# SYLLABUS
# COURSE-VI
# ROMANTIC AND VICTORIAN POETRY

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|---|---|
| Blake | : Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience. |
| Wordsworth | : 'Tintern Abbey,' 'Ode Intimations of Immortality'. |
| Coleridge | : 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,' 'Kubla Khan' |
| Keats | : 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,' 'Ode to a Nightingale,' 'Ode on Melancholy,' 'To Autumn' |
| Tennyson | : The Lady of Shalott,' Ulysses,' 'The Lotos-Eaters' |
| Browning | : 'Evelyn Hope,' 'The Last Ride Together', 'My Last Duchess' 'Rabbi Ben Erza. |

**INSTRUCTIONS :**

There will be eight questions in all.

Question No. 1 will be compulsory and will have 12 items requiring short notes or explanations of around 100 words each. The students will have to attempt 4 items of 6 marks each. The aim is to test student's first-hand knowledge of the tests. 4 X 6 - 24

From each of the prescribed text 1 question with internal choice will be set, and one question with internal choice will be set on the background and will be of general nature. The students will have to attempt 3 questions out of these. Thus, the students will have to attempt four questions in all. 3X17 = 51

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# Lesson-1
# WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

**STRUCTURE**



## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

William Wordsworth was one of the founders of English Romanticism and one its most central figures and important intellects. He is remembered as a poet of spiritual and epistemological speculation, a poet concerned with the human relationship to nature and a fierce advocate of using the vocabulary and speech patterns of common people in poetry.

## 1.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter we will learn about William Wordsworth along with his two poems.

## 1.3 ABOUT THE POET

The son of John and Ann Cookson Wordsworth, William Wordworth was born on April 7, 1770 in Cockermouth, Cumberland, located in the Lake District of England: an area that would become closely associated with Wordsworth for over two centuries after his death. He began writing poetry as a young boy in grammar school, and before graduating from college he went on a walking tour of Europe, which deepened his love for nature and his sympathy for the common man: both major themes in his poetry. Wordsworth is best known for *Lyrical Ballads*, co-written with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and *The Prelude,* a Romantic epic poem chronicling the "growth of a poet's mind."

**Wordsworth's Life (1770-1850)**

**Wordsworth's life may be divided into four periods :**

(1) His childhood and youth in the 'Cumberland Hills from 1770 to 1787. Wordsworth was born in 1770 at Cockermouth Cumberland. He was the second son of John Wordsworth, attorney-at-law. He spent much of his boyhood among the shepherds of his native country. These early surroundings had a profound and lasting influence on him. The simple and unsophisticated life of the peasants possessing homely virtues taught him faith in humanity and reverence for the elemental things in life. Moreover the natural scenes had a particular fascination for hiah Wordsworth's mother died in 1778 and then he was sent to the ancient Grammar School of Hawkshead. His father died five years later. The children were placed under the guardianship of two uncles. At Hawkshead, in the beautiful lake region, Wordsworth learnt more from flowers, hills, and stars than from books. "The Prelude" reveals Wordsworth's early love for Nature. Three things became clear from this poem (i) Wordsworth loved to be alone, and never felt lonely with Nature, (ii) he felt the presence of some living spirit, real though unseen, (iii) his impression of Nature were delightfully familiar.

The Second period of Wordsworth's life is a period of uncertainty, of storm and stress, including his university life at Cambridge, his travels abroad, and his revolutionary experience, from 1787-1797. When Wordsworth joined St. John's College at the University of Cambridge in 1787, he had already developed the habit of writing verse and the temperament of poetry. He composed "Evening Walk" in 1789. In the third book of "The Prelude" there is a realistic account of hit college life. In 1791, Wordsworth took his B.A. degree. Wordsworth visited France in 1790 and 1791-92. Where for a time, he became a fervent Republican. But the excess of the Revolution disgusted him and he lost his trust in immediate social reform. The guide whom he chose during this difficult period was William Godwin. His Political Justice (1793), with its unbounded confidence in reason, it's clear and rigid argument, provided a loomokt for Wordsworth when his original emotional w.i, shaken.

For two years since his return from France, Wordsworth had led a wandering life making no efforts to find for himself a provision. The death of a friend (Raisley Calvert) who left him a legacy of nine hundred pounds made him so independent that he settled himself with his sister Dorothy and devoted himself entirely to poetry. His friendship with Coleridge, which began in 1796 did much to stimulate his genius. In "The Prelude", Wordsworth traces the recovery of his moral and polemical health to the influence, first of his sister and secondly of Coleridge. It was while these "three persons and one soul" were living close together in Somerset that the Lyrical Ballads were conceived and composed.

During the third period of his life (1797- 1808) Wordsworth produced his best work. Dorothy who had been his childhood companion, a devoted friend and confidant perhaps gave a largest share of inspiration which resulted in the Lyrical Ballads. Meeting with Coleridge also took place in the same year. Coleridge's influence on Wordsworth was in the first place intellectual, and it showed to Wordsworth another road to travel than the Godwinian one. Coleridge's soaring-fancies made an alliance with Wordsworth's deep rooted faith in Nature and in common experience. Coleridge has written in the chapter XIV of his Biographia Literaria that, his share in the Lyrical Ballads was to illustrate the naturalness of the supernatural meanings, and the inner spirituality of actions and incidents which were most natural. The whole spirit of the Lyrical Ballads is reflected in two poems, "The Ancient Mariner" which is Coleridge's masterpiece, and "Tintern Abbey" which expresses Wordsworth's creed and which is one of the noblest poems in English. After the publication of the Lyrical Ballads Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy set sail for Germany. On his return

from Germany, he and his sister went to live in Grassere : in the lake district, where his earliest impressions had been gathered, there they spent rest of their lives except for occasional tours to Scotland and to the continent.

In 1802, Wordsworth married Mary Hutchinson. Though, it was a happy union, yet it was not a remarkable event in the imaginative life of the poet. No doubt she made herself a good wife and an interesting companion, but her influence cannot rank either with his sister Dorothy or with Coleridge. By this time Wordsworth finished "The Prelude". It is the spiritual autobiography of the poet from the earliest childhood down to the date 1797 at which he took the resolution of devoting himself wholly to poetry. In 1802-3, Wordsworth's political interest revived and he wrote a series of political sonnets. In this year, the peace of Amiens was concluded with France which was welcomed by liberal sympathizers; but disillusionment was soon to follow. It became clear that what had begun as a movement of liberation was ending in a personal despotism. Wordsworth attacked it from the stand point of the old guard of liberal idealist; It was during this period the "Ode to Duty", and the immoral "Ode on Intimations of Immortality" were printed.

The Fourth period of Wordsworth's life is a long period of his retirement in the Northern Lake Region where he was born, and where for half a century he lived so close to nature that her influence is reflected in all his poetry. This was a period in which Wordsworth's life saw a decline in his poetic powers. By 1807, in fact, his best work was done. In 1805, the death of his brother John Wordsworth had affected his temperament deeply and he went back to religious orthodoxy. In 1815 was published the first collective edition of Wordsworth's works. In 1822 the Ecclesiastical Sonnets and the Memorials of a Tour on the Continent were published. After 1835, Wordsworth published nothing new in poetry.

## 1.4 TINTERN ABBEY

### 1.4.1 Introduction

"Tintern Abbey" was composed in July, 1798, five years after Wordsworth's first visit to the banks of Why which took place in 1793, the year following his return from France when his mind was in a state of intellectual and emotional turmoil. It was probably then that Wordsworth realized that intimate communion with natural beauty, which was to be the mainspring of his poetry and the source of his original philosophy.

"Tintern Abbey" appeared in the Lyrical Ballads published in 1798. It is a great reflective poem. It records the mood of Wordsworth from phase to phase, and the blank verse, low-toned and familiar, moves with sureness and inevitable ease. It is a piece of highly accomplished verse, conceived and composed in a full flood of creative activity. It can be descended as a lyrical meditation on the theme of Nature.

'Tintern Abbey" is a statement of Wordsworth's complete philosophy of Nature. Here he has described the characteristics of each stage of development- "the and annual movement" of childhood, the "passions" and "appetite" of youth, and lastly "that serene and blessed mood" when "we are laid asleep in body and become a living soul." In other words, when Wordsworth was younger, his love for Nature was thoughtless, passionate and sensuous. But now when he has witnesses the suffering of mankind his love for Nature has become spiritual. He now perceives a divine spirit in all objects of Nature. Furthermore, he regards Nature as a mother, guardian, nurse and moral teacher. The poem concludes with an address to his sister Dorothy whom he advises to cultivate the friendship of Nature.

### 1.4.2 Development of Thought:

'Tintern Abbey" can be studied in three parts

(i) Description of the scoops (Lines 1 to 22).

(ii) The development of the poet's view of Nature (Lines 23 to 113)

(iii) Address to his sister Dorothy (Lines 114) onwards).

The opening lines give us a vivid description of the scene visited by the poet-the water rolling from their mountain springs; the steep and lofty rocks; the plots of cottage ground; the hedge rows etc. These lines show Wordsworth's close observation of Nature. Wordsworth was very sensitive to the sights of Nature and it is said that reading this Nature description is like visiting a scene of Nature.

The second part of the poem traces the growth of the poet's mental and emotional attitude to Nature in general and the part played by Nature in his life in particular. The memory of the scene has been a great source of joy to him and has acted on him as a stimulus to kind and sympathetic deeds.

Whenever he felt oppressed by the fret and fury of the world, he got relief by thinking of this scene of Nature. Thus he looks upon Nature as a healing influence on a troubled mind.

Then he contrasts his attitude to Nature as a boy with his attitude to Nature as a man. His love for Nature, as a boy, was sensuous and physical. The objects of Nature, then haunted him like a passion. They appealed only to his sense. But now his love for Nature is spiritual. He has now witnessed the sufferings of mankind "the still, sad music of humanity" and that experience has made him thoughtful. He has now discovered in Nature the existence of a Divine Spirit. This is Wordsworth's pantheism (the belief that a Divine Spirit pervades all objects of Nature). According to him Nature is a great moral teacher. Nature is the nurse, the guide, the guardian of his heart, and the soul of all, his moral being.

