

**TWENTIETH CENTURY -  
PROSE AND FICTION  
(DEG25)  
(MA - ENGLISH)**



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## Lesson – 1

# TRENDS IN TWENTIETH CENTURY PROSE

### 5.1.1 Objectives

- to study the growth and development of XX Century English Prose
- to study various prose modes, such as Scientific, Historical and Biographical

### 5.1.2 Essayists :

In this century journalism has nurtured and housed literary and informal essays. Many of the modern essayists began their literary career as columnists of newspapers. The literary writing in newspapers had a healthy impact on journalistic prose and raised its standards. The essayists have to face a severe constraint and fill a limited space, sticking rigidly to a time schedule. The imposed discipline exercises a salutary effect on the form and content of essays. In another sense newspapers offer unfettered freedom to the writer. The essayist can pick up his subject anywhere and can cover anything, everything and nothing. The writers' material is life and he has the freedom to comment on any aspect of life in any manner. He has to write in a transparent and pleasing style and avoid technical jargon and complexities associated with formal and technical writing.

### 5.1.3 Modern Essayists :

A brief account of representative modern essayists who have made rich contribution to the field of essay writing appears below:

#### **Max Beerbohm (1872-1956)**

Max Beerbohm holds a high place as a twentieth century essayist. He is a creative critic of literature and life and has the genius to burst the bubbles of snobbery and pretence with wit, irony and satire. He has revived the art of parody and in his "A Christmas Garland", parodies the style and writings of A.C. Benson, Wells, Conrad, Bennett, Shaw and a dozen other writers. He is also a renowned cartoonist and his coloured cartoons are witty and delicate examples of the art of caricature. His literary excellence gives the caricatures their unique touch as they carry in minute handwriting, a crisp comment in the artist's ironic prose lashing at the current foibles and follies.

In his essay 'On Big Words' he says, 'If we are wise, our wisdom will gain from the simplicity of our speech, and if we are foolish, our folly will only shout the louder through the big words'. 'A fine use of words does not necessarily mean the use of fine words....Quite ordinary words employed with a certain novelty and freshness can wear distinction that gives them not only significance but a strange and haunting beauty'.

A. C. Ward sums up his work thus: 'In an age of hurry he never hurried; in a machine age he preserved in his writings and drawings the delicate

craftwork of a more leisured and less strenuous time; in an age when most could write moderately well but few had anything to write about, he was perfect in both manner and matter’.

### **G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936)**

Essayist, novelist, poet, Chesterton began his career as a literary journalist and it is in this field that his most successful work was done. Though primarily an essayist, he also wrote a few critical studies - Robert Browning (1903) (an excellent straightforward guide), Dickens (an enthusiastic study). Orthodoxy (an exposition of Christian religion), What is Wrong with the World (a book on his political and social beliefs) are some of his other important writings.

He wrote for The Daily News when AG Gardiner was its editor. He used to review in its columns all sorts of books and write on every topic under the sun. As a writer he is noted for his witty and clear presentation of commonplace thoughts. As E. Albert observes in his History of English Literature, “the Quizzical humour, the scintillating wit, the delight in mental gymnastics, in paradox and epigram and the wholehearted defense of whatever is old or gay or romantic, are things which distinguish his writing from that of any of his contemporaries.”

### **E .V. Lucas (1868- 1938)**

E.V.Lucas, a journalist of wide scholarship is famous as the editor and biographer of Charles Lamb. He edited a definitive edition of the works and letters of Charles Lamb (1903-5) and wrote the standard Life of Charles Lamb (1905). His remaining works include travel books, essays, books about paintings and a number of volumes that hover between essay and novel (which he called ‘entertainments’). Reading, Writing and Remembering (1932) is an interesting record of his reminiscences.

His essays reveal his preference for the curious, the human and the ridiculous. His mind is that of a critic and commentator. His fancy and playful mind can transform any incident, absurdity or character and express it with wit and form. His essays display wisdom, sentiment literary artifice, commonsense and lightness of touch.

### **A.G. Gardiner (1865- 1946)**

A.G.Gardiner a delightful modern essayist wrote under the pen name of ‘Alpha of the Plough’. His volume of essays ‘Pebbles on the Shore’ (1916) Leaves in the Wind (1920). Many Furrows read like short stories and are full of amusing anecdotes and homely illustrations. He assumes the role of a preacher and moralist and his essays aim at uplifting the morals and manners of the war-ridden British society. But he has a cheerful disposition and does not attempt to thrust his views on his readers. His wide appeal is due to his use of simple words, simple phrases and simple sentences.

As A.S.Collins says, 'At ease with the world and himself, he wrote with a detachment that gives a timeless wisdom to his commentary on life. Unlike so many of his contemporaries, he did not want to change the world, but to encourage it to live, sanely, decently and happily'.

He avoids the slipshod journalistic writing and writes in a pleasing conversational style with flashes of humour and irony. Clarity, epigrams, sense of balance, phrase-making gift, are other features of his appealing prose style.

### **Robert Lynd (1879-1949)**

Robert Lynd, an outstanding essayist started his career as a journalist, and made his regular weekly contribution to the New Statesman, for about twenty years, recording his reflections on contemporary events with gaiety and gusto. The Pleasures of Ignorance (1921), Collected Essays (1923), The Money Box (1925) The Green Man (1928), It is Fine World, include his major essays.

His essays are personal and reflect his likes and dislikes on a variety of subjects. As a skilled phrase-maker he could describe a Cup Final with his eye on many things beside the game. J.B. Priestley has the following apt observation on his work: "He has marched into literature by way of journalism, the day's round, the common task. It is not every body's way; it is especially suitable for writers with well stored, sane and masculine minds, men who can take hold of experience and translate it freely, who can ransack their own minds and plunder the outside world with an equal measure of success; and when once a man does enter into literature by this road, there can be no doubt as to his capacity; he is worth hearing'. His commentaries on life are characterised by sanity, a fine sense of humour, tolerance, and natural sincerity. But he detested brutality, malice, and intolerance. Lynd is also a writer of fine critical prose and his essay on Modern poetry illustrates his insight into modern poetry and poetic trends.

### **J.B. Priestley**

Priestley, the critic, dramatist, and novelist is also a fine essayist. His essays are noted for his broad humanity, shrewd sense of true values, knowledge of men, narrative power and humour. In the English Comic Characters he is able to recreate with zest the great comic figures, in English literature like Sir Toby Belch and Mr.Collins. His essays are enlivened by allusions drawn from his wide reading. Priestley prefers a familiar and simple style. Explaining the reason for his choice of such a style he says "Deliberately I aim at simplicity and not complexity in my writing. No matter what the subject in hand might be, I want to write something that at a pinch I could read aloud in bar-parlour (And the time came when I was heard and understood in a thousand bar-parlours). I do not pretend to be subtle and profound, but when I am at work, I try to appear simpler than I am. Perhaps I make it too easy for the reader, do too much of the toiling and sweating myself".

#### 5.1.4 Travel Literature and Books on Nature and Country Side

English literature is noted for its rich travel literature and the twentieth century works in the field sustain this rich tradition. W. H Hudson (1841-1922) and Cunningham Graham (1852-1936) traveled in remote parts of the world and assimilated with zest wanderer's lore. But Hudson wrote some of his most entrancing books about English Countryside and Cunningham was at his best when he wrote about his native Scotland.

Hudson is one of the front rank writers of Countryside and Nature. He combines an acute power of absorption in noting natural phenomena and a supreme power of self-expression. His special interest is in appreciation of wild life, particularly birds. *British Birds*, *Birds in London*, *Birds and Man* are some of his significant book on bird life. He was able to recognize by their songs alone over one hundred and fifty different varieties of South American birds. His *Shepherd's Life* takes us to the heart of nature and country life. His prose is scientifically precise, sensitive, concrete, direct and free from jargon.

The travel accounts of Cunningham are about Scottish life and character. As A.S.Collins observes, "His pages are vigorous as life itself - while Hudson is placid and meditative, with passages sweet as birdsong, Graham is turbulent and explosive, restless as the broken waters of a mountain stream falling over jagged rocks". His accounts of his eastern travels in Magreb-el-Acksa, and from the Mouth of Sahara are poetic and illuminating. He peered into many of the world's remote corners and his books record with force out-of-the way experiences in out-of-the way places. Shaw was fascinated by his Morgeb-el-Acksa (Morocco the most holy) and commends 'its picturing of' scenery, surroundings, its atmosphere, its geography, its knowledge of the East, its fascinating Cadis and Kro-boys and Sheiks' castles".

The Arab countries of the Middle East have attracted a number of British travellers and we have vivid accounts by them of the desert scene, the Arab temperament, the enduring and attractive ancient monuments and the survival of ancient patriarchal customs. T.E.Lawrence (1888-1931) became a legend and a man of mystery in Arabia and his *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* is an epic in prose and the most significant literary work on the primitive manners and customs of the Arabs. The man and matter are interlinked in this book. It reveals as much of Lawrence as the sands of Arabia. The style is vivid and graphic and has a quality of grandeur. It is more than one man's experiences: in a very poetic style it includes reflections on man's nature as well as descriptions of battle and of the beauty of the great desert.

H.M. Tomlinson (1872-1958) describes his voyage to South America right into the heart of the jungle in *The Sea And The Jungle*. *Face of the Earth* (1950) gives an account of his trip from England to Spain in a small vessel. *Malay Waters* gives an account of the courage and endurance of sailors who fought heroically in exotic lands during the second World War. Tomlinson writes as a born traveler in an original, philosophic and humorous style. While Tomlinson loved travel and sea voyage for its own sake and for the joy of

adventure, Sacheverell Sitwell, another travel writer shows interest in the people, the scenery, art, architecture, music, literature and festivals of foreign countries. His other travel books include the Gothic North, Touching the Orient, Prime Scenes and Festivals. He identifies himself with the countries he visited and his musical prose recreates the scenes in all its sensuous details.

The travel records of Joseph Conrad, D.H. Lawrence and Graham Green also form part of modern travel literature.

### **5.1.5 Biographers**

The intention driving many writers of this century has been the wish to describe things, as they are without being influenced by tradition or convention. One of the early works of biography to attempt this was Lytton. Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918) which gave a very different picture of the people he described (including Queen Victoria) from the admiring portraits drawn in the last century. Strachey wanted to correct the public picture of famous people who were always described as honest, clever and brave and to show they were no more perfect than any one else.

Strachey dealt with his subjects in a provocative way without embroidery. As tales of men and women, his work is absorbing from beginning to end but there is less in the tale than in the telling. With brilliance and force he turned biography into an art. Irony was the most powerful weapon of Strachey and his brilliant and unexceptional style added vigour to his handling of irony. He presented the *Eminent Victorians* (Dr. Arnold, General Gordon, Florence Nightingale, Cardinal Newman) as men and women instead of as inanimate idols.

Philip Guedalla (1889-1944) considered biography as the painting of portraits with a touch of art. He considered the earlier biographies as dismal products and aimed at lively presentation. His *Supers and Supermen* (1920), *Masters and Men* (1922) and *A Gallery*, include fine sketches of Victorians and their contemporaries including Disraeli, Lord Asquith, Hardy and Wells. All his portraits are drawn with glittering wit. Sir Osbert Sitwell brought out the history of his family in six volumes and it shows his love of the past and his unqualified admiration for a Victorian way of life.

Lord David Cecil's *The Stricken Deer* (which deals with the life of poet Cowper) Peter Quinzel's *Byron*, Virginia Woolf's *Life of Roger Fry* are some examples of the important biographical works of this century.

### **5.1.6 Literary Critics**

Critical essayists have produced some of the best prose of this century. Some of this has been by the work of writers whose achievement is primarily in fiction. Henry James in his prefaces and his works and his works like *The Art of Fiction* and *Notes on Novelists* combines theoretical grasp with a subtly persuasive, tone. Lawrence gets to underlying issues with remarkable force in

works like classic American Literature. Virginia Woolf's *The Common Reader* is another example of successful modern prose. C.S. Lewis displays a mind that can deal with any literary topic with ease and simplicity. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch waged a successful battle against jargon and in support of simplicity in prose style.

Dr. Leavis edited the distinguished critical journal *Scrutiny*. He was against romantic vagueness in criticism or creation and advocated matter of fact, precise and concrete criticism. *New Bearings in Poetry*, *The Great Tradition Revaluation* and *The Common Pursuit* are some of his important works.

A.C. Bradley is an authority on Shakespeare and his famous *Shakespearean Tragedy* is a scholarly survey of Shakespeare's principal tragedies. *Oxford lectures on poetry* carries his illuminating views. Sir Walter Raleigh's main works are *English Novel*, *Wordsworth*, *Six Essays on Johnson* and these works show his mastery of the subject and capacity for expressing his conviction with clarity and force. His traditional criticism is free from technical jargon. Prof. Saintsbury's criticism is noted for its scholarship and style.

### **5.1.7 Historical Writing**

There has been a rapid growth of historical writing in twentieth century and a few historians have achieved the distinction of creating literature in the process of writing history. Sir Winston Churchill displays remarkable command of language in his historical writings. His *History of the second world war* is a masterpiece rooted in his direct personal experience. His mastery of prose, his dramatic sense of history, his deep personal involvement and his patriotic fervor make this work a remarkable and powerful narrative. His *History of the English Speaking Peoples* shows the same narrative sweep and dramatic power.

*The Outline of History* by H.G.Wells is another monumental work of vast magnitude and wide range. G.M.Travelyan's popular works are his *History of England* and *English Social History*. He writes with an eye for vivid detail and his gripping narratives are well documented. A.J.Toynbee's *A Study of History in Twelve Volumes* is perhaps the biggest historical work of the century.

Sir. James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* is a great work of history. It is a massive work on ancient civilizations and primitive societies, their myths and legends and present invaluable materials for theologians, philosophers, psychologists and creative writers.

### **5.1.8 Scientific and Philosophic prose**

In the modern period scientific thinking affected all branches of life and learning, religion, ethics sociology and politics. Eminent scientists also wrote popular books on scientific themes. A.N. White Head, Julian Huxley, J.B.S

Haldane F. Hoyle, Sir, Oliver Lodge are some of the authors of popular scientific works.

Bertrand Russell's questing mind probed every aspect of human behavior. A non-conformist he campaigned against nuclear weapons and Vietnam war and plunged into political controversy and sociological debates. His works numbering about 40 including his autobiography are noted for their clarity and distinctive prose style, logical and effortless, enlivened by wit and insight. Whatever be the topic - scientific, philosophic or political Russell could sum up his main views cogently and in a few clear and simple sentences.

Aldous Huxley covers in his essays a wide range of topics with his characteristic insight and clarity.

### **5.1.9 To Sum up :**

In this lesson, we have studied the various prose modes, such as the Biography, Scientific writing, Historical Writing and so on. We also discussed the various literary and non-literary uses of English Prose in XX Century.

### **SUGGESTED READING:**

1. Short Oxford History of English Literature
2. David Daiches: Companion to Literature – British and Commonwealth
3. A.C.Ward : Twentieth Century English Literature
4. W.H.Hudson : Introduction to the Study of literature

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## Lesson - 2

# T.S. ELIOT AS CRITIC

### Contents

- 5:2:1 Objectives
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### 5:2:1 Objectives:

1. To introduce T.S. Eliot as a Critic
2. To make the students understand, appreciate and evaluate T.S. Eliot's Critical Views on
  - a) poetry
  - b) drama and
  - c) criticism
3. To make the students understand Eliot the critic in relation to Eliot the poet.
4. To familiarize them with some of the important concepts in Eliot's Critical discourse.

### 5:2:2 Eliot's Life and Works:

Thomas Sterns Eliot was born on September 26, 1888 at St. Louis in the United States of America. He entered Harvard University in 1908. There he attended the lectures of George Santayana and Irving Babbitt and was greatly influenced by them. Between 1910 and 11, he was in Paris, studying French literature and Philosophy. On his return to America, he continued his study of philosophy at Harvard and also learnt Sanskrit and Indian philosophy. With the help of a traveling scholarship, he visited Germany in 1913. He was studying philosophy at Merton College, Oxford when the first World War broke out in 1914. He now settled in England and his first mature poems were published in English periodicals in 1915-16. He taught for a time at Highgate school and after sometime worked in a London Bank. After the war, he was an active contributor to the literary periodicals of London. He founded and edited The Criterion. He also became a director of the publishing firm, Faber and Faber. He was naturalized as a British subject in 1927. Eliot was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1947 and in 1955 the Hanseatic Goethe Prize was awarded to him. In 1957, Eliot married his secretary Valerie Fletcher. On 4<sup>th</sup> January 1965, Eliot died at the age of seventy-six.

Eliot's literary output can broadly be classified under three heads namely (1) Poetry (2) Drama and (3) Criticism. Since the focus of the present lesson is on Eliot's critical output, let us take a look at Eliot's Prose writings:

<b>(i) Literary Criticism:</b>		
The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism	-	1920
Homage to John Dryden	-	1924
For Lancelot Andrews: Essays on Style and Order	-	1928
Dante	-	1929
The use of Poetry and the use of criticism	-	1933
Elizabethan Essays	-	1934
The Music of Poetry	-	1942
The Classics and the Man of Letters	-	1948
What is a Classic?	-	1945
Poetry and Drama	-	1951
The Three Voices of Poetry	-	1954
<b>(ii) Collected Editions of Literary Criticism:</b>		
Essays Ancient and Modern	-	1936
Selected Essays	-	1951
Selected Prose	-	1953
On Poetry and Poets	-	1957
<b>(iii) Sociological and Cultural Criticism:</b>		
Thoughts after Lambeth	-	1931
After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy	-	1934
The Idea of a Christian Society	-	1939
Notes Towards a Definition of culture	-	1948

You will know about Eliot's dramatic and poetic works in one of the later lessons.

### 5:2:3 Background to Eliot:

In this section let us briefly examine some of the most significant influences on T.S. Eliot.

The influences on Eliot are many and varied-both native and foreign, but he has not simply copied others. Eliot's precocious mind has digested innumerable influences. His mind was so fine that it compressed everything into unity, system and coherence. In spite of the multifarious influences, there is an identity of spirit, progression and development.

The classical trait and the disposition towards order and discipline in T.S. Eliot can be likened to the nature and the temperament of his father and grandfather.

Eliot entered Harvard in 1906, took his Bachelor's degree in 1909, his Master's in 1910; spent a year in Paris; and studied for three years at Harvard from 1911 to 1914.

Harvard in Eliot's time was the seat of great learning and wisdom. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a number of intellectuals like William James, Santayana, Royce and Babbitt were lecturing and training their students to unfold their own potentialities. Eliot condemned

England and America in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as intellectual deserts. But he has regarded his individual teachers, above all, Professor Babbitt with great reverence and admiration. Eliot's debt to Harvard is immense. The University supplied him a reservoir of ideas extremely stimulating.

At the Smith Academy in St. Louis, Eliot began to read Latin at Twelve, Greek a year after. The Undergraduates generally evaded the classical courses but Eliot chose to study Greek and Latin at Harvard, too. Eliot had a fascination for the unpopular and the conservative from the very beginning.

Eliot, the critic was influenced by the French genius Bergson and his account of time, change and individual consciousness. Eliot's remarks about intuition provides probably the best opening to a consideration of Eliot's debt to Bergson. Eliot was always fascinated by the non-compromisers of his time: Babbitt, the quixotic Pound, truculent Wyndham Lewis, the lonely and self-assured Joyce and Benda. For two years Eliot studied Sanskrit and read Indian philosophy, particularly the Yoga system of Patanjali under the guidance of James Haughton Woods. After the spring of 1913, Eliot withdrew from the Sanskrit courses and turned to the study of European Philosophy. In June the same year, he purchased a copy of F.H. Bradley's Appearance and Reality and read it and was immensely impressed by it. Eliot completed his Doctoral thesis on Bradley in April 1916. F.H. Bradley has influenced the critical ideas of Eliot. Eliot himself has mentioned F.H. Bradley as one of his masters. Eliot's admiration for Bradley has been known ever since he quoted the philosopher in notes to "The Waste Land."

'The Unity of Experience' constitutes the matrix of Eliot's Critical dialectic and Eliot's concept of poetry as "Unified sensibility" has the direct bearing of Bradleyan dialectic. There are close links between Eliot's concept of "dissociation of sensibility" and F.H. Bradley's concept of 'Immediate Experience'.

Even Eliot's prose style is said to have close resemblance to that of F.H. Bradley.

Yet another major influence on T.S. Eliot was Ezra Pound. Eliot's passion for economy, concreteness and precision of expression, both in his poetry and criticism can be attributed to Pound's influence on him.

From Pound, Eliot inherited his translative method, his method of comparative study, and the concept of the scholar-critic. Despite a basic religious disagreement, Eliot had great admiration for Pound.

Another literary figure and eminent thinker who had exercised considerable influence on Eliot's work and personality is T.E. Hulme. Eliot was also influenced by Henry James. Eliot includes Henry James among his masters.

Despite their basic opposition, I.A. Richards has been one of the major influences on Eliot's critical thought. Eliot has after dwelt upon his indebtedness to Richards and ha found his work, "of cardinal importance in the history of Literary Criticism".

We cannot discuss here all the numerous influences that shaped Eliot's imagination as a critic. We have discussed a few major influences on Eliot. Eliot the critic is as much a product of these multifarious influences as a genius on his own terms.

### **5:2:4 Eliot as Critic:**

In this section we shall examine Eliot's critical views on poetry, criticism and drama besides examining his critical style.

**Eliot's views on Poetry:** Among the aesthetic principles of Eliot, his views on poetry are of paramount importance. Eliot writes that his essays and formulations about poetry are the by-product of his poetry-workshop. Eliot has introduced new points of emphasis to the precept and practice of poetry. In his essay, "Tradition and The Individual Talent" Eliot has given an interesting definition to poetry:

Poetry is not turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality.

Eliot's concern over the increasing sentimentalization in poetry is manifest in this definition. Eliot opposed the vagueness, emotionalism and pseudo-romanticism of Georgian poetry. He wanted to have order, clarity and sanity in poetry. In the expression 'poetry is not a turning loose of emotion ... but an escape from personality' – Eliot has given a memorable definition of poetry. 'Turning loose of emotion' indirectly suggests the bad features of the 19<sup>th</sup> century romanticism.

Eliot has changed the center of emphasis in poetry and has underscored some neglected aspects. This is no less an achievement of Eliot. The nineteenth century poets and critics harped mostly on emotion and sensation, while Eliot in reaction laid stress on wit, intelligence, common sense, structure and organization in poetry.

Eliot does not always treat emotion and feeling in one sense; he takes emotion to be a part of feeling as the canvas of the latter is greater than that of the former. Emotion is generally taken to be distinct, definite, where as feeling is regarded as a little obscure, more tangled, faint and less violent. The function of an artist, according to Eliot, is to make the configuration of feelings into a definite set of patterns.

Eliot's notion of impersonality or the principle of depersonalization in art as it emerges from his essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' might seem somewhat rigid and mechanical to us. But it is not true of Eliot's later criticism where he believed that real impersonal poetry results from the personal experience of the poet. He felt that impersonality should be forged out of intense personal experience and emotion.

Poetry for Eliot was both the particularization of the universal and the universalization of the particular. While discussing Eliot's views on Poetry, it becomes essential to understand his notion of the 'dissociation of sensibility'. This expression represents the separation of intellect from emotion, thinking from feeling. Eliot uses this term in his essay "The Metaphysical Poetry".

Finally, Eliot wants for poetry some system of thought, some vision or point of view. That is why, Eliot is fascinated by Dante in whose work he finds economy of language and a system of thought. For Eliot, Dante has everything in his poetry – simplicity, lucidity of style, precision and economy of expression, ‘the greatest attitude and greatest depth of human passion’.

**Eliot’s views on criticism:** T.S. Eliot has defined the nature and the function of criticism in different contexts on different occasions. These definitions are of immense value to the students of literature. Let us consider some of the most important of them here:

- Criticism is the elucidation of works of art and correction of taste.
- The function of criticism is to promote the understanding and enjoyment of literature.
- To bring the past back to life is the great perennial task of criticism.
- A critic’s task is ‘to detect the living from the dead’.
- The rudiment of criticism is the ability to select a good poem and reject a bad one.
- The good critic is a man who to a keen and abiding sensibility joins wide and increasingly discrimination reading.
  
- Criticism is the “Common pursuit of true judgement”.
- It is the business of a critic to preserve tradition where a good tradition exists. It is part of his business to see literature steadily and to see it whole; and this is eminently to see it not as consecrated by time, but to see it beyond time; to see the best work of our time and the best work of twenty five hundred years are with the same eyes.
  
- Comparison and analysis are the chief tools of Criticism.

The critical essays of Eliot like “The Function of Criticism”, “The Frontier of Criticism” and “The Experiment in Criticism” represent the ideal of true criticism. In “The Function of Criticism” there is an annoyance against impressionistic or aesthetic criticism. True criticism always aims at objectivity and springs directly from the text, and every generalization is based upon it or is immediately relevant to it.

In his criticism, Eliot focuses a great deal of light on the terms ‘Critical’ and ‘Creative’. He says that it is unwise to distinguish too bluntly between the two activities. Critical toil done consciously or unconsciously is implied in creation, as no good art is possible without it.

Eliot derides critics who have stepped out of the limits of literary criticism by doing the work of a biographer, philosopher or sociologist in the guise of scholarship and fact-finding. There are limits, “exceeding which in one direction, literary criticism ceases to be literary and exceeding which in another, it ceases to be criticism”.

Eliot does not suggest that literary criticism should keep itself aloof or separated from the developments and numerous happenings in the society. He only suggests that literary criticism should not cease to be literary. To be literary, as he explains it, does not mean to be limited in one’s interest. It does not forbid us ‘to have interest beyond literature’. At the same time literary criticism should not be a substitute of sociology, history or biography. The task of modern

criticism, says Eliot in his essay "Experiment in Criticism" is not only to expand its borders but to clarify its center too.

Eliot differentiates between the literary criticism of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century and the modern criticism. He praises older criticism for considering literature as literature and not another thing. Literature was something distinct and was different from philosophy, psychology or any other discipline.

Eliot deals admirably with the features of a good and a bad critic in his essays "The Perfect Critic" and "Imperfect Critics". Eliot points out that the task of a critic is not only to point out the virtues of a writer but also to expose the fake and the fraudulent and condemn them. It is to train us not to enjoy a bad poem. An ideal critical mind of universal intelligence sees an object as it really is. Therefore, true criticism is "the disinterested exercise of intelligence". A bad critic is a sentimental person in who a work of art arouses all sorts of emotions, which have nothing to do with, that work but are accidents of personal association.

Eliot showers superlative praise on Aristotle. Aristotle is cited as a remarkable example of a critic possessing universal intelligence. Eliot considers Johnson as one of the three greatest critics of poetry in English literature; the other two are Dryden and Coleridge

In the actual practice of criticism, Eliot sometimes goes against his own theory and formulations. But it should be viewed as a sign of a flexible and developing mind.

**Eliot's Dramatic Criticism:** Eliot's dramatic criticism can roughly be divided into three parts the theory of drama, the critical analysis of individual dramatists and Eliot's views and comments on his own dramatic experiments.

From the beginning of his career, Eliot has been aspiring unconsciously for the theatre. Regarding his predilection towards drama Eliot writes: "Reviewing my critical output for the last thirty old years, I am surprised to find how constantly I have returned to the drama, whether by examining the work of the contemporaries of Shakespeare, or by reflecting on possibilities of future."

In the field of drama, too, Eliot wanted to create a new direction and focus through his theory and practice. Eliot wants verse drama but verse is to be spoken by of characters or persons who use telephones, motor cars and land on the moon. In short, the poetry of verse drama should be based upon the speech rhythm of the contemporary situation and the people, yet its task is not only to portray the ephemeral, the superficial and the external, but also to peer beneath the surface and to have a musical pattern. Eliot justifies verse drama by saying that verse or poetry is most natural to us in moments of emotional intensity. The unlimited realism in the prose dramas of Jones, Galsworthy, Pinero and Shaw repelled him. Though Eliot himself was not completely successful in his own verse drama, his theory and experimentation are a pointer to a new direction. Eliot's theory of verse drama was opposed to his contemporary over-insistence on the realism of prose drama.

A prose dramatist also can be poetic though he has to function under several constraints. He cannot exercise his poetic sensibility freely owing to these constraints. Eliot argues that for drama a new verse different from the blank verse of Shakespeare is to be forged. It is to be made most transparent and flexible to become capable of expressing any experience.

Eliot says that the epic is essentially a tale told to an audience, while drama is essentially an action exhibited to an audience. "Permanent literature", Eliot writes, "is always a representation: either a presentation of thought, or a presentation of feeling by a statement of events in human action or objects in the external world ... The drama is perhaps the most permanent, is capable of greater variation and of expressing more varied types of society, than any other."

Eliot rightly argues that it is wrong to consider drama as a mere form of literature. Literature is an art dependent upon words, but drama is a multiple art, using words, scenic effects, music, the action of the actors and the organizing talent of the producer.

Eliot's ideal of verse-drama is that it should have a musical design and a musical pattern and should arouse in us the same kind of lull, intoxication, the aura and the ecstatic delight which excellent music creates in us.

Eliot's criticism of the Elizabethan dramatists is a considerable part of his dramatic criticism. His essays constitute a genuine revaluation of some of these dramatists. He has brought them into a new focus through his criticism. Eliot has revalued these writers and his revaluation has influenced the courses of studies and the prescription of texts in the Universities all over the world.

Eliot has brought the neglected and the less known figures, like Thomas Middleton, Thomas Heywood, Cyril Tourneur and John Marston to our knowledge.

Thus Eliot's dramatic criticism is a major contribution to modern critical thinking.

**Eliot's Style:** Eliot's prose style in his early essays is markedly different from that of his later ones. In the early essays, one finds a greater degree of orthodoxy, conviction, cocksureness, vigour and incisive analysis. Hence his earlier essays are more absorbing, exciting and persuasive for the reader. Eliot himself acknowledges this fact in his essay "To Criticise the Critic":

"... There are errors of judgement, and what I regret more, there are errors of tone: the occasional note of arrogance of vehemence, of cocksureness or rudeness".

The style of Eliot is at its best in his essays on "The Metaphysical Poets", "Dante", "Tradition and the Individual Talent", "Poetry and Drama," and the essays on F.H. Bradley and Elizabethan dramatists. The style in the critical essays is governed by the kind of critic Eliot is. Eliot's mode of criticism is not interpretative. He is not a creative critic like Lord David Cecil; nor is a romantic critic like Walter Pater or Arthur Symons. The critical method and style in Eliot's criticism are generally analytical, incisive, anatomical, scientific and expository.

One of the important features of Eliot's style in prose is its liveliness, its gaiety and humour. In Eliot's prose, humour, wit and irony are usually mingled with one another.

Eliot is outspoken in his praise of the economy, precision and the width of emotional appeal in Dante. He cannot tolerate any verbiage, looseness in exposition of ideas in others or in himself. Eliot's style is generally compact, taut and does not include any critical jargon.

**Classification of Eliot's critical works:** Eliot's critical works may be grouped under three heads:

- (a) Theoretical criticism dealing with the principles of literature – poetry, drama and criticism.
- (b) Descriptive and practical criticism dealing with the works of individual writers and evaluating their achievements.
- (c) Theological essays.

The well known essays in the first group are "Tradition and The Individual Talent", "The Function of Criticism," "The Use of Poetry and the use of criticism," "Religion and Literature" etc.

In the second group, Eliot examines individual writers in the light of his own principles of tradition, objectivity and impersonality in art. Noted essays in this group are "The Metaphysical Poets", "Andrew Marvel," "Homage to John Dryden" and his other essays on Dante, Blake, Philip Massinger, Ben Jonson etc.

In the third group Eliot has certain essays which deal with religion, culture and great human values. Some wellknown works in this group are "The Idea of a Christian Society" and "Notes towards the Definition of Culture".

### **5:2:5 Evaluation of Eliot as Critic:**

T.S. Eliot occupies a unique position among the pioneering critics of our century. To him, criticism is a disinterested exercise of intelligence. Eliot is a very subtle and profound critic. He disliked Romanticism but immensely liked Dante, the Jacobean dramatists, the metaphysical poets and the French Symbolists.

Among his other contributions as a critic, Eliot's 'impersonal theory of poetry', his notions of the 'tradition', 'objective correlative' and 'dissociation of sensibility' stand out in the critical terminology of the twentieth century.

It must be borne in mind that Eliot never made an attempt to systematize his ideas into something like a theory or even a single coherent statement. His ideas on poetry and criticism are scattered among numerous essays, lectures, prefaces and book reviews spread over a period of four decades.



Eliot is a critic of comprehensive taste. He does not hesitate to modify or revise his critical opinions and attitudes. When the light of a new experience is cast upon him, he shows his readiness to look at work of art from a different angle. In his essay “The Metaphysical Poets” (1921), Eliot praises John Donne’s poetry. After ten years, i.e. in 1931, Eliot is somewhat critical of Donne’s poetry and the fashion for it.

Impressed and guided by Ezra Pound, Eliot at one stage, attached importance only to criticism of critics who are themselves poets and practitioners. Later on Eliot got rid of his bias and modified his views.

By 1934, Eliot had contradicted or modified many of his literary and critical judgements implied in the essay “The Metaphysical Poetry”. He praised not only Tennyson and Yeats but also Wordsworth and Coleridge who were nearly rejected in 1921. Thus we see that Eliot’s mind was constantly developing and widening its frontiers and gaining richness and complexity.

F.R. Leavis, the famous critic of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, makes serious charges against Eliot as critic:

“What was not at once apparent to all of those impressed was that some of the ideas attitude and valuations put into currency by Eliot were arbitrary ...”

Notwithstanding his greatness as critic, Eliot is not free from weaknesses of judgement. He betrays limitations of his taste and interests leading to errors in perspective. His dislike of Shelley’s poetry and his professed inability to understand Keats’s line “Beauty is truth, truth beauty” have often been cited as instances of Eliot’s temperamental bias. There are many similar instances where he obviously over-estimates or underestimates books or authors for reasons that are not tenable on strict aesthetic grounds.

In spite of all his limitations, Eliot as critic has enriched the concepts of continuity, discipline and order by relating them to that vital principle which he calls tradition.

Delmore Schwartz has written an article with the title “The Literary Dictatorship of T.S. Eliot”. To talk of the dictatorship of Eliot both as a critic and poet, is not altogether unjustified. It is true in the sense that the best criticism of our time is usually Eliot-oriented. The New Criticism has virtually taken its start from Eliot and I.A. Richards.

### **5:2:6 Summary:**

We have discussed the major influences on the formative mind of Eliot in this lesson. We have also analysed and examined Eliot’s critical views by categorizing them under three heads, namely,

- a) Eliot’s views on poetry
- b) His views on Criticism
- c) His views on poetic drama

In addition to the above, we have also critically examined Eliot’s style in his prose-writings. We have also evaluated Eliot as a critic.

### **5:2:7 Model Questions**

1. Examine briefly Eliot as critic.
2. Evaluate Eliot's views on poetry
3. Write an essay on Eliot's views on Criticism.
4. Discuss Eliot's predilection for the poetic-drama.
5. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Eliot's critics.

### **5:2:8 Reference Books:**

1. Hanif. Md., T.S. Eliot: The Theory and Practice of Criticism, Patna: Anupam Publications.
2. A. David Moody, ed. The Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot.
3. Sourindra mitra, T.s. Eliot. The Critic. Delhi: Mittal Publication.

**P. Hari Padma Rani,**

## Lesson – 3

# Essays from The Sacred Wood

### Contents

- 5:3:1 Objectives
- 5:3:2 Background: Eliot and the period
- 5:3:3 T.S. Eliot: His life and Works
- 5:3:4 Introduction to The Sacred Wood
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- 5:3:7 Summary
- 5:3:8 Model Questions
- 5:3:9 Reference Books

### 5:3:1 Objectives:

1. To introduce the students to the essays in The Sacred Wood.
2. To make them understand and appreciate Eliot's critical views on
  - a) the notion of the perfect critic
  - b) poetic drama
  - c) Shakespeare's play Hamlet
  - d) the notion of the objective Correlative
3. To make the students understand the critical implications of the term 'objective correlative'.

### 5:3:2 Background: Eliot and the Period:

The modern age has been dominated by the spirit of weariness and disillusionment. The rapid growth of science and economy and the World Wars have completely shattered and disintegrated civilization. The world lay in utter ruin both physically and spiritually after the First World War. A moral apathy spread all over the world. The epic massacre of men shocked the human conscience.

The social pattern of early Victorian England, based on a sense of complacency, material prosperity, social security and political order gradually broke down with the rise of democratic ideals and with new discoveries in the fields of biology, philosophy, psychology and anthropology. A sense of despair and pessimism has been the outcome of this decay of the established social order.

In the early part of the twentieth century, new experiments were tried in all forms of literature. The traditional forms were thrown out and in their place new literary experiments were conducted in the fields of poetry, drama and novel. "It is doubtful whether any period of English literature saw experiments so bold and various as those of the inter-war years. (A natural corollary of the quest for new ways of presentation and all the major literary genres of the age produced revolutionary developments.)"

Even though T.S. Eliot is a man of genius, he is also a product of his milieu. There are many influences which have moulded his tastes, attitudes and opinions during the formative years of his life.

In 1906, Eliot read the poetry of Donne, the English metaphysical poet and was influenced by it. In later years, he repaid his debt to Donne by directing his critical efforts to arouse the interest of his century in Donne. Another major influence on the formative mind of Eliot was Arthur Symons' The Symbolic Movement in Literature, which he read in 1908. Later he acknowledged in a review that Symons's book had affected the course of his life. Irving Babbitt, a staunch humanist and anti Romanticist and George Santayana, the philosopher are two other influences on Eliot. Ezra Pound was not only a major influence but Eliot's literary mentor.

Thus a multiplicity of influences form the background of Eliot, the poet and the critic. These influences, richly varied and sometimes even contradictory, contributed to the formation of Eliot's personality. This is however, not to suggest that Eliot was only an accumulation of such influences. A personality like Eliot's is something immensely greater than the sum total of these influences. Eliot represents a genius, which absorbs, assimilates and synthesizes these influences.

The influence Eliot has created on the modern literary scene is so enormous that the age is often called the "Age of Eliot" by many literary historians.

### **5:3:3 T.S. Eliot: His life and Works:**

Thomas Sterns Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on September 26, 1888 to Henry Ware Eliot and Charlotte Champe Sterns. Eliot's mother was a prolific poet of some reputation. At the time of Eliot's birth, his family had been in Missouri fifty-four years. Yet they retained, against Southern and Western influences, the New England political and theological culture. Late in life, the poet said that he was glad to have been born in St. Louis instead of Boston or New York or London. He was, nevertheless, a New Englander to the end.

Eliot's family background is important for an understanding of his career. For he was allowed the widest education available in his time, with no pressure from his father to be 'practical' and to go into business. From Smith Academy in St. Louis he went to Milton, in Massachusetts; from Milton he entered Harvard in 1906. He obtained his B.A. in 1909. The men who influenced him at Harvard were George Santayana, the philosopher and poet, and the critic Irving Babbitt. From Babbitt he derived an anti-Romantic attitude that was amplified by his later readings of British philosophers F.H. Bradley and T.E. Hulme, lasted throughout his life. In the academic year 1909-10 he was an assistant in philosophy at Harvard.

The year 1910-11 was crucial for the man who was to become one of the greatest poets of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He spent the year in France, attending Henri Bergson's lectures in philosophy and reading poetry with Alain-Fournier. It was here that Eliot gained a mastery not only of the French language but also of Symbolic poetry. In 1914 he first met Ezra Pound. From 1911 to 1914 he was back at Harvard reading Indian philosophy and studying Sanskrit. By 1916 he had finished, in Europe, a dissertation on F.H. Bradley's Philosophy; but

World War – 1 had intervened and he never returned to Harvard to take the final oral examination for the Ph.D. degree.

**Early Publications:** Eliot was to pursue four careers: editor, dramatist, literary critic and philosophical poet. He was probably the most erudite poet of his time in the English language. His first important publication and the masterpiece of “Modernism” in English was “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”.

For a year he taught French and latin at the Highgate School. In 1917 he began his brief career as a bank clerk. During this period he was also a prolific reviewer and essayist in both literary criticism and technical philosophy. In 1919 he published Poems which contained the poem “Gerontion” with the publication of The Waste Land in 1922 Eliot achieved an international reputation.

His first critical volume The Sacred Wood appeared in 1920. The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (1933), Thoughts After Lambeth (1931), The Idea of A Christian Society (1939), Notes Towards the Definition of Culture (1948) and Dante (1929) are some of Eliot’s Publications.

Later Career and Works: Eliot’s masterpiece Four Quartets which was originally published in four parts between 1935 and 1941, came out as a book in 1943. This led to the award of the Nobel Prize to Eliot in 1948. Eliot’s dramatic works include Sweeney Agonistes: An Aristophanic Fragment (1932) The Rock (1934), Murder in the Cathedral (1935), The Family Reunion (1939), The Cocktail Party (1950), The Confidential Clerk (1954) and The Elder Statesman (1959). In 1948 Eliot also received the Order of Merit. Eliot’s career as editor was ancillary to his main interests, but his quarterly review, The Criterion (1922-39), was the most distinguished international critical journal of the period. He was a working editor of the publishing firm of Faber and Faber Ltd. From the early 1920s until his death.

Eliot’s posthumous volume of Criticism, To Criticize the Critic, and Other Writings (1965) contains two essays of great literary value; the title essay is a review and severe evaluation of his criticism. “American Literature and American language’ deals with the Chauvinist myth of American English as a separate language and with equal conviction treats British and American literatures as branches of one literature.

The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can rightly be called the age of Eliot as he has created his age. As poet, dramatist, literary critic and editor, T.S. Eliot exercised a strong influence on the 20<sup>th</sup> century culture in the period between the two World Wars. His experiments in diction, style and versification revitalized English Poetry. He shattered old orthodoxies, through his critical essays, and created new ideas.

Eliot always kept his private life rigorously in the background. In 1915 he married Vivian Haigh-Wood and after 1933 she was mentally ill and they lived apart; she died in 1947. In January 1957 he married Miss Valerie Fletcher, with whom he lived happily until his death on January 4, 1965, in London. He died at the age of seventy six.

### **5:3:4 Introduction to The Sacred Wood:**

The Sacred Wood is a collection of thirteen essays on poetry and criticism. The essays were written between the years 1917 and 1920 and they came out in book form in 1920. The essays therefore represent a transition between the period immediately before the war and the period afterwards. Mr. Middleton Murry ran a journal called Athenaeum and most of the essays were written during the brief and brilliant life of the journal at the instance of Mr. Murry. The Sacred Wood includes the following thirteen essays:

The Perfect Critic  
Imperfect Critic  
Tradition and the Individual Talent  
The Possibility of a Poetic Drama  
Euripides and Professor Murray  
“Rhetoric” And Poetic Drama  
Notes on the Blank Verse of Christopher Marlowe  
Hamlet and His Problems  
Ben Jonson  
Philip Massinger  
Swinburne and Oet  
Blake  
Dante

Of these thirteen essays, three of them “The Perfect Critic”, “The Possibility of a Poetic Drama” and “Hamlet and His Problems” are prescribed for your study. Before we examine these essays in detail a word about “Tradition and the Individual Talent.” This is perhaps the most popular of all the above essays. The essay is well known for its novel ideas on poetic creation and it is historically as important as Wordsworth’s “Preface to the Lyrical ballad”. According to Eliot, tradition is something that must be earned by the poet; it is not a repetition of the work of the past; it comprises the whole of European literature from Homer to the present. The poet writing in English therefore may make his own tradition by using materials from any past period, in any language. This point of view is “programmatic” in the sense that it disposes the reader to accept the revolutionary novelty of Eliot’s polyglot quotations and serious parodies of other poets’ style in The Wasteland.

Eliot has said that the poet-critic must inevitably write “programmatic criticism” – that is, criticism that expresses the poet’s own interests as a poet, quite different from historical scholarship, which stops at placing the poet in his background.

The Sacred Wood contains many reinterpretations of the English literary tradition. The heart of the work appears in the first half of the book which contains the more theoretical essays. “Tradition and the Individual Talent” is a classic statement of Eliot’s critical theory. Eliot felt that “traditional” ways of interpreting poetry only hindered his generation of writers. He therefore looked for a way that artists could be judged by the standards of the past but “not amputated” by them. He found the answer in his highly personal conception of tradition.

In this conventional sense, tradition is a “handing down” and might connote an unhealthy respect for past generations. For Eliot, however, tradition is not simply received or “inherited”

but “obtained by great labour.” This conception of tradition implies a sense of history which is “a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence.”

The 1928 edition of The Sacred Wood reveals Eliot’s increasing interest in the social conditions necessary for great art. The preface to this edition contains Eliot’s well known and misleading statement that “Poetry is a superior amusement”. He admitted that the statement was not a “true definition” of poetry but that he was using it “because if you call it anything else you are likely to call it something still more false”. Eliot asserted in the preface that just as certainly as poetry is meant to give pleasure, it also has “something to do with morals, and with religion and even with politics perhaps, through we cannot say what”.

Eliot praised Shakespeare’s era in the ‘Philip Massinger’ essay as a ‘period when the intellect was immediately at the tips of the senses’ and implied that it was morally superior to later ages.

The concluding essays of The Sacred Wood. “Blake” and “Dante” also relate the morality of an age to the vitality of its poetry. Like Massinger and other poets Blake suffers from living in a “formless’ age which lacks any framework of traditional ideas. The Romantic period was so formless that Blake was forced to erect his own framework for his poetry.

What the poet needed is clear in the essay “Dante”. Dante was fortunate, according to Eliot, to live in an age when philosophy and theology, religion and actual belief, and public and private morality were not dissociated. He benefited from ‘a mythology and a theology which had undergone a more complete absorption into life. . .’

In the preface to the 1928 edition of The Sacred Wood Eliot declares his preference for Dante over Shakespeare. He says “If I ask myself why I prefer the poetry of Dante to that of Shakespeare, I should have to say, because it seems to me to illustrate a saner attitude towards the mystery of life”. Underlying this statement is the assumption that any good literature must illustrate a same attitude towards the mystery of life.

### **5:3:5 Analysis of the Texts:**

In the next few pages let us try to understand Eliot’s views in the essays “The Perfect Critic”, “The Possibility of a Poetic Drama” and “Hamlet and His Problems” by analyzing these texts in detail.

**The Perfect Critic:** Irked by the mess in the field of criticism, Eliot felt the need to reexamine and redefine the principles of criticism. As he wrote:

Contemporary literature, like contemporary politics, is confused by the moment – to – moment struggle for existence, but the time arrives when an examination of principles is necessary.

As a first step in his business of settling the question of “principles”, Eliot distinguishes between true critics and spurious ones, between the perfect critic and the imperfect ones. From the distinction thus drawn, general principles regarding the nature and function of criticism can be derived.

In the first two essays of The Sacred Wood entitled “The Perfect Critic” and “The Imperfect Critics” Eliot begins his scrutiny of familiar types of critics and criticism so as to grasp inductively what is essential for criticism and what is inessential, irrelevant or even distractive.

Eliot begins his essay “The Perfect Critic” by proclaiming that Coleridge was perhaps the greatest and the last of English critics. Even though we have Arnold after Coleridge Eliot says that Arnold was more a propagandist for criticism than a critic; he was a popularizer rather than a creator of ideas.

When a distinguished critic observes in a newspaper article that “poetry is the most highly organized form of intellectual activity”, Eliot raises his objections to the definition by asking questions like “How is it that poetry is more highly organized than astronomy, physics or pure mathematics?” Eliot argues that words like “organized” and “activity” are a part of scientific vocabulary, which characterizes much of modern writing, and he describes the definition as a symptom of a “verbal disease”.

Eliot then cites Arthur Symons, the critical successor of Pater and partly of Swinburne, as a representative of “aesthetic criticism” or “impressionistic criticism”.

For Eliot, Pater, Swinburne and Symons are examples of critical inadequacy. All of them have recognized merits of varying degrees but their equipment and performance remain inadequate. In Arthur Symons, Eliot finds an example of what is worse than inadequate criticism. As a typical exponent of “impressionistic” or “aesthetic criticism” Symons represents, for Eliot, a kind of sham criticism. The impressions of a writer like Symons do not constitute true criticism because they represent “a mixed critical and creative reaction.”

Symons’s type of criticism represents the channelization of a “suppressed creative wish” through a wrong medium because of some basic impurity of the original impulse:

The sentimental person in whom the work of art arouses all sorts of emotions which have nothing to do with that work whatever, but are accidents of personal association, is an incomplete artist.

The two types of imperfect critics discussed by Eliot – the incomplete and the spurious critics – are supplemented by two other types: the ‘dogmatic’ and the ‘technical critics’. The dogmatic critic’s concern is purely normative: he dictates and applies rules:

The dogmatic critic who lays down a rule, who affirms a value, has left his labour incomplete.

The ‘technical critic’, on the other hand, is one who is concerned with particular elements or aspects of poetry or art. His work may be very important and helpful but is not criticism. Along with the scholar or the literary historian he remains on the periphery of the true critical activity. He can be called, as Eliot says, “a critic only in a narrow sense”, because his objective and, therefore, his performance are limited.



From Eliot's review of the different types of imperfect critics the following negative postulates emerge. True criticism is not:

- (1) simple enthusiasm for poets, poetry or periods;
- (2) the communication of taste, however delicate, for particular local 'flavours' of poetry.
- (3) The record of personal emotions or impressions or temperaments;
- (4) The *a priori* formulation of rules and their application for value judgement
- (5) The technical study of particular elements or aspects of poetry or of its background, whether social, historical or biographical.

