pair, Julia is practical and sensible like Captain Absolute in the former pair. Faulkland expects Julia to remain melancholic and pine for him in his absence. Her down–to-earth attitude far from being appreciated by him, also provokes him into quarreling with her continuously. He even makes her cry. This sub plot has been introduced in order to satirize sentimental

comedy but it does appear tedious at times. White Faulkland's incorrigible sentimentality is meant to satires the excessive sentimental quality of the age, Julia, despite her sensible attitude remains pale and flat.

Act IV (iii)

Captain Absolute plans to win the favour of Mrs. Malaprop through mere flattery and he succeeds in doing so. But Mrs. Malaprop is extremely concerned with the obstinacy of Lydia who continues to love Ensign Beverley without knowing that both (Cap. Absolute and Beverley) are the same. Mrs. Malaprop shows a letter of Beverley where he had severely criticized the artful use of English by her as well as commenting on her pride. He calls her an "old weather – beaten she dragon" and calls her features as being "worse" Her conversation is described as being as "a dull chat with hard words." To top it all, in a veneer of innocence, Captain Absolute asks Mrs. Malaprop as to whom he had meant in such derogatory language captain.

Absolute professes to contrive a plan to get rid of the Ensign. He requests Mrs. Malaprop to help the lovers and advise elopement so that he could get hold of them red handedly. Mrs. Malaprop readily accepts the place, little knowing that it is she who is being fooled.

The audience cannot but appreciate the tact and cleverness of the captain. He masters the situation with tact, without disclosing his actual identity even when Lydia meets him. In fact he tells her that he has come there, by cleverly evading the captain in his place, so that Mrs. Malaprop may think that he was the Captain. He feeds her with romantic notions of love by consenting for an elopement and his readiness to live in poverty.

The scene is laden with irony and laughter since, Mrs. Malaprop who considers herself as being extremely intelligent is reduced to a mere fool, without her being aware of it.

Act III (iv)

The initial part of the scene is dominated by Bob Acres, who imitates the fashions of the town-bred aristocracy. His imitative behavior which borders on dandyism earns criticism even in his servant David. His taking lessons in dancing under a French tutor is in fact hilarious since, his body language does not permit his to get acquainted with the nuances of the art. In fact he reduces the art to a state of clumsiness.

Sir Lucius instigates Acres to challenge the Ensign since it was he who had usurped his place by winning the love of Lydia. Bob Acres' sense of false esteem being triggered by Sir Lucius, he challenges Beverley, by asking him to have a duel at King's Mead Fields, that evening. Sir Lucius informs him of his duel with Captain Absolute, a person who had insulted him

This scene complicates the plot further since, the two guises of the Captain are drawn to a duel at the same time and place, which needs a tactful handling by the dramatist.

Act IV (i)

The scene opens with the grass hopper -like Bob Acres brandishing his sword, and challenging his rival Ensign Beverley. The audience indeed remain amused with Acres professing terms like "fire", "fury", honour" and "valour of St-George." In fact, the silly dandy in Acres, hardly has any strength to bear the mantle

of his professed heroism. One can clearly see through his professed gallantry which sends the spectators rollicking with laughter. In fact, even David, his servant is also aware of the fact, that his muster has little or no chances of successes successfully. He diplomatically dissuades his master from fighting the duel, saying that his great master should consider all heroism a bubble. The foolish Bob Acres dismisses his servant's pleas externally, while he inwardly. Shivers with fear since he knows the fact that he would definitely be defeated.

When Captain Absolute enters, Bob Acres asks him to carry the letter to Ensign Beverley, and to act as his second. While the Captain agrees to take the message, he refuses to act as the second to Bob Acres unmindful of this, Bob Acres asks the Captain to caution the Ensign of his valour. Not only the Captain, but the audience also remain amused, since he is unworldly challenging the Captain himself. The scene closes in a state of expectation, since the audience is eager to know the outcome of the duel.

Act IV (ii)

Mrs. Malaprop continues to persuade her niece to accept the Captain. Both Captain Absolute and Sir Anthony Absolute arrive there. The father is in fact embarrassed over the fact that his son does not speak to Lydia. The captain is now relegated to a tight – cornered situation where it is difficult to continue with his dual role. He makes feeble attempts at concealing, by speaking in a different voice. But Lydia Languish, who recognizes the familiar voice of her lover, calls him as Ensign Beverley, which comes as a shock to both Sir Anthony and Mrs. Malaprop. The real facts are now clearly laid bare by Captain, Absolute, which enrages both Lydia and her aunts. Mrs. Malaprop rages over the unparliamentry remarks that he had made against her as Ensign Bever by. Lydia, on the other hand is angry for having shattered her romantic illusions of elopement and love in a poor cottage. Sir Anthony is silently pleased over the prudence of his son and he requests, Mrs. Malaprop to forgin and help in the creation of lowers.

Lydia breaks off the engagement, for the sake of which he warns her that she will make herself scorned by the world, because the world may consider her as having been rejected by her lover. While Lydia is full of grief, the elders. Sir Anthony and Mrs. Malaprop console her.

ACT IV (III)

This short scene has no major events but still remains important since, it helps in bringing together a few loose ends of the dramatic plot. Sir Lucius deliberately quarrels with the Captain since he considers him a rival of Lydia Languish, and challenges him to a duel. He wants the fight to take place in the evening at King's Mead fields, the place where he is also supposed to wage a duel with Bob Acres. Faulkland, who arrives on the scene after Sir Lucius leaves, and readily agrees to be the second of the Captain. Faulkland continues to remain in a pensive mood after his recent quarrel with Julia. Her servant delivers Faulkland a letter and he anxiously goes out to her.

Act V Sc (i)

In the beginning of this scene, we find Faulkland falling back on his pranks once again. In order to test Julia's sincerity, he sends her a message that he is in a serious trouble and therefore wants to escape from the country. Believing him, Julia promises to share his trouble and as well as agrees to marry him. On realizing her

sincerity in love. Faulkland reveals the truth which angers Julia. She refuses to forgive him despite Faulkland's regret. When Lydia arrives, Julia describes her deception by Faulkland, for which Lydia describes her also laments over her deception by the Captain. Lydia is grieved over the fact that her romantic dreams have been shattered. She had wanted a love marriage and that too one which followed an elopement. She had also dreamt of the manner of elopement: escaping from an upper window on a moon-it night, with the help of a rope ladder, and going in a state of disguise to Scotland, where they would get married secretly. This would indeed be a sensational news in all the news papers. But all these illusions remain dashed down to earth, since she cannot accept a mundane arranged marriage which involves "simpering up to the altar with Captain Absolute." As Lydia and Julia keep talking, Mrs. Malaprop, Fag and David ask these two women to accompany then to King's Mead Fields, and prevent the captain by taking part in the duel.

V (II)

Captain Absolute is perfectly dressed for the duel with a coat and sword, when he meets Sir Anthony on the way. By partly concealing his face, he tries to evade his father by behaving like a stranger. But the shrewd father discovers in a jiffy that the son is carrying a sword. But the Captain tells his father that he is carrying the sword only to threaten Lydia with an attempt of suicide in case she refuses to forgive. Immediately, David comes running asking the father to dissuade his son from dueling.

Act V SC iii

All the characters is the play are assembled in the same place in this concluding scene. Sir Lucius and Bob Acres are waiting for their respective rivals. The audience feel tickled when Sir Lucius gives Bob Acres two options regarding the disposal of the Captains body, in case he is pilled. Either it should be buried at Bath or "pickled" and sent to his home town. Bob Acres, inwardly shivers with a sense of fear. In fact, he blurts out " I don't feel quite so bold, somehow, as I did." But the moment Sir Lucius uses terms like "courage" and valour, he regains his old flimsy confidence. When Faulkland and the Captain arrive, Acres finds to his surprise that the two (Captain Absolute and Ensign Beverley) are one. He makes this an excuse to not fight. Sir Lucius tries his best to persuade, to no avail. When the Captain gets ready to fight Sir Lucius tries Sir Anthony, David and the other women reach the place to avert the duel. The Captain and Lydia are united. Much to his dismay, Sir Lucius receives lears the fact that the "Delia" who wrote him letters was not Lydia but Mrs. Malaprop. She is also annoyed at Lucius scorning her as an old gentlewomen. He himself plans to get Lydia and the Captain married. Bob Acres invites them all for a ball where Sir Anthony suggests that all single lads will drink a health to the young couples, and a husband to Mrs. Malaprop. The play closes with Julia wishing for a better and prosperous future.

4.6.8. Characterization :

Mark S. Auburn in "*The pleasures of the Rivals : A study in stage History*" (1975) calls this play as "the most durable of English stage comedies". The basis for such a comment owes to the fact of the continuing popularity of the play on both the English and American stages. Auburn further states that the success of the play is somewhat puzzling on account of the lack of "real moral seriousness or high aesthetic design". Still, the fact remains that the play is highly successful. The reason for the appeal he feels, is "in a distinctly amiable plot and **charming, if artificial idiosyncratic characters.**"

True to Auburn's remark, the characters in the play are both "charming" although they are also "artificial" and "idiosyncratic". The charm of each of the characters lies in their vivacity. Every character in the play exudes life. The characters do not change, develop or grow. They are flat but the magic touch of Sheridan makes them memorable both on the stage and the audience. In fact the characters appeal to us today as it was on January 17,1775 at Covent garden, where it was first produced.

Leonard J. Reff feels that much of the characters' charm is due to the fact of Sheridan coupling sentimental lovers: "an opposing satiric pair, a quartel of comic types drawn from Plautus and Terence, Shakespeare, and Jonson". The two pairs: Lydia and Absolute, Julia and Faulkland, complement each other. Apart from the four characters, the other major characters like Sir Anthony Absolute, Sir Lucius O' Trigger, Mrs. Malaprop and Bob Acres make the play a brilliant comedy.

Captain Absolute the comic hero of the play has charm, skill and intelligence. Faulkland rightly tells him "you throw for a large stake, but losing you could stake and throw again. " Basically being decisive and masterful, he counsels Faulkland, Bob Acres, fools Mrs. Malaprop and opposes his father while simultaneously wooing Lydia. In fact, Lydia Languish is hardly his equal in terms of his intelligence, tact and wit,

Lydia Languish. "True to her name, she continues to languish on trivialities." She is modeled on the lines of the of sentimental novel. Interested in novels like *The Mistakes of the Heart, The Delicate Distress and The Reward of Constancy.* She dreams of a love marriage after an elopement and life in a strange and unknown land. She hardly has the pragmatism, wit and practical outlook towards life like her lover. It is only after persuasion does she accept him in the end.

Mrs. Malaprop : It is after her that the term "Malapropism" has come to stay in the English language. Strict, firm and seemingly hard – hearted, she is the aunt / guardian of the heroine Lydia Languish. This "queen of the dictionary" is drawn to Sir Lucius and writes love letters to him under the name "Delia". She is shocked to learn that Sir Lucius loves only her niece and not her Utimately she helps in the union of the lovers.

Faulkland and **Julia** are foils to Jack and Lydia. They have numerous individual scenes which Leonard J. Leff feels "give the comedy an earnestness that neither *The School for Scandal* nor *The critic* has, Because the entire play is against sentimentalism, Faulkland (along with Lydia) "is the dramatist's jest". Always suspecting the fidelity of Julia, in fact he is juxt opposed to the practical and realistic Julia (like the juxtopposition of Lydia and Jack). This couple's role and performance says Leonard J. Reff was elaborated in the third performance. R.L. Purdy mentions that Sheridan " was proud of them, proud of their refinements of speech....., prouder of their refinements o emotion so painstakingly dissected". It reflects the fact that "despite the success of the laughing comedy..... the sentimental remained a viable theatrical commodity". In *Retrospections*, John Bernard maintains that "Sheridan had obviously introduced (them) to conciliate the sentimentalists". But the fact remains that Sheridan seems to have done so to conciliate the anti-sentimentalists. Samuel L. Macey has rightly labeled him as "the last of the great theatrical satirists

4.6.9. Topics for Discussion

1. Consider *The Rivals* as a comedy of incident and intrigue.
2. Critically analyze the appropriateness of the title *The Rivals.*
3. "In attacking sentimental comedy, Sheridan has produced one" critically analyze this statement.
4. How does Sheridan fuse the comedy of humors, comedy of manners and sentimental comedy in this play.
5. How does the play satirize the social life of the eighteenth century Bath?

4.6.10. Select reading

1. Nayar. M.H. ed. *The Rivals*, R.B. Sheridan. Madras: Macmillan 1977.
2. Nicoll, Allardyce. *The Theory of Drama.* 1937.
3. Nicoll, Allardyce. *British Drama.* 1962.

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Lesson - 7

She Stoops to Conquer

[OLIVER GOLDSMITH]

Contents

4.7.1. Objectives

- to highlight the play as a "pure comedy"
- to appreciate the a dramatic techniques of the play, such as the use of plot, characterization, style.

4.7.2. Background – the writer and the period.

Oliver Goldsmith was born in County Longford, Ireland, in 1728, the son of a poor Protestant Curate. He spent the greater part of his boyhood in the little village of Lissoy, attending the local and other village and grammar schools. In 1744 he entered Trinity College, Dublin, spending five years at that University and in February 1749, he obtained a B.A. degree. But his life for a period thereafter was a "record of almost unbroken failure —". Relatives contributed to send him to Edinburgh to study medicine. After achieving little there, he took to wandering on the Continents, and traveled leisurely through the Low Countries, France, Switzerland and Italy, living mainly on his wits.

He returned to Britain in 1756, tried journalism, teaching and acting but often ended up sleeping in the company of beggars. According to his friends and contemporaries, he was a man of infinite good humour, and his contribution to dramatic history was of major significance. He was idle and wasteful in youth. He neglected or misused such advantages as came his way, though with all this, he had virtues not always conspicuous in those more free from fault. He could be kind, was always generous, and he had pluck when necessity demanded, he was capable of vigorous work. His talents did not really manifest themselves and so he lacked that encouragement from his elders. Though he pretended to be a cool, calculating man of the world, he was really the most unguarded of creatures and brought his faults to the surface by his very simplicity. In his early days, he

would endure poverty rather than practise economy. When he reached a position of affluence, he aspired to be well dressed and elegant, though the awkwardness of his person and the coarseness of his features prevented any such thing. He travelled a great deal.

He chose the wrong methods. Instead of pursuing learning and experience, he was familiar with, he was constantly trying to win applause in arts in which he was a complete stranger. No man of his age wrote with a more sweetness and grace, few talked worse. He wanted to shine in every company and upon every topic, but a stammer stood in the way, and his ideas came too thick and fast for coherence and fluency. His pen was a more delicate instrument than his tongue; he never got over his inability to hold men conversationally. He died of a neglected nervous fever in April 1774, leaving huge amounts of debts and was buried in the Temple Inn Churchyard, London, where an engraved slab still marks his grave.

Before the Cromwellian revolution, the English stage was held by realistic comedies of common life and romantic ones of upper, class society. The theaters were closed during the Commonwealth, but after the Restoration when, during the 1660's, the aristocracy returned from its exile in France, a strong reaction to Puritanism set in, and cynicism and debauchery became the main themes in the reopened theaters. Gradually, such plays gave way during the eighteenth century to sentimental comedies, in the work of almost forgotten dramatists like Wycherley, Congreve and Farquhar. It was only in the last three decades of the century that comedy recovered some of its earlier flair. When Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer was first produced in 1773, it came like a gush of fresh air and was an immediate success, containing all the elements of by-play and mutual misunderstandings that have ever since characterized light comedy in England.

The revolution was completed four years later when Richard Brinsley Sheridan presented 'The School for Scandal' in London and both and recaptured much of the good humour of Restoration polite society, but without any of its obscenities. These two plays, with their comic dialogue, amusing situations, and lack of pompous moralizing, have never since failed theater audiences. There was more emphasis on character, which audience could recognize and appreciate and with whom they could identify themselves.

4.7.3 Life and work

As already mentioned, Goldsmith drifted into writing as he tried everythingelse in life. Necessity forced him to become an occasional writer in periodicals. His first success as a writer was the result of a series of essays, Letters of a Citizen of the World, which appeared in 'The Public Ledger' in 1762, and which was professed to be written by a Chinese philosopher visiting England and giving his impressions of that country. Infact in 1759 he published the Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning. This brought him a reputation for learning and elegance of style. He met Smottett, who introduced him to a friend. He had literary activity for some time. He conducted a Lady's Magazine ,he published 'The Bee', a weekly magazine in miniature , and printed his Chinese's letters in the 'Public Ledger'.

A vital turning point in his career came in 1761 when he was befriended by the influential Dr.Samuel Johnson and was admitted to the esteemed Johnson literary circle, which had come to include the actor Garrick, the painter Reynolds and the statesman Burke. Goldsmith's literary fame was established by the publication of "The Traveller", a philosophical poem, in 1764, which was followed two years later by Goldsmith's one and only novel, "The Vicar of Wakefield", which gained an immediate place among all the classes. His most famous

poem, "The Deserted Village" appeared in 1770. She Stoops to Conquer (1773), his only successful dramatic work, was the last product of his literary career. In 1768, he produced his first play,' The Good Natured Man"' and then wrote History of the Eastern and Animated Nature which were not as successful as' She Stoops to Conquered."

4.7.4. Background to the play:

Early in March, 1773, Goldsmith's good friend and patron Dr.Sammel Johnson wrote as follows to a correspondent:: "Mr. Goldsmith has a new comedy in rehearsal at Convent Garden, to which the manager predicts ill success. I hope he will be mistaken. I think it deserves a very kind reception. "She Stoops to Conquer" was first produced at Convent Garden two weeks later, and was an instant success, inspite of the critics. For the first performance, Goldsmith himself was in too nervous a state to be present when the curtain went up, and only plucked up sufficient courage to arrive in time for Act V. It was played twelve times before the conclusion of the season, the tenth representation being attended by Kind George III and the Queen. Meanwhile, on 26th March, the text of the play was published in Octavo format by Francis Newbery, under the title of She Stoops to Conquer or The Mistakes of a Night. There was an unfavorable early reception for it as many intellectual help critics strongly disproved of the play. The author Horace Walpole claimed that it was "a very wretched comedy". Mason called it, " the lowest of all forces". Inspite of such censure, the play has gained a permanent niche in English drama. It dealt such a staggering blow to the didactic sentimentalists that they never recovered.

4.7.5. Summary

The Story : Mr. Marlow is to visit the Hardcastle. Marlow is Kate's father's choice for her as a husband and she is anxious to see what he looks life, though she has heard he is shy and retiring. Hastings, in love with Kate's cousin and dear friend Constance, is to accompany him. Mr. Hardcastle has hopes that Kate's half brother, Tony Lumpkins and idle, fun-loving fellow- will provide a match for Constance, but in fact there is little love lost between them. Marlow and Hastings lose their way, and at the Three Pigeons Tavern the joke-loving Tony directs them to "another inn"- the Hardcastle home in reality, for the night when the two men arrive there, they treat Hardcastle as an innkeeper. Constance encounters Hastings and they decide not to tell Marlow of Tony's prank because he is so shy and sensitive. The couple plans to elope if they can get their hands on her jewels. Marlow encounters Kate, takes her for a barmaid, and loses all the shyness he would feel with a woman of his own class.

Meanwhile, Tony takes, the jewels from his mother's closet and gives them to Marlow for safe-keeping. He in turn hands them over to the "land –lady" Mrs.Hardcastle, who now learns of her niece's intended elopement. She resolves to take Constance that very night to her Aunt Pedigree.

Sir Charles, Marlow's father, arrives, Marlow learns of the mistaken identity of the household and daughter, and after further upsets, she is happily betrothed to Kate and Tony. Instead of taking Mrs. Hardcastle and her niece to Aunt Pedigree, drives them around in the dark and finally brings them to the Hardcastle home. Mrs. Hardcastle reluctantly consents to Hastings's marriage. Constance and Tony is relieved that it is not he who must face the responsibilities of wedded life.

4.7.6. A CRITICAL ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF THE PLAY

A.H. Thorndike talks about the exposition this: It is admirable in construction and incident apart from its charms of style and humour. How simply and pleasantly the opening scene introduces us to an old fashioned house in the country and its occupants, Mr. Hardcstle, his wife, son, niece and her friend. A critic Tom Davis says, "Tony Lumpkin is the real author of the play "and that he embodies in himself the theme of appearance versus realties". R.F. Patterson calls "She Stoops to Conquer "a splendid comedy of intrigue" where there are plots, designs, contrivances, and conspiracies of characters against one another. Robert Herring points out," The title is somewhat misleading, for the central character is not Miss Hardcastle, but Tony Lumpkin. Though the main incident is her "Stooping" to be a barmaid, this could not have occurred, even had Marlow been never so cold, had not Tony first misdirected the travelers'. According to Edmund Gosse, "She Stoops to Conquer' is "one of the greatest comedies of the world" and its popularity has been both universal and enduring. HoraceWalpole called it a farce rather than a "genuine comedy, criticized at for its lack of moral values and for contain a number of improbabilities, both in incidents and situation. But A.S. Collins feels, the fun of a farce arises from ridiculous situation and incidents, and truth of characterization and probability of plot are of little account. He also says,"In fact it would be hard to find in any comedy a more skilful and varied performance by the Comic Muse." Viewed in historical perspective, "She Stoops to Conquer" is ageless. It is basically a play of pleasant nonsense arising from young Marlow's delusion that's he is topping at an inn when in fact he is in Mi. Hardcastle's house.

In an age when 'genteel comedy' was in vogue on the English stage, She Stoops to Conquer captured the audience with its bustling action and unflagging humour and sentimental handling verbiage is excluded from the dialogue. The plot borders on farce and is very farcical in nature. But a similar adventure befell Goldsmith in Ireland in 1744, when he was not yet seventeen, and it is said that he based his play on this very incident-mistaking a country gentleman's home for a public inn. Apart from the lasting freshness and skilful manipulation of the plot, the characters are not nearly as superficial as they may appear on a first cursory reading. In contrast to the inspired heroines of his contemporaries, Goldsmith has crated in Kate and Constance two charming young women, full of the joy of life, while Hastings and Marlow are much more than stage lovers. All of these characters, through the simple development of humorous incident, work hard and effectively to achieve the author's prime intention to "make an audience merry" and "to keep our spirits up".

She Stoops to Conquer is admirable in its dramatic contribution of incident. The opening scene introduces the audience pleasantly to the old-fashioned country home, to Mr. Hardcastle, with his fondness for long- winded stories, and his silly wife and Tony, Kate, Constance, Marlow and Hastings. The action has been slowly built up with the action culminates in Marlow's ardent proposal Kate, her arch raillery and Hardcastle's perplexity at the whole impossible situation. Throughout the play there is an underlying element of dramatic irony. Tony playing pranks, manipulation thing on the stage and the events taking another turn. Goldsmith has no dibasic intention. The whole mood of the play is humorous. It is essentially this humorous view of life, which separates the play from the two opposing dramatic schools, which flourished in the mid 18th century. On one hand, it is purely comedy, unsentimental with no morals and on the other, it is free from the satirical and sarcastic attitudes pour at that time. The comedy has a rural setting. Country life and attitudes change less quickly than urban ones. In short, however improbable the action, She Stoops to conquer abounds in memorable dramatic situations, and the central story is full of genial warmth and unmelodious fun. These elements combine

to make an unsuitable, unpretentious comedy, which is so solidly based on the fundamentals of human nature, that audiences ever since have recognized its quality. As in everything he wrote, Goldsmith went straight to nature and therefore the play still seems natural to us today.

Plot: Oliver Goldsmith's She Stoops to Conquer is one of the first comedies in English and it is an everlasting universal appeal Goldsmith wrote the play with the firm intention of amusing and entertaining and ever since its first appearance fresh audiences have continued to enjoy its humour. It is a timeless comedy, farcical in plot, but often shrewd in its characterization and realistic in its illustration of human nature.

According to A.N. Jeffares, " there are many reasons for the enduring popularity of the play. Goldsmith sets out to make us laugh and he does so successfully. He used for his plot an experience of his own as a school boy, when, having lost his way, he asked for an inn and was directed by a practical joker to the local squire's house. He behaved there rather as Marlow, the hero of his play. In the morning when he called for his bill, discovered that the man he had assumed to he an inn keeper was in fact an old college friend of his father's. His use of the incident is farcical and he entitled his play "The Mistake of a Night" referring to the several mistakes Marlow made during the course of a single night.

The Plot of the play is made up of a main plot and a subplot and the dramatist has shown a greats skill in interlinking the two to form a single whole. The main plot consists of the Marlow – Kate Hardcastle love story while the subplot deals with Hastings – Constance Neville love story. The two stories are fused into a single whole by the intrigues of Tony Lumpkin, the Stepson of Mr. Hardcastle. It is he who initiates the action, as well as brings it to a successful close.

The Play is constructed in five acts. The first act tells as quickly and economically about the characters. We learn that the Hardcastles live in the Country; their characters are very different. Mr. Hardcastles is very conservative in his taste, loving everything old, while his wife resents his calling her old, and hankers for the excitement of town life. The dialogue tells us of their ages and their different outlook upon life. It even sets the scene for the later misunderstanding by pointing out that their house is an old ramkling mansion that looks for all the world like an inn; it also indicates their lack of company in the country, which prepares us for the special preparations made later to receive tuests. Tony is explained as the son of Mrs. Hardcastle's first marriage, and the attitude of his step-father to his practical joking made clear. His mother's doting on him is demonstrated when he enters the scene rumbustionsly and shortly afterwards leaves the stage with her. Similarly, the very different nature of Kate, the daughter is shown. She is obedient and takes very well Mr. Hardcastle's announcement that he has found a husband for her, the son of his friend Charles Marlow. Incidentally, she explains how she is wearing a housewife's dress, an essential part of the plot later when young Marlow mistakes her for a servant. She hears that he is eligible and handsome but shy and reserved; her feelings are mixed, she is all in a flutter. After Mr.Hardcastle has disappeared to prepare the servants to receive Marlow, Kate's friend Constance Neville enters, and Kate discovers that Marlow is the friend of Constance's admirer, Mr. Hastings — and that he is not so modest as virtuous women believe. Next we learn that Mrs. Hardcastle is trying to marry her son Tony to Constance who pretends to be in love with him, though she is secretly in love with Hastings. And Tony does not want to marry her.

The characters have been skillfully introduced to us, and the complications have begun. We learn from Constance that Tony is basically good natured, and that Marlow is not as modest as he may seem in

polite company. We realize that Mrs. Hardcastle does not know that Constance is not in love with Tony. Things are not what them seem. In fact It has all been done very speedily; the simplicities and complicities of the characters are established, and the action is developing fast. Those characters who leave the stage go to effect further action which will affect the play's movement over interest has been efficiently captured.

The second scene, set in the local ale house gives us Tony's attitude to Bet Bouncer, to his expectations of fifteen hundred pounds a year when he comes of age, and to his grumbling step-father. His companions enjoy his company; he is a true son of his late father, a typical eighteenth century comic squire, who kept the best horses, dogs and girls in the whole country. Then Marlow and Hasturings having lost their to the Hardcastle's house, enter the ale house. We are again reminded of Marlow's reserve. Tony then begins the practical joke around which the play revolves. He asks whether the strangers are seeking Mr. Hardcastle's and there ensures a typical piece of comedy of mistaken or unknown identity. He makes the route to Mr. Hardcastle's seem long, dirty, dangerous, and over difficult to discover at night. He shows fine inventiveness in his description of this imaginary wasteland. He directs them for the night to Mr. Hardcastle's house, giving the name of an inn nearby. He adds to his practical joke by telling them that the landlard is rich and, as he wants to be thought a gentleman, will inflict his company and his opinion on them. The plot is set in full motion thus in the First Act.

In the second Act Hardcastle teaches his servants how to behave and in so doing adds to the credibility of the story told by Tony to Marlow and Hastings. The servants provide intervals of rustic clowning. He leaves the stage to welcome his guests and see to their houses. The discussion between Marlow and Hastings reveals Marlow's inability to talk to modest women, his intention to help his friend run off with Miss Neville, that they are not known to the Hardcastles and it further prepares us for Marlow's first subsequent meetings and conversation with Kate Hardcastle.

Later the two young men have commented on the complicated menu; Marlow visited on going off to see that the beds are avid, promptly accompanied by a protesting Hardcastle. This allows Miss Neville to enter and tell Hastings that the supposed inn is in fact the Hardcastle's house. The relations ting between Hastings and Constance becomes important Tony is ready to help the lovers by opposing his mother as he was earlier eases to revenge himself on his step father.

The third act is the centre of the plot commences with Hardcastle talking to Kate. Each has formed a very different impression of Marlow. The father regards him as impudent and her as timid. They leave the stage having re-established the interest of the Kate –Marlow relationship. Tony enters with the jewels which he gives to Hastings. He is afraid that Mrs. Hardcastle will be enraged when she discovers that they have vanished. This is a case of the Plotter's divergent plans going astray Hardcastle realizes Kate likes Marlow and gives her an hour to prove Marlow to be a modest man. The act ends with this note of urgency, and indeed the speed and complication of this act has been continuous.

The fourth act opens with the news that Marlow's father is expected the same evening. This adds to the urgency of the situation, for Hastings is known to him and must therefore press on with the elopement. Hardcastle orders Marlow to leave the house. Marlow realizes that he is in Hardcastles's house but is led to think that Kate is a poor relation of the family. He is greatly by taken by her modesty, but bids her farewell. A period of recrimination follows where the young people blame each other for the catastrophies

In the fifth Act, the complications get cleared up and its pace maintained Goldsmith does this by keeping up the confusion. The two fathers Hardcastle and Sir Charles Marlow discuss the union of the families. Hardcastle tells Sir Charles that Marlow does like Kate – and remember he interrupted Marlow's advances to her in her barmaid capacity; We also remember that Marlow's last thought of her a poor relation of the family. On hearing that Hardcastle approves of the marriage between Marlow and Kate, Marlow protests as he mistakes her as the barmaid.

The second scene is set in the garden and here Hastings hears from Tony how he has conducted his mother and Constance around in a circle in the dark and finally landed them in the horse pond at the bottom of the garden. Mr. Hardcastle's image is being built up as a reasonable and kind man.

The third scene opens with a talk between Kate and Sir Charles which makes it clear that he wants her for a daughter-in-law. Constance is free to marry Hastings and Tony is a free man. Kate decides to marry Marlow. The plot has been resolved and Mr. Hardcastle benignly blesses the lovers. The plots of the play is skillfully constructed. There is no flagging of interest at any point nor is there any failure in the development of the action Tony is prompt in his attitude and to Hastings and Miss Neville – and his role is certainly very important in the play. Miss Hardcastle meets Marlow thrice; she stoops to conquer – and wins Marlow

Characterization: "Characters", Jeffareo feels," in comedy of the kind of She stoops to conquer are quick. Sure delineation; the writer can almost afford to make them types. Goldsmith gives his characters some individuality; they are "Characters" as well as characters. Mr.Hardcastle is a typical father of comedy. His relationship with his future son-in-law begins well, deteriorates and then ends well. He is an opinionated bore but a benign one. His wife is very different. She resembles Mrs. Primrose, the wife of the Vicar of Wakefield, the saintly hero of Goldsmith's novel. Like Mrs. Primrose, Mrs. Hardcastle uses the devices of a country matchmaker. She is vain and gullible, she is not kind.

The two lovers, Constance and Hastings have been sensible and determined. Their misfortunes have arisen by mischance. Kate and Marlow are more dramatically pair of lovers. Kate is a lively, inventive, gay girl. Yet she is dutiful at the beginning of the play. She seems the opposite of Tony and unlike him, gets on well with Mr. Hardcastle, but as the play progresses, she develops a sense of mischief. Like Tony's own she enjoy's teasing Marlow, she also enjoys her conquest of him. She comes to like him in the process.

Marlow, the shy lover of ladies the would be conqueror of barmaids, is an unusual character. He is unsure of himself in one sphere, while confident in another; he seems ready to accept the marriage arranged for him, yet at his first meeting with her he finds Kate over-prim foe his liking. He appears to be modest but to Hardcastle is impudent. His shyness and assurance are seen through eyes of Mr. Hardcastle and kate alternately.

Tony Limpkin is the most interesting character in the play. Goldsmith begins with him as a rustic boar, and yet it is his ability to manage an intrigue that leads to the final resolution of the problems of Constance and Hastings, and to his own freedom. The play begins with Tony as a young man who resents his stepfather and is spoiled by his mother. But as the play progresses he changes, and his resentment turns against his mother, he would seem to the freeing himself from her domination. He is forthright in nature and can settle the problems without losing heart. Despite his lack of education and polish, his country wits to prove themselves to save the two town gentlemen whom his deception has thrown into such an sufficient awkward situation. The complexity

of his character does not interfere with his comic role; it makes it viable. A clever fool aids any comedy, but there is in this play, an extra dimension added by the fact that Tony's character is sufficiently complex for us to realize that he is more than a country booby, that he is more than a type, he is an individual, essentially general intrinsically gay. He has been frequently likened to Shakespeare's Falstaff. A. S. Collins states. " but though Tony is so outstanding, he is not alone, there is not one of the chief characters who is not vitally imagined by Goldsmith. The chief difference in characterization between the Tony and the others is that we see Tony more 'in the round', and that he is more individually himself than the others are" Robert hearing says," Goldsmith may not reach the subtlety, but his characters are by no means as "simple" as those of more artificial pretentious writers who put into their puppet's mouth egigrams which the puppets, to all seeming, would never have had the brain invent.

Stage Craft and Dramatic Techniques:

Goldsmith's masterpiece shows his complete mastery of stagecraft and dramatic technique. He learned many things from the failure of the Good Natured Man, his first play. In She Stoops to Conquer all crudities and excesses have been pruned away, the action has been speeded up so that we are not conscious of the improbabilities for which the play has been criticized. From the very beginning there are hints and references which foreshadow the events to come. There is not a dull moment anywhere, expectations are aroused and the audience is eager to know what is going to happen next. It is a triumph of dramatic construction that there is not even a single false step. A.H. Thorudike Writer " It is admirable in construction and incident apart from its charms of style and human. The setting of the play is the old, rambling, mansion of a country, squire at some distance from London. The characters are not rich and fashionable lords and ladies of the city of London, but well-to-do, old fashioned people, who live in the country side, and who have never been to London. Thus the play takes us away from the suffocating city atmosphere to the refreshing air of the countryside, so much so that the play has been called "a charming idylli".

Dialogue: Goldsmith's style is graceful, clear and lucid, and fire sparkling all over the play. The dialogue is brief and to the point and is skillfully varied according to the nature rank and status of the speakers. Each character has his or her manner particular way of speech. Hardcastle own of prefaces many of his own remarks with "As Marlow, when speaking to kate in his respectable view, begins most of his replies with 'yes' Madam', and Tony's use of 'Ecod' and other oaths is characteristic of him. The dramatist makes his characters speeches link together through repetition. On the whole, the speeches are short running only to a few short sentences. This gives the play its naturalness, its convincing conversation. Goldsmith's dialogue is easy and natural – sometimes rough and many times witty. His was a spontaneous flow suiting the characters and their individuality. Robert Herring comments." It is comparatively simple to indicate a person by giving him some trick of speech or gesture, that is external. It is not so simple to let that speech or gesture be dictated by the inner truth of character, but this is what Goldsmith does."

Humour: A notable merit of the play is its skilful blend of broad and light comedy Hardcastle has a fine sense of humour and a lively wit. Tony is equally witty.

William Vaughan Moody states, " The play is a charming idyll, in which the rough edges of the World are ground smooth, in which faults turn out to be witnesss, and mistakes to be blessings – It is a kind of Prose Tempest, the most victorious assertion in its age of mood of the idyll."

Richard Ferrar Patterson commends: "She Stoops to Conquer is a splendid comedy of intrigue, introducing lively and farcical incidents and highly drawn pictures of eccentric characters. The comedy skill holds the stage, and is as amusing today as when it was first produced."

According to Edmund Gosse, She Stoops to Conquer is "One of the greatest comedies of the world." Harace Walpole felt it was a farce rather than 'a genuine comedy" and criticizes it for its lack of moral edification and found a number of improbabilities both in incidents and situation." But eminent critics like Allardyce Nichol, Thorudike and others defended Goldsmith and repudiated the changes brought against the comedy by Walpole.

4.7.7. Sample Questions

1. In 'She Stoops to Conquer 'Goldsmith did more than write witty lines and invent new comic interrelationships, he gave his sense of brace its head." To what extent do you agree this assertion that the play's main quality is that of farce?

2. The plot rests essentially on two devices – the deliberate practical joke and mistaken identity. To what extent is this true of "She Stoops to Conquer"?

3. It has been said, "This play is an unalloyed source of amusement". Discuss the techniques used by Goldsmith to generate such amusement.