In the last part of the poem he pays a glowing tribute to his sister Dorothy. He advises Dorothy to submit herself completely to Natural influences because Nature has a purifying, ennobling and elevating effect on man and leads him from joy to joy. "Nature, never did betray the heart that loved her." He tells Dorothy to let the breeze blow freely against her cheek and the moon shine freely on her brow. He himself is a Worshipper of Nature and urges Dorothy to develop an intimacy with Nature because the sweet memories of this intimacy with Nature will be a comfort to her in the misfortunes and troubles of life. Then he expresses his belief in the education of man by Nature.

### 1.4.3 Critical Appreciation

"Tintern Abbey" is Wordsworth's autobiographical poem. This poems contains Wordsworth's faith and is a statement of his Nature philosophy in a highly lyrical verse.

The poem may be studied in three parts (i) Deception of the scenes are given, a vivid description of the scene visited by Wordsworth-the waters-the water rolling from their tappatain springs; steep and lofty chaffs; the green Areas with their unripe fruits; the hedge-rows; the column of smoke rising amongst the trees (ii) development of the poet's view of Nature ; the memory of this scene of Nature has been , a great joy to him. Whenever he was oppressed by the "fretful' stir and fever of the world" he felt comfort by thinking of this scene of nature. Thus Wordsworth feels that Nature has a healing influence out troubled minds, (iii) address to his sister Dorothy—then he contrasts his attitude to Nature as a boy with his attitude to Nature as a man. As a boy his love for Nature was purely physical but now witnessed the staggering of humanity and this experience has made him thoughtful. He sees in Nature the existence of a Divine Spirit and expresses

his pantheistic belief. Then he dwells upon the moral influence of Nature-Nature as a great moral teacher. In the last stanza he advises his sister Dorothy to submit herself completely to Nature as Nature has a purifying effect on man.

The poem has been written in a meditative mood and is full of pedestal calm joy. Wordsworth here appears as a priest of Nature or a Worshipper of Nature. We begin to see greater beauty in Nature.

This poem has a reminiscent quality. Wordsworth dwells upon his memories of this natural scene and tells us how these memories sustained him.

This poem is full of Wordsworth's beautiful and highly expressive phrases like "We see into the life of things the fever of the world", "the sounding cataract haunted me like a passion", "aching joys and dizzy raptures. "The still and sad music of humanity" "the shooting lights of the vivid eyes", "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her", etc.

The blank verse of the- poem is majestic. The sublimity of the verse suits the loftiness of the theme. In the words of Bernard Groom: "Tinterm Abbey remains a landmark in literature. The world- music alone would give it the highest distinction. Drawn from the depth of the poet's experience, independent of any literary most, flowing spontaneously, and obedient to the demands of a passionate, it places its author among the few great masters of blank verse."

## 1.5 ODE : INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD.

Before discussing this Ode let us see what an Ode is-

The Ode is a form of poetry. It is Greek in origin. It was first written by Pindar. The regular Greek Ode-or Pindaric Ode consists of three stanzas named strophe, anti-strophe, and epode this unit being repeated until the poem is complete. The pattern of the Pindaric Ode is very complex. Another Roman poet Horace, originated another variety of classical Ode. The Horatian Ode uses a particular stanza throughout and there is no intricacy in this form of Ode.

Although both the Pindaric and Horatian Odes have been written in English, yet most of the English writers of Odes have ignored the patterns of Pindar and Horace and their Odes show a complete liberty of line, rhyme and stanza. In fact, any poem expressing strong emotion and following unsystematic rhyme, rhythm and metre may be called an Ode. Under the control of gemus this kind of irregular Ode has resulted in some of the finest poems in English. Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimation of Immorality" is an example of this kind of irregular Ode in which the poet follows an unsystematic rhyme, rhythm and stanza. The regular Odes in English, like Wordsworth's Ode to Duty", "Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" follow the same stanta throughout without any variation.

The ode may be employed for the expression of enthusiasm, of passion under control, of deep and highly imaginative reflection, praise, or sadness etc. An Ode has usually a single but dignified, theme and is therefore of a serious character. It is generally written in the form of address or apostrophe. For example, Keat's "Ode to a Nightingale" or Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind". Ode is a sub-division of the lyric so it is lyrical in essence. It may be personal in inspiration as "Ode to a Nightingale" or it may be purely impersonal like Dryden's "Alexander's Feast".

**"IMMORTALITY ODE"**

**1.5.1 Introduction:**

This Ode was written partly in 1803 and partly in 1806. The theme of the poem is the immortality of the human soul of which one is aware in childhood but which fades from one's mind with growing years. The child's knowledge of immortality is based upon the memory of his life in heaven before his birth. This view is the basis of this poem. The long title of the poem clearly expresses the theme of the poem that our knowledge of the soul's immortality is based upon the reminiscences of life in heaven before birth. Whether Wordsworth's theory is convincing or not is a controversial matter but this poem has been considered as a masterpiece of philosophical or metaphysical poetry.

This poem is based upon Wordsworth's personal experience. As a child he could not believe that a human soul could die. He was certain that after death he would go to heaven. Having this faith he was often unable to believe that external things had external reality. Many times while going to school he had to catch hold of a tree or a wall in order to bring himself back from his fits of dreaminess back to reality. This is Plato's idea because Plato looked upon this world of senses as unreal or animation of the real world.

The main idea of this poem is that the soul lived in heaven before coming into this world. Wordsworth's belief in pre-existent state is part and parcel of many religions.

**1.5.2 Summary of the poem:**

This poem gives expression to the doctrine of reminiscence or in the belief of immortality of the soul. The child remembers the life which he led in heaven before birth, in this world. That is why the child is surrounded by a heavenly glory. When the child looks at Nature, he finds all objects of Nature wrapped up in a dream-like splendor. But when the child grows he falls more and more mature under the influence of this world and his memories of heaven become dimmer and dimmer till they fade out of his mind.

The child remembers that he lived in heaven before his birth while the grown-up man has no such memories. Therefore the child is greater than the man. The child may be called a great prophet, a great seer and a great philosopher. But there are some occasions in the life of a grown-up man which bring him some relivements of immortality.

When one grows up one misses the heavenly light one saw as a child in the objects of Nature. But maturity has its own compensations. With maturity comes the faith in a life after death. Maturity also brings the philosophical mind as the sight of suffering humanity gives rise to "soothing thoughts". In this state, even the meanest flower can rouse in man thoughts which are so deep that they cannot be expressed even through tears.

**1.5.3 Critical Appreciation:**

Wordsworth wrote this splendid poem when he was at the height of his genius i.e. in the middle of the splendid ten years between 1797 and 1807. This poem was started in the spring of 1802 and it was finished 2-4 years later. But the delay in composition made no difference to its unity. It is built on a simple but majestic plan. In form, it is an irregular Ode. The first four stanzas tell of his spiritual crisis; of a glory passing from the earth and end by asking why it has happened. The middle stanzas from five to eight explain the nature of this glory and tell us about the doctrine of prenatal existence. The last three stanzas reveal that thought the divine glory has perished life has still meaning and a value. The Ode can be divided into three parts, the first part tells about the crisis the second about explanations and the third is about consolation.

The poem is based upon the metaphysical doctrine of the immortality of the soul which is based on the memories of childhood. However, Wordsworth does not assert this doctrine of reminiscence to be true. He took hold of it as having sufficient foundation in humanity.

In this poem Wordsworth addresses the child as a "mighty prophet", "super blest", "best philosopher". It can be justified on the basis of innocence and purity of childhood, but it is slot justified on the ground of spatiality and prophetic quality. Even Coleridge criticized this poem on this account.

Wordsworth has very aptly described the psychology of the child in this poem. The child is an image, an actor who performs all parts and who copies every action and gesture which he sees.

This poem is autobiographical in nature. When Wordsworth was a child he used to see a divine glory in the objects of nature. The meadow, grove and stream seemed to him to be clothed in a heavenly light. As a boy he used to experience certain doubts about the reality of this world. But now when he has attained maturity, he misses that glory and the dream like splendor which he saw in Nature as a child. He reconciles into self to the loss of the glory of childhood because he has found a rich compensation. So be decides not to feel sad. He finds consolation in (i) the sympathy which he feels for the suffering humanity (ii) the faith in his after death (in) the being responsible, a quality which he has developed with maturity.

Wordsworth's great power of image making can be seen in this poem. He gives vivid pictures of the rainbow, the rose, the moon shining in a cloudless sky, the star-light falling on waters, children collecting fresh flowers, the babe leaping on his mother's arms etc.

This ode clearly brings out the difference between Wordsworth's love for Nature as a child and his love for Nature as he experienced intoxicating joys on seeing it. But he developed a spiritual love for Nature when he became a man. His love for nature now became meditative, sober and reflective. Having seen human suffering, he looked at Nature thoughtfully.

This Ode is written in an unusually lofty key. The stately metrical form is matched by a stately use of words. Wordsworth thought his subject so important that he treated it in what was for him an unusual manner, and for it he used his own high style. Wordsworth has used many rhythmic and effective phrases, for example "the glory and freshness of a dream", "shades of the prison house", "Our, birth is but a sleep and a forgetting", "the light of common day", "thoughts too deep for tears". In facts the words used for expressing thoughts and emotions in this poem are very appropriate. The grandeur of language befits the grandeur of theme. There is perfect harmony between thought and expression. The poet has not made use of the artificial and stale language of eighteenth century.

No doubt the poem contains a metaphysical doctrine, but there is a deep and sincere personal emotion which imparts it a lyrical character. This poem is a happy blending of thought and exaction; of doctrine and poetry; of meditation and melody.

The poet has expressed a moral view in this poem. He refers to the human suffering which he has witnessed and the sympathy which he feels for his fellow human beings. The poem which began with a sense of loss and a feeling of grief ends with calm reflection and a sense of gain.