Eliot describes true criticism as a "disinterested exercise of intelligence". The great example of such disinterested intelligence is Aristotle who is not concerned with emotion, nor has any 'impure desire to satisfy.' His mind is focused on the subject:

. . . Aristotle had none of these impure desires to satisfy; . . . he looked solely and steadfastly at the object; in his short and broken treatise he provides an eternal example – not of laws or even of method, for there is no method except to be very intelligent; but of intelligence itself swiftly operating the analysis of sensation to the point of principle and definition.

The two English Critics whom Eliot mentions in this context are Dryden and Coleridge. Eliot mentions these names with reservations. 'Dryden', he says, 'is far more disinterested; and yet is not quite a free mind'. Coleridge too cannot be 'estimated as an intelligence completely free.'

Toward the end of "The Perfect Critic" Eliot dismisses the popularly conceived dichotomy between the terms "appreciation" and "criticism". He argues that these terms do not represent two different activities but two interdependent activities of the same faculty:

Appreciation in popular psychology is one faculty, and criticism another, an arid cleverness building theoretical scaffolds upon one's own perceptions or those of others. On the contrary, the true generalization is not something superposed upon an accumulation of perceptions; the perception do not, in a really appreciative mind, accumulate as a mass, but form themselves as a structure; and criticism is the statement in language of this structure; it is a development of sensibility.

In continuation with this argument, Eliot also defines what bad criticism is. He says:

. . . bad criticism is that which is nothing but an expression of emotion.

Eliot here recalls a statement he made earlier and he disowns it by stating that he no longer believes in the truth of the statement. The statement is:

"The poetic critic is criticizing poetry in order to create poetry". Eliot now asserts that it is fatuous to say that criticism is for the sake of "Creation" or creation for the sake of criticism. It is also fatuous to assume that there are ages of criticism and ages of creativeness.

Eliot concludes his “The Perfect Critic” by stating that poetry and criticism, the two directions of sensibility, are complementary. He prefers a situation where the critic and the creative artist are one and the same.

**The Possibility of Poetic Drama:** In the essay entitled “The Possibility of a Poetic Drama” Eliot discusses the nature of poetic drama and the need to create poetic plays in the modern period. Eliot begins the essay by saying that there is legitimate craving among people for verse plays: “Surely there is some legitimate craving, not restricted to a few persons, which only the verse play can satisfy.”

From the point of view of literature, drama may be considered as one among several poetic forms. But drama is the greatest of all forms for “The drama is perhaps the most permanent, is capable of greater variation and of expressing more varied types of society, than any other.”

Eliot traces the brief history of the poetic drama in England although he does not undertake any historical survey. He says that the course of poetic drama varied considerably in England alone. Charles Lamb performed the poetic drama’s autopsy and made people aware of its death. Lamb’s autopsy also brought about a consciousness of the “immense gap between present and past.”

After that it was impossible to believe in a dramatic tradition. Eliot emphasizes the importance of tradition, in any form of literature, for the survival of the form. When poetic drama seemed to have its tradition, the form itself seemed dead by the eighteenth Century. Eliot asserts, in line with his other assertions on tradition, that ‘By losing tradition, we lose our hold on the present’. As for as Shelley’s age was concerned, Eliot says, there was no dramatic tradition worth the keeping.

Eliot praises the masterly use of the blank verse during the Elizabethan period. He says “the blank verse of their (Elizabethan) plays accomplished a subtlety and consciousness, even an intellectual power, that no blank verse since had developed or even repeated;”

The nineteenth century had no form in which the writers could confine their impressions. Eliot says that Wordsworth and Browning hammered out forms for themselves but were not successful for ‘no man can invent a form, create a taste for it; and perfect it too.’

To create a form means not merely inventing a shape, a rhyme or rhythm but it also means ‘the realization of the whole appropriate content of this rhyme or rhythm.’

If the Elizabethan dramatists were successful, “the half-formed temper of the age” also was a main factor in addition to the other factors. Eliot argues that there was an economy of effort on the part of the Elizabethan dramatist owing to the “temper of the age”. Eliot makes an interesting comment in this context:

When there is this economy of effort it is possible to have several, even many good poets at once. The great ages did not perhaps produce much more talent than ours; but less talent was wasted.

Eliot traces some of the reasons for the dearth of the poetic drama in the contemporary period.

Eliot says that twentieth century being a “formless age” there is very little hope for the minor poet to do anything worth doing; when he says ‘minor’ he means very good poets indeed: Eliot says that under the present conditions, “the minor poet has too much to do. And this leads to another reason for the incompetence of our time in poetic drama.”

Eliot then goes on to say that permanent literature is always a presentation of thought or feeling “ by a statement of events in human action or objects in the external world”. In the literature of the past we find both kinds. Aristotle, for example, present thought, stripped to the essential structure and he is a great writer. The Agamemnon or Macheth is equally a statement of events. They are as much the works of the “intellect” as the writings of Aristotle. Eliot says that no contemporary author is capable of the ‘control’ exercised by great masters of the past like Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare etc.

Commenting on the scenario of contemporary drama Eliot says “we have on the one hand the “poetic” drama, imitation Greek, imitation Elizabethan, or modern philosophical, on the other the comedy of “ideas” from Shaw to Galsworthy, down to the ordinary social comedy.”

Eliot calls Shavian drama a philosophy or a popularization and not art. He says:

The moment an idea has been transferred from its pure state in order that it may become comprehensible to the inferior intelligence it has lost contact with art.

The Elizabethan drama was meant for a public which wanted entertainment of a crude sort but Eliot argues that our problem should be to take a form of entertainment and subject it to the process which would leave it a form of art.

Thus Eliot explores the possibility of creating poetic drama in the modern times under the conditions prevalent.

**Hamlet and His Problems:** the essay “Hamlet and His Problems” became one of the most popular critical essays of Eliot mainly for his use of the term ‘objective correlative’ in it. The term is a coinage of Eliot. The term “objective correlative” was coined by the American painter and poet Washington Allston (1779 – 1843). It was introduced by T.S. Eliot, rather casually, into his essay “Hamlet and His Problems” (1919). The subsequent use of the term in literary criticism, Eliot has said, has astonished him.

The essay has raised a great controversy, also for Eliot’s views on the play Hamlet. Eliot calls the play an artistic failure shattering the popular judgement about the play. He says  
... far from being Shakespeare’s masterpiece, the play is most certainly an artistic failure. In several ways the play is puzzling, and disquieting as is none of the

others. Of all the plays it is the longest and is possibly the one on which Shakespeare spent most pains; . . . It is the “Mona Lisa’ of literature . . . Hamlet . . . is full of some stuff that the could not . . . manipulate into art..

Eliot says that the play Hamlet is an “artistic failure”, as the dramatist here has not been able to achieve the unity of impression. The emotional utterances of Hamlet, the character, are in excess of the facts as they appear in the play. The excessive emotion in Hamlet is not contained in the situation or explained by the situation as given in the play. Hence the play has failed to achieve a pattern. Shakespeare has not been able to objectify his obscure emotions in the play. The play lacks in ‘artistic inevitability’ or the complete adequacy of the external to the emotion. The terrible, intense feeling in the play is without an object or exceeding its object. Such is not the case with more successful tragedies of Shakespeare. The emotional intensity in King Lear issues overwhelmingly and most naturally from the context of the play.

Hamlet, the character is out of tune with the central theme of lust and betrayal. He seems to be groping at something different. One finds that hamlet is trying to understand the mystery and terror of a main’s life after death. ‘what is man but the quintessence of dust’ seems to be the genuine attitude of Hamlet but this attitude is not at all relevant to the central theme (the theme of lust and betrayal) which had begun at the beginning. Hamlet wants to experience the state of being after death and feels horror. But there is no objective correlative in the play for the expression of Hamlet’s experience.

Eliot Concludes the essay by saying that Shakespeare tackled in Hamlet a problem which proved too much for him and we can never know why he attempted it at all and what actually compelled him to undertake the writing of Hamlet.

Eliot finds Hamlet artistically /deficient because Shakespeare has not used an “objective correlative” to express emotion:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an “objective Correlative”, in other words a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. . . . The artistic “inevitability” lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion; and this is precisely what is deficient in Hamlet.

As it is not possible for the poet of transfer his emotions and ideas directly to his readers, he objectifies them in ‘a set of objects, a situation’ or a chain of events.

### **5:3:6 Critical Evaluation of Eliot’s Views:**

Eliot’s critical writings covering nearly half a century have produced all sorts of reactions in the world of letters. He has been praised for originality as often as decried for conventionalism.

Eliot’s dismissal of important critics as no critics at all in The Perfect Critic seems unconvincing despite his persuasive arguments.

Eliot's views on Shakespeare's Hamlet also seem not wholly convincing. Many objections were raised against his notion of "The Objective Correlative" which he thinks is missing in Hamlet. His formulation of "The Objective Correlative" has often been criticized for falsifying the way a poet actually composes. No object or situation in itself is a "formula" for an emotion. Thus a poet cannot be accused of not finding an objective correlative for expressing his emotion.

Many critics are not convinced by Eliot's views on Hamlet. H.B. Charlton in his introduction to Shakespearian Tragedy writes:

"When, for instance, I read that Hamlet 'so far from being Shakespeare's master piece . . . is certainly an artistic failure', I feel that English is a language, which I do not know."

David L. Stevenson too, in an article says that Eliot reaches oddly an arbitrary conclusion. J. Dover Wilson, in an appendix to his detailed study What happens in Hamlet (1935) patiently disagrees with Eliot. Francis Fergusson in his The Idea of Theatre regards Eliot's essay as an outstanding example of a perverse demand for narrow conceptual truth from a play intricately dramatizing the mystery of life itself. Delmore Schwartz says:

"To conclude that Hamlet is a failure, as Eliot does . . . seems to me to have a curious notion of success."

Elizabeth Drew dismisses Eliot's term 'objective correlative' as a rare lapse into the hideous language of modern abstraction on the part of Eliot. A much more serious contention is that of Elisco Vikas whose critique entitled "The Objective Correlative of T.S. Eliot" is an aggressive attempt at exposing the instability of the aesthetic foundation of Eliot's theory of poetry.

### **5:3:7 Summary:**

The Sacred Wood is a collection of thirteen essays from which in the present lesson we have analyzed and evaluated three essays, namely, "The Perfect Critic", "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama" and "Hamlet and His Problems". According to Eliot Aristotle is an example of a perfect critic. Among the English critics, he passes his judgement on Dryden, Coleridge and Arnold but finds them wanting in some respect or the other. Eliot describes true criticism as "disinterested exercise of intelligence".

In the essay "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama", Eliot explores the possibility of creating poetic drama in the 20<sup>th</sup> century under the conditions prevalent.

The essay "Hamlet and His Problems" is one of the most well-known critical works of Eliot. It has raised great controversy for Eliot's views on the play Hamlet. Eliot describes Shakespeare's Hamlet as an "artistic failure". The term "objective correlative" is used in this

essay for the first time. Eliot feels that Hamlet is one of the most unsuccessful creations of Shakespeare.

Thus the three essays represent Eliot's critical views on different subjects of critical importance.

**5:3:8 Model Questions:**

1. Discuss Eliot's views on imperfect critic as they emerge from "The Perfect Critic".
2. Examine Eliot's views on poetic drama.
3. Why does Eliot call Hamlet an 'artistic failure'? Do you agree with him?
4. Write an essay on Eliot's critical views with specific reference to the essays prescribed.
5. Explain critically and evaluate the critical term "Objective Correlative".

**5:3:9 Reference Books:**

1. Sourindra Mitra, T.S. Eliot The Critic. Millal Publication Delhi.
2. The Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot. Edited by A David Moody.
3. T.S. Eliot, The Sacred Wood. 1928 edition B.I. Publications: New Delhi.

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**P. Hari Padma Rani,**

## Lesson 4

# Trends in Twentieth Century Novel

## Contents

### 5:4:1 Objectives

### 5:4:2 Beginnings of the Twentieth Century Novel

### 5:4:3 The Fuller growth of the Twentieth Century Novel

### 5:4:4 Important XX Century Novelists

### 5:4:5 To Sum up

### 5:4:6 Suggested Topics

### 5:4:7 Suggested Reading

### 5:4:1 Objectives:

1. to study the growth and rich diversification of the narrative genre in development of XX Century
2. to study the themes and techniques of XX English novel

### 5:4:2: Beginnings of the XX Century Novel

Between 1900 and 1930 revolutionary developments affecting subject matter style and technique took place in the English novel. These led ultimately to a rethinking of the relationship between fiction and reality.

Victorian novelists presented different levels of society and explored different themes. But they shared one thing in common - a sense of great confidence in British society, culture and Empire. The first world war and the events that followed led to the disappearance of the British Empire. The modern writers, could no longer share this confidence in a stable society and culture. The Victorian novelists linked major developments in plot with changes in the social or economic or marital status of the chief characters. Modern age, an age of disintegration and dissolution does not provide the novelist the chance to draw on commonly accepted and shared values. He has to depend on his own sense of values, intuitions and techniques to mirror his unique individual vision of the world. According to one modern writer, his main task is to unveil to others the kind of world which he beholds in his own mirror. A writer like James Joyce even avoids a single view and his writings have multiple implications and different points of view, simultaneously presented. As an author he remains detached and does not commit himself to any one view.

Modern novel is greatly influenced by the views of psychologists like Freud and Jung on the nature of consciousness and its relationship to time. The narration in the novels is non – chronological. Freud's view that all mental phenomena have meaning led to new ways of structuring narratives based on dreams, fantasies, and chains of associations. Consciousness is multiple. The past is always present. The great French novelist Proust in his great novel Remembrance of Things Past studies how the past impinges on the present and how consciousness is determined by memory. Man is his memory. Present is the sum of the past. To understand a man there is no need to take him through a series of trying circumstances. We can

tell the whole truth about him if we dig into his consciousness. Henry Bergson the French philosopher makes a distinction between Scientific Time (a mathematical, abstract, homogeneous medium) and real duration (our direct experience of time as a flowing, irreversible succession of heterogeneous and concrete states). The former is illusion, the latter is real.

### **5:4:3 The guller growth of XX Century English Novel:**

Modern novel experiments with these radical perceptions of time and consciousness. Narrative chronology is avoided and the nature of consciousness is presented by describing events through the awareness of one or more characters. There is a radical revolution in fictional technique. Instead of dealing with a lengthy period of time the novelist could focus on just one day in the life of the main character ( as in Joyce's *Ulysses* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* ). Dispensing with external chronological narrative the novelist adopts the stream of consciousness technique and plunges directly into the consciousness of his characters without reporting it in formal quoted remarks. This style developed in the 1920's as the most favored style is exploited as an effective tool to experiment with new delicacies of perception and subtleties of presentation.

The stream of consciousness technique led to a focus on the essential loneliness of the individual. For the individual his private world is the real world and not the social world to which one is forced to do lip service. Our inward needs don't correspond to the values, mechanical gestures and standardization imposed by society. When we try to give out a sign from our real selves the sign is misunderstood when read in its own light by some other self with a different personality. How is true communication possible in such a world? Modern novelists like Lawrence, Conrad and Virginia Woolf explore as a theme the establishment of emotional communication in a community of private consciousnesses. The search for communication and the inevitable isolation of Leopold Bloom in James Joyce's *Ulysses* is symbolic of the human condition as seen by the modern novelist. Virginia Woolf deals with supreme delicacy the self's need for privacy and the self's need for genuine communication. Lawrence studies how human relationships are disastrously distorted by mechanical social conventions, false notions of respectability or priety, shams of middle class life and the craze for money power or success. At all the modern novelists are preoccupied by these themes and techniques. It is risky to make generalization on literary trends. Several writers continue in the traditional fashion. For example the documentary novelists such as Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy (and HG Wells in some of his novels) concentrate on the changing social scene and present it with great skill. Virginia Woolf describes these writers as materialists who deal only with externals and who do not explore aspects of consciousness and inward life of men which constitute reality. Arnold Bennett's novels like *The Old Wives Tale*, and *Riceyman's steps* are telling studies of ordinary lives with a strong sense of the rich detail of society. Wells was an extremely versatile writer and his novels cover contemporary social issues as well as scientific topics. Aldous Huxley, Wyndham Lewis, Evelyn Waugh share a sense of the absurdity of modern society and their novels present the modern world as manic, mechanized and incomprehensible.

Science fiction covers another area of modern life - current developments in science and technology and future possibilities. The possibilities of destruction and the danger to man when technological developments are carried further and the adventures offered by exploration of the world of space are the major themes of many novels of this category. Some novels also attempt



to suggest what will happen when man defeats the problems of war, disease and poverty and goes beyond the limits of the human body and gains the qualities of machines. HG. Wells who was greatly interested in the scientific advances looked ahead in his novels to picture future possibilities. Aldus Huxley's *Brave New World* gives a grim picture of a heavily organised and controlled society.

Novels concerned with women's experience represent a significant section of the contemporary novels. They make use of a wide range of narrative styles and techniques to project the typical feminine voice and experience unrecorded and omitted in the conventional novels. Feminist writing attempts to reveal the structures of oppression that stifle female freedom and view point. For example Eva Figes's *The Seven Ages* is a chronicle of the lives of seven generations of women, from pre – history to the present and concentrates on their struggles with poverty and violence, and their experience of childbirth and child rearing. Madness is a recurrent theme of feminist writing and it is associated with a refusal to conform to an imposed social identity and with a revolt against oppression. Women's experience of isolation, betrayal and loss in a society dominated by male attitudes, behaviour and social conventions are explored by several writers like Edna O'Brien, Angela Carter, Emma Tennant, Maureen Duffy.

The field of modern fiction is large and the above account attempts to give a general account. The following section gives a brief account of the contribution to fiction by representative modern novelists. It is impossible to include in a brief survey, all the major authors and the important novelists chosen give a vivid picture of the range and variety of modern novel and the striking trends in the fictional field.

#### **5:4:4 Important XX Century Novelists:**

**Joseph Conrad (1857-1924):** Joseph Conrad, one of the leading modernists, son of Polish parents spent years in the English merchant navy before devoting himself to novel writing. The sea provided the setting to most of his novels. But his chief interest is in character, particularly difficult people who feel cut off from their fellows.

His life as a merchant seaman, his upbringing in Poland and Russia brought him into contact with a wide range of cultures. The experience of the European in Asia, Africa and South America (which later becomes a major concern of the twentieth century novel) is explored in a number of his works. He used the hardlife on shipboard or in remote settlements as a context for exploring certain moral ambiguities in human life. In *The Nigger of Narcissus* a dying seaman corrupts the morals of a ship's crew. *Lord Jim* describes the gross failure of duty on the part of a romantic idealist sailor and probes its meaning. *The Heart of Darkness* is based on his Congo River experience and creates an atmosphere of horror and darkness. *Nostromo* is a subtle study of the corrupting effects of politics and material interests on personal relationships.

Conrad is an acknowledged master of atmosphere good at capturing up a typhoon at sea or evoking the mystery of a Malay Jungle. "My task ..." he once wrote "is by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel - before all to make you see". Skillful use of break in time sequence is his characteristic narrative technique. The movement of the stories, of the images and emotions are portrayed through each character's vision of reality.

Extreme and testing situations are faced by his characters. Quite often unable to bear such tests they crumble under pressure. He believed that man must be faithful to his friends, his fellows and his employers. When there is no such faithfulness, ruin is sure to follow.

**Henry James (1843-1916):** Henry James is sometimes described as ‘The American Literary Ambassador to England’. He spent most of his professional life in England and usually wrote about Americans Abroad. *The American*, *Daisy Miller* and *The Portrait of a Lady* deal with the impact of the old world culture on the New World type of character. He explores in his major novels in a masterly way the moral consequences of the meeting of the American innocence with a sophisticated but corrupt European culture.

The narrative technique of Henry James is that of the psychoanalyst. He is more interested in situations, characters and dialogue rather than with plots, stories and action. He displays the art of a painstaking painter and his literary brush strokes are fine and delicate.

Henry James was one of the great exponents of the art of fiction. He felt ‘novel was the best form of art to express the truth of life.’ He brought to the novel conscious artistry, aesthetic refinement, sensuous subtlety and an elaborate perceptiveness. He has created a vast gallery of characters and is an adept at vivid creation of a place whether it is London, Oxford or Paris. His style is effortless lucid and exact and his works display the precise observation of a visual artist.

**Galsworthy (1867-1933):** His chief novels collectively called *The Forsyte Saga* traced the fortunes of his widely elaborated family of Forsytes and of their children and grand children. In this chronicle he has fixed for social historians of future the way of life of the middle class Victorians, and has shown what they aimed at (safety of possession), what they feared (a social upheaval that would disrupt values), what they avoided (the unusual or unreliable) and what they enjoyed (solid and assured comfort). Their world was that of the British Empire and they considered themselves the established right owners of this Empire. The impact of the twentieth century threatened their sense of security.

Galsworthy’s novels have undoubted sociological value and ‘Forsytem’ with its tribal instinct, its possessive love of property, its studied resistance to natural emotion, and imperviousness to all artistic feeling has become a permanent symbol.

**D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930):** D.H. Lawrence’s novels reflect his intense preoccupation with the mystery of sex and the two worlds of conscious intelligence and unconscious instinct. He believed that love as a passion and a force must be felt and created on an instinctive level. It cannot be explained in terms of rationality and reason. He once said, “I want men and women to be able to think sex freely, completely, honestly and clearly.” Lawrence expressed his faith in physical life and passions. Modern man was in danger of losing his ability to experience the quality of life. “My great belief is a belief in the blood, the flesh as being wiser than the intellect.” Scorning the mere intellectual faculties he placed his trust in the experience of the senses which for him seem to gain in value as they become more violent. Man’s primitive instincts and the impulses which spring from his unconscious mind are his safest guides in life. Lawrence also deals with the disastrous impact of modern industrialization on human sensibility. Nottingham Shire, the mining area where he was brought up presented a close and harsh contrast

between industrial and rural life. The waste and filth of an industrial site was a threat to natural fulfilled life.

Lawrence's masterpieces *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* are symbolic and dramatic poems in prose. The relationship between man and his environment, the relationship between the generations, the relationship between instinct and intellect, the proper basis for the marriage relationship are presented with power and subtlety, in this novel. Lawrence is a great artist with a vision, with a poetic sense of life.

**Virginia Woolf (1882-1941):** The best-known works of Virginia Woolf are *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931). Like EM Forster, she was a member of the Bloomsbury group, a collection of individuals who lived in the London district of Bloomsbury and exchanged ideas.

The Bloomsbury group reacted against Victorian literature, its taboos, and the restrictions it imposed on the discussion of sexuality. While Victorian novelists often examined society, Virginia Woolf examines individuals. She moves away from Victorian ideals and style and her portrayals are characterized by sophistication and delicacy.

Virginia Woolf is famous for her masterly exploitation of the stream of consciousness technique. *Mrs. Dalloway* concentrates on one day in the life of Mrs. Dalloway and recreates the stream and pattern of her thoughts and feelings from a totally internal viewpoint. Flashbacks are used to give a broad picture of past experience. The novel's denial of chronological time is typical of Bloomsbury group's challenge to all form and convention. A feeling for privacy, ambiguity, suggestiveness and uncertainty of symbols are other marked features of her novels. More than all, Virginia Woolf displays fine sensitivity and genuine insight into the workings of the female mind.

**H.G. Wells (1866-1946):** H.G. Wells had a predominantly scientific training and discarded classical humanism in favour of science. He stressed that Biology and Science should take the place of the classics.

The novels of H.G. Wells can be categorized into three broad divisions – scientific, domestic and sociological. His scientific romances are masterpieces of imaginative power. In these novels the author projects himself to a distant standpoint, to the moon, the future, the air or another planet and presents his views on life from these higher levels. In *The Time Machine* the hero with the help of a machine accelerates the time consciousness and projects himself into the future and sees a grim picture of the earth divided between a master race and a sub-race, the Marlocks. *The War of The World* deals with the invasion of the earth by the inhabitants of Mars who use a death ray to spread destruction. *Kipps* is an example of his domestic fiction which is a comedy of class instincts. Kipps, the hero, a drapier's assistant rises as a man of fortune. But he feels relieved only when he loses his fortune and relapses to his lower class.

H.G. Wells was primarily a novelist of ideas whose works aimed at imparting scientific and social instruction. He called himself a journalist rather than an artist and had no expectation or desire of permanence.

**George Orwell (1903- 50):** Orwell's two important novels are 1984, a description of his post-war vision of totalitarianism and the political allegory Animal Farm. 1984 powerfully portrays how totalitarian regimes will wipe out individuality and individual consciousness altogether. History, biography and language will be controlled, moulded, changed at will by the state. Big Brother will watch, control and frighten all the citizens all the time. Animal Farm is about a political revolution that went wrong. The animals on a farm, led by the pigs revolt against the farmer Jones and take control of the farm. But they end by being just as greedy as the master whom they drive out. Orwell's best writing is political and he is one of the most important political writers of the post war years.

Orwell draws attention to the power of language particularly the ways in which it could be used to hide truth. The quality of a language suggests the quality of the society that uses it and Orwell shows how a government could control language in order to control the people who use it.

**Aldous Huxley (1894-1963):** Aldous Huxley's well known works are Crome Yellow (1921) Antic Hay (1923), Point Counter Point (1928) and Eyeless in Gaza (1936). But his novel Brave New World (1932) is mainly responsible for his reputation and standing. This novel portrays a world where all birth is controlled and administered through the test tube, society rigidly planned and organized to afford happiness for all and sex and drugs are used as social palliatives to ensure an absence of rebellion. The novel implies that the psychologically controlled new world is a horror and a nightmare.

**Iris Murdoch (1919-99):** Iris Murdoch is one of the most complex and interesting of contemporary novelists. Her novels set in contemporary middle class society focus on investigations of the problems posed by moral philosophy. She has also to her credit a series of philosophical studies like Sartre, Romantic Rationalist, The Sovereignty of Good and Metaphysics as a guide to Morals. Her novels are concerned with a range of philosophical issues centring on moral responsibility, individual freedom, the nature of love and the possibility of actually pursuing goodness. In an article 'Against Dryness' published in 1961 Murdoch presents the nature of her philosophical and literary standpoint. "We live in a scientific and anti-metaphysical age," she argued, "an age in which we have been left with far too shallow and flimsy an idea of human personality". In such an age the connection between art and moral life has been disturbed because we are losing our sense of form and structure in the moral world itself. The writer should turn away from "The dry symbol, the bogus individual the false whole, towards the real impenetrable human person."

The novels though they are concerned with ethical dilemmas include exciting plots and elements of the comic supernatural and the fantastic. The Bell, an early novel is noted for its symbolic structure. The moral significance of the lives of a group of characters, brought together in a rather bizarre religious community is examined. The pattern of interaction centres around the symbol of a convent bell and animal and water symbolisms. In Under the Net, the male narrator Jake Donaghue both resists and creates theoretical patterns with words, which, like nets, entrap and affects perceptions of a larger and expanding reality. The Sea, the Sea (1978), a Booker

Prize Winner is a typically dark comedy about obsession, guilt and egoism. It is a remarkable novel noted for the richness of its symbols and characters.

**Muriel Spark (1918):** Like Murdoch and Golding Muriel Spark displays a pressing commitment to moral issues and to their relation to fictional form. Her first novel *The Comforters* is about a neurotic woman writer Caroline Rose who has to come to terms with her new-found Catholicism, with her hallucinations, and with her Godlike status as a creator. She not only works on a study of contemporary fiction entitled *Form in the Modern Novel* but also attempts to write a novel about writing a novel. Spark finds the narrative problems posed by self-consciously literary tests as fascinating as her other interest – the theological problem of evil. *Memento Mori* gives a gruesome account of life in an old peoples' hospital in a wry, blunt, and provocatively funny narrative style. *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960) and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* are in different ways concerned with possession: the first with necromancy in a South London suburb in the 1950's and the second with Miss Brodie's exercise of psychological power and moral sway over her pupils in an Edinburgh girls' school. Spark's entertaining novels include characters who are alive and eccentric.

**William Golding (1911-93):** William Golding has successfully constructed moral fables based on Christian concepts of sin, guilt, purgation and the tentative but precious hope of redemption. The intrinsic cruelty of man is at the heart of many of Golding's novels. He often presents isolated individuals or small groups in extreme situations. His novels are remarkable for their strikingly varied settings.

Moral evil is the theme of *Lord of the Flies*. In this novel a group of boys from an English Cathedral Choir School are wrecked on a desert island and convert this natural paradise into hell regressing into dirt, barbarism and murder. The idea of *Lord of the Flies* is that children far from being innocent and good by nature, are at least half savage and they would become fully savage without guidance and control.

*The Inheritors*, *Pincher Martin*, *Free Fall*, *The Spire* and *The Pyramid* are his other novels. His sense of the power of evil is expressed in almost everything he has written. But the important point is that evil can only be understood because good also exists.

**Angus Wilson (1913-91):** Angus Wilson turns away from the experiments of the modernists and prefers the Victorian fictional techniques. In 1961, he proclaimed his faith in God's eye view, the omniscient narrative style of the Victorian novelists. The world of his novels is that of the mid-twentieth century.

Wilson's novels from his first *Hemlock and after* (1952) to his last *Setting the World on Fire* (1980) are essentially comedies of manners. They give a picture of the whims, fancies, voices, fashions and pomposities of his time. He poked fun at the crude social gatherings which represent 'the hell of the human failure to communicate' where the damned are the social climbers, those wanting to be loved, the unloved women who push people round, the organisation men who fall to pieces when they are alone.

Anglo Saxon Attitudes, The Middle Ages of Mrs. Eliot carry his comments on the cultural, social and sexual tensions of a period that struggles to face the conflict between tradition and novelty. His main strength is his psychological insight into character and motive.

**Alan Sillitoe and others:** Most characters in Wilson's novels are drawn from the middle class. But many novelists like Alan Sillitoe explore characters from lower social levels and present them in a realistic way. Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958) is about a young man from the working class in the English Midlands who wants to shape his life in his own way, ignoring the dictates of society. *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* is about a boy in the boy's prison. He refuses to obey the order of the governor who wants him to win a race. He loses the race and keeps his pride in himself and his own sense of freedom.

The novels of Kingsley Amis have greater comedy and less moral concern. His *Lucky Jim* is about a young university teacher who wants to break away from the conventions of his social class and integrate with the working class and unusual characters outside any social group. According to him, these characters have deeper and stronger feelings than the people around him.

Margaret Drabble and A.S.Byatt are outstanding social commentators and creators of vivid and arresting characters.

**Samuel Beckett :** Samuel Beckett continued the Joycean line of experimentation. He was attracted by words as well by their limitations. *Malloy* (1956), *Malone Dies* (1956), and *The Unnamable* (1959) deal with isolated, aged and decrepit social outcasts of obscure origin who narrate their stories with black humour and remorseless grimness. As story tellers they are aware of the utter futility of the act of story telling but they have to continue the activity as an activity of defiance or as an obsessive compulsion. His novels represent the ultimate breakdown of the realist novel where character portrayal is done in a rich social context.

**Women Novelists:** During this century many women novelists have written about the lives, problems and special concerns of women in the modern world. Their novels, with women characters at, their centre project the women's point of view.

The novels of Ivy – Compton Burnett (including *Brothers and Sisters*, *Parents and Children*, *A Heritage and its History*) deal with the family in a very original way. The stories which picture family life are told almost completely through conversation. She shows powerfully that the reality of their characters' life is basically cruel and destructive.

Doris Lessing's first novel *The Grass is Singing* is set in southern Africa and explores the mind of the wife of a poor white farmer. The main character in her group of novels *Children of Violence*, *Martha Quest* moves away from the old ideas of politics, religion, society and the role of women to live her life according to her beliefs. *The Golden Notebook* is an honest presentation of women's lives, beliefs and the pressures put on them by modern society. The outside world is found to be unfriendly to women and the men often hurt and damage them.

### **5:4:5 To Sum up:**

In this lesson, we have studied the psychological, intellectual and philosophical foundation of the narrative form, which is the richest form in XX Century. We have noted its diversified richness in its theme and technique.

### **5:4:6 Suggested Topics:**

1. the psychological aspects of the XX Century novel
2. the issues and themes of the modern fiction
3. the growth of novels by women writers.

### **5:4:7 Suggested Reading:**

1. Short Oxford History of English Literature.
2. A.C.Ward – Twentieth Century English Literature.
3. Thornley and Gwyneth Roberts – An out line of English Literature.
4. David Daiches – Companion to Literature : British & Commonwealth.

**V.S.VENKATARAMANAN**

## Lesson 5

### THE STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS

#### Structure

- 5:5:1 Objectives
- 5:5:2 The origin of the stream of consciousness
- 5:5:3 The prominent writers of the stream of consciousness
- 5:5:4 Association of ideas in the stream-of-consciousness
- 5:5:5 Conclusion
- 5:5:6 Sample questions
- 5:5:7 Suggested Reading

#### 5:5:1 OBJECTIVES:

- to study the concept and growth of the stream-of-consciousness novel
- to discuss the art of important novels who use this technique
- to discuss salient features of this narrative mode.

#### 5:5:2 THE ORIGIN OF THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS :

According to William James, “Psychology is the science of mental life, both of the phenomena and of their conditions. The phenomena are such things as we call feelings, desires cognition, reasoning decisions and the like.” In other words, psychology as the scientific and objective, examination of the nature and form of human reactions, is a comparatively recent development. The term “stream of consciousness” comes from psychology. It was William James who coined the term in 1886 and popularized it in his *Principles of Psychology* in 1890. According to him, “Every definite image in the mind is steeped and dyed in the free water that flows round it; the significance, the value of the image is all in this halo or penumbra that surrounds and escorts it. (Here is the ‘luminous halo’ of Virginia Woolf). Consciousness does not appear to itself chopped up in kits..... It is nothing joined, it flows fit no call it the stream of thing, of consciousness or of subjective life”. Virginia Woolf realized that in the stream of consciousness novel; the story might wobble the plot might crumble, ruin might seize upon the characters. The new novel dispensed with the accepted principles and connection of prose fiction. I.A. Richards insisted on the need for a new form different from the solid mechanism.

Around the period of the First World War three novelists from three different provinces began writing works to have a remarkable influence on the fiction of the twentieth century. They were Marcel Proust—a Frenchman who was sickly and a semi-recluse, deeply introspective and self who published in 1913 the first two volumes of the eight parts work, known as *Remembrance of Things Past* : Dorothy Miller Richardson—an Englishwoman, a staunch feminist with an awareness of the inner life of her mind had begun to write a twelve part novel entitled “*Pilgrimage*”, the first chapter of which appeared in 1915 and the last in 1938 and James Joyce – an – Irishshman, a teacher of English wrote a novel entitled *A Portrait of the Artist as a Your Man*. Between 1913 and 1915 was born the modern psychological novel what we have come to call the form of consciousness novel or the novel of the silent the internal monologue in English and the modern analytic novel which caught the every atmosphere of the mind. These three writers composed their works independently without any knowledge of what the other two were doing as they were unknown to one



another. These three distinctly different talents and temperaments turned fiction away from external to internal reality. There were striking similarities as well as differences in their works which seemed to be autobiographical. They contained an unusual infusion of the language of poetry. Their very titles suggested, including *Ulysses* by Joyce, a curious kinship of search, voyage, pilgrimage. The three writers were aware of their feelings and sensation. They were also capable of a frank self examination to a degree uncommon even among writers. All the three seemed to write from an acute need to cope with inner problems and project their inner life before the world. The traditional process of projecting the inner experience into an imaginative narrative dealing with the internal world was not carried out. These novelists sought to retain and record the 'inwardness of experience the great journey inward had definitely begun a journey of exploration into the feelings where the first need was to discard the traditional story which entertained a certain amount of conscious or unconscious falsification of man's experience of life, removing reality out of shape. The writers of Psychological Novel annihilated it. According to a critic, "The new psychology has shifted the goal of the novelist:" The writer's purpose was not to moralize, it was felt but to get at all that there in any individual. In brief his purpose is psychological research. The writer's aim was to get nearer to life and depict human life as experienced by those who lived it. These writers were similar to a psychologist whose goal was also the same. The novelist is out to catch the psychological moment.

The reader of their works discovered that the authors seemed bent on effacing themselves and confronting the reader with the direct mental experience of the character. There were only occasional shifts from past to present, from present to past. What was happening seemed to occur largely at whatever moment the reader happened to be reading the story. This was certainly a distinct departure from the way in which the conventional novels unrolled themselves in majestic leisure with the author constantly telling the story and omniscience to the extent of knowing everything about his characters. This removal of the author from the scene made necessary a significant shift in narrative, it created the need to use the memory of the characters to place the reader into a relationship with their part. There was no "story" no "plot". This kind of novel seemed to turn the reader into an author, it was he, ultimately, who put the story together and he had to be cautious to accumulate his dates.

The novelists of the nineteenth century agreed that subjective states could be reported but not rendered in the novel. William James in his Principles of Psychology of 1890 offered a striking confirmation of this view. The term stream-of-consciousness was invoked by him to describe the flux of the mind, its continuity and yet its continuous change. Consciousness, William James said, is an amalgam of all that we have experienced and continue to experience. Every thought is a part of a personal consciousness, Every thought is also unique and even changing. We seem to be selective in our thoughts, selectively attentive or inattentive, focusing attention on certain objects and areas of experience, rejecting others, totally blocking others out. When a thought recurs in the mind it can never be exactly the same as it was before. Renewed, it carries with it the freshness of renewal the new context in which it has emerged "Experience is remoulding us every moment and our mental reaction on every given thing is really a resultant of our experience of the whole world up to that date." Thought has changes of pace. William James says, "The search of thought is so headlong that it almost always brings us up at the conclusion before we can arrive it ... The attempt at analysis is in fact like seizing a spinning top to catch its motion, or trying to turn up the gas quickly enough to see how the darkness looks".

During the first two decades of the present century, there were popular novelists like Hardy, Conrad, James Bennett, Galsworthy and Wells. Henry James wanted to make his main concern the inside rather than the outside of his characters and replace the primary interest of the story by the charm and fascination of the carefully analysed reasoning and to feeling which motivated a few figures. He reflected his own mind and the experience of his own mind, even with all sorts of conditions made. This new technique of the novel, to reinforce what is stated earlier has relegated the importance of the story to the background. James Joyce's expression of experience took a different turn as well as a different form. He spent his early years in Dublin. Almost blind from his childhood, he lived in the world of sound, in the noisy town of Dublin, Joyce wanted to catch the immediate and the present—he called it 'an epiphany' unlike Proust, he wanted to express the immediate consciousness as reality. Balzac and Dostoevsky expressed the need to digest the thought of their characters and of translating sensations into words, much earlier before.

### **5:5:3 THE PROMINENT WRITERS OF THE STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

The psychological novel, accidentally found by Samuel Richardson, by the use of an epistolary method that brought the reader close to the thoughts and feelings of his characters had given way to the self-conscious psychological novel, in which the thoughts and feelings themselves were re-created. Coleridge described Samuel Richardson as recording 'the morbid consciousness of every thought and feeling in the whole flux and reflux of the mind in abort its self-involution and dream like continuity'.

The modern psychological novel is 'modern' in that it reflects the deeper and more searching inwardness of our century and this turning inward was reflected in the writings of William James and Henri Bergson and after them, on the experimental and clinical level, in the work of Sigmund Freud. Their explanation of the psychology of thought of consciousness went far beyond the mere analysis of it by Hume and Locke and Berkeley and Mill. When Proust, Joyce and Dorothy Richardson began to write, the influence of Freud was only beginning to be felt. It is to Bergson, in his influence on Proust, and to some extent on Joyce and to William James in his account of thought experience that we must look as the creators of the intellectual atmosphere in which the novel of subjectivity came into being. Changes in philosophical thought heralded technical innovation in the arts. Proust studied briefly under Bergson and his works. Memory is the at the heart of Bergson's exploration as it is of Proust's. Like William James, Bergson taught that we are remoulded constantly by experience, that consciousness is a process of endless accretion, so long as mind and senses are functioning that it is "the continuation of an indefinite past in a living present". And out of this comes also the preoccupation with time which is central to psychological novel. In setting down in the novel the thoughts as they are passing through the mind of the character, the novelist is catching and recording the present moment and no other. It was no accident that Joyce sought to record a single day in *Ulysses* and that throughout Virginia Woolf there is a preoccupation with the moment". For Joyce Time present was all important—a continuous of present, in which the past inevitably lingered.

**JAMES JOYCE** The opening lines of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, clearly demonstrated that there was something strikingly new—a clear departure from the traditional method of novelist narration.

“Once upon a time and very good time it was there a moocow coming down

along the road met a nice little boy named baby tuckoo .....  
His father told him that story. His father looked at him through a glass, he had a hair face”.

James does not tell, instead he shows by putting us in direct contact with the mind of characters who people his novels, By coming directly in contact with the mind of the people in the novel the reader is in a position to judge for himself, the author need not explain anything. James very often keeps in the ground. He narrates very little in the accepted sense of the term. In his later novels almost all that happens is reflected in the consciousness of one or two of the characters. Their minds become ‘burnished reflectors’, and sometimes the mind of one character reflects the entire story.

DOROTHY RICHARDSON : Her novel also expresses the insistence upon the immediate consciousness as reality. In her, this insistence is instinctive and somewhat irrational, and has a peculiar feminine touch. She is quieter and less dramatic and her vision of life is rather limited. The conversational tone of the opening lines of her novel may be noted. “Miriam left the gas lit hall and went slowly upstairs. The march twilight day upon the landings, but the staircase was almost dark”... She would have time to think about the journey and decide what she was going to say to the Fraulein”

HENRY JAMES : He himself characterized this method of ‘revelation of the story’ and illumination of the situation and character through the mind as the point of view. He elaborates his theory with great care in the preface. He tells us about Roderick Hudson that “the center of interest throughout Roderick in the Rowland Mallet’s consciousness and the drama is the very drama of that consciousness”. He goes on with his explanation “the beautiful little problem was to keep it connected with the general human exposure, and thereby be dimmed and befooled and bewildered, anxious, restless fallible and yet to endow it with such intelligence that the appearance reflected in it and constituting together there the situation and the ‘story’, should become by that fact intelligible”. This may be taken as complete statement of the Jamesian technique. He constantly puts the reader in contact with the mind of his characters. The recorded talks of James character are detailed and minute, yet it would be difficult to say how much of these are real in life. Just as in the dramatic monologues of Browning no matter who speaks at the moment, Bishop Blongram or Andrea, it is basically Browning himself she speaks, similarly in the novels of Henry James no matter who is thinking at the moment the expression of all thought is inevitably in the personal style of James himself. In the Preface to.

The Portrait of a Lady James comes very near describing the stream-of-consciousness technique. The Jamesian point of view gives us an inner vision of a particular mind, and we are taken to the realm of consciousness. In James’s later novels especially, we are in contact with some mind or other, but very seldom with a whole mind in all its complexity. His purpose is to isolate from the whole stream-of-consciousness the current he required. He is perhaps the first novelist to study seriously the problems of consciousness and its novelistic expression. He is certainly a path maker, a pioneer for those who came after him and carried the technique to its logical conclusion.

The close of the nineteenth century in England witnessed the rapid disintegration of Victorian life and values. Several eminent writers of this age of transition turned their back on external reality and the ugly world in which they lived. They turned to subjective experience and dived deep into human consciousness. It was a reaction against the

naturalistic moment and its excesses. The naturalists led by Emile Zola prided themselves on their objectivity, they explored the material realities of life and social environment and endeavoured to represent them as faithfully as they could. Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy failed to look within and gave a solid and arbitrarily stylized picture of life. While Henry James reacted against their style, Virginia Woolf described them as materialists and felt that their narratives left her with a 'strange feeling of incompleteness and dissatisfaction.' She was an admirer of James Joyce.

**VIRGINIA WOOLF:** She presents various interrelated ideas and images and suggestion as the notion of a group mind. The halo of consciousness surrounding her character is always impinging on the individual being which is an encroachment by the group consciousness. Her theory of group consciousness establishes a major divergence from the principles of William James who believed in the privacy of each individual's inner life. In Virginia Woolf's works there is a tension between the individual's inner life and the concept of a group feeling. Her center of artistic sensitivity is the need for consciousness to establish its identity and integrity and the exposure of consciousness to a constant attack of impression and feeling.

Virginia Woolf's deviation from the traditional narrative technique was established with the publication of 'Jacob's Room' in 1922, when James Joyce published his 'Ulysses', T.S Eliot "The Waste Land" and Franz Kafka "The Trial". "Jacob's room" is the narration of man's life from a multiple point of view. Virginia Woolf has adopted a discontinuation technique of severing the individual growth of a young man by the First World War. 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man' also presents a similar viewpoint. She describes the characteristics of her heroes on the basis of psychological realism adopting a technique where a sprinkling of ideas and feelings is the basis for the description. If Mrs.Dalloway was projection of Virginia Woolf's personality, "To the Light house" is a very sensitive portrayal of Mrs.Woolf's childhood. The technique she utilizes in this novel makes a complete break from the 19<sup>th</sup> century tradition projecting the inner reality minus the chaotic and incoherent style of Jacob's room and Mrs.Dalloway. It projects a multi dimensional picture by the juxta positioning of interior monologues as in Joyce's 'Ulysses' where the consciousness of Stephen Molly and Leopold Bloom are in opposition to each other. "To the Lighthouse", a psychological novel is divided into Window, Time Passes and The Lighthouse. The Lighthouse the central symbol, depicts Mr.Ramsay's essential loneliness. The depth of the sea fathoms the depths of Mrs Ramsay's inner being. Mr.Ramsay's character is individualistic but his wife's consciousness prevails the characters in the novel in a diffused manner. The conclusion of novel is significant because the consciousness of the protagonist undergoes a complete transformation. It is because Mrs.Woolf descends into the beings of her protagonists, their consciousness and individual complexities. There is a penetration beyond the social existence, delving into the bleakness of the individual soul.

**D.H. LAWRENCE :** David Herbert Lawrence believed that a complete imaginative experience, which goes through the whole soul and body can renew our strength and our vitality. He saw the novel as the utterance of the consciousness of the whole man, drawing the consciousness of the reader towards health, sanity and wholeness. The form corresponds to a pattern in consciousness- a vision-which is itself a product of the interaction between the reality within the writer, the naked self, and the reality outside him, the circumambient universe. In "Sons and Lovers" Lawrence could render his own deepest experience into art with the poise and assurance. Lawrence deftly handles the inner feelings of Mrs.Morel, Paul, Miriam and biological desires and his physical intimacy with Clara without any

inhibition, delving deep into the human consciousness. Even the 'Women in Love' and 'The Rainbow' are examples of the journey into the mind and soul of the human being to project a realistic version of life.

ANITA DESAI "Anita Desai is the vanguard of a new generation of Indian writer's who are experimenting with themes of inner consciousness. She gives her reader valuable insights into the feminine consciousness through her memorable protagonists", says a scholar. Anita Desai stresses on interior than on exterior characterization, on motives and circumstances, and on the invisible. She can be considered as a psychologist novel writer as she writes about the interior motives of characters and psychological effects of actions.

Her first novel, *Cry the Peacock* was published in 1963 and it deals with unexplored recesses of a man's heart and his inner psyche. This novel is not only concerned with the inner experience of character but also with their inarticulated sub-consciousness life and it can also be termed the stream of consciousness novel or the interior monologue. Anita Desai delineates the atmosphere of the mind of her character. She presents the inner emotional world of only one character, Maya. This novel deals with Maya's mental upheavals, her inner struggle, her desire for warmth, love and companionship and her obsession with death. She is constantly haunted by her fatal flaw which is activated by her hidden fears or inhibition created by her relationships with others or her circumstances of lie. This exploration of Maya's mind through images, conscious, unconscious, reveals Anita Desai's portrayal of consciousness.

#### **5:5:4 ASSOCIATION OF IDEAS IN THE STREAM-OF-CONSCIOUSNESS:**

Consciousness covers the entire area of mental processes. Psychic activity or awareness extends from the lowest level which is just above oblivion or unconsciousness right up to the highest level which is represented by formal or rational communication". Levels of consciousness can be easily distinguished, the speech level and the pre-speech level. The stream of consciousness fiction is largely concerned with the pre speech level of consciousness which lacks coherent pattern and is not rationally controlled below the threshold of conscious thought of experience stands the vast region of sub-conscious psychic processes which are in an amorphous, fluid state.

The stream-of-consciousness novel admits the reader to the hidden reserves of consciousness and concentrate on what J. W., Beach calls 'passive states of mind' which are undirected by rational thought or a sense of practical need or conduct. Middleton Murry believed that the new novel presented human consciousness 'as it was before it had been reshaped in obedience to the demands of practical life and explored the strange limits where experiences once conscious fade into unconscious.

The stream of consciousness fiction did not impose a coherent and logical pattern on life and dispensed with formal story telling and characterization in order to reveal the depths and fluidity of human consciousness. It presents character as a process not a state, according to David Daiches. There is no arbitrary formalization and no emphasis on superficial traits of personality or external idiosyncrasy and humors. The new novelist aimed at capturing the flux of consciousness and revealing the richness and subtlety of psychic life.

Human consciousness is characterized by flux as well as privacy. It is essentially egocentric and to a great extent the material of any one consciousness is an enigma to the other. Each person has his own private sense of values, relationships and associations J .M.

Beach says, "Our psyche is such an impermeably integrated bundle of memories, sensation and impulses that unless sternly controlled by a dominating will it is at the mercy of every stray mind of dominating will, it is at the mercy of every stray mind of suggestion .... The moment we relax, the moment will let go control of our will and our attention we fall back into the matter, the chaos of our natural complicated selves". When concentration is relaxed the mind shifts restlessly from one thing to another associated with it. The stream of consciousness novel has to communicate the flux as well as the tone and texture of private consciousness.