4. Examine 'She Stoops to Conquer 'as a 'Laughing Comedy'.

4.7.8. Suggested Reading

1. A Nicoll. A History of Late Eighteenth Century Drama (1952)
2. F.S. Boas. An Introduction Eighteenth Century Drama (1953)
3. A. Norman Jeffares "Writers and their Works" (series No.107 Longmans)
4. Norman Jeffares. Goldsmith she Stoops to Conquer Macmillan, London, 1966.
5. She Stoops to Conquer Goldsmith ed. A. Norman Jeffares. Macmillan, London. 1965

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Lesson - 8

Romantic Age-a general essay

1.1. Contents

4.8.1. Objectives:

a. to offer a definition of 'Romantic'

b. to focus on the background of Romanticism

c. to acquaint the student with some writers to see how they can be described as 'Romantic'

d. to give a brief account of the distinguishing features of Romanticism.

4.8.2. Background- the writers and the period

In mediaeval times, a number of poems were given the name 'romances' and they were described as 'romantic' in nature. They were strikingly different from the works of Greece and Rome, the 'classical' works. The romantic works thus came to be distinguished broadly by their extravagant sentiments, supernatural elements, and fairy landscapes born of fantasy and 'Glory of lake and mountain, grace of childhood, dignity of the untaught peasant, wonder of faery, mystery of the Gothic aisle, radiance of attic marble...' (Herford). Theodore watts was said to have described Romanticism a 'The Renascence of Wonder'.

For Donne, the word 'romantic' has come to be understood as the opposite of 'classical'. Indeed some great German thinkers have employed it thus on occasions. However, as Stephen Prickett rightly opines, no consensus has been arrived at, with regard to the word 'romantic'. He draws our attention to the word 'romancer' which meant 'a liar', at one time. Pater, on the other hand, describes the addition of curiosity to the desire of beauty as what constitutes the romantic temper. He observes, 'The essential elements of the romantic spirit are curiosity and the love of beauty...'he words 'romantic' and 'romanticism' have come to be devalued in Twentieth century, suffering at the hands of critics. The labels have come to mean a highly individualistic view of things, coupled with a loose and easy-going moral vision, and an answer to an over precise or extremely logical view of things.

In reality however, Romanticism depends on introspection, expression of self, and intution as a basis to look into the inner fabric of things, men and matters. The Romantic Age has given us an insight into the study of an individual based on the society and the world around him. The shift from a rural to an urban scenario and the consequent conflict between man in his natural surroundings and the machine, is part of the romantic agony and tension. Years later we find a similar conflict being presented in Hardy's The Mayor of Caster bridge, between the dogmatic Henchard and the dynamic Fanfare.

What is "Romanticism"? According to CM Bowra in his work Romantic Imagination, it is impossible to confine it to any single meaning and it is sufficient to say that it is the English poetry written during the period between 1789 to 1832, beginning with the Blake's "Songs of Innocence" to the death of Keats and Shelley Within this historical period, of "Romantic Age" there are Five major poets, namely Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats sharing a common point that a poet's creative imagination is closely connected with a peculiar insight into an unseen order behind the sensory reality, though there are many other writers outside this period, like the Pre-Raphaelitism sharing the same view.

Romanticism is the expression in terms of art of sharpened sensibilities and heightened imaginative feeling. It is an imaginative point of view that influenced many art forms, and has left its mark also on philosophy and history. According to Walter Pater, the essential qualities of the romantic spirit are curiosity and the love of beauty. Its medieval quality is occidental. Elemental purity and simplicity are the other qualities of Romanticism. Renascence was the supreme Romantic Movement in English Literature, as it also transformed the European life. The Romantic Revival was the outcome of the Renascence and Reformation. The age-old notions of the dignity and importance of man in the scheme of things of the Universe, the glories of the world of nature found their full expression in the horrors of French Revolution in the kindling of a new idealistic philosophy in Germany under Kant and Hegel, and in the political upheaval in America. The subtle sense of mystery and approximating the unknown in terms of the familiar is a Romantic quality. Romanticism is not opposed to reality. It is only reality transformed by new powers of vision and feeling. The Romantics discovered mystical qualities in Nature. They spiritualized Nature. Romanticism has the quality of exuberant intellectual curiosity. On one side, it satisfied the emotional sense of wonder, while on the other side, it fulfilled the intellectual sense of curiosity. It shows an instinct for the elemental simplicity of life. Nature was idealized Blake and Wordsworth idealized nature.

The German thinker Kant influenced the English Romantic movement. It was more philosophic and critical, more coherent in its body of writing. Rousseau believed that original impulses are good because they are natural. Man's evil is because of his separation from Nature. Rousseau's sentimental influence touches Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge. His intellectual influence affected Godwin, and through Godwin, Shelley. For Shelley, Revolution as an "idea" appealed to him.

The Romantic tendency was to turn to nature for inspiration as an answer to pressures of life and society. The writers of Romantic Age were highly individualistic, while sharing some broad-based characteristics. They did not form into a school. In fact English men are known for their aversion to be identified with schools or movements. Like many other concepts which have a broad basis in the entire continent of Europe and are not confined to England alone, romanticism also derives its inspiration and direction from the socio-political and socio-economic bases of European society. The French revolution was one such upheaval. For the romantic writers, the poets are the leaders of society, as opposed to the misgivings of Plato about them in his

Republic. Shelley describes them as the unacknowledged legislators of the world. The romantics preferred a world of imagination to the real world with its constraints and limitations. Blake equated nature itself with imagination. To Coleridge, imagination was the living power. Coleridge was profoundly influenced by Kant, and equates the shaping spirit of imagination with the process and creation of the poetic composition. Wordsworth refers to the sad incompetence of human speech which can only be compensated by the power of imagination. The Romantic theories of imagination were influenced by the German philosophers Kant and Schelling. Kant held the view that experience is organic, that it is a unity. The poetry of Blake, for instance, is influenced by German Romantic literature, 'the contradiction between imagination and –world that resists it, the artist as a hero, the sense of a lost vision...' (David Morse). Romantic poetry is invariably associated with philosophy. There is so much philosophy in this poetry that Julius Hare, when he tried to defend Wordsworth, against the assumption that his poetry is excessively philosophical, asserted that 'poetry is philosophy, and philosophy is poetry'. Such an identification of poetry with philosophy could be contemplated only with regard to the poetry of the Romantics. Wordsworth refers to Aristotle as having said that poetry is the most philosophical of all writing. This only proves the broad European basis of Romantic thought, a mighty ocean of which English Romanticism was but a stream. Schlegel, another German thinker, admired Kalidasa and his Sakuntalam and tried to trace the source of Romantic imagination, to the great works of the East. The Romantic revival therefore was not a thing confined to English borders as the cross currents of thought from across the borders reaching far and wide have helped in shaping the romantic imagination as it was evidenced in England.

Two great thinkers, Rousseau and Godwin have made a profound impact on the shaping of Romantic imagination. Rousseau preferred nature to civilization. According to him civilization is a great enemy to self-sufficiency, and if man ought to stand on his feet, he must return to nature in its pristine glory. Both Shelley and Byron admired Rousseau, though Blake condemned him. The Romantic writers including Shelley, Wordsworth and Coleridge were profoundly influenced by William Godwin, a reformer. Godwin's noble view of humanity impressed many of the romantic writers. Godwin also believed in an egalitarian distribution of wealth as one of the important requirements for the well being of humanity. Wordsworth salutes him in his The Prelude.

Imagination, as C.M. Bowra observes, is the most important and distinguishing features of the Romantic Age,-' If we wish to distinguish a single characteristic which differentiates English Romantics from the poets of the eighteenth century, it is to be found in the importance which they attached to the imagination and in the special view they held of it.' Bowra holds the view that this belief in imagination was part of a contemporary belief in the individual self. William Blake declared, 'This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity'.

The best statement on behalf of the romantic creed that was ever made, is to be found in the following lines of William Blake:

To see a world in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour.

The concern with the self and the idea of self-consciousness constitute part of the Romantic tendency. This was partly a result of the Romantics' belief in the importance of man in the universe we live in. As T.E. Hulme rightly points out, man is an infinite reservoir of possibilities.

4.8.3. The Writers and their Works (A very brief account)

Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge of the older generation and Keats, Shelley and Byron of the younger generation constitute the body of major Romantics of English poetry.

William Blake (1757-1827)

Blake was born to a London hosier in 1757. He had no formal schooling. The first published poems of Blake were 'poetical sketches' of 1783. In 1789 he published the 'Songs of Experience' to offer a contrast to his 'Songs of Innocence' written in 1789. While the 'Songs of Innocence' tend to be light hearted, the 'Songs of Experience' are serious and even bitter, at times. They represent contradictory experiences. Elsewhere, Blake disliked the mechanical discipline of science and expressed his disagreement with Newton. This was so be cause Romanticism was deeply associated not only with philosophy, but religion, as well. The influence of religion on Romanticism and vice versa can be easily noticed from the poetry as well as the remarks of Coleridge.

As a visionary Blake touches both art and letters. He is interested in looking behind the visible frame of things for the glories and terrors of the world of spirit. Unlike Wordsworth, who discovered ethical ideas in his mystical intimations of Nature, Blake dreamt of Nature's mystical powers. This visionary qualities overpower his artistic quality as there is a profusely rich suggestion of imagery in his art. This rich suggestion of imagery gives his art a phantom touch of extraordinary subtlety and as the source of his spiritual intuition. He drew inspiration from Nature with a mystical rapture. Bake is interested in the splendour of human love and the rapture of the sun and sky as it carries him to some inner fire. He loved the Elizabethans for their naturalness and rhythmic music though he never imitated them. His poem is like the singing of a happy child expressed with the art of a man. He saw in the simple joys and raptures of ordinary life a paradise regained. In the Songs of Innocence, he describes Eden of Christian purity. His poetry shows naturalism and mysticism of the Romantic Poetry. On the naturalistic side, he deals with the simplest phases of life, with the instinctive life of the child and with the love of flowers, hills and streams, the blue sky and the brooding clouds. His poetic vision spiritualises the simplest objects of nature. For Blake, every aspect of Nature is holy. Angels shelter the birds from harm, the good shepherd looks after his sheep, the divine instinct is present even in the hearts of the savage animals. He gives the same freedom to the animal world, as enjoyed by human beings. As mysticism is usually blended with a wistful melancholy, Blake is different, as he is a joyful mystic. For him, the morning stars sing together and the splendour of life far exceeds its shadows. His mysticism is a realization of the present. One great reality for him was the world of his visions. His view of love resembles Shelley's. He may not be so much interests in Logic or Theology. Like Shelley he has a passion for revolt.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

Coleridge was born in 1772. He was the son of the vicar of Ottery St.Mary Devon. He was educated at Jesus college, Cambridge. In collaboration with Robert Southey, he published ' The Fall of Robespierre' in 1794. In 1795 he came into contact with Wordsworth. This developed into a deep and great friendship. Coleridge's Ancient Mariner was published in The Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth and Coleridge. In his later life, Coleridge became an opium addict. In 1808, he delivered a number of lectures on English poets. In 1817 he published his famous Biographia Literaria. Besides being a poet, Coleridge also wrote a considerable body of literary criticism. His first impulse towards expression in poetry came with the chance reading of the

Samuel of Bowles. It stirred within him that rich and advent delight in natural beauty. This spritual interpretation of the Universe with a rich yet delicate appreciation of the beauties of the physical work may be found in his poems, such as the Lines on an Autumnal Evening and Religious Musings. In the second period, the intimacy with Wordsworth and Dorothy led to its first fruits in the odes "To the Departing Year" any "To France". This abandonment of his youthful social ideals is celebrated a here with a fire, passion and freedom of expression. We find the subtler charm of his description of Nature in his poems, "Frost at Midnight" and "Fears in Solitude". The full flowering of his genius comes with "The Ancient Mariner" "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan". "Kubla Khan" is an exquisite dream fragment". Ancient Mariner" and Kubla Khan" exhibit the highest power of Coleridge as a poet.

There are two important qualities for his poetic work. They are : a physical quality and second, an intellectual quality. The physical element lies in its breading sense of mystery; intellectual element lies in the pure simplicity with which this sense of mystery is expressed. Unlike the super naturalism, we find in Walpole and Mrs. Rad cliffe, for Coleridge the supernatural world is an intimation of the unknown universe to the familiar logic of our ordinary life. He absorbs the medievalism into himself and describes them with the poet's exquisite perception of the mysteries that surround the common place things of every day life. In "The Ancient Mariner", every phase of landscape, seascape, and cloud scape is touched upon . He describes with equal power and beauty every phase of life at sea, such as the freezing cold of the Arctic, region, the horrors of the eerie passage, the clear sky the incarnate fury of the storm, and so on. The whole poem is eked out with the colour and beauty and power of the middle ages. This poem is "the ethereal and subtle imagination of a great poet".

"Christabel" is an equally powerful poem. It is a metrical romance Whether we read the poem as an allegory or merely as another excursion into the dim dream world of fantasy, its beauty and magic are immense. The poem has medieval atmosphere. It has the old moated castle with its feudal qualities. We have the witch woman with the evil spell and the innocent victim. The poem is a fantasia on the elemental theme of good and evil, light and darkness set in moonlight and eeriness and remote horror of the scene without using any elaborate machinery. In this poem, the diction is homely and simple. We feel the oppressive silence, the ominous loneliness and the powers of Darkness. Coleridge's supreme strength as a pot lies in his marvelous a dream faculty. There is no finer dreamer in English verse, than him.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was the son of an attorney of Cocker mouth. He studied at the grammar school of Hawks head and St. John's college, Cambridge. He was profoundly influenced by the French Revolution. In 1798, he and Coleridge published the renowned Lyrical Ballads . In the same year, Wordsworth started his composition of The Prelude . In 1800, he wrote his famous poem, 'Michael'. The Prelude was completed in 1805. In 1807, he published some of his poems which included the 'ode to Duty' and ' Ode on Intimations of Immortality' among others.

'He sought beauty in meadow woodland and mountain-tip and interpreted this beauty in spiritual terms. He spiritualized Nature's moods to win moral consolation from them. It is his special quality to identify himself with the strange and remote aspects of the earth and sky in their ordinary and familiar moods. His best work was done between 1796 and 1808. After that, there was not much of the originality of his genius. Essentially, as a poet and thinker, he is interested with Nature and Man. In Nature he is interested with its spiritual intimations to man. He discovers such spiritual intimations in all the objects of nature. The primrose and the daffodil are symbols to him of Nature's message to man. The grandness and majesty of the mountain,

torrent appeals to him because he can link its beauty in his mind with to glory of the floating clouds, with the charm of a young girl's face. A sunrise for him is a moment of spiritual consecration. In any case, he is not concerned or even bewildered by Nature's furies. Nature appeals to him for its visual splendor and auditory delight. He perceives Nature's soul to seek empathy with it. He listens to Nature's discords to discover its harmony underlying "a central peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation". Wordsworth, like Shelley, intellectualizes nature. In their poetry, Nature's music is set to transcendental language. They are ultimately prophets of Nature. They "explain" to us the spiritual meanings of Nature. They show to us the inner significance of Nature. They move from the external fact to the inner truth though thus Wordsworth and Shelley have a similar goal of intellectualizing Nature Wordsworth discoyers peace and harmony and order, at the heart of things, while Shelley has a revolutionary purpose. Shelley is a dreamer of Nature's spirit. Wordsworth meditates about Nature's intimations for man's wisdom. For him, Nature has a mystical intimacy. Wordsworth's symbolism of sound is supreme.

As in his attitude to Nature, in his attitude to man also, he is always eager to move from the concrete to the abstract. He is more concerned with the goals of larger humanity than with the individuals. He is interested in mankind, in general. He saw Man through Nature's eyes. He deals with the primal qualities of humanity where man and Nature are unified. Thus, his love of Nature is transferred to the shepherd and simple dales man of the north and the ordinary men and women with ordinary joys and sorrows. Only by purging away the accidents, only by allowing one's emotion "to be recollected in tranquility" and by ridding oneself of petty cares and distractions, can one get a true and faithful vision of human life. This is his view.

He employs the narrative, lyrical the elegiac and the sonnet form. His narrative poetry is sometimes cast into heroic metre, sometimes into that of the ballad, and in each medium he achieved distinction. He brought freshness and pensive sweetness to his lyrics. His a natural diction it the grand manner resonant with stately beauty. His poetry has a fine sedative influence which soothes and tranquillises us. In his poetry, he again and again returns to the earliest childhood experiences. He understood that Nature is intended to educate man. Nature is man's shortest way to God. The essence of the union between Nature and Man is best defined in the second book of The Prelude.

John Keats (1795-1821) was the son of a stable keeper in London. He abandoned the profession of a surgeon in preference to literature. Shelley helped him to publish Poems of John Keats in 1817, but this did not help Keats, as it did not prove to be a successful commercial proposition. In 1818, Keats wrote the Endymion. In 1819, the renowned odes of Keats were composed. He traveled to Italy for a change of skies, for reasons of health, as he was afflicted with Tuberculosis. There in Italy, be breathed his last, in 1821. Keats was first attracted to Spenser and later Homer. He was attracted towards Leigh Hunt Intellectually, he was in sympathy, with Shelley and Byron. In his religious philosophy, he was more whole heartedly pagan. He was influenced by medievalism and Hellenism. If Wordsworth spiritualizes and Shelley intellectualizes the Nature, Keats is content to express her through senses. Nature's colour, scent, and touch stir him his depths. He loves all the moods of the Earth. All the seasons of Nature inspire him. The influence of medieval Italy and its legends, the pastoral sweetness and sensuous beauty of Spenser inspired him. His early poems". Ssleep and Beauty and "Endymion" were inspired by Spenserian imagery and Elizabethan conceits.

The fruit of Keats's maturing of Sleep and Sensibility is in mind four odes, "found in Melancholy", "On a Nightingale", On a Grecian urn " and "To Autumnal written in 1819. These poems are different in kind from his earlier poems. There poems are enlarged by a dimension of human experience, unknown his earlier poems.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was born at Sussex. He was educated at Eton and the University college, Oxford. A sensational pamphlet on 'The Necessity of Atheism' in 1811, was responsible for his having had to leave the institution. About 1814, he composed 'Queen Mab'. This was followed by 'Alastor' published in 1816. In 1819 he published his great poetic dramas. Cenci was published in 1819 and The Prometheus unbound in 1820. Having moved away to Italy in 1819, Shelley composed a number of great lyrical poems. 'Ode to the west wind', 'To a Skylark' and 'The cloud' belong to this period. In 1821, Shelley was compelled to answer charges against poetry by T.L. Peacock. This led to the composition of Defence of Poetry by Shelley. He was a reformer as well as a poet. He was only interested in the present. Godwin impressed his imagination. Greek literature inspired him. He wrote many beautiful lyrics by the inspiration from Italy. His important themes are liberty and his whole-hearted belief in love as the prime factor in all human progress. For him, revolution was a spiritual awakening for the beginning of a new life. All that was evil in life was traced to slavery. These thoughts define his works, The Revolt of Islam and the noble lyric, drama, Prometheans Unbound. For him, Liberty meant Freedom from external restraint. It is opposed to license. For him, "to rule the Empire of self" was a moral necessity Love will control and regulate society. Liberty can work, in an atmosphere of Love. Love is a transcendental force, kindling all things into beauty. He sings of human passions., yet as one almost aloof from them, as feeling them only in some etherealised way. No poet felt more deeply the dynamic influence of love in moulding human destiny than him. His poetry shows spontaneity and musical richness. His philosophy is often pantheistic in expression. In Adonais this passion for freedom, his craving for moral harmony drew him towards Greek ideals. Intellectually, his sympathies were with the Greek thought. His songs describe the ideas such as liberty for the downtrodden, hope for the oppressed, peace for the storm – tossed humanity. He had an implicit belief that the human race is perfectible. According to him, man will reach a Golden Age of material and spiritual happiness, by means of love.

Poetic instinct came naturally to him. His earlier work Queen Mab is individual enough in its outcry against the unspiritual forces that weigh down mankind. In Alastor, he found his true greatness for the first time. The aspiring youth in the poem is the poet himself on his quest and if the story becomes at times obscure and discursive, the main drift is the revolt of the imagination against the limitations of human self. Hymn to intellectual Beauty and Mont Blank describe the same theme. In Prometheus Unbound, the Shelleyan thirst for freedom is found in a noble and expansive setting. Shelley's poetic genius is in full expression in his lyrical pieces, such as "The Skylark" "The Cloud" and "Ode to the West Wind". "The Cloud" is a Nature's myth of flawless beauty. Here, we find the complete identification of the poet with his subject. The superb musical quality and the crystalline quality of diction. "Ode to the West Wind" has intellectual and human interest. In Adonais he celebrates his love for Keats, the deceased poet.

George Gordon Byron (1788-1824) was born in London. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge. From 1809 to 1811, he toured Europe. He visited Portugal, Spain and Greece. On his return, he published 'Childe Harold'. In 1815 Byron married Ann Isabella, but they were separated as early as 1816. A disillusioned Byron left England, never to return. He toured Switzerland and Italy and finally settled in Italy. The third and fourth Cantos of 'Childe Harold' were published in 1816 and 1818, respectively. Byron's great work 'Don Juan' was taking shape during 1818-20 of which he published the first five cantos. In 1819 he wrote the poetic dramas Manfred and Cain. The Prophesy of Dante dealt with a vision for the liberation of Italy. In 1822, Byron came out with his well known poem, 'The vision of Judgment', intended to be a satire on Southey with whom he fell out. In 1824 Byron died of a fever.

Byron described Europe successfully. He had an instinct for admirable and telling prose. His letters are brilliant with racy humour and lively personal touches. He is an excellent observer of men and manners. Without the poetic intensity of Wordsworth, the subtlety of Coleridge, the sensuousness of Keats, the fine of imagination of Shelley, he has a rare breadth and vigour of imagination. He shows the love of Nature. He shows the tendencies of Scot at his best, in his poetry. He shows phases of simplicity and naturalness. He is an actor, with a strain of fierce sincerely. He is a revolutionary in thought and conservative in art. He had fine qualities of mind, such as courage, generosity and a capacity for friendship. As a poet, he is objective. His heroes and villains are coloured stage editions of himself. In "Childe Harold", and "Don Juan", we can see the daring adventurer, the intrepid fighter and the amorist. His satire is more remarkable than even his rhetoric. He has vitality. He has an eye for the essentials. He presents the surious and piquant combination of an ardent romantic imagination and an intellect and outlook essentially worldly and matter-of-fact. He is interested in the present. He is most at home with the England of his day, the Empire of his day. At heart he is always a society gentle man and both in its good and bad senses a man of the world. The English Bards, is purely eighteenth century in spirit. Vision of Judsement is a pure satire.

4.8.4. Analysis and a brief evaluation of the writers' works

Among many fascinating texts of the Romantics, William Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience deserve a special mention. Songs of Innocence, being the first volume, was published in 1789 and in 1799, it was produced along with the Songs of Experience. As a collection of lyrics, it has few parallels in English literature. These poems differ considerably from what are known as Blake's Prophecies In these, he 'piped with a merry cheer', 'piping down the valleys wild'.

Blake himself has described the Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience as representing what he himself calls them as 'the two contrary states of the human soul'. These songs have an immediacy of appeal. The first book, the Songs of Innocence, true to its name is concerned with a state of innocence while the latter, The Songs of Experience deals with how life corrupts innocence. Blake gives an account of how the good people are corrupted by mere senses. His Songs of Innocence seems to be a product of his spiritual and domestic disharmony.

Coleridge's Rime of The Ancient Mariner was another, demonstrating the Romantics' concern with the supernatural and the Gothick. While it touched others only outwardly, it fascinated Coleridge, very intently, be it in Christabel, Kubla Khan or The Ancient Mariner. Hazlitt thought of The Rime of The Ancient Mariner as the most remarkable performance of Coleridge. Coleridge explains in his Biographic Literaria that he intended, 'the incidents and agents...to be in part at least, super natural, and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interest of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real'. The poem is the story of a Mariner, haunted by guilt, having killed a bird, an albatross. He is so obsessed with the idea that he goes on narrating the story to every sea farer. The poem has seven sections. It is a poem of crime and punishment, guilt and redemption, the phantom ship appearing to him like a night mare, 'The Night mare Life-in Death was she, who thicks men's blood with cold. The Mariner is haunted.

Let me, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
* * * * * * * * * * *
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

Yet another great work which deserves our attention is Shelley's Prometheus Unbound. It is a sequel to Aeschylus's Prometheus Vinctus or Prometheus Bound. Aeschylus had written a tragedy on Prometheus, the Titan, who stole fire from heaven for the benefit and progress of mankind, but as he had no permission from Zeus, the Greek God of gods to do so, he was punished by being bound to a rock with chains, to be tortured daily. Later however, he is delivered from bondage, a subject taken up by Shelley, the freedom-lover. Shelley made use of this great work to give a free expression to his ideas of human liberty and freedom. Prometheus Unbound, designed by Shelley as a lyrical drama in four acts, is a great treatise on freedom and liberty, in opposition to the inescapable or ineluctable destiny in which the Greeks, dogmatically, believed.

As for great works like Wordsworth's The Prelude or Keats's Odes, the reader may kindly refer to the relevant lessons.

4.8.5. A Summary:

The word 'romantic' has been used mostly to define things opposed to the 'classical'. The rigid logic of the classical works came to be replaced by a free play of imagination in the works of romantics. The romantics concentrated on a study of the individual, mostly in relation to the development of self in relation to nature, and the world around man including the society. The consequences of a shift from rural to urban scenario with its far-reaching implications formed a major component of the romantic works, in practice.

Like many great movements in English literature, romanticism was also deeply influenced by many cross currents of European thought. The Germans like Kant and Schiller and the French thinkers of the social contract theory like Rousseau made a profound and indelible impact on the romantic thinkers of England.

The ability to see God and his work in every object of the universe was an accepted credo of English romanticism. Nature therefore came to be represented as guiding the footsteps of an individual in his well-being as a creature. These ideas were expressed with great variety, lending charm to romantic expression. Arthur Compton Rickett, a literary historian, has come out with three distinguishing features of romantic literature- a 'Subtle sense of mystery', 'an exuberant intellectual curiosity', and an 'instinct for the elemental simplicities of life'

4.8.6 Key Words/ Technical terms (by way of illustration)

Romantic: The word has been variously defined and interpreted, but originally it meant to mean, 'as in romances' of the past. Later for purposes of distinction, the Germans used it widely in the sense of things opposed to the 'classicial'.

Pantheism: A creed or doctrine which the romantics have helped in fostering, namely that God is in every object of the universe.

Imagination: The best definition of 'Imagination' for the Romantics may be said to be provided by Wordsworth in his The Prelude:

Imagination, which, in truth,
Is but another name for absolute strength
And clearest insight, aptitude of mind,
And reason in her most exalted mood.

On the other hand, William Blake identifies the world of imagination with eternity: 'This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity, ...This world of Imagination is Infinite and Eternal, where the world of Generation, or Vegetation, is finite and Temporal:

4.8.7. Sample Questions:

a. Define Romanticism.

b. What according to you are the characteristic features of Romanticism and Romantic Age?

4.8.8. Suggested Reading

- C.M.Bowra, The Romantic Imagination (Oxford University Press, oxford, 1950).
- Joseph Warren Beach, English Literature of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries (Collier-Macmillan Ltd, London, Third printing, 1966).
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- David Morse, Romanticism : A Structural Analysis (Macmillan, London, 1982).
- Romanticism, ed. Cynthia Chase (Longman, London, 1993).
- C.H. Herford, The Age of Wordsworth (G.Bell & Sons Ltd., London, 1960).
- Arthur Compton- Rickett, A History of English Literature (Nelson, London, Indian Reprint by Universal Book Stall, Delhi, 1976).

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9. Nature in Romantic Poetry

Contents

3.9.1 Objectives:

a. To describe briefly, the inspiration provided by Nature.
b. To consider Nature as the shaping or moulding influence on the works of major writers of the Romantic revival.

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3.9.2 Background -The Writers and the Period:

From the day poets started composing poetry, they did make use of nature as a source of inspiration, as an object of beauty, and as a symbol among many other uses to which they put it. Like divinity, worshipped by many with varying forms which suited their taste; imagination and use, nature also came to be clothed in varying moods and varying hues in the history of literature not in England alone, but elsewhere, as well.

In literature for the western man, we notice Homer describing dawn as 'rhododaktulos Eos' or the rosy-fingered dawn, personified into a charming human being. The pastoral poetry of Theocritus, Bion and Moschus, while giving all respect to the beauties of a sylvan or rural scenario, did also employ it as a backdrop for the death of a great man or poet. Virgil, who comes out with the well-known affirmation of 'Sunt lacrimae rerurm' ('there are tears for things',-

the things of course, being tragic things) to justify nature as sharing in the sorrow of human beings. Ruskin characterizes this use of nature in pastoral poetry, as pathetic fallacy.

The twin aspects of nature, namely the beautiful and the terrible were employed by Shakespeare as well, in his poetic dramas. The man who envisions the beautiful forest of Arden which becomes a scenic setting for a romantic comedy like As you like it, is the same man who creates the mystery of Birnam wood in Macbeth and the storm in King Lear which externalizes the fury of the recognition of ingratitude of an old father, betrayed by his 'Pelican daughters'.

It is however a popular belief that the Romantics were the ones who employed nature as a hand maid of their poetry. It was the relationship between the inner world of man, the theatre of the mind and the way external objects were made to represent it, that was basically the subject of profound exploration by the Romantic poetry. Call it landscape symbolism or name it images or imagery borrowed from nature, it all amounts only to saying the same thing namely that the objects in nature living as well as non-living come to represent the feelings of the humans in poetry of the Romantics with greater recognition probably than in the writings of others. One may say without any hesitation that this has became a cornerstone of the Romantic creed.

Even Twentieth century writers like Yeats, Eliot and Dylan Thomas fall under this category with the recognizable variations. Dylan Thomas is rightly labeled a neo-romantic, and describes nature as a cosmic force, the creator and the destroyer, all in one.

All this amounts to saying that the connection of nature with the Romantics is a highly complex one and deserves therefore to be explained in detail, at some length. Citing Coleridge's remarks on Nature, 'ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud', Elizabeth Drew aptly observes 'Nature herself remains the same; it's the poet who finds reflections in her of his own varying moods and perceptions.'

3.9.3 The Writers-Their Lives and works:

The students may kindly refer to my essay on Romantic Age- a general essay (under Paper-IV- Lesson 1).

3.9.4 Analysis of some texts and VI. A brief critical evaluation of some literary texts and the writers' work:

Ever since the days of Shakespeare and Milton, nature came to be associated with purity and innocence. Rural or Sylvan setting was invariably employed by poets of the past to depict images of innocence. Milton employs it thus in the prelapsarian Eden of Paradise Lost. The landscape of nature with its hills and dales is a scene of purity as opposed to the industrial pollution that threatens city life. Spenser makes 'Sweet Thames' the natural setting for the nuptial songs of Prothalamion and Epithalamion.

The Romantic poets had this great tradition behind them before they began to compose their poems which have rightly earned them the reputation of being the votaries of nature. As early as The Tintern Abbey, Wordsworth describes nature as the supporting structure of his thoughts, ' the author of my purest thoughts'. His moral well-being is purely sustained and is dependent upon nature, which performs more roles than one for him, namely the role of a nurse, a guide, a guardian and even a soul, 'the nurse, the guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul of all my moral being' as he describes her. Wordsworth rightly lamented that after Milton, there were not many poets who could make use of nature as a genuine source of inspiration. This was one of the reasons which made him admire Milton as a star-like soul that dwelt apart.

Even Byron admires the genuine and pure bliss to be found in the presence of nature. He claims an empathic union with nature, by claiming to become a portion of what is around him (in his Childe Harold's Pilgrimage). The mountains are in themselves, a feeling for him. '...to me/ High mountains are a feeling' (Childe Harold's Pilgrimage). A similar idea can be noticed in Byron's Childe Harold's Pilgrimage where Byron claims that the objects of nature like the mountains, waves and skies become a part of his soul, and what is more, he seems to become a part of nature, himself, through them. He is sick of the noisy cities with their commercial transactions. '...but the hum/ of human cities torture' (Childe Harold's Pilgrimage). Watson gives three important aspects of nature as emphasized in Romantic poetry. They are:

1. 'the genuine pleasure at seeing, hearing, and feeling the freshness of the natural world'.
2. Nature and landscape are employed not merely for their beauty but for 'their ability to express some of the elusive truths and perceptions of the mind'.
3. the association of nature with moral and physical well-being .

Rousseau's clarion call for a return to nature electrified the imagination of the Romantic poets. They did not confine themselves to mere descriptions of nature, but associated them purposefully with the inner core and compulsions of our being. 'It's the deeper and more complex relationships between the external world and the mind of man that inspires the best nature poetry'. Elizabeth Drew distinguishes two main modes in this, namely an identification with the forces of nature as in Wordsworth and others, and the kinds of Romantic poetry where nature and its settings are used like a parable or fable with moral vision.

In his Biographia Literaria Coleridge narrates how he and his friend Wordsworth divided the possible subjects of the lyrical ballads into two, - he, to deal with the supernatural although with a certain essential component of human interest and Wordsworth was to deal with the objects of ordinary life but by infusing into them something more than ordinary. To Colerdige, nature becomes a mirror. 'nature herself is the same; it's the poet who finds reflections in her of his own varying moods and perceptions.'

Thus Wordsworth came to choose incidents and situations from common life, as they are found in nature. He tried to derive his language from the humble and rustic people as they were found to be in greater contact with nature, the soil, than all the others. '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-exit in a state of greater simplicity...'

He never believed in attempts to elevate nature by trick or artifice. His statement, "Poetry is the image of nature" is said to echo the spirit of Thomson whose The Seasons is so dear to Wordsworth. The poet Wordsworth himself expresses the inseparable link between nature and human nature in lines that are justly famous; where he speaks of a

presence, 'And I have felt/ A presence that disturbs me with the joy/ of elevated thoughts...' with a sense whose dwelling is:

... the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking thins, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

('Tintern Abbey')

(For details on Wordswoth's The Prelude, the student may refer to the lesson on the same).

3.9.5 A Summary:

For ages 'Nature' served as inspiration to poets. From the days of Homer to the days of the romantic writers, this was so. Nature has both a beautiful aspect as well as a terrible aspect. This serves as a basis for the inspiration of the romantics in portraying her as she is. Even in 20th century, writers like Yeats and Dylan Thomas were inspired by nature as a cosmic force.

Wordsworth considers nature as his guide and guardian. Byron and Shelley, in their own way, employ nature as a source of poetic inspiration. Coleridge says that he and Wordsworth have come to an understanding, namely, that Wordsworth may deal with ordinary objects of life and he (Coleridge) may deal with the super natural.

3.9.5 Sample Questions:

a. Describe some ways in which poets employ nature.
b. How does nature play an important role in Romantic Poetry?

3.9.7 Suggested Reading:

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- The Pelican Guide to English Literature, Vol.5: From Blake to Byron (ed. Boris Ford, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1957).
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10. Wordsworth's The Prelude

Contents

3.10.1 Objectives:

a. To provide a background of the genesis of Wordsworth's The Prelude.
b. To describe the essential message of the work.
c. To trace the growth of the poet's mind as evidenced by the work.

3.10.2 The Background – The Writer and the Period:

In literary history, the first three decades of the nineteenth century have come to be described as the 'Age of Wordsworth'. The crowded three decades at the onset of nineteenth century may not easily be brought under a single label. The revival of Romanticism was aptly described by Theodore Watts as 'the Renascence of wonder.' Germany, England, and France witnessed a new upsurge of the discovery of the glory of nature and the wonder of childhood as it had probably been never done before.

Romanticism of this period was marked by a pronounced deviation from the humdrum realities of life, trying to suspend routine pressures by virtue of imagination. The wonder of the child was its chosen paradigm worked out to its full, in the poetry of Wordsworth.

Three great aspects have had a profound and indelible impact on the poetry of the Romantic revival,- Rousseau's clarion call to return to nature, and the philosophy of Kant , coupled with the historical event of the French Revolution. They have moulded the direction and

fervour of Wordsworth's poetry. The dignity of man and the power of nature were vehemently advocated by Rousseau as a part of the well-known theory of social contract. While Wordsworth concentrated on the image of the child, - man in communion with nature, Shelley upheld the dignity of man, and projected glorious visions of human freedom to be achieved, if it was thus required, by breaking the shackles of convention.

For the romantics, nature was a manifestation of the divine, a direct link between Man and God. They worshipped nature as their teacher. Nature nursed and educated them, the best example being Wordsworth who unhesitatingly acknowledges the moulding influence of nature on him. The composition of The Prelude looks like an act of gratitude to nature. On the other hand, Kant's idea of experience as a total and organic entity and his attempts to dispel dualism between mind and matter, resulted in the most depraved among men, to think of freedom.