## A. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION

The period of William Wordsworth is

1. 1770-1850
2. 1807 -1882
3. 1836 -1907
4. 1840 -1928

## 1.6 SUMMARY

This poem **Line Composed A few Miles Above Tintern Abbey** is generally known as 'Tintern Abbey' written in 1798 by the father of Romaticism Willam Wordsworth. Tintern Abbey is one of the triumphs of Wordsworth's genius. It may he called a condensed spiritual autobiography of the poet. It deals with the subjective experiences of the poet, and traces the growth of his mind through different periods of his life. Nature and its influence on the poet in various stage forms the main theme of the poem. The poem deal with the influence of nature on the boy, the growing youth, and the man. The poet has expressed his tender feeling towards nature.

He has specially recollected his poetic idea of Tintern Abbey where he had gone first time in 1793. This is his second visit to this place. Wordsworth has expressed his intense faith in nature. There is Wordsworth's realization of God in nature. He got sensuous delight in it and it is all in all to him. Tintern Abbey impressed him most when he had first visited this place. He has again come to the same place where there are lofty cliffs, the plots of cottage ground, orchards groves and copses. He is glad to see again hedgerows, sportive wood, pastoral farms and green doors. This lonely place, the banks of the river and rolling waters from the mountain springs present a beautiful panoramic light. The solitary place remands the poet of vagrant dwellers and hermits' cave.

**"Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"** (also known as "Ode", "Immortality Ode" or "Great Ode") is a poem by William Wordsworth, completed in 1804 and published in Poems, in Two Volumes (1807). The poem was completed in two parts, with the first four stanzas written among a series of poems composed in 1802 about childhood. The first part of the poem was completed on 27 March 1802 and a copy was provided to Wordsworth's friend and fellow poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who responded with his own poem, "Dejection: An Ode", in April. The Fourth stanza of the ode ends with a question, and Wordsworth was finally able to answer it with seven additional stanzas completed in early 1804. It was first printed as "Ode'" in 1807, and it was not until 1815 that it was edited and reworked to the version that is currently known, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality".

## 1.7 GLOSSARY

**Ode:** An ode is a type of lyrical stanza. It is an elaborately structured poem praising or glorifying and event or individual, describing nature intellectually as well as emotionally. A classic ode is structured in three major parts: the strophe, the antistrophe, and the epode.

**Ballad:** The ballad is a poem that is typically arranged in quatrains with the rhyme scheme ABAB. Ballads are usually narrative, which means they tell a story. Ballads began as folk songs and continue to be used today in modem music.

**Rhyme:** A rhyme is a repetition of similar sounds (usually, exactly the same sound) in the final stressed syllables and any following syllables of two or more words.

## 1.8 QUESTIONS

1. Define Ode.

2. Critically appreciate “Immorality Ode”.

## 1.9 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION’S ANSWER

A) 1770-180

## 1.10 SUGGESTED READING

The Penguin Book of Romantic Poetry by Jonathan Wordsworth.

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# Lesson-2
# RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE

**STRUCTURE**



## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

**"Resolution and Independence"** is a lyric poem by the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth, composed in 1802 and published in 1807 in *Poems in Two Volumes.* The poem contains twenty stanzas written in modified rhyme royal, and describes Wordsworth's encounter with a leech-gatherer near his home in the Lake District of England.

## 2.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

We will study the poem of William Wordsworth named Resolution and Independence

## 2.3 RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE

### 2.3.1 Introduction :

This is an autobiographical poem. This poem is not about the Leech Gatherer at all-it is about the moors, the immense and desolate moors which seem to die, distance and recede beyond sight. The moors worth's response to them are what made this poem : yet he named it "Resolution and Independence". According to a critic "Resolution and Independence" is an example of the manner in which much of Wordsworth's poetry flowed from his "Unconscious memory". Actually Wordsworth was not alone when he met the old man-Dorothy his sister was with him. Dorothy has recorded this incident in her journal:

"When William and I returned from accompanying Jones, we met an old man almost double. He had on a coat, thrown over his shoulders, about his waistcoat and cost. Under his arms he carried a bundle and had an apron on and a nightcaps. His tace was interesting. He had dark eyes and a long nose. He was of Scotch parents. He had a wife and 'she was a good woman, and it pleased God to bless them with ten children". All these were dead but one, of whom he had not heard for many years, a sailor. His trade was to gather leeches, but now leeches were scarce, and he had not the strength for it. He lived by begging, and was making his way to Carlisle where he would buy a few godly books to sell. He said leeches were very scarce, partly owing to the dry season, but many years they have been scarce. He supposed it was owing to their much sought after, that they did not breed fast, and were of slow growth. He had been hurt in driving a cart, his body driven over, his skill fractured. He felt no pain till he recovered from his first insensibility. It was then late in the evening, when the light was just going away."

It can be seen, while many details have vanished, Wordsworth has preserved that "Ideal and essential truth" of the old man's appearance - his great age, his frame bent double turn "some dire constraint of pain" in time past, even the Scottish tone of his speech, But the setting has been quite transformed. Wordsworth had not met the old man on the moor but on the Grasmere Road; not at Sun rise but late in the evening; and the old man was not gathering leeches but begging his way to Carlisle. When Wordsworth was feeling dejected in 1802, partly due to some personal reasons and partly from anxiety about Coleridge who was pinking deeper into the opium habit, his mind reverted by contrast to the figure of the old leech-gatherer as a symbol of firmness in adversity. But he could not poetize that figure till he had placed it in such a setting with his visionary power. Hence the Sunrise, the roar of the woods and distant waters, the moorland solitary figure of the old man.

**2.3.2 Summary:**

In the beginning of the poem there are series of Nature pictures the Sunrise after a wind and rainy night, the birds singing in the distant woods, the grass bright with raindrops and the hare running races.

Then the post tells that he was wandering upon the moor that morning and was oblivious of the old memories. He was feeling very happy but suddenly he was overpowered by feeling of sadness. "Dim sadness and blind thoughts", "fears and fancies" came to him in abundance. He tried to keep his cheerfulness by the remembrance of the playful hare and of the song of the skylark but he was saddened by the thought that he might one day be oppressed by "solitude, pain of heart, distress and poverty".

The poet thought that he had lived all his life in pleasant thoughts: "as if all needful things would come unsought". But now he realised that man should exert himself in order to be happy, and that nobody should expect others to "build for him, sow for him, and at his call love him". Then the poet thought of the sad fate of Thomas Chatterton, "The marvelous boy" and of Robert Bums, which made him feel that poets begin their lives in gladness, but that they ultimately get only despondency and madness". When Wordsworth was struggling with such depressing thoughts, he saw beside a pool, a very aged man.

Wordsworth compares this man to a huge stone which is sometimes seen lying on the bare top of a hill and the presence of which is difficult to explain. Wordsworth was not clear how that man appeared there his standing there seemed to Wordsworth like a sea beast which had crawled forth on a rock or on sand to bask in the sun. This man seemed neither to be alive, nor dead nor asleep. He was a very old man. His body was bent double. It appeared that he was suffering from some acute pain. He supported himself on a long wooden stick and stood there "motionless as a cloud".

After sometime the old man made a movement and stirred the water of the pool with his staff and looked closely at the muddy water. The poet now drew closer and asked the old man what he was adding in that lonely place. The old man replied in a feeble voice that he had come there to gather leeches. He had to wander from moor to moor and from pond to pond in order to make an honest living. Leech gatherer's words had a strange effect on the poet, all the troubling thoughts come to the poet in a flash. Wishing to be comforted the poet again asked the old man about his occupation. The old man repeated, his words and further added that once he used to find leeches in abundance but now there had been a great decline in the availability of leeches.

The poet felt greatly disturbed by the old man's words. He saw in his imagination the old man wandering about the moors "continually", "alone", and "silently". But the old man kept his composure and talked cheerfully of various fixings. When the old man stopped speaking the poet realised that he was face to face with somebody who was decrepit in body but resolute in mind. The leech gatherer on the lonely moor became a great source of strength to the troubled and the dejected spirits of the poet.

**2.3.3 Critical Appreciation:**

The poem "Resolution and Independence" illustrate the sentiments of pathos. The poem is saturated with a note of pessimism, the poet's mind is visited by fears and fancies. He is overcome by "dim sadness and blind thoughts". He thinks of the tragic fate which over-took Chatterton and Burna and laments:

We poets in our youth begin in sadness;

But thereof come in the end despondency and madness. (Lines 48-9)

The pathos of the poem is further accentuated by the sad look of the old man. The poet describes the physical condition of the old man. He appeared to him the oldest man, he ever had seen, his body had bent double and he seems to be suffering from some disease. The manner in which this old man has to earn his livelihood further excites our sympathy. On hearing this story of the old man, the poet is once again overwhelmed by the sadness. However, the poem is not one of unredeemed pessimism. The old man does not lament his fate. He tells his story with a smile. He only complains that leeches are no longer to be found in the same abundance as in the past. Otherwise he speaks in a dignified manner in fact this old man has a very firm mind. The thought of this old man moving from moor to moor and from pond to pond "continually" and "alone" proves to be a source of strength to the sad heart of the poet. The poet draws a moral lesson from the independence and resolution of this old also. The poem is didactic in tone. The courage and perseverance the old leech-gatherer against the hardships which he has to face has a tonic effect on the poet.

This poem has a psychological value also. The Nature is full of joy and the poet too is in a joyful mood but suddenly he is overpowered by melancholies. The poet rightly explains that a mood of happiness may sometimes yield to a fit of depression. Suddenly the poet is overpowered by the emotion of fear and he feels that there may come a day when he might be afflicted by some kind of misfortune.

Here are a number of similes in this poem. The poet wonders how the old man came to be there: He compares him to a huge stone which is sometimes seen lying on the bald top of a hill and which makes people wonder how it came there (Lines 57.40).

Then there is another simile. The old man is compared to sea-beast that has crawled forth from the sea to rest on a piece of rock or a heap of sand:

Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf of rock or sand reposed there to Sun itself (Lines 62-63)

By these two comparisons the poet has conveyed his reaction to his seeing the old man - standing beside the pool. He develops his comparison at length so that it takes on a life of its own in which the original subject is submerged. It's independence force makes it an internal simile.