The movement of psychic processes below the speech level is determined by the principles of free association. The pattern of association depends on the individual's past experience and present obsessions and future dreams or aspiration. According to Robert Humphrey, three factors control association- first memory which is its basis, second the senses, which guide it and third imagination, which determines its elasticity. To make the psychic flux intelligible the writer has to provide explanatory clues and hints.

The stream of consciousness writers use figurative language, rhetorical devices and expressive symbols and images to portray the flux and privacy of human consciousness. Sometimes the novelist is compelled to use private symbols in images expressive of the individual's private sense of values on prediction. The process of psychological association is very well illustrated by Molly Bloom's stream of consciousness in *Ulysses*. She lies in bed at night. The striking of the clock, the sight of the wall paper and lowering of the lamp are the only external stimuli. The flux of her consciousness at the pre-speech level is rendered with great art and skill by James Joyce. Similarly in Virginia Woolf's short sketch "The Mark on the Wall" we have the reveries of a woman who allows an unidentified mark on the wall to provoke a train of ideas. From the mark, her consciousness wanders to thoughts on the uncertainty of life to Shakespeare, to tables of precedence at Court, to remains and relics of the past and back to the mark which turns out to be a snail.

Frederick J Hoffman gives a brilliant analysis of these varying levels of fictional writings in his book, "Two Decades of Criticism". This technique plunges as into varying degrees of depth. First, the traditional where the method accepts the conscious controls of speech, and thought and experience; second, the level of the preconscious (Freudian) or of conscious reverie in which the chief difference from logical discourse is the former's greater fluidity and its less attachment to the rules of sentence, structure, and word meanings, the third level is the subconscious where much of the control of the conscious mind over will is lifted. The fourth level is the unconscious in which the narrative style and content both try to free themselves completely from rational control and give a verbal, rendering of the behaviour pattern of the psychical unconscious.

Another important characteristic of stream of consciousness fiction is its freedom from rigid action of Time and Space. Psychic processes, before they are rationally controlled for communication do not follow the chronological pattern. Memory recalls the past and disrupts the time sequence. The mind also swings away in space to distant scenes and thus the movement acquires a wide sweep. Most modern novelists like Proust, Conrad, Woolf, Joyce, Faulkner deny absolutes in human relationships.

**TECHNIQUES :** The revelation of the deepest recesses of consciousness requires a special technique. Robert Humphrey suggests the interior monologue which "is the technique used in fiction for representing the psychic content of processes of character, partly or entirely

unuttered, just as these processes exist at various levels of conscious central before they are formulated for deliberate speech. The indirect interior monologue gives to the reader a sense of the author's continuous presence. The use of the third person point of view permits the introduction of description and expository material the author interposes directly between the character's psychic and the reader.

Omniscient description and soliloquies have been effectively by stream of consciousness writers. The author sometimes assumes the role of an omniscient narrator. Dorothy Richardson gives an impressionistic description of the depths of Miriam's consciousness in *Pilgrimage*. The soliloquy presents psychic processes directly without the intervention of the author. Lady Macbeth's broken utterance in the sleep walking scenes are closer to the real stream of consciousness. There are different ways to express psychic process. It can be the use of italics, the absence of punctuation, use of parenthesis and so on.

The flux of consciousness lacks form and coherence. It has no logical sequence and is apparently chaotic. It is necessary to impose order from psychic contents and processes to make them significant and intelligible. Writers rely on the unities, musical structure, cycle schemes and symbolism to impose a formal pattern on their work. In *Mrs. Dalloway* Mrs. Woolf strikes a compromise between a charity of form and the formlessness which characterise the stream of consciousness. She adheres to unities of time and place, the action does not exceed 24 hours and takes place in London. Psychic material is carefully sifted and welded into an artistic pattern. Dorothy Richardson uses no complex formal devices and the presentation of a single consciousness gives sufficient unity and pattern to her work. Miriam's consciousness is haunted by a vague symbol. 'a tiny little garden'. This image as motif runs throughout 'Pilgrimage'.

The stream of consciousness novel approaches the condition of poetry because the writer holds in his hand one medium only with which to create his work. He has words, even as the painter has color and the musician sound. The novelist sets out to use words to render the very iridescence and bloom of life or to frame in syllabus the light and dark moments of memory and feeling. The word must paint a picture or the sound of a freight train rushing through the night and through the mind of Molly Bloom's it must remind the reader of a smell or a lost sensation. It conveys to the reader some of the feelings he has experienced at the moment he has used it. The word has to convey the whole of a writer's experience.

### **5:5:5 CONCLUSION**

We have seen how within the novel, once there is inclusion of large masses of subjective matter, there is inclusion of large masses of subjective matter, there is an alternation of the temporal and spacial qualities of the fiction. Mechanical time gives away to psychological time, though is shown in its flowing kinetic state but the process of recording it results, in reality in a kind of stasis so that the inner monologue or stream can be said to be observed as well as overheard. Since thought does not arrange itself in orderly sequence, the novel of subjectivity often gives an effect of disorder and different readers cope with this in different ways. The inattentive reader speedily loses his way. The attentive reader in Such novels—the works of Dorothy Richardson or of Virginia Woolf belong to that category of fiction of which T.S.Eliot spoke when he said that "only sensibility trained on poetry can wholly appreciate" them. By this he meant that the novel is read not as a time sequence but as a heterogenous series of perception each catching its moment of intensity without

reference to what lies on the succeeding pages but the entire reading of which conveys a poetic synthesis.

In the psychological novel the author is nowhere in sight. Suddenly we are seated at the window. Somewhere, above behind below, the author is busy being a stage manager and an actor, arranging what we shall see. He tries to give us the illusion constantly that we are experiencing what is happening there and in the process he asks us to look at all sorts of extraneous things, strange things as if we were in one of our own dreams in which impossible and implausible events occur. Magical transformations, return of episodes and people out of forgotten pasts, masses of geography and history that are part of the common heritage of man, a veritable mental cinema of flashing images often confused and incoherent, often sharply focused so that we forgot ourselves and living all that the writer has arranged for us. From being listeners once removed from the scene, we have become actual participants the effect is to make us use our eyes to see rather than rely upon someone else's report of what he has seen.

The psychological novelist sometimes takes us into certain minds where we do not care to remain. This reflects our taste and feeling and is no reflection on the artist. Both reader and critics who have insistently asked the psychological novelist to mend his ways and revert to old methods and old forms have failed to recognize the collaborative nature of novel reading. Certainly the techniques evolved by the psychological novelist by which they penetrated deeper into realities of the mind have passed into the common currency of fiction and there are signs among the younger writers of further refinement of techniques and a moulding of the stream of consciousness to new uses as well as an integration of it into the older type of narrated fiction. The novelist knows today that in the portrayal of the mind's atmosphere the literary art has achieved what seemed at one time impossible; Proust's observation of himself Joyce's matching of language to sound and image, Virginia Woolf's use of poetic imaginary, Faulkner's bold sally into the consciousness of an idiot- all these represent victories of literature over the seeming anarchy of life, to be cherished and studied and used.

The aggressive novelty of the stream of consciousness fiction has often baffled critical opinion. Well detested its 'copious emptiness' Herbert Read was distressed by the "terrible fluidity" and the disintegration of form and structure in the work of Joyce and Proust. Yeats looked at the genre with alarm and Wyndham Lewis felt that Joyce and the disciples of Bergson were menacing western culture by abandoning themselves to flux and disintegration. I.W. Beach states that the stream of consciousness technique is applicable only to neurotics whose consciousness is given over to the chaotic. The new genre disregarded rational thought and the commonly accepted syntax and diction. It deviated from the rules of grammatical construction and evolved a strange cryptic medium of expression. Sometimes it is dismissed as morbid or unwholesome without any artistic beauty and merit. However it cannot be disputed that the psychological novel had added a new province to fiction. It has explored a new realm of experience and revealed the amazing depths and fluidity of human consciousness. It has thrown light on the deepest recesses of the mind and depiction psychic processes with remarkable art and skill.

### **5:5:6 SAMPLE QUESTIONS**

- a. Trace out the development of the Psychological Novel.
- b. What is stream of consciousness? Illustrate.
- c. Attempt an essay on the major writers of the stream of consciousness.



- d. Describe the different aspects of stream of consciousness techniques in literature.
- e. Does the psychological novel differ from the traditional fiction? Elucidate your answer.
- f. In your opinion has psychological novel added a new province to fiction? How?

### **5:5::7 Suggested Reading**

- 1. Leon Edel .The Psychological Novel 1900—1950 Kalyani Publishers, Ludhiana 1997.
- 2. Jaydipsinh Dodiya Critical Essays on Ania Desai's Fiction
- 3. V.Y. Publishing House, New Delhi 2000.
- 4. Keith Sagar : The Artw of D.H. Lawrence. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1966.
- 5 B.Sudipta The Novel of Virgina Woolf. Prestige Books, New Delhi 1990.

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## Lesson 6

### Virginia Woolf : A Room of One's Own

#### Structure

- 5:6:1 Objectives**
- 5:6:2 Background**
- 5:6:3 Writer: Life & Works**
- 5:6:4 Analysis**
- 5:6:5 Critical Evaluation**
- 5:6:6 Summary**
- 5:6:7 Technical Terms**
- 5:6:8 Model Questions**
- 5:6:9 Reference Books**

#### **5:6:1 Objectives**

1. to study A room of One's Own as an essay on the intellectual freedom of women.
2. to understand and appreciate Virginia Woolf's insistence on the importance for women of gaining both a space (a room) and a degree of financial independence.
3. to understand Virginia Woolf's theory of the androgynous mind.
4. to familiarize with the Complex theory of relations between gender and writing.
5. to appreciate A Room of One's Own as the first sustained essay in the feminist literary theory.

#### **5:6:2 Background**

The end of the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of the down-trodden as a tremendous force in social and political life. The Russian Revolution of 1917 was an event of global significance. Running counter to the communist movement was the rise of Fascism in Germany and Italy. As the socialist movement gained momentum, the capitalist world had a tense atmosphere of labour unrest. The growing importance of the masses, the decline of the middle class in its political influence, the political and economic stagnation of Europe, rapid urbanization giving rise to a disturbing sense of man's alienation, a strong sense of disenchantment with the political and economic philosophy of the preceding era were some of the signs of change in the pattern of collective life. The new era was also marked by a rejection of many of the old assumptions regarding the true nature of family and social relationships. Man's private behaviour was profoundly modified by the atmosphere of economic, political and moral perplexity in which he lived. The growing knowledge, of science, technology and the dialectics of the new political and philosophical systems, instead of giving man a sense of confidence regarding his position in the larger scheme of social life, made him feel extremely unsure of his ground.

The nature of the universe had been given different interpretations from Darwin to Einstein. Darwin upsets man's centrality. Man was no longer considered as the best and the noblest of God's creation but merely a transitional figure in the evolutionary process. The new

physics of Planck shattered the theory of cause and effect by emphasizing discontinuity. His quantum theory had its impact on literature as well so that the emphasis now was upon bits of character, scenes and life rather than on the totality of any of these.

Einstein developed his Theory of Relativity. All the things which had been taken as stable or fixed so far were observed now in relation to other things. The important word 'relationship' or 'relativistic' in modern physics as well as in modern literature describes Virginia Woolf's world as much as Einstein's. With their focus on relationship, the modern novelists stopped looking for the absolutes and thus automatically stood on a different ground from that of their predecessors. The romantic hero had an unceremonious exit from the modern novel.

While the Quantum Theory and the Theory of Relativity upset many of the earlier beliefs regarding the nature of the universe, Freud and Jung were engaged in a thorough exploration of the human psyche. As a matter of fact, Freud's theories of sex and psychopathology became the commonplaces of literature and were interpreted more as literary rather than as scientific doctrines.

It was in such an atmosphere that Virginia Woolf emerged on the literary scene. She took pains to get acquainted with the new ideas in ethics and psychology. She seems to have fully assimilated the ideas of the American novelist and critic, Henry James. Marcel Proust, tutored and inspired by the Philosopher Bergson, gave her the sense of discontinuity and also of the free association of ideas on the level of the subconscious and he proved a direct influence on her. Freudian psychology of the subconscious revolutionized the entire concept of man. The strongest impact of psychology appears in her Mrs. Dalloway. The influence of the Russian novel also is quite perceptible in her fiction. From Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov she learnt how to probe deep into the dark regions of the human soul.

Since 1918 the world has witnessed a series of wars and the First World War seems to have penetrated deeper into the human consciousness than any other of the later ones. The authors of the period sought indefatigably to uncover the reasons for the world – shaking event. A new literature thus grew up, full of anguish and pain, characterized by the spirit of intense self-examination and daring social criticism. The two World Wars made a tremendous impact on Virginia Woolf. She, whose novels are a mirror of the twentieth century sensibility, saw life in the raw. She had an acute awareness of the indescribable horror and suffering of war. The novels written during the period between the two wars have a clear note of anxiety and crisis even though superficially they might look as comedy of manners.

### 5:6:3 Writer: Life & Works

**5:6:3:1Life:** one of the most innovative writers of the twentieth century, Adeline Virginia Woolf was born on 25<sup>th</sup> January, 1882. Her father Sir Leslie Stephen was an eminent critic, historian, biographer and the first editor of the prestigious Dictionary of National Biography. Virginia Woolf inherited her father's intellect and mother's fine sensitivity and artistic taste. Her early childhood was spent in an exciting world of books which encouraged her to study, to read and to express her mind. She was educated at her house. She spent long hours in her father's

library. Many writers, politicians and painters met regularly in his house. Meredith and John Morley were regular visitors. She could claim family connection with a number of distinguished men like Darwin, the scientist, Maitland, the historian and J.A. Symonds, the poet and critic. It was her privilege thus to be in heritor to a profusely rich culture.

When she was nine years old, she started a handwritten weekly newspaper, The Hyde Park Gate New where in she published her stories which are remarkable in their narrative skill, vocabulary, ingenuity and charm. Her early stories like 'The Midnight Ride', 'A Cockney's Farming Experience' and 'The Experience of a paterfamilias' are humorous in nature and bear inspirations of the comic English weekly called 'Punch'. Before she was thirteen, she found herself imitating Hawthorne in her style. Her first publication was an unsigned review in The Guardian in 1904. She regularly contributed journalistic essays on diverse topics. Later she started contributing articles to The times Literary Supplement with which she maintained life-long association.

Virginia Woolf's mother died in 1895 and in that year she had her first breakdown. Her father died in 1904 and she suffered another breakdown. On her recovery she moved, with her brothers and sister, to a house in Gordon Square, Blooms bury. The name of Virginia Woolf is often identified with the group of artists, writers and intellectuals who were her closest friends. This circle of intelligent and gifted people, who came to be called the 'Bloomsbury Group' included such famous names as Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf, Lytton Strachey, J.M. Keynes, Roger Fry and E.M. Forster. All these men were influenced by the intellectual ambience of Cambridge. They sought new ways of thinking and living and expressed their reaction against Victorian conventions. Discussion amongst these intellectual men evolved a number of masterpieces and valuable literary works. Intellectual members of the group moulded her early writings, her ideology and contributed a great deal to her vision and style.

She traveled a good deal despite much ill in these years and had an interesting social life in London. She did a little adult-education teaching, worked for female suffrage and shared the excitement of Roger Fry's Post-Impressionist Exhibition in 1910. In 1912, after another bout of nervous illness, she married Leonard Woolf.

Her first book, The Voyage out was published in 1915 when she was thirty-three. She was often ill with depression and anorexia and in 1913 attempted suicide. But after a bout of violent madness her health seemed to settle down and a printing press, Hogarth Press was inaugurated in 1917. During the period from 1925 to 1931. With her novels Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse and The Waves, she established her reputation as a serious experimental novelist to be reckoned with. At the same time she found a wider audience with The Common Reader, Orlando and A Room of One's Own. She became famous and financially successful. By the autumn of 1940, many of the familiar Bloomsbury houses had been destroyed or badly damaged by bombs. During February, 1941 her mental condition deteriorated alarmingly and on 28 March, unable to face another bout of insanity, she drowned herself in the River Ouse.

Virginia Woolf was often referred to as "highbrow", which was somewhat justified if one considers the fact that the very air Woolf breathed, was steeped in intellectualism. With her Bloomsbury background, she was able to savour the current of the exciting new concepts that

were associated with the names of Freud, Bergson, Proust and the Impressionists, to name a few. Rejecting traditional methods of fiction, Woolf's preoccupation was with the depiction of what she terms "life itself" meaning ordinary everyday experiences of the individual rather than the sensational or the momentous. Her focus on the workings of the human mind makes her adopt a technique that takes the reader under the surface from a glimpse of the outward reality.

Her career as a writer of fiction covers the years 1912-41, thirty years distracted by intermittent serious illness as well as by the demands, which she regarded as very important, of family and friends and by the need or desire to write literary criticism and social comment. Her industry was extraordinary-nine highly-wrought novels, two or three of them among the great masterpieces of the form in the century, along with all the other writings, journals and letters that have been edited and published.

**5:6.2: Works:** The Voyage Out (1915), her first novel, is quite traditional in form. It is the story of a young and inexperienced girl who comes to learn something of life and the relations between the sexes. She falls in love and dies of a tropical fever before she can realize herself. The real interest in the novel centres on a vague awareness that there is meaning in life. Somewhere the mystery of life and death is laid bare. The novel is primarily concerned with the dispute between the individual and the society.

Night and Day (1919) is Virginia Woolf's longest novel. It is a conventional, realistic story showing many of the characteristics that Virginia Woolf ridiculed in her criticism of the English realistic novelists. It is set in the pre-war world and is about a cultural clash between different classes. The main focus, however, is on the war between the sexes. The novel is a comedy which enables love and intimacy to triumph without disaster. The mood of enchantment and magic make this novel readable.

Jacob's Room (1922) was a decisive turning point in Virginia Woolf's career. Jacob, the central character is perceived by the narrator, a woman ten years older than him, primarily from the outside. Virginia Woolf had rejected, and never again returned to, a first – person stream of consciousness technique. The novel seems to tell the life story of Jacob. It opens with Jacob as a boy and follows him through his life as a student at Cambridge and then tells of his adventures in London and in Greece. At the end we learn that he has been killed in the Great War. Yet the novel is not a traditional bildungsroman. It is an anti-war book and it is bitter and angry not only about war itself but also about the values, historical myths and social illusions that gave rise to the war.

Mrs. Dalloway (1925) follows the trend of complete break from conventional techniques that started with Jacob's Room. It carries all the traits characteristic of Woolf's novels – stream-of-consciousness, internal monologue, poetic style, suppression of plot, suppression of objective character descriptions etc. The narrative flows smoothly without the hindrance of demarcation into chapters. Virginia Woolf utilizes a multifaceted narrative technique of direct and indirect narration which absorbs us completely and illuminates the thoughts and feelings of the protagonists. The novel opens in London on one day in June 1923 and ends the same evening when at Clarissa's party, the parallel strands of the Clarissa and Septimus stories are linked together in an aesthetically pleasing unity.

To the Lighthouse (1927) is generally recognized as Virginia Woolf's masterpiece. It is a novel of manners depicting the upper middle class academic society in Edwardian England. The novel is divided into three precise parts. Woolf operates within the framework of a single day but the evening and morning are separated by a long night of ten years. It deals with solitude, death and memory but instead of ending on a note of fatality, it ends in affirmation. The lighthouse is a symbol of eternity in the midst of the changing waves. There is a willful confusion of the time sequence and it would require an exceptionally attentive reader to keep pace with the changes.

Orlando (1928) is conceived as a mock biography of her friend, Vita Sackville-West. It was a deliberately superficial book as she felt that for once she did not need to be a difficult author. However, the fact that it is a fantastic, comic and superficial book does not mean that it has nothing serious in it. The mocking, parodistic and fantastical tone with which it opens had by the end been replaced by a more serious quest for the character of Vita in the present day. Through its comic treatment of gender, the novel highlights the conventionality and the artificiality of social assumptions about men and women and what they are capable of.

A Room of One's Own (1929) is constructed out of two lectures Virginia Woolf gave in two Cambridge colleges at Newnham and Girton. Basically it is a polemic on the inferior status of woman that has persisted in European civilization from the earliest times to the present day. She admits the gradual erosion of inequality and prejudice in her own time but insists that the idea of inferiority is deeply rooted in men's minds. Specifically, it is a claim that 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction' and it is agreed with the most remarkable force and the most telling illustrative examples. And it is not only about the status of women but also about the creative intelligence, the nature of genius and the doom of Fascism. It is in fact, a masterpiece.

The Waves (1931) is a beautiful prose-poem in which Virginia Woolf's talent reaches its zenith. The Waves is a series of moments with a diaphanous plot delineating the progress of the individuals from their childhood to old age. The action takes place within the framework of a single day. It has nine sections of varying lengths. The novel is a simple progress of a day, with six children lying serenely at dawn and withered by age by dusk. It deals with eternal truths. In her other works, Woolf's ever-present voice obtruded in the narrative. In The Waves, all we have is a series of quotations. The soliloquies are alternated with the lyrical description of nature. She intends to present the 'moment' whole so that the very texture of life is revealed.

The Years (1937) is a fictional saga commencing from the Victorian era to the present generation. In the process, Virginia Woolf has portrayed the minds of the protagonists in a psycho-analytical manner. The plot is nothing but the enumeration of a series of incidents regarding the Pargiter family. Virginia Woolf's involvement was not with the desultory and routine affairs of life but her interest lies in focusing on the sense-impressions, with the projection of fragmentary and discontinuous conversations and thought-processes. In writing this novel, Virginia Woolf returned to dialogue which she had not written extensively since Jacob's Room. But dialogue is not used, as it conventionally was, to represent successful communication. Talk is portrayed rather as the failure of communication. The novel highlights the interference, the noise that prevents talk from being filled with meaning.

Three Guineas (1938) is a relatively unknown text. Woolf conceived it as a sequel to A Room of One's Own. Three Guineas is an extended analysis of the social and economic position of women and a political treatise against Fascism. Woolf presents her argument in Three Guineas as a reply to three letters which she has received, asking for her political and financial support for different causes. The first letter is from a barrister who asks her opinion about the most effective way to combat the drift towards war. The second letter she receives is from the treasurer of a women's college, asking for a contribution to its Rebuilding Fund and the third asks her to donate money to a society which aims to promote the entry of women into the professions. Woolf considers each of these requests in turn, ultimately deciding to send each correspondent the sum of one guinea. Then she involves herself in an analysis of the history of women's education, the political and individual values which dominate public institutions, the relations between militarism and masculinity, and the fear and anger which structure relations between men and women.

Between the Acts (1941) the last novel of Virginia Woolf, was published posthumously and the narration covers a day at a country house, during which a historical pageant is performed. When the pageant is unrolled, the audience is able to witness Chaucerian, Elizabethan, Restoration, Victorian and Present-Day episodes, with strategic interludes, all within a specified time. Woolf's attempt was to capture the essence of British History and present-day reality. The novel was written under the shadow of the Second World War. Though the novel does not have war as its central theme, the fear of war is never absent from the consciousness of the characters. Between the Acts is the story of the attempt of a couple to find fulfilment in a satisfactory marital relationship. This novel adapts lyrical style.

## **5:6:4 Analysis**

**5:6:6:1Plot :** In October 1928 Virginia Woolf gave two lectures in Cambridge Colleges, one to the Arts Society at Newnham, and the other to a similar society at Girton, on 'Women and Fiction', and it was out of these lectures that she constructed A Room of One's Own, published as a separate book the following year. Basically, it is a polemic on the inferior status of women that has persisted in European civilization from the earliest times to the present day. Virginia Woolf admits the gradual erosion of inequality and prejudice in her own time, but insists that it still has a very long way to go, and that the idea of the inferiority of women is still deeply rooted in men's minds. Specifically, it is a claim that 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction', argued with the most remarkable force and the most telling illustrative examples. And yet rarely, if ever, was a polemic delivered or a claim upheld with such good humour, such wit, such imaginative illumination or such absence of rancorous rhetoric. And it is not only about the status of women, but also about the creative intelligence, the nature of genius, and the doom of fascism. It is spirited, lucid, cogent, amusing; it is, in fact, a masterpiece.

Woolf takes us on a series of excursions and reflections in 6 Chapters. In the first we are in Cambridge (She calls it Oxbridge, but it is perfectly obvious from the beginning that we are, in fact, in her beloved Cambridge), and the notes with sly exactitude the difference between the luxurious appurtenances of life in a man's college, where she is feasted with the most delicious

of luncheons (and forbidden as a woman to enter the famous Library without special introduction), and the measly supper she is offered at the women's college she visits in the evening. In the next chapter, we are in the British Museum, where she finds an enormous number of books by men about women, and in particular, one by a Prof. Von X on the Mental, Moral and physical inferiority of the female sex, and makes fun of him for his anger, which she feels betrays his insecurity as a member of the dominant sex. That England is under the rule of a patriarchy is proved by a glance at the evening paper; she then informs us that she has been left £ 500 a year by an aunt, and how that completely changes her condition. In the III chapter she imagines what would have happened to a sister of Shakespeare, if she had had one with the same gifts as his own; how she would have been forced to deny her gifts and remain silent and subservient her whole life through. In the IV chapter she traces the gradual emergence of women writers, and the enormous difficulty they found in the earlier centuries of our literature, until, with Aphra Behn in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, a corner is at last turned. She made money by her writing, and Woolf sees that fact as the beginning of female liberation; but even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the great women novelists appear, she observes, that they had – with the unique exception of Jane Austen – used synonyms like, George Eliot, Currer, Ellis and Action Bell. In this chapter she makes two very striking statements. One is about the necessity of women writers to find a sentence that will express themselves, and not to borrow the male sentence which expresses such an entirely different temperament; one can say that all through her writing life, Woolf was in search of such a sentence. The other statement is about genius.

The **Chapter V** is important, because in it Virginia Woolf makes absolutely clear that she does not want women to be like men; she does not advocate anything remotely like the modern conception of the blurring of the sexes; in fact she thinks that women should fortify the differences between themselves and men, for only thus can they come into their own. And she paints a picture, remarkable for a childless woman, of how a woman has always been able to stimulate and encourage man in his career or creativity.

When it comes to writing, however, she has, in her last chapter, something rather different to say: she believes, with Coleridge, that the creative mind of the poet or novelist should be androgynous; that if there are two sexes of the body there are also two sexes of the mind, but frequently inhabiting the same body, whether male or female, and that the best writing is produced when the man (or the woman) allows these two sexes to collaborate with each other. A mind that is purely feminine or masculine cannot create a good piece of work.

Virginia Woolf announces the basic concept of the work that a woman should have a room of her own if she is to write fiction. In a satirical manner, she brings into light the 'stateless' condition of women through the ages. The request before her was lectures on 'Women and Fiction' which was no mean task. It gives rise to innumerable questions like causes for the present condition of women and the fiction that is written about them and written by them.

As the subject is a difficult one, she weaves her thoughts into a web of fiction around a few concrete facts. Moving off into the field of imagination, she experiences a great disparity between men and women in the amenities available, and the life led in Oxbridge and Fernham. Deprived of formal education and opportunities of experiencing life and the world outside, women suffered from intellectual poverty. Oxbridge with its smooth lawns, massive building



and pinnacles is a symbol of the privilege of men to receive education while Newnham and Girton devoid of history or amenities reflect the neglected women's education.

Virginia Woolf goes to the British Museum to collect material on women. She is bewildered to find so many books written about women by all types of men. Woman is the most 'discussed animal' in the universe. She finds disparaging remarks made about women in men's books. She refers to the damaging statements made about women by eminent men like Napoleon, Mussolini, Samuel Butler, Dr. Johnson and others. They differed in their opinion regarding women by eminent men like Napoleon, Mussolini, Samuel Butler, Dr. Johnson and others. They differed in their opinion regarding women but most of them insisted on their inferiority. Professor Von X wrote on the mental, moral, physical inferiority of the female sex in anger.

Man was not concerned with the inferiority of women but with his own superiority. Their superiority exists only so far as the women are uneducated for they fear competition from women. A man requires a woman to inflate his ego, a looking glass of magical power to maintain his own significance. Virginia Woolf believes that for a woman to live a life of her own with ease, 500 a year is of great importance. She also believes that intellectual freedom is a prerequisite to creative writing which is impossible without certain material facilities. Virginia Woolf seeks to discover why women are so poor and why so few women have written. The first question provides an easy answer. Women are poor because, instead of making money, they have had children. The second question is far more complex and her attempt to answer it leads her to history.

She traces the economic and social position of women over the preceding centuries. She wondered why no woman has contributed a word of extraordinary literature when every other man was capable of a song or a sonnet in England during Elizabethan period. She gives an account of the humiliating conditions under which women of the Elizabethan age lived their lives. She undertakes to answer the old Bishop's disparaging comment that it was impossible for any woman past or present to possess the genius of Shakespeare.

Judith, Shakespeare's fictional sister, met with a tragic end because gifted women in the sixteenth century would meet only with hostility. While her brother Shakespeare went to learn Greek, Latin and fundamentals of grammar, equally gifted Judith was denied formal education and had to do domestic chores. Having run away from home to act like her brother, she was deceived by the actor manager, Nick Greene, became pregnant, committed suicide and was buried at the cross roads. Creativity in women and been crushed. Thus Virginia Woolf shows that one cannot expect a woman genius during the age of Shakespeare because difficulties were formidable and the woman had to face the hostility of the world.

Until the end of the seventeenth century, it was not only eccentric but also financially secure and aristocratic women could indulge themselves in the luxury of writing like the Duchess of New Castle and Lady Winchilsia. Even they had to brave the disapproval of the patriarchal society. However, through their poetry, they burst out in indignation against the subservient position of women. They hated and feared men because they had the power to bar their way in becoming writers. This had resulted in bitterness and resentment, which marred the lyrical purity of poetry. It was unthinkable for any woman of sense, modesty and decency to write in those days.

With Aphra Behn in the eighteenth century, a very important corner is turned on the road. She was a middle class woman who for the first time in history, wrote to earn a livelihood when her husband died. She proved that woman could make a living through writing. The end of the eighteenth century saw many women who had made writing their profession.

Woolf then discusses great novelist of the nineteenth century – George Eliot, Emily Brontë, Charlotte Brontë and Jane Austen—all who wrote only novels. Woolf argues that these novelists belonged to middle class without a room of their own and hence had to write in the common sitting room with all disturbances. Such an atmosphere is fatal to write poetry which requires perfect concentration. Therefore nineteenth century women writers preferred prose and fiction which were easier to handle. Preoccupation with domestic duties resulted in less periods of leisure time.

Jane Austen, like Shakespeare, expressed her genius “whole and entire”. Her novels are devoid of hate, bitterness, fear, protest and preaching. Charlotte Brontë had more genius in her than Jane Austen but was given to distraction and her work was stunted and its integrity was damaged. This is because she writes in a rage about herself and lack of opportunities when she should write about her characters. Since freedom and fullness of expression are the essence of the art, lack of tradition, scarcity and inadequacy of tools marred the writing of women in the nineteenth century.

A welcome change is noticed in the twentieth century. Women writers of the present century have not confined themselves to writing novels only. Poems, plays, criticism, histories, biographies, travel books, scholarly research, science books are written by women. A certain degree of transformation in women’s writing was evident. However certain technical obstacles existed.

As we read the text, we find that Woolf describes an incident:

Virginia Woolf turns to the window and sees a man and a woman getting into a taxi and driving away. It symbolizes the ideal state of men and women, a state in which they live and move in perfect cooperation. This sight she finds so immensely attractive, so profoundly soothing, that it reminds her how unnatural it is to think of the sexes as separate, how natural to think of them as cooperating with one another. And it leads her to speculate that, just as there are two sexes in the natural world, there must be two sexes in the mind, and that it is their union that is responsible for creation.

She recalls Coleridge’s idea that a great mind is androgynous. The androgynous mind must be a pure vessel for the transmission of reality. But it is particularly difficult for a modern to transmit reality. Modern women are frustrated and angry. Their experience is limited. Modern men are obsessed with the letter “I”. Their writing is full of self-conscious indecency and self-conscious virility. It is essentially sterile. Virginia Woolf opines that it is fatal for any writer to be conscious of sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple. One must be women-manly or man-womanly. She also says that it is fatal for a woman to lay the least stress on any grievance, to plead for any cause and finally to speak consciously as a woman.

Thus, unless men and women can be androgynous in mind, literature itself will be permanently flawed. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom and intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Room and money stand for material well-being and mental independence. And this is the reason for Woolf's insistence of £50 a year and rooms of their own for women. It is not that she wants women to write better than men. She hates pitting of sex against sex and claiming of superiority for one sex and imparting inferiority to another sex. It is only to encourage writing of genius and to discourage flawed work that Woolf is so insistent upon money and privacy for women.

### **5:6:6:2 Virginia Woolf as a Feminist (or) A Room of One's Own as a Feminist Doctrine**

Virginia Woolf perceived male barbarism everywhere and wages a war against subjugation of women by men. There seems to be an eternal conflict with no hope of achieving a solution to the crucial problem. Prior to delivering the lecture at the Arts. Society, Newnham, her mind was experiencing severe distress and restlessness regarding the conflict of sexes. She was unconsciously searching for a permanent solution to this problem. Suddenly she perceived a girl and a young man getting into a taxi-cab. This sight demonstrates her idea of androgyny. Blackstone says, "Virginia Woolf has been called a feminist. But more truly we might call her an androgynist".

This androgynic theory is the highest aim of her feminism. As a practical feminist, she sought equality between the sexes, a dynamic balance between the two halves of mankind which would lead to social regeneration. She does not fight for achieving legal and political rights along with men. Female subjugation continues to exist even after the legislation of equal privileges for women along with men. Man still considered himself superior to woman. So she does not insist on legal and political freedom of women or equal status or equal rights.

She brought to the feminist cause something much more interesting and profound than advocacy of equal rights. The 'something' is nothing but a mind without over consciousness about its own sex. She advocates freedom of the mind. The only way to attain this mental freedom is to cease being conscious of one's own sex. She thinks that it is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple. One must be woman-manly or man-womanly. It is fatal for a woman to speak consciously as a woman.

This harmonious blend of man-woman and woman-manly powers in one's mind is the 'androgynous' mind. Most part of A Room of One's Own is a debate on the intellectual freedom of women. She brilliantly traces the causes for their intellectual inferiority while revealing her valuable literary views. The goal which is set by Virginia Woolf to eradicate this inferiority is the 'androgynous mind'. Colridge believes that when fusion between male and female parts of the mind takes place, the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties and a great mind is androgynous. It is a fully developed mind such does not think specially or separately of sex. Only then can a creative writer communicate his experiences with fullness. Therefore Virginia Woolf says that Shakespeare was the supreme example of an androgynous mind.

Woolf's is a different kind of feminism which aims at establishing 'a feminine identity in literature and feminine style' She wanted that the women writers should establish the tradition

of their own by finding their own subject matter, emotions, responses to the world and style. Even six decades later. Feminists like Elaine Showalter pursued Woolf's burning issues on female subservience. To establish female identity, Woolf advises a woman writer to kill the 'Angel in the House', that phantom of female perfection prompting restrictions which stand in the way of freedom. Domestic confinement can never let the woman think or write freely.

Woolf is especially concerned with women's education. What the feminists pleaded for from the beginning of the feminist movements are presented in A Room of One's Own with elaborate analysis of condition of women through ages. Like Simone de Beauvoir, Woolf believes that the secondary position of women is imposed not necessarily by natural feminine characteristics but rather by strong environmental forces of social traditions and education which have both been under control of men. "The imaginary sister of Shakespeare", "the poor condition of Women's College" described in A Room of One's Own are directed in this way so as to give clear picture of women deprived of educational rights.

Thus, strictly speaking, Virginia Woolf is not a feminist as is generally considered. In her view, the meaning of the word 'feminism' is not restricted to the advocacy of women's rights. It is something which brings about co-operation between sexes and harmony in every sphere. Wholeness and harmony are the ultimate goals that are determined in the final chapters of the essay.

#### **5:6:6:3 Narrative Technique:**

The method of narration chosen by Virginia Woolf for her otherwise drab discussion of women and fiction is admirable. Alternating between fictional composition and historical documentation, the narrative leaps from stage to stage through a chain of logical premises and sequences. Being an effective writer of fiction herself Virginia Woolf takes the help of Mrs. Mary Beton, a creation on the spur of the moment, as it were, and makes her live through two eventful days and one all-absorbing night. The reader is led through the life at Oxbridge and Fernham, and is made to peep into the books in the British Museum, all sifted and screened through the imaginative and impelling mind of the narrator. Then the historians are approached in order to trace the position of women in the society of the past four hundred years. Where history failed to supply adequate material, the narrator was quick of invent – Judith, the non-existent sister of Shakespeare, being one of the most fascinating of such inventions.

The beakles of Oxbridge, the tailless cat, the angry face of Prof. Von X, and the young man and woman entering a taxi cab and driving off are some of the most engaging images created by Mrs. Woolf on purpose not only to give to the discussion an air of fiction and a personality, but more importantly to supply a symbolic base for the whole argument. The most noteworthy of such symbols is the title itself which recurs in the course of the lecture like the burden of a song – a room of one's own – standing as it does for material well-being, and physical and mental independence. Through repetition even to the extent of absurdity, the phrase nevertheless becomes a key to a whole angle of vision, a philosophy.

Virginia Woolf's style of writing is visionary and idealistic. It is studiously literary much in keeping with her intellectual Bloomsbury background. We admire the profound insight and

knowledge which are reflected in the pages gained from her serious study of books from an early age. In describing Jane Austen's style, she portrays her own style, too," Jane Austen breaks from melody to melody as Mozart from song to song." We find complex sentences, dotted with commas, sailing musically on. Her poetic style is reflected not only in her language but with dexterous manipulation of punctuation marks. Her dotted technique creates momentary suspense, thus stepping up the reader's interest. Her use of parenthesis, too, is very interesting because it is in this that her true thoughts are revealed,

Certainly it was a shock (to women in particular with their illusions about education, and so on) to see the faces of our rulers in the light of the shall-fire.

Her observations also are precise and her use of epigrams make her observations indelible from one's mind, 'fiction is like a spider's web', 'Every Johnson has Thrale', 'poetry ought to have a mother as well as a father.'

Her style is poetic and she makes use of suggestion rather than descriptions. It is musical and charming. A.C. Ward says,

Virginia Woolf made her prose almost as sensitive an instrument as poetry she might indeed be regarded as a poet. She composed numerous enchanting passages which never locked the clarity of good prose. Her books invite active cooperation of the reader's faculties of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell.

Repetition is another of her stylistic devices which has proved to be very effective. 'Women and Fiction' recur in every chapter of this book because this was her primary concern. Prof. Blackstone says that A Room of One's Own is witty and urbane, a clearing house for ideas of every sort, most skillfully arranged and that much of life and literature and good society and philosophy is packed into these one hundred and seventh pages.

The tone is exalted. The conversational style, apt for an address delivered to an audience, is enriched by a note of breeziness and confidential casualness. It is imaginative and rich in metaphor and suggestion. Even where the analysis is weighted down by documentation, the language is elevated by the quick powers of invention and suggestion by the author. Her poetic style as well as the fictional method of narration makes A Room of One's Own a masterly piece of prose.

### **5:6:5: Critical Evaluation:**

T.S. Eliot claimed that Virginia Woolf was "the center of the literary life of London, and an important figure in the twentieth century literature". However, her essay, A Room of One's Own was not received enthusiastically. E.M. Forster refused to review it, finding it ominous. In her 1929 Diary, Virginia Woolf recorded that her friends disliked her shrill feminine tone. But the Time Literary Supplement received it with great praise, this brilliant and searching pamphlet might mark an epoch in the world's history . . . Many readers of this book will applaud, others grind their teeth."

The New York Times hails Virginia Woolf as "one of the most subtle, original and modern of moderns, herself a born writer". Spectator considers A Room of One's Own as a

work of genius – a brilliantly argued feminist piece of work on par with those of Wollstonecraft and Mill. It says, “Future historians will place Mrs. Woolf’s little book beside Mary Wollstonecraft’s The Rights of Women and John Stuart Mill’s The Subjection of Women. It does for the intellectual and spiritual liberation of women what those works did for the political emancipation. But A Room of One’s Own outshines them both in genius.”

Early reviewers called it ‘spirited and good-tempered: Vita Sackville – West said that “Mrs. Woolf is too sensible to be a thoroughgoing feminist”. (Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage) Arnold Bennett, who provided some of the ammunition for A Room of One’s Own in his book, Our Women: Chapters in the Sex Discord which is rich in such statements as “women in the main love to be dominated” and “the average man has more intellectual power than the average women’ called ‘non-artisan’. Michael Rosenthal in his Virginia Woolf described A Room of One’s Own as “luminous proof of a mind which has been able to synthesize its anger and frustration into a compelling, balanced work of art . . . an immensely civilized document.” Hermione Lee, in his Introduction to A Room of One’s Own, thinks that the arguments of the essay are bold and clear. The essay is a satire on a male society from a woman’s point of view. But it is gentle and not pungent. The critic writers, “A Room of One’s Own is famous for its case and urbanity, which have been much admired. That admiration often has an air of relief about it: this book will not bite.”

A Room of One’s Own opened Woolf up to the charges – snobbery, aestheticism – habitually leveled against the members of the Bloomsbury group in the late 1920’s. Mary Gordon gives a spirited defence to these charges when she says, “To an extent, the accusations are just; Woolf is concerned with the fate of women of genius, not with that of ordinary women; her plea is that we create a world in which Shakespeare’s sister might survive her gift, not one in which a miner’s wife can have her rights to property; her passion is for literature, not for universal justice. The thesis of A Room of One’s Own: women must have money and privacy in order to write – is inevitably connected to questions of class.”

Observing a man and a woman entering a taxi – cab and citing Coleridge as her authority, Woolf explores the imaginative and political resources of the concept of androgyny. Woolf argues for the importance of a unified creative mind which would express both masculinity and femininity, arguing that ‘it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex? This move has angered many feminist critics, who have seen it as an evasion on Woolf’s part, as a failure to face up to the implications of the oppression she had documented and explored so fully in the first five chapters. Indeed, Elaine Showalter has written of Woolf’s use of the concept of androgyny as “the myth that helped her evade confrontation with her own painful femaleness” and thus as a betrayal of any feminist project. (‘Virginia Woolf and the Glight into Androgyny’) However, Joan Bennett disagrees with this view when she comments that “she brought to the feminine cause, something much more interesting and profound than an advocacy of equal rights. She preferred equality, a dynamic balance between the two halves for social regeneration.” This is, according to Bennett, the writer’s theory of the androgynous mind.

## 5:6:6 Summary:

In this lesson, we have seen how Virginia Woolf develops an innovative and politically challenging analysis of the causes and effects of women's exclusion from British cultural, political and economic life. She examines the work of past women writers and looks ahead to a time when women's creativity will not be hampered by poverty or by oppression. We also have looked at the concept of androgyny proposed by Virginia Woolf to encourage writing of genius. The brilliantly argued, witty and persuasive essay makes Virginia Woolf emerge as one of the supreme prose writers of the twentieth century.

## 5:6:7 Technical Terms

**Bloomsbury:** The Bloomsbury Group consisted of a body of intellectuals from Cambridge during the twentieth Century. The members were Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf, Maynard Keynes, Roger Fry, E.M. Forster and Clive Bell. Their disinterest for life's mundanities earned them the reputation of being snobbish but justifiably they were also referred to as 'ivory tower aesthetes'. They were known for their sincere intellectual pursuits and straight forward approach to life.

**Comedy of Manners:** A comedy concerned with the intrigues of sophisticated members of an aristocratic society. The intrigues are usually amorous and witty.

**Freudian Psychology:** Sigmund Freud was the founder of the school of thought, 'psycho-analysis'. His theory was that psychological imbalance sprouted from deep-rooted psychological complexes exist in the unconscious and are not comprehended by the individual himself.

**Androgyny:** Coleridge speculates that just as there are two sexes in the natural world, there must be two sexes in the mind. The harmonious blend of man – woman and woman – manly powers in one's mind is the 'androgynous' mind. Coleridge believes that when fusion between male and female parts of the mind takes place, the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties and a great mind is androgynous. It is a fully developed mind which does not think specially or separately of sex. Only then can a creative writer communicate his experiences with fullness.

## 5:6:8 Model Questions

1. Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own is one of the earliest documents to have made a case for women's autonomy". Elaborate.
2. Do you consider Virginia Woolf as a feminist? Discuss.
3. Bring out the significance of the title, A Room of One's Own.
4. Write a note on the narrative technique of A Room of One's Own.
5. Examine Virginia Woolf's views about women's creativity.

### **5:6:9 Reference Books**

1. Phyllis Rose: Woman of Letters: A Life of Virginia
2. Claire Spragic: Twentieth Century Views: Virginia Woolf A Collection of Critical Essays. (Prentice Hall, 1971).
3. John Lehmann: Virginia Woolf and her World
4. Joan Bennett, Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist (Cambridgege, 1964
5. John Mephram, Virginia Woolf: A Literary Life (Macmillar, 1991)
6. Elaine Showalter, A Literature of their Own (Princeter, 1977)
7. Hermione Lee, The Novels of Virginia Woolf, Methuuea, 1977)
8. Michael Rosenthal, Virginia Woolf, (London, 1979).
9. Bernard Blackstone, Virginia Woolf: A Commentary (Hogarth Press, 1949.)

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## Lesson – 7

# Joseph Conrad : Lord Jim

### Contents

- 5:7:1 Objectives of the Lesson
- 5:7:2 Background
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### 5:7:1 Objectives of the Lesson

The lesson aims

1. to help students to understand and appreciate Conrad's Lord Jim.
2. to draw special attention to Conrad's innovative narrative technique employed in Lord Jim.
3. to evaluate Lord Jim as a sea novel dealing with man's alienation.

### 5:7:2 Background:

The second half of the nineteenth century in Britain saw the peak and decline of Victorianism. Life was profoundly modified by the steam engine, mass production, motor car and rapid transport generally. Working conditions in factories improved, medical and health services made remarkable progress and schooling became free and compulsory. Electricity was introduced in private houses. Photography was invented. The telephone and telegraphy introduced a new era of communication.

In painting the Pre-Raphaelite and the French Impressionists were receiving acclaim. Literature was, of course, influenced by the tensions and changes in society and by the great upheavals in the fundamental conception of man. Darwin's The Origin of Species (1859) may be considered as the irreversible shock to the very foundations of Victorian beliefs concerning religion, the social hierarchy, the function of work, and, most importantly, the concept of personality. A new understanding of heredity and its determining influence on character radically queried the responsibility of the individual for his conduct. Many writers of the time concerned themselves with this theme, probing the question of whether the individual could shape his own destiny or was unavoidably the victim of fate.

The new social awareness added another dimension to the same problem. Social structures and conventions could be seen as forms of fatality, and literature described various attempts to overcome them. Industrialisation caused the disruption of social organisms. Great parts of the population were uprooted and many were projected into other social surroundings. Isolation and solitude became major themes in literature. The institution of marriage, the position of women, the social façade of appearances as opposed to reality, and the conventional moral code were questioned and became the subject matter of literature.

The 1850s and 1860s looked up to Tennyson as the great poet representing Victorian attitudes and values. Browning and Arnold foreshadowed changing values and techniques. Prose became a work of art in Ruskin's essays. Ibsen and Shaw tackled, in their plays, essential problems and taboos. Dickens, Thackeray, George, Eliot and Hardy were popular as novelists. Writing during the 'decadent' 1890s, Oscar Wilde seems to propose a nihilistic

approach to life but in fact it implies the moralizing lesson that there is no redemption for those who transgress ethical laws. George Moore, Gissing and Somerset Maugham, as representatives of Naturalism, depicted poverty, deprivation and moral degradation. Kipling maintained the Victorian optimism and sense of responsibility while H.G. Wells was one of the founding fathers of science fiction, a characteristic of the twentieth century. Flaubert and Henry James developed a theory and elaborated the techniques of narration. The intensive analysis of states of mind, moral dilemmas and complex motivations announced the arrival of psychoanalysis which is one of the main fields of study of the twentieth century. Thus, in this period, when Conrad started to write, three trends co-existed and overlapped: the continuation of the Victorian outlook on life, the aesthetic movement and the forerunners of the twentieth century.

### 5:7:3 Life & Works

Joseph Conrad or Jozef Konrad Korzeniowski, as he was called before his naturalization, was born on 3 December 1857 in a Ukrainian province of Poland, then under Russian rule. He was the only son of his parents who were of the landowner class. His father was a writer and translator who had translated Shakespeare and Victor Hugo. He was a fervent patriot and became a prominent personality in the Polish national movement. In 1862 he was exiled, for political reasons, with his wife and child to northern Russia. In 1865 Conrad's mother died in exile when he was seven and the father died in 1869 when he was eleven. The orphaned son was looked after by his maternal uncle who remained Conrad's adviser and friend and helped *him financially* as long as he lived.

These early years of hardship, physical suffering and deprivation were to leave their indelible mark. From them the boy found his first escape through books and then, when he was seventeen, by a life at sea. It was also the only way to avoid Russian military service. In 1874 he went to Marseilles to become a seaman. Between 1874 and 1894 Conrad followed the sea, at first in the French merchant service, then on various British ships. In August 1886 he became a British subject and in the same year he obtained his Master Mariner's certificate. He served as officer on several ships, voyaging to many parts of the world, particularly across the Indian Ocean, in and around the Malay Archipelago and the gulf of Siam. Many of his best books and stories draw on his experiences and the people he met during these years.