Besides, the French Revolution created false hopes of freedom in a writer like Wordsworth. His hopes were dashed to the ground when he noticed the emergence of totalitarianism which he thought would be put an end to, by the Revolution. Critics often speak of two Wordsworths,- a Wordsworth before and during the Revolution and a Wordsworth, after the revolution, - a shattered and disillusioned man, a disillusionment from which he could never completely recover. As Stephen Gill aptly remarks, 'no single work of art registers as well as The Prelude does the hopes and disappointments of an individual then, or reveals as nakedly the turmoil which the collapse of hope entailed.'

3.10.3 The Writer –His Life and Works:

William Wordsworth was born on 7th April, 1770 at Cockermouth. His sister, Dorothy was born the next year, in the month of September, 1771. The young Wordsworth lost his mother Ann in 1778. In 1779 Wordsworth was admitted into the Hawkshead Grammar School. During his schooling there, he stayed in the house of Hugh and Ann Tyson. Wordsworth lost his father in December 1783.

Wordsworth's first ever efforts as a poet as recorded in literary history date back to 1785-86. Lines written as a school exercise at Hawkshead (1785) and The vale of Esthwaite constitute this preliminary exertion. The first ever publication of Wordsworth's poem is however, said to be Sonnet, on Seeing Miss Helena Maria (1787).

In October 1787, Wordsworth joined St. John's college, Cambridge. In 1790, he went for a walking tour in France and Switzerland with Robert Jones. He came back to London, but in November, 1791, he returned to France, once again. The zeal of revolution in France deeply affected him During his visit to France he developed a love affair with Annette William. A daughter was born to them in 1792. The poet however returned to England, leaving his darling and daughter, behind. Wordsworth had to search for his livelihood, now. In 1795 Wordsworth came into contact with William Godwin, Coleridge and Robert Southey, a contact which was destined to make an indelible impact on his career and personality in the years to come.

1798 proved to be an year of achievements for the poet. His poems were published –as Lyrical Ballads. The poet left for Germany in the company of Dorothy and Coleridge. The Prelude is said to have its beginnings in verses composed during this period. In 1800, a second edition of Lyrical Ballads was published.

In 1802 Wordsworth married Mary Hutchison. A son, John, was born to them in 1803. Efforts on The Prelude were continued and it was finally completed in 1805. in the meanwhile, a sad event punctuated the efforts of the poet. The poet's brother died by drowning.

Wordsworth read out his poem to Coleridge in 1806. In 1807 the poet came under fire from hostile critics. In 1810 a rift developed between Wordsworth and his friend Coleridge, a rift from which they could never totally recover. The death of his children Thomas and Catherine deepened the sorrow of Wordsworth.

Meanwhile the publication of the Excursion in 1814 invited more trenchant reviews by hostile critics. The first ever collected poems by Wordsworth appeared in 1815, till another enlarged edition appeared in 1820, to be followed by others in 1827, 1832 and 1836. Wordsworth suffered a greater loss in the form of the death of his friend Coleridge in 1834.

The honour of Poet Laureate was conferred on Wordsworth, after the death of Southey in 1843. Wordsworth breathed his last on 23rd April 1850. His great work The Prelude was published posthumously by his wife with the title by which the readers of poem know it, now.

3.10.4 Analysis of the text:

The poet greets the gentle breeze as a welcome messenger. The city has been a prison-like place, as opposed to outskirts full of green fields from which gentle breeze blows. Once out of the city limits, the poet is a free creature and wonders in what valley or grove he should reside. The whole world appears to be his and his guide, merely a wandering cloud. He seems to be seized by intuitive impulses. While the weary routine seems to interfere with and drive away his natural instincts, his exposure to the gentle breeze seems to drive away all such feelings from him. He is now blessed with a glorious prospect, the prospect of peace and undisturbed delight. He has only to decide which path he should take, - a road, a path way through open field or the watery path of the flowing river.

Nothing delights the poet more than the freedom he has for months to come, to choose and dedicate himself to what he desires to perform. He can drink water from the flowing streams, pluck herbs or fresh fruits from nature's bounty. More significantly, he feels a creative urge from within, which seems to correspond to the gentle breeze blowing outside. He describes this as a creative breeze and a vital breeze which becomes magnified like a tempest. The poet can recognize its onset as it puts an end to a long period of hibernation, and leading one to the 'hope/ of active days, of dignity and thought,..' It confers on the poet courage, virtue, knowledge and delight, in addition to the holy life of singers and poets.

Wordsworth goes on to narrate how he sings his joy, in verse. Poetry seems to have come to him spontaneously, and his spirit, to be dressed in a priestly robe. His voice seems to reflect the as yet unformed perceptions of his mind with its internal echo. The expressed as well as the inexpressible contribute in their own way to his optimism, 'A cheerful confidence in things to come'.

The poet does not want to stop giving expression to this passion. Hence he forges ahead slowly and casually. He prefers a green shady place for rest and also with a view to settle into a happy mood, by recognizing his thoughts. The season is autumn, and the day, quiet and moderately warm. A perfect stillness descends on the grove where he is lodged. While he chooses to visit a valley, his mind's eye presents him with a vision of 'some work of glory' to be carved by him. Couched in the lap of nature, the poet makes use of mother earth as his 'genial pillow'. He is lodged in a grove of oaks and while in a sleepy bliss, he is disturbed by the sound of an acorn that falls down from the trees.

While the poet is thus preoccupied, the sun sets and the poet, bidding a farewell to the city, continues his journey to the valley he chooses to visit. The evening looks splendid. For a while, the gentle breeze seems to sing nature's musical notes. Soon, the rhythm fades into silence. The poet is unperturbed. Like a peasant, the poet continues his journey. It is certainly a god-given respite from the bondage of a quotidian and pedestrian routine of a city-dweller. The poet has no intention to waste 'the Sabbath of that time' to what he describes it as ' a servile yoke', an avoidable bondage, the bondage of mere routine. A two-day journey brings Wordsworth to his hermitage.

The poet witnesses life in common things. The quiet and happiness he has been able to secure, lead him to congratulate himself. This is soon followed by a determined aim on the part of the poet to invent something new, or renew something old that deserved to be renewed. He wants to set at rest thoughts that have been troubling him for some time by giving them a shape, a home where they can be lodged permanently. But what occurs to him in the morning, he dismisses in the evening. He therefore requires a noble theme on which to work, but his efforts in this direction do not seem to be rewarded, at the outset.

Hence the poet feels that it would be better for him to be content with a humbler enterprise. But the poet, gentle like the lover, is guided by moods (Remember Shakespeare's comparison of a poet to a lover and a mad man). The meditative mind sits brooding like the Mother Dove before it can produce or hatch its offspring. Like the Holy Ghost whom Milton compares in Paradise Lost to a dove, the poet's mind seems to be in a state of hibernation.

The poet encourages himself by affirming that he has the equipment to perform the glorious work planned by him. Examining himself critically, the poet realizes that he has the first great gift, the gift of the vital soul! He has also the knowledge of generally valid truths which serve to help the 'living mind'. Besides, he has a fund of knowledge about miscellaneous details which can be acquired only by great labour, but which might be necessary for a poet's vocation.

Wordsworth now speaks about the probable theme for his planned work, an epic. He cannot recall to his mind, any particular or specific time, place or manners of the past which may enliven the present. Sometimes with mistaken pride, he misreads the occasional swellings of streams for a mighty ocean. In other words, events which might be fascinating in a particular period or place may not be so at other times. Romantic tales like the Arthurian legends, left untouched for his epic by Milton, visit the mind of Wordsworth, momentarily.

Wordsworth goes on to look up to Spenser's Faerie Queene for a possible source of inspiration for his theme. His reading of Plutarch and Gibbon attract him to the story of warriors like Mithridates and Odin, for a possible epic. Gibbon is said to have hinted that odin's heroism could make the subject of an epic poem. Sertorius's intention to go to the happy Isles as mentioned by Wordsworth originates from Plutarch's Lives and another work in Spanish. The story of a French gentleman who went to avenge the massacre of his countrymen by the Spanish, attracts his attention, next. Gustavus I who won freedom for Sweden from Danish tyranny; and Walllace, a Scottish hero, follow in quick succession as other possible themes for an epic. But like Milton who discards tales of mere physical heroism as inadequate for a greater theme, Wordsworth also prefers a theme dearer to his own heart, more allied to his passions and thoughts. Unfortunately at this juncture of time he has an unsubstantial and shadowy outline instead of a mighty fabric that is truly required for an epic.

Wordsworth then spells out his last and favourite aspiration as some philosophic song full of truth that has its basis in our daily lives. For a while, he seems to withdraw and postpone to wait until 'mellower years will bring a riper mind/ And clearer insight (one is reminded here of Milton's method of 'Long choosing and beginning late'). The poet is troubled daily by ambiguous desires which he does not seem to have the power of putting to execution. Prudence and circumspection result only in delay. Humility and a fear of his own limitations merely serve as a cloak to 'false activity' which threatens to cancel self-evident truth. The poet ruefully muses that it

would have been better to take a deliberate holiday, by enjoying the sight of nature and its beauties with random reflections. The ambition and zeal to compose a great work have been responsible for the conflict in his mind which is pulled in contradictory directions, not allowing the poet to settle down.

The poet is sorry of his limitations and is worried that like an ungrateful servant, he may not be able to pay back whatever he has received from nature, his teacher and his life may be reduced merely to an ungrateful though inevitable journey to the grave. The poet wonders whether it was for this that river Derwent, a beautiful stream, 'sent a voice/that flow'd along my dreams?'

Is it for this, the poet asks, that the river beautiful in its appearance and melodius in its flow, helped him compose his thoughts, while giving him a knowledge of the saintly serenity of nature? The river, originating somewhere in the mountains, flows past the towers of cockermouth and close to the house of the poet's father. Wordsworth reminisces as to how he as a child, basked in the sun, or bathed in the river, all naked, 'A naked savage, in the thunder shower'.

Wordsworth now arrives at the much-discussed and oft quoted lines of the poem. The poet says his soul had been properly nurtured by nature,-'Fair seed-time had my soul', he says, saluting the moulding influence of nature, on him. The beauty of nature as well as the fear induced in him by nature, for wrong-doing, helped him to grow into a proper adult. Even a lad of hardly nine years, the poet used to wander among the cliffs and dales for sheer pleasure. All alone, with the moon and the stars, shining over his head, the poet says he was tempted to steal a hunter's prey, his reason being overpowered by a strong desire. The deed being done however, he hears low breathings, sounds and steps following him. In spring, when he tries to steal eggs from a bird's nest by standing on a precipe, a loud wind blows with a strange utterance, the sky looks grim and the clouds seem to move towards him, threateningly. Thus while nature filled his soul with beauty, it also acted as a teacher, correcting his faltering footsteps, in the same way that a mother watches and takes care to alter the faltering footsteps of a child.

Wordsworth compares the constitution of wind to that of music. The workmanship of an invisible power acts to reconcile the discordant elements in the mind of man. It is because of this

that he, the poet, is able to lead a peaceful life, 'the calm existence', as he calls it, in spite of many miseries, 'regrets, vexations' in his mind. When nature wants to mould a human being, it acts upon the individual from his infancy gently or firmly as the occasion demands it.

One evening, the poet unties a boat from a willow tree, and races into the lake. The boat does not belong to him, nor has he obtained the permission of the owner. It was an act of stealth. At this time he was a school boy, on a holiday. The act of stealth yielded only 'troubled pleasure' as the poet characterizes the effect of his deed. The boat in its journey, looked like a swan. A living cliff seemed to follow him like a policeman going after a thief. The trembling poet returns the boat to the place where he had stolen it from, and desiring that he may not be noticed, the poet returns home, humiliated by his own guilty conscience.

The guidance and inspiration of nature continued, unmindful of time or place. In woods or valleys, in November or summer, it was the same. The young Wordsworth was undaunted by the cold nights of a frosty season, as he would go for skating, with his friends. The lines in which this is described, are characterized as 'the most energetic realization of spontaneous and communal joy in the famous but wintry description of skating'. Wordsworth addresses the agents of nature, in sky or on earth as haunting him through his boyhood days for many years, showing him sources of both delight and fear.

The poet was part of 'a noisy crew'. His joyous mood makes him conclude that the valley in which he wandered, was the most fascinating one on earth. In autumn, he used to wander through the woods. In summer he would go through rocks and pools. The poet is thrilled by these unfading recollections. Nature was to him, 'A sanctity, a safeguard, and a love!' He used to play a game of cards with his family members, by the fireside at home, while frost and a heavy rain with its loud noise like the noise of wolves, raged outside.

At first, Nature seems to have filled his mind with beautiful and grand shapes, but he does not forget other pleasures and joys. His senses prompted him 'to an intellectual charm' and to the bond of union between life and joy. Even as a child, Wordsworth visualizes unconscious communion with eternal Beauty whose manifestations he could read in lines of curling mist or 'waters colour'd by the steady clouds'.

The poet, a stranger to the sands of Westmoreland, the creeks and bays of Cumbria's limits, is yet a keen observer of its surroundings. His eye rolls across the sea water, 'mine eye has mov'd over three long leagues of shining water', gathering 'New pleasure, like a bee among flowers'. The poet was also affected by the temporary fits of joy to which the children are often subjected. He however seems to be more deeply affected by these, than the others, as the earth and nature seem to have addressed him on or shown him things worth remembering. At a young or formative age, these impressions may not appear very valuable, but as time progresses, the poet feels, these very feelings and impressions serve as a source of inspiration to impress and elevate the mind of an adult. Even if the intensity of joy tends to lose its hold with passage of time, the physical details of the objects witnessed, retain their impressions.

The poet says out of fondness for his early days, he is narrating all this. He expects Coleridge to be sympathetic to his tale, which to the others may look really tedious. Meanwhile, the poet feels that he may able to fetch inspiring thoughts from his younger years, and acquire a balance of mind. Now that he is mature, he may be able to derive benefit from the admonition he may have received from nature in his early days. As Coleridge is an understanding friend, Wordsworth hopes that he may escape from harsh judgement at his hands, if the latter chooses to retain the sweet memories of childhood.

By saying all this, the poet feels that a very good objective,- of his mind having been evived, is achieved. He feels that his path now is plain and clear. His theme is 'single and of determined bounds', in other words he knows the theme of his song or poetry and its limitations, as well. He therefore prefers this simple theme to a complex one.

3.10.5 A Brief critical evaluation of the literary text and the writer's work:

In 1798, Wordsworth expressed his intention to compose a poem, which would contain images of 'Nature, Man and Society'. It was meant to be a philosophical poem. The title contemplated at that time for the proposed poem was The Recluse. Wordsworth wanted to address the poem to his friend Coleridge as a mark of love for the latter. The Prelude was to be the introduction to the planned poem. Thus in 1798-9, Wordsworth wrote a poem about his owr

childhood and youth. The metre employed was the epic metre, the blank verse. The poem bore no title, and Coleridge is reported to have described it as 'the divine self-biography'. The poem got its title only after Wordsworth's death. It was named The Prelude posthumously. Mrs. Wordworth gave the poem its title by which readers now know it.

Wordsworth referred to the theme of the poem as being the growth of his mind, although he did not give it any specific title. It was a long poem. The labour involved in it must have been enormous, as its composition stretched over four decades. It was an epic, judged by its length, metre and theme. Credited with the 'egotistical sublime', Wordsworth himself made no secret of the fact that he spoke so much about himself in his poem, 'a thing unprecedented in literary history' as he himself confesses.

A work that began as early as 1798-9 both in its conception and execution, it came to be published only in 1850. Then it was published in fourteen books. Years later in 1926, Selincourt came out with a thirteen-book version. In 1959 it was revised for publication, by Helen Darbishire.

As David Morse rightly opines, The Prelude was an inescapable project for Wordsworth, besides being crucial to the definition of Romantic literature, by projecting the poet himself as the most important subject for poetry. Geoffrey Hartman rightly describes The Prelude as a Bildungsroman. The poem depicts the poet as a child developing into an adult under the influence and supervision of nature. Wordsworth has himself decalred, 'poetry is the image of man and nature... It is an acknowledgement of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgement the more sincere because it is not formal, but indirect,...' In his preface to the Excursion Wordsworth declares the mind of man as 'My haunt, and the main region of my song'.

The poem is thus, 'the epic of civilization, the epic of emergence of an individual consciousness out of a field of forces that includes imagination, nature, and society' (Hartman). Watson quotes Lévi-Strauss to affirm that the poem deals with 'the central problem of anthropology, viz., the passage from nature to culture'. Wordsworth's philosophy cannot be separated from his poetry, as indeed The Prelude evidences it. While Julius Hare tried to defend the practice of Wordsworth by asserting that poetry is philosophy and philosophy is poetry,

Herbert Read adds that neither (neither poetry nor philosophy) can be distinguished from his private belief.

The child Wordsworth is presented as one who 'enjoys a blessedness and freedom' of the 'primordial innocence' before the Fall, 'A naked savage, in the thunder shower'. In The Prelude, writes Watson, 'Wordsworth sees his childhood in terms of myth, the myth of paradisal happiness and its loss;...'

The main subject of The Prelude in its broadest sense, it is argued by Watson is education. Wordsworth is educated conventionally in the school and moulded by nature through the two-fold device of beauty and fear. The soul of the poet is in its evolution as portrayed by the poem. On the other hand, a critic like W.J.Harvey argues that The Prelude is a striking original poem, 'the first great modern poem' as he claims it, partly because there the poet, he argues, is in quest of his identity and partly because of what he describes it as ' a self-reflexive poem'- a poem 'which has as part of its subject the writing of the poem itself,...'

3.10.6 TO Sum Up:

Wordsworth was born in 1770 at cocker mouth. He studied in the Hawkshed Grammar school. He started writing poetry as early as 1785-6. His first publication was a sonnet, in 1787. In 1787, the poet joined St.John's college, Cambridge. A walking tour to France resulted in his admiration of the French revolution and the high hopes it evoked in the poet's mind. During this tour, he developed a short-lived affair with Annette William. The movement of Romantic revival which had its emergence and growth in Germany, France and England was marked by a love of the sylvan or rural scenario as opposed to the busy commercial transactions of the modern city life. Rousseau's call of return to nature, the philosophy of Kant and the French Revolution were the three influences that moulded the composition of Romantic poetry. Wordsworth who had high hopes on the French Revolution was soon disillusioned by the turn of events.

In 1795, Wordsworth met Godwin, Coleridge and Southey, the first two being acknowledged influences on his career as a poet. In 1798 and 1800, two editions of The Prelude were published. In 1802, the poet was married. In 1806, he read out The Prelude to Coleridge. At the outset, the poem faced a lot of hostile criticism. 1810 was a sad year for him as an

irreparable rift separated him from Coleridge. The first edition of his collected poems appeared in 1815.

In 1834, death snatched away his friend, Coleridge, from him. Wordsworth became a poet Laureate in 1843, seven years before he passed away in 1850. The Prelude was published after his death with its present title being suggested by his wife.

The origins of The Prelude date back to 1798 when Wordsworth intended a poem on 'Nature, Man and Society'. The philosophical poem was to be called The Recluse and dedicated to Colerdige. A massive epic in execution, it took four decades for it to be consolidated and published in its final form in 1850, in fourteen books. The poem deals with the stages in the growth of a poet's mind and is a spiritual autobiography. The poem is an epic of mental evolution written in blank verse. Nature emerges as the educator of the poet.

The poem starts with the poet greeting the gentle breeze as a messenger. The city limits him like a prison, while its outskirts are like heaven, with nature at its best. With a wandering cloud as his guide, he is full of natural instincts. The fact that he can drink from flowing streams, pluck herbs or fresh fruits, delights him.

Like a gentle breeze blowing outside, a creative urge drives him from within. This urge confers on the poet all that he requires to pursue a poet's vocation. Poetry comes to him spontaneously, and his spirit is dressed in a priestly garb. The poet has now a vision of 'some work of glory' to be composed by him.

The poet enjoys what looks like a god-given holiday, ' the Sabbath of that time, wandering through a valley. He is attracted by life in common things and aims to invent something new or renew something old that deserves a renewal. In the beginning, his mind does not arrive at a noble theme worth writing upon. The poet has to brood over the matter and finally he decides to write an epic. He tries to convince himself that he has the equipment necessary to do the same. Tying to locate a subject suitable for his intended epic, Wordsworth discards themes confined to mere physical heroism, reminding us of Milton's choice on similar lines.

Wordsworth thus comes to choose a philosophic song full of truth. He therefore chooses to glorify the role of Nature as his teacher in moulding his personality, and the growth of his mind

in the role of a poet. He demonstrates through The Prelude how he was influenced and 'fostered alike by beauty and fear' that nature could evoke in him from his childhood when he was 'A naked savage, in the thunder shower'

Wordsworth praises the ability of an invisible power which tends to reconcile the discordant elements in the mind of man. The poet prefers a simple theme to a complex one and expresses his wish that the poem may please his friend Coleridge to whom it is addressed.

3.10.7 Technical terms/ Literary terms/Key words/ allusions (by way of illustration)

Yon city's walls: It is pointed out that the 'city' here refers in reality to London, and not to Bristol, from where the poet sets out into the wide world to be nurtured by nature.

As the Mother Dove,
Sits brooding: a reference to the Holy Ghost, one of the Christian holy trinity. Milton refers to the same in the opening lines of Paradise Lost.

Mithridates, Odin,
Sertorius: Heroes of ancient Roman history, whose names have become legendary and have been recorded by Plutarch, the Roman historian.

That one Frenchman: Dominique de Gourges, who avenged the massacre of the French by the Spaniards.

Gustavus: a Swedish freedom fighter of the late 15th and early 16th century who liberated Sweden from the clutches of Denmark.

Wallace: a Scottish hero

Plebeian cards: a reference to the game of cards in Pope's The Rape of the Lock.

3,10.8 Sample Questions:

1. 'Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up Foster'd alike by beauty and by fear,...'
2. Justify the sub title of The Prelude as the 'Growth of a poet's mind'.
3. Write a note on the influences that moulded Wordsworth as a poet.
4. Consider The Prelude as a spiritual autobiography.

3.10.9 Suggested Reading:

- Wordsworth: The Prelude, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford University Press, London, 2nd edn., 1970).
- Stephen Gill, William Wordsworth: The Prelude (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991).
- William Wordsworth: The Prelude or The Growth of a Poet's Mind, ed. Bernard Groom (Macmillan, London, 1964).
- Geoffrey H. Hartman, The unremarkable Wordsworth (Methuen, London, 1987).
- Herbert Read, Wordsworth (Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1983- originally published by Faber & Faber, London, 1949).
- J.R.Watson : Wordsworth's Living soul: The sacred and the profane in Wordsworth's poetry (Macmillan, London, Reprint 1986).
- Stephen Gill, William Wordsworth: A Life (Clarendon Press, Oxford, Reprint 1989).
- Helen Darsbishire, The Poet Wordsworth (Clarendon Press, Oxford paperbacks 1966-first edn., 1950).
- Charles Sherry, Wordsworth's Poetry of the Imagination (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980).

Prof. T.Viswanadha Rao

Lesson - 11

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

S.T.Coleridge

Contents

4.11.1 Objective

- to introduce to the student one of the seminal texts of the Romantic movement
- to emphasize the value of love for the creatures of nature.

4.11.2 Structure of the lesson

i. General and literary background

It was the age of the Industrial Revolution in England which changed the physical appearance and the social structure of the country. New notions in psychology and metaphysics all played their part. Poetry was no longer considered as the refined and pleasing communication to educated ears. A shift in the view of nature and function of poetry proceeded gradually. There was a change from the view that poetry was essentially "imitation" of human nature to the view that poetry has for its major functions the expression of the poet's

emotion. The relation of a poem to the poet was considered more significant than its relation to the audience. Due to the influence of the political thinker Rousseau it was thought that the conventions of civilization imposed restrictions on individual personality and produced every kind of corruption and evil. This thought is reflected to some extent in William Blake's *Songs of Experience.*

The middle of the eighteenth century was a period of transition and experiment in poetic styles as mentioned earlier. The term 'romantic' has been used to designate the shift in change and attitude taking place throughout Europe in the latter part of the eighteenth century. And the shift was reflected in literature. There was sufficient poetic theory and practice to justify the use of the label 'romantic'.

People of earlier eighteenth century thought that the arts were a product of conventional urban society. They considered that the function of literature was to represent the human nature in the language of that society with its traditional culture.But in the latter part of the century, the life of men living outside the 'pale of urban gentility' became the subject matter for poetry. Wordsworth wrote: "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 coexist in a state of greater simplicity, and consequently, can be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated, ..." Dryden and Pope had insisted that the language of poetry should be based on the conversation of gentlemen; Wordsworth held that it should be based on the conversation of peasants. Between the two views lay generations of gradual exaltation of the primitive (as opposed to the polished and highly civilized) as a state peculiarly favourable to poetry.

Investigation of ballads and folk poetry as representing something genuinely poetic, looking at wilder and cruder ways of living, including low or mean aspects of life and believing that valuable human behaviour was not limited to conventions of contemporary civilization became common in the later eighteenth century. When these attitudes were applied to the writing of poetry, the result was the production of a poem of calculated simplicity or of calculated exoticism.

1. The Romantic poets sought a deeper reality beyond the conventional world of men and manners.
2. The poet was on his own drawing nourishment from his reading and imaginings.
3. This meant that each poem must create its own world and present it persuasively to the reader.
4. A poem was considered as an organic whole to be explained in terms of biology rather than poetic categories.
5. Coleridge was the first important English critic to emphasize and bring home the organic nature of form in art.
6. A poem is referred back to the poet out of whose experience it is generated, and not to the audience whom it meant to please or the naturewhich it imitates.
7. Propriety was determined by a specific poem, not by the attitudes of any social group to which it may be addressed.
8. The Romantic poet who wrote about the country, or symbolic Middle Ages, or the universe, illustrated his isolation and his desire to escape from his loneliness by finding his relationship with external nature.

ii. Life of Coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) was born at Ottery, St.Mary Devon. His father, a vicar, died when Coleridge was nine years old. The boy was sent to Christ's Hospital for education. He never knew the meaning of domestic solitude or creative love as a boy or man. He went to Jesus College, Cambridge in 1791, and 1793 but took no degree. Under the influence of Southey he became a revolutionist and the friends discussed starting of a perfect community. Coleridge was, from the beginning of his life to the end, "incapable of understanding the duty of fulfilling an obligation" although the obligation as an idea made him very eloquent. He married, but proved to be a disaster as a husband. He was inspired into writing poetry but for a very short while. He had a journalist's ability to write. He was a very eloquent speaker. His lectures on Shakespeare and other poets ought to have succeeded but for his "incapacity... to keep to time, to place or to subject". His moral strength was not considerable and his opium habit and the sea of German metaphysics engulfed him. But, Coleridge was saved from being a total failure by his friends and his own religious impulse saved him from reiterated defeat.

iii. Coleridge and Wordsworth

Coleridge's friendship with Wordsworth began in 1795. They shared some opinions which seemed to be in common. Wordsworth was more intensively creative, Coleridge was more widely discursive. Coleridge was an omnivorous reader and a tireless talker. He opened a new world to Wordsworth who had hardly gone beyond the rationalism of the eighteenth century: together they made some fruitless attempts at collaboration. Then, they decided to divide the field of poetry. Hence, subjects supernatural or romantic, fell to the share of Coleridge, while Wordsworth preferred events of everyday life in their humblest form. So Coleridge wrote *The Ancient Mariner* while Wordsworth told the tales of *Goody Blake* and *Simon Lee.*

Until Wordsworth and Coleridge met, they did not write anything of permanent value. But their poetic partnership was a short- lived one. It was due to the fact that they were poets of different essence. "The influence of the two men upon each other is most remarkable". Yet as poets they could not have written like the other.

iv. Coleridge's work

His most memorable and enduring work was written during 1797-1803 when he was in close interaction with Wordsworth. The most outstanding of Coleridge's works are *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* which appeared in *Lyrical Ballads* of 1708, *Christabel* (which was not included in the enlarged version of *Lyrical Ballods)* and *Kubla Khan.*He tried his hand at drama for which he had some talent. His play *Remorse* (1813) was inclined to the stage sentiment of the time and it had a fair run. *Zapoyla* was another drama in imitation of *The Winter's Tale*, but less successful. *Biographia Literaria* (1817) is the most important of his prose works, in which the beginning and ending are valuable. The earlier part has autobiographical value. The latter part contains some of the finest philosophical, poetic criticism in the English language. This part when read with Wordsworth's collected poems and preface of 1815, becomes immensely interesting. "In his critical judgement Coleridge was far more magnanimous to Wordsworth than Wordsworth was to him. The just enthusiasm of his praise is equalled only by the respectful delicacy of his difference; and against Wordsworth's detractors he

spoke fearlessly. As a critical appreciation of a new, contemporary and unpopular poet, *Biographia Literaria* has not been equalled."

In his *Lectures* on Shakespeare and other poets he borrowed ideas from Schlegal but he gives a new and precious view of Shakespeare. Coleridge also introduced the philosophical works of German writers to English readers. He attempted in his time to replace the mechanical Benthamite interpretation of life and nature with a view that was spiritual, indeed, a religious view. Apart from *Biographia Literaria*, and 'table talk' his prose is not very profitable. His letters help greatly in understanding his mind although it is difficult to tolerate the excess of self-accusation and self-pity in them. In spite of unsympathetic critical assessment "Coleridge remains not only the great poet of *The Ancient Mariner* but what John Stuart Mill truly called him: one of the "seminal minds" of his age.

v. General critical estimate

Lamb mentions in his famous essay "Christ's Hospital Five-and-Thirty years Ago" Coleridge as being 'amazingly erudite'. The following verse on Coleridge is an estimate by Shelley.

"You will see Coleridge – he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre and the pure
Intense irradiation of a mind.
Which, with its own internal lightnings blind
Flags wearily through darkness and despair."

However, William Morris wrote: "Coleridge was a muddle brained metaphysician, who by some strange freak of fortune turned out a few real poems among the dreary flood of inanity which was his wont. It is these real poems only which must be selected, or we burden the world with another useless book... There is no difficulty in making the selection – the difference between his poetry and his drivel is so striking."

Coleridge survives as a poet unique in inspiration although his achievement as a poet is uncertain. He was also a philosopher, critic, theologian, moralist and talker. But he was not endowed with a strong will and it is a wonder that he should have left so much rather than so little. "Excepting a few poems of his earlier years, he completed nothing he began, and began little of what he proposed."

vi. The ballad – a description

Coleridge's long poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* tells the story of an old mariner. It is a ballad. Let us examine what a ballad is. A narrative poem tells a story, The three main kinds of narrative poems are epic, metrical romance and ballad. Fundamentally a ballad is a song that tells a story. It was originally a musical accompaniment to dance. Certain basic characteristics common to ballads are,

i. the beginning is often abrupt
ii. the language is simple

iii. the story is told through dialogue and action

iv. the theme is often tragic

v. there is often a refrain and in addition

vi. it usually deals with a single episode

vii. the vents leading to the crisis are related swiftly

viii. there is minimal detail of surroundings

ix. there is a strong dramatic element

x. there is considerable intensity and immediacy in the narration

xi. the narrator is impersonal

xii. stock well tried epithets are used in the oral tradition

xiii. there is frequently incremental repetition

xiv. the single line of action and the speed of the story preclude much attempt at delineation of character

xv. imagery is sparse and simple

It is a poetic form of great antiquity.

Two kinds of ballads are in vogue, the folk or popular ballad and the literary ballad.

The ballad poet drew his materials from community life, from local and national history, from legend and folklore. His tales are usually of adventure, war love, death and the supernatural.

4.11.3 The text – in prose

Part I

There was an old mariner who was a thin man with bright eyes and gray beard who accosts the three guests who are invited to a wedding, with his story about a ship. The young man who was in a hurry to join the bridegroom's party tries to shake off the old man with curt words. But the old mariner's gaze fixes him to the spot, and he stands there listening to the mariner's story like a small child.

Under the mesmerizing influence of the bright eyed mariner he sits on a stone listening to his tale. "The ship moved out of harbour amidst noises of laughter and joy Southwards. The sun rose on the following day out of the sea on their left and set in the sea on their right. The ship with its mariners was in the deep seas where no land was visible. As they travelled southwards the sun at noon stood higher" said the old mariner. At this point the (wooden wind instrument) bassoon plays loud music as the bride enters the wedding hall preceded by the merry minstrelsy. The wedding guest beats on his chest in dismay because the old mariner has forced him to listen to his story while the marriage he has come to attend is in progress.

Suddenly the ship is caught in a storm. Caught in the fury of the strong winds the ship is driven further South. Its forepart now dipped into the sea and then its mast sloped; like a person who cowers before his enemy and runs away from him, with his head bent, the ship is driven south by the howling storm. Soon it enters the region of the south pole where it is cold, a misty region where snow falls. The crew see the high tip of an iceberg floating by- green like an emerald.

The ice all around makes crackling noises as if in a swoon. In this land of ice in which the white cliffs of icebergs cast a dull light, the crew can find no beast nor man until an albatross a great sea bird comes through the snow fog. It is received with great joy and hospitality.

The albatross is considered a bird of good omen. With its arrival the ice cracks, the ship is steered forward by a south-wind. The mariners welcome it with cries of joy as it has come for food that it has never before tasted. The large bird also comes for play at all hours and perches on the mast while the moon shines. But the ancient mariner, as he tells the story to the gallant man, looks as though he is plagued by fiends. The reason for his stricken condition being the killing of albatross by his own hand.

Part II

The ship moves forward in the seas. The sun now rises on the ship's right in the mists and sets in the sea on the left. But the sweet presence of the albatross no longer cheers the ship's crew. The shipmates cry out against the ancient mariner for killing the bird of good luck which caused the wind to blow. But when the fog clears and the sun rises brightly, the fellow mariners justify the killing of the bird which brought the fog and mists.

In clear weather they enter the Pacific Ocean. They are perhaps the very first people to enter the ocean. But suddenly the breeze drops, the sails drop while the sun – no longer friendly - burns brightly and hot at noon. For many days the ship remains still in the ocean. It looks like a painted ship on a painted ocean. This famous line of Coleridge 'water water, every where / Nor any drop to drink', shows the mariners plight in mid ocean without food supplies and without even a drop of water to quench their thirst.

The sea becomes 'corrupt' with disgusting creatures which move on its surface. Hell fires break out at night, swaggering and disturbing all around the ship. The seawaters, like witch's oil, burn emitting blue, green and white flames.

All the sailors cast accusing glances at the old mariner who killed the albatross. The sin hangs heavily round the mariner's neck, especially because of the thirst which dries their throats and makes them speechless as if choked with soot.

A spirit follows the ship – a spirit which belongs neither to the realm of heaven nor hell but to the planet earth. It is elemental, ubiquitous and invisible.

Part III

Hunger, thirst and weariness strike the crew of the ship leaving only a glaze in their eyes. The ancient mariner spots a speck on the far western horizon. It moves up and down and changes its direction. The

mariners are in no condition to weep or laugh but watch it dumbly. The thirsty mariner sucks blood from a cut on his arm to gain speech and cries that a ship is in sight. His companions, thirsty, tongues parched and lips black and baked, can merely grin in joy as they breathe in air as though it were a drink.

The strange shape of a skeleton ship appears suddenly on the west. As the sum goes down, the skeleton ship between the sun and ship casts bars on the red bright surface of the sun. The ship's sails are but gossamere like which makes the mariner wonder about it.

He sees on the skeleton ship the specter- woman Life in Death, nightmarish in appearance - yellow haired, red lipped and leprosy skinned, with Death for her companion, both casting dice for the crew of the mariner's ship. The phantom ship passes by as the specter woman cries on winning the dice. The sun sets, the stars rush out, and the night falls, thick. In the dim light of stars the moon rises in the east with a single star below. Without a sound, each ghastly and stricken face of the mariners curses the mariner with his eye. And one by one all the two hundred men on the ship drop dead. The old mariner does not know to which region their souls departed but clearly hears the souls whizzing past him from their bodies.

Part IV

Judging from his thin, brown, tall appearance, the wedding guest is afraid that the old man who spoke to him is also a spirit. The old man reassures the young man that he is not a spirit. He narrates how he was miserably and agonizingly alone and alive on that ship with two hundred men - all dead. Not a single saint is merciful and he lives like the innumerable detestable creatures of the sea. The men, the ship—everything lies in a state of decay. The old mariner tries to pray, in vain; his breath comes hoarsely as his heart remains dry as dust. The sea, the sky and the dead bodies of men oppress the mariner. Their bodies remain intact but their gaping eyes cast glances of accusation at him. For a week he endures the curse from the sightless eyes and still remains alive. He watches water snakes play by the moon light leaving a golden flash on each track. A spring of love gushes forth from his heart, he blesses the beautiful water snakes whose beauty can not be adequately described by any one. At this moment of the gush of love from his heart the heavy load of the Albatross comes off his neck and sinks into the sea.