"Like a sea-beast" the slam almost laboured, building up of the images gives an effect, of timelessness and permanence which contrasts with the feverish state of the poet's mind. The internal simile serves to reinforce the permanence of inanimate objects with the strength of beasts : of the sort of beast that might belong to another element as old and permanent as rock-the sea. In another simile the old man, standing motionless has been compared to a "motionless cloud".

There are vivid Nature-pictures in the first two stanzas of the poem. These provide the background against which the meeting of the poet with the old man takes place. Nature is in a merry mood which is in contrast with the poet's fit or depression.

The poem is full of beautiful phrases. For example "and tears and langes thick upon me came" "by our own spirits we are defied", "a flash of mild surprise broke from the sable orbs of his yet-vivid eyes" and so on. Wordsworth feels that- "the message is sent to him from above". The leech gatherer/old man appears to him as a visitor from another world that has come to teach him a lesson. The strange appearance of the old man, his stately and dignified speech, and his quiet acceptance of the burden lay down upon him, combine to rebuke the poet. The old man ceases to be merely a leech-gatherer, and becomes instead an image of human toil. The poet finds in the example of the old man an admonition to himself.

In the end of the poet makes a resolution that with the help of God and of thinking of the leech gatherer he would never feel afraid of what lies ahead of him. The cheerfulness shown by the poet at the end is not merely the endurance of failure; it also expresses the confidence that comes from having succeeded. The leech-gatherer will now be a talisman for the poet.

## 2.4 ODE TO DUTY

### 2.4.1 Introduction

This Ode was written in 1805. There is strong personal element in it. It is didactic in tone. Wordsworth here appears as a moralist and preacher. In this poem Wordsworth has not broken away from the influence of eighteenth century neo-classical poetry against which he was revolting.

### 2.4.2 Summary of the poem

In this poem the poet personifies duty and addresses it as if it were a living being. Duty is regarded as a moral guide for human beings. Duty is, so to speak, is the voice of God whom human beings must obey. Duty shows the right path to human beings, prevents them from doing any wrong, scolds those persons who commit some wrong, duty sets human beings free from temptations and has soothing effect on disturbed minds. It puts an end to the conflict of human minds.

These are human beings who follow the right path matinctively and spontaneously. This happens with the persons, who have inborn goodness. Evil is foreign to their nature. These people are lucky because they follow the right path without being guided by duty. If however, these persons are misled or are at the point of doing some wrong let duty look after them and direct them along the right path.

It will be a blessed state when human beings follow the virtuous path instinctively and spontaneously, live now there are some happy souls who enjoy following the correct and right path but they seek the guidance of Duty whenever they are in doubt.

Then the poet speaks about himself. He tells us that in the past he had been his own guide. But now he wishes to put himself under the supervision of Duty. In the past he often ignored the voice of Duty as he had an excessive faith in his own moral sense. Now he wishes to be guided by Duty not because in the past he had been yielding to temptations, but because he would now like to have some order in his life. Now he does not relish the unlimited freedom of action. He would now willingly obey the dictates of Duty, thus would get lasting peace of mind.

Duty governs the conduct of the human beings and supervises the working of the whole universe. The flowers, the stars, the sky, in short all the objects of nature, have to carry out their functions according to the command of Duty. Though Duty enforces obedience to divine laws, Duty does not have a frightening appearance. On the other hand, Duty possesses divine grace and has it most charming smile on her face. So the human beings feel attracted by Duty, and carry out her dictates most willingly.

The poem concludes with an appeal by the poet to Duty. The poet puts himself under the compliant of Duty from now onwards. He asks Duty to teach him the spirit of self-sacrifice, to give him the confidence which comes from following the right path and to let him live in the light of truth.

**2.4.3 Critical Appreciation:**

This poem has a philosophical character. It teaches the humanity; that one's conscience should' be one's guiding faculty. The poet wants to teach the readers how to conduct themselves in life. This quality gives it a neo-classical touch because the poetry of neo-classical age aims chiefly at moral instructions. But there is one difference also in classical poems the moral is conveyed directly to the reader, but in this poem it is offered indirectly as the reader is not directly-addressed. This is the method of the romantic poet.

A romantic poet is generally interested in his own personality. Wordsworth here reveals his nature by entrusting himself to the cause of Duty not because he has done something wrong in the past, but because he feels tired of too much freedom. In the past he lived free and unrestricted life. He had no experience of the world and so he recognised no restraints. But that does not mean that he followed every impulse that a rose in his heart. He did not yield to every temptation. Yet he realised that it was not correct to continue to be his own guide because that meant a blind trust in his own capacity. Excessive self-confidence sometimes led him into awkward situations when he found himself at the verge of doing something wrong. But luckily at such times, Duty gave him a warning against what he was about to do. As a result of the warning he desisted from the proposed course of action and followed a safer course of action, to live under the constant supervision of Duty, The last stanza contains his appeal to duty which is charged with sincerity of emotion. The value of the poem lies in the fact, that its sound ethical teaching is expressed in age emotional setting.

Side by side with the emotional quality of the poem, there is intellectual reasoning also which is characteristic of the eighteenth century poetry. For example, "I supplicate for the control not through any disturbance of my soul or through strong compunction in me wrought, but because this unchartered freedom tired the".

Wordsworth in theory was against such devices as apostrophe, antithesis, personification etc. But, in this poem he stakes use of these devices freely. An apostrophe is a direct address to a person or thing or abstraction; be present; the apostrophe temporarily interrupts the surrounding discourse. In this poem Wordsworth makes use of apostrophe freely: "Stem Daughter of the Voice of God", "Stem Law-Giver" "Awful Power", etc. In antithesis the balanced elements are contrasted. In this poem there is the use of antithesis also: "a light to guide, a rod to check the erring", "Thou, who are victory and- law". Personification

treats abstractions or inanimate objects as if they were human. The poet in this poem conceives Duty as a living being who controls the actions of human beings. Duty is here personified as a server and exacting daughter of God's voice. In other words, Duty represents the will of God.

Wordsworth has used some vivid phrases in this poem. For example: "Unerring light", "unchartered freedom", "the weight of chance desires", "the weary spirit of frail humanity", "awful power", etc.

In spite of its neo-classical features this is a great poem as it has lofty tone, deep, seriousness, noble conception of the spirit of self sacrifice, emotional quality and vivid phrases. World worth has written this poem in calm, serene and meditative mood.

In form this is a regular Ode as all its stanzas are of equal length and follow the same rhyme scheme : a,b, ,b:c,c:d.d. Unlike "The Ode on limitation of Immorality" which is an irregular ode because in this poem the length of stanzas and their rhyme scheme vary from stanza to stanza.

**2.4.4 Wordsworth us a poet of Nature :**

Wordsworth chief originality as a poet is to be sought in his poetry of Nature. From his early boyhood to his old age, Nature was the chief source of his inspiration. Almost all the poems that he wrote were saturated with his love for, and an abiding faith in Nature. De Quincy was right when he said, Wordsworth has his passion for Nature fixed in his blood; it was a necessity of his being, like that of mulberry leaf to the silk-worm, and through his communion with Nature did he live and breathe. Hence it was from the truth of his love that his knowledge grew".

The education of Wordsworth's feelings, passions and receptive powers was mainly the work of Nature. Both in "The Prelude" and in the "Lines, written a few Miles above Tintern Abbey" lie has carefully distinguished the several stages of his education by nature, and the several stages of his love for her. Three points of his creed of Nature may be noted (i) He conceived of Nature as a living personality. He believed that there is a divine spirit pervading all the objects of Nature. This belief in divine spirit may be termed as mystical pantheism and is fully expressed in "Tintern Abbey" and in several passages of Book II of "The Preludes" (ii) Wordsworth believed that the company of Nature gives joy to the human heart and he believed that Nature has a healing influence on sorrow striclcen hearts (iii) Wordsworth believed in the moral influence of Nature. He spiritualized Nature and regarded her as a great moral teacher, as the best mother, guardian and nurse of man. It has an elevating influence. He believed that in man and Nature there is spiritual communion or mystic intercourse.

According to him, Nature deeply influences human character. He tells his sister Dorothy, that "Nature never did betray the heart that loved her." According to Wordsworth/Nature is a teacher whose wisdom we can learn if we want. He believed in the extrication of Man by Nature. In "The Tables Turned", he urges his friend to leave his books and come out in the open as:

One impulse from a vernal wood

May teach you more of a man

Of mural evil and of good

Than all the sages can.

This inter-relation of Nature and Man is very important in considering Wordsworth's philosophy, in "Tintern Abbey" he also distinguished his love for Nature as a grown up man from his love for her as a boy in his boyhood his love for Nature was a physical passion but when he grew up his love for Nature became intellectual and spiritual. This change was due to the still, sad music of humanity" which he had heard.

In "Resolution and Independence," the poet tells us how the beautiful scenes of Nature made him oblivious of the ways of men who are "so vain and melancholy". This poem tells us how the beautiful scenes of Nature the sunrise after a windy and rainy night, the birds singing in the distant woods, the grass bright with rain-drops and the hare running races in its mirth influence the poet's mind. These Nature-Pictures provide the background against which the meeting of the poet with the old leech-gatherer takes place. Nature is in a merry mood which is in direct contrast with the poet's fit of dispassion. According to one critic, In Resolution and independence" Wordsworth meets an old Leech-gatherer on a moor who is not only himself a natural object, as closely he is assimilated to his surroundings but at the same time mediates between the natural world and Wordsworth in such a way as to bring home to him the qualities of mind and character which are the limit of the influence of natural objects, and which, in the immediacy of his personal melancholy, he has temporarily lost sight of.