Conrad's characteristic subject was sea. He wrote neither in his native tongue Polish, nor in French, his second language, but in English, which he *first* started to speak around the age of twenty. When **Almayer's Folly**, his first novel, was published in 1889, he was in middle age. It was followed by **An Outcast of the Islands** in 1896. The same year, he married Jessie George and settled in Essex. In the following years he wrote novels, stories, personal reminiscences and essays at an exhausting pace. Writing caused him great anguish and he was rarely satisfied with what he wrote. His devotion to craft and his wavering faith in his own genius made his profession as writer an almost daily struggle. His fame grew slowly and he became popular and was acknowledged first rank writer. He was offered knighthood in 1924. The same year, he died and was buried at Canterbury.

His artistic career is singular, unique and impressive. His first novel was published when he was nearly 40. When he died at 67, he was the author of a long shelf of books. His reputation faded for 15 to 20 years after his death but now it is very high. Critics continue to debate the meaning and importance of his work.

Various literary influences reveal their presence in his work: Flaubert, Manpassant, the Russian novelists and Henry James. Conrad's art is a composite one which allies the novel of adventure with the objective spirit of French naturalism. Conrad transmits impressions of reality, be it good, bad, indifferent, cruel, mean or magnificent. But he is not only concerned with externals, he is equally concerned with the inner self. His psychological curiosity finds scope in the analyses of simple, humble souls perplexed by the cruelty of fate.

His aim artistically was to portray, with the inevitability of life itself, man's wretchedness and helplessness.

All Conrad's novels are tragic because his mind was filled with a profound sense of the pity of life. An atmosphere of infinite sadness broods over his books. Men are isolated and lonely, a prey to perplexity and disillusionment. Rarely they are able to break through their loneliness into sympathy and understanding.

**Works:-**

Conrad's writing life extended for twenty-nine years, from 1895 until his death in 1924. During this time he wrote thirty-one volumes which include novels, short-stories, essays and plays besides many volumes of letters. Now let us look at Conrad's important novels.

**Almayer's Folly** (1895) is a story of decadence and breakdown, of exhaustion and frustration. Almayer has married a Malay girl and taken charge of a river trading post, where he dreams of luxury and riches. But he is incompetent, a pathetic failure whose visions end in opium smoking and his eventual death.

**An Outcast of the Islands** (1896) There is a sense of debility and impotence as in Almayer's Folly. Willems falls from power into a wasted life of treachery and self-disgust. He is seduced by Aissa, a native girl and this abominable desire destroys his character. The whole movement of the novel is towards death. Isolation and futility of the characters is emphasised.

**The Nigger of the Narcissus** (1897) The crew of the ship, Narcissus, is faced by two tests – to survive the storm and to overcome the subversive anarchy represented by the waster, Donkin and the sick black sailor, James Wait. In the storm, representative of Nature's insane violence in its dealings with man, the ship becomes an archetype for human society on its journey through an inexplicable universe. The crew survives by fidelity exemplifying the idea of human solidarity that Conrad thought essential in any community.

**Lord Jim** (1900) deals with 'acute consciousness of lost honour'. It is a study of a romantic young man tortured for years by the memory of a moment's dishonour and is redeeming a terrible moment of cowardice by later bravery and self-sacrifice. It is an allegory of the loneliness and inscrutability of the human heart and its dominant theme is the idea of fidelity.

**Heart of Darkness** (1902) deals with the theme of moral honesty versus moral corruption. It is the story of a voyage into the very heart of the dark continent – Congo in Central Africa. But it is also a journey into the inner darkness, the evil which lurks in the hearts of men. It shows that lack of restraint in solitude and silence will bring out a man's true nature and that a man's confrontation with his dark self is both dangerous and enlightening.

**Nostromo** (1904) is a strange story of adventure and daring exploits in the revolutionary broils of South American Republic of Costaguana. It is a poignant study of the conflict between moral idealism and material interest. It reveals the inescapable loneliness of individuals and their unhappy destinies.

**The Secret Agent** (1907) Mr. Verloc, an indolent secret agent consorts with a group of ineffective anarchists in London. On the surface this is a story of a mysterious crime solved by the intelligent Assistant Commissioner. But this seems superficial by the existence of another kind of discovery. Verloc, his wife and one of the revolutionaries experience a moment of self-understanding and discover the meaninglessness of their own self-created identity. The shock drives them inevitably towards breakdown and suicide.

**Under Western Eyes** (1911) deals with life in the Ukraine under the Tsar's domination. This is, at one and the same time, a psychological study and a story of political intrigue with elements of suspense and mystery. The protagonist proceeds from crime to punishment and

to redemption. In this novel Conrad finds the answer to his pessimism, seen in his earlier novels, by asserting the supreme importance of natural human relationships.

**Victory** (1915) is a story of a man who, seeking detachment in life, is impelled almost by chance to an act of chivalrous fortitude. He rescues a girl from unscrupulous hands. The evil of the world has broken into his retreat with vengeance. His habits of passivity render him incapable of coping with the ensuing difficulties and he ends by committing suicide. Conrad emphasises the need to escape the isolation of the self and to serve the community.

### **5:7:4 Analysis of the Text**

Jim was an outcast, a wanderer. Hired as water clerk in seaports throughout the East, he would keep his job only until his identity became known. Then he would move on. The story of Lord Jim began when he determined to leave home to go to sea. Accordingly, his father obtained a berth for him as an officer candidate and he began his service. Although he loved the sea, his beginning was not heroic. Almost at once he was injured and was left behind in an Eastern port. When he recovered, he accepted a berth as chief mate aboard an ancient steamer, the *Patna*, carrying 800 *Muslim pilgrims* on their way to Mecca. The steamer was unseaworthy, her German captain a gross coward, her chief engineer liquor-soaked. One sultry night in the Red Sea the ship struck a floating object. The captain sent Jim to check.

A month later Jim testified in court that when he went to investigate he found the forward hold rapidly filling with sea water. Hearing his report the captain declared the *Patna* would sink quickly and gave orders to abandon the ship. At first Jim was determined to stand by his post. At the last minute, on sudden impulse, he jumped to join the other white men in the lifeboat they had launched. The pilgrims were left aboard the sinking vessel. But the *Patna* had not sunk. A French gunboat overtook the vessel and towed it and the abandoned passengers into port without its chief officers aboard.

Marlow, a white man, sat at the enquiry. The captain, the two *engineers* and Jim were taken to the court for trial. Jim, with his recollection of his family and his father's teaching, as well as his own deeply established sense of honour, was a marked man for the rest of his life. Marlow told how he had dinner with Jim during the trial. The boy seemed of a different stamp from other officers of the *Patna*. Marlow was determined to fathom the boy's spirit, just as Jim was determined to regain his lost moral identity.

Jim never knew when – or why – he had jumped into the lifeboat the other officers had launched. Jim told Marlow how they had agreed to tell the same story. Actually, he and his companions thought that the *Patna* had gone down. Jim said that he had felt relief when he had learned that the passengers were safe. The whole story made sailor-talk in all ports where seamen met and talked. After the inquiry Marlow offered to help Jim, but Jim was determined to become a wanderer, to find out by himself what had happened to his soul.

Jim began his wanderings, to Bombay, to Calcutta, to Penang, Batavia, and the islands of the East. For a time he found work with an acquaintance of Marlow's, but he gave up his job when the second engineer of the *Patna* turned up unexpectedly. Afterwards he became a runner for ship chandlers, but he left them because he had heard one of the owners discussing the case of the *Patna*. He moved on, always toward the East, from job to job.

Marlow continued his efforts to help Jim. He sought out Stein, a trader who owned a number of trading posts on the smaller islands of the East Indies. Stein made Jim his agent at Patusan, an out-of-the-way settlement where he was sure Jim might recover his balance. There, in that remote place, Jim tried to find some answer to his self-hatred. Determined never to leave Patusan, he associated with the natives, and by his gentleness and consideration became their leader. They called him Tuan Jim – Lord Jim. Dain Waris, the son of Doramin, the old native chief, was his friend.

Marlow followed Jim to Patusan where he explained to Marlow that at last he felt as though his way had been justified. Somehow, because the simple natives trusted him, he felt linked again to the ideals of his youth. Marlow felt there was a kind of desperateness to his conviction.

The end came when Gentleman Brown, a roving cut throat, determined to loot Lord Jim's stronghold. He arrived while Jim was away. Led by Dain Waris, the natives isolated Brown and his marauders on a hilltop but were unable to capture them. Lord Jim returned and after a long talk with Brown became convinced that Brown would leave without any violence if the siege were lifted. He persuaded the reluctant natives to withdraw. The vicious Brown repaid Lord Jim's magnanimity by vengefully murdering Dain Waris. Lord Jim went unflinchingly to face native justice when he offered himself to the stern old chieftain as the cause of Dain Waris' death. Doramin shot Jim through the breast. Marlow, who had watched Jim's life so closely, felt that Jim had at last won back his lost honour.

### Structure

**Lord Jim** may be divided into four parts. The first part is composed of the first four chapters in which the omniscient narrator presents the life of Jim from his early childhood upto the *Patna* episode and the institution of the court of enquiry. The remaining portion of the novel is made of the information given by Marlow about Jim and other persons coming in contact with him. This portion may be further divided into three parts. In the first part is the narration of Marlow's first conversation with Jim on the Verandah of *Malabar House*. In the second part is the description of Marlow's visits to Patusan many years later. The third part is full of the information about Jim given by Marlow to one of his friends in a packet of 'documents'.

Much has been written about the structural weakness of *Lord Jim*. Some early reviewers maintained that the work starting as a short story had got beyond the writer's control. i.e., the short story had got out of hand and became a novel. Modern critics like F.R. Leavis support the judgement of the early reviewers.

In an unsigned review, one critic says that it is a very broken-backed narrative. The first 150 pages or so are devoted to the episode of the *Patna*, told partly in third person and partly in first person. The remaining 300 pages seem to be an after thought. **Lord Jim** is tedious, over-elaborated and more than that a little difficult to read. The first episode might have stood by itself and the concluding narrative might have been worked up into a separate tale.

In terms of plot there are undoubtedly two parts to the story: the defection of Jim and the disaster after he seems to have rehabilitated himself. The second part has been added. But the two parts are intimately connected. It is difficult to imagine the first part alone as a satisfactory story. The account of a cowardly jump for safety alone is not enough. It certainly needs or demands development.

Stein in chapter XX bridges the two parts. It may be true that the novel is not very neatly halved but neither half is conceivable without the other. This novel has a single action which accommodates and gives significance to all its details. Conrad binds his tale with large and small parallels. They may be numerous in number but are quite apparent to the attentive reader. Jim's last acts are the final segment of an unbroken circle which begins with the training ship episode of Chapter I and ends with Jim's violent death in the last chapter (XLV).

The beginning clearly implies the end. Conrad's theme – the acute consciousness of lost honour – requires a deliberate ordering of related acts. Jim's jump from the *Patna* is decisive in the sense it ends his career at sea. But it is not the climax of his life but one of a

series of consistent acts of character. Jim is essentially the same man in both halves of the novel though there is a radical change of scene and an enlargement of opportunities for the expression of his romantic fantasy in Patusan.

As Robert E. Kuethn says, though Conrad may initially have conceived Jim as a short story, his enlargement of the sketch into novel seems entirely natural and appropriate because for the completion of Jim's character Patusan experience is required. If Conrad had not added the second part, the novel would have lost its coherence, toughness and magnitude.

Conrad refers to **Lord Jim** as a 'free and wandering tale'. But it is a carefully wrought novel. Few incidents and characters may appear irrelevant on a first reading but when the novel is re-read, we discover that every character, every incident is a comment on Jim.

### Sources

The sources of **Lord Jim** are the lives of three real persons whom Conrad knew, but except certain events and some of the traits of the character of these persons, Conrad used nothing in the novel. The first person is Jim Lingard whom Conrad met on the *Vidar* in 1887-88. He was a white trader who was known as "Tuan Jim" among the natives he traded with. He was "a colourful, swaggering figure, but Conrad borrowed only his name for his character and moral history have nothing in common with Conrad's Jim". James Brooke is another real person of fabulous career who has been made the subject of many of books which Conrad knew well. He was an English adventurer whose activities seem to have been made the basis of Jim's adventures in Patusan. The third source of the central event and the character of Jim in the novel is the *Jeddah* episode. The *Jeddah*, with more than nine hundred Muslim pilgrims, sailed on July 17, 1880 for Jeddah. It was caught in a storm on August 8 and began to leak. Captain Clark and his European Officers abandoned it and they were picked up and taken to Aden where they reported that *Jeddah*, along with its passengers, was lost, but the fact was that it was towed into Aden by another steamer. Conrad heard this story of desertion and since then he was thinking over the possibility of taking up one of the deserters as the main figure of a work of fiction and of examining his guilt-consciousness and efforts to atone for his guilt.

### Symbolism

There are two types of symbolism in this novel – the symbolism of character and the symbolism of events and situations. Jim, Marlow and Stein symbolize some of the basic values of life and Chester, Brown, and Cornelius stand for evil aspects of life. Conrad presents a contrast between these two types of characters for showing how human nature is mysterious.

Jim is the most important symbolical figure. He stands for man's craving for the fulfillment of his noble and lofty ideals and high principles of life which are not attainable at all. While Jim is a trainee-sailor at the marine school, his station was in the fore-top and from there he looked down. He does not want to have any relationship with the men below. This high physical position of him suggests his love for dreamy ideals and his romance of illusions.

The calm and quiet atmosphere of the sea, the perfect serenity of the night, the belief of the crew that Patna is sailing safely and its straight course – all this creates a setting which symbolizes Jim's sense of security and his fondness for escaping into a world of day-dreams and illusions of ideals. Jim's illusion breaks when the Patna is struck by a derelict ship. Just after the disaster, there is a heavy downpour of rains, storm breaks out and the moon is darkened. These climatic changes symbolise Jim's falling a prey to this subconscious.

The judges are the symbol of man's effort to ever simplify truth and reduce it to factual formula while Marlow is the symbol of man's wider vision of various aspects of life.

Marlow's effort to rehabilitate Jim symbolizes man's vision to provide spiritual harmony to a tormented soul. He fails to achieve his purpose, and goes to Stein, the symbol of self-restraint, intelligence, rationality, and forethought. Though he declares Jim a romantic, in the end he is also unable to understand him. Through him it is suggested that man's intellectual faculty also is unable to know the mysteriousness of human nature.

The light and darkness in the room of Stein are important symbols in **Lord Jim**. His room is like a cavern, in which beetles are kept in shelves and the whole setting symbolizes death.

Stein's remarks about butterflies and beetles are pregnant with symbolic meaning. The two varieties of insects symbolize two types of human beings; the butterfly stands for such a man who lives in an imaginary world of ideals, a world of illusion, a man who hates common people as low and base. The beetles suggest a will to live on any terms and capable of great malevolence when that life is threatened.

Jim goes to Patusan: this is his another symbolic jump into an unknown territory, which separates him from his familiar world. He has left behind him the sea, the symbol of life's struggles endangering safety and security, and has entered into a new world where beetles are engaged in killing each other. The moment the butterfly arrives there, he searches for the value in the pure hearts of the innocent natives and sees that there is really a vast paradise of the beauty of love that is truth. His efforts to triumph over the beetles succeed in the beginning but ultimately the beetles overpower him.

Marlow imagines Jim standing on the hill-top like "a figure set up on a pedestal". The hill-top brightened with the sunlight is the butterfly's world of illusory ideals and the land below is the earthly reality, the reality of the ugly facts. Jim's "evening rounds" symbolize his gradual entry into darkness, of his fall from the high pedestal of a butterfly to the lowly state of beetles.

The split conical hill on Patusan suggests Jim's spiritual cleavage and the moon rising between the two halves suggests a "figure of the ego-ideal with its illusionaries and the solitude implied by illusion. The moonlight of Patusan is associated with immobility and isolation. Its occult power can rob things of their reality. This moonlight comments on the unreality of Jim's aspirations. If the light of the moon is associated with illusion and a blurring of reality, the dark of the moon can be a very important reality and one largely responsible for our acts, the unconscious self.

Heavy fog over the river is a strong recurrent symbol throughout the novel. It suggests mysteriousness of life and inscrutability of the universe. It becomes the symbol of the darker aspect of the destiny of Cornelius, Dain Waris and Jim. Before they die a heavy fog envelops the whole of the river suggesting the death of them.

The silver ring though given by Stein to Jim is primarily a symbol of friendship and human solidarity it assumes a wide symbolic meaning when it moves in a cyclic order from Jim to Doramin through Dain Waris and at last comes back to Jim. When Jim goes to Doramin, the native chief, who is seated in his chair before the dead body of Dain Waris, Jim removes the silver ring and holds it in front of him before dropping it in his cap. The ring rolls down on to the ground and when Doramin rises to shoot Jim, it rolls to Jim's feet. Jim who had once come forward with his hands of friendship towards Doramin, now has crushed the ideal of friendship by allowing Brown to kill Dain Waris and other natives.

The novel's recurrent image is of reality obscured by mist or by deceptive light. Fog, mist, cloud and veil form a cluster with moonlight and determine the delicate relationship of idealism and self-deception. In his last act of superb egoism, he offers himself as a ritual sacrifice and as the supreme victory over a hostile fate.

## Narrative Technique or Marlow as narrator

Conrad's narrative art is highly complex. It abandons that simple method whereby author and reader stand comfortably together and look down on a logical chain of events presented in lucid chronological order. With **Lord Jim**, it can be said that 'the novel' has now become a non-narrative, no longer following a 'thread' but spreading out as an infinitely interwoven surface. Conrad's narrative method is dislocated or broken and he says that it works backwards and forwards in 'time' or 'time shift'.

The author begins to tell the story himself, from his omniscient knowledge of what happened. Marlow enters in the story as an ideal listener only towards the end of the III chapter and then he takes over as a curious narrator talking to a group of friends. Thus, apart from the first four chapters, all the material of the book comes to us through Marlow, either in his speaking voice as he tells his after – dinner story, or through his letter to a close friend. So instead of a linear rendering of events by an omniscient narrator, Marlow is there as the story-teller from the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter.

Why have a narrator at all? The answer is this way one ensures a maximum of mental and emotional involvement. If readers are simply told the facts of Jim's life they might feel sorry for him, but they would never feel themselves involved in his predicament. They feel disengaged. But it is impossible to remain outside the circle of Marlow's auditors. Marlow struggles to create an impression of Jim from personal observation, from reports and assessments of him by others, and from prolonged reflection and conjecture. His doubts and questions, his speculations and assertions, his tolerance and self-effacement, the leisurely quest of memory – all these things bring readers into the story. They are involved with Marlow. Since Marlow feels curiously involved with Jim, the problem of Jim's conduct puzzles, involves and challenges us. Readers are so involved that when Marlow asserts Jim is 'one of us' — meaning a western seaman — Jim becomes, by extension, one of 'us', the readers. Jim is watched through Marlow's eyes for the revelation of relevant psychological truths.

Marlow's reactions are spontaneous and therefore more credible than omniscient narration. Being emotionally involved, he changes his attitudes to Jim as much as his forecasts concerning Jim's future. These changes make the narrator come alive and they create in the reader the illusion of witnessing the events at the very moment when they take place, although the story is told in the past. The even flow of time is interrupted as Marlow pauses and searches for meaning of a detail or breaks off to recall an anecdote or jumps ahead to anticipate an event which will be described fully much later in the narrative. But however halting, dilatory, and indirect Marlow's method may be, one discovers in it an undeniable parallel with reality. One comes to know Jim gradually, as one comes to know men in real life. One's knowledge of men one meets in life is incomplete. Similarly the reader's knowledge of Jim is fragmented and incomplete. But few may insist that Conrad could have achieved this without Marlow. But without Marlow, the novel would be greatly impoverished, for it is Marlow who interprets Jim to us.

Who is Marlow? What sort of man is he? Marlow is a man of sea. His profession is his life and he takes pride in having trained many young men like Jim for the profession. At the inquiry he is moved by the pitiful sight of Jim. He becomes uneasy at the moral and philosophical questions raised by Jim's failure to behave honourably under stress. Jim becomes Marlow's private obsession and Jim's longing to atone for his betrayal becomes Marlow's trail and secret hope. Marlow's insistent telling of Jim's tale reminds the readers of Coleridge's **Ancient Mariner**, who had to share his terrible knowledge of sin and redemption with others.

In **Lord Jim**, Jim is the romantic idealist and Marlow is the ironist. When we say ironist we do not mean a sneering belittler, but only a man who insists on regarding things from a realistic point of view. By making Marlow recount and discuss Jim's experiences



Conrad makes possible the interplay of two frames of reference, two schemes of values, two sets of attitudes. Marlow is sympathetic and does maximum justice to Jim's romantic aspirations. At the same time he is experienced enough to look at them with the cool eye of the pragmatist. Thus as a narrator, Marlow is the man who tries to understand Jim without taking him at his face value. F.R. Leavis and some other critics have confused him with his creator. When Marlow speaks, they think it is Conrad speaking. The reason for this confusion is that Marlow shares some of Conrad's ideas like his moral concerns and his delight in irony. As W.Y. Tindall says, Marlow is a creature distinct from Conrad. Conrad, who appears at the beginning and end and sometimes in the middle of the Marlow books, listens to Marlow and tells us what he tells him.

### **Theme of Alienation**

**Lord Jim** is the tragedy of an individual in isolation from society. Jim, though white and English, neither experiences nor claims a sense of belonging to the community of white Europeans. Considering himself superior to those in whose midst he lives, he indulges in self-flattery. He lives in a state of mental exile. His fierce egoism and self-delusions alienate him from the community. With the loss of his self-respect and honour due to the Patna episode, Jim feels that he is alienated from his world and is forced to lead an isolated life.

He is the chief mate on board the Patna, the ship bound for Mecca with 800 Mohammedan pilgrims. The ship suddenly collides with a Norwegian ship and its forepeak is filling with water. In a moment of fatal and unexpected cowardice, Jim jumps into a life – boat along with the other crew deserting the passengers. He has to expiate all his life for this serious neglect of duty at a crucial moment. The Patna does not sink as has been feared. A French Lieutenant on board a European ship rescues it and tows it to port. The officers are brought for a trial before a court of inquiry. His certificate is cancelled and he can no longer pursue the profession for which he has been trained. His self-respect and professional reputation have been ruined. He feels as though he is exiled from his community and like a self-styled exile, he wanders concealing his fatal fall. He flees from the white society in order to start afresh a clean and honourable life. But the past haunts him. He works on various Eastern ports, routinely leaving his job whenever his guilt is found out.

Finally Jim finds rehabilitation in a native society. He is sent to an isolated trading post in Patusan as Stein's representative. He gets attached to the native Malay community and wins their trust, love and respect. A special bond develops between Jim and Doramin, the old native Chieftain and his son, Dain Waris. Here Jim tries to win back his lost honour. He tries to bring some order, peace and justice in the chaotic tribal society for which he is elevated to the status of Tuan Jim, the Lord. In spite of all his efforts, Jim could not integrate himself totally to the native society. His egoism and sense of superiority isolate him emotionally from the Malay tribe. He continues to be plagued by loneliness.

Jim faces his final test, after three years of successful stay in Patusan. Brown, a piratical sea-captain and his crew invade Patusan for food and water. He strikes cleverly at the sensitive cord of Jim by his subtle reference to his shady past which he wants to bury. Brown gives him two alternatives, a fight or clear road. Jim, who cannot bear to be reminded of his shameful past, chooses the easy way out by promising Brown a clear road and a safe passage. Doramin and others reject Jim's promise but Jim assures them that there would not be any bloodshed involved in it. He even refuses to lead the party that is to see Brown properly out of the area. Brown leaves as planned, but before escaping he treacherously fires on Dain Waris and his men killing Dain Waris and many of the soldiers. Jim finds his reputation tarnished and his world shattered. Jim owns responsibility for the disaster and tries to make amends by going to his certain death. Alone and unarmed, he faces Doramin who shoots Jim through the chest. His dream of special destiny has come true.

Right from the beginning, Conrad has been laying great emphasis on Jim's isolated state. The solitary candle in the dining hall where Jim tells the story of his desertion of the

Patna indicates his solitariness in the world. The cancellation of his certificate symbolizes his alienation from human solidarity. Jim has no one to call his own. He remains “alone, with no help, no sympathy, no pity to expect from anyone”. The fissured hill in Patusan symbolizes the relentless solitude of Jim’s fate. At the last moment of death, “Jim’s isolation is most profound and complete”.

### 5:7:5 Critical Evaluation

**Lord Jim** is one of the best and widely read of Conrad’s novels. But for F.R. Leavis, **Lord Jim** is overrated. Leavis believes that the novel, “doesn’t deserve the position of pre-eminence among Conrad’s work often assigned it: it is hardly one of his most considerable works . . . The presentment of **Lord Jim** in the first part of the book is . . . good Conrad. But the romance that follows . . . seems decidedly thin. **Lord Jim** is neither the best of Conrad’s novels, nor among the best of his short stories.” (The great Tradition)

Contrary to this opinion, Thomas Moser finds **Lord Jim** an excellent work. He remarks, “**Lord Jim** is the most mature expression of the theme of the human community.” (Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline)

A.J. Guerard’s claims are similar but more resonant and grand. For him **Lord Jim** is the masterpiece for which all the earlier work has been a preparation, a novel that has an almost miraculously apt position in literary history since “it appears at the turn of the century as the first novel in a new form.” (Conrad, The Novelist)

Marlow is considered one of the rare achievements in English literature. But for Richard Curle, its narrative form is a mistake. He regrets the use of Marlow as a narrator. He regrets the use of Marlow as a narrator. He writes that the novel “would have been even more powerful had it been told as a plain narrative rather than as a story recounted at second-hand. Marlow’s voice makes the reader weary: Marlow is a somewhat boring mixture of the ironic and sentimental philosopher.” (Joseph Conrad: A Study) On the otherhand Crankshaw strongly disagrees with Curle and says, “Marlow is not a ‘bore’ at all. It is more appropriate to see him as a commentator than as a moralist.” (Joseph Conrad: Some Aspects of the Art of the Novel.) C.B.Cox fully justifies the narrative technique in **Lord Jim**. He writes, “this method of narration, with its constant flashbacks, bewilders the reader. Conrad’s aim is to analyse the complex influences, motives, emotions and beliefs that determine Jim’s character rather than to tell a story in chronological sequence.” (**Joseph Conrad**)

J.W. Beach is another critic who is in full praise of Conrad’s use of Marlow as a narrator. He says, “Conrad’s problem was to secure the advantage of the many points of view without losing that of coherence. It was to make a real composite of these many pictures taken from so many diverse angles, to make a synthesis of material so disparate. And he solved that problem most successfully through the help of Captain Marlow.” (**The twentieth Century Novel.**)

Dorothy Van Ghent is in full appreciation of the role of Marlow as a narrator. She firmly believes that Marlow is indispensable in Lord Jim. She writes, “Marlow is the most familiar narrative mechanism in Conrad’s work; and in this particular book Marlow has to exist.” (**English Novel: Form and Function.**)

In her admirable essay on **Lord Jim**, Dorothy Van Ghent views it as a tragedy. For her Conrad’s treatment of Jim’s problem is ‘classical’ tragedy, comparable with that of Sophocles’ Oedipus. Derwent May believes that **Lord Jim** stands at the center of an English tradition of novels which are both moral and tragic. “The story of Jim is one of the ‘purest’ examples of tradition. Jim’s effect on the reader is like that of **Hamlet** on Shakespeare’s audience.” Douglas Hewitt in his **Conrad: A Reassessment**, published in 1952 remarks that Conrad is a writer of personal tragedies. In the revised edition of the book published in 1975, he concludes that politics is at the heart of Conrad’s work and that **Nostramo** is the best

political novel in the language. This revised assessment still gives weight to the view that **Lord Jim** is a tragedy with a central figure cast in a heroic mould and isolated from the exterior world.

Eloise Knapp Hay's **The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad**, Fleishman's **Conrad's Politics** and Benita Parry's **Conrad and Imperialism** move away from consideration of **Lord Jim** as the study of an individual (and thus as a tragedy) to consideration of Jim's story as a 'political' story, part of a growing web of political novels that reached its culmination in **Nostromo** and **Under Western Eyes**.

### **5:7:6 Summary:**

In this lesson we have critically examined Conrad's **Lord Jim**. Conrad has been well ahead of his times in reaching out to many anticipated human problems in the twentieth century living conditions. He has been an intermediary between the Romantic and Victorian traditions and the innovations of Modernism. The themes and techniques, structure and symbolism of the novel have been discussed. Literary influences on Conrad, sources for **Lord Jim** and his vision of life have been touched upon. For proper understanding and appreciation of the novel, select critical interpretations have been included. Familiarity with his major work will sensitize the students with Conrad's art and help him to have an insightful perspective on the writer.

### **5:7:7 Technical Terms**

**Pre-Raphaelites:** In 1848 a group of English artists organized the 'Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood'. Their aim was to replace the reigning academic style of painting by a return to the truthfulness, simplicity and spirit of devotion that characterize the Italian painting before the time of Raphael (1483-1520)

**Impressionism:** It frequently refers to the technique of centring on the mental life of the chief character rather than on the reality around him the writers dwell on their characters' memories, association and inner emotional reactions.

**Decadence:** A literary movement originated in the nineteenth Century France. It emphasizes the autonomy of art, the superiority of artifice to nature and the quest for new sensations. It believes that Art should be independent of moral and social concerns.

**Naturalism:** A literary movement related to and sometimes described as an extreme form of realism. This doctrine holds that all existent phenomena are in nature and thus within the sphere of scientific knowledge. It maintains that no supernatural realities exist.

### **5:7:8 Model Questions**

1. Discuss the existential predicament of the protagonist in **Lord Jim**.
2. Comment on the symbolism in **Lord Jim**.
3. Discuss **Lord Jim** as a fable of sin and redemption.
4. Write a note on Conrad's tragic vision.
5. Examine the role played by Marlow in **Lord Jim**.
6. In what sense is Jim a characteristic Conradian hero?
7. Comment on the narrative technique in **Lord Jim**.

### **5:7:9 Reference Books**

- M. Asaduddin. **Joseph Conrad**.  
John Batchelor. **Lord Jim**.  
Tony Tanner. **Lord Jim**. London: Edward Arnold, 1964.  
R.N. Sarkar. **A Critical Study of Joseph Conrad**. New Delhi: Atlantic, 1993.

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Dorothy Van Ghent, **Lord Jim.**

J. W. Beach, **The Twentieth Century Novel.**

F.R. Leavis, **The Great Tradition.**

Richard Curle, **Joseph Conrad: A Study.**

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**Dr. T. Asoka Rani**

## Lesson 8

# Somerset Maugham : The Moon and Sixpence

### 5:8:0 Objectives:

1. To try to understand the powerful desire of the protagonist to give expression to art.
2. To critically evaluate the artist hero with the assistance of the trends and techniques of the twentieth century novel.
3. To evaluate the role of Ashenden as the narrator and an amateur writer.

### Structure

- 5:8:1 Background
- 5:8:2 Writer: Life & Works
- 5:8:3 Analysis
- 5:8:4 Critical Evaluation
- 5:8:5 Summary
- 5:8:6 Technical Terms
- 5:8:7 Model Questions
- 5:8:8 Reference Books

### 5:8:1 Background

Victorianism with its inherent authoritativeness and moral onslaught, was not acceptable to the future generation. They viewed existence, life and even religion, from a completely different perspective. These sceptics did not conform to any doctrine and dogma, adapting their individual creeds and establishing their own schools of thought. As such, society and the individual gained prominent position in twentieth century fiction.

Twentieth century fiction underwent a dramatic transformation which will be clearly evident when we trace the history of English literature from its origin to present time, from another fundamental aspect. It is strange but true that scientific progression has crossed the limits of outer space, but in literature, the artist's soul which thrived in its world of imagination, has found meaning in the lowest strata of life-existentialism- 'the pilgrimage in search of identification and these practical theories dealing with facts and actual occurrences lend a feeling of substantiality and genuineness in our daily experiences. Thus man's deeper aspirations were stirred and a resultant regeneration was visible, with the revival of art, literature and life in general. Innumerable schools of thought played a predominant role in the mind of man, where in they have envisioned life in its meaningful and realistic countenance, eradicating skepticism, stultifying dogmas and customs and instilling humanistic doctrines of Schiller, instead.

Certain novelists have injected life in the mundanities of life. Hugh Walpole (1884-1941) has inducted new meaning with his masterful technique into routine city and provincial lives. Compton Mackenzie (1883) writes prolifically on life and people in an evocative pattern. C.P. Snow (1905) gave prominence to life in the universities. The Cambridge University was the scene of action, discussing on his theme from a scientific and administrative viewpoint. He portrays the life of the intellectuals, their rivalries, politics, discussions within the precincts of

the awe-inspiring monumental buildings. Angus Wilson (1915) is an intellectual who has been profoundly influenced by the French naturalist Emile Zola. His themes center around individuals striving to survive in a modern world. He analyses his character with scientific precision softened with his sincerity and brilliant language, encouraging man to adjust with the modern environment.

Certain novelists have utilized the novel as it was the most appropriate form by which to express their view of life.

Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) was engrossed with the moral condition of his age which he dealt satirically but on a lighter vein. He was considerably influenced by the French, which is visible in his brilliant evocative yet subtle writings. He views man's liberated lifestyle with humour tinged with sarcasm. His intense concern for the decadent modern civilization induced him to interweave the doctrine of non-attachment in his philosophy of life. His powerful rhetoric served to instill his ideas effectively in the minds of his readers.

William Somerset Maugham (1874) was an impressive artist whose considerable talent is reflected in his novelistic creations. His character portrayals have been acclaimed as imaginative, vibrant and with as much philosophical depth as his paintings. His narrative which has been incorporated with the new psychological techniques is commendable. Maugham's Maupassant-like approach to literature interlaced his writings with a humane aura.

Joyce Cary (1888) was an Irish writer, who stepped into the literary world at the ripe age of forty-four after an administrative career in Nigeria. His cosmopolitan life evoked in him a desire to propel into the world of fiction inhabited by a variety of people. Cary's faith in the 'impulsive force' present in man's character, resembles Shaw's 'Life-force', exhibiting the imaginative leanings of the romantic idealists. His novels are autobiographical because the author impregnates himself in all the incidence and characters.

Katherine Mansfield (1889) born in New Zealand is a sensitive writer, reflecting powerfully the trends of her age in a controlled and classical style. She was influenced by modern psychological writers like Tchekov and Proust and such subtle emotional nuances pervaded her writings. Her pure and natural instincts, untarnished by any superficial influences, were projected in a serene, yet evocative manner, digressing into the soul of her protagonists with unrestrained simplicity.

There are innumerable writers who have traversed into the unknown terrains of the soul. These psychological writers have courageously and candidly traversed in their inner beings in search of meaningful themes. Their search for truth and reality have been amply rewarded, as they have discovered rich stores of treasure, enshrouded from our normal vision.

Evolution of this novelistic technique required a departure from traditional trends of writing. Therefore technical innovations and European influences of their Schools of Thought, like Expressionism, Impressionism have been adopted. J.W. Beach in The Twentieth Century Novel describes Zola's Naturalism and Maupassant's style and terms like expressionism and

impressionism. The latter two were derived from painting where he mentions Cezanne and Gauguin (The biographical artist – hero of The “Moon and Sixpence”.)

Twentieth century writers are expressionistic, by expressing freedom and unconventionality, by realistic portrayals in their work. Henry James insisted on the artistic qualities of the novel. Virginia Woolf, too, had shared the strong views of James regarding artistry in novel. The readers will find new areas to explore and enlighten themselves. Typically of the modernist writers, D.H. Lawrence attempts to reshape this materialistic, mechanized and selfish world, through his writings.

Philip Henderson is one of the Thirties critics who in The Novel Today : Studies in Contemporary Attitudes (1936), expressed that “subjectivism” resulted in further detachment from social reality. Randall Stevenson in A Reader’s Guide To the Twentieth Century Novel in Britain (1993) writes that, much of the thirties writing did move away from innovation and formal experiment into conventional realism as in like Myers, Powys and several others. A modernist writer manifests himself from unexpected quarters at that time. Throughout his long career, stretching back for Liza of Lambeth (1897), Somerset Maugham is generally considered conservative in outlook and technique, though there is some departure from this manner in his study of good, evil and religion in The Razor’s Edge. The novel, along with Cakes and Ale (1930) extend a consciousness of techniques, adding a modernist touch. We also have for Maddox Ford’s The Good Soldier (1915), experimenting with the techniques of Modernism. Among the women writers, we have Jean Rhys, Elizabeth Bowen, Rosamond Lehmann, where fiction exhibits several modernist techniques, which they employ sensitively and skillfully.

Maugham was very much influenced by the French writers, particularly Maupassant, Thus, Maugham believed that one gives his vision the form that is forced on him by nature. Maugham moves his pattern of life so well, with intelligence and taste, in spite of his unhappy childhood, severe illness, stammer and disillusionment.

Even with all his French influence, he was a British writer, more in the tradition of Butler, Bennett, Moore and Gissing. Maugham’s stories are lucid, readable, simple and euphonious. His Ibsenite taste for realism and his native tendency toward it is evident in The Moon and Sixpence. The novel itself is a series of closely connected incidents leading to a sudden and unexpected end.

## **5:8:2. Writer: Life & Works**

### **5:8:2.1 Life:**

The inner world is a reality to most authors, representing protagonists not as an idealized hero but by manifesting their natural characteristic traits. Somerset Maugham's novels have woven nature and man's psyche on a single thread of narration, the result of which is indelibly imprinted in the reader's mind.

William Somerset Maugham was born in 1874 at the British Embassy in Paris, where his father Robert Ormond M. was a solicitor. Maugham was the youngest of his four brothers. His mother Edith Mary was well known for her beauty and love for entertaining. Robert Maugham hailed from a relatively ordinary family, but his father had gained the title of "The Father of Legal Journalism". Robert Maugham had traveled widely and had visited Morocco, Greece and Asia Minor. Thus traveling and writing were inherited qualities in the case of William. He was in the care of a French nurse but was allowed to spend a few minutes with his mother every morning. Every afternoon he was welcome to visit his father's salon where the French dignitaries came to enjoy cups of English tea. He would entertain the guests with recitations. Even till his last days, Maugham entertained people of great reputation in his villa Mauresque. He lost his mother in 1882, a loss which pained him even when he was an old man. He never ceased to adore his mother and his sorrows were tragically increased with the death of his father, only two years later. Even though there was not much rapport with him, he had now become literally homeless. The age difference with his brothers did not help matters and therefore he was shipped to England, the language and lifestyle of which he was not sufficiently acquainted with. The French influence was naturally predominant in his books and thoughts, as he was born amidst French culture. He was sent to his uncle at Whitstable, Kent, the rectory which was as cold and unfriendly as were his uncle and aunty. An added sore to his wounds was the King's School, where uncordial and cruel treatment was meted out to him by the school boys. His characteristic stammer was the target of these cynics, and what struck him was that the French boys had so very discreetly kept silent about his handicap. The superiority complex of the British people irked Maugham since they bruised his sensitive nature. His education Cambridge was hampered for a while due to lung infection and while recuperating in the Mediterranean coast, he discovered the short stories of Guy de Maupassant. On recovering from his illness, he completed his schooling and simultaneously discovered a fantastic trait which he possessed. His power of expression was a precursor to his writing abilities. His vocabulary partially sublimated the inferiority complex which he had developed due to stammering.

Henry Mac Donald, Maugham's uncle, wanted him to join the church, but Maugham desired to be a writer. His sojourn in Germany benefited him in two ways. Firstly, he had the opportunity to attend the lecture of Kuno Fischer and thus he became acquainted with the philosophy of Schopenhauer. Presumably, his misogynistic conceptions were a result of his exposure to Schopenhauer's philosophy. Finally, he decided to lead an independent life and with his annual income of 150, he enrolled as a student in St. Thomas's Hospital, London. It was in this phase of his career that he confronted life in the raw, and from his experiences in the slums of Lambeth he wrote his first novel *Liza of Lambeth*. After successfully obtaining a



medical degree, Maugham retired permanently into the serene and soul satisfying precincts of English literature. Even as a student his love for traveling had surfaced and Spain became the land of his dreams. Meanwhile Maugham faced severe financial straits and was forced to receive hospitality on many occasions and this has been dwelt upon in his novel.

Maugham's sojourn in Paris was the turning point in his career. He met a whole group of artists and writers in a nondescript restaurant which were devoid of social shams and here he led a Bohemian life. He utterly detested the conventional life of the Britishers, for he himself possessed an informal and uncomplicated personality. It was in this restaurant that he was introduced to an Irish painter, Roderic O'Connor, who acquainted him with the story of Paul Gauguin, the original source of the 'Moon and Sixpence'. He met Syrie Williams in 1913, who at that time was living away from her problematic husband. They shared a comfortable relationship, and some time later he was recruited into the military intelligence. Later, when he began to face problems with Syrie, he set out for Tahiti to collect biographical details of Paul Gauguin. Here he unrestrainedly moved about enjoying the anonymity wholeheartedly. He could view people as they were with their natural honest beings and behaviour. He discovered a hut where the artist has convalesced after an illness. Here he had painted a considerable part of the doors and walls, which were ruined by the village children. He discovered a fraction of it and bought it from the present occupant of the hut Maugham had possessed a famous collection of Impressionist paintings.

Materialist as Maugham was in his philosophy, he became fascinated by the Greek-Spanish painter's metaphysical turn of mind. In Paris, he lived with a group of artists and writers. He was fascinated by a Spanish artist El Greco a precursor of the moderns with his striking distortions of the body and his greater concern form colour than for drawing. There are echoes of Maugham's fascination and excitement ... When he was twenty eight he wrote in his notebooks that he had found what he believed to be the basis for a comfortable philosophy of life, a humorous resignation.

#### **5:8:2:2 Works:**

1. Liza of Lambeth (1907) Portrays the life of the poor in suburban London. The life of Liza is depicted in all its depravity very poignantly and realistically.
2. Of Human Bondage (1915) An autobiographical novel projecting Philip Carly's life as meaningless and futile. He is a lonely recluse who falls in love with a silly girl who becomes a prostitute, who does not accept his forgiveness.
3. Cakes and Ale (1930). The novel is about two authors, one a genial bohemian and the other busy writing an official biography. The two personalities who attract us are the two Drifffield's, totally contrasting personalities. This satiric portrayal exhibits incisiveness, brilliance, genuine pathos and beauty.
4. The Razor's Edge (1944) It is a philosophical novel reflecting on the value of renunciation in human life. Larry, the protagonist's meeting with some Sadhus in India

and finds his own salvation. The hero attempts to find answers to his philosophic queries and in the process, deserts the girl he loves.

5. Purely for My Pleasure (1962). This book is a testimony to a lifetime devoted to art. It consisted largely of plates of the famous pictures of Renoir, Matisse, Picasso, Monet and others.

## **5:8:3 Analysis:**

### **5:8:3:1 Plot:**

Ashenden, the narrator confesses that when he first met Charles Strickland he could not discern anything extraordinary in him. Yet now few will deny his greatness, a reputation which is authentic, unlike a Prime Minister or a general, whose respect is circumvented by the Chair or position. Strickland's art may not be universally appreciated, but he disturbs and arrests. Normally, artists satisfy the aesthetic sensibility in man; on the contrary, his art suggests a personality which is strange, tormented and complex. It is this attribute which attracts people even involuntarily to his art and excites a curious interest regarding his life. Ironically, it is four years after his death that Maurice Hewet wrote an article in the *Mercure de France*, rescuing him from oblivion and blazing the trail of his popularity.

Ashenden narrates of his visits to certain gatherings of writers and artists in large airless rooms where tea and snacks were served. The strange people with brilliant conversation and stinging humour, fascinated him. Mrs. Strickland was present at the same party and Ashenden was impressed with Mrs. Strickland's simplicity and unaffected mannerisms. She was a good companion to artists and took pleasure in guiding their virgin steps in the difficult path of letters. Later he met her teenage children, a son and a daughter. On questioning about her husband, she quickly replied that he was not at all literary and was a perfect philistine who would bore him to death. The shocking news of his desertion came like a thunderbolt. The rumour was that he had run away with a woman leaving the family penniless, deleting the seventeen year old marriage with a little note, "I shall not come back. My decision is irrevocable". Characteristically, he did not think any excuse, regret or explanation was necessary. He translated his thoughts into reality with a single stroke. Strickland had been living in Paris, in a dinghy lodging all by himself. Despite Ashenden's cautioning of a calamitous future, he insisted that all he wanted to do was paint. Ashenden wondered that:

There was real passion in his voice, and in spite of myself I was impressed. I seemed to feel in him some vehement power that was struggling within him; it gave me the sensation of something very strong, overmastering, that held him, as it were, against his will. I could not understand. He seemed really to be possessed of a devil, and I felt that it might suddenly turn and rend him (49).

On the whole, he had decided to turn blind to the world, except for the disturbing vision in his soul. Women had no place in his life, even though so many of them were attracted by his coarse and sensual brutality. He had abandoned the joys of the world for the painful austerities of the cloister. Strickland exhibited the directness of a fanatic and the ferocity of an apostle. Mrs. Strickland perforce had to adopt a new role and in time she proved to be a woman of character.

She assumed a perfect demeanour and established a typing institute, which in time became a successful venture. Five years later Ashenden decided to live in Paris. For a while he took an apartment, hired some furniture and settled down. Dirk Stpoeve was a mediocre artist who painted the common place aspects of life, which were well received in countries like Holland and Norway by merchants and rich tradesmen. During their long, dark and cold winter paintings of vibrant and rich hues depicting Italy, warmed their hearts. He was too innocent and simple hearted to perceive facts beyond the superficial strata of existence. Only his thoughts were life's truth and reality for him, and he never looked beyond the veneer of life. He gave the needy freely, was exploited by the undeserving and was also very emotional and extremely foolish. People cracked jokes with Christmas approaching, Dirk decided to forgive Strickland's crass behaviour, as he could not imagine. 'the lonely painter should be abandoned to his own melancholy' (87). Dirk decided that Ashenden should be present at the reconciliation and they went searching for Strickland's quarter. They found him in a most distressing condition living in the worst possible circumstances. He was suffering from high fever and had subsisted only on water for the past two days. Dirk decided to take him home and very hesitantly placed the proposition before his wife. He had married an Englishwoman who was tall, simple, with grey eyes and brown hair and by nature extremely reserved. She was very silent, giving no clue to her past and a sincere admirer of her husband's artistic ability. After the initial courtesies were over Ashenden enquired about Strickland. On hearing this Blanche Stroeve spontaneously uttered 'Beast' and obviously she seemed to despise him. Dirk said that he had come to their house and while ignoring his paintings, had borrowed twenty francs quite brazenly. But Dirk insisted that he was a genius and a great artist who went unrecognized, as initially did all great artists like Manet. To him;

Beauty is something wonderful and strange that the artist fashions out of the chaos of the world in the torment of his soul

Tragedy struck in a most inconceivable manner when Blanche Stroeve and Strickland developed a relationship. Ashenden that Blanche had attempted to commit suicide, he was stunned! In the hospital her tears flowed incessantly, her face was distorted with the acid, and she did not meet Dirk even on the point of death. Dirk was inundated in agony and a week later decided to leave for Holland.

On an impulse Strickland set sail for Marseilles, and after wandering a while he finally settled in Tahiti. Here in the South Seas the atmosphere was sufficiently conducive to inspire him to settle down. It was fifteen years since Ashenden had seen him and nine years since Strickland had died at the age of fifty-six, Ashenden had come to Tahiti and naturally his mind reverted to the enigmatic painter. Tahiti was beautiful, mysterious and colourful, being populated with gay and cheerful individuals. Ashenden met Captain Nichols who had met Strickland in Marseilles and had directed him to Tahiti. The captain was a beachcomber, an uncomplaining married bachelor with innumerable problems, he had met the artist in the Aisle de Nuit, where beggars are given free boarding and lodging for a week. Later they sought the hospitality of Tough Bill in a sailor's boarding house, whose portrait Strickland had painted and survived temporarily. But he consistently refused berths on some ships and finally they were thrown out. They literally starved and spent nights in empty trucks, a cart or warehouse. All these hardships appealed to Strickland's sardonic humour. Nichols said that even amidst these

bitter trials, there never was a cross word from him. At times he'd be a bit surly, but even in a condition of starvation he'd be in a lively mood. Tramps as a community were large-hearted people, who shared what little they possessed and were free from all bondages and restrictions of any country. One day Strickland got into a fight with Tough Bill and was forced to flee from Marseilles. He sailed to Tahiti and settled in an island named Papeete. He worked for Cohen, a Jewish trader, who had come by his paintings in a singular manner. Cohen was interested in Strickland because he was a bad painter and gave him a job as an overseer in his plantation. But, once he collected sufficient money for his paints he left the job to paint at will. Later as he was starving, he borrowed two hundred francs from Cohen in exchange for a painting of his plantation. His wife was disgusted with it and had thrown it in the attic for fear of people laughing at such a display of rubbish! Pradoxically, thirty years later they earned thirty thousand francs for the same painting.