Part V

The prayer, that has sprung from his heart brings sleep into his eyes by the grace of Mary. Asleep the mariner dreams that the buckets on the ship's deck are filled with dew and on waking up he sees rain falling. His parched throat and lips and his body are now drenched yet they still take in all the rain.

The lightness of his body makes him feel like a ghost, the thought occurs to him that he died in sleep. He hears the roaring wind shake the ship's sails. Strange sights present themselves in the sky like fire-flags which move here and there, dimming the stars in their brightness. The wind roars even more loudly raising the sails as rain pours down from a black cloud with the moon at its edge. The black cloud breaks and lightning flashes like the steep fall of a wide river from a high crag.

The roaring wind does not touch the ship but the ship now starts moving in the darkness illumined by lightning and the moon. The dead men too stir into life. It would be a strange sight even in a dream to witness

the dead men come to life. Silent, unblinking all the lifeless crew begin to work. It is a ghastly crew. The body of the mariner's nephew begins to work by his side, without uttering a word.

At this point the wedding guest grows frightened of the ancient mariner. But the old man assuages the young man's fear, stating that the dead men's bodies were activated by kindly spirits. At daybreak the crew cluster round the mast, as sweet sounds emanate from them, rise high into the sky they come back all mingled together or one by one. The mariner even hears the song of a lark and the sweet notes of little birds seem to fill the air. Sweet songs, which fill the air sometimes like the songs played on a flute and some times like an angel's songs, are heard in the silence.

Soon, the songs cease, but the sails make pleasant sounds like a running brook in spring which sings to the sleeping woods. The ship sails pushed from beneath by the kind spirit from the South Pole into the northern seas. In the afternoon the song of the sails stop as does the ship's movement. But soon the ship begins to move uneasily and then suddenly it dashes forth sending the mariner into a swoon.

The mariner lies unconscious for a long time until he hears two voices in the air speaking to each other. One voice asks the other, "by Christ, is this the man who killed the harmless albatross? The albatross lives in a realm of mist and snow and loved the ancient mariner, but the voice loved the harmless bird which was cruelly shot by the mariner. The second voice, sweet as honey, speaks kindly on behalf of the mariner that he has done penance for his crime and would do more if necessary.

Part VI

The ship sails at a great speed. One of the spirits wonders about what has caused its speed. It is not the ocean which moves the ship. The ocean looks to the moon silently and wide eyed. The moon directs it to be calm or grim. Even as the two angelic spirits speak the first voice intends to know how the ship is moving at great speed even when the sea was calm and no wind was blowing. The second voice explains that a strong wind from behind is pushing the ship forward so that before the mariner awakens from his trance the ship would be on the right course.

The mariner wakes up to a gentle weather and the ship's smooth sailing on a calm, moonlit night. But the dead men standing together on the deck cast their glittering stony looks at the mariner. The pain and the curse are still there in their eyes. The mariner finds it impossible to remove his gaze from the dead men or turn it up heavenwards to pray.

Finally the curse ends and the mariner no longer sees the terrible sights that had troubled him earlier. Soon a gentle breeze from the heavens touches his cheek, ruffles his hair like the breeze of spring in meadows. The anxious, frightened mariner understands it to be a sign of welcome. Yet the breeze leaves no trace of itself on the sea.

The ship continues to sail smoothly and swiftly and the breeze gently blows on the mariner until in a joyful moment his country with the lighthouse, hill-top, and church come into his view. The mariner, overcome with joy and also sadness too, prays for consciousness or for the sleep to continue. The moon shines on the harbour bar and the bay looks like clear glass. The church, the rock, the weather cock are all bathed in white,

bright, moonlight and steeped in silence. Many shadowy shapes in crimson colour rise from the ship. The mariner also sees the crimson shadowy shapes near the prow. And when he turns his gaze to the deck to his utter shock and surprise he sees the corpses of the crew lying flat and lifeless while a bright six-winged angel stands over each corpse. They stand as lovely light signals of arrival to the land, bright and heavenly and waving their hands silently. Their gesture in silence touches the deep core of the mariner's heart like music.

Soon the mariner hears the sounding of a boat's oars and a pilot's voice, which sends a thrill of joy into his heart, which the dead men cannot destroy. The mariner also sees the hermit of the woods in the approaching boat who sings loudly in praise of the lord; he hopes that the hermit would wash away from his heart the sin of the killing of the albatross.

Part VII

The hermit from the woods on the hill slope near the sea, prays, sings hymns loudly and also loves to talk to mariners from far off countries. The hermit and the pilot are quite surprised because they do not see any lights on the ship which has signalled to them for help. The ship's planks look twisted, the sails are worn out. The hermit is reminded of dry leaves by the side of the banks, and the young wolves eaten by the wolf as the young owl whoops, on seeing the skeletal ship. He is afraid but prompts the skiff boat to approach the ship. When the boat is by its side a strange sound is heard to emanate from beneath it. The sound strikes the ship and sends it like lead to the bottom of the sea. The sound fills the sky and sea. The old mariner remains afloat on water like a body dead for seven days. Soon the mariner finds himself with the hermit in the boat but the pilot falls into a frightened fit of unconsciousness. The hermit begins to pray. The pilot's boy goes mad, laughs and cries that he has seen devils row it.

After settling foot on land the mariner implores the hermit for relieving him from his sinful burden by listening to his confession because a state of agony seizes his body and leaves him only when he makes a confession of his story. From then the mariner begins to feel a compulsion from within to unburden his terrible story from time to time. He tells the wedding guest that in his journey from land to land he has acquired a strange power of speech and also the ability to identify the listener of his story. At that moment the vesper bell rings for the mariner to pray, the bride's maids sing in the garden, and guests make a loud uproar in the wedding hall.

The mariner is grateful to the wedding guest for listening to the tale of woe which left him bereft of god's grace on the lonely sea. He is also thankful to the young man for the walk together for praying at the church. His final words of advice convey that to love 'man and bird and beast' is the best form of prayer; to love both great and small things is also the best form of prayer to god who made them and loves them.

The bright eyed, white bearded mariner leaves the wedding guest stunned, wretched, lost and also a sadder and wiser man.

4.11.4. A Critical Analysis of the Text :

In Ancient Mariner Coleridge employs "Imaginative realism", It describes Coleridge's complex vision of life. For him, life has both its dark and lighter sides. He sees that the two are closely interwoven. He realizes

life creatively, as an organic mysterious universe. For him, art is an enhancement of life. He preserves the mystery and enchantment of life.

Coleridge's conception of "the imaginative realism" is a combination of the creation of the world of mystery and dream. It is the world of weird and the force of the supernatural that is instructed by spiritual wisdom that is the main purpose of this poem, conceived on the plan of his poet companion Wordsworth, on a walk in the Quantock Hills on November 20th, 1797 and the idea from a Mr. John Cruik Shank (who had a dream about " a person suffering from, a dire curse for the commission of some crime and a skeleton ship with figures in it"), " Ancient Mariner" is " a criticism of life." In spite of its incredible, surrealistic world of the supernatural, this poem describes to us with a concrete particularity, of its visual images. The tale of "pure suffering". Here suffering is a means of purification of sin. The poem moves in its own world of weird realism from the world of "life-in-death" to the realms of purity and transcendence of self. In 1797, Coleridge, in his full outburst of creation, conceived the first part of "Christabel", "The Ancient Mariner" and "Kubla Khan". In these poems, all his qualities of a dreamer came to the fore, he gave a concrete shape to the heterogeneous elements of his thought. Coleridge's supreme contribution to English Romantic experience is constituted by these three poems, dealing with the supernatural. "The Ancient Mariner", has "the wild magnificence" of the supernatural. In "Christabel", the whole scheme is based on the supernatural. The evil spirit who haunts the body of Geraldine and tries to ruin the innocent happiness of Christabel is in the tradition of vampires. In him we see an embodiment of evil powers from another world. Both "Kubla Khan" and "Christabel" are fragments of Coleridge's larger supernatural vision of the universe and human life. In any case, such a vision is complete in the "Ancient Mariner". As the triumph of this poem is that it presents a series of incredible evenly, in a unique disjunction of time and space, Coleridge created the supernatural world with greater credibility, proportion and human value. He humanizes the world of weird adventure with the ideas of guilt, remorse and final retribution. He realizes the world of monumental proportions of colour and sound. With a sharp vision and vivid graphicness, Coleridge is able to relate the supernatural to the familiar values of life. He stirs our elementary passions of life. Here, fear and retribution complement each other.

On the surface, it has many qualities of a surrealistic a realm. In any case, as visual impressions and auditory perceptions are proportionate and unmistakable, what is true of Physical sensations is no less true of mental states. His "Imaginative realism" is much more than an art of circumstantial details. He has "the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature". As his eye for nature is for its more subtler charms, his natural description is by no means photographic. His visual perception (even of the supernatural) is far more subtle. Unlike Wordsworth, he sought Nature's bliss in its own beauties, without any ulterior motives. He is able to see with his mind's eye, the magical associations of sound. Coleridge, with his own interest in the metaphysical abstractions, surely perceives the beauties and force of nature through his sense.

"Ancient Mariner" is a myth about " a dark and troubling crisis in the human soul." In its lowest terms, this is a tale of crime and punishment, rendered in seven sections. Each section creates emotional impression of a crime and its consequences. Coleridge describes in his myth the essential qualities, which make crime and punishment, and shows what they mean in the conscience when it is sharpened and clarified by the imagination. He goes to the heart of the matter in its universal character. The first section tells of the actual crime. He does not tell us why the Mariner kills the albatross. The Mariner might have killed the albatross in a mood of

annoyance or anger or frivolity – these are only our guesses. What matters importantly is the uncertainty of Mariner's motives and this illustrates the essential irrationality of crime. The crime might have been committed by a simple perversity of will. This is a crime against nature, against the sanctified relations of guest and host, The bird, which had been hailed in God's name " as if it had been a Christian Soul", is wantonly and recklessly killed. Coleridge was obsessed by the Neo-Platonic ideas of the brotherhood of all living things. But, the real tragedy is that the Mariner breaks a sacred law of life.

In the second section, the Marnier begins to suffer punishment for his crime against nature. Coleridge describes the physical world of nature's disturbance to the mental state of guilt of the ancient Mariner. The world, which faces the Mariner after his crime, is dead and loathsome. The ship has ceased to move and the sailors are tormented by thirst. The only moving things are the slimy creatures on the sea and the death fires which dance at night. The immediate results of crime are portrayed in the image of a universe dying of thirst and haunted by fearful phantoms. The third section shows the guilty soul of the ancient Mariner becomes conscious of what it has done and of its isolation in the world. The night in which the Mariner's companions die symbolizes the darkness in the soul. In the fourth section, this sense of solitude is elaborated. The guilty soul is cut off not only from the fellow humanity, but also from the consoling companionship of nature. When the ancient Mariner supposedly accidentally blesses the water snakes, he reestablishes relations with the work of the affections. The fifth section describes the revival of soul of the Ancient Mariner. The ship begins to move, and celestial spirits stand by the bodies of the dead men. The Marnier hears heavenly music. He heard the skylark sing. Sometimes all the birds " seemed to fill the sea and air with their sweet jargoning" when the music flows into his soul and delights him, he is on the way to recovery. But, he has to do the penance. He is ready for it. However, as the process of healing is impeded, in the sixth section, as the Mariner is haunted by the presence of dead comrades and feels that he is pursued by some fearful power of vengeance. Coleridge describes the remorse in the Mariner's mind, as remorse brings repentance and humility. And the vision of angelic forms standing by the dead sailors follows. Also, God's forgiveness follows. In the last section, the guilty man is purified of his sin and redeemed by his benediction to the slimy creatures. However, the punishment of "life-in-death" is not complete. As the Mariner confesses his guilt, Coleridge leaves it to the readers to suppose that the Mariner's sense of guilt will end only with his death. Thus, this poem is a myth of a guilty soul and its description of its redemption in clear stages from punishment.

The myth of crime and punishment provides a structure to the World of the supernatural. He uses the supernatural for its intimations of his/her destiny and man's relationship with other aspects of Nature. Through the supernatural reality, he made his reader to appreciate the remoter mysteries of the universe. He invests the impressions of dreams with emotional significance. On the surface, it shows many qualities of dream. It moves in abrupt stages, each with its own single character. Its visual impressions are remarkably brilliant and absorbing. Its emotional impact changes rapidly. Though as in a dream, events move in an apparently disorderly way, all the events within "the dream" of this poem have an organic unity. "The Ancient Mariner" is not a phantasmagoria of unconnected events but a coherent whole, which, by exploiting our acquaintance with dreams, has its own causal relations, between events and lives in its own right as something intelligible and satisfying". In this poem, Coleridge's aim is " to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." Each action and each situation is presented in a concrete form in which the details are selected for their appeal to common experience. Thus, Coleridge shows "imaginative realism". For however unnatural the

events may be, they are formed from familiar to make a direct and natural appeal. Though he appeals to our experience of dreams, he so uses it as to present something, which is more solid and more reasonable and more haunting than the most haunting dreams. He uses the world of dreams to make the experience of the poem familiar to us. At every step, to make the dreaming world real both for the eye and for the emotion in the course of all these events of unpredictable quality, nature is unaffected. Nature makes an objective presence in the poem. Nature may break into more violent moods; yet it is itself. As Coleridge sketches a storm in these words:

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and Fro, any in and out,
The war stars danced between.

Each detail in the description of this dream comes from the known world and gives it a firm background to the accompanying supernatural events. This surrealistic detail of violent colour and auditory patterns provide the dramatic context for the men, though the Mariner and his comrades are hardly portrayed as characters. They lack a clear sense of personality. They are more human types, without any identifiable individuality. Their experiences are universal to anybody under those circumstances. They could not "speak, no more than if (they) had been choked with soot". Coleridge describes the relief of life with great economy of effort and visual power. He describes the physical sensations, with abiding clarity and effect:

My lips were wet, my throat was cold.
My garments all were dark;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

Equally powerfully, Coleridge evokes the mental states by the use of imagination. The Mariner is in a fearful condition alone in a ship, surrounded by the dead bodies of his comrades. His utter helplessness and solitude are suggested by these lines:

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide seal.
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The Mariner feels abandoned by God and man and is faced with the fear of his tormented soul. Finally, when the ship at last comes to land, the Mariner sees angels standing by the dead bodies and fees an infinite relief. The silence of the celestial delight fills his mind with hope and joy:

No voice; but oh! The silence sank

Like music on my heart.

Coleridge evokes the feelings of extremes of despair and joy as the poem moves between such extremes with a certain spaciousness and grandeur and reflects through its variations the light and the shadow of human life.

The voyage of the Mariner from England to the Southern Pacific, from the known to the unknown, from the familiar to the impossible is described in poetry of enchanting beauty. The sea as the poetic medium of evocation of feelings is rendered in all its grandeur and inscrutable mystery. There is nothing fundamentally strange in the silence of the sea. When dreadful and unnatural things happen, the turbulence of the sea symbolizes the disturbed emotions in the Mariner. When the albatross first begins to be avenged, the sea changes its appearance and horrible things are seen on it. There were slimy things crawling with legs upon the slimy sea. It is a world of hallucination in incredible proportions, but made real. There is both poignance and bewilderment in the setting. Here, Coleridge combines exactness with economy of description. When the dead men stir and begin to do again in death what they used to do in life, Coleridge describes the weird situations in evocative, near hallucinatory images.

Coleridge's " imaginative realism" has special form of poetry. He derives richer and more luxurious pleasure. He prefers to enjoy nature's bounties for their own sake without any ulterior purpose. He is able to evoke with mind's eye scenes of monumental proportions with minimum, economy of words. He also evokes the magical associations of sound. With his interest in metaphysical abstractions, he used nature to give colour and music solidity and perspective to his creations.

In creating " The Ancient Mariner", Coleridge obeyed the peculiar and paradoxical nature of his genius. In him, as there is an uneasy blending of the poet and the metaphysician, his three great poems are poems in their own colour and imagination, without philosophical interest. Like Blake, he saw strange powers behind the visible world and believed than men were moved and directed by them. Where Wordsworth found in a vision, Coleridge found in the supernatural. He was both fascinated by the unknown and in some sense afraid of it. This helped him to make "The Ancient Mariner". It gave him the thrill of excitement which he needed before he could concentrate his mind on a subject and through it he sharpened his vision and purified his mind of many disturbing and distracting elements. In this poem, Coleridge emphasizes the state of man "between persecuting horrors and enchanting beauties". In this poem, he put most of himself into it and spoke most fully from his inner being. He creates the brilliant reality within the poem from the prophetic insight into himself. According to Prof Grierson, this poem has an "the magic and music..... that has not flowed since Shakespeare wrote Tempest".

4. 11. 5. Critical opinion

David Daiches writes: "The Ancient Mariner" opens with a ballad-like directness to introduce the Mariner himself... buttonholing a wedding guest and keeping him from joining the wedding feast by the strange and gripping tale he tells. The Mariner's narrative begins with cheerfulness, sociability and normality... But as the narrative proceeds the events become more strange and tone both ominous and exciting:". In the region of

the South Pole which is "white and frozen atmosphere – where the ice is both dismal and beautiful, ... the albatross appears and follows the ship, a bird of good omen... The Mariner's wanton shooting of the bird is of course the crisis of the action... a violation of a deep natural sanctity... how the curse fell... and...at last how it was mitigated. The Mariner's shipmates take no moral responsibility for anything... at first blame him... and then praise him." They all die only the Mariner remains alive and alone on the vast sea. Then a change comes he is able to pray, the curse is removed but it is not totally cleared and the ship reaches its home port. The mariner asks the hermit to shrieve him. "The total moral of the poem, is of course, much more complex. It is clear that the Mariner's killing of the albatross violated a fundamental principle in nature, and he had to pay for it.... The full meaning of the poem escapes any schematic formulation."

4. 11. 6. Let us some up

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner is a ballad of beauty, power and moral substance. The theme of sin and expiation centres round the idea of equality of all life -human, animal or bird. It is woven into a story of sea adventure the goal of which is undefined. A host of supernatural phenomenon, hostile and friendly, are part of the narrative. The bizarre, the incredible and the wonderful are beautifully woven into the story. And finally, the whole story is placed into the dramatic context of the mariner accosting a young man for unburdening a long past event at a wedding. The *Rime* with its supernatural and natural phenomena— such as phantom ship, manning of the ship by dead crew, survival of the mariner alone while two hundred of his maters die, kindly seraphs etc certainly calls for a 'willing suspension of disbelief'. It is a story which takes place 'outside the pale of urban gentility', in the lap of nature.

4.11.7. Glossary

loon	a silly or foolish person;
Kirk	a church
Bassoon	a large bass wood wind instrument of the oboe family
Clifts	same as cliff
Ken	to cause to know, to know and recognise at a distance
Swound	give a feeling of fainting
Vespers	evening service generally
Averred	to declare to be true
Deep	sea
Slimy	disgusting
Rout	disturbances
Wist	to know

Tacked	sound of a sharp tap
Veered	change direction
Hollo	a shout of encouragement or to call attention
Gossameres	any very thin material
Boards	supply of food
Prow	fore part of the ship
Skiff-boat	a light, small boat
Keel	the part of a ship which support the whole frame
Stern	hind part of a vessel
Harbour bar	Sand bank at a harbour's mouth
Ivy tod	a bush of ivy
Shrieve	to disburden by confession
Corse	poetic form of corpse
Trow	trust
Owlet	a young owl
Sedge	a grass like plant with triangular stem and inconspicuous flowers growing typically in wet ground

Weal a red swollen mark left on the body by a blow or pressure; that which is best for some one or something.

4. 11. 8. Model questions

1. What is a ballad and identify the features which mark *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* as a ballad.
2. Write an essay on Coleridge as a romantic poet.
3. How are the principles of the Romantic Movement illustrated in *The Rime*.....
4. Narrate in your own words the story of the mariner.
5. Attempt an essay on the supernatural phenomenon in the poem.
6. Examine the moral significance of the poem.

4. 11. 9. Reference Books

David Daiches.:*A Critical History of English Literature,* Vol.IV

George Sampson : *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature,*

Master Plots of World Literature

Fifteen Poets, Oxford University Press.

The Road to Xanadu

CMBowra , Romantic imagination

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Lesson - 12

"ADONAIS" P.B. SHELLEY

Contents :

3.12.1 Objective

* to introduce the poetic genius of P.B. Shelley
* to critically study Shelley's "Adonais" to appreciate its various qualities of lyricism, pastoral elegy and poetic style, its universal qualities.

3.12.2 Life and Works of the Poet

Percy Byshee Shelley was born at Field Place in Sussex on August 4, 1792 as the eldest son of Timothy Shelley. After being taught privately by a Welsh clergyman, sought admission to the Eton Public School, where, due to his insubordination, came to be called "Shelley the Atheist". Later he joined the University College, Oxford and formed an intimate friendship with Thomas Jefferson- Hogg, who shared his abhorrence of religious dogma. He was expelled from the university, along with Hogg for their pamphlet entitled "The Necessity of Atheism". Afterwards, he loved and eloped with Miss. Harriet Westbrook and married her on August 28, 1811. He published his first work "Queen Mab" in June 1813. After the failure of his marriage due to mutual suspicion, Shelley eloped with Mary Godwin to the Continent. In 1816, they went to the Continent again. In Geneva, he met Byron for the first time. In December 1816, he married Mary.

About the time of Harriet's suicide, Shelley developed friendship with Leigh Hunt and first met Keats on February 15, 1817. It is said that Shelley was more considerate towards Keats than Keats towards him. However, Shelley and Keats decided to write each an epic within a period of six months. Thus, Shelley wrote The Revolt of Islam and Keats Endymion. Shelley left England for Italy after an attack of serious illness. He alone travelled practically all over Italy along with his family.

Shelley discovered "the surest promise of ultimate excellence" when he read Keat's Endymion.

3.12.3 Shelley as a Poet

According to Mathew Arnold, Shelley's actual life is "a vision of beauty and radiance".

Hogg was impressed by his "moral and intellectual expression. Edmund believes that there is a close relationship between Shelley's life and his art. For Arnold, Shelley is "an ineffectual angel beating in the void his luminous wings in vain. "As in his life, Shelley was "a dreamer of unrealizable dreams" and "eager for a new birth" in his art. He is a keen observer of the lovely in Man and Nature. He is a worshipper at the shrine of Reason. His poetry is the artistic version of his life. He challenged blind faith in The Necessity of Atheism. He aspired both in his life and poetry to improve the conditions of mankind. He was generous. For him loving others is an essential attribute of goodness. His proper sphere of activity is spiritual. He had a transcendental genius. According to Symonds, Shelley had contributed "a new quality to English literature a quality of ideality, freedom and spiritual audacity". He could express the material and the immaterial in terms of each other.

He shows a metaphysical bent of imagination. According to Hazlitt, Shelley is "drawn up by irresistible levity to the regions of mere speculation and fancy to the sphere of air and fire, where his delighted spirit floats in "seas of pearl and clouds of amber". He glorified the abstract. He had a special gift to transform the abstract into concrete. He shows revolutionary idealism. He attacks religion, marriage, kinship and many such traditional institutions. In Queen Mab he protested against the crimes perpetrated in the name of religion and marriage. In "The Revolt of Islam" he upheld the doctrines of liberty, and justice. It stresses equality between men and women, the power of reason to move humanity. It also denounces religious intolerence and tyranny. Prometheus unbound celebrates the victory of Good over Evil, of Love over Hate and of Freedom over Slavery. Shelley, departing from Aeschylus story of Greek mythology, frees Promethus for upholding the spirit of liberty. Prometheus is freed from celestial tyranny. For Shelley, institutions symbolized the tyrannical bondage of man to them. To him, liberty was the priceless quality of man's existence and no government or institution can supress it. In his last songs of liberty, called Hellas he describes the spirit of freedom, inspired by the Greek struggle for independence. Shelley disbelieved in kings. He desired a religion of humanity in which all the organization of men should be present.

Shelley's lyrical ecstasy is more fully manifested in his lyrics than in his longer poems. For Fransis Thomas, these lyrics offer the absolute virgin gold of song which is the scarcest among human products. For Swinburne, "he was alone, the perfect singing-god. Shelley's thoughts, his words and his deeds all sing together. For Swinburne, Shelley is "the poet beloved above all other poets, in one word, the proper word, divine. Shelley's poetic interest arises from his instinct for beauty in sound and thought and in imagery. Shelley is unequalled in his varied music of rhythms and the glory of words.

Shelley employs Nature in various ways. He describes nature in his abundant imagery in his poetic imagination. He would mould nature's objects in diverse forms in an increasingly beautiful manner. The skylark symbolizes a cloud of fire. It is an unbodied joy. It is a star of

heaven. It is a poet hidden in sight of thought. It is a rose embowered in its own green leaves. The westwind, is an enchanter, an aerial stream, a dirge, a spirit and the trumpet of a prophecy.

Shelley has myth-making power. He humanized Nature, like a Greek. Shelley has no gods and goddesses of his own, but often he assigns godly and human powers to his objects of Nature. For him, nature appeared to him as real and intense. He almost made friends with the sun and the stars, and the winds and the clouds. He discusses a deeper reality beneath the outward shapes of Nature. He sees the very life of nature. He sees her living a life of her own, which has a birth, a growth, a death, and a reincarnation into another shape. Even the lifeless earth has life in his poems. He may not attribute any spiritual quality to Nature like Wordsworth. However, he shows some quality of Pantheism. Shelley's Pantheism means that all Nature is the manifestation of a universal spirit. Keats in Adonais is made one with Nature. His voice is heard in all her music and his presence is felt in nature's manifestations. His spirit has mingled with the universal spirit. Like Wordsworth, Shelley perceives " a motion and a spirit" rolling through all things. Sometimes, he sings to Nature as his companion. He turned to nature finding no human sympathy. He addresses the skylark or the west wind as though they would understand him better.

In his lucidity of utterance and purity and richness of contemplation of the mystical intimacies of man and the universe, he is like the Greek masters. Like them, he indulges in myth-making. His images look, each, like a tale from mythology. According to Clutton-Brock, he is "rather a classical than a romantic poet". His genius is lyrical rather than narrative. He is the loftiest and the most spontaneous singer of English language. He was born to sing rather than to tell a tale. His emotion suggested its own expression. Shelley had the vision of Nature.

He "exhaled verse as a flower exhales fragrance". He was a reformer as well as a poet, uninterested in the past, mindful only of the present. In his earlier years, Godwin impressed his imagination. Two ideas, Liberty and Love dominate his imagination. For him, Revolution was a spirital awakening, the beginning of a new life. All that is evil he traced in slavery. For him, the natural development is the only development. For him, Liberty is possible in a World of Love. Love is a transcendental force, kindling all things to beauty. In all his imagination, there is the implicit belief that human race is perfectible. Man will reach the Golden Age of material and spirital happiness by understanding the fuller value of Love.

3.12.4 A critical study of "Adonais"

Shelley's "Adonais" combines lyrical ecstasy with the quality of universal meditation of nature of human existence and the joy of God's creation. Structurally, the poem has two distinct parts, one following the Greek models and the other the poet's own genius. While the first part describes "death, sorrow and the past", the latter deals with "immortality, joy and the ectayrapture of things that can not pass away. While the first part describes the ancient from, the second part expresses "a highly spiritualized modern thought". The transition of the poem's mood from the near

pathos of a personal sorrow to one of celebration of the joy of Creation occurs at the thirty-eighth stanza. This transition from the pastoral to the metaphysical appears natural. According to E.W. Edmonds, Shelley, like Milton, has transmuted the ancient pastoral form into a magnificent modern poem. If in the case of Milton, he transformed the death of Lycidas to describe the triumph of Puritanism, in the case of Shelley, he has created the world of the Victory of Love, out of the death of Adonais. For Shelley, Love conquers Death.

Thus, there are some similarities in form and mood between Milton's "Lydidas" and "Adonais", Both in their pastoral quality and mood of sorrow. In his letter to the publisher, Ollier on September 25, 1821, Shelley expresses his interest in writing the poem, as to describe "the image of (his) regret and honour for poor Keats". In another letter to his friend Gisborne, he wrote that it was his favourite theme to give an account of the memory of keats was "a poet of great genius". According to Shelley, he was 'dipped his pen in consuming fire for his destroyers." The personal grief of Shelley is unmistakable in the poem, in such lines as these :

But now thy youngest, dearest one has perished,
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished.

Shelley's personal agony is deep and abiding :

Ah, woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year

Even spring season promises no revival of his spirit :

Alas that all we loved of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal!

Shelley shows his disapproval for the Fateh of Keats in the attacks of his critics. Here, Shelley writes with all the force of his personality. He knew the sting Keats must have felt when he says thus :

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my heart?
The hopes are gone before : from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldsst now depart!

However, according to W.H.Rossetti, Shelley's choice of pastoral form might have hampered his "plain and self-consistent expression of his real feeling towards Keat's critics.

The elegy is cast in the pastoral form like Sponser's "Aetrophel" written on the death of Sir Phlip Sidnev. and Milton's Lvcidas. written on the death of Edward King. However, Shelley modelled

his poem on the Greek poet Bion's "Lament of Aphrodite for Adonais" and Bion's friend Moschus's "Dirge for Bion (Epitaphium Bionis). Shelley employs the classical machinery like Milton. He represents Keats as one of a long series of poets, all children of the same mother, Urania. The opening lines are remuniscent of Bion and the Greek pastoral poet, Theocritus. Though the poem has a pastoral tone, with its shepherds and frocks and country atmosphere, the references to them are not so frequent as in Lycidas. They appear in the first stanzas, there is no pastoral reference at all, as it appears only in the ninth stanza, when Shelley speaks of the thick Dreams, as Keat's Flocks, "whom near the living streams of his young spirit he fed". This pastoral mood continues upto the seventeenth stanza and it suddenly disappears afterwards. It begins again, though superbly this time, in the thirtieth stanza, when the Mountain shepherds come. They engage our attention for the next six stanzas, as they are the loveliest in the whole poem in their beautiful blending of fact and fiction. According to Stephen Gwynn, we reach the heart of the inspiration in the stanzas that tell of those other poets who mingled their grief over the grave-Byron, more and Shelley himself. After this, as the pastoral convention disappears, according to Symonds, the poem reaches its heights of joy and delight.

"Adonais" also has metaphysical richness. The second part of the poem is concerned with this question :

Where are we, and why are we? Of what scene
The actors or spectators?

Here Shelley breaks away from Bion and Moschus to pursue his own solitary way into the realms of the unknown pursue. Thus, in the second part of the poem, in "the magnificent peroration", he considers nature of the human soul, the possible origin of man's life and the higher significance of death. He describes soul as deathless, in these words :

Dust to the dust : but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must grow
Through time and change unquenchable the same.

Shelley here thus propounds a pantheistic idea, that Keat's soul after liberation from the body has become one with Nature. It is "spreading itself that power may move/which has withdrawn his being to its own". This sense of Power expresses Shelley's approach to God. Without expressing faith in Him, he believes that Power is heavenly in its essence, that it is a spark from eternity. We are the living symbols of the heavenly beauty in which all things work and move. We are imprisoned from sometime in our life in mortal flesh. Ultimately we return to where we come, that is Death. For Shelley Death is not an ugly reality, as it is waking from the dream of life :

We decay

Like corpses in a charmel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day.

Death restores us to life eternal, freeing us from "envy and calamity and hate and pain/ And that unrest which men miscall delight".

Thus, Adonais "lives, he wakes-'tis Death dead, not he'. Death is the liberator of the soul. It is the spark the fire of true life. Death unites us with the great spirit of the universe. It annihilates the work of time.

Though Shelley believes that Death is a union of the spirit of the universe, he is not an atheist, nor does he conform to any particular religious faith. In all the five of his poetic imagination, Shelley believes in the power of the spiritual over the material. As it is his main preoccupation in all his poetry, "Adonais" also describes the power of the immortality in the everlasting music of the poem. However, for Francis Thompson, the poem lacks Christian faith and Christian hope.

Shelley's metaphysical inclinations are also noticeable here. As to the question, "Whence we are, and why are we? Of what scene/The actors or spectators?" he considers the nature of human soul, possible origin of man's life and the higher significance of death. For him, soul is deathless. He believed that "the pure spirit shall flow/Back to the burning fountain whence it came". It is "a portion of the Eternal". As it glows "through time and change," it is "unquenchably the same". He believes in the Pantheistic idea to say that Keats's soul after liberation has become one with Nature. Keats's soul is heard in Nature's sounds and sights. There is a Power, which weilds the world with never wearied love" and "sustains it beneath and kindles it above". For Shelley, this Power is, perhaps, a belief in God. For him, life is heavenly in its essence, as it is a spark from eternity. That original essence or benediction burns in some manner in every human soul. We are the living symbols of that heavenly beauty, though we are imprisoned in this mortal flesh, for a while, in the form of human life and human body. Ultimately, we return to that eternal source of that Power. From where we came, Death being the way for such a transcendence. Therefore, form, Death, in its metphysical connotation, is a "Waking from the dreams of life". Death restores us to life eternal, freeing us from "That unrest which men miscall deligh". Therefore, Adonais "lives and wakes" in death. Thus, death is the "the liberator of the soul, the key to all mystery. Death is that spark that lights the fire of true life. It makes us one with the great spirit of the universe, clothes it with eternity. According to Edmund in his work, Shelley and His Poetry, Shelley describes the triumph of spiritual over the material. In Adonais, we have the fullest expression of this idea. For Francis Thompson, the poem lacks the element of Christian hope. However, there is this Pantheistic consolation through the realisation of the immorality of the soul in Nature's process.

According to Shelley, Adonais is "a highly wrought piece of art" and this is the least imperfect

of his compositions. For Symonds, this elegy is equalled only by Lycidas. For Thompson, this is the greatest of the elegies, wherein Shelley "shed petals of his lovely fancy giving the slain bird a silken burial". In English language, only Lycidas competes with Adonais. For Clutton-Brock, Adonais is "the most perfect poem on only length" that Shelley ever wrote, as it combines music with abstract ideas. It is as perfect in form as in matter. For Sidney Calvin, this elegy is unsurpassed in literature, with its "beautifiul images and "the irresistible current and thrilling modulation of its verse. "Its" strain of transcendental consolation for mortal loss contains the most lucid expression of Shelley's philosophy. Keats moved to Italy, (as his health declined). However, he declined Shelley's invitation to stay with him in Italy, as according to Clutton-Brock he did not want to be thought a parasite of Shelley. Keat's Endymion having been violently attacked in the Quarterly Review, information, which was however without any foundation, seems to have reached Shelley that he was thrown into a deadful state of mind", bordering on insanity, in which he even thought of committing suicide. Shelley believed Keats's fatal disease to be the direct consequence of the Quarterly attack. Keats reached Naples in October 1820 and moved on to Rome about the middle of November, where he died on February 23, 1821. And Shelley died in a boat accident along William. His dead body was found on the shore on July 18.

The poem opens in the manner of Bion's Lament for Adonais. Urania is substitute for Aphrodite in Bion. Urania is the Muse of Astronomy. Urania is also known as Aphrodite. As the heavenly Aphrodite she represents spiritual or intellectual aspiration, the love of abstract beauty or the divine element in art. She may be the mother of Adonais. It is the mother who mourns the loss of her son. The first mourner is the Hour and he summons other hours to keep him company in his grief. As Adonais was killed, "pierced by the shaft which flies in darkness" (implying here that Keats was the unjustified victim of the savage criticism of "Endymion" in the Quarterly Review). Heath has made Keats "a portion of that loneliness which once he made more lovely". Keats is compared to a pale flower, cherished by some sad maiden. With implied references to Milton, also Homer and Dante. There were poets who had been struck down by the wrath of man or God. Keats died in Rome and he lies in peace, in the shadow of Death, unaffected by the corruption of the world.

The living Dreams mourn him, with a pastoral quality. These Dreams were his flocks whom Keats fed near the living streams of his young spirit. Desires and Adorations, Persuations, Destinies, Splendours and Grooms and Hope and Fears and Sorrow and Pleasure are his next group of mourners. Then Morning, Thunder, Ocean and Winds mourn him. Echo sists silent among the mountains and feeds her grief on his song. The Spring is wild with grief. Keats was dear both to Spring and Autumn. England mourns Keats more melodiously than the nightingale mourns for lost mate and more passionately than the eagle mourns here young ones. The curse of Cain is invoked on the head of the savage critic who was responsible for the death of Keats. Even as Winter disappears and Spring returns, the mourner's grief is continued. The quickening impulse of Nature's life appears to mock at Death. He perished "like a pale flower" cherished by some sad maiden". He bought "a grave among the eternal" with the price of the purest breath. Shelley in a revealing images

describes Keat's death, as the extinction of "an intense atom". Uranus would have joined him in death, but she is chained to time. Shelley wishes that Keats had not provoked the savage critic. The critics are compared to hearded wolves and vultures. Here Byron is Apollo the Python Slayer. The mountain Shepherds are the contemporary poets. Byron is the pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame is like an "enduring monument" came with songs in sorrow. Thomas Moore, Ireland's "Sweetest lyrist" song the saddest song. Shelley, who, "a phantom among men" and companionless and as the "last cloud of an expiring storm" follows as the next mourner. Here Shelley is restless. He pursued "his own thoughts along the rugged way". He weeps his own fate in that of Keats and to Urania, he reveals his brow like Cain's or Christ's. Leigh Hunt is the next mourner.