In the "Ode to Immortality" Wordsworth tells us that as a child he saw the light of heaven in the objects of Nature. The earth, the meadow, the grove, the stream and every common object seemed to him to be clothed in a divine glory. The tree, the field, the pansy possessed a dream like splendour for him. But in maturity Wordsworth missed that divine radiance which he had observed in Nature as a child. The reason which Wordsworth gives for this is that as a child he was close to God and had vivid memories of his pre-natal existence in heaven. His heavenly memories, invested all Nature with a divine light. But as he grew up, the memories of heavenly life faded out of his mind. Therefore, he could no longer see that heavenly splendour in Nature. The field, the tree, the pansy- all lost that divine glory which he used to see in them when he was a child. No doubt the objects of Nature were still beautiful for him but that divine glory was missing.

The sense of this loss makes Wordsworth sad. But he consoles himself with the ides that Nature now has a deep significance for him. With maturity has come the knowledge of the sufferings of mankind. Therefore, he has developed a reflective habit and a philosophic mind. Now when he looks, at the objects of Nature he finds a profound meaning in there. The clouds that gather round the setting sun take a sober colouring from his eyes. To him the meanest flower that blows can give such deep thoughts that they cannot be expressed even through tears in other words, Nature has now acquired a philosophic meaning and arouses in him deep thoughts about human destiny on earth. The sight of the objects of Nature stimulates him to think about the suffering humanity.

**2.4.5 Wordsworth as a Philosopher and a Teacher :**

Wordsworth was, first and foremost, a philosopher. His intention and purpose in life was to think out for himself faithfully, and seriously the question concerning "Man and Nature and Human life." He was a poet, because the poetical gift and faculty had been so bestowed on him that he could of fail in one way or another way to exercise it. According to Wordsworth, "Every great poet is a teacher ; I wish either to be considered as a teacher or as nothing". He was not like those poets, whose main object in writing poetry is to please. Nor, was the likes those poets who express merely their sense of the beauty, the strangeness, the pathetic mystery of the world, and give an outlet to their impressions in brder to invite sympathy with their personal sorrows and hopes.

Wordsworth was fully conscious of his duty as a poet. Inspite of his highly imaginative nature, he never forgot that he was a teacher and as such his chief purpose was to uplift his reader spirally and spiritually. He was as much in earnest as a prophet, and he held himself as responsible for obedience to his call and for fulfilment as a prophet.

In a letter to Lady Beaumont, Wordsworth has given his own account of the purpose of his poetry. It was "to console the afflicted, to add sunshine to teach the young and the, gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous". He himself has said, "there is scarcely any of my poems which does not aim to direct the attention to some moral sentiments or to some general principle or law of thought, or of our intellectual constitution". Each of them has a purpose.

As regards Wordsworth's ethical theory, he believes that there is a divine order in the Universe, and that conformity to this order produces beauty as embodied in the external world. It is by obedience to the 'stem law giver", duty, that flowers gain their fragrance and that "the most ancient heavens" preserve their freshness and strength. In "Ode to Duty" he expresses an abstract thought with passion and imagination. Throughout his life, his teaching kept the main course. His appeal to feeling which were "sane, sure and permanent".

Wordsworth's strong moral and philosophical tendency clearly comes out in poems like "Intimations of Immortality", and "Ode to Duty". In these two poems his philosophical and metaphysical poetry reaches its height. These two poems represent a perfect combination of profound thought and deep emotion.

In "Intimations of Immortality". Wordsworth express his faith m the Immortality and his view about the unreality of the world of the senses. According to him, the child comes into this world from heaven. The child is vaguely aware of his prenatal existence and is wrapped up in clouds of heavenly glory. As the child grows he forgets his memories of heaven and becomes engrossed in earthly interests. The grown-up man, however, by recalling his experiences of childhood, can come to the conclusion that the soul is immortal. This belief is known as the doctrine of reminiscence. Then Wordsworth, on the basis of certain experiences of childhood declares that the material world or the world of senses is an illusion. This is a Platonic view. The last two lines of title poem are full of instructions:

"To me the meanest flower that blows can give.

Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears"

The ethical purpose of the poem is conveyed by the lines where Wordsworth tells us about the soothing thought that spring out of human suffering and the lines in which he thanks the human heart for its joy and fears.

"Ode to Duty" is a moral and didactic poem. Duty is the power that guides human beings along the right path and teaches them to distinguish between right and wrong. Duty is a light to guide, and a rod to check the erring. The poet declares his resolve to submit himself to the strict discipline of Duty. He wants to obey the dictates of Duty as he does not wish to follow the chance desires. This poem is obviously intended to influence the reader in his conduct of daily life. "Ode to Duty" is not a pure poetry as its purpose is instruction and moral elevation, not pleasure or delight.

"Resolution and Independence", or "The Leech-Gatherer" is also a poem with a moral Wordsworth wishes his readers to derive instruction from contemplating the fortitude, independence, persevering spirit, and the general moral dignity of the old leech-gatherer's character. According to Wordsworth the value of the poem lies in its lesson that is the spectacle of meek endurance of hardship which may at times strengthen the faint-hearted. This poem, offers frequent sights of what is to be borne by all men, everywhere, at sometimes or other. Ills of the spirit, like those of the body, must be endured and if possible overcome.

Wordsworth, also believed in the education of Man by Nature. This interrelation of nature and man is very important in considering Wordsworth's philosophy. In "Tintem Abbey" he distinguishes his love for Nature as a boy from his love for her as a man. In his boyhood, his love for Nature was a physical passion; when he make up his love for Nature became intellectual and spiritual. In his boyhood his love was an "appetite", with its aching joys and dizzy raptures; as a man his love became thoughtful because of the "still and sad music of humanity" which he had heard. According to Wordsworth Nature has a living personality. He believed that there is "divine-spirit pervading all the objects of Nature. This belief in divine spent may be termed as mystical pantheism. He believed that Nature gives joy to the human heart, and has a healing influence on sorrow stricken hearts. It is a wonderful power around us calming and influencing our souls.

According to Wordsworth : "the end of the poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an over-balance of pleasure". While Wordsworth's idea of pleasure was an intellectual spiritual one, it was neither bodiless nor excessively metaphysical. The greatness of Wordsworth is successful poetry lies in its power to give acute pleasure by stimulating the reader's imagination to the pitch where he perceives with the freshness and wonder of a new creature in a new world; and this power is more extraordinary in as much as it is generated through a meditation upon familiar and frequently common place things.

**2.4.6 Wordsworth's Theory and Practice of Poetic Diction :**

Wordsworth's famous declaration of Principles concerning the nature of poetic diction are found in the Preface to the first edition in 1979. Wordsworth simply mentioned: "The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adopted to the purpose of poetic pleasure". It was in the long preface to the second edition of the Lyrical Ballads that he put the issue on broader grounds and explained his own view on poetic diction:

"The Principle object, then, proposed in these poems was to choose incinerates and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout as far as possible in a selection of language really used by men, and at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of the imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect, and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature, chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity."

Along with this statement regarding the nature of poetic diction, Wordsworth also pointed out that some of the most interesting parts of his poems were written strictly in the Language of prose, and even went further in making a wider generalization : "It may be safely affirmed that their neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition". He also qualified his first statement that "the real language of men" was the right material. It was to be purified from provincialism, and from all "rational causes of, disgust and dislike", it was to be "selected"; it was to be "the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation".

Wordsworth in this way discarded the abstract and rigid style of eighteenth century. In this new kind of poetry, Wordsworth made an attempt to exercise "the power of exciting sympathy of the reader by a faithful, adherance to the truth of nature". Wordsworth's dictum that the language of poetry is "a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation" has been a subject of much criticism, which began with Coloridge's Biographia Literaria. Coleridge, exclaimed that a language which has submitted to this

Selective process will, in the result, "not differ from the language of men in a state of vivid sensation". Coleridge exclaimed that a language which has submitted, to this selective process will, in the result, not differ from the language of any other man of common sense. Hazlitt remarked that Coleridge has reduced the merit of Wordsworth to "that there is nothing peculiar about him and that his poetry, so far as it is good for anything at all,' is just like any other good poetry". But this is to underestimate, because Wordsworth has a perfectly good answer to this objection. The poet who composes in a selection "from the real language of men" escapes "the language of any other man of commonsense" in the exact degree in which he is a poet. The language of poetry must be real, true and not a false language; but because it is to be poetry, it cannot be the language of "Commonsense", but only that part of the real language of men as will "make up into imagination of the poet". So what Wordsworth says of "selection" is not merely essential to his theory of poetic diction, but also to his whole teaching upon the subject of imaginative creation.

Wordsworth, in the matter of poetic diction breaks up with the orthodox convention of his day but returns to the natural diction of normal men, in the matter of metre he appeals to tradition. According to him, the concurring testimony of the ages have established the laws of metre, and all upongble people submit to them and acknowledge them. The state of excitement which yield the right words and the right diction of poetry, is altogether too much of a good thing if allowed a free run in the matter of rhythm. In other words, that poet by the aid of metre, exercises upon the passions of real life the same refining and "selecting" power as he exercises upon language of real life.

It is clear that for Worthworth's purposes and in relation to his chosen subjects, the diction that he used was the best diction, indeed in many cases, the only diction possible. As far as possible he sticks to his theory in the writing of his poems, but there is no doubt that he does not always succeed in this mission. While passion holds him .and while he is moved or exalted, his language keeps its intensity. But when his own feeling flags and there is ground to be covered, he becomes mechanical.

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

**William Wordsworth**

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

These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard- tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,

Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,

Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.
These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration:— feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
is lightened:— that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on, —
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:

While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of jobless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hang upon the beatings of my heart —
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!
And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity, The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man

Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me wassail in all. — I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,

That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye. — That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Paint I, nor mourn nor murmur, other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense, For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes

The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue, and I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And soils through all things. Therefore am I still
A lever of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear, — both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:

For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,

My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead'
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all

The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall ever prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,

Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance –
If I should be where I no more can hear

Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence - wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream

We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With winner love - oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

[Date of composition: 1798. Source of text: William Wordsworth, 1888 edition of Complete Poetical Works.]