Ashenden lived in Hotel de la Fleur and the proprietress Tiare Johnson was acclaimed for her hospitality. She knew Strickland well and regretted the fact that his paintings were sold even at a paltry amount of five francs. He was emaciated penniless and she had helped him to get jobs, but invariably he would return to the bush. Once he had told Tiare that when he was scrubbing the deck, somebody pointed out the island of Tahiti, "I knew right away that there was the place I'd been looking for all my life". Ashenden then narrated a story about a brilliant doctor who had sacrificed a golden future to live under unenviable conditions in Alexandria. He was condemned as a man without character who had made a hash of his life. But Ashenden wondered, *'I suppose it depends on what meaning you attach to life, the claim which you acknowledge to society, and the claim of the individual'*. The doctor was at peace with himself, and nothing else in life mattered more than an idealistic existence. The sacrifice was imperative if he desired to retain his individuality and a life of more intense significance. This is exactly the same ideal that Maugham had adopted after he had graduated from the medical college. Tiare continued her narration to Ashenden regarding Strickland. Pitying his forlorn condition, she arranged for one of her girls, by name of Ata to marry him. She had a little property by which they could both survive. He confessed that he was already married, but that didn't make any difference to Tiare. They lived on Ata's property in the mountain and this was the happiest period in Strickland's life, as it was a haven of peace and tranquility. Now he had a home, food, solitude a conducive atmosphere to indulge in artistic creations. In time he had two children and their family constituted of an old woman, her granddaughter and a young boy. They co-existed in harmony and contentment and Ata never interfered with Strickland. Therefore, he and Tiare decided to dwell in this paradise forever.

Captain Brunot knew Strickland, and Tiare introduced him to Ashenden. He described Strickland's home as the Garden of Eden, where he lived unmindful of the world and by the world forgotten'. Dr. Coutras was an old Frenchman of great stature, a good natured person who was quite well acquainted with Strickland. He had ventured the precarious route to Strickland's home and discovered that he was suffering from leprosy. It came as a shock to the sensitive artist, but characteristically even on receiving this shattering information; he remained placid. A few years later, the doctor received a message that Strickland was dying. He reached their home and on entering it was enshrouded by a profound feeling of beauty. It was like a magic world of great primeval forest with people walking under the trees. The mysterious and elaborate compositions took his breath away.

Strickland had made Ata promise that she would destroy the house at his death. By this act of destruction, he ultimately won his battle against society. He knew that his paintings were masterpieces, which he destroyed in pride and contempt. '*Strickland had kept his secret to the grave*'.

Ashenden bade farewell to Tahiti with a heavy heart, the customary gifts and a tearful farewell from Tiara. On reaching London, he went to visit Mrs. Strickland. She had aged gracefully, was trim and modestly dressed. Sitting in the drawing room was an American publisher who was planning a book on Strickland. Ashenden looked around and found reproductions of Strickland's paintings. One was of the Holy Family, most surely of Ata suckling her baby, but he had no intention of disclosing any details of the past.

### **5:8:3:2 Narrative technique:**

The novel is narrated by Ashenden and he commences with the strange tormenting and complex personality of Charles Strickland. He was given credit four years after his death by an article by Maurice Hewet. The flashback is, about Ashenden's earlier days in London and his friendship with Strickland and the husband's decision to become an artist. Five years later Ashenden returned to Paris and lived there narrating his extraordinary experiences regarding Strickland. Ashenden had not seen him for fifteen years and it was nine years since he had breathed his last. The rest of the novel depicts Ashenden meeting various acquaintances of Strickland and tracking the various stages of his existence.

Ashenden is a character based on his war time experiences as a secret agent. The use of a detached narrator is an admirable technique, which helps Maugham to achieve an off hand tone. The narrator is a man of the world which nothing shocks and is self effacing. He tells the story casually keeping it moving with the right effects. Anthony Burgess comments. "Here again was something that English fiction needed – the dispassionate commentator."

The novel appealed primarily because it was an excellent example of the genre which had become prominent in the early twentieth century the Kunstlerroman or an artist hero novel. This novel is an examination of freedom in the form of the artist's search for liberty from social pressures and conventional ties. The narrator, on the other hand, represents moderation, compromise and the dictates of civilization, observes Calder in Somerset Maugham and His Quest for Freedom.

**5:8:3:3 The Title:** The Moon and Sixpence represents the theme of renunciation of material values of life for peace and perfection of the soul. The title is symbolic of an artist who is totally engrossed in reaching for the moon, that the sixpence loses all significance for him. This impressive title represents the theme of ephemerality and illusion contrasted to the realistic and necessary aspects of existence. A true artist, like Charles Strickland never desired an iota of physical comfort but lived life, wholly of the spirit.

**5:8:3:4 About Maugham:** Ted Morgan in Maugham comments that the death of Maugham's mother had forged a crucial link between love and suffering, which would appear in all his works and relationships, may be leading to misogynism.

Similarly, Maugham's contribution is at once simple and complex. His poetic flights of imagination may not be as unique as Richard Cordell in Introduction to Of Human Bondage.

The Moon and Sixpence is underlined with a note of irony because Mrs. Strickland failed to decipher her husband's latent talent and was encouraging other amateurs in this field.

Somerset Maugham is one of the least puzzling or enigmatic writers. His prose style like that of Bernard Shaw, is lucid. Cliches were used to obtain an easily accessible conversational style.

#### **5:8:3:5 Structure**

1. A series of closely connected incidents leading to a sudden and unexpected end
2. Despite his French influence, he was more a British writer.
3. he advocates plot in story – telling
4. Like Shakespeare, he believes in plain narration.
5. He was a materialist but was fascinated by the Greek Spanish painters' metaphysical turn of mind. In all his creative works, he associated beauty with art.

#### **5:8:3:6 Maugham's Philosophy:**

At an early age, Maugham realized that the basic nobility of man depends neither on culture or breeding, but is rooted in man's instincts. Man on occasion can display some splendour of spirit which provides refuge from despair. He praises the bravery of the spirit and man's ability to rebel against fetters.

#### **5:8:4 Critical Evaluation:**

In Summing up, Maugham had written, I have put the whole of my life into my books (10) As Richard Heron Ward in 'Somerset Maugham' writes that Maugham's most characteristic quality is his pity and tolerance for the weaknesses and tragedies of human beings.

Anthony Curtis in The Pattern of Somerset Maugham, says that Maugham can never be judged by his best work for the essential Maugham is Maugham. Maugham claimed to be a story teller, but craved a truth above fiction. The protagonist of the Moon and Sixpence strangely reflects Maugham's life and his philosophy. Mau Cordell in Somerset Maugham A Biographical and Critical Study, reflects on the same line of thought. Maugham had lived through the era of Imperialism and colonialism and had witnessed the most murderous war in history. He was perhaps, embittered of having become an orphan at an early age. This made him live among bigots and philistines and yet could write pleasurable and humanistic stories. "The critics' attitude towards Maugham is varied. Maugham himself tries to sum up the attitude of the critics toward him thus:

In my twenties the critics said I was brutal, In my thirties they said I was flippant, in my forties they said I was cynical, in my fifties they said I was competent, and now in my sixties, they say I am superficial. I have gone my way following the course I mapped out for myself, and trying with my works to fill out the pattern I looked for. Maugham made no bones about the fact that he was a professional writer. A number of British and American critics have placed him in the front row of the first-raters. But it is Maugham's modesty and humility which make him declare "I know where I stand; in the very front row of the second raters."

### **5:8:5 Summary:**

Somerset Maugham's The Moon and Sixpence, is an examination of freedom in the guise of an artist's search for liberty from social and familial bindings. Maugham also embodies his personal philosophy in his artistic temperament in the problem of artist and morality, the question, which was raised by Shaw, Joyce and Lawrence. Finally, Somerset Maugham manifested the artist's inner beauty describing it as a spiritual exercise leading to the liberation of the soul.

### **5:8:6 Technical Terms**

Narrator: A character who gives the description of cultural or fictional events.

Misogyny- Hatred or hostility towards women

Xenophobia – A person unduly fearful of foreign culture. (Maugham's displacement from Paris to Britain and he missed the kind and informal traits of French)

Alienation- The condition of being an outsider; a state of isolation.

Impressionism: A literary style characterized generally by the use of details and mental association to evoke subjective and sensory impressions rather than objective reality.

### **5:8:7 Model Questions**

1. The Moon and Sixpence contains elements of two quite different settings, the artistic hew and the story of adventure in exotic settings elaborate.
2. Comment on Ashenden's role in Somerset Maugham's The Moon and Sixpence
3. Explain the role of the minor characters in manifesting the artist in Charles Strickland.
4. Write an essay on Maugham's fictional technique in The Moon and Sixpence
5. Bring out the theme of Somerset Maugham's The Moon and Sixpence.
6. Comment on the structure of The Moon and Sixpence.
7. The artistic 'inevitability' in the protagonist Strickland was realistically evolved by Somerset Maugham. Do you agree
8. Justify the title The Moon and Sixpence.
9. Trace the autobiographical elements of the author in The Moon and Sixpence.
10. "Contrary to Maugham's ideas, Existentialism advocates individualism" Elucidate.

### **5:8:8 Reference Books**

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**Dr. B. Sudipta**



## Lesson – 9

# James Joyce: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

## Contents

- 5:9:1 Objectives of the Lesson**
- 5:9:2 Background**
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## 5.9.0 Objectives

### 5.10.0

1. To create an awareness of the essence of the twentieth century novel.
2. To appreciate the importance of autobiography which has been effectively portrayed in A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man.
3. To know about the Stream-of-Consciousness technique which has been widely utilized with very good effect.

### 5:9:2 Background:

Modern man and society have been the topics of many genres, even as this theme predominates in the twentieth century novel. The psychological novel is a deviation from the tradition-bound narratives. The mind is the central feature in both disciplines of psychology and philosophy. Man has been the victim of extraneous circumstances and is relegated to social constraints. In 1890, William James focused his attention on the individual consciousness. The liberated mind ensures positive perception and successful formulation of ideas and notions. Thus, systematic value-structures have been erected on the conscious level of man. Earlier the Victorians attempted to disseminate information from casual roots like family background and behavioural patterns.

The transitions that were brought about by progress in scientific and industrial fields had an impact on society. In the literary genre man's complacent demeanour was destabilised by Freud's psycho-analytical conceptions. Religious doctrines could not hold sway over the masses with its traditional dogmas which proved iconoclastic by nature. G.E. Moore's Principia Ethica (1903) created a stir in artistic circles with its metaphysical and philosophical theories. Disintegration of the traditional social order was imminent. French influence from the world of art and literature played a prominent role in the metamorphic phase. Cezanne, the Post-

Impressionist French artist was introduced by Roger Fry to English circles. Impressionism is of considerable import in the twentieth century techniques. The evanescence of refined sensibility was very subtly evinced and portrayed by the stream-of-consciousness writers.

World War is bound to be cataclysmic by nature. Writers had their share of traumatic experience, though their literary compositions did not cease as artists like Proust, Woolf, Joyce had contributed innumerable masterpieces even at this critical juncture.

The four novelists belonging to the era of the First World War, who played pivotal roles in reinforcing the psychological novel in our literary infrastructure were Marcel Proust, Dorothy Richardson, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Thus, around 1913-15 the modern psychological novel became a reality for the lovers of literature. Marcel Proust's thirteen volumes *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* was momentarily inspired by a cup of tea and some toast. This apparently trivial incident overpowered him with the essence of his childhood, transcending him from his present misery to a spell of joyousness in the past, literally experiencing '*Time Regained*'. He had overcome temporal and spatial barriers, fusing inner time with outer time, his present room and the vast spaces of the past. Dorothy Richardson had a number of personal problems, but the immediate discomfort which she suffered from was myopia. She expressed her realism, moments of intense experience, and innumerable sensations and conceptions in twelve volumes titled *Pilgrimage*. The woman in her came flooding into her soul and imbued in an endless stream of emotions, her keyed up sensibility was embodied in Miriam Henderson, the protagonist of Dorothy Richardson's lengthy, bio-graphical creation. James Joyce (1882) is one of the pioneers of the 'Stream of Consciousness' technique. His books are evident of powerful revelations of the consciousness, in the process completely demolishing traditional trends and techniques. His revolt against his nation and the religious dogmas of the day have speeded into his artistic consciousness, revealing bitter truths at varying junctures of his creation. His innovatory techniques of language, style and analysis of the soul, have gained a deep-rooted hold in English literature.

Virginia Woolf's (1882) novels are the most intuitive, sensitive and classical portrayals of the consciousness of her protagonists. Her keen perception, intelligence and an exquisite sensibility enabled her to portray impressionistic renderings of the soul. She has utilized the temporal aspects and the 'stream-of-consciousness' technique in an impressionistic manner dissolving all boundaries between individuals. The 'tunnelling process' technique was her contribution to the twentieth century innovations. Her ephemeral conditions captures the transient and evanescent in all its naturalness. Thus writers dealing with the psyche have projected consciousness in its multifarious hues and elevated it to an indispensable technique in contemporary English literature.

### **5:9:3 Writer & His works**

James Joyce has successfully carved a niche for himself in twentieth century literature. His intense involvement in exploring the inner truths of man was an obsession which was aesthetically portrayed in his poems and novels. His adoption of the various techniques escalated his expressive abilities and gave meaning to the indecipherable complexities of the psyche. His narrations are apparently formless and incomprehensible, but his structural

techniques, diction, forays into the sub-conscious of the protagonists and his innate desire for freedom, has established his creative ability in the annals of English literature.

James Augustine Joyce was born in Ireland in the year 1882. His parents Mary and John Joyce were trained in music and Joyce inherited their musical talent. This has partially attributed to his artistic and musical temperament, which he portrayed from the very first page of the novel. John Joyce had inherited sizeable properties in Cork, in addition to which he was a successful politician. His inefficiency and extravagance resulted in the dwindling of their family fortune, even while Joyce was a young boy. Joyce's disorientation in his school life and parallelly the poverty-stricken home distorted his dreams of a serene future. This disturbed his mind and discontent and dissipation was aroused from the depths of his soul, resulting in a profoundly negative attitude towards life itself.

His education was conducted in schools run by the society of Jesus, where the Jesuits contributed towards his intellectual development. For the first three years, he attended the Jesuit school at Glongowes Wood. The next five years he was trained for the University at Belvedere College in Dublin, also a Jesuit institution. Deviation in literary interest was evident here as he spent considerable time in studying the works of the Norwegian dramatist, Henrik Ibsen. After receiving his degree, he went to Paris to study medicine. The unconventional atmosphere precluded all efforts of serious studies as he had adopted the role of a Bohemian student. He returned to Dublin just before his mother's death. Joyce was so attuned to his principles that he did not adhere to his mother's dying request, that he should receive communion and embrace religion once again. This was the vindication of his inner reality and he sustained it with courage and determination. He left Ireland with his wife Nora Barnacle in 1904, the very year he wrote Stephen Hero, the initial attempt of *The portrait of the Artist as Young Man*.

James Joyce, as a youth, witnessed the internal conflicts prevailing within Ireland. Many a powerful Irish revolutionary fought to retrieve Ireland from the clutches of the British. Charles Stewart Parnell was a force to contend with and being a parliamentarian he fought for 'Home rule'. Unfortunately he was deceived by the Catholic Irish hierarchy and the Irish people, leaving Ireland once again in an irretrievable pit of domination. Joyce's father was a Parnellite and Joyce together with his dislike for priests, created a volatile situation in his heart. It ended in his utter dislike for the Irish people and the Catholics who had betrayed Parnell. Joyce had in truth witnessed fierce arguments in his home with this highly explosive subject as the topic of discussion. Parnell was Joyce's hero, about whom he had written poem at the tender age of nine. Thus, Parnell's betrayal was a blow to his impressionable mind, which finally culminated in his disdainful attitude towards Ireland. His rebellious feelings were consolidated when he chose to be an exile, condemning the injustice and hypocrisy which prevailed there.

### **Autobiographical**

Joyce's tenure at the University College, Dublin was responsible for his intellectual development. He utilized the library and studied books on all subjects. He made an extensive and deep study of English literature which resulted in his aesthetic theories and innovative literary themes. The friendship which he cultivated in the institution formed the cornerstone of his individualistic philosophy of life and his dedication to art. He studied Modern European languages, like French, Italian and Norwegian in order to read to great masters in original. One of his first publications as a review of Ibsen's 'When We Dead Awaken' which was well

appreciated. Equally well accepted was a paper on "Drama and Life, which he resented before the Literary and Historical Society of the college. Unfortunately, his home condition was not conducive to his sensitive native and he planned to move to the continent.

He moved from place to place in Europe and earned some money by teaching languages. He had decided to focus his attention to the task of writing. In `907, he published a small volume of poem, entitled Chamber Music. His book of short stories Dubliners were charged by the censors to be obscene and blasphemous and was not accepted by the publishers in Ireland. He was a controversial writer thematically, but was acknowledged as a master of English prose. His financial problems were partly solved form the British Privy Purse. Dubliners was published in 1914 and The Portrait in 1916. Ulysses was published in Paris in 1922, but it was banned in England and America as it was an ultra-modern novel. His last book Finnegan's Wake was published in 1939.

James Joyce spent the last twenty years of his life in Paris. He was constantly troubled with diseases of the eye, which resulted in very little writing. He passed away in 1941, due to illness. He was supported financially by his admirers.

#### **JOYCE'S LITERARY WORKS:**

**Dubliners** (1914) A collection of fifteen short stories written particularly to display the 'paralysis' affecting Dublin's life. Despite serious publication obstacles, he firmly felt that this volume was the first step towards the spiritual liberation of his country.

**Exiles** (1915) is a three act play, which is a tribute to his great master Henrik Ibsen. The play is autobiographical in the sense that it explores analytically the dilemma of Joyee's inner life, particularly the complex emotional cross-currents involved in his rejection of Ireland and in his love for Nora.

**Ulysses** (1922) The composition of Ulysses took Joyce seven years. In Homer, Odysseus's son Telemachus goes in search of his long-lost father. Here Stephen Dedalus is in searchof 'fatherhood' having cast off allegiances to home, fatherland and church. It also tracks the wandering of Odysseus in the guise of Leopold Bloom, who is suffering, like Odysseus, form separation from his wife, Finally, Bloom's wife Molly, at home, brings about the clarification of the aspirations of all the three of them. This novel has generated a vast amount of literary activity regarding Joyce's technique in this book.

**Finnegan's Wake** (1939) is notoriously the most obscure book written by any writer, to which Joyce had devoted eighteen years of his life. Innumerable references have been made, giving it a historical encyclopedic ambience. The whole landscape of the Dublin area corresponds with Tim Finnegan and his family. Tim's story is of fall, death and resurrection.

#### **5:9:4 Analysis**

With the onset of the twentieth century Modern literature, poetry and the novel in particular is rarely created in the light of a single encompassing system of ideas, such as the

richly textured and intricate aesthetic philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. The relation of creative writing and this ideative background is evident in modern writings. James Joyce is convinced of this theory when he writes, 'A Portrait of the Artist as a young Man and Finnegan's Wake. The Edwardian ethos on which Joyce descended is essentially an ethos of realism, which suggests that life is ephemeral, impressionistic and temporal. The post-war attitude was one of tragic realism, which silhouetted Joyce's creative writings.

It is novel about growing up which had required a series of adjustments in the various institutions of the family, school, religion and politics. The protagonist Stephen Dedalus gradually frees himself from the influence of these forces to follow his own nature and his own fate. Joyce adjusts the style appropriately to the succeeding stages of his hero's development. When the book opens, the reader is taken into the world of the child's infancy and impressions are recorded accordingly. At the conclusion of the novel, the reader is in the world of a young man.

### **Structure and Language**

Joyce wrote the first draft of a work called Stephen Hero, which was finally published as 'A Portrait'. The novel presents the author as a young man in the character of his hero, Stephen Dedalus, whose total character is formed by the national political and religious feelings of Ireland. The evolution of Stephen's character reveals his gradual freedom from the influence of these forces to follow his own nature and his own fate.

Joyce adjusts the style appropriately to the succeeding stages of the hero's development. For instance the first chapter reveals the world of the child's infancy and impressions and the book closes in the world of the young man. A Portrait is a very carefully constructed novel. It has five chapters and each chapter contains a number of sections. The narrative of a young man who decides to become an artist, is shaped into a unity that universalizes it; thereby transcending the limitations of time and space. And so James Joyce reshaped his own and his nation's history into a novel which has made it as one of the world's greatest literature.

### **Plot:**

The novel commences on a very tender note the serene picture of a moocow coming down the road and meeting a nice little boy named baby tuckoo. The child as he listened identified himself with his father's story. It was very good time, he was baby Luckoo and the moocow came down his street, where Betty Byme sold lemon platt. The little boy's father had a hairy face and his mother had a nicer smell than his father. Then there was song which was his very own. 'O, the green wothe botherh'. (7) The boy continued to indulge in introspecting wetting the bed, the accompanying oil sheet and discomfort and queer smell. These existential problems have been innocently and realistically projected. He loved to dance to the tune that his mother played on a sailor's hornpipe. We are being led unobtrusively into the inner being of this little one, by way of his mind's reflections and acquaintances. Uncle Charles and Dante frequently visited their home. Dante was an artist and she used the maroon velvet black brush for Michael Davitt and the green velvet black of Parnell. We are now made aware of the protagonist's early contact with the revolutionaries. The first page is a perfect portrayal of the impressionistic mind of the child. A frank observation regarding a neighbour could spark off a dire threat:

Pull out his eyes  
Apologize,  
Apologize,  
Pull out his eyes (p.8)

### **Stephen's life at Clongowe's**

Wood College did not appeal to him with its crudities. He felt sick in his heart due to his inability to be one with the other fellows.

During the vacation he was home for Christmas. His childish eagerness of marking the days on the calendar at last brought forth the happy event and the customary feast was laid out on the table. His parents, uncle Charles, Dante, Mr. Casey and Stephen settled down to do justice to the scrumptious dinner. As they were just beginning to enjoy the meal the much-feared discussion of politics and religion reared its ugly head and the atmosphere was charged with tension. Mr. The Virgin Mary. The dinner concluded on a tragic note. Mr. Casey moaned the death of his King and "Stephen, raising his terror stricken face, saw that his father's eyes were full of tears" (p.40)

This traumatic exposure for a child created many discrepancies in his tender soul. He believed in God who kept his loved ones in His custody and even attended Church. These arguments disrupted his equanimity and innocent trust in the Lord. Seeds of distrust and discontent were also sowed in abundance, when he was exposed to such vehement arguments by the elders themselves. Stephen's philosophical mind rambled on to politics, Dante, Parnell, Mr. Casey and yet he could not resolve the enigma as to where the universe ended? So far, he could identify himself with the religion and find some meaning in the word 'God'.

Stephen's experiences in school did not alleviate his inner turmoil's though these exposures are vital for survival. A boy while riding a bicycle, knocked Stephen down by accident and as he was thrown on the cinderpath "his spectacles had been broken into three pieces and some of the grit of the cinders had gone into his mouth" (p. 41). This apparently inconspicuous episode, is in reality the first sense of loss by Stephen.

There was an incident that stirred his normally peaceful temperament, into a riotous and confused condition. Father Arnall was taking up a lesson in Latin and he was shocked at their scandalous performance in their theme books. A little later Father Dolan, came in with a threatening crack of his pandybat.

'Out here, Dedalus, Lazy little schmer, I see schmer in your ace, Where did your lasses break?' (p.50) Alleging that the excuse was an old school boy trick, Stephen was mercilessly pandied.

One positive step that this episode initiated was that Stephen's sense of antagonism was aroused against injustice. He took the advice of his friends and reported the matter to the rector. It was a successful meeting since the rector had heard his complaint with sympathy and had spologised for father Dolan's treatment meted out to Stephen. This was a moment of triumph for him, as the boys cheered both Stephen and the rector.

With the ever – increasing financial strain, Stephen’s family shifted to a poor residential area of Dublin. This disheartens Stephen. His sense of insecurity deepens amidst of the disoraginsed life and the filth and squalor. He visits his aunit’s home, may be in an attempt to shed the feeling of insecurity and detachment that unnerved him. But the room was gloomy and dark and he visualized the outline of a skull at the doorway, symbolizing his extreme depression and oneness with death. Even amidst a children’s party, Stephen’s participation was nil, ‘His silent, watchful manner had grown upon him’...(68). As, ‘he began to taste the joy of his loneliness’ (p.69). the mirth, music and laughter excited his heart. His eyes are following the young girl Emma Clery. They travel on the same tram and stifling his desire to kiss her, they part company and later, he tears his ticket to shreds in utter loneliness.

Stephen joined Belvedere College and was elected secretary to the Gymnasium. One day his mind traverses to an incident in the past, some where. Mr. Tate had accused him of heresy. A conflict against individual and society has been portrayed, with Heron representing society and attempting to force Stephen, to accept the general view that Byron was a heretic. Mr. Tate’s statement also indicates the biased attitude of the authorites, condemning a young boy of committing heresy, instead of solving the problem on a note of equanimity. Therefore, false religious values, too, were inflicted on individuals which created unrest in Stephen’s young mind, “And it was the din of these nollow-sounding voices that made him halt irresolutely in the pursuit of phantoms” (p.84).

Stephen was traveling on a railway carriage to Cork accompanying his father, as they had to dispose their family properties, He felt alienated from his surroundings and realized that he had outgrown the childish wonder with which he had viewed life for so long. Even his prayers were no longer embodying any saint or God, and sounded foolish even to him. This is foreshadowing Stephen’s steady transformation from adolescence to adulthood. In truth, he was disgusted with the priests, his father’s selfish and destructive mannerisms and the Irish politics.

Stephen discerned a sense of commitment as excelled in his educational career. When he received his scholarship prize money, he decided to make a sincere and final effort to establish a permanent and satisfying relationship with his family. During the whole season he spent his money giving his family a rare treat of clothes, food and merry making. Tragically he realized that all his efforts proved to be futile against the ‘sordid tide of life’ and ‘ He saw clearly too his own futile solation’ (p.98).

Stephen had ventured into the interdicted territory and he would burn in the fires of his consciousness for his permissiveness. His religious upbringing would combat his sinful act of succumbing to lust. He had sinned and he was filled with darkness and uncertainty. Father Arnall’s sermon prior to the three days annual retreat n belvedere College, plunged him in a well of torment and shame.

He would be rebaptised in the searing flames of repentance and the soothing words of the priest. He finds a church to ease the aches of his conscience and finally makes his confession to a father whose ‘old weary voice fell, likes sweet rain upon his quaking parching heart’ (p.145). In time, was his conscious realization that his confession had failed to give him what he had desired. It was a perilous struggle between temptation and God’s grace. A feeling of

uncertainty, an incomprehensible fear gnawed him, regarding his declining spirituality, and he was once again overwhelmed with shame and humility. He infused the offer of priesthood for fear of doing his personal freedom. He did not feel attracted to the staid, routine and 'passionless' lifestyle, devoid of materialism where life would not belong to him anymore and his soul would be enchained, with the loss of his personal freedom. Finally, while wading in the water, he was enthralled with the joy of solitude. All of a sudden, he espied a tall and slender girl, who as if by magic had been transformed into a beautiful sea bird. He had absorbed her image in a moment of ecstasy. The wild angel and liberated him from his earthly bonds and he felt himself 'swooning' in a new found existence. This was the grand finale, the completion of Stephen's characteristic development, his achievement of the artistic consciousness and the realization of his life's vocation. All his patriotic and religious zeal conglomerated at a single point, at the altar of art. Finally, we have a glimpse of man's intimate possession. Stephen's diary entries, which records his mental meanderings, confrontation with his mother, meeting with Emma, and ultimately his preparation to depart from home and all his friends. His self designed exile is the only possible solution to achieve his life's desires and adopt a life pattern of his inner calling. He would be preserved from the promptings of other people, dictating terms as to how he should live his life, forcing their theories and stifling his personality.

Welcome, O life! I got to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race. (p.253) Language was evoked like many-hued canvas, its magic captured in every degree of its sound and rhythm. Stephen analysed subconsciously his present state of mind through nature, colours the sea sky and all that surrounded him in their loving embrace ... Since Stephen was in a period of transition, his strange name sounded symbolic, prophesying his future. He was ensconced in timelessness and an aura of impersonality. His soul could fly out into the unknown realms of the universe unfettered by responsibilities and obligations. His name symbolized this and he was therefore destined to lead an independent life, to forge ahead despite inhibitions. His artistic consciousness had awakened in him and he was not destined for a dormant existence. Life had unfurled its wings and true to his name he was now positioning himself to reach out to the transitory and inaccessible goals of his artistic temperament. His renewed zest for life, swept over him; His heart trembled; his breath came faster and a wild spirit passed over his limbs as though he was soaring sunward. His heart trembled in an ecstasy of fear and his soul was in flight. His soul was soaring in an air beyond the world and the body he knew was purified in a breath and delivered of incertitude... (p.169).

### **Existentialism:**

Joyce's is a Nietzschean concept of existentialism wherein religion is an inextricable factor of life, but the dogmas are not conducive to rational thinking. Stephen in his mental meandering, places God on a similar level as his own even while accepting his presence. We find similarity to Nietzsche's conception of the world's being a meaningless void, wherein we doubt even our own existence.

One juncture, Stephen had offered his body and soul at the altar of religion, so much so that he experienced a sense of completion and life's fulfillment and he was ready for death itself. But, if we minutely assess Stephen's religious practices, we can gauge Joyce's subtle satire woven into Stephen's extreme pious mannerisms. His devotional attitude was impressive but it had a tinge of absurdity and even falsity, for his artistic consciousness could not be fully



submerged by the traditional religious dogmas. Truth had to finally surface and the significant and symbolic event has been recorded in the beautiful imagery of a bird, a white dove and the blue, white and gold vision, signifying Virgin Mary. These images congealed in the image of the girl, transmuting his life mystically on an aesthetic plane.

This is the point of centrality in the novel, around which revolves the consciousness of the protagonist. His sensitivity has been projected in every page portraying his oneness with nature, his gentle and docile temperament and poetic affiliations.

Stephen's life was parallel to that of Kierkegaard, and the novel concludes on a note of Kierkegaardian philosophy. Kierkegaard was brought up amidst the rituals and dogmas of Christianity. Later, he broke away from religion and conceived in his mind a notion depicting the irrelevance of traditional theological customs, insisting that truth was absolute. Similarly, Stephen, too, was reared in a strict god-fearing atmosphere. When he began to think for himself, he discovered that rigorous dogmas and rituals were all hypocritical. He asserted his individuality and broke away to vindicate his idealistic norms, wherein truth and aestheticism tilted the balance. He opted for a life of freedom and a religio-artistic life, and his conceptions of divinity were offered at the alter of art.

With the final emergence of his aesthetic consciousness, Stephen discusses art with every opportunity that came his way. During his discussion with the Dean of Studies on issues relating to art, Joyce strengthens Stephen's views of the aesthetic ignorance of the priests. Their vocation is devoid of art and its corresponding sensibilities, as they were imbued in intellectual pursuits and vacuous disciplinary obsessions. When Stephen went to his class, McCann requested him to sign a testimonial for world peace soliciting universal brotherhood; Stephen refused to sign it as he felt that his signature was of little or no value. When Davin Charged Stephen of disturbing his peace of mind due to certain disclosures regarding his private life, Stephen responded, experiencing a surging tide beneath his serene exterior- 'This race and this country and this life produced me, he said, I Shall express myself as I am! (p.202). Parnell's downfall due to the deceit of a handful of people, seethed in Joyce's subconscious, which' dissipated his patriotic zeal for Ireland. When the soul of a man is born in this country, there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets (p.203).

Stephen's aesthetic vocation was not cogent to nationalism or religious dogmas of the times. He had to break from his birthright, go far from the country, the people whose cowardice and religious falsities were abhorred by him. He was prepared to lead the life of an exile and forbear solitary confinement, even amidst a sea of unknown people constantly flowing around him!

Stephen's individuality was too strong and this saved his soul from annihilation. Even though he had sensed a void in existence, a spiritual regeneration was effected in a moment of epiphany, and it was a momentous experience as his life was reoriented from an aesthetic perspective. His emotional, spiritual and social problems faced dissolution and he was a liberated individual.

Camus's theory of existentialism vindicated similar views where life was an absurd and meaningless journey in the universe. But man had to counteract problems with courage and combat life with rebellion. Rebels will automatically be treated as outcasts, as they will incur the wrath of society. But Stephen did discover a goal wherein to anchor his restless soul. His search concluded in the religion-mystical realm of art, which rose above petty controversies like religion, politics and society. Stephen found peace, serenity and a vocation not in Ireland, but beyond the boundaries of his homeland, as an exile.

It is was an aspect of the material world, palpable and yet imperishable, of eternal beauty which would transform a tired soul and elevate it with a capacity to create genuine happiness.

This is Stephen's final assertion of his individual self, denouncing all that man is supposed to live by. His existentialistic personality is steadily reaching out to his ideals and is in the process of accruing his moral strength to gain a firm grip on his visionary ideals. Stephen vindicates his aesthetic ideals in further discussion with Lynch and others. Pity and fear are negative sensations but a desire for beauty 'the esthetic emotion elevates our mind above desire and loathing'. After a prolific discussion on the theories of Aristotle, Plato and Thomas Aquinas, Stephen concluded with an aesthetic doctrine of Aquinas:

Three things are needed for beauty, wholeness, harmony and radiance (p.211).

**Religion:** In *The Portrait*, his rebellion against dual authority, the imperial British and parochial Catholicism agitated his soul as he displayed them with the religion of aestheticism. Joyce's fundamental interest was to release an individual from the ruthless clutches of society, whose religious morality stifled his aesthetic creativity and subdued his individualistic urges and instincts, beneath the hypocritical moral and religious doctrines.

Autobiographical delineation is at times a compulsive force in subjective novels. The expression of the inner being and one's experiences will be taken complete possession of in at least one novel of the author. Other artistic works will have a few autobiographical elements strewn in the narrative, because life's experiences and impressions are an inescapable influence in a sensitive person. The *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is purely an autobiographical novel, portraying Joyce's childhood travails and the emotional conflicts of his youth.

Joyce succeeded in projecting this autobiographical work realistically without excessive involvement due to his artistic impersonality. The ruling symbol in the book was the name of the protagonist, Stephen Dacdalus. In Christian legends, the name Stephen, meaning crown, belonged to a martyr who was stoned by his own people for proclaiming his faith. In Greek Mythology, Daedulus personified an artificer who made waxen wings for his son Icarus. These two names put together symbolizes Stephen's emotional conflict and his desire to impose himself as an exile and create his life anew, forging ahead with his newly found vocation:

His soul had arisen from the grave of boyhood, spurning her grave-clothes. Yes! Yes! Yes! He would create proudly out of the freedom and power of his soul, as the great artificer whose name he bore, a living thing, new and soaring and beautiful, impalpable, imperishable.

He finds his own identity and as a priest in the world of art; he frees himself from all forms of servitude.

**Stream of Consciousness:** It was a term coined by William James in his book *Principles of Psychology* (1890) to denote the flow of inner experiences. This term signifies the fundamental principle of the psychological novel, as it focuses on the innumerable thought processes, sensations and emotions of the individual. This technique heralds the interiorisation of literature. Originally, it was Edouard Dujardin who first initiated the technique in his novel *Les Laurier Sont Coupés* in 1888. James Joyce applied this technique in a more sophisticated manner, literally transferring the individual's thoughts on paper without any major transmutations. In his universally acclaimed novel *Ulysses*, he portrays the internal experiences of two protagonists, the narration lasting twenty four hours of clock time. The stream of consciousness technique was utilized to a maximum extent and Joyce created a milestone in this technique with his forty pages of interior monologue of Molly Bloom, with only a single punctuation mark. Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist* has evidence of this technique. Marcel Proust (1913) delved into the past and wrote thirteen volumes titled, *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* and Dorothy Richardson compiled her 13-volume Pilgrimage. Earlier, interior monologue was evident in the novels of Henry James and Dostoevsky. It became popular in time and Virginia Woolf exploited it to the maximum in all her literary works. William Faulkner, too, made considerable contribution in developing the stream-of-consciousness technique.

Joyce's stream-of-consciousness technique undoubtedly represents the mental life of his characters. The uniqueness of Joyce is the quality of human life. In Joyce one is intermittently inside the mind of the developing little boy, Stephen Dedalus, with his bad eyesight and acute sense of sound and smell. His portrait is an embodiment of sensations and passion, thought and intellectual development. The real artistic and dramatic unit of Joyce's stream of consciousness technique is the epiphany. What he renders dramatically are the minds engaged in epiphanies, the elements of meaning apprehended in life. This very personal experience helps him to discover the attitudes and values that give it form even as it is experienced.

J.W.Beach in Twentieth Century Novel, defines this technique as "... an exploitation of the element of incoherence in our conscious process". Interior Monologue, Impressionism etc, form the crux of this technique. The subjective element, too, reveals the intricate inner processes of the introvert protagonist, Stephen Dedalus. The "dramatic" tendency is also revealed by his impressionistic categoring and defining the various forms 'lyrical', 'epical' and 'dramatic'. He seems to regard the form as integral to the evaluation of any literal form. In this novel, the author quotes from the mind of the baby, who remembers a story that his father had told him.

down            "Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming  
                  along the road ..... met a nice little boy named baby tuckoo ....."

Joyce continues to quote a few other things from the child's memory regarding his father, mother, uncle and aunty. Another major example is the football field in Stephen's school. He did not enjoy the rough ball game and his mind thinks of the decent fellow Rody Kickham and the "Stink" Nasty Roche. The latter had bullied him but his mother had urged him to keep away from rough boys. His parents had bid him goodbye and his thoughts went to the holidays when

he would go home. He would lie on the hearth rug before the fire. This reminds him of the cold muddy water of the ditch in which Wells had pushed him.

When Stephen goes to Cork with his father and hears about his father's activities "And a faint sickness sighed in his heart, he recalled his own equivocal position in Belvedere a free boy, a leader afraid of his own authority, proud and sensitive and suspicious, battling against the squalor of his life and against the riot of his mind".

The diaries entries are purely subjective and accurate recordations of thoughts.

"Long talk with Cranly on the subject of my revolt. He had his grand manner on I supple and suave, Attacked me on the score of love for one's mother..."

### **EPIPHANY:**

The Word Epiphany is made from two Words – 'Epi' means to end 'Phyno' which means shine or manifest, generally referred to the manifestation of a divine power.

A Portrait is sprinkled with epiphanies which gradually reveal the nature of life to the growing boy and the young man. The epiphanies begin in the nursery, where the child experiences 'cold' and 'warm'. Thereafter, at each crucial stage of development there is a moment of memorable illumination. Some of these moments bring revelations of injustice, bitterness and squalor. Others are in which joy and beauty of life impinge on experiences of release and hope, like the blissful joy when absolved in the glimpse of wading girl.

The theory of epiphany was claimed by Stephen Dedalus to have acquired from St. Thomas Aquinas. According to him, the three basic qualities required from beauty are, *Integritas* (unity), *consonantia* (harmony) and *claritas* (radiance). The last quality is identified by Stephen as *quidditas* (whatness) of being, Sydney Bolt in A Preface to James Tyce writes that, it is imperative that a work of art embody the Thomistic principles, which must be a complete whole, as is reflected in Joyce's writings.

### **SYMBOLISM:**

Myths, imagery and symbolism acquire great importance in Joyce's creative writing. The myth of Daedalus plays a crucial role in explaining Stephen's emotional turmoil. Just as Daedalus flew away from his captivity, in the same way, Stephen desires to escape from the bondage of family, nation and church and work in freedom as an artist. The symbol rose is associated with the beauty of women, reflecting in his love for art, the green rose which was only in his imagination suggested his distant dream of a free Ireland.

Stephen's defective eyesight is a recurrent symbol, when the eagles are mentioned who will pull out his eyes. Later, his spectacles are broken and he is unjustly punished. This symbol also depicts Joyce's constant effort to rectify the situation of parochialism and unjust authorities that prevailed in Ireland.

A great many of the symbolic themes are really devices to help create the characters themselves. Thus Joyce packed several meanings into a single action on one ruling symbol., in

A Portrait the hero's name is the ruling symbol and the development of consciousness. Stephen is drawn from a Christian legend where St. Stephen was stoned to death for propounding Christianity. Dedalus was an artificer who had tried to give Home Rule to the Irish, but was deceived by them.

Birds, colour, nature, impressions, etc. have been elaborately utilised to manifest the inner working of the mind.

Arthur Symons in The Critical Heritage writes, "Worshipping colour, sound, perfume, for their own sakes ... Joyce stupefies himself of the threshold of ecstasy." Fire stands for knowledge, which Stephen uses as lamps, to light the way of his own thinking. The Hands motif is an unpleasant association for Stephen representing the cruel aspects of life.

Birds and flight are a recurrent motif in the novel, which ultimately become symbols of freedom and liberation.

Eagles represent the animosity between Catholics and Protestants.  
Gleeson's talons – ecclesiastical authority.  
Heron representing parochialism and authority.

Water is an important symbol in the novel. Flowing water symbolizes the disorderly life of Stephen's home; The sluggish turf-coloured water is associated with the passionless life of the priests at Clongowes. Then the dirty ditch of water he had fallen in later, we see him wading into the sea and experiencing an epiphany as he sees the virgin Mary-like girl in the water.

Birds also have pleasant and painful association in Stephen's mind. Eagles are mentioned as threats to the little Stephen. Then we see characters like Heron and Cranby who bully him. Later, we see the unknown girl, whose bosom was like a bird's.

Thus, these symbols represent Stephen's emotional condition at different stages of his development.

### **5:9:5 CRITICAL EVALUATION:**

H.G. Wells, in an early review wrote about the novel which was taking more of life, like A Portrait involved in explaining and transgressing of the boundaries between the public and private life. He accepted this as the hallmark of Joyce's act.

Edward Garnett in a reader's report on 'A Portrait' was of the opinion that the novel projects a good story, well drawn, characters but was too 'unconventional'.

Wyndham Lewis on 'A Portrait' "...it was far too tenuous for my taste. (In time) I do recognise the A portrait to be the one only a large class and of its kind a very excellent example".

Wimsatt and Brooks in Literary Criticism: A Short History traces Thomistic and Platonic philosophy, resulting in the flowering of German and English criticism, referring to Joyce's

scholastic philosophy, resulting in the aesthetic creed which occurs towards the end of A Portrait.

John Gross comments on Joyce's syntactic strategies, that he steadfastly maintains a tone of a man who is making perfect sense. L.A.G. Strong on Joyce and New Fiction, writes that regarding the Latin words, Joyce and Yeats meet. Yeats with his magic, Joyce with his superstition".

### **5:9:6 Summary:**

James Joyce, in his novel A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, has highlighted the psychological novel, utilizing various trends and techniques of the twentieth century novel. Stephen Dedalus's emotional, spiritual and social problem faced dissolution and finally, he was a liberated individual. His search concluded in the religio-mystical realm of art, which excluded petty politics, and the other conflicts of existence. Stephen chose to become an exile and elevated his soul by creating his own visionary world of truth and beauty.

### **5:9:7 Technical Terms:**

#### **Psychological novel:**

Psychology pertains to the science concerned with the emotional and behavioural patterns of an individual or a group of people. The psychological novel is a category of fiction which deals with the spiritual and emotional lives of the character. A subjective approach has been preferred to objectivity.

**Impressionism:** It is a style in painting and in literature it is a form denoting the application of details, symbols association to bring about a particularised effect on sensory impressions. It is a technique through which authors effectively delve into the inner characteristics of the protagonists.

**Epiphany:** In literature it is a moment of revelation, a moment in which truth has been realized, which is indicated in a sudden spiritual manifestation.

**Monologue:** A long speech or talk, often monopolising conversation, or a literary composition in the form of a soliloquy.

**Existentialism:** This term denotes a state of existence, dealing with the living condition and existential problems of man pertaining to his physical, moral and spiritual conditions. This theory affirms that man is alone in a hostile universe and that he is both autonomous and responsible.

### **5:9:8 Model Questions**

#### **A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man:**

1. Write a note on the structure of the novel A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.
2. Discuss the mythic context of Stephen in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.
3. Attempt a critical note on A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man as an autobiographical novel.
4. Joyce's Portrait seems to reenact the fall of man. Do you agree?

5. “Joyce has successfully elevated both art and religion to a single platform”. Explain with reference to A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.
6. Write an essay on the various aesthetic concepts that have been interwoven in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.
7. Comment on the various trends and techniques enlisted in Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.
8. Discuss A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man as a psychological novel.
9. Spiritual conflict between politics, religion, family and his individuality is externalized in Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man comment.
10. Alienation and exile are recurrent motifs in Joyce’s A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man. Explain.

### 5.8.9 Reference Books:

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## Lesson – 10

# Graham Greene: The Power and the Glory

### 5:10:1. Objectives

- To understand and evaluate Graham Greene's novel **The Power and the Glory**.
- To understand Greene's use of religion in his fiction.
- To make the reader/ student to realize the sense of the importance of human actions through the eyes of God.

### Contents

- 5.10.1. Objectives of the lesson
- 5.10.2 Background
- 5.10.3 Life & works of Graham Greene
- 5.10.4 Analysis of the text
- 5.10.5 Critical Evaluation
- 5.10.6. Summary
- 5.10.7. Technical terms
- 5.10.8. Model questions
- 5.10.9. Reference Books

### 5.10.2 Background

The beginning of the Twentieth Century marks the accession of Edward VII to the throne after the long reign of the queen. The Victorian age had been a period of self-satisfaction and optimism. It witnessed the rise of dynamic middle class, unparalleled industrial progress and prosperity, added to the unprecedented growth of commerce and science. The Queen's death marked the end of fifty years of glorious period. The Boer War ended in 1901 and it exposed the vulnerability of the British might and removed the guarantee of safety and progress that was generally associated with the queen's long reign. The faith and complacency of the middle class was severely shaken and the dream of economic progress along with domestic life was shattered resulting in a period of unrest and anxiety. There was a set back in industrial supremacy of the British in the age of heavy competition.

In the social field, the dawn of the century brought new generation, claimed full liberties and had a tendency to question and interrogate Victorian ideals aided by the scientific and technological advancements and industrial development. People lost faith in the old order and failed to find a better substitute in the new order. Spiritual degeneration made the youth of the age taste the forbidden pleasures.

After the Second World War (1939–1945) with the advancement of science, technology and industry, England truly became modernistic. Political and religious scepticism, general



disillusionment, cynicism and irony being the order of the day, it appears to be an era of revolt against authority. There is a widespread gloom of pessimism caused by economic depression, unemployment, over-population, poverty, problem of immigrants, labour-troubles etc. There has been a remarkable spread in education and popular literature. The writers of the modern period reflect the problems of the present in their literature than chewing the end of the memory and living in the past. Influenced by the darkness and disease of their environment writers wrote to cure them. All these characteristics of modern age made an impact on writers and they reflect these images, colours and experiences in literature.

One can see a curious blend of traditional and experimental, of the old and the new in Modern literature. It is complex and many-sided. Though there is an enormous increase in output, it is felt by critics that there is a gradual decline in the quality of literature. The English literature (from 1901 to 1925) was directed by mental attitudes, moral ideals and spiritual values, almost the opposite extreme from the attitudes, ideals and values governing Victorian literature.

Modern poetry revolts against tradition, due to the impact of science. The novel gained immense popularity more than it was ever before; it has eclipsed the poetry and drama. The novel attained popularity because there is a scope for discussion, clarification and analysis of the subject matter which is not possible in any other form. One important feature of modern novel is its immense variety and complexity.

The writers of the thirties felt that the fictional hero could avoid sacrificing his uniqueness to an oppressed society only with the strength provided by the commitment to belief. Evelyn Waugh interpreted this problem in Christian terms that the unique individual in fiction is without specific acknowledgement to the omnipotence of God. He condemned the writers of the twenties (1920s) for their attempt to ignore God. Waugh suggests that the strength of those pre-war novelists who did not acknowledge God lay in their acceptance of their own limitations, their inability to present a complete man. The failure of the writers of the twenties lay in their attempt to establish a complete man in a vacuum, without the defining support of faith.

Evelyn Waugh suggests that only a conscious Christian novelist can present a character that is more than a 'pure abstraction'. Graham Greene (1904-1991) being the writer of the same time defends the argument and regards Henry James as the last writer in the tradition. Greene further says that Henry James had the advantage of working in an age and society, which contained the implicit assumption of God's existence and the common acceptance of social values, which Greene, calls a 'religious sense'. With the death of James the religious sense was lost in the English novel and with the religious sense went the sense of importance of the human act. Greene regards the fiction of twenties as misdirected, as an attempt to assert the importance of the individual, independent of his environment and of the deep values within it. Ignoring the society and considering the self and spiritual values as important is denied. But for Greene and for other novelists of this generation the sense of importance of the human act can only be achieved if the individual and in particular the protagonist, acts in a recognizable world with its own importance and purpose. The hero who acts in a world without any idea of its purpose or spiritual will lands himself in a world of complete absurdity.

Greene and Waugh believed that this spiritual sense, which disappeared with the First World War, could only be re-established by an active assertion of faith. Rex Warner, Edward Upward and George Orwell regarded the Twentieth Century Christianity as a sad survivor of once vigorous faith. They feel that adapting Christianity is not at all needed for thirties and are aware that it had once dictated the purpose of existence. Virtues such as courage and honesty are not abstract human qualities but soundly rooted in the Christian doctrine. Edward Upward saw Christianity as a form of magic which had not succeeded in explaining the world and individual's functions in it. The reality is that Christianity belongs to the past, whereas social revolution is that only valid object of belief in the Twentieth Century. There is no possibility of achieving their state without the effort of the people and belief in social revolution to maintain their individuality, although physical conditions are now favourable.