In the intensely passionate image, Shelley describes Leigh Hunt, who tried "to scarce uplift the weight of the superincumbent hour". When Keats was on the throngs of death, Leigh Hunt witnessed the "dying lamp", "a falling shower", "a breaking billow". The killing sun smiles brightly "on the withering flower". The life can burn in blood while the heart may break. Shelley's description of Keat's death is rendered thus.

From now onwards the theme of immortality follows. Keats is now a part of its Eternal. He is far from "these carrion-kites" of critics. He is now "the pure spirit". He is back to the burning fountain "from where he has come. He is a portion of the Eternal", which glows through time and change". It is unquenchably the same. Keats has "awakened from the dream of life". He has lived beyond the mortal into the immortal. Envy and columny and hatae and pain will not touch him. He is with unrest. He is secure from the "world's contagion". As Death is dead, Keat's spirit is immortal. Now, Nature is also rejuvanated. Every thing is fresh, as there are "joyous stars, which smile on its despair". Keats is united with Nature Pantheistically. Everywhere Keat's voice is heard "in light, from herb and stone. It is spreading its Power in every part of the universe.

In a moment of are poetic ecstasy, Shelley describes the splendours of the fragment of time which are "extinguished not". Death is a low mist, which can not dim the stars in their heights. In this moment, Shelley calls upon "to clasp the panting soul the pendulous earth". For him, Rome now is at once "the paradise, the grave, the city and the wilderness". Keats memory stands "like flame transformed into marble". Heaven's light shines forever, while earth's emhemeral shadows fly. Eternity, which is a colourless "radiance" subsumes in itself life of "a dome of many-coloured glass". Death may destroy life; but Eternity is present everywhere, in Rome's azure sky, flowers, ruins, statues, music, words". Love is a light, which "consumes the last clouds of mortality". Love is "the beauty, in which all things work and move. It is that "benediction which the eclipsing curse of birth can quench not". The soul of Adonais invites Shelley "like a star, from the adobe where the Eternal are". The poet is taken aloft "darkly, fearfully afar". While burning through "the inmost veil of heaven", Shelley seeks a union with the soul of Adonais. Thus, this elegy begins with the description of personal sorrow through the medium of Death and finally ends with the celebration of unity of Shelley's imagination Pantheistically with Nature's spirit and the soul of Keats.

Adonais is a pastoral elegy, in which Shelley's passionate grief is expressed in every line. Shelley's fascination for nature in this elegy. Nature appears in Adonais in may ways. First he uses Nature for its charm and immense beauty. He describes with a rare poetic beauty the charm of the Italian sky, the winds and flowers, the fountains, and the mountains, the birds and stars. More particularly, he draws natural images and symbols with a striking lucidity and abiding perfection. For example, "death is a low mist which cannot blot the brightness it may veil"; and "so long as fire outlives the parent spark / Rose robed in dazzling immortality". Natural symbols also have their metaphysical significance; the one remains, the many change and pass; Heaven's light for ever shines, earth, shadows fly. Life is like a many coloured glass".

Shelley's commendable mastery over images in well known. He evokes poetic states of mind through these images. He draws a majority of his images from Nature. His rich use of images in Adonais are both functional and organic to the poem. His natural images have intrinsic mystical quality. For example the poem ends with these words, "the soul of Adonais, like a star / beacons from the abode where the Eternal are". There is also a growth in their form and spirit in his use of images in the poem. First they are decorative and functional to evoke a particular meaning. For example, Keats was like "a; pale flower by some sad maiden cherished". Keats lies dead there "like a dew upon a sleeping flower". He is a "lost angel of a ruined paradise". Keats's spirit was like the "Iron nightingale". In a revealing image, Shelley describes Keats's death as "the intense atom glows a moment, then is quenched in a most cold response.

From these natural images of profuse beauty and meaning, Shelley's images acquire a celestial purpose. "The One remains, the many change and pass". He says further : "Heaven's light for ever shines, earth's shadows fly." Life like a dome of many coloured glass, stains the white radiance of eternity". The poem's mystical intimacies are clear. Shelley declares thus "Adonais calls ! Oh hasten thither! No more let life divide what death can join together". In all these cases Nature appears in its spirit and mind in eternalizing Shelley's grieving mind. Spring appears as autumn. The voiceless mountains, fountains, amorous birds, hyacinth and narcissus, the torn nightingale, and eagle are all evocative symols of Nature externalizing Shelley's sorrow, which is, in reality, universal sorrow.

Adonais also shows Shelley's mystical contemplation. The poem in its essential purpose is about the trascendental union of Keats's self with Shelley's poetic self. Shelley believes that there is an all pervading Power in the universe. It is Omnipresent. All things live and move and have their being in this all-pervading Spirit. It may be called Light or Beauty. It is "that Light whose smile kindles the universe. That Beauty in which all things work and move". Shelley call this universal lover as Light, Beauty, Love and Lovelines, and so on. This Universal Spirit is both immanent and transcendental. This power sustains the world from beneath and kindles it above. It is resplendent and emitting light and radiance. It is eternal and immutable. It is the "Beauty in which all things work and move". In Adonais, Shelley presents a monistic conception. He presents the Universal Soul as

the One, which endures, while the manifold appearances of the universe change. The One is a synthesis of all aesthetic, moral and metaphysical ideals, like beauty, wisdom, and power. The One includes intellectual Beauty, Intellectual Love and Intellectual Freedom. The function of this universal Power is creation, as it shapes and moulds matter according to an ideal pattern.

Shelley's mystical ideas are manifested on such occasions as when he compares life with a dome of many coloured glass which does not allow man to see Eternity. Death is a gateway for the soul's union with the Almighty. Human soul is part of the Universal Soul. After death the individual soul returns to the Universal Soul and merges in it. Death frees the individual soul from the prison of mundane and material life and leads to the identification of the individual soul with the universal soul. Here, human life is expressed as "the painted veil". It is the shadow of our night. It is a mere dream, a sleep sound and fury. Death liberates human soul from bodily bondage and reunites it with the universal spirit. Matter is also imperishable. It changes, but does not perish. Many of these concepts are Platonic.

Shelley's lyrical qualities are fully expressed in Adonais. This poem has emotional interests leading to transcendental quietness at the end. Shelley is able to sustain loftiness and emotion throughout the poem. The theme is lofty and universal, even as the emotion is highly refined. AS the poem is deeply personal, it has Shelley's stamp of personality. Adonais reveals Shelley's inner experience, his aspiration and dreams and visions. Shelley's lyrical ecstasy also has musical richness. The elegy also has lofty radiant and spontaneous diction. It also shows Shelley's mastery over the Spenserian Stanza. It is in Shelley's own words, a highly wrought piece of art". Its thought content is of a permanent value. According to Thomson, this is "One of the greatest of the English elegies". For Desmond Kings, this poem is structurally "the most coherent and technically the most polished of his longer poems".

Adonais is a complementary poem to Prometheus Unbound. Following the Sophoclean implication that "through his inner fleme, a mortal may meet the gods".

3.12.5 Critical Views

For Clutton Brock, Adonais is "the most perfect poem of any lenghth" that Shelley ever wrote; for its 'passionate eloquence" it is even superior to Lycidas. Adonais is a quest time of mystery of death. He made a discovery that death is the gateway of life. For Shelley, thoughts and emotions and the voices of the earth and sky are as real as men and women; all these have some kind of reality in Adonais as in Prometheus Unbound. Shelley like a great composer creates a world of his own with the power of his music, in which old myths sum to be new. For Harold Bloom, Adonais is a "high song of poetic self-recognition in the presence of foreshadowing death" and also "a description of poetic existence". The underlying motif of Adonais is in Prometheus Unbound, in dealing with the problem of man's finitude of death. For M.M. Bhalla, Adonais is "the great utterance of faith, an attempt to experience the vision of the eternal". For George M. Ridenour,

Adonais is the most dogmatically optimistic of Shelley's poems. Adonais deals with "the death of an elect spirit," that is the problem of the death of a saint (that is Keats here) in world where there is not surely a god. Eternity and integrity are perceived as qualities of Adonais, so that to see the world under the aspect of Adonais is to see it in relation to an "Eternal" and "One". The particular theology of the poem is an answer to the question posed by the death of Adonais. The poem is structurally the most coherent and technically the most polished of his longer poems. Keat's death gives him a fine chance to utilise his religion-the philosophy of Platonism. Both Milton and Shelley follow Theocritus with their pastoral setting and their direct expressions of sorrow. Both relieve the tension of grief by denunciation of the living. As is Milton's Lycidas the poet's concern is "with the fate of poets in the world that resists their prophecies and a nature that seems indifferent to their destruction". For A.C. Baugh-Adonais "rises into a sublime hymn to the eternal principle of Beauty" in the last part of the poem. For W.J. Long, Shelley even in his grief still preserves a sense of unreality". The whole poem is a succession of dream pictures, exquisitely beautiful such as only Shelley could imagine. For Saintsbury, Adonais is "a shrine for separate passages, each of incomparable beauty even for the author".

Love in Adonais

For Shelley, love is a heavenly passion. It is the essence and prime attribute of God Himself. It is the foundation upon which the universe is resting. It is the silent, yet irresistible attraction in the universe of nature. It displace all man-made laws in the golden age to come when individuals and communities are knit together. The whole of Prometheus Unbound is a masterly celebration of the flowering of this love, which transforms the whole universe. Shelley like Plato recognizes two types of Love, the Earthly and the Ethereal. In Shelley's poetry, we get only the Platonic love. For him, Love is a transcending principle. No other poet than Shelley felt so deeply the dynamic influence of love in shaping human destiny. None realized more utterly the significance of life without love. Shelley turns bodies to spirits by the transmuting power of Love. He is in love with the ideal, and stops to be an ideal as soon as it is realized. He makes Love the main principle in the universe. For him, Love is an aspiration for attaining the Higher and the Eternal.

Shelley's Platonism

Shelley was an ardent lover of the Greeks. His Platonic ideas can be broadly divided into four categories. They are (1) general religious and philosophic ideas (2) cosmic speculations (3) social and political ideas (4) the theory of love. In his general, religious and philosophic ideas, he conceived of a supremen power, which is at once immanent and transcendent and which moves through all the objects of Nature and human life. According to Plato, this is the governing spirit of the universe. Like Plato, Shelley was vividly conscious of the universe of the world and of all life. Like Plato, he believed that the one spirit moves through the universe giving things form and shape

according to its power. In this poem, this power appears as the One, which never alters. This spirit sometimes takes the form of Love and sometimes that of the supreme Beauty. In some other poems, this spirit takes the form of Goodness. His conception of the soul and the immortality of the soul was also Platonic in conception. Like Plato, he believed that the soul is immortal and has its pre-existence and reincarnation. Shelley like Plato, believed that the reality was hidden behind the facade of external things. Shelley expresses Platonic view in Adonais that the soul is immortal and its permeates the universe.

Like Plato, Shelley also believed that the entire universe is the evolution of an absolute intelligence. In the Hymn to Appollo, Shelley represents the Platonic view of the sun as a source of intelligence. In Prometheus, he represents the moon and the earth as living spirits endowed with the intelligence of their own. They are bound together by the force of Love.

Shelley's social and political ideas are also based on Plato's conception of the continuous struggle between the Forces of Evil and Virtue. Shelley recognized goodness under its own heel, though the ultimate success was of the spirit of goodness. In Prometheus Unbound, this dualism of the conflict between virtue and evil represented. Prometheus is the soul of man and he is the embodiment of everything that is noble and good. Like Plato, Shelley hated tyranny. Here Jupiter represents the arbitrary will.

Plato's conception of love also shaped Shelley's view of love. Plato believed that love governs all things, divine as well as human. Plato believed in the idea of Comic Love. Shelley also believed that all objects of Nature, living and non-living are linked together with a common bond of love. They all strive for a permanent union with a divine spirit. Shelley belived in the equality of all men. He also believed that poet is the unacknowledged legisator of mankind.

Shelley also shows his Platonic interests in many of his longer poems, such as Adonais. In this elegy, he manifests the Platonic assumption that the heaven is the realm of light and life and immutable realities, where as the earth is only its shadow, a mere illusion. On earth, things are mutable and decay. Only the One is eternal and immutable. In the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty the Platonic idea appears to be the constant prototype of all earthly beauties-physical, moral, religious and philosophical and artistic. Plato merges his Platonic idealism with the Godwinian idea old championship without marriage in his poem "Epipsychidion".

According to George M. Rineous (in Shelley : A Collection of Critical Essays) Adonais is a "boraque apothesis, echoing the earlier period in its blending of the sensuous and the ascetic, the ceremonial and the moral". Its hope for man is in the cleansing and directing of his imaginative powers, to create the god whose sanction it invokes. It is a more powerful and individual vision than Prometheus Unbound. Adonais offers us an optimism for our own god, as the saving of god is an inference from the nature of Adonais himself. In this poem, Shelley, commitment is to a man, rather than to system. He is fertile in evolving systems suited to man's will. He is successful in presenting

the focus of both the system and the individual.

Shelley, according to Richard Harter Fogle, in his essay, "The Abstractedness of Shelley" seeks Truth in poetry. He pursues this poetic truth by means of "creative imagination, synthetic and intutuional". The Truth toward which Shelley's poetry from first to last aspires is "a shifting, tantalizing elusive thing which he is always striving to catch and clothe in words". Shelley's poetry strives continually to express by images an absolute truth or beauty beyond the scope of imagery". According to W.B. Yeats. for Shelley a symbol is an image "that has transcended particular time and place". It "passes beyond death and becomes a living soul". According to Leone Vivante (in his essay Shelley and the Creative Principle), Shelley conceives life's radical aspects, which perpetually disclose its creative essence, as real. Thus Adonais consisting of Fifty-five Spenserian stanzas in two principal movements goes beyond the poet's lamentation for Keats into the realms of metaphysical enquiry into the nature of Death and Immortality.

3.12.6 To sum up

In this lesson, we have studied Shelley's lyrical delight, alone with his speculations into the metaphysical nature of Death.

3.12.7 Suggested Questions

1. Consider Adonais as a pastoral elegy.
2. Compare Adonais with other important elegies in English Literature.

3.12.8 Suggested Reading

G.M. Ridenour	Shelley : A Collection of Critical Essays
E.W. Edmunds	Shelley and His Poetry
O. Elton	Shelley
W.H. Abrams	English Romantic Poets.
A.T. Strong	Three Studies in Shelley
Carlos Baker	Shelley's Major Poetry : The Fabric of Vision

Prof. M. Madhusudhana Rao

Lesson - 13

Keats : The Five Odes

Contents

4.13.1. Objectives

a. To discuss briefly, the achievement of Keats as a poet of the odes.

b. To throw light on the various aspects of the poet's vision as reflected in the odes.

4.13.2. The Writer – His Life And Works

The genius of Keats is of a mysterious origin as there is neither family tradition nor heritage to support the same. He was born in a very ordinary family. His father Thomas Keats was an Ostler. His mother was Frances Jennings. Born in October, 1795, John Keats was the eldest child of his parents. His mother was an affectionate parent, described as a woman of uncommon talents. By the time Keats started going to school, his father passed away and his mother married again. As a young boy Keats was emotional but George, his brother, recollects how John Keats was characterized by a goodness of heart and a nobleness of spirit. These qualities made Keats popular, in spite of his emotional nature. As a young boy Keats won many literary prizes in the school. But strictly speaking he did not exhibit any extraordinary intellectual bent.

Even as a young boy Keats was in love with ancient mythology. However, with his mother's death in 1810, Keats went to join as an apprentice to a surgeon. Presently he started translating Aeneid. Cowden Clarke introduced the poetry of Spenser to Keats. We have it on the authority of Charles Brown who was regarded as an intimate friend of Keats, that Spenser's Faerie Queen was his first great inspiration to become a poet. Keats was also attracted by the Spenserian stanza. In the year 1816 and the subsequent year, Keats developed a desire to pursue a literary career for the rest of his life. 'On first looking in to Chapman's Homer' was a poem written by Keats at the outset of his career. He developed friendship with Leigh Hunt and Haydon during this period. Keats had occasion to meet Wordsworth, an elderly poet. He used to attend the lectures of Hazlitt, regularly. Keats started reading Paradise Lost.

Very soon, however, George, his brother, tried to emigrate to America, and as a result, the family was rendered unhappy. But the literary pursuits of Keats continued and under the influence of Milton's Paradise Lost, Keats composed Endymion.

In the year 1850, he passed his diploma examination which made him fit to work as an assistant to physicians or surgeons. He worked as a dresser. He was good at his work, but his love was all for literature. Keats was admired by Haydon as well as Leigh Hunt as having an inward look. Both appreciated the recital of poems by Keats as they felt that Keats did it with true emotion.

His epic Endymion was the story of a shepherd who loved the moon goddess. While as an epic it might not have been of the tall order like Milton's Paradise lost, it must be admitted that its grandeur consisted in passages and episodes. The myth of Endymion and Selene the moon goddess was a popular story and was the subject of poems in Greek. In England, Lily an Elizabethan writer wrote a comedy on the theme. Keats was also said to have taken some hints from Man in the Moon by Michael Drayton. The divine vision of Endymion is interpreted as a symbol of beauty and the longing of the human soul for beauty. Keats himself had said that he wrote Endymion as a trial of his powers of imagination and invention. Poetry, according to him, should surprise the reader by a fine excess and hence it is no wonder that he chose a romantic theme for his epic. Even when the verse of Keats was not technically perfect in places, it was distinguished by high musical quality. Keats remarks that he will write independently, combining judgment. The genius of poetry according to him must work out its own salvation in a man. In 1880, Keats was busy with the publication of Endymion. At this time he was also planning a future tour of Scotland with his friend Charles Brown. A change of plans however was necessitated as a result of the poet's failing health. But even the changed plans for the tour were sufficient to produce enough strain on Keats. After his tour of Scotland his health started deteriorating and the first signs of tuberculosis appeared. He returned to London, only to find that he was ruthlessly attacked by the reviews in two magazines, - Black Wood's Magazine and The Quarterly Review. The review in the Black-wood's was uncharitable in that it did not confine itself to literary analysis, but included remarks on his personality, telling him to go back to the shop and stick to 'plasters, pills and ointment boxes'. The Quarterly Review was no better than the Black Wood's Magazine. Gifford, the editor of the Quarterly Review condemned Keats and his Endymion by stating harshly that he was unable to read beyond the first canto, or to make head or tail of that This proved too much for Keats as it was combined with his own failing health and his brother Tom's ill health as well. Keats had to nurse Tom but soon, Tom breathed his last.

Keats continued his poetic pursuits and was planning to write the Hyperion. In the beginning he was not prepared to love or marry any woman. 'The Roaring of the wind is my wife and the stars are my children', he remarked. Later however, he developed a love at first sight for Miss Fanny Browne, the daughter of a widow. The girl was full of confidence and good cheer. But the outcome of Keats's love was uncertain. Keats, who was already burdened with many sorrows, was now in very low spirits. The departure of his brother George, followed by his own declining health, the death of Tom and the adverse criticism of the reviewers had an indelible psychological impact on him. Coupled with the danger of poverty, these inconveniences proved too much even for a brave character like Keats.

The best of his shorter poems were soon to be published. Isabella, a romantic love-tale, borrows its theme from Boccaccio whose story of a damsel of Messina was the inspiration of Keats's poem. Keats shifts the scene from Messina to Florence. The metre for the poem is borrowed from Italian, but it is artistically

redesigned to suit the sorrowful theme of the poem. St. Agnes' eve, another romantic poem written by Keats, is charming with the love of young man for a girl whose parents were by no means friendly with the young man's family. Besides being a fascinating piece of visual imagination, the work brings to life, even the inanimate objects. La Belle Dame Sans Merci is a short tale of horror enshrined in a fascinating though short narrative. Another narrative poem of Keats which deserves to be read is Lamia.

Besides these poems, Hyperion, planned to narrate the story of the war of the Titans with the Greek gods on Olympus, is modeled as an epic. One cannot expect to see sustained flights of imagination in this epic, but it has a grandeur of its own which recommends it to the reader.

The best work by which Keats is recognized was soon to follow in 1819. The Odes which made Keats justly famous, came to be written mostly during 1819. The Odes are free-flowing and melodious in diction. They also present the reader with a picture of Keats's evolution to maturity and reconciliation comparable to Shakespeare's evolution and fulfillment in The Tempest. The evolution of a soul in conflict to acceptance and fulfillment is a long road indeed, but this is what happens in a poetic and spiritual odyssey starting from the terrible conflict between the time-bound and the timeless, the temporal and to atemporal, the 'here' and 'there' in 'The Ode to a Nightingale'. The immortality of the bird as a paradigm, comes sharply into conflict with the sordid realties of a short-lived affair called life.

The 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' tries to seek a solution for the depredations of time. Time frozen on the urn seems to be the only way of preventing people from old age and death. Art is a means by which one can save humanity from oblivion. This is only a compromise, a reconciliatory gesture, as death will not be denied its share. Keats progresses a step further in the 'Melancholy' ode, where the co-existence of the two faces, the obverse and the converse of a coin, joy and sorrow, are recognized without fuss. The juxtaposition of the opposites, joy and sorrow, is achieved in this poem. In the very temple of delight, veiled Melancholy has her Sovran shrine. The poet realizes that there is no better solution to the enigma of life, than the acceptance of its reality. Ode to Autumn thus takes Keats to his most mature vision, acceptance and not conflict being recognized as the paradigm required for living one's life, well. One is reminded of what Shakespeare, although on a larger scale, achieves in his last and the most mature play, The Tempest.

Keats went on to write a play, Otho, but this was no match to the great and remarkable achievement of Keats in his odes. The characters in this play look like mere puppets as Sidney Colvin rightly observes,- 'Otho, a puppet type of royal dignity and fatherly affection, Rudolph of febrile passion and vacillation, Erminia of maidenly purity, Conrad and Auranthe of ambitious lust and treachery'. Only a fragment of his second historical play, King Stephen, is preserved.

From October 1819, the marks of Keats's physical decay became more manifest. But Keats continued writing. He now wanted to write a satirical fairy poem, Cap and Bells. The poem was a great success. The only redeeming feature was its rhyme scheme, the metre of the Spenserian stanza which he could manage well. He also tried to remodel Hyperion into the form of a vision. Brown, Keats' friend, tells how Keats was now reckless of his health.

In January, 1820, George Keats, his brother, was on a short visit to London. He stayed only for three weeks, but during his visit, he noticed a change in his brother, John Keats. After George left for Liverpool,

Keats had the first serious attack of Tuberculosis. He went to his friend Brown's house, and when he noticed blood coming out of his mouth, when he had to cough slightly, he told Brown, ' that drop of blood is my death warrant...' the last volume of poems which he got it published before his death was the one containing Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, Hyperion and the Odes.

With the English winter advancing, he was adviced by Doctors to change the place. He decided to leave for Italy. He and his companion Severn reached Naples and from there, they went to Rome and there Keats breathed his last in 1821.

4.13.3. Analysis of the text

Ode to a Nightingale :

The 'ode to a Nightingale' is the distilled agony of the poet, encapsulated in a poem of eight stanzas. The poem is packed with thought. Some have tried to trace the origin of the poem to the song of a real bird which Keats was supposed to have heard. They tried to name it the immediate provocation of the poem. In reality however, it is the result of a deeply-felt emotional conflict in the mind of a young writer troubled by personal tragedies of a grave nature, with so many sorrows on one side and a fatal disease on the other, offering a challenge to his fortitude. The emotional intensity pervading the poem is more than evidenced by the opening of the poem, a plain statement of sorrow in just three words, 'My heart aches' and the indecisive conclusion that closes the poem on a note of puzzling ambiguity,-' Fled is the music, do I wake or sleep?' The poet is not certain, -'was it a vision or a waking dream?'

Stanza – I:

The poem opens with three words which are self-explanatory. 'My heart aches' is how the poet begins the poem. The word ' aches' in the first line is supported by the word 'pains' in the same line. The poet is dazed and stupefied. The use of his senses is restrained and checked by a 'drowsy numbness'. Naturally, this pains him. The soporific or sleepy effect is induced in not by Hemlock, the narcotic nor even by any drug like the opium although it resembles one such effect. This momentary lapse into a state of blissful indifference is the effect of a song, the song of the nightingale. Like the souls of the dead, who in Greek mythology, drink the waters of Lethe to forget their past, the song makes Keats oblivious to his surroundings and his sorrows. Being a noble soul, the poet does not envy the bird. He knows he has his quota of sorrows, but he does not allow this to make him unhappy, too. The bird is described as light-winged as it can fly at a moment's notice, to any place. It is also described as a Dryad, a nymph of the trees. The song is even more enlivened by its setting, - a plot of beechen green. This plot is qualified as melodious as it is filled with the melody of the bird. The bird sings of summer (warmth being preferable to cold, in a country like England) in great comfort and in an unrestrained voice, in full-throated ease.

Stanza II:

The poet now aspires for a draught or sip of vintage wine, wine which acquires a good quality, being preserved for a long time in the deep bowels of the earth,-' deep-delved earth.' The wine tastes of Flora and the country green, as it is normally processed in the countryside. The poet also aspires to have a feel of the song

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and dance of the people of provence, in the southern region of France, known to be a warm place. The joy of the people there is a direct result of their being exposed to the sun, and hence it is described as 'sun burnt mirth'.

Keats now wants to have a beaker full of the wine from the south of France The wine is called Hippocrene. The wine is personified and the bubbles formed like beads are said to be winking at the brim, like a mischievous individual. The poet imagines a situation where his mouth may be stained in purple as a result of drinking. He wants to take the help of wine to leave this world of ours and disappear straight into the middle of the forest along with the bird.

The poet thus desires to leave his usual place and wants to forget the things that the bird never ran into, namely, the weariness, the fever, and the fret from which life is troubled. On earth, men listen to one another's groans born of their sorrows. It is again, on our earth, paralysis and old age shake human beings and make them, bald. Here, even the young grow pale and thin like ghosts, and die, troubled by diseases. Keats is thinking of his brother Tom, afflicted with Tuberculosis. All is sorrow here on earth, and every thought is darkened by despair. Despair has eyes of lead, dark and black. Beauty's bright eyes cannot keep their glow forever. Beauty of the physique is short-lived. Love based on physical charms, suffers similarly.

It does not take much time for Keats to realize the inadequacy of wine as a medium to reach the nightingale's domain. Bacchus, the Roman wine God, who has a chariot of leopards, cannot therefore, be his inspiration. A preferred medium of the poet in this case is the art of poetry, based on imagination, a creature with invisible wings. Human brain, whose activity is based on intellect, reason, and logic is no good in this context, as it makes men think, and thinking serves as a hindrance to quick action, as it creates a lot of confusion, ambiguity and dullness generated by endless debate and ratiocination.

Keats is now transported to the realm of the nightingale. The Moon is sitting on her throne, like a queen surrounded by her associates, the fairies whom the world knows by the name of stars. But here there is no light, but for the one blown from heaven, filtering through the thick greenery and paths full of moss.

The poet knows that there is a wide variety of flowers at his feet, but can only guess their presence through smell, as they are full of mild and delicate incense. The poet however, is able to guess that the place is full of flowers that bloom in the warmth of summer. Here is God's plenty, - hawthorn, eglantine, violets, musk rose full of dew and honey. Flies haunt the place in the summer evenings, with their buzzing. The poet listens to all this in darkness. He says that on several occasions, he wished for an easy and painless death in preference to a life full of sorrow and suffering. He says he called upon Death, softly and in poetic rhymes, to relieve him from this world. The poet is confirmed in his opinion that death is preferable to life at a time when he is full of joy and the nightingale is singing with all its heart, its soul-filling songs. Otherwise, the song which is still being sung by the nightingale has no meaning at all and he would be merely like an insensitive sod, a piece of clay.

The poet now hails the bird as immortal, and not born for death. It is the usual practice of the one generation to bid farewell to another, but the bird is timeless and defies such a necessity. The voice of the nightingale was heard by the rich and the poor, the emperor and the clown alike in the ancient past. Ruth, a damsel in sorrow, also heard the voice of the bird, when sick for home, she stood in tears on a foreign soil. It was also the voice of the nightingale that charmed magic windows to open on to the seas full of danger, in

stories of fairy lands, forlorn. (some one, a princess probably imprisoned in a tower, could have the benefit of the windows of her room open, allowing her to call for some help for her rescue)

The word 'Forlorn!' brings the poet back to reality, with a thud. It brings him back to his self, like a bell. Imagination after all, proves to be a mischievous and erring spirit and hence the poet bids farewell to the bird. The song of the nightingale now sounds to the poet, like a sorrowful song, a plaintive anthem, which fades over meadows, streams and the hill side and is finally buried deep in the neighbouring valley. The poet wonders whether he has seen a vision or was dreaming while he was awake. Now that the music is gone, the poet wonders whether he is awake or asleep. The poem thus closes with the poet, stunned into an ambiguous state.

Ode on a Grecian Urn:

Keats begins his poem by addressing the Grecian Urn as a bride, a bride of quietness. The urn does not speak, much like a shy bride. It is said to be unravished, as neither its silence nor is its newness is spoiled. It seems to be like a child adopted by silence and slow time. The urn has the ability to record rural settings and scenario, better than any historian, and hence it is described by the poet as a 'sylvan historian'. It can express sweet themes,-'flowery tales' better than any poet, can. The poet wonders as to what the legend painted on the urn, might be. He starts his game of guessing. Is it story of Gods, or is it a story about human beings, or is it about both? Is it about some story of shy maidens? Is it a mad pursuit and a struggle to escape? what are the pipes and tumbrels painted on the urn and the wild ecstasy?

The song that we hear may be really sweet, but the songs which we never heard, may be sweeter. Hence Keats requests the musicians on the urn to play the pipes. These songs may not appeal to people like the songs we normally hear but they are even more endearing. These can offer a wide and even infinite variety. There is a fair youth painted on the Urn. He is sitting beneath the trees, but he cannot stop singing. The trees painted on the urn, are not capable of shedding their leaves. They can never be bare. The lover represented on the urn desires to kiss his beloved. He seems to be progressing towards this end, but he cannot fulfill his desire. The poet asks him not to feel sorry, because she will not lose her youth. They will remain young for ever, and also remains as lovers, for ever.

The trees on the urn have branches full of leaves. They can never shed their leaves as the spring there is perennial. The man who plays on the pipe, plays songs for ever. He is not tired. He looks ever fresh. Love on the urn is always warm with expectation. It is beyond human passion. Human passion in its intensity leaves people in its fulfillment, with a worried brain and an agitated tongue, like the dry tongue of a thirsty man.

Yet another picture on the urn is the picture of some people going to take a heifer for sacrifice at some altar. The priest looks mysterious. The sacrificial heifer is adorned with garlands. The people going to the sacrifice are from a small town on the seashore. The town is so tiny that because of people leaving the town, it is silent and empty in the morning of the pious sacrifice. They cannot return to tell why the town is lonely, abandoned and desolate.

The urn is now addressed as the attic shape, because it is the 'Grecian' urn. With men and maidens painted on it, with forest branches and the grassy paths, the Grecian Urn is a silent form, as it does not speak. Like a mysterious power, it offers a teasing puzzle to people. It looks indifferent and totally unconcerned and

the poet therefore describes it as a cold pastoral. Old age may wear and waste the people on earth, but the urn remains unaffected. It seems to give a message to all mankind that 'Beauty is truth, and truth beauty', all that we know on earth, all that we need to know.

Ode to Autumn:

Keats begins the ode by describing autumn as a season of mists and also a season of ripe fruits,- 'mellow fruitfulness'. Autumn is a close friend of the maturing sun, making days, more comfortable. The season conspires with the sun in planning to load with fruits, all kinds of creepers. The trees in the cottages are full of apples, making them bend. All these fruits are ripe to the core. The gourd and the hazel shells are fattened with a sweet substance. There are more and more birds and as a result, more and more flowers full of honey. The bees thus labour under the illusion that warm days will never come to an end. The beehives are full of honey, thanks to the autumn weather.

Autumn is now personified. It is picturised as sitting casually on the floor of a granary and is noticed almost by every one amidst her store. Her hair is lifted softly by the winnowing wind. Sometimes she is also noticed, sleeping on a half-reaped farm, the sleeping being induced by the smell of poppies. Sometimes she crosses a brook with a load on her head or watches with patience, the last drops, oozing out of a cider press.

To look for the songs of spring in autumn argues an anomaly. The poet knows this. Therefore he asks the question, 'where are the songs of the spring?' and answers the same. Autumn, however, need not feel inferior. Every season has its own music, and its own charms. So there is no need for us to look for the charms of one season in another. The poet thus attains a maturity. He has travelled a long way from the conflict and doubts of the Ode to a Nightingale to the well-reasoned acceptance of the Ode to Autumn.

Keats goes on to describe the graces of an autumn evening. The sun sets softly with clouds trying to mask the sun. The farms from which crops are already reaped, are painted and suffused in a light red glow, the colour of a rose. Autumn may not be glorified by the songs of the birds, as in spring. But it has its music, the choir or chorus of small gnats. The gnats are so small and tiny that they are drifted along with the wind, sometimes. Nature in autumn is made lyrical occasionally by the bleats of lambs in a hilly background. The season is also enlivened by the musical exertions of hedge-crickets, birds like the red breast and swallows 'twittering in the skies'.

Ode on Melancholy:

Stanza I:

The poet probably addresses himself or the reader or both. One should not try to go to Lethe, he says, meaning that one should not try to hide one's sorrow or try to forget it merely by ignoring it. There is no use extracting juice from poisonous herbs and plants like wolf's bane as such an extract may only kill the individual without offering any consolation, nor should one allow his head to be touched by night shade or Rhubarb, used as a medicine. As the Yew is symbolic of death, Keats forbids one's rosary being made of yew berries, as a rosary is one on which one may count his chant or mantra for a material as well as spiritual benefit, but not for death. One should not be tempted like Proserpine, and suffer the punishment of having had to stay back in sorrow in the land of the dead, for half of one's life time, like Proserpine. The beetle which breeds in dung, or

the moth, insects of no significance, the gloomy owl and other such creatures should not be allowed to trouble people, by acting the role of a mournful psyche, for them. These should not be partners in one's sorrow. Our soul should be fully aware to the agonies as much as the ecstasies of life. The passing shades of sorrow should not be allowed to drown the wakeful soul, a soul which is not only able to recognize sorrow, but is also able to put up with it.

Stanza II:

Fits of melancholy are often sudden. They descend from the above like weeping clouds. Even flowers drop under the influence of a melancholy fit. Even hills and dales full of greenery seem to be hidden under black cover, like a shroud covering a dead body, in the month of April.

The poet asks the reader to forget his melancholy by engaging himself with deep appreciation of a rose, blooming afresh in the morning, or by looking at the variegated hues of the rainbow or the undulations of a wave, positioning himself on the sea-shore or by deeply caressing the hand of one's mistress, and looking into the matchless, unparagoned charm of her eyes.

Stanza III :

Finally Keats presents the picture of Melancholy as dwelling along with beauty. Physical beauty which is not permanent, has an ingrained element of melancholy about it all the time. Hence, Melancholy is said to dwell with beauty. Melancholy accompanies the impermanent joys of life, as well , as life itself is a passing show, a mere pageant. The mouth of the bee sips honey, but even its pleasure can not be long-lived. Not all Seasons do offer flowers full of honey, nor is the bee free from the limits imposed on its life, by time. In this world, joy and sorrow are inseparable. In what might be described as an oxymoronic state of affairs, veiled Melancholy sits in the Sanctum Sanctorum of Delight and is even ready to be worshipped there, by the priests and votaries of Delight. Even the most Bohemian and the most cheerful among men who can feel joy like the taste of a grape being felt by the palate, can not escape from the clutches of Melancholy.

His soul feels the strength of sorrow which Melancholy represents and becomes a trophy in her sorrowful armoury.

Ode to Psyche :

The poet had a dream or vision of Psyche. In that he saw cupid and psyche, the mythological pair of lovers side by side. So he begs forgiveness for having espied their privacy. The scenic setting is indeed charming. They lay in deep embrace, 'mid hushed, cool-rooted flowers,'., The poet recognizes psyche and salutes her as 'the latest born loveliest vision' of an ancient form of religion, of the Greeks. Psyche did not receive the conventional forms of worship like other deities in the Olympian hierarchy, as she belonged to a younger generation of Gods and Goddesses in Greek mythology.