**William Wordsworth. 1770-1850**

**Ode**

**Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood**

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem Apparel's in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore;-
Turn where so ever I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more
The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose;
The mo on doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet 1 know, wherever I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.
Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,

And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong:
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;

No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng, The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,

And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday;
Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
Shepherd-boy!

Ye blessed creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fullness of your bliss, I feel-I feel it all.
O evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the children are culling
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm
And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm: -

I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
-But there's a tree, of many, one,

A single field which J have look'd upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?
Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting

The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

Earth finis her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a mother's mind,

And no unworthy aim,
The homely nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her Inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came

Behold the Child among his new-born blesses,
A six years' darling of a pigmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!

See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song:
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his 'humorous stage'
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy soul's immensity;
Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted fo ever by the eternal mind, -
Mighty prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;

Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a master o'er a slave,
A presence which is not to be put by;
To whom the grave
Is but a lonely bed without the sense or sight
Of day or the warm light,

A place of thought where we in waiting lie;
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest-

Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast: -
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts before which our mortal Nature

Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain-light of all our day,
Are yet a master-light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,

To perish never:
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,

Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find

Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.
And O ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripp'd lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
Is lovely yet;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,

Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

## A. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION

When was "Resolution and Independence" published?

a. 1807 b. 1906

c. 1803 d. 1934

## 2.6 GLOSSARY

**Magpies** : are birds of the Corvidae (crow) family.

**Mirth** : amusement, especially as expressed in laughter.

**Plashy** : full of puddles; marshy; wet.

**Warble** : (of a bird) sing softly and with a succession of constantly changing notes.

## 2.7 QUESTIONS

1. Critically appreciate “Ode to Duty”.

2. Write a short note on Wordsworth’s diction.

## 2.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION’S ANSWER

A) 1807

## 2.9 SUGGESTED READING

*The Penguin Book of Romantic Poetry.*

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# Lesson-3
# WILLIAM BLAKE

**STRUCTURE**



## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

William Blake was an English poet, painter, and printmaker. Largely unrecognised during his lifetime, Blake is now considered a seminal figure in the history of the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. What he called his prophetic works were said by 20th-century critic Northrop Frye to form "what is in proportion to its merits the least read body of poetry in the English language". His visual artistry led 21st-century critic Jonathan Jones to proclaim him "far and away the greatest artist Britain has ever produced". In 2002, Blake was placed at number 38 in the BBC's poll of the 100 Greatest Britons. While he lived in London his entire life, except for three years spent in Felltham, he produced a diverse and symbolically rich *ourve,* which embraced the imagination as "the body of God" or "human existence itself."

This first lesson on William Blake will be devoted to a ***discussion and critical analysis of Blake's poems*** included for special study. It is to be noted that a thorough understanding of the themes of his verse is the basis for knowing him intimately as a poet in different aspects.

William Blake (1757-1827) had an Irish descent from his father's side and showed himself a dreamer and visionary even when very young, and was an aesthetic in his love of poetry and painting. As a writer he is most spontaneous and is guided purely by instinct more than by any prescribed code. In the indulgence of his intuition he even surpasses Wordsworth and his prophetic ardour and love of reform he reminds one of Shelley. His poetry baffles for sheer complexity and mystery, and the plethora of critical books devoted to his moral, religious and political doctrines testify to the profound importance of the topics that exercised his mind and to the power and suggestiveness of the symbolic treatment given by him to simple, ordinary, everyday themes. Secondly, in his case the separation of art from problems and beliefs would seem ridiculous. His primary concern was the understanding and evaluation of human experience, especially in certain crucial situations.

In Blake's poetry the universe is seen through the eyes of a child; felt through its senses, judged through its heart, and this child is the symbol of the most delicate and courageous intuitions in the human mind, just like the soul of peasant iii those moments of sober exaltation which to Wordsworth, are the very

source and inner substance of poetry. The child, who for Wordsworth, is father of the man, is for Blake primarily an aspect or possibility of every human personality. He makes an explicit distinction between 'childlike' (referring to the good qualities of childhood) and 'childish' (pertaining to something improper in a grown up person).

## 3.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This chapter focuses on the collection of poems named Songs of innocence and songs of Experience.

## 3.3 SONGS OF INNOCENCE

Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience are two main headings for poems of a great difference of character, showing two contrary states of the human soul, vindicating Blake's own maxim that "without contraries is no progression." In reality there are two sections of a book, two contrasted elements in a single design. The first is an imaginative vision of the state of innocence, the second shows how life-challenges, corrupts, and destroys it. While the first part is a definition and explication of innocence, the second about its corruption and destruction. The design of both part is woven from the texture of childhood which as the symbol of untarnished innocence suffers the sophistications of modem civilization, and the strain of adults life, under whose impact it loses its pristine, glory and joy.

Songs of Innocence constitutes an imaginative picture of the state of innocence as derived from sources such as the Bible, the pastoral tradition and the growing Romantic fascination with childhood, and supposed primitive condition of human perfection in innocence. Here all human desires are innocent-even discipline leads to happiness. Here profound moral ideas spring directly from the poet's personal vision of the universe. Blake speaks of himself from a purely personal point of view. The introductory poem, piping down the Valleys Wild and subsequent poems have a childlike directness and sense of controlled joy in the human writing for children or playing at being a child. The pure passion and intensity of feeling reflected by the poems derives from the prophetic and visionary Blake. Many of these poems show a sense of order and harmony allied to spontaneity.

The ***Introduction*** may be looked upon as a brief essay on poetry and the poet's mission in so far as it is a divine command to sing, the subject of innocent bliss by fitting words to melody and then to perpetuate the melody in writing with the aid of unstrained imagination so that "every child may joy hear". The ***Echoing Green*** has an idyllic background reminiscent of Gold Smith ***Deserted Village*** although its nostalgic vitality is much more artfully artless. The description of the joy and contentment experienced by children at play is the best of artlessness. Lines.

"Such, such were the joys.

…….

On the Echoing Green"

breathe a spirit of universal joy symbolizing childhood play and a sense of participation.

The lamb stresses a feeling of kinship, of innocence between the child, the lamb, and Christ. The goodness of God's endowment elicits spontaneous praise and symbolises the rightness of creation. A child, a lamb and God are all endowed with the essence of divinity :

"I a child, and thou a lamb,

we are called by His name.

The lamb is other than God, who has himself become the Lamb, the child, and the son of God, Jesus Christ. The poem contains a beautiful idea that human conceits such as ownership, possession are all signs of our gross ignorance of the Supreme Truth that the only reality is God. ***The Tiger in Songs of Experience*** is a contrasted study of this poem which is distinguished by its forceful and supple rhythms of speech derived from the Bible and free metres. The shepherd is logical sequence to ***The Lamb.*** God Plays "the protective shepherd to His flock" i.e. His creation as much aim the ordinary shepherd tends his sheep, goals etc. A new-born infant, just two days old has no name, but he is the picture of innocence and bliss-imsullied joy and can rightly he christened as Joy. This is the theme of ***Infant joy.*** A contrasted and a contrary picture is expressed in ***Infant Sorrow*** in Songs of Experience. ***The Little Black Boy*** brings out the moral essence of Blake's poetry. Inspired by the anti-slavery agitation, the theme cuts across racial prejudices, and the entire poem becomes an impassioned cry against the social ostricisation of the black-the negress-by the white. On another level the poem is deeply humanitarian in sentiment in the poet enlisting our apaspethies for the black-the aggrieved social under-dogs. The spiritual undertones of the theme are also powerful, and here Blake alludes to the underlying reality of God tor Divino, power- "the beams of love"- which welds all human hearts imo the band of love, and which points to the whiteness of soul in all bodies, whatever be their complexion. The man made racial differences, the poet believes, obscure real human nature which is essentially divine. The pastoral background and the narrator's tender age lead to the theme force and passion.

***Laughing Song*** strikes a note of directness and simplicity reminiscent of Elizabethan lyrics. It is also comparable with a Wordsworthian lyric of nature where nature is sounds with the feeling of joy which crams human nature. There is rhythmic unity between man and nature. And what is true of ***Laughing Song*** is confirmed by ***Spring.*** In spring season, human heart dances to the joyful tune of the season, and the spirit of perfect abandon seems to be abroad and at large.

While the obvious theme of ***A Cradle Song*** is a mother's watching and crooning over her young one as he lies asleep in a cradle being rocked by her to the accomplishment full by its deeper meaning is that a child is the true image of the Father, the Almighty God, and in his face can be traced gleams of Divinity, Christ, the child of God manifests Himself through every infant in it.

"Sweet babe in thy face

Holy image I can trace.

Sweet babe, once like thee.

Thy Maker lay and wept for me.

The mother looks upon her child as a redeemer, like Christ.

***Nurse's Song*** gives expression to the feeling of involuntary participation in the unbounded joy of uninhibited childhood as it temps and plays on fly green fields and hills and makes them echo with its shouts of joy. Or does the poem mean that the uninhibited happiness of a child is strong enough to infect even the hearts of the adults so as to wean them from their anguish and care to a free participation in the sports and games of the young ?

***Holy Thursday*** only explicitly recounts the moral implied in ne Divine Image. In place of voicing mere moral platitudes. Blake here gives expression to a vision of the universe personally felt by him. The burden of the Church service on the Holy day is the significance of piety and love in the life of man. The Divine Image stresses the four-fold divine creed of brotherhood made up of Mercy, Peace, Pity and Love. As a counterpart to Holy Thursday the poem is a reiteration of the Creative and Spiritual power of God in man,

of the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man. In believing that God does not exist apart from man. Bible seems to Humanise Divinity The thought had relevance in the age of nationalism such as Blake's. ***A Dream*** has identical theme although the message is conveyed through a parable; the helplessness of a mother ant separated in the night from her children, and finally united to them by a glow-worm. It is the story of human beings straying from the path of divinity of which they are restored by a beneficent angel. The poem, thus, teaches the lesson of the omniscience and omnipresence's of god. This story of loss and restoration is repeated in the two short companion pieces— ***The Little Boy Lost*** and its subsequent ***The Little Boy Found.*** God, the shepherd, out of kind consideration always comes to the rescue of the poor souls who come to grief in the developing gloom of ignorance. A poem of human life vis-a-vis ***God is On Another's Sorrow*** whose theme is compassion, a feeling integral to man's imaginative nature, a most delicate fiber of human sensibility- God is Divine essence who reveals Himself through his creatures, the inanan beings. Human pity is thus another name for Divine compassion.