### **Life and Works of Graham Greene (1904 – 1991)**

Graham Greene was born in 1904, in Berkhamstead, England, very near the “Pain – threshold”, a term coined by William James in his book, **The Varieties of Religious Experience**. He was educated at Berkhamstead School of which his father was headmaster. Greene was a sensitive boy and felt stifled in the conventional, middle-class, Anglican Protestant environment of his school. He had an imagination far advanced than that of his school fellows and was attacked by a sense of ennui and boredom by all that life offered him. The school rules inhibiting exercise of free thinking, enforcing doctrines of morality and the general filth festering under the surface of the prudery in sex, alienated him from class-fellows and his whole school. For the first thirteen years, he was haunted with boredom and a sense of utter meaninglessness in existence. Also there was the betrayal and alienation by his friends. He was branded as a member of the Quisling's party, represented by his father, and humiliated in the game that was played in those days. He had to stand with back turned, counting ten, while the other boys advanced to touch his back. This humiliation left a permanent scar on his mind and the experience reappears in the creation of the character called Andrews in **The Man Within**. Carter and Watson, his schoolmates who bullied him became, in his works, the prototypes of the injustice of the world.

Greene took his degree in Modern History from Oxford and there he met a beautiful Roman Catholic girl – Vivien Daynell-Browning, whom he married in 1927. He also published his first book, a volume of poems – **Babbling** in 1925, while he was at Oxford. He dedicated this volume to his parents.

Greene seems to always hear the child in him speaking to him and his answers to the child's eternal questions. They explain his miseries and sorrows. Carolyn d. Scott notes the same fact: “No critic can escape the childhood theme in Greene, for it is the one obsession out of which his tragedies grow”.

Graham Greene's childhood was actually “The Lost Boyhood of Judas”. His sense of utter futility regarding life, the stifling Puritanical environment of his school at Berkhamstead, his alienation from his school mates, his tortures at the hands of bullies, his trancies to the commons and his desire to end his life by playing Russian roulette and taking poison – all these form a background to understand his characters. These experiences form a symbiosis in

Greene's childhood experience and the characters of his novels recreate the same in their childhood. Greene's principal (or main) characters are properly termed "anti-heroes", since unlike traditional heroes, they are disintegrated personalities, sometimes neurotic and sometimes criminal. They are victims of their childhood memories.

**Influence of Catholic Faith:** Graham Greene was friendly with a Roman Catholic priest, father Trollope. He got converted to Roman Catholicism in February 1926 after a three-month discussion with this Priest. Greene was reluctant to express the conflict that caused him to turn to the Catholic Church. It is not clear, whether he received any consolation from the Catholic Church on his dissatisfied life, but there was a greater effect of the faith on his writings. He says, in his **Why Do I Write?**, "If I may be personal, I belong to a group, the catholic Church, which would present me with grave problems as a writer were I not saved by my disloyalty... There are leaders of the church who regard literature as a means to an end, edification. I am not arguing that literature is amoral, but that it presents a different moral, and the personal morality of an individual is seldom identical with the morality of the group to which he belongs. You remember the black and white boards of Bishop Blougram's chessboard. As a novelist I must be allowed to write from the point of view of the black squares as well as the white: doubt and even denial must be given their chance of self-expression or how is one freer than the Leningard group".

## About his Works

Graham Greene is one of the world's most successful writers in English with more than thirty works translated into twenty-one languages to his credit. His novels have proved uniquely cinematic and all have been turned into films. A plethora of critical literature has been written on his works. Greene wrote novels, poetry, travel books, children's books, short stories, critical essays, essays in French, plays, biography and Film criticism.

He used 'novel' and entertainment to differentiate his serious and lighter fiction. He wrote about 23 novels. His first novel **The Man Within** was published in 1929 and the last novel **Dr. Fischer of Geneva** or **The Bomb Party** in 1980.

**The Power and the Glory** first published in 1940, is generally accepted to be Graham Greene's masterpiece. It also received highest esteem from the critics as well as public. **Brighton Rock** (1938), **The Power and the Glory** (1940) and **The Heart of the Matter** (1948) in general considered a trilogy, as they are essentially religious in character. The novelist's preoccupation with Roman Catholicism and the essential theme of Salvation versus Damnation is predominant in these novels. Each of these novels focuses on the world, the flesh and the devil. The characters in these novels do believe in the existence of God and even if they sin, they do it with the complete knowledge of their sinning. Greene presents materialists in contrast with the believers who do not believe in god and hence they never think in terms of sin and evil.

Greene traveled widely in Mexico in the year 1938 and based on this travel he published **The Lawless Roads** in 1939. In chapters five and six of this travel book, there is a reference of a drunken priest who held out against the police for ten years in Tabasco, a small province in

south Mexico where the practice of religion was strictly prohibited. The protagonist of **The Power and the Glory** is based on this drunken priest.

According to Ravi Vyas “Perhaps more than in any other novel, it is in **The Power and the Glory** that Graham Greene tackles the universal themes of love, sex, authority, God, the paradoxical nature of truth, honesty, strength, good and evil. These, in themselves, would ensure the novel a permanent place in literature”.

### **Analysis of the Text: The Power and the Glory**

In a particular Mexican State the Church had been outlawed and the priests driven underground by the threat of being shot. After several months, word went out from the governor’s office that there was still one priest, Father Montez, who was moving from village to village carrying on the work of the Church by administering the sacraments and saying masses. A young lieutenant of police, an ardent revolutionist and an anti-clerical, persuaded his chief to let him search for the priest who, as the authorities saw it, was guilty of treason.

Two photographs were pasted up together in the police station. One was the picture of an American bank robber who had killed several police officers in Texas; the other was that of the priest. No one noticed the irony, least of all the young lieutenant, who was far more interested in arresting the clergyman. While the officer was receiving permission to make a search for Father Montez, the priest was already in the village, having come there in order to get aboard a boat that would take him to the city of Vera Cruz and safety.

Before Father Montez could board the boat word came to him that an Indian woman was dying several miles inland. True to his calling, the priest mounted a mule and set out to administer the last rites to the dying woman, even though he realized that he might not find another ship to carry him to safety. There was one other priest in the vicinity, Father Jose. But Father Jose had been cowardly enough to renounce the Church, even to the point of taking a wife, a shrewish old woman. The authorities paid no attention to him at all, for they felt, and rightly so, that the priest who had renounced his vows was a detriment and a shame to the Church.

After completing his mission, Father Montez came back to the coast, where he spent the night in a banana warehouse. The English manager on the plantation allowed him to hide there.

The following day, hoping to find refuge from the police and from the revolutionary party of Red Shirts, he set out on mule back for the interior. As he travelled, he thought of his own past and of himself as a poor example of the priesthood. For Father Montez was a whiskey priest, a cleric who would do almost anything for a drink of spirits. In addition, he had in a moment of weakness fathered a child by a woman in an inland village. Thinking himself a weak man and a poor priest, he was still determined to carry on the work of the Church as long as he could, not because he wanted to be a martyr but because he knew nothing else to do.

After twelve hours of travel he reached the village where his one-time mistress and his child lived. The woman took him in overnight, and the following morning he said a mass for the

villagers. Before he could escape the police entered the village. Marcia claimed him as her husband, and his child, a little grown girl of seven, named him as her father. In that manner, because of his earlier sins, he escaped. Meanwhile the police had decided on a new tactic in uncovering the fugitive. As they passed through each village they took a hostage. When a certain length of time had passed without the apprehension of Father Montez, a hostage was shot. In that manner the lieutenant of police in charge of the hunt hoped to persuade the people to betray their priest.

After the police had left the village without discovering him, Father Montez mounted his mule and went on his way. He travelled northward in an effort to escape the police and, if possible, to make his way temporarily into another state.

Some hours after leaving the village, father Montez met with a mestizo who fell in with him. Before long the half-breed discovered that father Montez was the priest for whom the police were searching. He promised that he, a good Catholic would not betray the secret, but Father Montez was afraid that the promised reward of seven hundred pesos would be too much of a temptation for the poor man.

When they reached a town, however, it was Father Montez' own weakness, which put him into the hands of the police. He had to have some liquor, the sale of which was against the law. He managed to buy some illegally, but his possession of the contraband was discovered by one of the revolutionary Red Shirts, who raised a cry after him. Tracked down by a posse, the priest was caught and placed in jail. Fortunately, the police did not recognize him, but since he had no money he was kept in jail to work out the fine.

The lieutenant of police who was searching feverishly for him unexpectedly did Father Montez a good turn. Seeing the ragged old man working about the jail, the lieutenant stopped to talk with him. The priest claimed to be a vagrant who had no home of his own. The lieutenant, feeling sorry for the old fellow, released him and gave him a present of five pesos. Leaving town, Father Montez started out across the country to find a place of temporary safety. After travelling for some time, he met an Indian woman who could speak only a few words of Spanish. She managed to make him understand that something was wrong with her child. He went with her and found that the baby had been shot; his immediate guess was that the American bandit had done the deed.

After performing rites over the child, Father Montez continued his flight. He eventually made his way into the next state, where a German plantation owner gave him sanctuary. After resting for a few days, he planned to go to a city and there present his problems to his bishop. Before he could leave, however, the mestizo, who said that the American bandit, a Catholic, was dying and needed the priest, found him. Father Montez answered the call, even though he was sure he was being led into a trap. The bandit was really dying, but he lay in the state from which Father Montez had just escaped. With him was a party of police, waiting for the priest's appearance in order to arrest him.

Immediately after the bandit's death the police closed in and Father Montez was captured. Taken back to the capital of the state and tried for treason, he was found guilty and sentenced to be shot. The lieutenant of police, who felt sorry in a way for the old priest, tried to

persuade the renegade father Jose to hear father Montez' last confession, but Father Jose, who feared the authorities, refused. Father Montez was led out and shot without the benefit of the Church's grace. Yet the lieutenant of police had not succeeded in removing the Church's influence; in the evening of the day on which Father Montez died another priest made his way, in secret, into the town where the execution had taken place.

### **The Title**

The title of this novel is taken from the last line of the Lord's Prayer: "For Thine is the kingdom, the Power and the Glory for ever and ever". The line indicates that true power and true glory belong to God because they are essentially divine in origin and represent God's authority. But the title may be interpreted that the power may be wielded by the government as represented by the lieutenant of police in the novel but certainly the glory belongs to the priest who, in spite of his sins, is capable of reaching the supreme heights of self-sacrifice.

### **The Structure of the Novel**

The narrative of **The Power and the Glory** has three major structural features:

- a. Overall pattern is simple and the themes are skillfully interwoven through its three parts.
- b. The scenes have a striking visual quality; and
- c. There is clarity and fast transition between those scenes.

Sometimes we do have external evidence that writer is consciously attempting some adaptations of film convention. Henry James composed his novels dramatically, whereas Greene composed his cinematically. The construction of **The Power and the Glory** is very simple. The three parts of the novel are (i) the setting and the arrival of the priest; (ii) the pursuit of its apparent end in safety and (iii) the return, the execution of the whisky priest and the arrival of the new priest. The pattern of the novel is very clear and neat. The last priest is executed and on the same day (night) a new priest comes and that asserts the continuity of faith.

### **Christian Existentialism**

Graham Greene's religious novels echo the themes of alienation, anxiety and the existential relation between man and God which have been emphatically treated by the Christian existentialists.

**The Power and the Glory** like the other novel, **Brighton Rock**, criticizes the dehumanizing elements in modern life, shows the importance of the faith rising from man's personal experience and human affliction and points out the irrelevance of the doctrines and ceremonies of the conventional church. Greene is critical of the modern narrowly rationalistic belief in social utopia and pleads for an acceptance of the wonder and the mystery of the irrational in life. The strength of the present novel is based on an interesting contrast between the materialistic and the spiritual approach to life. The Lieutenant is a staunch rationalist, who holds a purely materialistic view of life and is fanatically opposed to the church for its insistence on the unimportance of human lot in this world. The lieutenant is the direct opponent of the Priest. Having no taste for music, art and religion, the Lieutenant lives in a room "as comfortless as a prison or a monastic cell". It infuriates him to think that there are still people in the State who believe in a loving and merciful God. He is firmly determined to wipe out everything,

which reminds him of his miserable childhood. He wants “to destroy everything: to be alone without any memories at all”. A modern Prometheus, with a devotion only to the reality of the here and now, he is in revolt against pain, misery and oppression of the people and wants to drive out everything that brings misery, poverty, superstition and corruption. His mission is to create happiness for his people, to give them the whole world and he will achieve this by any means, even by a massacre: “They deserved nothing less than the truth – a vacant universe and a cooling world, the right to be happy in any way they chose. He was quite prepared to make a massacre for their sake ... He wanted to begin the world again with them, in a desert”. To the Lieutenant, there is nothing unique or mysterious about human existence and human beings have only material needs. His ideal is the well-fed and well-clad but soul-less person. But at the novel’s close when he has arrested the Whisky-Priest, he seems to be shaken by the faith of the Priest and feels lost as if life has drained out of the world. The loss of emotion carries him beyond rationalism into a mystical state when he fails to understand why the Priest – of all the people – “should have stayed when the others ran”. He has begun to sympathize with and admire the Priest: “You are not a bad fellow. If there’s anything I can do for you”. It is against the law he is supposed to preserve, he runs to fetch Padre Jose to hear the Priest’s confession and also arranges whisky for him. The Whisky-Priest represents the force of the irrational whose superiority the novel seeks to establish.

The Whisky-Priest is an angst-ridden character. His anxiety arises from an awareness of isolation and from the feeling that he has fallen far short of the glory of God. He fears that he can do nothing to redeem himself. He is the last priest, because the others have either fled or conformed themselves to the law or they have been persecuted and hunted down by the police. In his present condition, being an outcast and a sinner, the Priest is a parody of a true, official priest like the abandoned, wounded bitch gnawing a piece of bone in the deserted banana station of Captain Fellows is “the parody of a watch dog”. Exhausted and abandoned, he guards, like the bitch, his last possession, i.e., faith. But the bitch retains hope; it knows no despair. The Priest, on the other hand, is troubled by a sense of sharp contrast between what he was before and his present state. Now shaken by the sense of his own worthlessness, the Priest prays to God to send a more worthy man to carry on the mission he has taken upon himself: “Oh God, send them someone more worthwhile to suffer for. It seemed to him a damnable mockery that they should sacrifice themselves for a whisky-priest with a bastard child”.

The Whisky-Priest’s past and present point to the modes of existence elaborated by Kierkegaard, an existentialist. As his remorseful conscience reveals, in his early life the Whisky-Priest was living on the aesthetic level of existence. He was just a vain formalistic priest, his hypocrisy, selfishness, pride and lack of love shut out from him the understanding of both God and man. He was just “a play-actor”. In the savage scrutiny of his own being “he was proud, lustful, envious, cowardly and ungrateful”. He himself ate good meals in comfortable quarters and slaked his own thirst rather than that of the lost souls. He never experienced the sense of companionship with the pious people who “came kissing his black cotton glove”. Being the last priest, he takes upon himself, at the risk of his life, the task of carrying God to the people. His “courage to be” enables him to affirm his humanity amidst terrible uncertainty of the world. Through a sudden leap he reaches the ethical plane of existence. During the perilous journey he performs through the mountains and forests, he encounters people who signify some important aspects of the human condition and gains a better understanding of himself and life.

In the state of corruption he learns to love the poor and the unhappy and identifies himself with the common men – sinners and criminals. In the wretched prison cell he has a feeling of communion with his fellow prisoners. Touched by an extraordinary affection, he feels that he is just “one criminal among a herd of criminals ...” and becomes aware that the world is like a prison: “overcrowded with lust and crime and unhappy love”. Through adultery he finds in himself the capacity for love. Worried about the safety of Brigitta, the fruit of his sin, the Priest strikes a bargain with God and enters into an “I-Thou” relationship with God: “Oh God, give me any kind of death – without contrition, in a state of sin – only save this child”. The Priest’s prayer anticipates Scobie’s in **The Heart of the Matter** and Sarah’s in **The End of the Affair**. Before death, the Priest liberates himself from the haunting fear of death and despair and realizes the true meaning of love or of the motto equating God with love. Safe across the border in the neighbouring State, the Priest is moved by a sense of duty and walks back into the trap laid for him. He lays down his life for God and His beloved and accomplishes the greatest act of love. According to the orthodox doctrine the Priest dies in a state of mortal sin, but he does not fear damnation. Even the fear of pain remains in the background. He feels only an immense disappointment that he is going to God “empty-handed, with nothing done at all”. This is the sign of humility and modesty which characterize Kierkegaard’s spiritual man. In this way the Priest moves away from the rigidity of an official, authoritative and egotistical priest to the gradual attainment of the nature and function of a genuine one. He realizes that the meaning of God and the purpose of life rest ultimately in the mission of love. He proceeds towards the supreme level of existence in fear, pain and loathing and embraces his ultimate victory in death.

The novel hints at Greene’s dissatisfaction with the forms of organized religion. Formalistic religion suspends one’s imagination, its piety is soulless. In her lack of love and sympathy, the pious, unimaginative woman, who is outraged by the screams of pleasure coming from a man and a woman copulating at the far end of the dark cell, exemplifies the death of the spirit. Her figure deepens this meaning more substantially when the Priest finds her sleeping with “her prim mouth open, showing strong teeth like tombs”. His own past is mirrored back to him – a similar figure, not an agent of God but of death.

Thus, Greene, in the present novel, emphasizes the theme of man’s alienation and protests against the totalitarian Government interfering with human activities and insisting on conformity. He denounces the State which does not think in terms of human beings and tends to persecute an enemy for the common good. He is also opposed to the church as an organized institution because it limits the individual’s freedom. The Whisky-Priest attains self-hood by his own effort and quest and gains strength by experience and not by argument or dogma. He lays stress on the gulf lying between the rational and the irrational. The Lieutenant, believing in social utopia and the secular logic of human development, pleads for the satisfaction of material needs and fails to understand how pain and suffering may be good. The Priest, on the other hand, believes in the inevitability of pain and suffering and insists on spiritual satisfaction. Both of them develop a reluctant liking for each other. As the Lieutenant admires the Priest, the Priest admires the Lieutenant: “You’re a good man. You’ve got nothing to be afraid of”. Greene appears to be pleading for a proper harmony between the two – the rational and the vital. Thus the novel **The power and the Glory** underlines the themes of alienation, the significance of human love and suffering and the insignificance of the doctrines and ceremonies of the church.



## The Imagery and the Characterization

The imagery and the characters of the novel offer a telling picture of the hopelessness the contemporary life. Stripped of family, home and country, man today is drifting from place to place in search of livelihood. A victim to the complexity of modern life, he has lost the capacity to discriminate between the merely superfluous and the really indispensable. Man's preoccupation with money has become so extremely dictatorial that it prevents him from thinking about the higher goals of living and attending to the higher business of finding his soul.

The novel is set in a fever-stricken Mexican State, a land of heat, vulture and swamp: "... the swamp and vultures and no children anywhere, except a few in the village with bellies swollen by worms who ate dirt from the bank, inhumanly". "Heat", "vultures", "decaying teeth" are symbols. "Heat" signifies restlessness and anxiety that man feels today, "vultures" are the symbols of human monstrosity and greed and "decaying teeth" stand for the stinking decay of civilization. Mr. Tench, a morose expatriate English dentist, is a typical Greene figure of decay. Without a memory and without a hope, he is making a bare living out of the decay he cannot prevent. Cut off from his wife and children, he pursues the ugly profession of a dentist in the unhealthy climate and the hopeless conditions of life, the sweat and mosquitoes making life unbearably painful. His greed for money has petrified his heart and the heat and shoddiness have drained away all initiatives. That is the whole world to Mr. Tench: "the heat and the forgetting, the putting off till tomorrow". Mr. Tench is gripped with an awful sense of nausea and longs to escape, but there is no escape for him. He envies the priest: "You are lucky. You can get out. You haven't got your capital here". His possessions – "the Japanese drill, the dentist's chair, the spirit lamp and the pliers and the little oven for the gold fillings: a stake in the country" – define his misery and exile.

Padre Jose, the old, fat and ugly priest, is another inhabitant of this shabby land. Giving up his faith, he has married in obedience to the law that all priests should marry. He has no sense of self-respect and, though mocked and taunted both in his home and outside, his only concern is to earn a livelihood. As the habit of self-analysis enables him to see himself as he is – "fat and ugly and old and humiliated" – he is in the grip of the unforgivable sin, despair. Unwilling to get out of this state of despair, he asks the Priest, "Go ... go. I don't want martyrs here. I don't belong any more. Leave me alone. I'm all right as I am". Lost in the trivialities of life, Padre Jose tries to be another self.

The Half-Caste, "with two fang-like teeth jutting out over his lip", exemplifies serpentine slipperiness and treachery. Pretending to be an honest Christian eager to help the Priest, he is always planning to trap him. Eventually, he does succeed and he gets the reward. However, he does not seem to feel any compunction or repentance.

He reminds us of Gentleman Brown of Conrad's **Lord Jim**. As Gentleman Brown is reducing Jim to his own level, the Half-Caste has a grievance against the Priest till the end and tries to reduce him to his own level: "There's not much charity in you, Father. You thought all along I was going to betray you".

These characters truly represent the modern man, engrossed with the material, forgetting the world of the spirit. Superficiality and loss of contact with the world of human emotions

characterize man's life in our time. Against a background of these men representing various forms of loneliness and isolation, Greene sets the story of the hunted Priest, his pursuit and capture.

### **Critical Evaluation of the Text**

Greene in this novel tried to reveal the ambiguity of the human condition by introducing the juxtaposing wavering priest with the upright police officer. As victims of the human predicament, both are moved by compassion. Both recognise the solid core of goodness in each other, yet one dies for love and the other kills for it. The humility of one contrasts with the authority of the other to show up, as it were, the truth of the priest's observation: "You only had to turn up the underside of any situation and out came scuttling these small absurd contradictory situations" (p.100). John Atkins is less than fair to the lieutenant when he says: "The lieutenant is an old friend by now. An intelligent Ida Arnold..." Laurence Lerner makes a similar error in judgement: "The police officer, never seen from within, exists only as a threat". David Lodge, however, takes a balanced view: "With deliberate irony, enforcing the novel's thesis, the lieutenant of Police appears, in every respect except faith, much more like an ideal priest". L.J.Clancy has accused Greene of making a special pleading on behalf of the priest. The critic thinks, "the policeman is never given speeches that really come to grips with the priest's sophistries". The priest no doubt emerges as a near tragic character whose suffering has more merit than the lieutenant is prepared to concede. As Robert A. Wichert notes, the priest attains a high heroism in his last moments "only through his agony of inadequacy". The special pleading is there, not because he is a Catholic, but because he is human — a victim. But to suggest that the lieutenant's character have been rigged to disadvantage is to misread the novel. Any such attempt would squarely defeat Greene's purpose of dramatising the duality of human experience. Had the priest not been given a worthy rival, **The Power and the Glory** would have been robbed of the compelling power it has as a work of art. Walter Allen recognises this in **Tradition of Dream**: "For the first and almost the only time the representative of the secular interpretation of life, the non-religious humanist view, is treated with a dignity and seriousness comparable to that accorded to the representative of the religious. The police lieutenant is conceived in imaginative understanding and is shown as equally dedicated as the priest. If there are secular saints this man is one". Allen's "for the first and almost the only time", is open to doubt, but the remaining part of the statement is perfectly valid.

The novel examines the relevance of various beliefs — religious as well as secular — to the terror of life that stares man in the face. Is man irrevocably doomed to the "shabby landscape of terror and lust" where vultures wait for human beings to turn into carrions? It is dangerously easy to seek refuge in the soothing certainties of religion and politics. But the easy solution is not necessarily the right solution. The pious humbug of the devout may be as misleading as the misplaced idealism of the godless state. In so far as action is viewed through the catholic consciousness of the priest, the novel is catholic in intent and does concentrate on religious relations. But doesn't the priest undergo a crisis of consciousness? Sin and sanctity almost get redefined in his actions. The priest is a mixture of good and evil, but the conventional morality of the pious woman in the prison looks suspect when confronted with the priest's corruption. **The Power and the Glory** is not a proselytising work, yet it calls for a radical revision of many conventional attitudes to matters human and divine.

### 5.10.2 Summary

After reading this unit the student will get a fair idea of Greene's emphasis on the theme of man's alienation and protest against the totalitarian Government interfering with human activities. In this unit, we have given the structural analysis of the text i.e., **The Power and the Glory**. It deals with various aspects like theme, structure of the novel, justification of the title, imagery and characterization etc. The influence of catholic faith on Greene is discussed under the title the life and the works of Graham Greene. The novel is explained on the basis of Christian existentialism. Interpretation of the text by various critics is also discussed in this lesson.

### 5.10.3. Technical Terms

**Existentialism:** A philosophical movement, closely associated with Kierkegaard, Camus, Sartre, and Heidegger. The movement emphasises that there is no ultimate purpose to the world; that persons find themselves in a world which is vaguely hostile; that persons choose and cannot avoid choosing their characters, goals, and perspectives; and that truths about the world and our situation are revealed most clearly in moments of unfocused psychological anxiety or dread. These themes have influenced literature, psychoanalysis, and theology.

**Prometheus:** In Greek mythology, a Titan; his name means 'the foreseeing'. He stole fire from heaven to help mankind, whom Zeus wished to destroy, and was punished by being chained to a rock in the Caucasus; every day an eagle fed on his liver, which grew again in the night. Heracles shot the eagle and set Prometheus free.

### 5.10.4. Model Questions

1. "In **The Power and the Glory**, Greene's main interest lies in the examination of the problem of good and evil". Discuss.
2. Discuss Graham Greene's treatment of evil in **The Power and the Glory**.
3. Critically comment on the title of the novel, **The Power and the Glory**.
4. Examine Graham Greene's views on formal morality and religion as portrayed in **The Power and the Glory**.

### 5.10.5. Reference Books

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## LESSON 11

# : C.P. SNOW'S *THE MASTERS*

### 5.11.1 OBJECTIVE OF THE LESSON:

- to provide adequate information of 20<sup>th</sup> century, English Fiction,
- to provide C.P. Snow as a Writer
- to provide a deeper analysis of the Masters to enrich the students' experience

### 5.11.2 BACKGROUND – ENGLISH FICTION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Every age has its own dominant literary form, as for instance, drama in the Elizabethan age. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was the great age of the English novel. Fiction continues to be the most popular literary form in the Twentieth Century. David Daiches, the critic, ascribes the predominance of fiction from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards to the fact that fiction is essentially a middle-class form of literary art. It was bound to flourish when the middle classes rose to power and importance. The nineteenth century saw a steady growth of the reading public as a consequence of the growth of lending libraries and modern publishing techniques. The novel was best suited to present life as it was actually lived at a given point of time. The novels of 19<sup>th</sup> century presented stories against a stable background of contemporary social and moral values. Escapist writing, so popular in the earlier era was no longer in vogue. The Victorian reader was also not interested in reading about the fundamental issues of human life, treated imaginatively and symbolically. He wanted to read about people who were recognisably like himself and about issues that concerned him intimately in his day-to-day life. Some of the great Victorian novelists like Dickens presented life at a deeper level than the superficial social pattern perceived by casual readers. The best Victorian novels transcended the requirements of contemporary readers. It was George Eliot among a host of novelists that struck out a new path. Prior to Eliot, the primary purpose of the novel was to entertain. The novels were moving, edifying or entertaining or all three. They hardly ever discussed or presented new ideas. George Eliot was the first English novelist whose novels had an intellectual base and a profound moral purpose. In doing so, she brought a new scope and dignity to the English novel. In novels like *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* Eliot successfully treated moral issues against a recognisable social context. Her characters are shown as moving naturally in their daily occupations which made them seem real and believable. The novels of George Eliot form a smooth link to the English novel of the twentieth century. From the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the English novel was anchored to a firmly drawn social world. The novelists were confident that their view point and value system was shared by their readers. The twentieth century saw a significant change in this aspect. The sense of a common world-view was lost. Writers like Virginia Woolf felt that the sense of what was significant in life was intensely personal and individual. It may not apply or appear valid to others. New concepts of time, new psychological theories brought in awareness of multiplicity of consciousnesses. The presentation of character was 'depthwise rather than lengthwise'. Chronological narration of events was no longer the norm. We see

the twentieth century novel moving steadily towards a greater increase in psychological subtlety. David Daiches singles out Henry James (*The portrait of an Artist as a Youngman*) as the one defining influence on the art of fiction. He brought a new precision and complexity to the portrayal of states of mind.

The three major factors which had an impact on the novel were, the collapse of a single public standard of significance, new notions of time and new concepts of consciousness. These had affected the techniques as well as the themes of fiction. Eighteenth and Nineteenth century fiction was woven around the themes of the relation between middle class respectability and morality, apart from the staple themes of love, property issues and rivalry. The major themes of Twentieth Century fiction are the isolation of the individual, the longing for certitude and love. In a scenario where one is conscious only of alienation, separation, let alone love, even communication seems difficult, if not impossible.

D.H. Lawrence, Conrad and Graham Greene, novelists of the Twentieth Century have attempted to come to terms with the lack of values in contemporary society. Where Conrad was deeply pessimistic about man's ability to sustain ethical values, Lawrence drew heavily on autobiographical sources to find viable relationships which can be liberating as well as life-giving. He believed that sexual relationships are at the core of man's wholesome life. Roman Catholicism is a leitmotif in Graham Greene's fiction (e.g. *The Power and the Glory*) where Greene explored the gulf between theological virtue and ordinary human decency. Virginia Woolf in novels such as *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* tackled the problems of loneliness and love which so haunted her. James Joyce dealt with the loss of public values in a distinctly individual fashion in novels like *Ulysses*, *Finnegans Wake* and *Dubliners*. The technique known as 'stream of consciousness' to present the inner landscape of the characters thought processes became popular thanks to the novels written by Joyce and Virginia Woolf.

After the 1930's and the establishment of the Welfare State in Britain, the miserable condition of life of the working classes was no longer an issue. In fact, the socially committed novelist had no role to play. Satirical writers like Huxley and Evelyn Waugh were concerned with the theme of the impossibility of heroism in the modern world. William Golding (*Lord of the Flies*) is perhaps the most intensely passionate writer of the post-war years. He is a powerful writer who combines meticulous realism with visionary clarity. He also uses symbolism with great effectiveness. It is to be noted that the great advances and experimentation of the early Twentieth Century has not been continued in the later decades. But then, no art form can be continuously in a state of experiment. The latter half of the Twentieth Century is a period of consolidation as far as technique is concerned. Thematically too there is continuation in the sense that the themes of alienation, isolation, disintegration, possibilities of heroism are still being treated in fiction. Standing apart from the above mentioned novelists there are others who are deliberately realistic. Galsworthy (*The Forsyte Saga*) and Arnold Bennet (*The Old Wives Tale*) treated the novel as little more than social documentation. In some ways C.P. Snow's fiction is like Galsworthy's. It is a faithful presentation of a world he knows from the inside. New fangled notions of time and psychology are

avoided by him. He is in the tradition of novelists like Jane Austen, Bennett, Galsworthy and Powell. His fiction presents a very English view of institutions and human interrelationships leavened by his humane and compassionate outlook.

### 5.11.3 THE WRITER – HIS LIFE AND WORKS:

C.P. Snow, the author of the novel, *The Masters* was born in 1905 in Leicester. He was the son of a clerk in a shoe factory. He had a brilliant academic career, with a First Class Honours Degree in Chemistry from a local college. He joined the Cambridge University as a research scholar with a merit scholarship. In 1930, he was awarded his Ph.D. and was elected a Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge.

Snow's field of study was science but he always knew that he had 'an ultimate vocation' as a writer. However, he was quite serious about his research and published several highly acclaimed scientific papers. He also attempted popularising science by contributing articles on science for the commonman in journals like *The Spectator*, eg: *The Enjoyment of Science*, *Science of the year* etc. Snow's first foray into the literary field began in 1932 itself when he published a detective novel, *Death under Sail*. It was well received and was a Crime Club selection in the United States. Snow next tried his hand at science fiction with a novel titled, *The Search*. It is a conventional novel but its interest lies in the fact that some of Snow's later concerns and theories find expression in it. Snow's friend William Cooper felt that an important piece of research which went wrong at this juncture proved to be the turning point in Snow's career. Snow made a deliberate choice in favour of literature, he gave up scientific research. He also accepted an administrative job at Cambridge in 1935. Four years later, he was a full-time administrator, served on various committees such as the *Royal Science Committee* and *Civil Service Commission*. He was awarded the C.B.E. in 1943 and Knighted in 1957. One may sum up his administrative career as an eminently successful one. Snow married late in life, the novelist Pamela Hansford Johnson. The couple have one son.

Snow's reputation as a novelist rests chiefly on a series of inter-linked novels published under the title *Strangers and Brothers*. The first novel with the same title was published in 1940, the second *The Light and the Dark* in 1947. At roughly two year intervals, nine more novels were published. According to Snow, the entire framework and the central concept came to him almost in a flash. He said, "the entire outline of *Strangers and Brothers*, the response of dialect between Lewis Eliot as observer and as the focus of direct experience appeared to me in one flash". *The Rede Lecture* (1959) and *The Two Cultures: A Second Look* (1963) by Snow are considered to have exerted a profound influence on the thinking of men and women of his generation. The ideas and theories articulated by Snow in these essays find an echo in his novels.

The success Snow enjoyed as a novelist was modest in the beginning. Gradually, almost imperceptibly his reputation as a man of letters grew. From 1950's onwards Snow's views as a commentator on public issues like science and government, disarmament and peace, education, were widely read and respected.

### 5.11.4 Analysis of *The Masters*

*The Masters* is a campus novel. The scene of action is a University campus, the characters are all drawn from the teaching and administrative spheres of the University. Though written earlier *The Masters* was published as fourth in the series. It is considered the best in the series and won for its author, *The James Tait Black Memorial Prize*. It is a compact novel, neatly divided into four parts. It is interesting to see how Snow has succeeded in constructing an immensely absorbing novel which has no hero, no explicit theme. The election of the master is the central episode. At first sight, the election of the master seems good enough for just one chapter, not an entire novel. What then, is the plot of Snow's novel?

The plot in snow's *The Masters* hinges on a single issue, the master's election but Snow does not relegate plot to the background as a necessary evil. Snow confessed that his novels are carefully plotted, with each twist and turn preplanned. The Jamesian remark, "what is character but the determination of incident, what is incident but the illustration of character" aptly summarises Snow's plots, because the events that occur in the lives of the characters are a result of their own temperament as well as external compulsions. Using his sense of character, his knowledgeability and his skill in creating suspense Snow has constructed an immensely absorbing novel which has no explicit hero, no obvious theme but the reader hardly notices the absence of either.

*The Masters* is all about the nature and practice of University politics. It is the intellectual aspect of the power struggle on the campus that captures the reader's attention. The novel falls naturally into four parts. (I) A Light in the Lodge, (II) Waiting, (III) Notice of a vacancy, and (IV) Morning in the chapel. The first part, *A Light in the Lodge*, titled symbolically deals with the imminent death of the present master. Light, indicative of the life of the Master is about to be extinguished. The novel starts with news of the Master's serious illness. He is afflicted with the dreaded disease of cancer. The doctor's prognosis is that the Master does not have long to live. Vernon Royce is the dying master, whose impending, certain death in the next six months creates a crisis. A new master has to be elected in his place. The names of two candidates come up, Crawford and Jago. Crawford from the Science Faculty has a formidable reputation as a researcher. Jago comes from the Arts faculty. The college is sharply divided into two groups, one supports Jago, while the other supports Crawford.

*The Master* is a classic illustration of the concept, 'plot is character in action'. The decisions, defections and intrigues which make up the plot are shown to be natural developments given the nature of the characters. Each incident takes the plot forward and is a further revelation of the roots of character and behaviour. The speaking voice is that of Lewis Eliot, who was a protégé of the Master, Royce. The narrative opens on a cold winter night in January when the college is deserted (as it is vocation time) except for a few tutors and research fellows. There is a stillness in the air, 'the calm before the storm'. The news of the Master's serious illness is unexpected, shocking.

As Jago and Eliot talk late into the night, one thing is clear – Royce was a man universally respected, a man difficult to replace.

Jago, a senior tutor (tutorship is a senior post in English Universities) has had differences with Royce in the past. To his credit, Jago recalls only Royce's acts of kindness, his sensitivity. Jago remarks 'somehow one is dreadfully vulnerable through those one loves' (p.25). The remark is applicable to Jago himself in the later stages of the novel. Lady Muriel's decision to postpone telling Royce of the serious nature of his illness in order to give him a few months of peace – becomes a matter of debate. Jago disagrees with her decision and makes a profound remark: "No one should dare to decide for another man how he shall meet his death". Surely, one can't be tactful about death. Eliot sees in Jago's remarks his capacity for powerful feelings, his imaginativeness.

### A Light in the Lodge

The first part titled A Light in the Lodge is a foundation – laying exercise. As Eliot meets one after another the faculty members he gives his own assessment of their character, their individual strengths and weaknesses. The usual technique for revelation of character is through presentation of characters as they pass through stressful or dramatic events. Snow's novel presents no such dramatic situations. Life in the campus flows gently, placidly, the undercurrents are hardly felt. But Snow is aware that wherever men function in close proximity there are bound to be strong bonds of respect and affection as well as feelings of antipathy. This is illustrated in the antagonism between the Bursar Winslow and Jago. They are basically very different in temperament. Then there are Brown and Crystal close friends, who perfectly complement each other. Both are devoted to the progress of the college. Brown's character is an intriguing combination of sobriety, sound ethical values and a love of the unexpected. He tends to be conservative but admires spontaneity in other. As young Calvert Roy puts it irreverently "uncle Arthur loves odd fish".

Nightingale from the science faculty is a familiar campus type who bears a permanent grudge against 'the establishment'. He feels that he has never got his due. He is envious of the honours and status won by others. That he was not nominated to the Royal Society is a torment to him. Initially he promises to vote for Jago because he is jealous of Crawford's name as a scientist. Apart from Brown and Crystal who sponsor the candidature of Jago – Eliot, his friend Roy and a brilliant young Nuclear Scientist Luke pledge their support. At the end of the first section it appears as though Jago's election as Master is a certainty. Against him are ranged Winslow, Despard Smith, the deputy master and Getcliffe a leftist friend of Eliot who favours Crawford. He believes that unlike Jago who is a middle-of-the road conservative, Crawford will be more adventurous and take the college forward. The two men whose preference is not yet known are the absent Pilbrow and the absent-minded old senior Gay. The campus is a male bastion but there are a few women characters. First, there is the Master's wife, lady Muriel, an autocratic, snobbish woman. However, there is no doubt about her devotion to her husband. The strain of keeping up a brave front is evident in her. It is



only with Roy Calvert, a young scientist loved by her daughter Joan that lady Muriel is able to unbend and reveal her anxiety. When Royce is finally told that he has not long to live he poignantly remarks: "It is hard to think without a future". Faced with the prospect of death Royce was lost in his own thoughts. Roy, watching them was struck by the spectacle of human suffering and loneliness. Royce and lady Muriel loved each other but at this crisis in his life she could not reach him. As Roy puts it: "We are all alone. Each one of us. Quite alone". It is comments like these that makes *The Masters* more than just 'a campus novel'.

### Waiting

The second part, aptly titled 'Waiting' turns the focus on the Master's Lodge. As the Master has not yet been told the truth, each visitor to the Lodge feels that he is a part of the organised charade. It is a tense period of waiting.

Predictably it is Nightingale who makes the first move. He openly asks Jago to promise to give him the Senior Tutor's position, which will become available when Jago is elevated to the Master's position. Jago equivocates, instead of saying 'no', while Brown and Chrystal say that no guarantee can be given. Jago later feels ashamed that by allowing Nightingale to hope, he has lowered his own ethical standards. Nightingale had joined Brown's Caucus out of a sense of pique. He now crosses over to the otherside and becomes an ardent supporter of Crawford. If Nightingale's conduct gives the reader a glimpse of the inherent meanness in human beings, Snow gives compensating glimpses of grace and unselfishness in other characters. In a subsequent meeting it was Pilbrow who pointed out that to discuss the election of a future master when the present master is ill betrayed a lack of feeling. Jago immediately agreed with him. Snow's intention is to show that even in the midst of political wrangling some men are guided by basic decency.

Apart from the impending election there is another issue which is exercising the minds of Brown and Chrystal. It is the prospect of getting a very large benefaction for the college from the millionaire Sir Horace. He is invited as a special guest to a feast at the college. His nephew though academically weak is given a passing grade as a part of the bargain. Such are the inner compulsions behind the smooth façade of the college. Sir Horace proves to be a smooth and astute bargainer. He keeps them all guessing, promising but not actually committing himself. Royce, the dying man shows extraordinary generosity of spirit in his conduct with his visitors. He allows his colleagues to visit him more in consideration of their feelings. The kindness of Royce is set against the rancour of men like Nightingale.

Apart from Lady Muriel and her daughter, Joan, there is another woman, Mrs. Jago who is destined to play a crucial role in the unfolding of the narrative. Ignored by Lady Muriel, Mrs. Jago's one ambition was to prove to be her worthy successor at the Lodge. Even though she had been cautioned not to take Jago's win as a certainty, she begins to put on airs as 'a would-be Master's wife'. All her life she had suffered from a terrible inferiority complex. She was always suspicious of her welcome in Jago's circle

of friends. She felt that she was merely tolerated for the sake of Jago. As a purely defence mechanism, she assumed a superior air and tried to dominate every conversation. It made everyone around her uncomfortable.

Nightingale started a scurrilous campaign against her. Friends of Eliot like Francis Getcliff's wife Katherine summed up the general opinion: "She would be an intolerable nuisance in the Lodge". It is in vain that Eliot reminded them that they were not electing her but electing her husband. It is strange but true that minor or irrelevant issues can influence the outcome of major matters. Nightingale is ready to stoop to any level to ensure success for his new favourite, Crawford. He tries to co-erce young Luke whose prospects for a new tenure rest with the Science Faculty. Luke remains firm in his support of Jago. With Pilbrow yet undecided the scales are evenly balanced between Jago and Crawford. To break the stalemate an outsider is suggested by Chrystal. It is clear however that it is not a serious option. Part-II closes with the death of Royce and an account of the solemn funeral.

### **5.11.6 Part III: Notice of a Vacancy**

The vacancy of mastership is now an established fact. The strain is palpable. Jago with his inherent pride and core of diffidence finds the whole thing intolerable. His self-respect makes it difficult to accept the 'wheeling and dealing' which are a part of any election. The election is barely two weeks away. In a chapter aptly titled 'A good day for the college'. Elliot recounts the happy tidings that Sir Horace has finally made a generous endowment of one hundred and twenty thousand pounds to the college and a special fellowship to Roy Calvert in appreciation of his outstanding research work. Brown and Chrystal who had worked hard to bring it about experience a sense of achievement. Their unrelenting efforts have finally been crowned with success. Snow has deliberately introduced the issue of Sir Horace's endowment to highlight how vital are the services, talents and quiet dedication of men like Brown and Chrystal for the progress of the educational institutions. It is easy to underrate their achievement. The academic achievements of men like Crawford, Calvert and Luke are recognised but institutions need men like Brown to ensure their financial viability.

Jago who started as a clear favourite slowly started losing his vantage position. With the votes evenly distributed in favour of Jago and Crawford – Pilbrow and old Gay's votes assumed a tremendous significance. One is reminded of the dictum 'one should not peak too early' as he may lose momentum in the last round. This is exactly what happens to Jago. In spite of his personal liking for Jago Pilbrow decided in favour of Crawford. As election day drew nearer Nightingale used the worst possible tactic to undermine Jago by attacking his wife in a flysheet. A copy of the pamphlet was sent to Mrs. Jago with the idea that in order to spare his wife further humiliation, Jago would withdraw from the election. Jago however decides not to withdraw his candidature

There is an unexpected 'fall out' from Sir Horace's magnificent gift. Technically all such endowments should have been routed through the Bursar Winslow. In their anxiety to secure the gift for the college and their certainty that Winslow with his acerbic

temperament is sure to annoy Sir Horace, Brown and Chrystal had bypassed Winslow. Winslow feels insulted and resigned the Bursarship. Jago, who normally never got along with Winslow, felt that Winslow was shabbily treated. His support of Winslow understandably upsets Chrystal. Eliot brings up the issue of Nightingale sending the flysheet to Mrs. Jago. While Crawford obviously will not stoop so low, he is willing to overlook it and benefit by the lowly trick. The account of Eliot and Roy meeting old Gay is decidedly humorous as the old man keeps mistaking them for others like Nightingale.

#### **Part IV – Morning in the chapel**

Chrystal once again moots the idea of a third compromise candidate, this time from within the campus. He comes up with the name of Brown. When he comes to know of it Brown is extremely upset. He says that Chrystal had no business to suggest his name without prior permission. He doesn't waver in his support of Jago.

It is now clear that Chrystal has changed sides. Perhaps he had never been comfortable with the idea of Jago as Master. He had agreed only because of his friendship with Brown. It looks like the friendship of Brown and Chrystal is going to be one of the casualties of the Campus War.

In the midst of these political wranglings, Snow cleverly brings in an account of a break through in a vital experiment achieved by Luke. For a moment members forget their differences as they congratulate Luke. Ultimately research, the widening of intellectual horizons is what the University is all about. The chapter titled *The Last Night* allows Eliot to unravel the characters of Brown and Chrystal, the latter plays the role of Judas. Eliot puts his finger unerringly on what made Chrystal change sides. As he puts it: "He had come to think that if Jago became Master, his own power and policy would dwindle to nothing within the next five years".

Till the very end Brown does not give up hope. Gay conducts the election meticulously – insisting that every thing should be done according to the statutes. In fact the whole procedure assumes the form of a ritual. Jago and Crawford voted for each other, Gay himself voted for Jago. Crawford won by a majority of one vote. A formal notice is put up. At the dinner that night, Jago came late leading to adverse comments. The novel however closes on a gracious note. Jago arrives in time to drink a toast to Crawford and invites Crawford to his home for his first dinner out as Master.

#### **5.11.5 A note on Snow's *The Two Cultures***

One of the most significant controversies of the twentieth century was over the cultural split between achievements of arts and sciences. C.P. Snow and F.R. Leavis argued on opposite sides. The main documents in the controversy were C.P. Snow's Rede lecture, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (1959) and Leavis' Richmond lecture at Downing. Snow's principal assertion was that the literary and scientific cultures have never before been so divided. Most literary men will agree that Snow was right in maintaining that self-impoverishment was not all on one side, that

men of letters should take more interest in scientific achievements. Similarly, scientists would profit through a better acquaintance with literature.

Snow's novels on university politics, including the celebrated novel, *The Masters* have this belief as the backdrop of the action depicted in the novel.

### 5.11.6 Critical Evaluation

What are the strengths of Snow's novel, *The Masters*? The answer seem to be a suspenseful plot, a fascinating analysis of a small group of people in a closed society of academicians, a vivid portrait gallery. A fairly large group of people is presented, yet it is not difficult to recall each of the characters distinctly and with pleasure. The characters are as it were, lit from inside: there is first the narrator Lewis Eliot, his maverick friend, the brilliant and sensitive Roy Calvert, Brown, the natural manager, Chrystal the more worldly friend of Brown who likes to be the 'power behind the throne'. Winslow, the Bursar, unimaginative, acerbic, Nightingale a failure as a scientist but worse still, a man without honour, Getcliff a liberal, high-minded scientist, the youthful Luke. Of the two candidates, while Crawford is a distinguished scientist, a liberal in politics, sober and somewhat pompous, Jago is a much more complex man, warm hearted, imaginative and thin skinned, vulnerable.

### 5.11.7 Characterization-technique of presentation

Snow is aware of Marxist and Freudian views of character. Marx believed that the economic environment moulded character, while Freud saw a man's psyche as a battlefield of warring impulses. Snow's understanding of man includes both these ideas. He is also interested in 'the irremediable components of one's character', which is linked to his tragic view of individual life. Snow believes that this innate unalterable part of one's nature plays a dominant role in shaping one's destiny. The flaw or aberration of temperament is something man has to learn to live with. In that sense the dictum 'character is destiny' holds good for Snow's characters. Snow is not a psychological novelist in the technical sense of the term. The notion of 'old stable ego' which a D.H. Lawrence would spurn, was acceptable to him.

Essentially, *The Masters* consists of a series of confabulations among the faculty members where they try to sort out their differences and come out in favour of either Jago or Crawford. In the process, they reveal the inner workings of their own minds, the complex motives that lie behind their choices. Though the die-hard supporters of each candidate remain steadfast, there are unexpected betrayals. The foremost of these is Chrystal one of the original supporters of Jago. Snow maintains the suspense right up to the end when the votes are counted as to who will emerge the winner.

Snow is remarkable for his tolerance of "so many petty ambitions, small jealousies and ill-concealed desire for power and for revenge". These weaknesses could easily be presented as contemptible. Snow loves his characters too much to denounce them. Thus, the novel, *The Masters* has no villains as such, but there are no

heroes either. Snow is a novelist in the psychological tradition of George Eliot. His novelistic world is neither distorted nor exaggerated. One might call his notion of self as philosophically unsophisticated. His characters do not suffer from a vague sense of angst. They are believable, likeable men even with all their weaknesses. Lewis Eliot's words about Arthur Brown are generally applicable to Snow's characters: "He loved his friends and knew that they were only men".

The common reader values Snow's novels most for his comments, observations on human nature, eg. commenting on the nature of leadership Snow comments, "a leader is one who is not too superior to the crowd who follow him, a leader needs to have a certain humility" or "to be an influence in any society, one can be a little different, but only a little" (with a reference to the eccentric Roy Calvert). As Bonamy Dobree asserts of Snow's characters "all the characters with whom he peoples his world are individuals; they have their own lives, their own complexities and inner conflicts; we trace their progress and come to understand them".