The poet therefore volunteers to be her priest, build a temple for her in the untrodden region of his mind. He will decorate her temple with roses, 'with buds, bells, and stars without a name', and with all these flowers which any gardener could think of.

At night, the windows will be kept open and a torch would be he kept ready to let Cupid, come in.

4.13.4. A brief critical evaluation of the literary text and the writer's work:

Sensuousness

In a letter to Bailey in November 1817, Keats expresses his preference for a life of sensations, rather than of thoughts (' o for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts).

The odes of Keats provide the best example of the presentation of the five senses by the poet. The images in the poetry of Keats cater to the joy of the senses, - the sense of sight, touch, smell, taste, and hearing. David Masson rightly opines that 'the most obvious characteristic of Keats' poetry is certainly its abundant sensuousness'. While critics who opposed Keats, held that sensuousness is no virtue, others like Louis Mac Neice hold the view that Keats tries to obtain or achieve a vision of some kind, with its help. Grierson and Smith point out that the senses in Keats's poetry are the servants, not the masters, of his imagination.

Sensuousness in itself may not make any poet, great. But Keats does not stop at a mere physical description of the things that would give us a feel of or fulfillment of the senses. He goes a step further, and makes his sensuousness, a stepping stone for his vision and philosophy of human life. Louis Mac Neice compares him to Marlowe and Tennyson, but argues that Keats becomes a mystic or attains to the status of a mystic through the senses. Keats, according to him, is a sensuous mystic, an excellent blend of a vision that projects fulfillment on a physical plane with a realization of the permanent and the spiritual, the next step or goal. Neither sensuousness nor mysticism, taken in isolation, could help any poet to become great, he argues.

Graham Hough, another critic, observes that 'it is by the precision of sensuous imagery, bright and coloured yet rich, that he commands the response that he wants. 'The Ode to a Nightingale' provides many instances of sensuousness. The first stanza provides a picture of taste and hearing. The second stanza adds the experience through touch. The third stanza adds the sense of light. The fifth stanza gives us a sense of smell. In the first stanza of the poem, the taste of hemlock or some 'dull opiate' is suggestively ('as though') placed before us. The song of the nightingale performed in 'full-throated ease' appeals to our sense of hearing. In the second stanza the mouth is stained with the drink touching the lips. The third stanza presents a picture of 'lustrous eyes', but the luster of physical beauty cannot last long. The fifth stanza provides a delight to the nostrils, identifying our sense of smell, for, here we have flowers in abundance!

Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, the fruit-free wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast-fading violets cover'd 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.

In the 'ode to Autumn' sensuousness is employed to build a graphic picture of the beauty of autumn, a beauty of its own, with its fruits and shells, among other things:

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;.... ....

The 'ode on a Grecian Urn' provides enough material for the eye to dwell upon. There are innumerable pictures on the urn and the visual imagery of Keats is compact and comprehensive in trying to build an image:

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
of marble men and maidens overwrought,
with forest branches and the trodden weed, ...

In 'Ode on Melancholy' he exploits the sense of touch, effectively in combination with the visual images in the following:

Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

Once again in 'Ode to Psyche' we have a picture of two lovers brought before us in compact lines, packed with thought:

'Mid hushed, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;
Their arms embraced and their pinions too;
Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adiene,...

Hellenism:

Keats was described as a Greek by some critics, in terms of his literary spirit. His Ode to Psyche and better still Ode on a Grecian Urn represent his indebtedness to the Greek spirit. Among the sources that were responsible for Keats imbibing this spirit were the classical Dictionary of Lempriere, the translation of Homer by Chapman (which inspired Keats to write a whole poem) and the Elgin marbles in the British Museum.

Brooks argues that the poem 'anticipates Nietzsche's famous analysis of the Greek genius into the Dionysian and the Apollonian elements, ecstatic excitement and luminous order' in the mad pursuit of the youth, of the maiden and the sacrificial procession, both depicted on the Urn. Bowra argues that it has reference to a marble vase made by the sculptor sosibios.

As for the 'Ode to Psyche', the story of Psyche is based on the Greek legend of psyche narrated by Apuleius in his Golden Ass. The story has also become the subject of many a great work, other than Keats' ode. The legend of psyche combines in itself a pagan divinity and a symbol of great charm. Like the Greeks, Keats was also-a votary of all that was beautiful, - supernal or physical. He makes the urn utter the message of

Beauty is Truth, truth beauty, - that is all
Ye, Know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Negative capability :

In a letter to George Thomas Keats on 21st December, 1817, the poet writers, '...it struck me what quality went to form a man of achievement, especially in Literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously. I mean 'Negative capability', that is, when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable after fact and reason...

One need not be a philosopher nor does one need a doctrine to create characters or situations. Shakespeare, Keats believed, could create so many fascinating characters only because he was so objective, so impersonal as none among his characters can be specifically treated as projecting his philosophy. It is this lack of any identifiable philosophy that makes Shakespeare the great writer that he is. It is this theory of impersonality which has given a lead to writers like Eliot when in The Tradition and the Individual Talent, Eliot maintains that a poet is capable of dealing with disparate experiences and that the poet's mind, like a shred of platinum which helps in the creation of Sulphuric Acid without undergoing any chemical change, acts as a catalytic in the chemical reaction. The best example of negative capability in Keats, occurs in his 'Ode to Autumn'. He asks the question, 'Where are the songs of spring? Aye, where are they?' and answers, 'think not of them,- thou hast they music too,..'

And again in a letter to Richard Woodhouse on 27th October, 1818, Keats writes, 'As to the poetical character itself,... it is not itself – it has no self-it is everything and nothing...what shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the chameleon poet... A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in the existence, because he has no identity- he is considerably in for- and filling some other body...The poet none, no identity, he is certainty the most unpoetical of all God's creatures'.

Escapism

In his Don Juan, Byron encourages the notion of Keats having been killed by the reviewers' un charitable remarks.

'T is strange the mind, that very fiery particle,
should let itself be snuffed out by an article
(Don Juan, Canto xi)

These remarks, it is often thought rankled the heart of Keats and drove him to escapism. But this is not true, as the subsequent works, prove.

The charge that Keats is an escapist is often leveled against him based on the 'ode to a Nightingale'. The charge is also based on the pathetic life of Keats, troubled by a fatal disease, Tuberculosis which has already consumed a brother of his and was about to consume him also. The passion for Fanny Brawne coupled with financial difficulties, has only landed Keats in unenviable situation. Keats wants to forget all these personal sorrows, it is alleged, by trying to escape into the land of the nightingale which is free from the constraints as well as sorrows from which the ordinary human beings on earth are troubled.

The nightingale sings of warm summer and its comfort is evidenced by the unrestrained voice as it sings in 'Full throated ease.' Besides, it has also a remarkable setting, ' a melodious plot of beechen green.' Keats is not envious, but being 'too happy in thine happiness', desires to attain the bird-condition. Like the 'light winged Dryad' of the trees, the poet also wants to fly away into a land free from the 'wearines, the fever and fret' of this world where men sit only 'to hear each to her groan'. Mortality is the fate of the humans, and immortality, the fare of the bird. The vexed poet prefers to join the bird and enjoy the bliss, that he as a human, is denied. Anyone in his situation would have done that. But fancy cheats him and the momentary identification, the empathy or the psychological union he seeks with the bird, is broken. The music is fled and the poet is left behind, in a dazed condition.

But those who charge Keats of being an escapist, should note, that Keats does not end here. However intense may be the passionate picture of uncertainties presented in the 'Ode to a Nightingale', it should not be forgotten that he has progressed a great deal to realize an exemplary vision of acceptance, in the 'Ode to Autumn', (of which Middleton Murry says, 'Ripeness is all') passing through 'ode on a Grecian Urn' and 'Ode on Melancholy'. The poet may be compared to Prospero in The Tempest of Shakespeare. Like Prospero who forgives and forgets, making acceptance his hall mark, Keats also attains to a fulfillment of vision through the acceptance and recognition of God's design and the vicissitudes of life on earth.

Keats therefore is no escapist as he is the poet who could brush aside the thought of the songs of spring, and assert that every season, including Autumn, has songs of its own.

* * * * *

Beauty is Truth : Much discussion has centered around the statement made by the urn at the end of the 'ode on Grecian urn', in the form of a message. Earl. R. Wasserman remarks that it has 'the syntactical preciseness of a mathematical statement'. Even T.S. Eliot has condemned the message which he says ' strikes me as a serious blemish on a beautiful poem; and the reason must be either that I fail to understand it, or that it is a statement which is untrue.'

On the other hand we have Arthur Symons, telling us in The Romantic Movement in English poetry, that the statement 'is a saying not personal to Keats only. It was what Coleridge, who doubted everything else, never doubted; it characterizes Wordsworth's poetry whenever it is poetry and not prose'.

In a letter to Benjamin Bailey, on 22 November, 1817, Keats writes, 'What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth,...The imagination may be compared to Adam's dream, - he awoke and found the truth...'

The famous Endymion starts with the well-known first line:

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.

I.A. Richards has dismissed the message of the urn as meaningless, and Edmund Blunden remarks, 'In the days when it was the custom to take romantic modes of expression simply at their face value these lines were often read as the expression of profound philosophy'.

A better way to read the lines would be to read them in the context where they occur, or if we want to extend it slightly further, we may do so by placing them in perspective, with reference to the odes.

Evolution of thought in the Odes of Keats :

Although, considered as individual pieces, every ode is capable of yielding a meaning of its own, taken together, they are the projection of a vision, the poet's vision of life as it is lived with its agonies, but a solution has to be sought. In a world of impermanence, the poet desires permanence. This oxymoronic desire makes the odes, all the more fascinating.

The 'ode to a Nightingale' holds a key to the conflict in the mind of the poet. The ode is not merely a poem, but the high drama of life in a nutshell, abridged into eight stanzas of packed thought, which is deeply absorbing. The poem renders the reader breathless. The very first line contains a reference to 'aches' and 'pains' from which the poet, representing both himself and humanity at large, struggles to escape in vain. The poem is highly compact in terms of its verbal organization. 'My heart aches' is how the poem starts and goes on to add that a 'drowsy numbness pains'. Jealousy, the poet has none, as the bird and its eloquent outpouring in the form of a song represents the very opposite of what the poet, it appears, is destined to suffer on earth, where all kinds of glory are merely ephemeral, transient, and impermanent, 'Sic transit gloria mundi', -'thus passes away earthy glory' as the Latin proverb states.

Keats wants to join the bird in its land of glory and permanence. But will must be accompanied with tools, and the instrument he chooses at first is a beaker full of the drink called Hippocrene. The hot beverage, he assumes, may lead him where he wants to, but his surmise of a glorious escapade, leads him nowhere, eventually. The poet wants to drink and leave the world unseen, if only to fly away to the dense jungle to forget what the bird has never known or experienced, but which, for the poet, is a daily fare, 'The weariness, the fever and the fret' with which human life is strained, the disgust and disease which reduce men to ill-health and decay. Here, on earth, young men die a premature death, having grown pale and thin like ghosts, 'pale and spectre thin'. Keats remembers here his brother Tom, afflicted with the deadly disease of Tuberculosis. Even physical beauty and love based merely on skin-deep visual charms, do not last long in a world of transience, flux, and decay.

It does not take much time for Keats to realize that the drink can fail him, and prefers the more viable medium of poetry with its imaginative powers. For a while, he imagines he is with the bird, but his tactics only prove illusory. The poet is merely a piece of clay in comparison to the divine ecstasy of the song of the nightingale. The superiority of the bird is established. His vision is broken and he is brought back to the weary world, with a thud, -' Fled is that music:- do I wake or sleep?

But the poet cannot give up, nor is he expected to. His quest for permanence must go on. The visit of the poet to the Elgin marbles, gives him a clue to what appears like a first step to the attainment of his ideal of permanence. The world of art is capable of presenting men and matters in a state of suspended animation, even if it cannot confer permanence on the living and moving beings. Art suspends time. So the poet chooses a Grecian urn on which life with all its various forms is graphically presented. A cross-section of humanity, more cheerful than pensive, is presented on the Urn in all its intensity. The painter's brush checkmates time, if only on the urn, as in real life, a different set of values operate.

A whole town is emptied of its folk. All of them go to witness a sacrifice. The lovers continue to love and live. The bold lover comes near fulfilment, but misses it narrowly. One thing is certain. The figures on the urn are free from the trammels of passion. Passion realized on earth will only lead to more passion and leave men, high and dry, 'with a burning forehead and a parching tongue'. The urn is however, represented as indifferent to the sorrows and sufferings on earth. No wonder, Keats describes it as a 'cold pastoral!' The urn leaves a message for mankind:

> Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all
>
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

The 'Ode on Melancholy' comes out with a more pragmatic solution for facing the problem of impermanence in this world. It is the unquestioning recognition of the coexistence of joy and sorrow. No one can explain this inseparability better than Keats as he does it in the following lines;

> Ay, in the very temple of Delight
>
> Veil'd Melancholy has her sovereign shrine,...

In the 'ode to Autumn' the poet has reached a sense of maturity. The doubts in his mind are at rest, now as he has come to accept life at its face value. The poet recognizes that in this world there is substitute to acceptance. Autumn, we know, cannot boast of the melodious music of spring. But now the poet has learnt to take things as they are, and not worry about things that are not available, this acceptance makes his life happy and makes his life, full. Hence the question is answered with firmness and confidence;

> Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,...

Thus Keats progresses from negation and doubt, to affirmation and acceptance in the odes.

* * * * *

4.13.5. Let us sum up

'Those whom the Gods love, die young', so goes the Greek proverb. Great men are often the victims of premature death. History upholds this truth. Besides, exemplary suffering seems to be a part of their lives. Keats is no exception to this. Keats was afflicted with Tuberculosis at a young age. His brother died of the same disease. His passion for Fanny Brawne and financial difficulties landed him in trouble.

Keats was, however, a genius and in the words of Arnold, he would have rivalled Shakespeare, had he lived longer. The poetry of Keats is highly romantic. The odes are the best example of his poetry and are considered to be his highest achievement. From the doubts and uncertainties of the ode to a Nightingale, he traveled a long way to the ripeness of the ode to Autumn. Suffering purifies human soul and so it does in the case of Keats, too. He reaches a mature vision even at a young age much before his death.

4.13.6. Key Words/ Technical terms :

- Hemlock : we are given to understand that there are two kinds of Hemlock, one a poison and the other, a narcotic. It is the Narcotic to which Keats makes a reference in the ' Ode to a Nightingale'.
- Lethe : In classical mythology, the under world is credited with seven rivers. Lethe is one of them. It is referred to by Milton his Paradise Lost as the 'river of oblivion'. The souls of the dead on a voyage to the underworld were supposed to drink water from Lethe, and forget their earlier form and life.
- Dryad : a nymph which was said to inhabit a tree or trees.
- Proven cal : of Provence, the southern part of France. It was known for its Comparatively warm climate. It is also the land of the famous Troubadours or great poets of mediaeval France.
- Darkling : In darkness, - a poetic usage.
- Attic shape : The urn is thus described because its form is inspired by Attic or Greek sculpture and architecture.
- Psyche : A princess, the darling of cupid; figuratively, soul.
- Wolf's bane : A poisonous plant.
- Yem-berries : The fruits of Yew; used as a symbol, it stands for death.

4.13.7. Sample Questions :

a. 'O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts'-Discuss the statement of Keats with regard to his poetry and in particular, the odes.

b. Trace the evolution of thought in the major odes of Keats.

c. Do you think Keats is an escapist?

d. Consider Ode to Autumn as the most mature among the odes of Keats in terms of his vision of life.

e. What philosophy of life does the Ode on a Grecian Urn project?

4.13.8 Suggested Reading :

- John Barnard, John Keats (Cambridge University, Cambridge, Reprint, 1988).
- Christopher Ricks, Keats and Embarrassment (Clarendon Press, Oxford, Reprint 1990).
- Sidney Colvin, Keats (English Men of Letters series, Macmillan, London, 1889).
- John Keats: A Reassessment, ed. Kenneth Muir (Liver pool University Press, 1958).
- Keats: Poems and Letters, eds. Linda Cookson and Bryan Loughery (Longman Literature Guides, Essex, 1988).

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KAKINADA

Lesson - 14

ROMANTIC PROSE – A GENERAL ESSAY

Contents:

4. 14. 1. Objectives:

- to trace the development of English Romantic Prose
- to focus on the major prose works of Coleridge, Hunt, Hazlitt, Lamb and De Quincey

4. 14. 2. Back ground of the Age

Romanticism, generally speaking is the experience in terms of art of sharpened sensibilities and heightened imaginative feeling. Romanticism is an imaginative point of view that has influenced many art forms and has left its mark also on philosophy and history. Pater goes on to define the romantic character in art as consistency in "the addition of stranger ness to beauty." Further he says:" The essential elements of the romantic spirit are curiosity and the love of beauty; and it is as the accidental effect of these qualities only that it seeks the middle ages because in the overcharged atmosphere of the middle ages there are unworked sources of romantic effect, of a strange beauty to be won by strong imagination out of things unlikely or remote." Curiosity and the love of beauty are certainly integral factors in Romanticism, the one intellectual, the other emotional. Romanticism also blends a subtle sense of mystery, an exuberant intellectual curiosity and an instinct for the elemental

simplicities of life. The supreme Romantic movement in English letters was the Renascence which transformed both the English and the European life. 'Reformation' also contributed to the Romantic Revival. The dignity and importance of man as man, the glories of the world of Nature – the ideas were very popular at the end of the eighteenth century.

The revolution brought in literacy criticism by the Romantic writers is a matter of common knowledge. They transformed criticism from the cult of finding faults to the art of revealing beauties. They brought the creative imagination of the poet into the interpretation of great writers. The historical method of criticism initiated by Coleridge substituted order for chaos. It viewed the subject relatively in terms of its time and place: it put an end to the old absolute standard of criticism, in which current prejudices and standard served as the one criterion.

An instinct for the elemental simplicities of life is another characteristic noted in Romanticism both in poetry and prose of the time. Just as Bishop Percy's *Reliques* and *McPherson's Ossian* heralded in the romantic revival in poetry, so did Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto (1764) proclaimed its entrance into fiction. In 1777 Clara Reeve (1729 – 1807) published her *Champion of Virtue*, afterwards called *The Old English Baron.* Obviously inspired by Walpole's story, she thought to improve upon the original, and economized with her supernatural effects, but her story was more tedious than that of Walpole with most of his absurdities and showed less acquaintance with medieval life.

A more interesting romance than either Walpole's or Clara Reeve's had been published in 1762. This was *Longsword Earl of Salisbury,* and is really the first historical romance in our fiction. It was written by Thomas Leland, an Irish Cleric who attempted genuinely at historical detail, though not at language and customs of the time. Ann Radcliff (1764 – 1823), the lovely wife of a busy journalist was the next writer who wrote fine romances with a lively but undisciplined imagination. Her stories were published between 1789 and 1797. The elements of medievalism like monks, inquisition, disguises, intrigues, escapes, gloomy castles with a suitable language and scenery to go with could he found in her works. She mixed prevalent sentimentalism with a sensational melodrama. Her heroines are generally influenced by their scenic surrounding and get affected with the changing climatic moods and somehow remain unacceptable without a sense of humour.

William Beckford (1759 – 1844) is romancer whose imagination was derived from the works of the east. In 1782, he wrote in French an "Arabian Tale" *Vathek* satire mingles with sensation in his fictions. He was certainly a man of considerable force of intellect and brilliant imagination.

Mathew Lewis (1775 – 1818) was the lineal descendant of Mrs. Radcliff who and tried his best to excel her in mystery and sensation. In 1795, he published *The Monk* and was afterwards known as "Monk" Lewis. Magic and Witchcraft were the necessary factors for fiction to him. Lewis's acquaintance with Shelley had its impact on Mrs. Shelley's extraordinary romance *Frankenstein.* William Godwin (1756 – 1836) occupies an important place among makers of fiction. He had absorbed the principles underlying the French Revolution and aimed at reconstructing a new society. His social writings are so matter of fact that it comes as a surprise in *The Adventures of Caleb William* to find a writer of such genuine imagination power. His subsequent novels. St. Leon (1799) and Fleetwood (1804), reveal his skill as a story teller in much better way.

The didactic note persists through the tales of Mrs. Opic (1769 – 1853) who wrote A*deline Moubray*, or the Mother and Daughter (1804) and Mrs Inchbald's more artistic work, *Simple Story* (1791) and Nature and Art (1796) the sudden passion for educational fiction aroused by Roussean's *Emile* also found expression in many decorous but duce stories for children, including Thomas Day's *Sandford and Mertous*. There was Scott who was preceded by others in historical fictions.

In 1783 Sophia wrote about the days of Queen Elizabeth, published later in parts in 1786. James White's *Adventures of John of Gaunt* and Earl *Stronglsow* were more adventurous in nature. Jane Porter (1776 – 1850) wrote Scottish Chiefs (1810) – an excellent melodrama romance dealing with the time of Wallace and Thaddens of Warsaw (1803), dealing with the partition of Poland. Joseph Strutt left behind her a half-finished romance, later completed by Scott and published in 1808. It reveals more knowledge of medieval England than previous writers had shown and his picture of the contemporary manners and customs – the pageants, the may games and social life of the streets and taverns is admirably well informed of all these writers, homener . Jane porter, write her more limited historical knowledge, remains the most able historic romancer previous to Scott.

It is not out of place to mention the receivers and magazines in the early nineteenth century to realize how those tried to instruct or persuade its readers by the presentation of definite views in the form of essays whose purpose was the discussion of books named at the head of the articles. The greatest of reviewes, Macaulay offer specimens of all kinds of procedure. The reveiews did not print either original poetry or fiction, but the magazines, which did, also publish certain reviews such was the main distinction between a magazine and review . In the first quarter of the nineteenth century , the two great reviews – 'The Edinburgh' and 'The Quarterly' – and two brilliant Magazines 'Blackwood's' and 'The London' – sprang to life, and, they conformed to the original distinction of type. The strict anonymity of the writer in the Reviews gave them weight and power, but the power was sometimes grossly abused. "The London Magazine (1820 – 29) had a short but distinguished carrier, during which it introduced to its readers the works of men who were to take a very high place in British literature. Among its contributions were De Quincey. Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt and Keats.

4. 14. 3 Charles Lamb (1775 – 1834)

Some knowledge of the domestic life of Charles Lamb facilitates the understanding of his works. His father John Lamb was the personal servant of Samuel Salt, a bencher of the Runer temple. Charles, the youngest son of John and Elizabeth Field; grew up in salts house in the Temple, for the first seventeen years of his life in the most delightful surroundings. To Lamb his London house was as great an inspiration as his mountain house to Wordsworth. His youth was passed in poverty; but fortunately a presentation to Christ's Hospital procured him the elements of a sound education. There he stayed for seven years where he made the acquaintance of the youth Coleridge three years his senior and the acquaintance blossomed into a friendship that was to last a lifetime. Lamb proved good scholar and when he left in November 1789, obtained a post in the South Sea House where the friendly Salt was a Deputy Governor Nevertheless the quiet cloisters of the Temple and old – world atmosphere of the Temple clung about him all his life.

In his scanty leisure Lamb engaged himself with in the joys of reading – a joy he shared with his sister Mary. This was varied by occasional visits to the theatre, a brief excursion to Hertford shire – where some of his happy moments were spent. His home life was wearisome and gloomy. His father was becoming childish and querulous; his mother was an invalid and the strain of insanity in the family suddenly showed itself in Mary who was managing the whole household alone. Mary was to be put in a public asylum and her brother Charles offered to be her guardian, sacrificing his romantic dreams and many other ambitions. His father's death in 1799 and Mary's aggravated insanity had their bitterest impact on the shattered Charles.

While brother and sister moved from lodging to lodging, the incessant change of place being a painful necessity, Charles started on his literary career. His early ways was inspired with that of his friend Coleridge, by the quiet charm and pensive delicacy of W.L Bowles. Financial necessities urged Lamb to try his hand at a force though his precious Elizabeth experiment, *John WoodVil* (1802) was much more to his taste. He had, however little dramatic power and Mr. H Proved no more successful than the poetic play. Lamb's sense of loneliness conceived a strong attachment for Charles Lloyd a young Burmingham and an associate of Coleridge. To the second edition of Coleridge's poems (1797) were added poems by Lamb and Lloyd. From Lloyd, Lamb got that liking for Quakers which appears in several pieces of writing. But Charles Lloyd was a bad friend for Lamb. His sensitiveness bordered on mental distraction and he died deranged. He also managed to effect a breach between Coleridge and Lamb. The friendship was soon renewed, but never upon the same level.

Lamb's first independent work in prose, *A Tale of Rosamund Gray and Old Blind Margaret* was published in 1796. His life with Mary at this time is tenderly recorded in *Old China*, one of his best essays. His correspondence with his mathematician friend Thomas Warming produced a series of letters full of Lamb's finest humour casual writing for the papers occupied his leisure during the next few years. In 1807 he and Mary wrote the familiar *Tales from Shakespeare*, Mary undertaking the comedies, Charles the harder task of making the tragedies acceptable and understandable by children. As Shakespeare for the young was at that time never thought of the volume really gave many youthful readers their first acquaintance with a great dramatist. Another work for the young, *The Adventure of Ulysses* based on Chapman appeared in 1808. Although it is a finer book than the *Tales* it has had nothing like the name success. In *Mrs Leicester's School* (1809) Mary Lamb had the principal share, Charles himself contributing only three of the ten stories. The book has small interest and no importance with Mrs. Leicester's school artless rhymes of *Poetry for Children* (1809). The joint work of the brother and sister came to an end *Prince Dorus* (1811), a fairy tale in decasyllabic couplets, was Lamb's last work for children. The excellence of Mary's writing shows that, at normal times, her intelligence and judgement were very sound.

Lamb's next literary venture was the firstly famous *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets who live about the Times of Shakespeare* (1808). This work rediscovered for its age the Elizabethan dramatists many people cannot share Lamb's enthusiasm for these authors; some, on the other hand, have declared that Lamb ruined his authors by presenting as poetry what should be presented as drama. The objection is unreal and the radical point is that the old dramatists were not known and that Lamb sought to make them known in extract chosen with sure dramatic instinct and enriched with brief

notes that are little masterpieces of just criticism and eloquent prose. During the next years Lamb was steadily ripening by reading and reflections into a serious essay writer and giving frequent and memorable examples of his power in letters to numerous friends. To Leigh Hunts *Reflector* he contributed such excellent articles as *The Genius and Character of Hogarth* (1811) and *The Tragedies of Shakespeare* (1812). His serious and matter-of-fact *Recollections of Christ's Hospital* in 'The Gentleman's' for June 1813 is a forerunner of the beautiful later essay. Lamb continued to write for such magazines as 'The Examiner' and 'The Indicator'. But the great event in his life was the appearance in 'The London Magazine' to which Hazlitt introduced him, for August 1820 of an essay entitled "Rellection of the south sea house" signed "Elia". Its success was so outstanding that from October 1820 to the end of 1823, Elia was a regular contributor to this brilliant but short lived periodical. The volume called "Elia" appeared in 1823. the original "Elia" whose name Lamb borrowed (and produced "Ellia") was an Italian clerk known to him in business.

The next important event in his life happened on 29 March 1825, when he left the India House forever as a superannuated man, with a generous pension allowing an equally generous remainder to Mary, if she survived him. But his health began to deteriorate. The rest of his work is slight and unimportant. In 1827, he moved to Enfield and in 1833 to Edmounton. That year saw the marriage of his adopted daughter Emma Isola to the publisher Edward Moxon and the publication of Moxon of *The Essays of Elia*, the July of 1834 saw the death of Coleridge. It depressed him terribly. Mary's health also grew worse owing to an accident he fell ill of erysipelas and the disease easily mastered his devitalized body. He died painlessly on December 27, 1834, his sister surviving him by nearly thirteen years.

Lamb started as a writer about 1795, when Burke and Cribbon were at the height of their glory, and some years before Scott had given romantic narrative verse its astonishing vogue. For some years he wrote little; but his literary friendships helped to stimulated his slowly maturing powers and in 1820, he discovered the person of "Elia" the medium best fitted to display his peculiar qualities beginning as a writer in the days before the Romantic Revival he "found himself" in its last phase, when Wordsworth and Coleridge had done their best work and Keats and Shelley were the great stars in the firmament of poetry.

Lamb's qualities as critic are his gift of luminous enthusiasm, his faculty for distinguishing the human qualities from the academic. But he has neither Hazlitt's breadth or range nor Coleridge's subtitles of analysis, and he is happier in noting the mountain top in estimating the sweep of tableland. His work as a critic precedes his work as an essayist, though the essays, no less than the letters scintillate in brilliant flashes of criticism. His earlier essay work, between 1811 and 1820, is scarcely upto the level of Leigh Hunt's the flowering time came in 1820, when "Elia" entered upon his own and started with the *South Sea House* rich is observant humour and reminiscent charm. In 1833 the final fruits of Lamb were gathered together in *The Last Essay* Elia.

It is tempting to say that Lamb's are the best essays in English, because they are rich in the charm that is one of the rarest gifts of genius; it is first to say that Lamb's finest essays are the nearest of all to poetry, not only because they often touch the height where prose eloquence passes into. Poetry, but because whether grave or gay, reminiscent or personal, they have in some degree the

creative imagination which it is the privilege of all poetry to possess in full. And it support of this claim, the meeting with Dodd in the essay *On Some of the* of old Actors, would suffice the magic of his style is enhanced by its intensely literacy quality. The genius of Lamb lies in his power of visualizing memories, as a stylist he does walk in the past, gathering to himself the pleasant tricks and mannerisms of bygone writers, just as a girl plucks flowers instinctively that blend with her looks and carriage. The blossoms are culled from other men's gardens, but their blending is all Lamb's own. Passing through Lamb's imagination they become something fresh and individual. The matter harmonizes with the manner. It also belongs to the past; its charm, too, is a retrospective one. In his dearly loved haunts it is the shadow of bygone times that he sees rather than present actualities. Lamb's memories are not like Wordworth's " emotions recollected in tranquility" He recalls them not to wring from them some spiritual rapture or ethical significance, but merely as material for his intellect and fancy to play upon. He plays with his thought as the wind plays with the leaves tossing them hither and thither. Circling them round in strange eddies, scattering, combining in all manner of queer ways. All the conventional approaches to the Essay are quietly ignored by him. Never was any man more intimate in print than he. He has made of chatter a fine art, for he is enchantingly easy, with no suspicion of vulgarity, simple in his choice of subjects, never trite in his treatment, and he can trifle delicately without being trienal. Humour with him is never far from tragedy; through his tears may be seen the rainbow in the sky, for his humour and pathos are really inseparable from one another; they are different facts of the same gem; one may say that Lambs's mood, grave or gay, are equally the natural effervescence of an exquisitely mobile imagination.

It is characteristic of the Romantic writer that he should be confidential. As a rule he tells the world more about himself than he tells his friend. This is due to morbid egotism, no mereloquanty, it is a necessity of his nature to express himself. In fiction it is least apparent, because of the exigencies of this particular art form. For this reason *The Essays of Elia* especially and the critical essays to a lesser extent, are practically autobiographical fragments, from which he may reconstruct with little difficulty the inner life and no little of the outer life of Lamb. We may learn of the boyish Charles in ' Night Fears' and in Christ Hospital, he introduced to his family in *"The old Benchers of the inner Temple"* and in my *" My Relations"* read of his youthful experiences in " Mackery End in Hertfordshere" get a vivid glimpse of his long intimacy with Mary in " Mrs Battle's Opinions" of his official work in the " The South Sea House" of his sentimental memories in " Dream Children" of his prejudices and temptations in " imperfect Sympathies" and " The Confessions of a Drunkard ".

Even in his most irresponsible dallyings there are flashes of self revelation, and his " Popular Fallacies" might be described as personal idiosyncrasies in terms of farcical humour. As Lamb's asi work is individual in its cumulative effect, that we can not place him in any particular school of prose. The formal quality of his work approximates often to the eighteenth century essay. The echoes of Sir Thomas Browne and Keats could also be felt in Lamb. His reminiscences of style are really due to the fact that he is a poet at heart and unconsciously suits his manner to his matter. Every essay is in essence a tone-poem, set in the proper key and never transgressing it, the variations are many, but never away from the central theme, and its apparent discord resolves itself to a higher harmony.

Within the boundaries of his temperament, Lamb was a great critic. His Elizabethan affinities made him a fine interpreter of the beauties that age, while his insight into the merits of the Jacobean and Caroline dramatists,was more remarkable. Lamb's appreciation of verse is more limited, less catholic than his appreciation of prose. When as a critic he turns to poetry, the intellectual, fantastic Lamb disappears; strength and passion, nobility of thought, are the qualities that chiefly made him . Tender he was, as his intense humanity made him tolerant and charitable to those around him; but there was a stern inflexibility of character behind the tenderness. The man was overpowered by a shattered family background, his own weakness, and Mary's insane life. There is a center of iron in nature that could shape his destiny along these lines of self discipline and disinterested affection, and compel the love and admiration of fiery, impatient souls like Hazlitt. Thus we may leave him, reserved beneath all his confidences, serious behind all his whimsical gaities, true and steadfast at the track of his wilful caprices – a strong, lovable, human soul.

4. 14. 4. Williams Hazlitt (1778 – 1830)

William Hazlitt, son of a Unitarian minister of Irish blood, was born at Maidstone, in 1778, and nurtured in the keen atmosphere of progress thought. The Hazlitt family moved to Ireland in 1780, an thence to America in 1783, where they remained till 1787. Later in that year the father became Unitarian Minister at Wem in Shropshire, and there young Hazlitt spent most of his youth. Social and political problems preoccupied him as a youth and he paid more attention to these matters than to theology, thereby annoying his tutor at the Unitarian college. It was soon obvious that the ministry for which he had been intended exercised no compelling influence on his intentions and he gave off the idea of becoming a minister. From radical politics, he plunged into philosophy and studied the philosophical thinkers of the seventeeth and eighteenth centuries. He showed some interest in painting also.

In 1796, Burke's *letter to a Noble Lord* arrested his attention and its rich eloquences fascinated him. Then came the great, unforgettable and decisive moment in his life. In 1798, he met Coleridge who became for him a kind of god and taught him the gospel of revolution and gave him the thrill of poetry. Hazlitt explained of Coleridge's influence on him in his *My First Acquaintance with Poets* ,which many consider to be among the best of English essays while a few others consider it to be the best of all The intellectual tragedy of Hazlitt,s life was the fall of Coletridge.After the meeting with Colierdge, Hazlitt felt that he must strive to accomplish something. He took up again a cherished piece of youthful speculation, *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action.*He walked countless miles to visit the picture – galleries in great houses. He returned with ardour to painting. He crossed to Paris, and fell in love with Napolean. He stayed several months in Paris, making copies of pictures and actually selling them. Then he returned to England, went about painting portraits, and suddenly discovered that the thing to do was to write. He came to London in search of a literary career,and soon found the friends he needed. He married, Sarah Stoddart, an acquaintance of Mary Lamb. After a short time, they got divorced and he got married again to a Mrs. Bridgewater. That marriage also also ended up as a failure.

Through dint of hardwork, in twenty- five years he gradually made his way to fame from absolute obscurity, without prestige of family, without formal education and without friends of influ-

ence. He won distinction as a lecturer, his virtues on books, pictures and plays were widely read; he became known as a good talker, and he attracted the notice of the most brutal as well as the most gifted of reviewers. His collected works occupy about six thousand printed pages. Probably no English author who has written so voluminously has left so much that is first rate very much more of Hazlitt survive than of De Quincey and far more than of Lamb Hazlitt's most notorious book in the worst he wrote the Liber Amoris, an account in dialogue, letters and narrative of his infatuation with Sarah Walker, a girl of the house in which he was lodging.

An Essay on the Principles of Human Action (1805) got published at last feeling much about Hazlitt himself a critic has complained that Hazlitt had a "common mind" that is pricisely his great distinction. Hazlitt is the common ,wholesome, sensible man raised to an uncommonly high degree of receptivity and expression. The first taste of the real Hazlitt is not to be found in his political pamphleteering; but in the vivid portraits of Walpole and others that served to introduce "the eloquence of the British senate"; while his work as a dramatic critic even his experience in art, served as a valuable apprenticeship to the Hazlitt of the 'Table Talk' and The Character of Shakespeare's Plays.