The ***Chimney Sweeper*** is a class by itself. Inspired by deep humanitarian feelings it highlights the prevalent socio-economic exploitation and inequality which in the form of employing children of tender age in factories, mines and other industrial concerns in the wake of the industrial Revolution becomes an impassioned cry, against human injustice. Other contemporary poems on the same theme were ***The Cry of the children*** by Elizabeth Barrett Browning and a poem about a seam stress by Thomas Hood. Condemned to the drudgery of chimney-sweeping the children find all their dreams of a happy, joyful period of life dashed to the ground. The dull routine will crush their souls and utterly destroy their physical strength if it were not for their dreams then which present to them a vision in which the benign angel holds out a 'promise of a glorious and happy future' when they would be rewarded with adequate recompense in the form of peace, playfulness, and joy for all their sincorp, conscientious work in the present. The poem, thus, turns out to be yet another variation on the theme of God, the Almighty Father; standing by the innocent children. Here is Blake the moralist speaking through art which triumphs by being artless. The poem was a special favorite of Charles Lamb who also wrote an essay entitled ***Chimney Sweepers*** on the same subject.

The companion book Songs of Experience is about the actual world of human experience, and suffering of mankind. More impassioned than the Songs of Innocence, they are born of a deep anguish, from a storm in the poet's soul. Besides a visionary and a mystic, Blake was a psychologist and a realist and was aware of the natural cycle of things and, events. He knew that a period of life full of happiness and harmony is bound to be succeeded by one full of distress and discord much as light follows darkness or night follows day. It is a part of discretion and sanity to accept coexistence of the contrary states of existence, and instead of complaining against the dark aspects of life attempts reconciliation and a synthesis. The willing acceptance of this fact leads to a consummation of the human experience. In fact the glory of an part of experience is dependent upon and is magnified by the other. Translated into concrete terms it means that innocence wedled to experience and goodness to knowledge will have elegance and meaning. According to Blake - Unorganized Innocence : An Impossibility - Innocence dwell with wisdom but never with Ignorance. The true innocence is not that of the Songs of Innocence, but something which gains knowledge from the errors of experience and finds an expanding strength in the unfettered life of the creative soul.

Such a consummation, however, which beyond experience, does not result from mere goodwill or pious inspirations. Life of the imagination is possible only brought passion and power and energy. Blake, therefore, emphasizes the great latent force in man which are employing but nonetheless indispensable for the achievement of something worthwhile. According to him it is only through the release and exercise of

awful powers that his creative activity of the imagination is awakened and set in motion and experience gained and transformed. He looks for his symbols for these powers in violent and destructive things, and in their elemental force lies the redemption of mankind Christ is Blake's symbol of the divine spirit which chafes at all restrictions, established order social code and custom. The word of Christ is instrumental in uniting innocence and experience in a wonderful harmony. The two groups of poems, thus, are complementary to each other and not antithetical as may appear on superficies view.

The "Introduction" to Songs of Experience is more complex and extremely fine example of Blake's poetic method. In The Introduction and the succeeding Earth's Answer Blake uses certain familiar themes, whose ordinary associations are called but unexpectedly modified, and they are set in relation but not an explicitly defined relation - to totally different and unfamiliar ideas.

The introduction might seem at first glance a straight-forward treatment of the fall, with its reference to

The Holy word

That walk'd among be ancient trees.

And fallen, fallen, fallen, light renew !

Even here the word 'ancient' for the trees unexpectedly modifies the ordinary notion of Eden; it is taken up again in Earth's Answer, when in denouncing the jealous, love-chaining God, Earth calls him the father if the ancient med. The 'weeping' is given an implication of helplessness by the next two stanzas of the "Introduction" in which The Holy word is shown as pleading with Earth, in effect from wooing her to come to him in the permitted period of darkness :

"Turn away no more;

Why will thou turn away?

Is given three till the break day."

with this helplessness is contrasted the power of the Creator to reverse if he would, the darkness of the fall.

"And fallen, fallen, light renew!"

The effect is already to convey not only the usual sense of boundless loss and the grief of the Creator, but with an astringent mint of something questionable in the power of renewal not exercised. Moreover, the lapsed soul is not mass but 'Earth'. In ***Earth's Answer*** it becomes clear that Earth is feminine and is being wooed for her love, including her sexual love. The Holy Word has now become

"Selfish father of men !

Cruel, jealous, selfish fear !"

And the denunciation of his imprisoning, jealousy is combined with Blake's hatred of the conventional restriction of sexual activity to darkness, with its implications of shame and secrecy:

"Can delight

Chaine'd in night,

…….....

Does spring hide its joy

…….....

Or the plowman in darkness plow?"

The fallen light of the "Introduction" thus, gathers a further meaning. Behind the two poems, moreover, there lurks the idea which Blake developed in the prophetic books that the Creation was a division in God and itself constituted the Fall. That, however, is no made explicit here, what the two poems offer is an unexpected handling of the Fall with its sexual aspects, in a way that links God's relation to the world with that of men to women, associates the Creator with the jealous patriarch and with the selfish fear in us all, and at the same tune shows him helplessly defeated by the refusal of his creation to submit to jealous control arid accept atonement on his terms. The themes are brought together with vistas of association down any of which we can pause and look rather in manner of a photomontage. They are not fully developed, nor explicitly related to one another, but, although possibly mystifying at first, the effect is of a pattern that the emotional coherence in spite of being so remote from discursive logic. It must be added that the proper pleasure of the poem and its appreciation involves extended insight into the relatedness of themes that may at first seem to be merely juxtaposed.

In the ***Introduction*** Blake contemplates the inhumanity and injustice upon fallen man, but considers this apparently evil descent indispensable in the wheel of destiny. The soul must pass through the complete cycle in order to emerge into a fuller, more active life of the Creative Imagination from the apparent complexities and horrors. The Bard in this poem calls upon Earth to proceed to its which includes the bitterness of experience in order that the physical world is superseded by the visionary age (Eden). In the largest context and the most forceful implication of the theme the poem suggests that the innocent cannot come by true vision unless they know and fully understand the distortions of experience, and also transcend them. Eastth's Answer records initial despair and helplessness at the imprisonment of mankind in fear and jealousy by analytical reason, but calls for the release of men's spirits from bond-age and repression. The release signifies awakening to a new world of enjoyment, indulgence-even indulgence in free love:

"Break this heavy chain

That free Love with bondage bound."

Almost all the poems under Songs of Experience are a continuation, extension, and variation of the theme of poems under the preceding title. It would be more apt to another facet of the experience described in the first category.

***Nurse's*** Song sees as a waste of time and cruelly tells the children that their life is a strain, a hypocrisy spent in darkness and cold. It is a poignant contrast to the earlier which symbolized the carefree play of the imagination when it is not spoiled by senseless restrictions. Nevertheless the "winter and night" are very much of the offshoot of "Your spring and your day ..... wasted in play". Similarly Instant Sorrow counters *Infant joy*. The former registers an infant's protest against the tyranny and oppression of life here represented by the cruelty of the father helped by the mother's complicity. But through sheer helplessness and despair the infant learns to live with this experience, and yet he is all the richer and wiser for it. It is the inescapable lot of a child to face and suffer the new problems of adults life.

**A. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION**

William Blake's Songs of innocence came out in

A)1776 B) 1789

C) 1787 D) 1800

## 3.4 SUMMARY

*Songs of Innocence and of Experience* is an illustrated collection of poems by William Blake. It appeared in two phases. A few first copies were printed and illuminated by William Blake himself in 1789; five years later he bound these poems with a set of new poems in a volume titled *Songs of Innocence and of Experience showing* the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul. William Blake was also a painter before the songs of innocence and experience and made paintings such as Oberon, Titania, and Puck dancing with fairies.

## 3.5 GLOSSARY

**Soot** **:** a deep black powdery or flaky substance consisting largely of amorphous carbon, produced by the incomplete burning of organic matter.

**Mire** **:** a stretch of swampy or boggy ground.

**Beadle** **:** A beadle, sometimes spelled "beadle", is an official of a church or synagogue who may usher, keep order, make reports, and assist in religious functions; or a minor official who carries out various civil, educational, or ceremonial duties.

## 3.6 QUESTIONS

1. Explain the context of "Songs of Innocence".
2. Give the central idea of "Holy Thursday".

## 3.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION'S ANSWER

B) 1789

## 3.8 SUGGESTED READING

Songs of Innocence and of Experience by William Blake


**1.** J. Bronowski, ***A man without a Mask.***

***2.*** S.F. Damon, ***William Blake : His philosophy and symbols.***

**3.** N. Ptye, ***Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake.***

**4.** S. Gardner, ***Infinity on the Anvil: A critical Study of Blake's Poetry.***

**5.** D. Saurat, ***Blake and Modem Thought.***

**6.** William Blake, ***Twentieth Century Views.***


(4 Nos 3, 4 and 6 for advanced students).

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# Lesson-4
# WILLIAM BLAKE

**STRUCTURE**



## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

*Songs of Experience* is a poetry collection of 26 poems forming the second part of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience.* The poems were published in 1794. Some of the poems, such as "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found", were moved by Blake to *Songs of Innocence* and were frequently moved between the two books.

## 4.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This chapter focuses on the collection named Songs of Experience.

In continuation of the discussion in the preceding lesson we will deal further with the poems of Blake, and then pass on to a general discussion of his poetry.

## 4.3 SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

Quite a few poems in Songs of Experience deal with the theme of human life, its desires, feelings etc. ***A Poison Tree*** is a simple poem on the theme of repression, the question of disguising true feelings. Here is the feeling of wrath, antagonism which if repressed will work as poison in the heart and mind and drive a person either mad or cynical. Frank and unrestrained expression, on the contrary, restores health both of mind and body. Talking symbolically the poet conveys in the last stanza of the poem that the evil fruit of the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden was actually the fruit of restraint and repression: "My foe outstretched beneath the tree."