Snow's very success in dealing with the moral and political uncertainties of our times have diverted attention from his artistic achievement. Critics have tended to emphasize his merits as a thoughtful and perceptive commentator and on his sense of character. His deliberate turning away from the technical innovations of his immediate predecessors has been used against him. It is often said that he has not contributed anything to the 'art of the novel'. Snow was quite clear in what he wanted to do. There is no doubt about the remarkable developments in fiction during the first half of the twentieth century, as for instance the intense exploration of individual sensibility, particularly through stream of consciousness technique, the extensive use of symbolism and irony, new concepts of time as a continuous process as well as presenting time in a non-chronological frame, emphasis on verbal texture of fiction and finally development of techniques of indirection and obliquity. Snow was aware of all these accomplishments but he felt that the new techniques needed firm control on the part of the novelist. In the hands of lesser artists there was the danger of unintelligibility. Wholly internalised drama could become dull, obscure. Snow was against this kind of fiction. His objection was not to the novel of sensibility, to the concern with personal relations but to the minute examination of sensibility in isolation and to the divorce of personal relations from morality and societal context. He admired the fiction of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky for "the complex and enriching interaction between their characters and their immense social range. Their insight, he feels is inextricably linked to their active interest in society. Snow has chosen the means which are best suited to what he has to say. There are no shining and elusive moments of consciousness in his novels but a more traditional and humanistic view of character and motive. He is not interested in presenting consciousness as direct experience, but he does present complexity of character and unconscious motivation. Snow's fiction has the virtues of lucidity and directness, facilitated by the use of a thoughtful and intelligent narrator (Lewis Eliot). Power-relations, Snow says, determine so much of our working lives. They form the leit-motif of his novels.

Snow has affinities with the older generation of English novelists, Jane Austen, Thackeray, Trollope and George Eliot. Their's is a vision which is central, clear, wide-ranging, free of eccentricities and extravagances. Snow's vision is a realistic, one, and also a compassionate, understanding view of men and matters.

#### **5.11.8 TO SUM UP :**

In this lesson, we have studied the growth of the XX Century Novel and the thematic and structural preoccupations of the Masters on it hinges on a single issue, namely the master's election. The narrative is all about the nature and University politics, It is the Intellectual aspect of the power struggle on the campus that captured the reader's attention.

## Lesson - 12

# William Golding: Lord of the Flies

### Contents

- 5:12:1. Objectives of the Lesson**
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### 5:12:1. Objectives of the Lesson

- To understand and estimate William Golding's **Lord of the Flies**.
- To learn the novelist's search to probe the inner recesses of human behaviour.
- To realise the conflict between the civilized selves and brutal inner nature of human beings.

### 5:12:2. Structure of the Lesson

#### Background

In the generations immediately preceding and following 1914, the novel underwent a radical redefinition of its nature and possibilities. The death of the novel has often been announced, and part of the secret of its obstinate vitality must be its capacity for growth, self-renewal and even self-transformation. It adapts itself quickly to a changing world. War and revolution, economic crisis and social change have made this century unprecedented in human history in the speed and extent of change, but the novel has shown an extraordinary capacity to find new forms and techniques and to accommodate new ideas and conceptions of human nature and human experience, and even to take up new positions on the nature of fiction itself.

During the 1950s, a number of new and articulate voices in British fiction began to claim public attention. For several years before, commentators had speculated about where or what the new generation was, wondered how the Second World War might be treated in serious fiction and worried that fatigue or public austerity might have been instrumental in a premature atrophy among the potentially creative. When their fiction reached enthusiastic public notice, in the early 1950s, the work of Kingsley Amis, Iris Murdoch, John Wain, Doris Lessing, Angus Wilson (who was slightly older but did not publish a novel until 1952), Thomas Hinde and Philip Larkin (who had written two novels in the late 1940s before publishing his poetry) began to be regarded as representative of a new post-war generation. In the initial and often superficial responses to their fiction, the new voices emerging from the war seemed to many comic and limited, and often insular. For good or ill, depending on the point of view, and most often for both good and ill,

they did not seem to demonstrate much concern with eternal verities or transforming visions of human experience. Alone among these emerging writers, although eventually noticed nearly as much as any of them, William Golding, from the appearance of **Lord of the Flies** in 1954, was seen as a visionary dealing with universal and essential human issues, was not part of a group or a generation. Somewhat older than the others (although only two years older than Angus Wilson), Golding seemed an anomaly among the novelists of the early and middle 1950s. For some, in both England and America, Golding was immune from the dominant temper of the age, from the bland muted, non-charismatic, comic safety of the carefully limited survivor; for others, Golding was both surly and reactionary.

### **Life and Works of William Golding (1911 – 1993)**

Sir William (Gerald) Golding was born on 19 September 1911 in Cornwall, a small Cornish village in England and lived a very quiet life till he became famous as a writer in his forties. Golding, son of a distinguished schoolmaster, became a schoolmaster himself and wrote deeply imaginative tales of the human condition of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was educated at Marlborough Grammar School and became proficient in Greek literature. He went to Brasenose College, Oxford where he wanted to study science, but switched to English literature. Academically his loyalty was divided between Science and Humanities. Surprisingly, it is philosophy that really dominates his writings. He has a passion for literature and likes ‘words of themselves’.

After graduation in 1935, he married Ann Brookfield in 1939 and in the same year he started teaching at Bishop Wordsworth’s School in Salisbury. A small volume of his poems appeared in 1934 and his first novel appeared in 1954. During the period of twenty years between 1934 and 1954 he experienced two important events which influenced his life and his career as an artist. The first thing is his service in Navy during the war and secondly, his reading of ancient Greek literature. During the World War II (1939-1945), he joined the Royal Navy and was present at the sinking of the Bismarck; he returned to teaching in 1945 and gave it up in 1962, and from then onwards he remained a full-time writer, at first, his novels were not accepted. But **Lord of the Flies**, which came out in 1954, was welcomed as ‘a most absorbing and instructive tale’. He won the Nobel Prize in 1983, and was knighted in 1988.

**Pincher Martin** (1956) deals with a castaway clinging to a rock in mid-Atlantic during the Second World War. Hadley Martin, the protagonist of the novel, is a ‘lone survivor’, ‘a good hater’, ‘an egoist’, and ‘self-centred’. Christopher Martin who becomes Pincher Martin (Pincher a common name for the sailors) later is a ship wrecked sailor in the vast Atlantic sea. He is alive for six days and in the course of time his memory and delirium gnaw away his consciousness before he dies.

**Free fall** (1959) is a first person narrative story. The novel has a confessional or a self-revelatory mode of narration. In this novel Golding telescopes his vision on a single individual called Sammy Mocoentjoy. Ian Gregor and Mark Kinkead Weekes say that **Free Fall** deals with ‘the central relationship of man in relation with man’. It delineates the protagonist’s relationship with his family, friends, teachers’ etc. This throws light on the fallen nature of Sammy Mountjoy.



In **The Spire** (1964) Joceline, the dean of the Cathedral church, believes that he is chosen by god to fulfill the vision of the spire. And assuming himself to be the 'chosen man', he exploits all, and at last falls from the grace of God. The protagonist, though a religious man, becomes a victim of ambition and pride. He harbours a grand dream of erecting a stone spire on an ancient cathedral with the charity received from his aunt Alison. He faces a crisis, a crisis not of conscience but that of the situation. In the process with the total sense of disgrace he succumbs to death.

**Darkness Visible** (1979) mainly concerns with Golding's apocalyptic vision. It deals with the "extremes of behaviour of which men are capable, their propensities for absolute good or evil, their endlessly paradoxical saintliness and sinfulness". The central character of the novel Mathew Septimus, known as Matty, is an avaricious Bible addict. D.W. Crompton remarks that the final judgement as promised in St. John's revelation is a major theme of the novel. In fact the apocalyptic imagery is scattered all over the book.

**The Paper Men** (1984) is published a year after he was awarded Nobel Prize. This novel focuses on theology, man's fallen nature, sin, heaven and hell or man's relations with the universe surrounding him. The entire narrative concerns itself with the protagonist Wilfred Barclay. He happens to be a writer whose books have brought him reputation. Don Crompton finds Barclay as an exceptionally intelligent but morally and spiritually a stupid writer.

**Rites of Passage** (1980), **Close Quarters** (1987) and **Fire Down Below** (1989) form a trilogy. The voyage that started in 1980 in **Rites of Passage** comes to an end in the last novel **Fire Down Below** in 1989. Mr. Edmund Talbot, a civil servant, is the central character in all the three novels. The novels are narrated from his point of view. In fact, Talbot's experiences and encounters in the voyages of migration from England to Australia during the Napoleonic wars after 1811 help to develop his consciousness and personality. It is a 19<sup>th</sup> century story, and, as Golding himself has pointed out, the Parson's story (Robert Colley in **Rites of Passage**) has a historical basis.

### **Analysis of the Text: Lord of the Flies**

During the Second World War, Nuclear War has broken out in Europe and an aeroplane has evacuated a school from the English Home Counties to an unknown destination. The plane was attacked and the pilot crash-landed in the jungle of an island, contrived to drop the passenger tube there. At the moment of impact, a fierce storm is raging and only a few boys – Ralph, Jack, Roger, Simon, Piggy amongst them – manage to scramble out of the tube before the wind sweeps it out to sea. The island is full of coral reef, beaches and fruit trees that bear all the year round. Hence forward, the novelist concerns himself with the adaptation of the boys to their new tropical background. They have their assembly, they pursue their own pleasure all within law and rule.

The story follows through the character of Ralph, who is 'twelve years and a few months'. The world of children is quickened with life when Ralph and his friend Piggy blow the conch to summon the assembly of the others. There are no elders to lead them. "we've to got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages..." says red-haired tall, thin, quick to anger, proud and aggressive Jack Merridew. He has all the qualities of the twentieth century

dictator who in league with Lord of the Flies has thirst for power. He is their Choir leader, wears a golden badge on his cap. They are like boys of any cathedral school – highly organised, civilized and disciplined. The tragedy is sharp as they fall from that civilized height. They turn into savages – naked, painted, gorging on pig-flesh, and whoops of ‘ooh-ah’ and ‘ooh –ooh’ are heard, they all participate in exploring the meaning and consequence of the creation of evil.

Ralph and Jack are antagonistic to each other; leadership is thrust upon Ralph. He is not as intellectual and logical as Piggy. ‘He would never be a good chess player’. He is not so intuitively right as Simon and aggressive as Jack. He is ‘a straw boy of democracy, tossed about by forces he cannot cope with’. He is courageous, intelligent but finally despairs of democracy which means only ‘talk, talk, talk’; apologizes to Piggy and faces his guilt of Simon’s death. Simon is characterized most effectively and poignantly. He is a stunning, vivid little boy aged 9 or 10. It is he who discovers that the Beast reportedly seen is no more than a dead airman whose parachute-strings have tangled in the rocks and scrub. Thus when a wind blows and the string tauten, the helmeted figure rises and seems to peer across the mountain; then, as soon as the wind drops, the face falls forward upon its knees. Simon is full of vision and forethought and tries to explain this and the fact that the Beast whom they all fear is not real and it really lies within themselves; the others will not listen and club him to death. He suffers from epilepsy as some great men of the past; the Lord of the Flies visits him in a key scene when the ‘fit’ is about to take him. He has a touch of the mystic and his is the voice of warning. He becomes the central figure of the Lord of the Flies scene, very powerful and poetic, and he also understands that evil cannot be exteriorized or destroyed by putting either a human or a pig’s head on a stick. Roger is not so subtly or complexly characterized; his furtive qualities make him a sinister foil and contrast to Simon. Piggy has a name that has irony in it and he possesses good and bad attributes of a weaker sort of intellectual. He rationalizes Simon’s death just before his own. He is a ‘bigun’ but physically incapable and emotionally immature. Ralph acts as a conscience for him. The Ralphs of this world does not see that the logic of Piggy’s mind will not cope with the situation.

Ralph dimly realizes that the world is not ready for its saints, or Simons, nor even Piggies or Ralphs. However, the latter do try to stop relapsing into barbarism. The world of the boys in the island demonstrates that good and bad can exist side by side ‘in the darkness of man’s heart. It is a novel that reveals Golding’s philosophy that the world should restore principles in an unprincipled world, restore belief to a world of disbelievers. This is the hidden appeal and message.

### **The Title**

The title ‘**Lord of the Flies**’ can, perhaps, be traced to the Jewish hierarchy of demons where there is reference to Beelzebub (from the Arabic ‘Baal-Zebub’, the fly-lord) who is known as the Lord of the Flies, the chief representative of the false gods. The Geneva Bible of 1560, followed by the Authorized of 1611, represents the Old Testament word exactly as ‘Baal-zebub’. From the New Testament designation of Beelzebub as ‘prince of demons’, the word becomes at an early period one of the popular names of the Devil (Milton used it as the name of one of the fallen angels). The title, therefore, is appropriate to a novel which like a fable conveys a moral that ‘the world is not the reasonable place we are led to believe’ and that ‘all power corrupts’ and

that one has to live with 'the darkness of man's heart'. It is the author's philosophy to restore principles in an unprincipled world, restore belief to a world of disbelievers.

### **Plot**

The plot is straightforward. The boys, plane-wrecked on an island, elect a chief, and at first live amicably. But soon differences arise among them as to the priorities, they have nightmares and fears, and eventually the society splits into two sections – those who hunt and who become savages and kill, those, eventually only Ralph, who believe in rational conduct and the codes of civilization.

Just as Ralph is about to be killed by the savages, a naval officer arrives with a rescue party.

### **Style and Structure**

There are several facets in the style of most great authors, and in **Lord of the Flies** it would be true to say that there are several styles. Perhaps the most outstanding feature is the incidence of metaphor, the finely economic word-picture much more a part of poetry than of prose writing. These metaphors or images are frequently in connected sequences, as in the description of the fire which gets out of hand in Chapter Two, where the animal images strongly suggest the animal behaviour of the boys later in the novel. One imagery sequence extends throughout the novel, and this is particularly subtle in its underlining of what the boys have exchanged for civilization; even the casual reader will be aware of the subliminal effect. Those are the images which recall the commonplaces, or even luxuries, of home, or domestic comfort and security; the end of sunlight is like the light going out, birds sitting on rocks are like icing on a cake, a rock is as a tank or motor-car, the horizon is a taut wire, all these serve to emphasize what has been taken for granted, what is no longer available to see, or touch, or feel. The implication is, perhaps, that when these things are lost, the spiritual and moral bases of the society which knew them may be lost also.

Close to the metaphorical and purely descriptive passages is the factual – geographical, geological, or scientific – sequence, which somehow balances or rounds off the poetry. The best example of this in the novel occurs at the end of Chapter Nine, where the body of Simon is carried out to sea. What is particularly impressive here is Golding's investiture of the fact with a poetry of his own, so that the statement of the cosmic and terrestrial becomes sublime. Another result of these statements is to reinforce the realism of the conception; the naming of a plant or a rock gives actually, particularly if it is casually done and does not degenerate into a text-book description. Another feature of the style is the ability to convey atmosphere (almost always by metaphor or, in the case of the storm that coincides with the murder of Simon, by repetition); sound (by onomatopoeic words, some self-coined); by the emphasis on certain colours, whether they be in the background (the red rocks) or the foreground (the black caps and cloaks of the choirboys).

Rhythm is also employed frequently in the creation of atmosphere. Thus the single words or short phrases of Ralph as he is pursued in Chapter Ten not only reflect his state of mind but also his breathlessness, his near exhaustion, and even his difficulties in reasoning. In complete contrast, the rhythms of the sentences used at the beginning of Chapter Four suggest by their movement the routine on the island to which the boys become accustomed, while the

sentences which describe the ‘mirages’ fluctuate in length and emphasis, as if in some curious way their verbal differences are a type of distortion. In these rhythms William Golding makes style reflect mood or outlook, and a limpid fluency tells of Simon gathering fruit for the ‘littluns’, while the sentences describing the movement of the sea unroll like the power of the tide.

One of the most natural things in **Lord of the Flies** is the dialogue. The slang is of its time, but the voiced thoughts of the children are of any and all time. The reader is struck by the fact that the exchanges in the assemblies have the ring of truth; sometimes one gets the impression of ‘practiced debators’ imitating grown-up manners of delivery in order to be the more impressive. More subtly, the dialogue is used to emphasize traits of character; Jack’s manner of speech is quick and jerky, reflecting the impetuous and irresponsible activity of which he is capable, and into which he is to lead the other boys. Piggy’s speech indicates the logical nature of his thoughts, Ralph’s of his reason, Simon’s few words and breaking off, his essential shyness and timidity. But even when they are not in assembly the dialogue of the children is accurately recorded. In the first chapter there is a striking instance of this when Ralph gives Piggy an account of his background, and piggy tells of his auntie and the sweet shop – the difference in class and speech habits, in confidence and diffidence, is apparent from the actual words spoken. We should observe, too, the way the boys, and particularly the twins, finish each other’s sentences off for one another. The savages with the Chief use a different form of speech – a weighted, game-playing utterance in keeping with the way they view their altered status. Perhaps best of all – and this is, of course, linked with rhythm – is the chant of the boys, with its variants, which so superbly expresses the frenzy of mood.

As the student reads **Lord of the Flies** he will realize how concisely written it is. It has been noted how the dialogue fits mood, character, back ground in civilization, and how it gives way to a formal utterance once the tribe becomes a tribe and ceases to be a group of society-conditioned boys. The student should also note the economy of description, that use of the right word to achieve the desired effect. If we think back over the novel there is no sequence we could wish to omit – everything is relevant; everything is inter-related. Occasionally William Golding uses a technique, which is commonplace in film production – the flashback sequence, which illumines the past of a character or characters. Such a sequence occurs in Chapter Seven, when Ralph dreams of a particularly happy period during his earlier childhood. This kind of return is part of the structure of the novel, and reinforces the constant metaphorical echoes of home. Otherwise the narration is a straightforward progression in time, from the boy’s discovery of one another after the landing, to the arrival of the naval officer. For convenience the novel may be divided structurally into three sections.

1. The arrival, and the period immediately afterwards, in which the
2. island is a kind of paradise (with metaphorical suggestions and associations with the Garden of Eden and innocence).
2. The beginning of the break-up of their own hastily erected society on the island, the differences of outlook, the arrival of the ‘beast’ from without and, so to speak, from within.
3. The throwing off of civilization by the majority, which leads to murder, persecution, bestiality and the practice of primitive rites.

The conclusion is integral to the novel, though the arrival of the naval officer, and his attitude to what he sees, may be – indeed has been – variously interpreted.

### **Lord of the Flies** and the other “Boys’ Books”

**Lord of the Flies** is a “boys’ book”, as are **Coral Island**, **Treasure Island**, **The Wind in The Willows**, **High Wind in Jamaica**, and other books primarily about juvenile characters which transcend juvenile appeal; it is in tradition of the survival narrative, along with **Robinson Crusoe**, **The Swiss Family Robinson** and even Barrie’s **Admirable Crichton...**. Of these, R.M. Ballantyne’s **Coral Island** (1857) may be considered closer to Golding’s **Lord of the Flies**. Ballantyne’s nineteenth century Victorian boys’ book is structured on a different level. His boys are noble, they are happy. Evil comes to them from outside. But Golding’s boys seem to possess evil inherently. They represent the original sin. In fact, with Golding’s boys, civilization seems to be backsliding into savagery. We find that R.M. Ballantyne’s three English boys in his **The Coral Island** are very different from Golding’s boys in **Lord of the Flies**. R.M. Ballantyne’s boys hunt for eating, but Golding’s boys hunt solely for sport. They enjoy killing. Golding adds one more dimension to his apocalyptic vision. The boys apparently have survived in nuclear war which itself heralded the end of the world as it were. In the sense of this apocalyptic vision Golding’s novel represents a departure from all other ‘boys’ books’.

Golding emphasizes that the enemy of man is within himself and that there is a constant reversal to the primordial darkness of the individual soul, as he points out: “... that one lot of people is inherently like any other lot of people; and that the enemy of man is inside him”. And, this very enemy has brought about the deterioration on the island, as we see the boys destroying what is good. Piggy’s death explains it properly, because Piggy represents scientific attitude in the novel. His looking glasses are symbolic, as they are useful in creating fire. Fire is the most important thing to the boys, as Ralph reminds the other boys, “... Without the fire we can’t be rescued. I’d like to put on war paint and be a savage. But we must keep the fire burning. The fire’s the most important thing on the island...”

### The Fall of Man

Golding’s preoccupation is with the Biblical theme of the fall of man as has been pointed out by John S. Whitley when he says: “**Lord of the Flies** is governed by the idea that the man is a fallen creature”. The other polarity of this theme is apocalypse. Apocalypse in the literary terminology is an end of everything. A religious minded writer like Golding is concerned with the future of man in his novels. Wars that shatter the old certainties and beliefs may be considered the events of apocalypse. Golding focuses his attention on the decay of culture, civilization, individuality and freedom in his novels which bespeak of the bleak future of mankind. Golding’s first novel itself illustrates amply his apocalyptic vision as he anticipates, while taking a long view of human civilization, the bleak future of mankind. His pessimistic vision of annihilation is not far from truth. The World War II has conclusively proved that there is certainly a possibility of the annihilation of all human civilization in future, if the stockpile of nuclear weapons and the political conflicts continue to trigger off a holocaust. This dark prospect already foreshadows the beginning of the novel. “The end of the world is high” is not just an empty slogan. It has cast its shadow already on the action of the novel. The beginning of the novel suggests widespread devastation after the World War II.

The whole action of the novel is full of the prospects of evil, death, destruction, bleakness, despair, and so on. In a sense, the end of civilization, as imagined by Golding shapes the structure of the novel. The young characters on the Desert Island enact a drama of jealousy, hatred, competition, killing etc. The apparently 'happy' ending is not really a 'happy' ending. It is 'happy' to round off the story. The arrival of the naval officer on the scene is gratuitous and serves only to put an end to the book. The death of Piggy and Simon corroded the minds of the other characters. The tragedy cannot be forgotten. And, in spite of the act of rescue by the naval officer, the novel really ends in a sense of despair: "... the island was scorched up like dead wood – Simon was dead – and Jack had ... The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time on the island, great, shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. And in the middle of them, with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the hair of the true, wise friend called Piggy".

The ending is actually a warning of the annihilation of our planet, our civilization. The arrival of the Naval Officer cannot be described as a harbinger of a new order of the world. The character of the naval officer is merely instrumental to round off the novel. He cannot be described as an instrument of fulfilling the other half of the apocalyptic vision, that is, the restoration of world order. In imaginative terms the annihilation of civilization has already taken place but for a few souls, who struggled on an uninhabited island. In the process of their struggle for survival, they fight among themselves, only to prove that human beings have not learnt anything from experience, from history, and ultimately they will end in the same manner as assumed by the writer's imagination. Perhaps, in no other novel of recent times the apocalyptic vision is so effectively illustrated as in **Lord of the Flies**.

### **Imagery in the Novel**

Golding's imagery in **Lord of the Flies** is conventional, although he renders it with freshness. He highlights the malevolence of what the boys do on the island by contrasting the human disruptions with the harmony and peace of nature. If we examine the scene before the first pig-slaughter we can see how the boys transform a natural idyll into something monstrous: "The pigs lay, bloated bags of fat, sensuously enjoying the shadows under the trees. There was no wind and they were unsuspecting ... Under the trees an ear flapped idly. A little apart from the rest, sunk in deep maternal bliss, lay the largest sow of the lot. She was black and pink; and the great bladder of her belly was fringed with a row of piglets that slept or burrowed and squeaked (Chapter 8)". There could not be a clearer image of natural bliss, with the word 'unsuspecting' emphasising the Eden-like innocence of the scene. Yet Jack selects this sow for his victim, tracks it, kills it, offers its head to the gods, so that in time it becomes metamorphosed into the Lord of the Flies of the novel's title.

Much of the imagery in the story derives from this contrast between nature and man. Certain key words like 'devil' often recur in order to emphasise the evil atmosphere which descends upon the island.

### **Critical Evaluation**

Since William Golding's first novel **Lord of the Flies** (1954) which brought him world-wide fame, critics have attempted to assess his contribution to the canon of English literature. Among them the earliest to study his novels thoroughly and evaluate his distinctiveness as a novelist in comparison with his contemporaries are Bernard S. Oldsey and Stanley Weintraub who published their critical work on Golding, **The Art of William Golding** in the year 1965. They have discussed Golding's first five novels: **Lord of the Flies**, **The Inheritors**, **Pincher Martin**, **Free fall**, **The Spire**, and other writings of Golding. These critics think that Golding's novels reveal the writer, though, perhaps not the man. They observe Golding as a unique writer and the founder of a school of his own. In describing Golding's uniqueness among his contemporaries, they say: "By comparison the symbolic novels of Iris Murdoch become emptily brilliant, the comic grotesques of Kingsley Amis thin, the detail-laden satire of Angus Wilson without depth, the social realism of John Braine pallid, the exotic sensuality of Laurence Durrell too easily florid, the socio-psychology of C.P. Snow's novel cycle ponderous and stolid – he is not any more likely to follow any school than he is to found one..."

**Lord of the Flies** is often compared with R.M. Ballantyne's **The Coral Island** (1857) and Richard Hughes's **A High Wind in Jamaica** (1929). The apparent similarity between these novels is that a group of British children are protagonists; but **Lord of the Flies** is very different in its theme and vision from the other two novels. In this very first novel William Golding's apocalyptic vision finds a dramatic expression. The very beginning of the novel, with civilization as we know it, is in ruins and the protagonists go on continual deteriorating in their morality as well as their world view. Critics have offered various interpretations of **Lord of the Flies**. Norman Page points out the beginning with the civilization of the protagonists return to savage life in different stages of deterioration. Golding's small children are set free from the pressures of an adult world. In the process of time the natural impulses come out and show their lust for power, hideous murders, savagery and barbarity also. C.B. Cox discusses the political allegorical aspect of the novel that at "one level the story shows how intelligence (piggy) and commonsense (Ralph) will always be overthrown in society by sadism (Roger) and the lure of totalitarianism (Jack)". This observation is justified since the characters seem to be allegorized to represent the conflict between good and evil. Kenneth Watson goes a step further and points out that **Lord of the Flies** is a "social and political fable", in which Ralph is a popular demagogue. Louise Halle also points out that the novel deals with "the struggle between civilization and barbarism". Clair Rosenfield points out that "(Golding) consciously dramatizes Freudian theme". Golding himself, however, has refuted this. He says "... I suppose I am doing the same thing as Freud did – investigating this complex phenomenon called man, perhaps our results are similar, but there is no influence". According to William Golding, the theme of **Lord of the Flies** is "an attempt to trace defects of society back to the defects of human nature".

### **5:12:3. Summary**

In this lesson, Golding's **Lord of the Flies** has been analysed structurally. Important aspects like plot, style and structure, imagery etc., have been examined. As a part of Life and works of Golding, brief summaries of the other novels are given. A brief note is given on Golding's preoccupation with the fall of Man. The meaning and interpretation of the title of the novel is briefly mentioned. Various interpretations of the **Lord of the Flies** offered by critics are

mentioned under the title, Critical Evaluation. The novel, **Lord of the Flies** is compared with some other 'Boy's Books' like **Coral Island**, **Treasure Island** etc.

#### **5:12:4. Technical Terms**

**Apocalypse:** A literary genre which can be traced to post-Biblical Jewish and early Christian eras; it especially comprises works in highly symbolic language which claim to express divine disclosures about the heavenly spheres, the course of history, or the end of the world. The most famous example is the Book of Revelation in the **New Testament**.

**Onomatopoeia:** The imitation of a natural (or mechanical) sound in language. This may be found in single words (screech, babble, tick-tock) or in longer units. It is especially heard in poetry.

**Holocaust:** The attempt by Nazi Germany to systematically destroy European Jews. Jews were herded into concentration camps, slave-labour camps, and extermination camps. By the end of the war in 1945, more than 6 million had been murdered. Other minorities were also subject to Nazi atrocities, but the major genocide was against the Jewish people.

**Fable:** A brief narrative, in either verse or prose, which illustrates some moral truth.

#### **5:12:5 Model Questions**

1. To what extent is William Golding's **Lord of the Flies** an allegory of the modern human world?
2. Consider **Lord of the Flies** as a Fable.
3. Trace the development of the conflict between Ralph and Jack and discuss whether it illustrates a fundamental split between two warring sides in man.
4. Comment on the theme of the loss of innocence in William Golding's **Lord of the Flies**.

#### **5:12:6. Reference Books**

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## Lesson 14

### The Art of Biography

#### Contents

##### **5:14:1 Objectives**

##### **5:14:2 Origins of Biography**

##### **5:14:3 What is Biography**

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##### **5:14:7 Biography in the Nineteenth Century**

##### **5:14:8 Biography in the Twentieth Century**

##### **5:14:9 To Sum Up**

##### **5:14:10 Suggested Topics**

##### **5:14:11 Suggested Reading**

#### **5:14:1 Objectives:**

- to explain the origin and growth of biography as a literary genre
- to discuss the types and function of a standard biography.
- to discuss the methods and problems of the biographer.

#### **5:14:2 Origins of Biography:**

Biography owes its origin to man's primary urge to celebrate, commemorate and immortalize. Classical Greece and Rome developed flourishing biographical traditions. The historical writings of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon and Polybius in Greece and the works of Roman historians like Livy, Tacitus included portraits of eminent statesmen and generals. Seutonius wrote the Lives of the Caesars. Plutarch in his lives of fortysix Greeks and Romans has compared and contrasted a famous Greek and a famous Roman. In the Middle Ages saint's lives dealing with their miracles and chronicles dealing with historical events were popular. These commemorative writings idealized and glorified their subjects.

Modern Biography has progressed in subtlety of technique, variety of forms, and self-awareness about its aims, methods and responsibilities. The writing of lives could be attributed to man's basic interest in man. The biographer reveals the individuality as well as the common touch of humanity in his subject that has a universal appeal. Besides the mere record of events, the biographies have a more interesting psychological element. As Johnson observes with his characteristic common sense and insight in his essay "The Art of Biography" (the Rambler Issue No.50) "I have often thought that there has rarely passed a life of which a judicious and faithful narrative would not be useful. For, not only every man has, in the mighty mass of the world, great numbers in the same condition with himself to whom his mistakes and miscarriages, escapes and expedients, would be of immediate and apparent use; but there is such an uniformity

in the state of man, considered apart from adventitious and separable decorations and disguises, that there is scarce any possibility of good or ill but is common to human kind..... We are all prompted by the same motives, all deceived by the same fallacies, all animated by hope, obstructed by danger, entangled by desire, and reduced by pleasure.”

### **5:14:3 What is Biography?**

The word biography comes from the Greek roots bios-life and graphien-to write. Dryden used the term for the first time in 1683 and defined it as the ‘history of particular men’s lives’. Oxford Dictionary defines Biography as ‘history of the lives of individual men as a branch of literature’. Biography ‘is a truthful record of an individual composed as a work of art’ according to Harold Nicholson.

‘History’ ‘individual’ and ‘literature’ are the important terms to note in these definitions. The biographer has to function both as a historian and portrait painter. The historians’ duty is to present accurate facts in an intelligent order. Mere listing of facts without order is neither history nor biography. The portrait painter has to draw a picture which is like the original but at the same time a work of art. Biography is not just a truthful record of an individual’s life. It should be governed by artistic principles. For a long time biography was just a collection of mere details, unorganized and unassimilated and presented without any selection or art. Lytton Strachey, the celebrated modern biographer commenting on these tedious productions observed in 1918, “The art of Biography seems to have fallen on evil times in England. Those two fat volumes, with which it is our custom to commemorate the dead-who does not know them, with their ill-digested masses of material, their slipshod style, their tone of tedious panegyric, their lamentable lack of selection, of detachment, of design? They are as familiar as cortege of the undertaker and wear the same air of slow, funeral barbarism.”

Biography is different from history. It confines itself to recording the life of one individual which is defined by two events, birth and death. Only one figure dominates its attention. Others however great or important should be relegated to a secondary position. Instead of giving a detailed account of the times, the biographer should limit himself only to those historical and social events that have a direct bearing on his subject. Works like Shakespeare and His Age, Tennyson and His Age tend to cloud the main figure of the biography giving more importance to various movements of the age. Biography is not the record of the life in general but has exclusive focus on a single individual.

The Biographer has to study the actions and achievements of his subject as well his inner life and personality. He studies his subject from both without and within. As Sir Sidney Lee observes in his Principles of Biography, “Character and exploits are for biographical purposes inseparable. Character which does not translate itself into exploit is for the biographer a mere phantasm. The exploit may range from mere talk, as in the case of Johnson, to empire -building and military conquest as in the case of Julius Caesar or Napoleon. But character and exploit jointly constitute biographic personality”.

Biography is a faithful portrayal of a soul in its adventures through life. It is not a dull recording of names and dates. The dates and the presentation of incidents should eventually lead to the portrayal of a personality throbbing with life. It is difficult for biographers to sustain such demanding work without emotional involvement with their subjects. Biographers must be prepared to make a major commitment, to immerse themselves totally in the point of view of another person so that they can recreate that person's life with accuracy.

### **Pure and Impure Biography**

Harold Nicholson makes a perceptive distinction between two types of biographies – pure and impure. Pure biography is an unvarnished and realistic account of a man's life. It records all his virtues and weaknesses without any attempt at concealment or exaggeration. The biographer should maintain objectivity and detached attitude towards his subject without allowing personal prejudices and views to intrude.

The nineteenth century biographies were reverential panegyrics. Carlyle observes, "The history of mankind is the history of its great men: to find out these, clean the dirt from them, and place them on their proper pedestal." Honoring the memories of the distinguished was considered to be the main function of biographies. Commenting on this reverential attitude, Harold Nicholson says: "Such exaggerated regard for reverence and caution has produced endless commemorative volumes: it has also ruined several biographies. It proceeds predominantly from the habit of regarding biography as something other than a record of personality. Were biography generally accepted as a branch of psychology, the high standards inherent in that science would impose its own discipline and sanctions. "White washing" would be considered as nefarious as malignity, inaccuracy of representation as more culpable even than inaccuracy of fact; a 'bad' biography would pass as unnoticed as a feeble novel; and this ideal of scientific honesty would free biography from the entanglements by which it is at present obstructed and obscured."

The biography also should be neatly constructed. Biography involves both content and form. The form can be compared to the plot of a novel. It unites diverse elements to serve the purpose of the whole. A successful biographer enables the reader to see the subjects and grasp how they acted and reacted, consciously and unconsciously. The successful biographer recreates the moments that reveal the most profound and psychological truths, the motivations, transformations and points of conflict in the life of the subject.

Many factors may affect the presentation of biography and make it impure. There is the common tendency to honour and worship the dead concealing and forgetting their weaknesses and evil qualities and perpetuate their memory as ideal figures worthy to be worshiped. It is always said that one should speak but nothing but good of the dead. This maxim, ideal for every day conduct does not apply to biographical art. Reacting to this trend of hiding the faults or failing of friends as an act of piety and adorning them with indistinguishable and uniform panegyric, Johnson observes "Let us remember", says Hale "When I find myself inclined to pity a criminal that there is likewise a pity due to the country". If we owe regard to the memory of the dead, there is yet more respect to be paid to knowledge, to virtue and to truth."

The intrusion of the biographer's personal views and prejudices is another factor that leads to impure biography. The biographer should stand at a distance from his subject and display an attitude of detachment and disinterestedness to ensure the credibility of his work. The

biographer's, interest in his subject should be professional like that of a doctor towards his patients. When the biographer digresses and starts airing his personal views and comments the work might tend to turn autobiographical.

Another wrong approach to biography is to treat it as a tool or an illustration to present a moral or a theme. This one sided approach may result in falsification and exclusion of more significant details. Commenting on the limitations and dangers inherent in such an approach. W.H. Dunn observes in his book *English Biography*; "So long as Biography is looked upon simply as a medium through which to convey 'useful information' for the sake of ethics, so long is it kept from its own mission. Biography must be allowed to stand or fall of itself. Let it but relate faithfully the history of a human soul, without any warping of the truth for purposes either of panegyric or invective, let it but place before us a true narrative, without any straining for effect or any drawing of a moral and it will not fail to speak to us clearly and influence us powerfully..... All works of art are shorn of their power when men attempt to reduce them to slavery rather than allow them to assert their sovereignty. Works of art cease to be works of art when they carry about upon them the chains of any tyrannical influence. A work of art must be as free and sovereign as the Truth, of which, indeed it is but a part and a manifestation".

### **5: 14:4 Writing Biographies : The Process**

The biographer has to do painstaking research to collect all facts that left their imprint on his subject. He cannot afford to ignore any source as sometimes an unexpected witness may supply an anecdote or evidence that may throw direct light upon a character. The biographer should have three essential qualities –a capacity for absorbing facts, a capacity for stating them, and a point of view.

What are the usual sources that are helpful and used in a biography ?

- a. Books previously written on the subject and related matters.
- b. Original documents such as letters, diaries or official archives.
- c. Memories of contemporaries
- d. the recollection of living witnesses if the subject is a person who has lived in the recent past.
- e. The writer's own memories if he happens to know the subject (eg. Boswell's memories of Johnson )

Visit to places that have meaning for the subject, grasp of the social and cultural influences and the books that influenced the subject and more than all personal intuitions are other factors that contribute to the success of a biography. When the biographer gets contradictory information from sources he has to weigh, verify interpret and decide. Ultimately he has to exercise his personal judgement in a responsible way to avoid glaring errors and misrepresentation.

There are two methods of writing biographies. The exhaustive and comprehensive method attempts to give a complete picture of life covering all events and listing all the achievements and failures of the subject. All the things known are presented in the work. The second method adopts the selective technique focusing only on those events and actions that exemplify the true character of the subject of biography. Lockhart's *Life of Scott* is a good example of the

exhaustive biography and Johnson's Lives of the Poets is illustrative of the second approach. An artistic biography is a miracle of selection and a balance which can present an animated and lively portrait before us as if by magic. The biographer bases his selecting of facts on a point of view regarding the character of a person and his selection is limited to facts exemplifying this view. Thus while a point of view is important to biography, one should remember Strachey's warning "a point of view, it must be remembered by no means implies sympathy. One might almost say that it implies the reverse".

### **Difficulties of the Biographer**

Biography writing is a Herculean task in which it is extremely difficult to achieve success. According to Carlyle 'A well written Life, is almost as rare as a well spent one.' Nobody is a solid block of virtues or vices. He never remains the same from adolescence to old age. A man's life has several dimensions – physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual. It is not easy to do full justice to all these aspects in a single book. Moreover the thoughts and the feelings that a man successfully conceals may perhaps be important to portray the real man. A biographer cannot guess them and a work based on words and observable deeds may at times have dubious value. There is neither logic in life nor in living and the biographer should avoid building up his central figure as a logical being. He has to rely on small touches successive anecdotes and scraps of evidence to suggest the hero's evolution. As W.H. Dunn says "Perhaps no other form of composition is so difficult no other deals with such elusive material. Other forms of composition deal with thought and emotion, but Biography deals with the source of thought and emotion, with Man himself in his inward and outward manifestations. Who is sufficient for such a task ?"

### **5:14:5 Development of English Biography**

The English biography took a long time to develop and to attain excellence. Boswell's Life of Johnson published in the eighteenth century is the first definitive modern biography. A few biographies were published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Wood, a contemporary of Dryden was the author of the first English biographical dictionary of authors. (1691-92) John Dryden's Life of Plutarch prefatory to a translation of Plutarch's Lives (1683) provides the earliest and most developed description of the genre in English. He says "(In) Biographia or the history of particular men's lives..... all things are circumscribed and driven to a point..... Here you are led into the private lodgings of the hero. You see him in undress, and are made familiar with his most private actions and conversations." Anthony Wood, a contemporary of Dryden was the author of the first English biographical dictionary of authors (1691 – 92). John Aubrey, Wood's assistant, a pioneer of the development of English biographical writing, wrote a collection of lives. These biographies reveal in vivid phrases a feeling for life, a sense of personality and an eye for details.

Izaak Walton was also a major biographer of the seventeenth century. Walton's lives include lives of poets and clerics like John Donne, George Herbert, Richard Hooker and Bishop Sanderson. He gives equal importance to character portrayal as well as narrative technique. Walton's Lives, a forerunner of English biography written in a vivid and charming style makes effective use of sources like letters, poems and wills. But he conceals the weaknesses of his characters and lists only their virtues. Thomas Sprat's Life of Cowley (1668 ) anticipates Johnson's method in the Lives of the poets. Cowley's life, personality and literary works are dealt with in three separate sections.

## 5:14:6 Biography in the Eighteenth Century

Johnson, who assimilated and revised the best elements of earlier biographical tradition became the foremost biographer of the age. He was the first who proclaimed biography as a distinct branch of literature. In his Essay on Biography (in Rambler No 60), he says why narratives of particular persons are important and significant.

“Those parallel circumstances, and kindred images to which we readily conform our minds, are above all other writings, to be found in narratives of the lives of particular persons and therefore no species none can be more delightful or useful, none can more enchain the heart by irresistible interest, or more widely diffuse instruction to every diversity of conditions”. According to Johnson biography is significant mainly because of its powerful psychological effects and ethical uses. Johnson considers a judicious and faithful narration of any life interesting and useful. Thus he expands the field to many possible subjects beyond the rich, royal, famous, infamous or holy.

Johnson wrote biography throughout his career. His Life of Richard Savage was based on personal acquaintance. His lives of the English Poets was based on a lifetime of reading, writing and keen observation of human behaviour. This work marks a significant signpost in the evolution of modern biography. The book contains the lives of forty two English poets from Cowley onwards. Each life has three divisions: biography, character and criticism. Johnson is perfectly at home in the biographical sections, full of interesting anecdotes and personal recollections. Johnson gave importance to personal details and evidence. Letters, autobiographical documents, anecdotes, contemporary accounts (particularly those that precisely revealed the subjects character in an arresting way) - all these were effectively exploited by him. Johnson felt that biographies need not only deal with exciting adventures or important public events. The art of the biographer is ‘to pass slightly over those performances and incidents which produce vulgar greatness, to lead the thought into domestic privacies, and to display the minute details of life.’ Johnson as a biographer pays attention to truth, vivid detail and to psychological insight.

Boswell’s *The Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791) is easily the most famous and brilliant biography of the eighteenth century. It had been his life vocation and he had worked on it for nearly thirty years. Boswell set out to write a life to supplant all other lives of Johnson, past, present and future. Wellread in previous biographies, willing as he said of himself ‘to run half over London in order to fix a date correctly’, a tireless recorder and recreator of conversation, he created a masterpiece, unrivalled in its field. Boswell’s major contribution to modern biography is his emphasis on painstaking primary research. Johnson and Boswell dealt with their materials in different ways. In the case of Johnson all the collected materials passed through his mind which altered, digested and interpreted and presented them.

Boswell’s work is a collection of unaltered primary documents (letters, sayings, conversations, anecdotes) connected by minimal narrative or transition devices provided by the biographer. In spite of this difference they agree on fundamentals. They would agree with the notion of a

biography as the history of an individual, depicted accurately and fully in domestic and other private settings, set in historical and social context, examined skeptically and with sympathy.

### **5:14:7 Biography in the Nineteenth Century**

Robert Southey's lives of Admiral Nelson (1813) and John Wesley (1820) the famous Methodist Preacher are two exemplary biographies of the early nineteenth century. Lockhart's seven-volume Life of Sir Walter Scott (1837-38) was both successful and highly regarded for its thoroughness and attractive style. 'I have endeavored' Lockhart says 'to lay before the reader those parts of Sir Walter's character to which we have access, as they were indicated in his sayings and doings through the long series of his years – making use, wherever it was possible of his own letters and diaries rather than of any other material - but refrained from almost anything of comment. It was my wish to let the character develop itself.'

#### **Biography in the Victorian Age**

Pure biography suffered a set back during the Victorian Age noted for its prudery and emphasis on respectability and forms of politeness. Panegyric and commemoration dominated Victorian biographies. Biographies of the "Life and Times" gave more importance to the historical background. Suppression of human weaknesses and frailties was the trend. For example Dean Stanley's Life of Arnold (1844) tends to revert to hagiography. The biographies of this period were generally lifeless listing of sanitized facts or portraits of improbable goodness. Freud's Carlyle is an exceptional example of a pure biography of the Victorian era. He reacts against the panegyric trend and gives a truthful picture of Carlyle with all his virtues and weaknesses.

### **5:14:8 Biography in the Twentieth Century**

Twentieth Century witnessed a radical reaction against the commemorative and didactic works. Modern Biography tends to become more and more psychological and has the focus on hidden feelings and inner motives and aims at a revelation of the inner life.

Biography has also been influenced by the works of Darwin, Marx, Freud and Carl Jung, thinkers in the field of psychology and sociology. Freud's views of the unconscious and notions of the impact of early childhood, and his conviction that a secret life is going on within us that is only partly under our control" have led to the focus of biographical enquiry on the private, unconscious motivational drives. Our notions of who we are, how we develop and our degrees of self-awareness are profoundly influenced by Freud's Psychoanalysis. We need psychoanalytic insight to become conscious of these processes. Modern biographers can not ignore these psychoanalytic interpretive methods. The genteel Victorian biography gave way to the works of new biographers who show the impact of a period which questioned all conventional thoughts and spiritual beliefs, public and private. These innovative writers gave importance to the following tenets in their radical revisionist works: brevity, skepticism, a commitment to the psychological notions of the unconscious and a belief that a suppression of the complexities of the human psyche serves neither the reader nor the biographical subject. Lytton Strachey, the twentieth century's most controversial biographer and Virginia Woolf were the two representative writers who energetically applied these new concepts in their biographical works.

Lytton Strachey is one of the great modern biographers. His chief biographical works are *Eminent Victorians* (1918), *Queen Victoria* (1921), and *Elizabeth and Essex* (1928). He broke away from the heavy laudatory biographical tradition and instead of treating his subjects as heroes and heroines, he presented them as ordinary men and women of flesh and blood with ordinary foibles of erring humanity. He took off the *Eminent Victorians* (who were the Victorian idols of worship and objects of veneration) off their pedestals and subjected them to critical and objective scrutiny and presented them in their true colours. He displayed the rare skill of making his characters live as men and women. He describes Victoria not as a queen but as a woman with all her virtues and weaknesses. Strachey was a master of brilliant prose style. Its main qualities are clarity, penetration, precision, color, humor and irony. Strachey gave to biographical literature a new life and a new form. Though Strachey's work genuinely invigorated early twentieth century biography, it was also followed by a lot of crude imitations by writers who mistook him as a mere iconoclast or muckraker.

### **5:14:9 To Sum Up:**

Currently biography has become a very popular literary form and innumerable works have appeared on different types of people. The term biography does not indicate a monolithic form and it includes different types. We can broadly classify the current types of biographies in a broadway:

1. Popular biographies of current celebrities - politicians, sports heroes, movie stars.
2. Historical biographies linking the central figures with their times
3. Literary biographies covering the life, personality and sometimes including interpretation of their works.
4. Reference biographies on notable figures including brief entries on several factors such as profession, achievements.
5. Fictional biographies which take factual materials about real people and develop them by applying fictional narrative techniques.

### **5:14:10 Suggested Topics:**

1. The Origin and development of biography as a literary genre
2. Different types and functions of biography
3. The methods and problems in writing a standard biography.

### **5:14:11 Suggested Reading:**

- 1) Catherine Parke : Biography
- 2) Harold Nicolson : The Development of English Biography
- 3) W.H. Dunn : The English Biography
- 4) W.H. Hudson : Introduction to the Study of Literature

**V.S. Venkataramanan**



## Lesson 13

### IRIS MURDOCH - The Sand Castle

#### Structure

- 5:13:1 Objectives
- 5:13:2 Background
- 5:13:3 Writer: Life & Works
- 5:13:4 Analysis
- 5:13:5 Critical Evaluation
- 5:13:6 Summary
- 5:13:7 Technical Terms
- 5:13:8 Model Questions
- 5:13:9 Reference Books

#### 5:13:1 Objectives

1. To give a psychological insight on man's social dilemma in the contemporary society.
2. To provide an insight into the fields of occultism, artistic sensibility and existentialism in the novel the Sand Castle.

#### 5:13:2 Background

The advent of powerful psychological and philosophical movements from the latter half of the nineteenth century, and the traditional and deep-rooted theories regarding, man and life underwent radical changes. Man's hibernating senses were awakened to life by the moral, religious, philosophical and psychological theories, shaking himself free of the compulsory shackles of existence. The autonomy of his consciousness, and the awareness of his moral freedom, revived his slumbering sensibility into a more meaningful existence.

Hegelianism was the phenomenology of the mind, whereby all that exists, must be on a mental plane. Therefore, thought is reality and is a search for truth through dialectic. People could never have imagined that thoughts could play such a vital role in our everyday life. Another destabilising factor was Kant's conception, in his book The Critique of Pure Reason, that reason was the means by which the phenomenon of experience is translated into understanding. This system of ethics gave unprecedented boost to reason, whereby even simple experience is given importance. Two facts which are the basis of existence, thought and reason, have acquired new-found status. In the school of pragmatism, the philosophical theory of C.S. Pierce and William James, expostulated that the meaning of a proposition or a course of action lies in its observable consequences and that the sum of these consequences constitutes its meaning.

William Golding (1901), is a religious novelist of the period deeply concerned with the power of evil in the world, Golding deals with this theme in various topics where good and evil are interwoven, encouraging his readers towards a better form of society. Amidst the literary reorientation Golding firmly directed social consciousness in a religious path, implying man's

spiritual deterioration. He emphasised on the dogma of 'Original Sin' which should make man realize that he should transcend from the demoralised state he had created for himself.

Craham Greene (1904) is the novelist whose religious leanings widely prevail in his philosophy of life. If the reader is a believer, then will he comfortably go through the novel with faith in his heart. To him, the excitement of modern trends of living are devoid of God's presence, which makes life vacuous. His metaphysical concepts are mainly to induce a degree of stability and religious zeal in the mindless existence of individuals. The theme underlying his creativity was that life without God, would definitely be discordant and apparent successes in truth, would be failures.