Between 1815 and 1822 Hazlitt had passed through the experimental stage and reached maturity. His Shakespearean criticisms rich in incisive vigor and freshness of imagination, his English Poets (1818) and English Comic Writers (1819), caustic in wit yet with the salt of true critical wisdom, his Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizeabeth, with its fine catholicity of taste – all these are memorable additions to English critical literature. The Political Arrays (1819) belonging to this period is probably the most neglected of his first rate books Hazlitt's criticism of his contemporary in The Spirit of Age (1852) is in accord with his courageous position on all questions. He wrote of the living as frankly as he wrote of the dead. In addition to being a critic of the printed drama, Hazlitt is the first of our great dramatic critics. He wrote for several papers, and many of his articles are reprinted in A View of the English Stage (1818). Others appeared posthumously. He did not go to the theatre to air his "views", he went because he liked going to the play and seeing "the happy faces in the pit". In particular, he is the historian of Edmund Kean's tremendous effects. Before his day, honest reviews of play hardly existed. He was fearlessly outspoken, and declared that the critic had no obligations to theatre manager, or actor. Yet another of Hazlitt's great interest was pictorial art. He propounded no philosophy of art he just liked picture, and wrote about what he liked. Hazlitt's opinions will be found in Sketches of the Principal Picture. Galleries in England (1824), Notes of Journey through France and Italy (1826) and Conversations of James Nothecate, Esq., R.A (1830), the last a rich and delightful book full of sane comments on art and life. Other essay on the fine arts were published posthumously.

There are two strongly marked opposing tendencies in his nature that called for no ordinary power of co-ordination. On one side we have the austere, individualistic Puritan strain that came from his Presbyterian forefathers; on the other, a sensuous, voluptuous quality that often ran counter to Puritanism. The general effect of these two elements in his nature was this, in matters of the intellect the Puritan was uppermost; in the realm of the emotions we felt the dominant presence of the opposing element. He wanders far and wide and is willing to go anywhere for a fresh sensation that may add to the richness of his intellectual life. He does not care for the new merely because it is new. The essay On Reading Old Books is proof enough of that.

Hazlitt, like De Quincey, had felt the glamour of the city as well as the glamour of the country not with the irresistibility of Lamb, but for all that, potently. Yet an instrict for the open the raving for pleasant spaces, and the longing of the hard-driven jounalist for the gracious leisure of the country. These things were paramount with both Hazlitt and De Quicey. There was also a fine quality of joy about Hazlitt. It is this quality of joy that gives the sparkle and relish to his essays. Although he gave up the brush, he never gave up painting and his brilliant audacities in the prose have survived his experiments in pigment. He was shy and reserved; every essay is a fragment of autobiography and every sentence a confession. His habit of introducing personal matter into his essays gives frequently a pleasantly intimate flavour to his writing. Hazlitt's prose resembles the best kind of talk. It is active, challenging, cheerfully dogmatic and will never be the angle of any coteries or the toast of any societies. To the end, he was resolute and independent. He died in solitude, save for the comforting presence of Charles Lamb saying when the end came ,"well I've had a happy life"

4. 14. 5. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)

Coleridge has no substantial and connected of prose to his credit like Hazlitt, Lamb and De Quincey. His prose is a collection of brilliantly discursive fragments that are extremely valuable for his critical faculty was second to none and in purely literary subjects he is easily the first in an age of great critics. His aesthetic judgments were regulated and clarified by his philosophical speculations. The imaginative greatness of Shakespeare was realized as it had never been realized before. The conditions under which he wrote how far he was way of his age, how far of ages, the transcendent power of his characterization all these matters were brought before the attention and impressed on the imagination of the ordinary reader. In much the same way, he deals with the poetry of Wordsworth, reveals its defects and exhibits its strengths.Criticism, therefore, in the hands of Coleridge ceases to be a merely arbitrary bundle of which and prejudices and in such papers as 'An Essay on Taste on Beauty', and on 'poesy' or art the nature of artistic pleasure is analyzed with clarity subtlety, as also in 'Biographia Literaria'(1817).

Even apart from his specific continuation to religious, political or literary thought Coleridge is full of good things, active and pungent sayings, illuminating ideas while there can be no question as to the immense influence of Coleridge upon Emerson's thought, the extent of his originality as a thinker is debatable that he learned much and borrowed much from Shakespearean critics like Schlegel, and Kant, is admitted on all sides. But his plagiarisms are really less formidable than at first sight they appeared. His easy-going method of lifting whole passages from these writers without the faintest acknowledgement has led some to look upon him as merely a purveyor of other men's thoughts.

Coleridge, like Dante Gabriel Rossetti, seems to have been more remarkable as a personality than as a writer. His personal magnetism seems to have been extraordinary. Like Bacon before him he pointed the way he was constitutionally unable to travel; he opened up lines of thought he had neither the patience nor constructive power to pursue. But no man did more to give a philosophical background to creative art and an aesthetic value to intellectual processes such as made of literature a fresher and more vital power.

4. 14. 6. Th mas De Quincey (1785-1859)

Thomas De Quincey was born at Greenhay, Manchester, in August 1785. Quick and responsive intellectually, he took a delight in his school work. An illness necessitated his removal from school and admission in Dr. Spencer's School at Winkfield, where the pupil was found to be in advance of his master in classical knowledge and the boy conceived a dislike for private schools in consequence.

An enthusiastic admirer of Coleridge and "The Ancient Mariner" De Quincey, while on a visit to Bristol in 1807, made the acquaintance of the poet. He had acquaintance of Lamb also. Need of money to look after the family made De Quincey restrict his use of the opium and also augment his income. In 1819 he became the editor of the *Westmolrland* Gazette and began writing for most of the important magazines and reviews. *The Confessions of an English Opium Eater* was published in **The London 'Magazine'** in 1821 in 1828, he got separated from his wife and family. In 1837 his wife died and he diet a solitary death in 1859.

De Quincey was insignificant in appearance, but his manner was peculiarly fascinating. He was a good, true gentleman, a cultivated scholar, and one of the most remarkable figures among the literary personalities.

His literary life started in 1821 with the first version of *The Confessions of an Opium Eater* where he utilized his early experiences and showed his fantastic imagination. In the *Dialogue of Three Templars* he displayed that passion for logical analysis which is as distinctive of his genius as his fantasy. This was the fruit of his study of Ricardo. Further in the twenties he made his first essay into German literature, and this gave him his earliest incursion into narrative writing.

These three notes, meditative, analytical, descriptive are inseparable from his work; and in the development of his power sometimes one is prominent, sometimes another, but no one entirely dropped. The fantastic not is enriched and mellowed in the longer *Opium Eater* and *Reminiscences* – and in such essays as 'On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth' (1823) the analytical faculty marks his critical work – e.g. style, rhetoric white the descriptive and visualizing power of De Quincey does not reach its maturity same in the *Suspiria de Profundis* and other sketches of "Impassioned prose". Sometimes, as in articles like 'The Revolt of the Tartars', fancy, logic and actuality are admirably blended, while in his purely critical work logic and fancy give a piquant flavour to the dish. He is a brilliant but ansteral critic with little of Hazlitt's Catholicity of taste.

The first important event in De Quincey life was the wide roaming on the hillside of North Wales, the second, the wanderings in "Stony – hearted Oxford Street". The spell of London was important in shaping his literary life and must not be underestimated what drew De Quincey to London was its mystery. At expressing subtle emotions, half shades of thought, no writer is more wonderfully adapt than De Quincey, but when the episode demands simple and direct treatment, his elaborate cadenes are out of place.

He had like Freud the power of attracting the spectacular side of great moments which many a more accurate historians has lacked. Especially striking is his *Revolt of the Tartars* – the flight east-

ward of a Tartar nation across the vast steppes of Asia, from Russia to Chinese territory. Ideas impressed him rather facts, and episodes rather than a continuous chain of events. Thus when he was interested he had the power of describing with picturesque power certain dramatic episodes in nations history what gives his works their especial attraction is not so much the analytic faculty, or the mystical turn of mind, but the piquant blend of the two. Hence while poking fun at astrology or witchcraft, we are conscious all the time that he retains a sneaking fondness for the occult. On the whole the mystic triumphed over the Logician. His poetic imagination impressed his work with a rich inventiveness, while the logical faculty, though subsidiary, is utilized for giving form and substance to the vision.

He was an artist of moods, skillfully adopting his style to the theme chosen. He had a ready perception of congruous atmosphere in which to deal with this various topics – e.g. the ironical opening of *Murder Considered as one of the fine Arts,* the satirical banter of Dr. Andrew Bell, the solemn rhythmic cadence of A Vision of Sudden death. At its best, the elaborate poetical prose in which De Quincey couched his imaginative dreams has a fine delicate beauty about it – a beauty which is quite distinctive and bears little resemblance to the beauty of other prose stylists. The logical faculty in De Quincey is as manifest as his inventive imagination. His discursiveness often merely indicates the spaciousness of his ground plan. He is not really introducing other irrelevant objects but reflecting the same object from many points of view.

The most curious fact about De Quincey as writer is that, during a long life devoted to letters, he published only two books, Klosterheim (1832), and a Logic of Political Economy (1844). While Hazlitt is remarkable for acuteness, De Quincey is known for subtlety. In the essays on 'Milton'. 'Coleridge' and 'Wordsworth', it is of great service. Apart from the horrible, the mysterious, the dark, the shadowy side appealed to De Quincey. While Lamb is far more intimate and frank, opening his mind to his readers, De Quincey looks upon the experiences of life as so much plastic material of his aritistry. He manipulates his material primarily for artistic effect, and only secondarily because he wishes to be confidential.

The reader of De Quincey is likely at first to be most conscious of his faults, and these may at once be admitted and dismissed. The first is a chronic langmindedness a steady refusal to come to the heart of his matter; the next is a maddening sapience perhaps caught from Coleridge; and the next is an elaborate and intolerable facetiousness. In spite of his obvious faults. He is a very considerable writer, and the reader must take him in the mass, cherishing his best and ignoring his worst.

4. 14. 7. Leigh Hunt (1784 – 1859)

The prose of Leigh Hunt synchronises with his verse. It began with his papers in the 'Examiner' and one in the 'Indicator'. His stay in Italy found expression in his *Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla* (1848), an agreeable volume worm with the colour and romance of the south. His charm and varied knowledge of London life is exhibited in 'The Town', while in his *Autobiography* we have the fullest expression of the man himself, his innate sweetness and beauty of character, with his little weaknesses and prejudices what the *Essays of Elia* are to Lamb, the Autobiography is to Leigh Hunt.

In his literary methods as an essayist he is akin to Lamb with something of the same springfulness, intimate ease, and whimsical charm. He lacks in the deep tenderness and imagination of Lamb. Hunt works on a lower level. But there is great attractiveness about his prose with his fine tastes, varied interests and frank enjoyment of things like Lamb and Coleridge he was at Christ Hospital, and oddly enough, like Lamb, a stammerer. He passed into journalism in 1808 to help his brother in editing "The Examiner." Leigh Hunt's real strength is to be found in prose, especially in those pieces with verse translations or illustrations. 'Wit and Humour' (1846) is such an essay with well chosen examples from the English poets. Hunt was invited by Shelley to Italy in 1821, to help him and Byron in producing a new and important review called 'The Liberal'. Shelley drowned shortly after Hunt's arrival 'The Liberal' also perished. Hunt lived on for many years, doing continuous journalistic and literary work and setting a model for other writers. In criticism, Hunt has the merit which Macaulay long ago assigned to him, of a most unusual and almost unique catholicity.

4. 14. 8. Walder Savage Landor (1775 – 1864)

Landor, the friend of Southey, lived to be the friend of Swinburne. His prose and verse are so alike in character that the bare fact of metre is almost the only distinction of the two, the prose in sometimes richer than the verse in diction. He shows a characteristic compound of styles. His fondness for Greek subjects is manifest in his works. He is liked as a writer of prose *Imaginary Conversations* were published very late in his life. Their range and treatment are varied. Landor fails to succeed in humour. His contemporaries admired not only his writings, but his ebullient character. He is a fine and unique writer, though not of the first rank

4. 14. 9. Thomas Love Peacock (1785 – 1866)

Previous to his marriage in 1820, Peacock had published a volume of verse and three of his satires and romantic novels. Headlong Hall (1816), Melincourt (1817), Nightmare Abhey (1818). In 1822 appeared his most romantic and least satirical fiction, Maid Marian; his Arthurian fantasy The Misfortune of Elphin (1829), and Crotchet Castle (1831) followed, then after a long interval Gryll Grange (1860) when he was an oldman. His style is admirable, lucid, harmonious, opposite. In his care for achieving his effects, in his fastidious sensibility for the precise phrase and proper emphasis, he reminds one rather of the eighteenth century humorists than of his contemporaries.

4. 14. 10. Let Us Sum Up:

An important feature in the history of prose literature during the Age of Wordsworth was the rise of the modern review and magazine. There were the Edinburgh Review; the Quarterly "The London Magazine" which included among its early contributors Lamb, Hazlitt, De Quincey and others. Most of these writers wrote periodically and then influence was tremendous on prose literature in general. Firstly, it gave great encouragement to essay writing, so most of the prose writers of the time were essayists rather than makers of books. Secondly it offered a fresh field for criticism and especially for the criticism of contemporary literature. In this literature of criticism considerable space was naturally devoted to the discussion of the respective principles and merits of the old school and the new,

and thus the critics of the age divided, roughly speaking into – the conservative or classical, an the radical or romantic. Fundamental changes appeared in the form and temper of prose, and this prose was a characteristic product of its age in its limitations as well as in its excellences.

4. 14. 11. Sample Questions

1. Describe the salient features of Romantic Prose
2. Give an estimate of the major Romantic prose writers.

4. 14. 12. Suggested Reading

1. The Romantic Revival (1780 – 1830) ed. Peter Westland. The English Universities Press Ltd. London.
2. The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature George Sampsons, ELBS and Cambridge 1975.
3. Hudson W.H *An Outline History of English Literature*
4. Harry Blamires *A Short History of English Literature* ELBS and Mathuen & Co. Ltd. London 1979.
5. Long J. William *English Literature* Its history and its significance for the life of the English speaking world. Lyall Book Depot Ludhiana, 1964.

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Lesson - 15

ESSAYS OF ELIA

(CHARLES LAMB)

Contents

4.15.1. Objectives.

- to Study Lamb's artistic qualities as an essayist
- to discuss the elements of pathos, and humour in his essays

Essays of Elia (Charles Lamb)

4.15.2. Writer and the back ground.

Charles Lamb is one of those few writers who created an unforgettable place for themselves in the history of English literature. Lamb's output is not very prolific. It constitutes a bundle of essays, a number of casual lyrics, one or two brief plays, a tale of striking Pathos, a few narratives and adaptations of old authors for children and some critical notes on his favorite writers. The appeal of his works is everlasting and Lamb has successfully withstood the fluctuations of literary taste and judgment. Lamb had only admirers, and no detractors.

He was the seventh and youngest child of John and Elizabeth Lamb. Of all his brothers and sisters, John Lamb and Mary Anne Lamb survived childhood. Charles was born on the 10th February 1775, in Crown Office Row, Inner temple in the house of Samuel Salt, one of Benchers .Salt was his father's employer.

In his childhood Lamb seemed to have attended along with Mary schools run by a Mr.Bird and Mrs. Reynolds but his school life really began with his admission into Christ's hospital. To this school, a friend of Mr.Salt, Timothy presented him. For seven years Lamb remained at Christ's Hospital, and during this period began many of the friendships notably- that with Coleridge- which were to form the chief solace and pleasure of his after life. He left school in November 1789, from the lower division of the second class partly because his

infirmity of speech made it impossible for him to cope,take orders as was expected from boys sent on from the school to the university and partly because the poverty of his family rendered it necessary that he should begin to earn.

For a short time he was employed in the South-Sea House where his brother John held a good job, but in 1792, he got a clerkship in the Accounts Office of the East India Company, in whose service he continued till the year 1825. In London he had the opportunity to keep his school friendships. His close friend was James white who wrote letters of sir John Falstaff. Lamb had a great admiration for Coleridge which influence could be felt in Lamb's attempts at verse. In one of his visits to his grand mother, Mrs. Field, he fell in love with a young lady, whom in his essay he calls Alice Winterton, and Anna in his poems.

Canon Ainger has identified this lady with Ann Simmons who married another man called Bartram. Suddenly Lamb became insane and spent six weeks in a madhouse at Hoxton ; but we have no information as to whether his madness was the cause or the result of the breaking off of his courtship.

Shortly after his recovery his four sonnets came in print, introduced by Coleridge in a volume entitled Poems On Various Subjects. His sister Mary's insanity drove him to take care of her.

About this time he began to study the Elizebethan Dramatists who had so much

4.15.3. Life and works

In 1797, a volume of poems was brought out by Coleridge, Lloyd and Lamb together. Wordsworth, Dyer and Southey were newly added to his circle of friends. In 1798 was published Lamb's story Rosamond Gray. In 1806 his farce Mr. H —— was accepted at Druary Lane. In 1810 Leigh Hunt started the 'Reflector' and Lamb, his old schoolmate assisted him in various articles.

The next few years were happy for him as he had sufficient income and recognition for his literary abilities; fortunately he had the company of congenial friends. In 1820 Lamb began to write for the London Magazine under the name of Elia. In 1821 his brother John died. Next year Lamb visited France. In 1825, a new series of London Magazine recommenced. In 1830, Mr. Moxon published a small volume of poems by Lamb, under the title of Album verses. In 1833 the second series of Essays – Last Essays of Elia were published by Moxon. Lamb was depressed by Coleridge's death the same year. Lamb himself died in 1834.

Lamb's work as a critic precedes his work as an essayist .His Essays of Elia reveal his real genius as an essayist. The other works of Lambs include The Adventures of Ulysses, and Specimens of Dramatic Poets who lived about the time of Shakespeare, Poetry for Children, **along with his sister and essays in " Quarterly" and "London Magazine".**

3.15.4. Analysis of the text

A number of essays have been written by Lamb under the name Elia, in both first and the second series as well. The list goes on but the popularly known essays are: 'The South Sea House', 'Oxford in the Vacation' 'Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty years ago.', 'New Year's Eve.' 'Mrs Battle's Opinions on Whist.' 'The Old and the New School Master.' 'Two Races of Men.' 'A Chapter on Ears.' 'Dream Children: A Reverie.' 'A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig.' 'A Quaker's Meeting.' 'Imperfect Sympathies.' 'Grace Before Meal.' 'The Praise

of Chimney Sweepers.''My Relations' 'Mackery End in Hertford shire.''All Fools' Day and 'A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People.'

These are from the first series. The Last Essays of Elia consists of an equally good number of essays .To have an insight into Lambs' Essays of Elia, summaries of some of the essays are provided.

i. The South – Sea House

Lamb was a subordinate clerk in the South Sea House for sometime. Later he joined the service of the East India Company. John his elder brother was already employed there. He remained in the South Sea House till 1792. The South Sea Company was established in 1710, with the promise of a monopoly of the trade with the South American colonies. Reckless speculation raised the stock of the company: the crash came in 1720 and the shares fell faster than they had risen. Thousands were ruined. The company remained, though it had little business. This essay was first printed in London Magazine under the title " Recollections of the South Sea House".

Lamb entered its services during its decline. He was just fourteen. He could feel its past glory in the buildings now run by a few staff. The room, the furniture and the other paraphernalia gathered dust .The clerks were underpaid. Most of them remained bachelors. They were odd beings and differed distinctly form one another. Lamb described all the employees there. Evans- the cashier a Welshman: Thomas Tame – the deputy cashier, John Tipp, the a accountant, Henry Man – the writer Plumer -- another clerk, Maynard a singer, Wollett, Hepworth and so on so graphically that their portraits had been drawn by Lamb with his pen in his essays. After giving an elaborate account of the various clerks in different capacities in the South Sea House, Lamb mystifies his readers saying that these people were just names and never had any real existence. They were purely imaginary characters.

ii Oxford in the vacation

This is the second essay of Elia which first appeared in the London Magazine. Lamb visited Oxford first in 1800 and next in 1810. He visited Cambridge University three times, in 1815, 1819 and 1820. In this essay his impressions of both oxford and Cambridge universities are given. There is a lot of digression in this essay.

Lamb does not disclose the identity of Elia. The reader understands that he is a clerk in a counting house with no higher literary pretensions. Literature is his pastime and as a clerk he can make use of his knowledge of literature as writing forms a part of his job. Lamb then touches upon various ideas like how he has forgotten all the names of saints and holidays named after them, unlike in Christ's Hospital. He feels that the civil authorities should have consulted the religious heads before naming the holidays after saints Lamb's vacation clubs with the vacation of Oxford itself. He does not have good university education. His flair for learning drives him there and he imagines himself to be a student of Oxford. He remembers the great people like Chaucer praising Oxford. He is amazed at its antiquity. He also describes the library and comes across George Dyer – a lover of books, a kind hearted gentleman ready to help others.

iii New – Year's Eve

It was published in 'The London Magazine' in 1821. Lamb had already become popular as an essayist. New year coming in the wake of Christmas has a religious sanctity about it. The occasion is marked by activity and enthusiasm for some while it provides scope for serious contemplation for some more. Lamb narrates his past experenices, calamities, misfortunes and disappointments, hopes and expectations in this essay.

Lamb begins with how the bells ring out the old year and ring in the new year. He loves past and not future. He does not like newness or novelty. He has experienced all the exciting events already in the past. There is nothing yet to come in future. He refers to his past failures and calamities, family and also his broken love – affair with a lady.

Then he tells his readers about his childhood and his adulthood. The essay reflects the character of Lamb. He feels nostalgic for the past, not looking forward to the future.

iv Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years ago

This essay first appeared in the ' Gentleman's Magazine' in 1813 and was republished in 1818. Christ's Hospital was a charitable institution for the poor boys. The chief feature of the education imparted in the institution is the study of classics. In this essay Elia would not identify himself with Lamb.

Christ's Hospital provided good food to the inmates. Elia had no friends in the town and the few acquaintances he had never welcomed him. He felt lonely and miserable in the beginning.

Lamb enjoyed the influence of his patron Samuel Salt. He was not treated like all the others but specially, Lamb describes a few incidents that happened at Christ's Hospital. Lamb's sense of pathos is delicately woven into the essay. While commenting on the affairs of his Old School, Lamb's dignified humor is displayed in his style, which reveals his humility and gentleness.

V Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist

It was published in 1821. Mrs. Battle is believed to represent Sarah Burney wife of captain James Burney 'wrapped up in his tranquility and his whist'. Mrs. Field, Lamb's grandmother has also been suggested as Mrs. Battle. Perhaps she is a representative of Lamb o himself and the whole essay may be a treatise on card game according to Lamb's own point of view.

Sarah Battle loved a good game at Whist. She always played cards seriously but not for relaxation. She considered it as an abstract affair and never in an essay manner. She knew many other card games besides Whist. She was an expert in all kinds of card games and could talk at length about their merits and demerits. Lamb says that her illustrations and arguments were logical and powerful. This essay reflects his satirical humor on the game of cards.

vi The Old and the New School Master

In this essay, Lamb gives an interesting account of his conversation with a modern schoolmaster. The new schoolmaster's business is to acquire more and more knowledge to equip students with the relevant

knowledge. The old school master used to feel that his only duty was to teach grammar and language. He considered languages to be the most efficacious tool to be handled and mastered thoroughly to acquire further knowledge in other branches. The study of classics was recommended to obtain universal wisdom. The teachers repeated what they had learnt in the past year after year to different batches of students,

Lamb in this essay brings out the difference between the Old and the New school masters and their attitude. Lamb's gentle submission to the modern thought in the field of education is revealed in this essay. The importance of the classics, grammar and syntax is clearly brought to light by Lamb.

vii All Fools' Day

In this essay, Lamb displays the mood and characteristics of a generous, catholic minded humorist. It is a universal custom to play pranks on people on the first of April. Lamb wished everyone merry April first and many more happy returns of it. Lamb confesses that he loves a fool. He even claims them as his kith and kin. If a man is foolish and silly he is likely to be less harmful or malicious. The fools, therefore, are the kindliest fellows in the world. So the world esteems those who are branded fools. Sober commonsense is accepted by Lamb in estimating the fools of the day. At every stage playful mirth is displayed in this essay.

viii TWO RACES OF MEN.

Lamb says that the human species is composed of two distinct types- the borrowers and the lenders. These are primary distinctions. All men irrespective of caste or color fall in with one or the other of these two categories. The former is regarded as the great race for they bear instinctive sovereignty. The latter are born degraded. The men who borrow have the open, trusting and generous manner. The men who lend, on the other hand, are lean and suspicious. They are inferior to those who borrow.

In this essay, Lamb's sagacity of wit coupled with his abundant knowledge of various branches of learning, comes out satirically.

ix A Chapter on Ears

In this essay, Lamb expresses quite humorously that he has no ears. At the outset, he says that he is physically fit with both the ears; but he has no ear for music. He laments over his inability to distinguish the voices produced by different musical instruments. He neither has the capacity to differentiate between two kinds of musical notes.

Music according to him has a magical influence of soothing, elevating and refining the passions. Music provides solace to a man who is sad.

x Dream Children: A Reverie

This is considered to be the best of Lamb's essays. Critics called it a poem in prose. It has an appeal to all the humanity and the tender human emotions. Lamb chooses the device of daydream to give us an account of himself and his love affair, his brother John, and his grand mother Field. In his reverie, he finds himself in the company of children at his knees, asking him tell them stories regarding their elders when they were children. Lamb thus creates a suitable ambience to give an account of his family .He gives a portrait of his grandmother who was a housekeeper of a great county mansion of antiquity. She was a lady of propriety and

dignity. Soon after her death the house came to ruins. She was so good and religious that her funeral was attended by a host of people of different places and conditions of life.

The next picture is that of John who was handsome and spirited, loved by his grandmother. He was very kind to Lamb who was lame footed. Lamb regretted that he was not as kind to him when he became lame footed later in life. The essay also throws light on the unsuccessful love affair which Lamb had with the country maiden for seven years, and later with Ann Simmons, who married someone else.

In this essay Lamb sketches the characters of two children John and Alice with a psychological insight. He presents their innocence and artless simplicity in a vivid manner. The essay is full of pathos and is special for its characterization.

xi A Dissertation Upon Roast Pig

In this essay Lamb states that according to a Chinese manuscript, mankind ate their meat without cooking. He says that there is no flavor comparable and no taste to the flavor and taste of a roast pig. He finds grandeur in the very process of roasting. The pig that is being roasted appears to be quite passive to the scorching heat, as though it were in comfortable warmth. In his dissertation on the pig, he dwells upon the various aspects of roasting the pig.

xii A Quaker's Meeting

In this essay, he expresses his opinion on silence and peace. Everyone wishes to enjoy solitude and the one who enjoys it all by himself is in imperfect solitude. That which is enjoyed in crowd is said to be perfect solitude. He wishes that everyone were a Quaker. A Quaker's meeting is more soothing than the Abbey Church of Westminster.

xiii Imperfect Sympathies

In this essay, Charles Lamb states clearly that it is natural for everyone to be repugnant with the manners and customs of the other nationalities. He confesses that he cannot look upon different sorts of people without feeling something. He is a victim to sympathy, hatred and other common human emotions. He can be indifferent to them, but cannot force himself to like them in any way. He adopts a definite attitude to some. He thinks about the differences between various nations and their people. He is proud of imperfect sympathies. He is a man, he admits of prejudices.

xiv Grace Before Meat

In this essay Lamb thinks that the custom of saying grace before meals can be traced back to the early times of the world. The germ of the modern grace appears in the shouts and triumphant songs of the past. He wonders why the blessings of food, the art of eating should have a particular expression of thanksgiving attached to it distinct from the silent gratitude expressed on receipt of other gifts. Gluttony and surfeiting are not proper occasions for thanksgiving. Somehow he does not approve precise manner of saying grace: nor does he favor the old form of saying grace during [illegible] days. He is neither for saying grace nor an enemy to graces.

xv The Praise of Chimney Sweepers

In this essay, Lamb's deep sense of sympathy towards the young. English boys who work as chimney sweepers is brought out. The young ones are innocent ' Lamb' expresses his concern for those chimneysweepers who work from the morning and ask people to be more generous towards them. These young sweepers preach a lesson of patience to the mankind.

xvi My Relations

In this essay, Lamb gives an account of his cousin James, who has been preaching to the author all his life. Lamb feels it a pleasure to hear his discourse of patience and wisdom. He gives various qualities of James and calls him, " A cousin par excellence ".

xvii Mackery End in Hertfordshire

In this essay Lamb gives some information about his cousin Bridget Elia who has been his housekeeper for many years. There is a mutual agreement in tastes and habits. They are generally in harmony with occasional petty differences in words. Their sympathies are rather understood than expressed.

xix A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behavior of Married People

In this essay published in 1822, Lamb, half humorously and half seriously re counts the ignominies and vexations to which he has been subjected all along by married couples. especially the wives of those men who were once this friends. On account of the peculiarities of his circumstances, he remained a bachelor all through his life. The essay is quite autobiographical in nature, though self revelation is subjected to a good deal of fun and humor.

These are some main Essays of Elia in the first series, while in the Last Essays, there are " Preface, by a friend of the Late Elia", ' Poor Relations", Stage illusion", Barbara s", " The Wedding". " The Child Angel: A Dream" " A Death Bed" " Old – China", to mention a few. He also gives his own account of the popular fallacies like" That a Bully is always a Coward" "That Ill – gotten gain never prospers" " That Enough is as Good as a feast, " That the worst puns are the Best", " That Handsome Is that Handsome Does" and so on.

4.15.5. A Critical Evaluation :

Cazamian praises Lamb: "His art exhausts and reconciles the dramas of very different flowerings of literature and along with that of the Renascence we feel in it the persisting flavor of Classicism".

In the words of Earnest Bernbaun " Many readers of Lamb's do not think of him as a sage or philosopher, because instead of expounding his wisdom in treatises or sermons he insinuated it in familiar essays, often humorous in tone and sometimes indulging in palpable exaggerations sallies of mere fooling. He was indeed a laughing philosopher but a philosopher nevertheless, and his chief thoughts constitute a system having something that " totality and individuality " which Coleridge discerned in his personality" Hugh Walker comments " no taint of gall passed into the nature so severely tried. In an age when the bitterness of the heart was allowed too often to distil from the pen, Lamb alone was never either wrong headed or wrong hearted."

Though Lamb started his career as a poet, he excelled as an essayist. The essays of Lamb fulfill the relevant characteristics of a literary essay. The essay proper, or literary essay is not only a short analysis of a

subject, not a mere epitome, but rather a picture of the writer's mind as affected for the moment by the subject with which he is dealing. Its most distinctive feature is the egotistical element. Montague chose himself for his subject because he was the only person whom he knew thoroughly, and therefore the only person he could truly describe to the world. This is an egotism devoid of self assertions, except in so far as it claims that the character of the writer is worth knowing, a claim quite consistent with modesty. Bacon's egotism shows itself like his treatment of friendship. In Sir Thomas Brown egotism becomes, as it were, impersonal, he is to himself the type of the human race Lamb's essays depict this kind of egotism blended with a sweetness all his own.

A literary essay is a short composition, one which can be easily read through in any interval of leisure and retained easily in the mind as whole. Lamb's essay are generally short and interesting for the readers. A Literary essay should be an assemblage of details carefully grouped rather than a system or theory worked out. It should suggest rather than prove, for it is more of a picture than of a narrative or a the thesis. A literary essay must be an artistic whole, developing a single idea and not a rambling of different subjects. Though Lamb's essays satisfy all these requirements, sometimes there tends to be a digression on his part where he rambles from one topic to another. However, it is the human interest that appeals to Lamb, he describes not so much things as their effect upon, or illustration in, human character. The artistic completeness of his treatment is perhaps best seen in "The old and New school Master' Where every detail bears upon the subject suggested by the title.

A literary essay calls for the light handling of the subject, but not frivolous. It must appeal, like a poem to the emotions and the heart rather than to the intellect. There need not be wisdom in it, but this must be imparted by presentation and not by argument; and here the egotism of the essay justifies itself, for the writer's personal experience is always a ready example and illustration. Bacon effects this by his constant use of poetic imagery and simile where the simile is a picture of the impression made by a fact upon the mind of the writer. Still the simile is not effective for this purpose as the direct 'I' of the Lamb. This is well seen in the opening paragraphs of " Witches and other Night fears" where Lamb defends the wisdom of our ancestors, presenting his arguments as his personal feelings on the subject.

Lastly, the essay must appear to be written, not without thought, but freely and openly without any after – consideration. Lamb, talking of the Essays of Elia says: " Crude they are, I grant you a sort of unlicked, incondite thing. " He is very truthful and honest about the things he writes. Again, the nature of his subjects, his constant reference to things never known by or forgotten by his readers, and yet connected with the town they lived in, or the nation they belonged to , produces the same effect as novelty. He tells an old story, but with some slight modifications that quite change its effect. At other times an old idea running in his mind serves as the ground work of a joke or pun.

Having seen how Lamb's essays can satisfy the characteristics of a literary essay, the reader is struck with Lamb's deft handling of the following as style dramatic characterization, extensive use of quotation, humour and pathos.

Style: There are many points in which Lamb imitates the Elizabethan writers, for instance, in his love for word coining, his fondness for alliteration, his use of compound words, his formation of adjectives from proper names, his frequent use of Latinisms. He also introduces many words now obsolete, and only to be found in Elizabethan writers. The result is a language which, like that of Spenser, could never have been spoken at any

time. Besides this, he is so familiar with the Elizabethan writers that when he follows their veins of thoughts he seems insensibly to adopt their style and the very cadence of their writing. When reflective, as in "New Year's Eve" and the "Popular Fallacies" his style resembles that of Sir Thomas Browne: when fantastic, as in the "Chapter on Ears" that of Burton, when witty, as in "Poor Relations", that of Fuller. His mind was so saturated with what he read that he could not avoid the use of their Phraseology. On rare occasions, like in "All Fools' Day" he used this antique style where the subject was not capable of that deep thought and fine observation with which we are used to associate it. But generally speaking, he shows great skill in adopting his style to his subject. In dealing with matters purely modern as in "Newspapers Thirty Five years ago", his style is purely modern also: In his rural description his tone is almost Wordsworthian. But whatever his style may be, his thoughts are his own, fresh and original and his honest admiration of what was great in the past has done much to check that conceit of the present, which is common in a rapidly- advancing civilization.

Dramatic Characterization

Procter writes: "Some of Lamb's phantasms the people of the Old South – Sea House, Mrs. Battle, the Benches of the middle Temple might be grouped into Comedies. His sketches are always full of witty delicacy; and if properly brought out and marshaled would do honor to the stage." This remark is true almost of all the characters in the essays; and it is some what surprising that, with this power of characterization, his two direct attempts at the drama, John Woodvil And Mr. H :- **should have been such failures. It seems that he could harmonize a scene, but not arrange or work out a plot. But besides this power of characterization, a certain dramatic effect is produced by the flexibility of his descriptive style, as may be seen in its rapid changes as he describes the different clerks in the South – Sea House.**

Use of Quotations

As a rule, Landor rightly remarks, the use of quotations only marks the weakness of the writer, and in fact it is only justifiable when the quotation adapts itself to the content, and does not strike the reader with any sense of incongruity. There is no reason why a writer should avoid using an idea, or the form in which a previous writer expressed that idea, if he can make its setting correspond to it. This is the justification of Milton in using passages from Latin and Greek writers and perhaps Lamb also justifies his free use of quotations. A careful perusal of his works will show that the quotations which he uses occur so repeatedly that they must have been constantly in his mind, and not raked up for the occasion. For instance, his quotations go thus:

a) Pretended quotations, as

"Which mortals candle call below"

The Child Angel

b) Random Quotations.,

"Those little airy tokens"

Popular Fallacies

c) Transformed Quotations, as" The note of the Cuckoo, a Phantom of a voice

My First Play

d) Adapted Quotations

" Prose hath her cadences"

Popular fallacies

Humour: The terms Wit, Humor and Fun are often confused, but they are really different in meaning. Wit is based on intellect while humour on insight and sympathy and fun on vigor and freshness of mind and body. Lamb's writings show all the three qualities, but what most distinguishes him is Humour, for his sympathy is ever strong and active. In Poor Relations the opening is sheer wit, but we are more inclined to cry than to laugh when we read the story of Favel's flight from the University. Humour might be defined as extreme sensitiveness to the true proportion of things. Free is, as Ollier says, the " Creation of animal spirits and health; it depends on the possession of sufficient vigor to forget ourselves for the moment and to look upon everything around us as formed for our amusement. We see this fun in "All fools" Day which is largely composed of mere pleasant nonsense like the idle talk when the wine is going round dinner; and in " Roast Pig", which is full of sheer absurditics. This same love of fun is seen In Lamb's fondness for punning, which he indulged in more freely in his conversation than in his writing. Punning was a characteristic of Elizabethan writers Lamb also frequently uses absurd details. Sometimes, his details are mere inventions as the discussion at St.Omer's when he was a student there; of the lawfulness of beating pig to death, and the study of the little chimney – sweep found sleeping on the state bed in Arundel castle. So also the thorough paced liar in " The old Margate Hoy" can hardly have been any one but Lamb himself. He takes the liberty of improving upon fact. In " AMICUS REDEVIVUS" he tells us that he drew his friend Dyer form the New River, Whereas he was away from home at the time and arrived only after Dyer had been resumed and put to bed. Another form taken by his fun is the constant mystification to which he treats his readers. After speaking of his real persons in the " South – Sea House" he pretends that they have no existence" I have fooled the reader to the top of his bent." In " Christ Hospital" he begins in the character of Coleridge, but towards the end he speaks as himself.