Of the notable women novelists are Rebecca West (1892), Rose Macaulay (1891), Rosamond Lehmann, besides many others. The intelligent and psychological assessments of their protagonists are indeed thought provoking. With their intuitive sensibilities and powerful perceptive abilities they have successfully created a commendable position in the hierarchy of English literature.

Ivy Compton Burnett (1892-1969) has persisted in the Edwardian themes of her novels, wherein the 'family' with its inherent happenings and situation of its members, have been accounted for. Routine familial emotions of love, hate, jealousy and interrelated tendencies of degenerated morals and scruples have been encompassed very adroitly in a limited span of time. She does not entertain moral strictures in her art, but the sarcastic targets are aimed consistently at the hypocritical practices in society. Good and evil are inevitable postulates of society, which have to be counteracted with fraternal love.

Elizabeth Bowen (1899) is an author of infinite sensibility, whose writings are ephemeral and sensitive quite at par with Virginia Woolf. She delves into the inner truth of the universe and intense human emotion on a realistic plane. The lonely heart groping for an emotional grip is portrayed in contrast to the deriding conformities and hypocrisies of society. Elizabeth Bowen is a sensitive writer portraying her sensibility on the lions of truth and reality.

Doris Lessing (1919) revolted against social discrepancies, with sufficient zeal and intensity. Blessed with a courageous personality, a penchant for truth and an intuitive nature she projects her conviction with confidence and élan.

Rish Murdoch (1919) is a teacher at the Oxford University. She is a philosopher and like Lessing, portrays angry individuals protesting against conventional society. Her psychological insight of man's social dilemma is equally pathetic and comic. She interweaves her themes with an old world atmosphere of gothic times. Existentialism is an intricate configuration of her narrations.

### **5:13:3. Writer – Life & Works**

#### **Life:**

Iris Murdoch is a writer and philosopher of great renown in the contemporary literature, She did not entertain gender roles and preferred to be known as an individual. Born in 1919, she

had obviously witnessed the flood of suffragettes literature demanding advocacy of equal rights. Murdoch claims in one of her lectures at Morley College: The novel is about accepting truth and living with a more realistic view of oneself and other people. “This moral concern together with her joyful inventiveness makes Murdoch a major British novelist”.

Iris Murdoch was born in Dublin. Her mother was a professional singer, a talent she forsook for marriage at the tender age of eighteen. Her father was gentle by nature and had a great fascination for books. She spent all her life in London and visited Ireland during her vacation. She descended from the Anglo-Irish stock and though they were staunch Protestants, religion was never attractive to them. She was blessed with a happy childhood and her father’s preoccupation with books apparently had a positive influence on Murdoch. She had a successful college and University education where she excelled in philosophy. She was also interested in ancient history and classics, which answers for her interest in mysticism, historical digressions like Gothic culture and mythical reference. In 1947 she organized the Sarah Smithson studentship in philosophy at Newnham, Cambridge. She also saw a total breakdown of human society and thus we often encounter refugees and homeless persons in her novels. Murdoch incessantly struggles with the notion to either enchain her protagonists or give them absolute freedom. But what prevails in her mind, as she expressed in the 1982 Gifford Lectures is:

In good art we do not ask for realism: We ask for truth.

Murdoch firmly believes in facing reality, even though she interlaces her plots with fantasy and mysticism. Her philosophical foundation enables her to transcend certain barriers and explore at her will. She projected eerie symbols in order to portray evil in man. Her fabulous fantasies denoted man’s limitless imagination. Fantasy references have been alluded to in a number of novels like The Sea, The Nice and The Good, The Good Apprentice and The Sandcastle. Black magic and occultism have been encountered in The Good Apprentice and The Sandcastle, which indicates strange characteristics in abnormal individuals which fail to be analysed. It is believed that magic and mysticism have originated from the East, and have been invested with spiritual powers. Peter J. Conradi felt that myth is inescapable:

The mythical is not something ‘extra’: we live in myth and symbol all the time. The novelist must use myth and magic to liberate us from myth and magic ... we are all symbol-makers, story-tellers, she has repeatedly asserted.

Murdoch’s themes have centered around related aspects of our personality, embodying them individually in her protagonists with all of them thirsting for emotional attachment. Certain individuals are so involved with their selfish natures, that they fail to realize this fundamental need. The author’s religious views are radical by nature. To be good is to lead a religious life without the customary rituals and may be in time to do away with God himself. In a nutshell, live the present moment as it should be lived satisfying us morally and spiritually.

Love plays a pivotal role in her novels. It is central to any relationship especially in marriage where an element of romance lends emotional security and permanence to the alliance. It is through love that one’s hidden qualities are revealed, because an individual desires to retain this special emotion against all odds, as true love is a rare phenomenon. Murdoch has

represented individual from a realistic point of view by respecting the individuality of each person. A.S. Byatt, in her book, *Degrees of Freedom* considers 'Against Drayness' as the most compelling defence of liberalism of various individuals struggling in society.

#### **Works:**

Under the Net (1954) It is the story of Jake Donaghys, who discovers the joys and retries of life through wild and comic adventures inording conterual misunderstanding of other people.

The Bell (1958) involves a variety of ordinary characters who retreat to a monastery of escape human limitation and failures indurdually working out their destinies.

A Severed Head (1961) is a remarkably effecture comic account of the same efforts to understand human nature and gearing for freedom.

The Unicorn (1963) is a philosophical work concerned with the ambiguities of relationship

The Time of the Angles (1966), a metaphical novel, like the unicous, questioning the presence of God, and exploring sensationally on a Gothic note, the nature of evil.

An Accidental Man (1971) focuses on the contrast between the search for love and the search for power through a kind of parallel novel within – a – novel

The Philosopher's Pupil (1983) presents a didactic allegorical struggle between good and evil.

### **5:13:4 Analysis**

#### **Plot:**

The Sandcastle is the story of a sensitive and serene, middle-aged schoolmaster named Mor. His Wife Nan considered herself to be infinitely superior to her husband. They had two school going children, who were immersed in their own affairs and as such, Mor constantly discerned a void in his being. A young painter named Rain was invited to paint a portrait and Mor was enchanted by her somplicity. Fate contrived against their union and Mor was once again trapped by the denizens of his lonely soul. The novel commences on a note of conflict. Nan thought that five hundred guineas was too much for a portrait. Mor seemed to disagree, possessing an artistic sensibility where art could never be evaluated with wealth. Murdoch, very ingeniously informs us about the incompatibility of the couple even in the fundamental values of life. She juxtaposed this difference with the severe heat outside and the cold lunch that Nan placed on the table. At the moment, her irritable mood was directed at her absent children, who had begun to tell lies quite often. Mor was brought up as a Methodist and believed profoundly in absolute truthfulness. Even though he held no religious views, it pained him to see religion totally absent in his children.

Mor's academic inclinations governed his interests and he wished that both his children, too, would be appropriately inclined. Nan insisted that their daughter Felicity be a professional

typist. When he differed she called him a dreamer and demanded that he become bit more of a realist, for sentiment was never one of her strong points. In his own gentle manner he voiced his opinion since he desired Felicity to take up a respectable profession, his son Dan to join college and his wife to take up German lessons and other academic activities. His friend Tim Burke, a goldsmith by trade, was keen that Mor contest for the M.P.'s seat as a local candidate. Non disagreed violently and taunted him regarding his monetary and intellectual capacity- '... you haven't the personality to be a public man. You'd much better get on with writing that school book'.

St. Bridels School where Mor was a housemaster, was a neo-Gothic building, with an impressive tower. Demoyte, the Headmaster lived in Braylings Castle which was a beautiful Georgian house. More could have succeeded him but since he did not possess the nominal faith of an Anglican, the Headship was refused to him by the Governors of the school. Demoyte was disappointed, as he was aware of Mor's intelligence and his administrative capacity. Demoyte was an extremely outspoken man and he voiced his passionate hatred for marriage very plainly:

Marriage is an organized selfishness with the blessing of society. How hardly shall a married person enter the kingdom of Heaven! "or" A married couple is a dangerous machine!

Nan heartily disliked Demoyte, which he, too, happily reciprocated. She vent her spleen of Mor on such occasions and he pretended to agree with her. There was to be a dinner at Demoyte's place in honour of Miss Rain Carter, the portrait painter. Demoyte's drawing room was a perpetual source of pleasure to Mor. His whole being synthesised with the red and good of the room strewn carelessly, but artistically with expensive ornaments, carpets and rings. "He let the colours enter into him. He rested". Here he met the boyish little artist scrutinizing the beautiful Persian carpet. She was startled, 'and he became for an instant acutely aware of what the girl was seeing: 'a tall middle aged schoolmaster, with a twisted face and the grey coming in his hair!'" Then in unison they appreciated the beautiful Shiraz carpet and 'he caressed it for a moment'.

The mysterious element of the novel has been supplied by Felicity's penchant for supernatural practices. Their dead dog Liffey appeared whenever she called out to him. She decided to visit her brother Donald at St. Brides, despite the prohibitory orders of the school. Liffey stayed far from human habitation because she now belonged to the infernal domain. A missing slug has made Felicity tearful and defiant, and despite the risks involved, she arrived secretly to her brother's rood. He shared this room with his friend Jimmy Carde. Felicity saw Donald's supersonic whistle, they discussed Miss Carter and finally she became aware of Donald's plans to scale the precarious neo-gothic tower of St. Brides. She discouraged him and suddenly Don suggested as an alternative that they play the Power Game. Felicity has originated this game, which in truth was eclectic witchcraft. They would purloin various articles form the victim which were to be utilized in the Power Game. Donald jokingly suggested Miss 'Thingummy' Garter as the first victim. Felicity reminded him of Liffey and Angus, who has participated earlier in these Power raids. Felicity on her way out suddenly identified Angus. He was in the form of a gypsy, frightening and grave, and a weird aura surrounded him. Felicity presumed that divine, beings had to manifest themselves in disconcerting forms. Donald and

Felicity managed to slip into Miss Carter's room at Mr. Demoyte's house and while they rummaged around for a pair of stockings, Felicity discovered the letter that Mor had writtend to Miss Carter. A little later, they sat in the fields.

Tears of blood said Felicity. This was an ancient ritual. Without a word Donald drew a razor form his pocket and handed it to her. Carefully she made a tiny slit beneath each eye. Both the Mor children could weep at will. A moment later mingled tears and blood were coursing down their cheeks.

Apparently Rain was doomed, burning in the hell fires of utter loneliness as her desire has been predestined to he crushed by the powers of Satan. She would be permanently alienated and the agony of separation from her love would crush her. The recent demise of Rain's father had caused immeasurable heartbreak and this lacunae which created a void similar to Mor's felling of emptiness had been replenished with a sense of belonging. Fortunately More too possessed an aesthetic sensibility, and his gentle nature and simplicity had attracted her and a rapport was instinctively established.

Mor and Rain were equally in a state of torment as the portrait was nearing completion, and the date of the presentation dinner had been fixed. More envisioned himself and Rain together, enriching each other by their love. Suddenly Mor "wanted to be the new person that she had made of him, the free and creative, joyful and loving person that she conjured up, striking this miraculous thing out of dullness".

An important event was Mor saving Don's life when he had attempted to climb the Gothic towers. Nan's last minute desperation to retrieve her marriage by announcing in the annual dinner about the ambition of her husband to be a member of parliament Rain told Mor that she did not intend to wreck his family and his future. Mor's dream for new lease of life had been struck down by destiny, his wife's treachery and felicity's black magic.

### **The Sand castle as a gothic novel**

The intellectual background of the twentieth century is very different from giving an account of the ideas of the preceding eras of the evolution of English literature. With science taking its rapid steps and with the complex philosophic ideas, philosophers like Nietzsche and creative writers like Yeats and It is Murdoch believed in the eternal recurrence of human history. Thus, when human society reaches a certain state of civilization, it collapses into primitivism, to emerge into various forms.

Iris Murdoch's Gothic novels are crucial to the understanding of the treatment of evil, the dangers of fantasy and the problem of the discovery of others which is the only means to achieve human communion. It is through these powerful images, that Murdoch has captured the moral and emotional failure of the age. For example, the demonic extension of selfishness and ruthlessness, manifesting modern existential man when defines his own values. Thus, her characters are in a fruitless search for truth, even who their visions are in conflict. They are not highly articulate, but are interesting, with the recurring theme of the struggle of love against the many guises evil in every day life. In The Sandcastle, we see the dichotomized version between the ruthless tyrant (Nan, Felicity, Donald) and the sacrificed victims (Mor and Rain).

The 'Sandcastle' is Gothic in its structure and technique. The 'Goths' were a Germanic tribe of medieval times. The Gothic novel is a type of romantic fiction which was popular in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Horace Walpole's 'Castle of Otrante. A Gothic Story', was the first novel in this category. The setting of these novel, were often gloomy, mysterious with Sartonal and supernatural experiences. The neo-Gothic structure of the St. Bride's School, with its pointed arches and vaults form the basic setting of The Sandcastle.

The Hanged man symbolizes the hanged craze of reality that separates Mor and Rain. Fatuity's tarot cards, her black magic ritual and the gipsy signify separation and agony. The title 'The Sandcastle', depicts the futility of the relationship of Mor and Rain, which would ultimately disintegrate like a sandcastle, with the existential tides of life.

In The Sandcastle occultism is integral to the plot, which provides the dynamic tension and metaphysical meaning where Felicity is a modern representation of Faust. Nan's character may be represented as an allegory of power, seeking control by whatever means. Rain and Mor have tread into a world of love, making themselves into dream objects of their own, which fragmented with the onslaught of evil. They are back to the world of strife and illusions. This three part structure novel concludes with Murdoch's philosophy of human life being a pilgrimage, away from fantasy towards reality.

Randall Stevenson in 'A Reader's Guide To the Twentieth Century Novel in Britain', writes, "Yet while sharing something of Golding's concern with morality, Murdoch's fiction treats it in ways almost contrary to his use of fable and allegory".

Murdoch derives from Simone Weil, that "all theorizing is flight. We must be ruled by the situation itself and this is unutterably particular."

Thus, in the conclusion of The Sandcastle, the separation of Mor and Rain, which means that Mor will continue to survive with his family, Thus, he is reverted to his original social self of the isolated, untranscended existential hero, rooted to his fate. Thus we are reverted to Murdoch's metaphor of "Moral truth' and 'the solidity of the normal'. Her plots have been defined as a internecine conflict between real people and fantasy which she describes as "Games-playing". She treads into forbidden areas, and the reader witnesses subversive activities like black magic etc. The dramatic and sensational effects have been heightened by the gothic elements in the narrative. These aspects also symbolize man's monstrous and destructive nature, but simultaneously representing the mysterious regions of our existence. Her philosophical and artistic language at times utilize the Stream of Consciousness techniques to evolve the thoughts more naturally.

John Fletcher in "Iris Murdoch's Fictional Universe", writes infact it is uncanny how close Murdoch is to the spirit of the times. Her moral toughness and contempt for easy consolations is typical of the political 'New realism' of the 1980's.

Lorna Sage in "The Pursuit of Imperfection" writes that, Murdoch has depth, but like the depth of her favorite paintings, it is limited and illusory ... It's this ignorance, this luring in separate worlds, that seems to Iris Murdoch to pose the central problems in art and morality.

### **Theme of Alienation**

According to the renowned twentieth century philosopher and litterateur, Jean=Paul Sartre, man is born free and it is he who will determine the mode of his existence. He himself develops his personality, his values, etc. and lives his life accordingly. Minimum interaction is inevitable as he is a part of society. But every person is by birth a free individual, and this birthright is meant to be executed. He is not destined to be shackled like wild animals, but ought to be free to lead his own life and take independent decisions. Mor's life depresses him because it is without any purpose, as he is just a figurehead, a role playing individual, whose normal condition was spiritual loneliness. He has been contained by his family in a particular position leading to nothingness. Mor's personal responsibility had been faithfully adhered to, but his spirit will not concede to perpetual enchainment. This timeless imprisonment culminated in revolt. Murdoch, thus very effectively projects the restlessness, insecurity and impermanence of man's nature focused upon in Sartre's existentialistic philosophy.

Mor's arid lifestyle was devoid of art or any such moments of real joy, because he was tied to a rational, egoistic and selfish women, who was not even aware of Mor's artistic sensibility. Her dominance and superciliousness dissipated his enthusiasm and created a docile individual, always reaching out to her even at the cost of his self-respect and personal peace. In time he was transformed into a mindless individual, dreading opposition at every step that he ventured to take. His helpless, lonely and tortured existence has been adroitly reflected by the author. Mor's agony has been translated into words and his acute need for solace and understanding cannot go unapprehended. His miserable family life and pitiable emotional turmoil went unheeded by his wife and children. His sensitive soul suffered in silence, while keeping up the pretence of a happy and well-adjusted him.

In Rain's company, these thoughts emerged with great clarity, more intelligible and no longer terrifying:

He walked and talked, and as he did so his heart was lightened as never before. He was able, little, to explain how in the long years Nan had frustrated him, breaking within him piece by piece the structure of his own desires. He was able to explain how and why it was that he no longer loved his wife. As he spoke of this Mor felt suddenly present to him the anger which was the tremendous counterpart of so long and so minute an oppression, and which, because in the end he had been afraid of Non, he had always concealed even from himself. It was a great anger as it rose within him, complete, as if of the memory were by some miracle retained within it of every smallest slight and every mockery, and it brought with it a great strength. Mor did it welcome.

Miss Carter too was a lovely person from her very childhood. People are like the grains of sand cemented together by some medium to form a solid whole. The social infrastructure coheres all individuals, which is necessary for physical survival. Since man has a mind of his



own, thoughts are more real to him than simple existence. He creates an inner world of existence wherein he can configurate his feelings, emotions and desires, and introduce an element of truth in his routine materialistic life. But when an individual fails to relate him self with the world outside, he experiences extreme loneliness and feels alienated from his environment.

Freud was of the opinion that intellectual awareness led to the disentanglement of physical fetters. It is the mind which is the hub of man's existence. Mor and Rain's relationship was purely on an intellectual and emotional plane, whereby physical contact was not the focal point of their union. Therefore it was the consciousness of these two individuals which played the major role and to foster individuality, one has to have the requisite courage. If society conceded to their lives based on a mental plane, then alienation could be sublimated. Their love was founded on simplicity and an inner truth, which both comprehended in the short span of their togetherness.

Occultism deals with supernatural influences. Rain's premonition of evil was represented by the gypsy woockutter, a haunting Saul from the nether world. Then felicity's black magic ureated an Ominous atmosphere in the novel.

Murdoch has woven an clement of black magic in her narration and the witch's role has been invested on Felicity. Her brother Donald was not an active participant at present, and of late discouraged Felicity to indulge in these ocular activities. These ancient rituals radiated an eerie sensation and never contributed peace or happiness. Children who drew blood for fun and games prophesied only evil and nothing good came of it.

Murdoch can tackle happiness "that deep, confiding slow retationship to time". She created the protagonist of *The Sandcastle* according to her modern vision of religion, deleting dogmas where spirituality denoted goodness. Thus Mor was a sincere and simple soul but solitary even amidst company and his own family.

Mor's values were Kierkegaardian in spirit as he advocated the theory that truth was supreme. Rituals and dogmas which were so vital to Christianity was of no consequence to Mor. Albert Camus, the Chief exponent of modern existentialism was concerned with man's spiritual character and his position in society. Similarly, Mor's faith revolved around infallible truth instead of the farcical rites of the priests and his congregation. Then there was Liffey, the Golden Retriever, who was dead but continued to be the only bond between Mor and Nan. Nan was a born cynic and sarcastic to the core of her being. Mor realized that she was not vulnerable, and was undoubtedly the stronger of the two. Her strength lay in unreasonable obstinacy.

Alienation is a negative stance, which should be transcended to realize a minimum relationship with the external world. Rain confesses that she had attempted to make sandcastles, but had failed to establish rapport. She was of the opinion that the Mediterranean beach is too dry and dirty to play on and the tides never wash the sand or make it firm. Our present day society has been embodied in this description, where individuals have become corrupt and self-centred, social values and morals have degenerated and only self-centred individuals thrived with their selfish and materialistic designs. Murdoch has brought together these two artistic, sensitive and lonely souls, who are languishing in the fortresses of their beings. Their goals, desires and

even thoughts were like sandcastles, tenderly nurtured in their hearts, but which were rudely washed away by social conventions. Their natures were woven with innocent simplicity and artistic sensibility and were too frail to counteract the external forces of life which required a tough and a hardliner attitude. Nature and all things beautiful were their source of joy and happiness, where they found solace and interacted perfectly and in harmony with life.

### **5:13:5 Critical Evaluation:**

In The Sandcastle, one's moral endeavor is best seen as an attempt to overcome illusion and selfish fantasy in order to respond to reality. Murdoch may condemn the consolations of self pity and resentment in her philosophical writings, but they form the crux of this novel. As Elizabeth Dipple in Iris Murdoch: Work for the Spent Opines, "She works with powerful paradoxes because she is" brave, even audacious, venturing into areas we fight to avoid. Thus a doomed love affair, interwoven with gothic towers, witchcraft and mysticism seems up The Sandcastle. In an essay on present quandaries, 'Against Deyness', she writes that the human condition is the business of the novelist to-day and it is hers too as philosopher and novelist.

J. Conradi's 'The Saint and the Artist: A Study of The Fiction of Iris Murdoch, was in part an intellectual biography she had introduced him to Buddhism and he had lent her Heidegger's volumes on Nietzsche, partially resulting in her collected essays Existentialists and Mystics. Iris Murdoch was responsive to the philosopher Dorothy Emmet, who spoke for the need of a rapport between religion and philosophy The Bell expresses such a concern in a post-theistic age. This reflects the author's personal quest for peace at some point in her life. The Bell is her first novel to be fuelled by Platonism in which Good substitutes for God, including appreciation of the visual arts. This novel marked Iris as 'the foremost novelist of her generation' by the new statesman. A.S. Byatt's British Council pamphlet on Iris in 1976, saw a conflict between her desire to have a strong apprehensible shape ... leading to her 'closed' Gothic novels. "(The Sandcastle, The Unicorn) Iris was aloof and largely voiceless about her own life. Peter J. Conradi in Iris Murdoch: A Life writes, "A discontinuous sense of being shows when she rediscovers her early journals, and is always surprised by the protean selves she finds therein: and discontinuity itself is a theme that needs exploring ... Her best work came out of struggle, discontinuity and self-division.

John Fletcher in "Iris Murdoch's fictional universe" writes, "In fact, it is uncanny how close Murdoch is to the spirit of the times. Her moral toughness and contempt for easy consolations is typical of the political 'new realism' of the 1980's.

Lorna Sage in "The Pursuit of Imperfection" writes that, "Murdoch has depth, but like the depth of her favourite paintings, it is limited and illusory . . . It's their ignorance, this living in separate worlds, that seems to Iris Murdoch to pose the central problems in art and morality".

Zohreh T. Sullivan, The Contracting universe of Iris Murdoch's Gothic Novels, As a novelist she dramatizes her ethereal concerns by increasingly demonizing the existentialist, solipsistic hero who rejects the 'messy reality' of involvement with others, in order to pursue what he perversely sees as freedom ... 'Murdoch's' concept of community, is realized, therefore, only within a nexus of morality, imagination, selflessness and love.

Malcolm Bradbury in "The Semi-Isle" Iris Murdoch "lets her novel accumulate its form, acquire its mystenes, its form, its magic, Its pattern. Then she lets it disowe again slowly, into chatter and ordinariness. Magic does not shrink reality ..."

Francis King in "Love's Speel of Black Magic" "Magic and supernatural run, two luried threads, throughout a loosely woven book"

"As always miss murdoch produces passages that simply take the breath away, no other turning English writer is capable of them."

Joyce Carol Oates in the New Republics: "Though Iris Murdoch has defined the highest as that which reveals and honours the minute, 'random' details of the world and reveals it together with a sense of its integhty, its unity, and form, her own ambitions, disturbing and early eccentric novels are strchomythic structures in which ideas, not things, and certainly not human beings. Flaurish."

Interview with Anthony Curtis, Radio – 4th August, 1981. "I take a Buddhist view it is difficult to overestimate the amount of illusion in any human soul. Art is to do with the clarification of illusion and movement towards reality".

### **5:13:6 Summary**

It is Murdoch in her novel The Sandcastle has realistically portrayed man's existential struggle interlacing fantasy and mysticism in the plot. She has projected the protagonist thirsting for emotional attachment from his family but found it in the young and affectionate artist, Rain. Murdoch's philosophical approach helps her to explore evil, greed and selfishness in human beings. Finally, Mor's dream for a new lease of life was struck down by destiny, his wife's treachery and Felicity black magic.

### **5:13:7 Technical Terms**

Protean – readily taking on different forms or characteristics, changeable.

Allegary – the symbolic representation of a subject in a story, using the portrayed character to illustrate deeper truths.

Demonic – motivated by a spiritual force; fiendish.

Didactie – inclined to teach or moralise.

Existential – depicts the uniqueness and isolation of human experience in an indifferent universe.

Fantasy – Dramatic fiction characterized by fanciful, weird or supernatural elements.

Occultism – Belief in supernatural powers and the possibility of bringing them under human control.

Magic – The practice of using charms, spells or rituals to attempt to produce supernatural effect or to control events.

Paradox – a person, situation or action exhibiting inexplicable or contradictory aspects.

### 5:13:8 Model Questions

1. Examine how bare factual reality and artistic reality is central to Murdoch's The Sandcastle.
2. Murdoch's The Sandcastle reflects the eternal struggle of individuals to create their won space. How far did the protagonists succeed?
3. Write a comprehensive essay on the them of The Sandcastle
4. Explain the significance of the title, The Sandcastle.
5. Trace the psychological nature of relationship between Mor and Rain
6. Comment on Murdoch's fictional techniques in The Sandcastle.
7. Bring out the element of pathos in the lives of Mor and Rain.
8. Love plays a pivotal role in Murdoch's The Sandcastle, as in her other novels. Do you agree?
9. Write an essay on the Gothie culture and mystical references as is evident in The Sandcastle.
10. Murdoch firmly believes in facing reality, even though she interlaces her plots with fantasy and mystieism. Explain with reference to The Sandcastle.

### 5:13:9 Reference Books

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## Lesson – 15

# Lytton Strachey – Eminent Victorians

### Contents

- 5:15:1 Objective
- 5:15:2 Lytton Strachey : Background
- 5:15:3 Lytton Strachey : His Life and Works
- 5:15:4 Eminent Victorians – An Introduction
- 5:15:5 Analysis of the text
- 5:15:6 Evaluation of the text
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### 5:15:1 Objectives:

1. To introduce the students to Lytton Strachey the bio-grapher.
2. To familiarize them with the four personalities dealt with in the text.
3. To make them understand, appreciate and evaluate Strachey's views on the four eminent Victorian personalities.

### 5:15:2 Lytton Strachey – Background:

Lytton Strachey is the chief figure among the biographers of the early twentieth century. Many questions were raised during Strachey's own life time and later, about his credentials as a biographer. As George Sampson describes him, "Strachey cannot be seriously considered either a biographer or a novelist, either a historian or a writer of fiction, but rather some curious species between the two – which we can call either "biographical novelist" or 'fictorian" (to coin a new word)".

Strachey was one of the original members of the Bloomsbury Group. Virginia Woolf dedicated her Common Reader to him. Strachey had a passion for the eighteenth century and contempt for the Victorian age. His best work Eminent Victorians clearly reveals his contempt for the Victorian values. The most important single book which influenced the writing of Eminent Victorians was Samuel Butler's novel, The Way of All Flesh. To this novel, Eminent Victorians owes its general tone and some of its characteristics of style.

### 5:15:3 Lytton Strachey – His Life and Works:

Giles Lytton Strachey was born in London on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, 1888 as the fourth son of the five sons of Lieut-General Sir Richard Strachey. Jane Maria, Lytton Strachey's mother, was

a woman of wide culture and some literary ability. She took pains to foster in her son the taste for literature which he began to manifest at an unusually early age.

He had his early education from Abbotsholme School, Derbyshire and Leamington College. He then studied history for two years at Liverpool University from where he went up to Trinity College in 1899. It was here that Strachey made his life-long friendships with most of the distinguished men who were later to be associated with him in the “Bloomsbury Group” of artists and intellectuals.

On leaving Trinity College, he took up residence in London and started working regularly for The Spectator. Simultaneously, he also contributed to The Edinburgh and New Quarterly Reviews. He drew intellectual inspiration from the Bloomsbury circle which began to meet in Gordon Square and Fitzroy Square.

Lytton Strachey was a prominent member of the Bloomsbury Group in London. This was the name given to a group of friends – writers, artists and intellectuals – who began meeting in about 1905 at the Bloomsbury house of the Stephan sisters, Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf. Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf, Maynard Keynes, E.M. Forster, G.E. Moore, Desmond Mac Carthy, David Garnett, Lady Ottoline Morrall and others were all associated with the Bloomsbury Group.

Although the members of the group denied being ‘a group’ in any formal sense, they were united in an abiding belief in the importance of the arts. Their philosophy can best be summarized in Moore’s statement that “one’s prime objects in life were love, the creation and enjoyment of arsthetic experience and the pursuit of knowledge.”

Strachey and his friends were skeptical and yet tolerant, when they reacted against the artistic and social restraints of Victorian society. Through writing (biography, novels, art criticism, economics, political theory), painting, publishing and support of new developments in the arts, the Bloomsbury Group exercised a considerable influence on the whole he ‘*avant-garde*’ of the early twentieth century. Accused of intellectual elitism, the Groups reputation faltered in the 1940s and 1950s, but from the 1960s critical interest in their achievements began to revive.

In 1904, Strachey became a reviewer for The Spectator. He also contributed to The Edinburgh Review, The Nation and The Athenaeum. He published two collections of verse, Prolusions Academicase (1902) and Euphrosyne (1905). His first book Landmarks in French Literature was published in 1912 for the Home University Library series.

Strachey was a conscientious objector during the first World War and he gave up his attempt to make an academic career. His Eminent Victorians was followed in 1921 by Queen Victoria and by Elizabeth and Essex in 1928. All three are biographies. Strachey’s preeminence as a writer derives principally from his work as a biographer, although the essays and criticism constitute almost half of his work.

The University of Edinburgh conferred on him the honorary degree of L.L.D. in 1926. He never married and he died of cancer on January 21, 1932 at Hungerford.

## 5:15:4 Eminent Victorians – An Introduction:

Eminent Victorians is a biographical work dealing with the lives of four eminent personalities of the Victorian period. The four lives dealt with in the book are those of Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Dr. Arnold and General Gordon.

Strachey took six years to complete the book. He began it in 1912 and finished it in 1918. Strachey's main intention in writing Eminent Victorians, to express it in his own words, was 'to present some Victorian visions to the modern eye? It would be relevant here to examine what Strachey himself had said in his preface about the book:

I have attempted, through the medium of biography, to present some Victorian visions to the modern eye. . . . It has been my purpose to illustrate rather than to explain. It would have been futile to hope to tell even a précis of the truth about the Victorian age, for the shortest précis must fill innumerable volumes. But, in the lives of an ecclesiastic, an educational authority, a woman of action, and a man of adventure, I have sought to examine and elucidate certain fragments of the truth which took my fancy and lay to my hand.

Let us now familiarize our selves with the four personalities Strachey deals with the Eminent Victorians. It becomes indispensable for us to know a few biographical facts about Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Dr. Arnold and General Gordon as it is their lives that the book is concerned with.

**Cardinal Manning:** Henry Edward Manning was born on July 15, 1808 and died on January 14, 1892. He was a member of the Oxford movement, which sought a return of the Church of England to the high-church ideals of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Manning converted to Roman Catholicism and became archbishop of Westminster. The son of a banker and Member of Parliament, he was ordained priest in the Church of England in 1833 and he became the archdeacon of Chi Chester in 1840. Manning's attraction to Roman Catholicism was based on his opposition to government interference in ecclesiastical affairs. Manning was received into the Roman Catholic Church in 1851 and was ordained priest in the same year. His rapid rise in the Church culminated in his appointment as archbishop of Westminster in 1865 and his elevation to the rank of cardinal in 1875. As archbishop, Manning was a vigorous builder of Catholic schools and other institutions. He accused Henry Newman of minimizing the authority of Rome.

### **Florence Nightingale:**

Florence Nightingale was born on May 12, 1820 as the second daughter of William Edward Nightingale and Frances Smith. She grew up in Derbyshire, Hampshire and London where her well-to-do family maintained comfortable homes. She was educated largely by her father, who taught her Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian, History, Philosophy and Mathematics. She read widely in many languages throughout her life. On February 7, 1837, she believed that she heard the voice of God informing her that she had a mission, but it was not until nine years later that she realized what that mission was. Meanwhile, she strove to escape to a life of her own. Her proposal to study Nursing at a hospital was scotched. In 1846, a friend sent Miss Nightingale the Year Book of the Institution of Protestant Deaconesses at

Kaiserswerth, Germany, which trained country girls of good character to nurse the sick. Four years later she entered the institution and went through the full course of training as a nurse.

In 1853 she was appointed as the superintendent of the Institution for the care of sick gentlewomen, in London. The changes that she made and her administration were very successful. But she yearned for a wider field; by January 1854 she was referring to the institution as “this little molehill.”

When the Crimean War broke out in March 1854, the British conscience was dismayed by graphic reports of the disgraceful conditions suffered by the sick and wounded British soldiers. Women were urged to serve as nurses like the French Sisters of Charity. Miss Nightingale volunteered at once to leave in three days for Constantinople, taking three nurses with her. Meanwhile, she was officially approached by her old friend, the then Secretary of State for war, Sidney Herbert to take out a much larger party of nurses. She was to have complete charge of the nursing in the military hospitals in Turkey (i.e. at Scutari). The party entered the Barrack Hospital at Scutari on November 5, 1854.

On her party's arrival, she found that they had no decent facilities at all there. Their quarters were infested with fleas and rats, and the water allowance was one pint per head per day for all purposes. She had to use the provisions brought with her. The doctors were hostile and at first the nurses were not allowed in the wards. But by the end of the year, surmounting most of the difficulties, she was purveying the hospital. She was harassed by the cares of administration, a vast correspondence, the writing of numerous official and private reports, as well as by the insubordination of her nurses. After 8.00 p.m. she would allow no woman in to the wards except herself. Each night, she made her rounds, giving comfort and advice and establishing the wounded soldiers' conception of “The Lady with the Lamp”.

By May 1855, nursing the sick became Nightingale's secondary interest and her prime concern now was the welfare of the British Army. She now transferred herself and some of her nurses to the Crimea.

Shortly after the last patient left the Barrack Hospital, Miss Nightingale sailed for England, where she had long been a National hero. But she refused official transport, home and every kind of public reception. Miss Nightingale had now started working on the improvement of health, living conditions and food of the British soldier. In October 1856, she had a long interview with Queen Victoria and Lord Panmure.

As a result of her interview, the Royal Commission on the Health of the Army was appointed in May 1857. The major consequence of the Commission's activities was the foundation of the Army Medical School in 1857. The Indian Mutiny in the same year turned Nightingale's interest to the health of the Army in India.

Meanwhile, she used the Nightingale fund to establish the Nightingale School for Nurses at St. Thomas's Hospital – the first of its kind in the world.



Within a few years she was largely instrumental in inaugurating training for midwives and for nurses in workhouse infirmaries. All these works were accomplished by a woman who became an invalid in 1857. Her correspondence was enormous. Lying on her couch year after year, she received innumerable visitors, from the highest to the humblest. She drove her influential friends to obtain for her those things that she felt her cause needed.

It has never been shown that Florence Nightingale had any organic illness; her invalidism may have been partly neurotic and partly intentional. By this apparent stratagem she was able to devote herself night and day to the task at hand. Her sight gradually failed until in 1901 she became completely blind. In 1907, the king conferred on her the order of merit – the first woman ever to receive it. She died on August 13, 1910.

**Dr. Thomas Arnold** (1795 – 1842) was a well known educator and historian of the Victorian period. He was the father of the famous Victorian poet and critic, Matthew Arnold. Born in the Isle of Wight and educated at Winchester college and Corpus Christi College, Oxford, Arnold became a Fellow of Oriel College in 1815. In 1828 he was appointed the headmaster of Rugby School. He strove, with his characteristic energy, to raise the standards and reputation of the school. Arnold's regime stressed the importance of classical education and, particularly, religious training; its purpose was to develop the boys' sense of duty and their character. Its success made Rugby the first choice of middle-class parents seeking a public school for their sons. In a larger sense, Rugby school became the model for the English public-school system in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The sole credit of turning the Rugby School from a state of decline to the rank of a great public school goes entirely to Dr. Arnold. He was held in great personal veneration by his pupils, who included his son Matthew Arnold, Clough, A.P. Stanley and Hughes, author of Tom Brown's Schooldays. A broad Churchman, he wrote in favour of Church reform and Catholic emancipation. He attacked the Tractarians of the Oxford Movement. He was the author of several works on Roman history.

### **General Gordon:**

Charles George Gordon was born on January 28, 1833 near London and died on January 26, 1885 in Sudan. He was a British General who became a national hero for his exploits in China and his ill-fated defence of Khartoum against Sudanese rebels.

The son of an artillery officer, Gordon was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Royal Engineers in 1852. During the Crimean War (1853-56) he distinguished himself by his reckless bravery in the siege trenches outside Sevastopol. Promoted as Captain in 1859, he volunteered the following year to join the British forces that were fighting the Chinese in the 'Arrow' War. A year later he became the Commander of the 3,500 man peasant force, known as the "Ever – Victorious Army". Gordon's troops played an important role in suppressing the uprising. He returned to England in 1865 where an enthusiastic public had already dubbed him "Chinese Gordon". For the next five years he was the Commander of the Royal Engineers at Gravesend. He spent his spare time developing his own unorthodox, mystical brand of Christianity.

In 1873, Ismail Rasha of Egypt, who regularly employed Europeans, appointed Gordon as the Governor of the province of Equatoria in Sudan. He returned to England in 1880 and in 1884 he was again sent to Sudan by the British government to evacuate Egyptian forces from Khartoum which was threatened by the Sudanese rebels. It was here that Gordon was killed by the rebels in 1885.

### **5:15:5 Analysis of the text:**

In this section of the lesson let us examine Strachey's views on the four eminent Victorian personalities.

**Cardinal Manning:** Strachey describes Henry Edward Manning as an eminent ecclesiastic of the Victorian period who is known less for his saintliness and learning than for practical ability. The most striking quality of his life is the persistent strength of his innate characteristics. He lived unperturbed through all the changes of his fortunes. His fortitude and inner strength were so powerful that it was as if the Fate had laid a wager that they would daunt him; and in the end they lost their bet.

Manning, like any other boy, led the unspiritual life of an ordinary schoolboy. He never wanted to go into the church. He saw himself marked for a political career. But when his father was declared a bankrupt, all his hopes of a political career came to an end. Making the best of a bad situation, Manning obtained a curacy in Sussex and he married the daughter of his rector. Within a few months Manning stepped into the rector's shoes following his death. He was energetic, devout, polite and handsome. When Mrs. Manning died prematurely, he was at first inconsolable, but he found relief in the distraction of redoubled work. Late in his life he referred to his wife's death as "God's special mercy" and the memory of his wife seemed to be completely blotted from his mind. He never spoke of her. He destroyed every letter, every record his married life.

When he eventually became a cardinal, he never alluded to his old friend Talbot and Manning Completely obliterated him from his mind just as he did his wife.

Strachey's tone through out the essay on Manning lays bare his hatred of ecclesiastical Christianity. Her minces no words to hide his disapproval of manning. There is irony in his tone whenever he alludes to Manning's success in life. Manning's success was a result more of his worldly wisdom and practical ability than of any intrinsic worth. Strachey suggests that Manning's relentless pursuit of ecclesiastical ideals has made him less human, though it brought him success in life.

### **Florence Nightingale:**

Strachey begins his account of Florence Nightingale by saying that the popular conception of the lady as a saintly, self-sacrificing woman who gave up the pleasures of a life for the sake of the afflicted is wrong. To put it in Strachey's own words:

The Miss Nightingale of fact was not as facile fancy painted her. She moved under the stress of an impetus which finds no place in the popular imagination. A Demon possessed her . . . in the real Miss Nightingale there was more that was interesting than in the legendary one; there was also less that was agreeable.

Thus Strachey claims to be unraveling to the readers the lesser known side of Miss Nightingale. He gives us a detailed account of the ruthless way in which Nightingale moulded her career and life. Strachey presents her as a changed woman towards the end of her life. He Says:

She was not to die as she had lived. The sting was to be taken out of her. She was to be made soft; she was to be reduced to compliance and complacency. The change came gradually, but it was unmistakable. The terrible commander, who had driven Sidney Herbert to his death, ... now accepted small compliments with gratitude. ... And at the same time, there appeared a corresponding alteration in her physical mould. The thin, angular woman, with her haughty age and her acrid mouth, had vanished; and in her place smiling all day long. The brain which had been steeled at Sentari was indeed, literally, growing soft. Senility – an even more and more amiable senility – descended.

Strachey ends his biographical account of Florence Nightingale with a highly sarcastic remark. When Nightingale was conferred the Merit of Order in her eighty seventh year, she barely recognized that some compliment was being paid her. She only murmured “too kind – too kin” as her response. Strachey says that she was not ironical in her response.

**Dr. Thomas Arnold:** When the headmastership of Rugby School fell vacant in 1827, the trustees of the school felt that Mr. Thomas Arnold would be the right person to fill the vacancy. They thought he would “change the face of education all through the public schools of England”. Thus in August 1828, he took up the duties of his office.

Mr. Thomas Arnold married young and settled down in the country as a private tutor for youths preparing for the Universities. He remained there for ten years as a happy, busy and sufficiently prosperous man. It was here that he began to write the history of Rome.

Arnold was thirty three when he became the headmaster of Rugby. His outward appearance was index of his inward character. Everything about him denoted energy, earnestness, and the best intentions. His features revealed a temperment of ardour and determination.

The public schools of those days were still “virgin forest” untouched by the hand of reform. It was a system of anarchy tempered by despotism. The public schools of the period were in such an abominable state that Rev. Mr. Bowdler said, “The public schools are the very seats and nurseries of the vice.” When Dr. Arnold entered the Rugby schools he was convinced of the necessity for reform. He felt that it was important to instill into the boys the elements of character and the principles of conduct. His sole objective throughout his career was as he repeatedly said, “to make the school a place of really Christian education. . . . what we must look for here is, first, religious and moral principle; secondly, gentlemanly conduct; thirdly, intellectual ability.”

Dr. Arnold's views were shared by a great majority of the English parents. Arnold insisted on order and discipline. The worst boys were publicly expelled while many others were silently removed from the school. Arnold had no theoretical objection to corporal punishment.

In the actual sphere of teaching, Dr. Arnold's reforms were tentative and few. He introduced modern history, modern languages and mathematics into the school curriculum, though the results were not very encouraging. Physical Science was not taught at Rugby. Dr. Arnold excluded it from the curriculum as he thought it was too great a subject to be studied in school. In its place, he wanted moral philosophy. As he himself writes in a letter to his friend, "... Surely the one thing needful for a Christian and an Englishman to study is Christian and moral and political philosophy."

Moved by Dr. Arnold's contribution to Rugby, Carlyle, the famous Victorian writer characterized him thus: "Dr. Arnold is a man of unshaking, unrelenting diligence." Dr. Arnold became a celebrity and Rugby prospered under his headmastership. After thirteen years as headmaster, Dr. Arnold began to feel that his work there was accomplished and that he might look forward to a dignified retirement. But it was not to be when his father died suddenly at the age of fifty three, he himself was haunted by forebodings of an early death. In the spring of 1842 when he was only forty-seven, Dr. Arnold died.

Dr. Arnold altered the whole atmosphere of public school life by introducing morals and religion into his scheme of education.

**General Gordon:** The unique feature of Strachey's biographical account of General Gordon is that the account is entitled "The End of General Gordon" whereas the other three biographies are simply named after the personalities, like 'Cardinal Manning', 'Florence Nightingale' and 'Dr. Arnold'. The title here is indicative of the focus of the biographical account. As Strachey remarks on the very first page of the account, "it was not in peace and rest, but in ruin and horror, that Gordon reached his end".

The essay on Gordon was an attack of imperialism and power politics which Strachey and his friends considered to be the major causes of the war. Strachey ends the essay with a highly ironic remark:

General Gordon had always been a contradictory person – even a little off his head, perhaps though a hero; . . . At any rate, it had all ended very happily – in a glorious slaughter of 20,000 Arabs, a vast addition to the British Empire, and step in the Peerage for Sir Evelyn Baring.

### **5:15:6 Evaluation of the text:**

Strachey claims his Eminent Victorians to be a biographical work. As he mentions in the preface to the book, 'I have attempted, through the medium of biography, to present some Victorian visions to the modern eye.' This the book could also be viewed as a book of history since it provides insights into the lives of four eminent personalities of the same period, namely, the Victorian period.

There are critics like Noel Aunan, who consider the book neither history nor biography. He says that Eminent Victorians is neither history nor biography but a polemic against the Establishment and its culture. The target of Strachey's irony was a combination of religiosity, inflated patriotism and debased liberalism which characterized the Victorian thinking.

Strachey's book became a success because his tone caught exactly the prevailing mood of disillusionment with the Victorian virtues. He mocked these virtues and ridiculed his Victorian victims for their tendency to preach, instruct and edify.

On reading Eminent Victorians closely, the strongest impression that one gets is Strachey's remorseless hatred of ecclesiastical Christianity. The book also seems to drive home the point that success or "eminence" in any walk of life could be attained only by exploiting others. The eminent spent their lives forcing others to do their will subtly, like Manning, or ruthlessly like Gordon.

All the four personalities were extraordinary. They were so anxious to do good, so powerful in carrying out their schemes, so notable at the end of their lives for their achievements that all four had been canonized by their admirers. But Strachey raises questions about their other human qualities: what of their virtue – what of simplicity, moderation, tolerance, sanity, compassion for others and love how had they fared?

To treat Newman as Cardinal Manning did was an offence against human decency. How could Manning crush all memory of his dead wife and never display any trace of feeling towards his old ally, Talbot?

Gordon, in a moment of lucidity, admitted to himself that love of glory and ambition had led him to disaster. In spite of all her popularity and achievements, in the end, Nightingale's sense of detachment and proportion vanished and worst of all she lost the power to love.

It was predicted that Arnold would change the face of education all through the public schools of England. There were indeed changes but Strachey argued that what he could have changed the ancient grind of Greek and Latin – he left untouched by refusing to introduce science and history into the curriculum.

All the four spent their lives in the pursuit of ideals but Strachey projected these ideals as deceptive masters which made them lose their human side. Thus the four eminent figures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century emerge as victims enslaved by the ideals of the Victorian period. The publication of Strachey's Eminent Victorians is an important landmark in the history of English literature. As William Vaughn Moody et. al. assert, "If any single literary event were to be chosen to mark the termination of the Victorian era, that event might well be the publication in 1918 of Lytton Strachey's Eminent Victorians".

It must be noted that the 'eminent' in the title is not adulatory but ironical. The purpose of the book seems to be to remove the halos with which a pious period had invested its heroes and heroines. Strachey's temperament and talent admirably suited the successful fulfillment of this purpose. His sympathies were classical rather than romantic, French rather than English.

His skeptical critical spirit was completely antithetical to the sentimental optimism of the Victorian era, and it was easy for him to find in that period overabundant material for the free play of his irony and his love for the mock-heroic. His biographical method was a conscious reaction to the characteristic 19<sup>th</sup> Century tasteless biography. His aim was the creation of an honest and lifelike portrait, not a stuffed effigy. Of Strachey's honesty, there can be little doubt, but of his fairness, at least in Eminent Victorians, there is a controversy. Behind the protestation of fairness, there was a spirit of mockery bordering on animosity which threatened the fidelity of his historical portraits. However, this brilliant and influential volume marked the peak of Strachey's anti-Victorianism.

Eminent Victorians is an absorbing text in which the author's incomparable power of writing narrative captivates the readers' imagination. Even though Strachey's views and ideas expressed in the text are highly controversial, his forceful style and powerful language have brought the book success and long-standing recognition.

### **5:15:7 Summary:**

In the present lesson, we have analysed Strachey's views on the four important personalities of the Victorian period, namely, Cardinal Manning, Florence Nightingale, Dr. Arnold and General Gordon. The 'Eminent' in the title of the book is highly ironic as it represents the author's deep-seated contempt for the Victorian age and anything that represented the age. The main objective in writing Eminent Victorians was "to present some Victorian visions to the modern eye".

Strachey's views on the four personalities are highly controversial as they reveal his deep-rooted prejudice against the Victorian Age. Despite its many limitations as a biographical work, Eminent Victorians has evoked considerable critical response not merely owing to Strachey's controversial views but also because of his forceful style and conviction.

If Strachey is remembered to day it is more for his Eminent Victorians than for any of his other works. Thus the book occupies a unique place in the history of English biography.

### **5:15:8 Model Questions:**

1. Examine Eminent Victorians as a polemic against the Victorian culture.
2. Who are the four eminent Victorians Strachey deals with in his text? Write a brief essay on Strachey's views on them.
3. Discuss why Strachey presents his eminent Victorians as victims of Victorian culture.
4. Write an Essay on Strachey's irony and mockery in Eminent Victorians.

### **5:15:9 Reference Books:**

1. Lytton Strachey. 1970. Eminent Victorians. Collins: London.
2. K.R. Srinivasa Iyenger. 1938. Lytton Strachey: A Study.

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