Use of Metaphors: There is a mixture of fun and wit in his metaphors and comparisons. The clerks of the South- Sea House remind him of the animals in a Noah's Ark; the sage who invented a less expensive way of roasting pigs than that which necessitated the burning down of house he compares to " Our Locke". The cook in " The Old Margate Hoy" reminds him of Ariel.

Irony: His fun passed into humour when there is an admixture of reflection. He is fond of a kind of reversed irony. He makes a statement or uses a phrase which at first is unpleasing, but becomes pleasing when we consider it more carefully. For instance he writes of " The rational antipathies of the great English and French nations."

Little hits: The essays are full of little hits at himself and others. He tells us that when at Oxford he is often mistaken for one of the Dons, but the mistake is made only by the dimayed vergers. Coleridge claims that title to property in a book is in " Exact ratio to the claimant's power of understanding and appreciating the same. Should he go on acting upon this theory, which of our selves is safe ? "

Humorous touches: Everywhere in the essays we find scattered little humorous touches Mrs. Battle loses her rubber because she cannot bring herself to utter the common phrase" Two for his heels" .When Bobo is discovered eating the roast pigs by his father, and finds time to attend to his remonstrance's and blows, he seizes a fresh pig and tears it into two parts, but it is the " lesser half" which he thrusts into the " fists" of his father.

Paradox and Oxymoron: All our reflective writers have been fond of paradox, and Lamb not less than others, so we observe many passages, such as, " Awoke into sleep and found the vision true" and so on. Now and then we notice instances of Oxymoron, as " Fortunate piece of ill fortune".

PATHOS

Humour is very nearly allied to Pathos. Our smiles and our tears are alike limited by our powers of insight and sympathy. Lamb's humour was largely the effect of a sane and healthy protest against the overwhelming melancholy induced by the morbid taint in his mind. He laughed to save himself from weeping, but as has been mentioned above, he could not prevent his mind from passing at times to the sadder aspects of life. In " Rosamond Gray", the description of his dead brother, in "Dream children, the flight of Favel from the university, in " Poor Relations", the story of the sick boy who "had no friends ", in " The Old Margate Hoy", and in many other instances we have examples of true pathos. In " New Year's Eve", In " Witches and other Night Fears" and the " Confession of a Drunkard"s - the feeling is so intense as to inspire terror than pity. Lamb's innate wisdom that is revealed in his essay entitles him to be considered not merely an essayist but also a thinker in his own way. Many of his essays are meant for our pure and unadulterated delight because in those essays, the essayist is concerned only with his pleasure and delight of the reader.

Let Us Sum Up: After reading the different aspects of Lamb's literary achievements, it is indisputable that in the history of English literature Lamb's place is assured. The life and literature of every writer is inseparable and so is Lamb's and few writers' life is so interesting and inspiring as that of Lamb. The man in Lamb is more endearing than in any other writer and he has the capacity to hold reader's affection with him.

4.15.6. Sample Questions:

1. Discuss the main features of the essays of Lamb.
2. " One of the secrets of Lamb's popularity as essayist lies in his power of visualizing memories" .Discuss.
3. Do you agree with the view that Lamb's personality is the most powerful source of the appeal that his essays have for the readers?
4. Write a critical note on Lamb's humour in Essay of Elia.
5. "Style is the man." How far is this saying applicable to Lamb's prose style?

4.15.7. Suggested Reading

1. The Essays of Elia and the Last Essays of Elia. Charles Lamb OUP London.

2. Essays of Elia Ed. N. H. Hallward and S.C. Hill, Macmillan &Co Ltd, New York 1960.

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Lesson - 16

EMMA

JANE AUSTEN

Contents:

4.16.1 Objectives:

- to give an insight into Jane Austen's Fictional Work Emma
- to study the social content of the novel and its qualities of plot, characterization, irony, etc.

4.16.2 Background – the writer and the period

Three types of fiction marked the close of the 18th century – the novel of manners, the novel of reform and the Gothic novel. These three evoked three types of responses – to stand and take stock of the situation, to attack it or to escape it. Jane Austen is a writer who cultivated a single form of fiction, the novel of manners with a singleness of purpose. Jane Austen has a place among the prominent literary writers of the age. The heart of her little world does not change with the passing of time. She deals only in essences that are universal and eternal. Her writings have such freshness and relevance to be presented as the creations of everyday. They are timeless. Mrs. Austen represents her fiction faithfully, purely and innocently. Such delightful innocence is hardly to be met with in literature.

She belongs to the period known as Romantic Revival or Revival of Imagination though these titles do not suit her. She was born a few years later than Wordsworth, Coleridge and Scott. In her works there is an extraordinary degree of truth of reality of a group of human beings, their relations with one another; their clashes and affinities, their mutual influences, their conversations and so on. Her novels belong to the age of Johnson and Cowper. She is a classical novelist who portrays a delicacy of a touch, a sense balance, a strict reasonableness in her novels. All her work is balanced with the spirit of classicism in its highest form, in its

most essential quality, a safe, orderly harmony among the powers of the mind, a harmony whereof necessity the intellect is paramount. She writes as one who is entirely ignorant of the growing force of Romanticism. Her reputation was on the ascendance in her own age but she was little known because of her fame had grown gradually Cornish says, "It is easier to feel than to estimate a genius which has no parallels. Miss Austen raised the novels to the highest place in the literature. She combines beauty with endurance, economy with quality, warmth with strength, humour with grace, cleanliness with simplicity, charm with dignity. All would have no purpose were they not imbued with the delicate traceries of her feminine paucities."

Edwin Muir in "Structure of the Novel" calls Jane Austen, "the first novelist who practiced the dramatic novel with consummate success in England. "Jane Austen's novels represent a microcosm of some larger moral universe.

The eighteenth century in the last decade witnessed the rise of Feminism in England; if not a widespread social movement, at least as a generally accepted ideal though Jane Austen – neither a social reformer nor a political thinker had no affiliation with contemporary Feminism. Her novels constitute essentially a study in woman's psychology. This introduction of the element of feminine awareness, humour talent and implicit, emerge as a new mode of perception in her novels. We become conscious of a thoughtful and intelligent woman's reaction to her environment. She sometimes portrays her men only as seen through the eyes of her women characters, so much so that they often fail to acquire any distinct identity of their own.

4.16.3 Life and Works

Jane Austen was born on December 16, 1775, the seventh of eight children – six boys and two girls. She had more than common varied contact with the limited world of provincial gentry because her father was a country clergyman, the rector of Steventon in the county of Hampshire in south central England. Though she accompanied her elder sister Cassandra to the boarding schools only to return home at the age of nine and remain there. She had the advantage of growing up and studying in an educated family. In the evenings amid the needless and other domestic activity, Mr. Austen would read aloud. The Austens were a novel reading family. But, for the novelist she was to become, her "education" was the total provincial community in which she came to maturity and of which she was to remain ever fond as both a place to live and a scene to delineate. In a letter of her adulthood she said that "such a spot in the delight of my life; three or four families in a country village is the very thing to work on."

She knew and loved this life because except for one real interval, she lived it; and in that interval she was unable to achieve any known completed work. ' This eight year period began in 1801 when Mr. Austen gave up the living of Steventon and retired to Bath. After his death in 1805 the mother and daughters moved to Southamphton, where they remained until in 1809 they moved to the little town of Chawton. She loved the life around her, but also saw the imperfection with a keen insight in her novels. She was aware of worldly happenings – the American and French Revolutions, the British maritime , the overdone peculiarities of Gothic and sentimental novels, the new emotional quality of Romanticism. Interestingly she kept herself away from these instead, she concentrated upon eternal mixed qualities of humanity – of human relationships – exemplified in the provincial society about her.

Her works can be grouped under three types of works:

1) Novels – which form into two divisions

   a) written within the ages of twenty and twenty two *Pride and Prejudice*; *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey*

   b) Written between the ages of thirty and forty: *Mansfield Park*, *Emma* and *Persuasion.*

2) Stories and uncompleted novels, a mention of which has been made in the Memories of Mr Austin Leigh; *The Watsons* and 'Lady Susan'; as story.

3) Letters – hasty letters of a girl and then of a woman, who regarded herself and only incident as writer or even a reader of books and whose inmost mind lay in her religion – a religion powerful in her life and not difficult to trace in her novels, but quite untheoritical and rarely open expressed. It gives some precious allusion to her novels; her favourite authors were Richardson, "Dear Doctor Johnson", Cowper, Miss Burney, Miss Edgeworth, Crabbe Scott and Byron.

It is said that her novel Pride and Prejudice had been written stealthily and remained unpublished for many years. Then she began another story The Watsons and because of some reason dissatisfied with it, left unfinished. The first chapter of *The Watsons* prove her to be a writer growing systematical and not a prolific genius. She chooses to write of the trivialities of day-to-day existences, of parties, picnics and country dances.

Mansfield Park produced a year after her great success with Pride and Prejudice intended t be a novel of moral import. Pride and Prejudice achieves a quality of transcendence through comedy and is animated by an impulse to forgiveness. almost the opposite can be said of Mansfield Park. Its impulse is not to forgive but to condemn. Its praise is not for social freedom but for social stasis. It takes full notice of spiritedness, vivacity, clarity and lightness, but only to reject them as having nothing to do with virtue and happiness, as being deterrents to the good life.

To Jane Austen, a man's profession was a matter of significance, having to do with two aspects of life – avowal of certain principles and beliefs and commitment to a particular kind of work. In the spiritual life of England in the nineteenth century, though faith in religion, was on the wane, much of the concern with profession had an ethical tinge about it, being a concern with duty. This view of a man's profession in nineteenth century England explains in large measure the commotion in Mansfield Park over the play incident, which to most of us today seems a storm in a tea – cup.

Pride and Prejudice pivots around those two qualities of Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet respectively. The misunderstanding vanishes when Elizabeth's love for Darcy grows out of esteem and gratitude and Darcy confesses the reason for his pride. The temporal substance of her novel – the manners and interests of the upper middle class in late eighteenth – and early nineteenth century England was that of her own surroundings from the beginning. While Pride and Prejudice is doubtless Jane Austen's most widely read and popular novel, many critics feel that her fullest achievement, the masterpiece of her six completed novels is Emma.

Miss Austen wrote Emma from 1814 to 1815 and by then reached a calm high point in her development as an artist, a point of steady, relaxed control over both her subject matter and her technique.

a) Introduction to Emma:

As has often been done, one can say that Emma, like Jane Austen's other novels, deals with the subject of young ladies finding proper husbands. On the surface this is what the story line of Emma is about, but the total subject matter of the book concerns much more than within the chosen limits of upper middle class society and within the even more limited strict feminine point of view for telling the story, Miss Austen is fervently preoccupied with the way people behave. And this is the broad area of the moralist if on the common rather than the exceptional behaviors of people, he is more likely to write comedy than tragedy.

Throughout Emma a deeper theme than that of a woman finding the appropriate man for herself defines the action. Emma Woodhouse's story is a progression in self – deception. Having since childhood been obliged to manage her father, she still likes to manage things and particularly people In fact, among her associates she feels confident to manage everyone except Mr. Knightly. In her long –term attempt to preside over the marriageability of Harriet Smith, the natural daughter of hitherto unknown persons, Emma pits herself against something in which she fundamentally believes in the eighteenth century belief in class status where one simply should stay in the class into which one is born. She deludes herself that Harriet's parents may have been of importance and hence tries to marry her off to people above her station in life with absolutely no foundation as this delusion stems solely from Emma's willful imagination.

Mr. George Knightley, on the other hand, in his sedate and kindly way accepts the social statu quo and governs himself accordingly, even cautiously Emma about what she is doing. On this major thematic point, Emma represents imagination and Mr. Knightley stands for realistic reasoning, two human characteristics that are so often in opposition, than a contrasting pairing of them leads to ruin. The story belongs primarily to Emma, for her willfulness most readily lends itself to satire and it is the feminine point of view that Jane Austen knows best. Still, for contrast Mr. Knightley is often enough on the scene to keep us reminded of the other side of the coin, and Mr. Woodhouse, Emma's father, is constantly before us as an extreme example of one who wants to keep things the way they are of the two men. So fearful of the least change that he bemoans the very thought of marriage and urges reason of health for not leaving his fireside even in good weather, and he is the main object of satire.

What Miss Austen has done is to take two human traits and put them in different characters in order to make her contrast highly effective. They belong to human nature in general and represent those ironical mixed qualities of humanity and human relationships. Throughout the story the reader feels that somehow extremes ideally should be able to meet on common group and be resolved into something right. There is doubtless significance far beyond the surface plotting of a love story in the fact that Miss Austen finally marries Emma and Mr. Knightley, that is imagination and reason. It is a common ground marriage of reason and imagination, of head and heart, of common sense and goodness. Based on a moralistic realism, Emma is a satirical comedy. Her satire not only probes the contradictory nature of opposite human qualities but also considers the ambiguous mixture of good and bad in anyone of these men and women.

4.16.4 SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

Volume One:

Youthful Emma Woodhouse, whose long-time governess and friend Miss Taylor has just married Mr. Watson, takes some solace in being left alone with her aging father by claiming that she made the match

herself. An old friend of the family, Mr. George Kinghtley, does not believe her. But in her certainty she decides that she must also marry off the young rector, Mr. Elton. Among her friends and acquaintances in the large and populous village of Highbury, she begins notice the young Harriet smith, the pretty illegitimate seventeen year old who lives at Mrs. Gdodard's boarding school. Determining first to improve Harriet, Emma discourages her interest in worthy Martin of Abbey – Mill Farm, declares that Harriet must be from more genteel parents than his, and fixes upon Harriet as Mr. Elton's future wife.

In bringing the two together socially, Emma does a drawing of Harriet which Mr. Elton admires and takes off to London to be framed. This appears so promising to Emma that, when Harriet receives a letter of proposal from Robert Martin, Emma discredits him and actually helps Harriet write a letter of refused in spite of the fact that Mr. Knightley has nothing but respect for Robert. Ensuring events developing a mutual regard, and endeavour, at the same time affirming that she herself will never marry.

For the Christmas holidays Mr. and Mrs. John Knightley, respectively the brother of George Knightley and the sister of Emma, come from London with their five children to visit the Woodhouses. On December 24, which proves to be a bad day of snow, all of them, including George Knightley and Mr. Elton, go for a dinner with the Westons there discussion turns to Frank Churchill, Westons handsome polished son by a former marriage but a son who has never been seen in Highbury John Knightley in particular treats it oddly improper that Frank has not yet called on his newly remarried father, even though Frank lives some distance away in Yorkshire with the Churchills. There have been letters from him and a pleasant surprise of the dinner party is an announcement that a recent letter sap that Frank will be coming for a visit within a fortnight an announcement that reminds Emma that, if she were ever to marry, Frank would suit her in age, character and condition.

The show increases to the point that the visitors feel that they must go if they are to reach home safely. To her consternation Emma finds herself alone with Mr. Elton I the second carriage but she is disconcerted even more when he begins insistently to declare his love for her and when he is amazed to learn that she thought him in love with Harriet. Emma's refusal of Mr. Eltons offer is firm but she is indeed worried that he has never thought seriously of Harriet. Her worry and self criticism continue through the night, mixed with resentment at the impertinence of Mr. Elton's aspiration towards herself fortunately for her, during the next few days everyone is confined to home by the weather on the firs good day, the John Knightleys return to London while Mr. Elton informs Mr. Woodhouse in a note that he is leaving for a visit to Bath. It is Emma's unhappy duty to inform Harriet about Mr. Elton and to console her, inwardly blaming herself for being in error. In addition to this disappointment in her plans, she learns that Frank Churchill has once again had to defer his visit because Mrs. Churchill is ill, a condition that many of Highbury doubt George Knightley in particular questions Frank's real sense of duty toward Mr. Weston and in a conversation with Emma, indicates that he does not share Highbury's and Emma's general tendency to think highly of the young man whom the town has never yet seen.

Volume Two

Though Miss Bates, as a harmless but compulsive talker, is a disagreeable in Emma's eyes, Emma pays a duty call to her and Mrs. Bates and learns that Miss Bates's orphan niece Jane Fairfax will arrive next week for a two months visit. Jane upon arrival is elegant, accomplished, and reserved and Emma does not like her when she learns that Jane and Frank Churchill had met at Weymouth.

George Knightley is about to tell Emma some news when Miss Bates and Jane arrive to announce that Mr. Elton, still in Bath, has become engaged to Augusta Hawkins there. Later Harriet comes to say that she has

encountered Robert Martin and his sister at Ford's shops downton, but Emma takes her mind off it relating the news about Mr. Elton.

Frank Churchill finally arrives and in very agreeable and lively. From the time of his first visit to the Woodhouse it is evident that Mr. & Mrs. Weston would like to make a match between him and Emma, but the call is ended by his going off to see the Bateses and Jane Fairfax. On subsequent meetings Emma is won over by Frank and in their discussion of Jane and her reserve Frank perfectly agrees with Emma. Faith in him is shaken when he runs off to London just to get a haircut, but he returns unabashed and continues to sparkle a party given by the Coles, Frank sits attentive beside Emma Jane, it is learned, has received a new piano forte. When Emma hints that Mr. Dixon, the husband of Jane's friend in Ireland, sent it, Frank politely agrees because of some improptu dancing at the Coles, Emma and Frank later plan to dance at the Crown Inn, but everything is overthrown when Frank has to leave owing to Mrs. Churchill's illness. Before going, Frank visits the Bateses and then the Woodhouses, leaving Emma pretty well convinced that he is in love with her, though she can picture herself only as refusing him.

Emma now thinks she is in love with Frank, but his letters to Mrs. Weston make Emma think also that she can do without him. Meanwhile her attention is taken up with Harriet and the arrival of Mrs. Augusta Elton, who has ease without elegance, is vain and overly talkative and proves to be an insufferable organizer and "manager". Mr. Knightley shows such respect for Jane Fairfax that Emma thinks he may be falling in love, but he declares that he would never ask her to marry him.

At a dinner which Emma dutifully gives for the Elton, Jane discloses that she always fetches the mail from the post office, and Mrs. Elton insists upon coming her. General relief by finding a situation as governess for her. But Jane, who is now to stay longer with the Bateses than originally intended, sap that she does not wish anything attempted at the present. In the midst of things, Mr. Weston arrives with the news that Frank will be with them again soon because on doctor's orders Mrs. Churchill must come to London for a stay in May.

Volume Three

By the time Frank Churchill returns Emma realizes that there is no attachment on her part. The ball at the Crown Inn now takes place when Harriet proves to have no dancing partner and Mr. Elton obviously slights her, George Knightley, who has not danced before gallantly leads her to the set and afterward even dances with Emma.

The next day Frank rescues Harriet from some gypsies and Emma thinks she sees something developing between them but decides not to interfere. It will be a mere passive scheme. Harriet indicates that she interested in someone above her, and Emma is sure that it is Frank. During a gathering at which they play a word game. Frank shoves words at Jane which makes George Kinghtley suspect that the two are involved, but Emma will not believe him.

In June strawberry party is held at Donwell Abey, George Knightley's estate. Emma observes George and Harriet walking together. Frank does not arrive; Jane Fairfax leaves early to home; and finally Frank arrives in agitation, not at all his usual smooth self. The next day on an exploring party to Box hill, Emma and Frank flirt; Jane appears bothered ; and Emma is rude to Miss. Bates. When Emma goes to make amends the next morning, she learns that Jane has accepted a position as governess and will be leaving soon. Frank too has to leave, but immediately, for Mrs. Churchill is ill and soon dies. Emma feels sorry for Jane's having to take a position but her attentions are repulsed.

Ten days later the Westons receive a brief letter from Frank in which he explains that he and Jane have been engaged since their being together at Weymouth; Mr. Churchill now gives his consent. It turns out that Harriet has not been thinking of Frank at all but rather of George Kinghtley. When Emma learns this, she is awakened to the fast that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself and she wishes that she had never seen Harriet and had let her marry Robert Martin. Knightley returns from a business trip, learns the news, and commiserates with Emma, who assures him that she has been captivated by Frank. The revelation leads Knightley to declare his own feelings for Emma, and they become engaged, though Emma knows that they cannot marry as long as she has to take care of her father, for she cannot leave them and he will not leave his home.

A very reasonable letter from Frank to Mrs. Weston explains satisfactorily his conduct at Highbury and his and Jane's need for secrecy. Emma is relieved, but she cannot set her mind at rest about Harriet, who now goes to visit the John Knightleys in London. Emma and Jane become reconciled as friends; George Knightley decides that, since Emma cannot leave her father, he will live with them; then it takes the combined persuasive forces of Emma, Knightley and the Westons to get Mr. Woodhouse to agree to the marriage when Harriet decides to marry Robert Martin after all Emma feels free enough that, after some small delaying tactics by Mr. Woodhouse, she and George Knightley are wed in "Perfect happiness."

4.16.5 ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

The unlimited, rewarding freedom of the novel as an art form is spectacularly evident in Jane Austen's novels. Her art is fundamentally anti – romantic. It was not due to an unawareness or lack of understanding of the romantic viewpoint and achievement, that is, the burlesque of the strongly romantic gothic novel in Northanger Abbey, the exploration of the dangers of excessive romantic feasibility in Mariane Dashwood in Sense and Sensibility, Emma's conversion from "an Imaginist" "on fire with speculation and foresight" to a rational being of "upright justice and clear sighted good will" at the core of the novel's meaning – but a greater affinity with the age of good sense. Emma illuminates an eighteenth century emphasis on graciousness and decorum, order and control in society –limited in this novel, as in most of her works, to "three or four families" in a country village built on values, insight and realistic observation. The clarity of her social observation is matched by the precision of her social criticism. In Pride and Prejudice social criticism aims at the complacency and snobbery of a strata of society above and executed to the discerning, sympathetically presented heroine.

Emma is no heroine in the conventional sense – she is the heroine of this novel only in the sense that she is its principal character and that it is through her consciousness that the situations are revealed. She is not merely spoilt and selfish, she is snobbish and proud, and her snobbery leads her to inflict sufferings that might ruin happiness. In the beginning of the novel, she dominates and directs the affairs of her social world but at the end she plays a less and less central part in it.

A good deal of the moral intensity of the novel arises from Jane Austen's understanding of and feeling about the problems of women in her society. Her attitude to the problem is at once compassionate and realistic. She knew marriage to be a market; in her "Letters" she wrote "single women have dreadful propensity for being poor – which is one very storing argument in favour of matrimony." In her portrait of Jane Fairfax, Jane Austen reveals the exploitation and degradation of the economically insecure, sensitive and intelligent, by ordinary, mediocre society a common and significant aspect of life as Jane Austen knew it.

In her male characters, Jane Austen explores variation on two traits, egotism and sociability, or "candour" which is the positive virtue sought by Mr. Knightley. These characters range from Mr. Elton the vain social snob, all egotism, to Frank Churchill, the man whose candour conceals a treacherous egotism, to Mr. Weston so

thoroughly amiable as to be nearly without judgement and yet an egotist himself, the egotism of parenthood, to Mr.Knightely who is the pivot, the middleman moderate and sound, balanced and humane.

Emma is conceived in irony which is the high point of the novel. The three major narrative movements in the novel are built on irony. Emma's encouragement of the courtship she imagines Mr. Elton carrying on with Harriet smith which ironically results in Mr. Elton proposing to Emma herself; Emma's games with Frank Churchill, whom she also assigns to Harriet after a time, only to find that he has been engaged to Jane Fairfax all along; finally her rivalry with Harriet over Mr. Knightley which ends with Emma getting the man she loves, but not until she has lived some days with the fear that he prefers Harriet and with the knowledge that she herself has unwillingly taught her protégée to hope for him.

POLT

Jane Austen's Emma embodies the eighteenth century concern for integral organic form shining with balance, order and symmetry. In Emma plot, character, dialogue and style are all integrally linked and animated by a unified and unifying impulse with nothing redundant or irrelevant.

a) Plot: The plot is extremely neat and economic. Some generalization should be kept in mind when one considers the plot of Emma. Jane Austen puts her story together in seeming leisureliness. There is little external climactic action, and there is no adventurous action. Primarily, the reasons are that it is a satirical novel about social manners and mores and that the narrative action comes more from the effects of emotion than from emotion itself. Yet it is one of the most tightly knit works of Jane Austen. For, since much of the book is plotted for purposes of irony, the novelist prepares the reader for the misunderstandings and the foibles of the people in her provincial community of Emma.

The plot structure of the novel is regulated in part by its division into three volumes. In volume one, Emma deceives herself about Mr. Elton and that deception reaches its climax in his declaration in the carriage; volume two shows her deceiving herself about Frank Churchill and getting over it in a much less climatic fashion; volume three continues her self- deception about people but reaches its major climax in the ultimate revelation about herself and George Knightley. Obviously, many other developing factors are involved, but in brief outline; these are the three rising and falling actions in the novel. Only the last one is final, for Emma throughout is more and more self-deceived, though at the same time, she is also moving toward self-knowledge which will let her come to terms with herself and her situation.

This skeletal plot structure becomes dense in many ways. The force of man-against environment is seen primarily in terms of Emma versus her social milieu: she goes against the accepted manners and social ranks in trying to manipulate Harriet either from or into the social and personal lives of others. The most consistent plot force in the novel is man-against himself. Emma is constantly deceiving herself and is thus in conflict with herself. Emma is ironically against herself because she is against her environment. She has accepted the code of her society but at the same time, due to her imbalance of imagination and reason, she wants to go against it; both the code and her opposing will fullness are important to her-hence conflict.

The overall pattern of plot movement is classic. The major climax, the highest point of reader's interest, comes in chapters XI, XII, XIII in the final volume. followed by an unraveling denouement.

The movement designed to increase the interest of the reader can be charted like the rising, peaking and falling on a graph. Another major plot pattern used in the novel is that of contrast .Plot manipulation juxtaposes significantly different characters such as Frank and George. The plot is quite complex with more than one element often working at once. Composed of classic pattern, contrast and planned general social satire, all facets are based upon conflict. Underlying all these conflicts is the motive of comic irony.

b. Setting: Jane Austen's setting is that of provincial community, particularly as it involves the gentry of the region. Primarily the setting is the drawing room or its equivalent. Vegetation and terrain are hardly mentioned, for the real setting in the social involvement, the human relations which are nowhere concerned with the specifics of geography. Instead, they find their natural setting among the drawing rooms, the dining rooms, the rooms for dancing, the carriages and so on.

c. Point of View:

Mostly the point of view is that of Emma. It is necessary to be hers if Jane Austen is to explore the character of a willful and somewhat snobbish young lady and at the same time keep the reader's sympathy for her. Only thus can we be convinced that Emma character really blends honesty and goodwill with her negative qualities. Sometimes the point of view is that of the author. The novelist occasionally steps briefly into the point of view of other characters and tactfully pulls the reader back to her own point of view in order that he see things in terms of ironic satire. Point of view, sometimes, is omniscient when it is to the author's purpose, but the character whose point of view is most before us is Emma, the focal personage of the novel.

d. Characters:

With the exception of Emma other the characters are generally static ones. They do not change. They are likely to be simply confined in their views, for they live in and accept a stable if static society. However, the type of characters portrayed is varied and so is the degree of their realistic development. Among the lesser developed but important ones, we may note Mr. Woodhouse, John Knightly and Augusta Elton. They appear to be one-dimensional because they consistently show their one dominant coloring, and so far as treatment of them in the novel is concerned, they are one-dimensional. Mr. Woodhouse, in his gentle selfishness, is the petty arch-conservative, wanting absolutely nothing to change and constantly being apprehensive about matters of health. John is rather unsocial because he wants to rest content with his family in his domestic comforts. Augusta is always seen as the talkative busybody who preens herself on her supposed social importance. Miss Bates is like an archetype of the boring non-stop talker. She is one of the most kindhearted and thankful persons imaginable. Harriet Smith is a simple but pretty girl. Jane Fairfax is a skillfully employed foil for Emma. Frank Churchill comes through with better delineation. He has admirable qualities but is too frivolous to be truly admirable. George Knightly is one of the most important figures in the book, though during much of the time he is rather in the background of events. He is benevolent and strong enough to impress Emma with a critical good sense. His reasoning and comment upon events are much those of the author, and he constitutes a relational thread of cohesiveness running through the novel.

Emma Woodhouse is the main character and hers is the most fully rounded, three-dimensional characterization. Her dominant trait is willful imagination, but she also has the elements of goodwill,

rationality. She is the fundamental changing character in the novel as she grows from self-deception to self-knowledge. Her characterization has been so well done that one cannot be absolutely sure that she will never scheme again, but one can feel that she has a good chance of remaining on terms with herself and her environment because of her growth and because of George Knightly who is with her and ethical purpose. Finally, her nove's are instructive for their moral instruction to us about men and manner in a very objective, though ironic way.

I am going to take a heroine whom no one but myself will much like," said Jane Austin of her novel Emma, and one might set the remark against her comment that Annie Elliot, the heroine of Persuasion was almost too good for her. It is presumably a moral objection. Her fears will be brought against Emma; and it is to be by resolving the situation - by fitting Emma into the moral expectations which she projects outwards into the audience. The Self-willed quality of Emma in which her attractiveness for reader and for novelist resides, must be contained and adapted, adapted to a norm which is neither social nor doctrinaire

There is a considerable difference in the degree to which the figures in Emma are characterized. Emma herself is very fully drawn, and her personality is seen to develop and alter in the course of the novel, but some of the other characters though they play important roles, are much less individualized, such as Jane Fairfax. All the characters, though, are made familiar to the reader through their conversation rather than through their action or Jane Austen's descriptions of them.

Emma Woodhouse:

When the narrative opens, Emma is a spoilt, self-confident and rather conceited young woman of twenty, though one is inclined to think of her as being older.

She is an heiress and the daughter of the principal inhabitant of a small Country town or village, and is therefore accustomed to being looked up to and deferred to on all occasions. The novel tells us show she makes mistakes through being too self-confident and deaf to wiser counsels, and how she eventually learns wisdom and humility. One of her redeeming features is that she is capable of learning by experience.

Her self-confidence, and trust in her own understanding of humanity, which, in fact, is limited, lead her to believe that she is justified in trying to arrange other people's lives for them and though she is warned by George Knightley: she continues in her match making. She also has the audacity to assure Mr. Knightley that he is quite wrong in imagining that there is any understanding between Jane Fairfax and thank Churchill, but subsequent events prove he was right.

She accuses Mrs. Elton of being "self-important, presuming familiar, ignorant and ill-bread", but is herself guilty of at least some of there faults. She is in such a need to being considered the first consequences in Highbury that Mrs. Elton's arrival and claims to notice as a newly wedded bride put her nose quite out of joint. Nor does she appreciate that it is even more presumptuous to arrange marriages for others than it is even more presumptuous to arrange picnics or jobs for them. Emma laughs at Mrs. Elton for her talk of the sucklings' "barouche – landau", but deliberately puts the

martins in what she conceives to be their place by taking Harriet in the Wood house carriage for a formal fifteen minutes call. And though in general, Emma is not vulgar as is Mrs. Elton, she is guilty of one shocking outburst of bad manners, when she so unkindly scores off poor, harmless Miss Bates during the Box Hall picnic.

Emma has some very good qualities, too. She is honest enough to admit her faults when she recognizes them. She takes Mr. Knightley's strictures on her behaviour to Miss Bates as they mere meant, and is truly repentant from that moment and she begins to take stock of herself, as it mere, and to try to improve; and where possible, to try to put right what she has done wrong. She tries to show by her attitude to Miss Bates that she regrets her behaviour, and, in the same way, tries to make amends for her neglect of Jane Favifax. Nor does she bear ill-will for the obvious snubbing she receives. Her own sufferings over Mr. Knightley make her infinitely more understanding of, and sympathetic towards, Jane in her uncomfortable situation, and she goes more than half-way to effect a reconciliation. When she finally perceives the unfortunate results of her ill-judges efforts on Harriet's behalf, she does her best to find some disfraction for her; though her solution sending her to ondon – ha› the added merit, from her own point of view, of avoiding awkward meetings between them.

There is one good quality which Emma shows consistently and that I her unfailing patience and consideration for her tiresome old hypochondriac of a father, even when she is feeling most unhappy.

From one point of view, the whole subject – matter of Emma revolves around the heroine's painful discovery of the truth about herself, the gradual stripping of herself of illusion – a similar theme is worked out around the character of Catherine Morland in Northanger Abbey. Emma, "handsome, cleaner, and rich", is always extremely confident of being right, though in faith she is almost always embarrassingly wrong 'The whole novel is conceived as an ironical survey of how Emma discovers the truth about herself. Emma is always at the centre of the action, always the most important character, to a very much greater extent than Elizabeth Bennet in Pride and Prejudice or Fanny price in Mansfield Park.

Suggested Reading.

1. Critics on Jane Austen ed. Judith O'Neill, George Allen and Unwin Ltd. London. 1970

sse. Theme:

The theme is man's absurdities, those common, frequent, and more laughable ones of society, its code of manners, and its fabricated engagement of man's time, thought and energy. Beneath Austen's satiric comedy is a moralistic realism. By picturing the real incongruities of social matters, she implies what may be right: the ideal balance between head and heart, common sense and goodness, rationality and imagination or emotion. Thematic satire at the expense of manners and people of this world is given throughout the book. A major thematic irony is that at the end Austen lets the reader see that, in spirit of the surface doubts and disturbance, there was never any real danger that the environmental fabric would be changed because of,or for,Emma.This certainity is driven home by the comfortable pairing of off the marriageable couples.

f. Style : Perhaps the best description of style in Emma is that it is subtle. The tone of the book is one of absolute ease and surely on the part of the author, who handles her material with such deft touches that for an unperceptive reader, the story and the writing may seem to be ordinary. Jane Austen makes use of the subtle antithetic balance of word and phrase. Her style achieves exactly the proper distancing she wants between the reader and the fictional subject. There is an acute and realistic observation coupled with an ironic difference between human intention and performance. Finally, one has to comment about Jane Austen's mastery of dialogue. Her ear for the way women in particular talk is very good indeed. In terms of authorial style, it should be further noted that the use of direct and indirect conversation varies according to how much the reader needs to be involved in the immediate material, for the indirect reportage puts more distance between the reader and the material and allows at times a better satirical view. Thus, form the smallest choice of words to the largest presentation of conversation and scenes, Austen's style is subtle and may be witty, sharp, epigrammatic, abstract, or distancing according to the satiric need. Jane Watt observes, "Jane Austen faces more squarely than Defoe, for example, the social and moral problems raised by economic individualism and the middle class quest for improved status". As Walter Allen comments "She is with Dr. Johnson, the most forthright moralist in English, and the authority which comes we feel, from vast experience of life, a massive common sense, and an integrity determined to face all the facts of life without seeking refuse in illusion is hers too" .

Emma is conceived in irony which is the high point of the novel. Mud Rick says: "Her temperament chose irony at once.... To sharpen and expose all the incongruities between form and fact, all the delusions intrinsic to conventional art and conventional society." Edwin Muir speaks of Jane Austen as "the first novelist who practiced the dramatic novel with consummate success in England". F. Bradbrook comments " The importance of conversation makes the novels naturally dramatic and they fore shadow later examples of satirical comedy or fiction implying a civilized standard of personal relationships".

4.16.6 To Sum Up : Thus, in this lesson we have come to know irony as an important organizing principle of Jane Austen's art, in characterization, Plot style and point of view. Her world is small, but it has a moral purpose and ethical relevance. Finally, her novels are "three inches of ivory" with realistic insights into human actuality with moral purpose. Her method is ironic, as her vision is flawless and objective.

4.16.7 Sample Questions:

a. Describe the plot structure of Emma.

b. "Emma is a heroine whom no one but myself will much like." Do you agree with Jane Austen's comment?

c. Consider Emma as a satiric comedy

d. What is the theme of Emma?

e. Discuss the critical statement that Jane Austen's point of view is a feminine one in Emma.

f. Comment on the characterization of Jane Austen with reference to Emma.

4:16.8 Suggested Reading

1. Cecil, Lord David. Jane Austen. Cambridge 1933.
2. Lascelles, Mary: Jane Austen and Hert Art. London, 1939.
3. The Pelican Guide to English Literature from Blake to Byron. Ed. Boris Ford Penguin Books, Britain. 1957.
4. Warner, Sylvia Townsend. Jane Austen 1771-1823 London, 1951.
5. Judith O'Neill, (ed.) Critics on Jane Austen

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