### 4.3.1 The Sick Rose

The Sick rose is a slight variation on the same theme. Here is the story of the rose flower and the can-her-worm which eats into its very vitals and destroys it entirety. In the same manner, restraint and selfishness poison the very springs of level. The poem is built around a beautiful metaphor. Another poem, *The Angel* returns us to the theme of love denied which means joy denied. The character is an old woman, a spinster who out of maidenly coyness spurned offers of love and youth test her maidenly code of conduct be broken. This timidity, however, cost her dear and she is now left with bitter lamentations over departed youth and wasted life. A free indulgence in the life of love would certainly, have saved her life from being completely wrecked. The poem is reminiscent of the experiences of Elizabethan lovers, though here the lover appears symbolically in the guise of an Angel.

### 4.3.2. My Pretty Rose Tree

*My Pretty Rose Tree* is also about missed opportunities in love. Symbolizing sexual indulgence in the rose tree the poem discusses the subject of love which hedges itself around with thorns out of foolish ignorance and disregard of the depth of feeling and thus keeps away happiness. In a mood of utter despair one is forced to live with thorns. In place of love is born jealousy and cynicism and in place of warmth cold calculation. The succeeding poem *Ah! Sun-flower* is more impressive and pregnant with deeper meaning, although it also employs a natural object-a sun-flower symbolically to convey its idea. It is the story of human aspiration, which finds its wings clipped so long as it is fettered to the realities of mundane earth. Like the sun-flower a man's face is turned upwards to the sun and the clouds, and like the flower drooping with sunset the frustration of desire leads to a sense of despair from which he finds an outlet and release into a freer and a brighter world. The sun is symbolic of hope and joy and the earth represents a corrosive limiting agent, the material interests of life. But the metaphysical overtones of the theme are even more significant. Human bodies for limiting adjuncts are the aggregate of objects with which human beings identify themselves and thereby prove their finite nature, while in essence they are a part of the Supreme Reality. The human soul-a part of the Divine, in its lowest stage of spiritual development unfortunately identifies itself with a number of lower things such as body, intellect or understanding, sensations, delightful feelings etc, so that it remains bandaged to earth. Yet there are constant endeavors by her to rid herself of this enslavement and enjoy astral flights.

The ideas of the poems are fused into it with the force and intensity of a passionate lyric cry and the tone throughout is inspirational.

### 4.3.3 The Ganien of love

*The Ganien of love* counters the sentiments of *The Echoing Green* (Songs of Innocence). Nature is no more a place of sport for children and its beautiful, green spots are encroached upon by mail and man-made structures such as "A Chapel."

Its spirit of innocence is being violated by codified laws and social and religious inhibitions and taboos-by a number of do's and dont's. The religiosity of the chapel and the priest frowns on the young children and stifles the joys of divine impulse. In the state of experience Blake finds jealousy, cruelty, hypocrisy, crippling the natural play of the affections and turning joy into sorrow.

In the nature of things experience of adults life gives a new turn to the affection of childhood. The Church comes in for censure at Blake's hands in The *Little Vagabond,* a poem which apparently deals all too flippantly with the subject of childlike-nay childish mention of God and the House of God. But beneath

flippancy is the serious theme of Blake which is that legalism and unduly harsh religious code has killed spontaneity and imaginative playfulness of children. To a child's imagination an ale-house is as good a place for sport and merry-making as a Church, but the laws and regulations devised by the adults and other man-made organization have prejudiced children's mind to the point of scaring them away from Church and God. What man, in his ignorance and selfishness, has made of institutions and organization is, thus, not half as tragic as what he has made of a child's mind. God identifies Himself with a child and rejoices in his activities.

**4.3.4 The Chimney - Sweeper and London**

A group of two poems-***The Chimney - Sweeper*** and ***London***, deal with the socio-economic aspects of life and are deeply moralistic. ***The Chimney Sweeper*** is more or less a continuation of its name sake in Songs of Innocence, although it is much more caustic in its attack on the parents, God, the priest and the king for their callous indifference. The parents are sheer tyrants in their gross negligence of their little ones. Their absence at Church for the sake of worship assumes an ironic meaning when the little one is deserted at him in tears, lit competition with them, as it were, the Church and State, indulge in a policy of repression and in humanity. "God and His Priest and king".... make up a Heaven of our misery" has all the force of bitter irony and paradox. Blake here appears in all his force. And passion conveying his message in images which are vivid for all their simplicity and familiarity. The other poem *London* is the harshest with the condemnation of a society that tolerated such class of people as Chimney Sweepers and harlots. The city of charter'd and street, charter'd Thames suffers from the blot of social evils. It seems that its very soul is corrupted within the deadening touch to "plagues" of various types-moral, intellectual and domestic. In his censure Blake is one with other social critics and reformers of his time such as Thomas Paine, Godwin, and even Rousseau. In a short poem charged with fire, fury and passion he accomplishes even more than what the great writers and pampbeleteers of the day succeded in doing. He lays bare, in almost suggestive manner, cruelty, hypocrisy poverty, misuse of the intellect, distrust die imagination, political and religious institutions and other associated evils of the day. A third poem entitled ***Holy Thursday*** also takes up the same theme, although here an ironical contrast is built up between affluence of England "rich and fruitful land" and the poverty, starvation and misery of its "many children." The poem, a counterpart to its name sake in Songs of Innocence, is charged, with bitter reproach, pessimism, indignation, and denunciation, in addition to its mocking tone which ridicules the so-called richness of the land, and its sunshine and rain, which contribute to its property. It bring out the moral note in Blake's poetry.

Blake's courage of the intellectual and mental ailments which afflicated his countrymen is even more powerful than his criticism of social and religious evils, and in Song of Experience there are quite a few poems which deal with the subject of intellect. The most significance of these is To Tlrrah-a woman who represents "Natural Religion" i.e. the rationalistic pragmatic mind of the English tenement. This woman lures men to the delusion of mortal bodies by her hypocrisy and selfishness, whereas the true, real body of man is spintual. The poem is a brilliant, short essay on the theme of Reason and its place in the life of man. In the few lines of poem the poet analyses the nature and characteristics of reason which acts as a mental tyrant. Its offspring hypocrisy, selfishness, shame, pride, false sense of distinction bind a person down to individuality, narrow-mindedness, and all the worst sufferings of the world. It has distorted his vision, taught him wrong perspective of life and love of falsehood in place of truth. Worst of all probably it has convinced man of his mortality whereas the Death of Christ teaches him about his Divinity and immortality. Thus Reason-analytic Reasons, pragmatic, empirical outlook, according to Blake, has spelt ruin and disaster to human beings and their happiness, in terms of abstract philosophy and metaphysics we might interpret the

poem as a study in human ego and its manifestations in everyday life. The original sin 'I am this body' is the source of all evils in human life and the realisation of the truth of Christianity that the body is the cross; that ego is Jesus, the 'son of man' and that resurrection is the glorious real self, is real life all else is death. Therefore, in its general sense the poem warns us against the evils of ego-sense and its consequent indulgence, as well as absolute reliance upon Reasons which, at best, leads us into a blind alley of confusion. What is, therefore, called knowledge is of true knowledge; the knowledge got through the mind and the senses implies the distinction between subject and object, which is only illusory. True knowledge is God or the real self because it is self-luminous. This is the theme of the poem *A Little Boy Lost* which obviously is about a boy who is sacrificed by the priest in order to prevent the spread of the heresy that Divinity must first he comprehended by Mind or Reason before being accepted by intuition. The supreme Reality or Divinity however, is not an object of discursive or empirical knowledge all profound religious experiences are related to the region of the super-conscious, and it is from this feat all great seers and mystics derive knowledge. Such religious persecution as fee poem records is reminiscent of the medieval bigotry and is a blot on fee fair name of England. Blake here appears as a true liberal.

In The ***Human Abstract*** Blake talks of hypocrisy in detail and discusses how the hypocrites explain human behavoiur in terms of "Self interest," almost in the copybook style of 18th century philosopher such as Hobbes. Hypocrisy is as grave a sin as cruelty since both spring from the same source viz refusal to obey the creative spirit of the imagination and obedience to fear and envy. The Tree of knowledge born of analytic intellect or reason "Human brain" yields the bitter fruit of decent which is further embittered by "Mystery" in the form of ceremonies and rituals being grafted to it. The fruit is of falsehood instead of truth, death in place of life.

A Divine Image provides an antithesis to this poem. Man, characterized by Cruetly, Jealousy, Terror, and Secrecy, in his fallen state is the divine image. In this stage of degradation he is the opposite of the four fold creed of brotherhood : Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love.

The poet assumes the role of a Bard; a wise person and calls upon young men in the Voice of the ***Ancient Bard*** to come and see the image of troth newly born in the early-morning. There will be no more fog of analytic reason disguising its face. Instead there will be the piercing rays of truth issuing from its clear, bright eyes. Ignorance of truth has so far been the cause of the down fan of man and his sorrow.

A minor poem that treats of the rationalistic mind as deductive of love is ***A Littler Girl Lost.*** It laments the passing away of the Golden Age when love was the natural religion of the soul and meant the union of two hearts or spirits. It meant a spiritual mingling between two persons. Now, however an element of inhibition has entered it with fee growing sophistications of life. Consequently it appears to be crime when tested with reference to the adults.

However, the most striking poem of Songs of experience and one truly representative of Blake as a poet in ***The Tiger,*** as poem of perfect beauty of form and melody, impregnated with profound symbolism of the theme stressed by Blake's spelling of tiger as tyger.

At simplest reading the poem is a contemplation of the fact that besides peacefulness and gentleness, the poem attudes fierce strength terrifying in its mileau of destructiveness but also impressive and admirable stupendous part of creation and seemingly a challenge to feel idea of a benign Creator. To see that the tiger's fierceness and the lamb's gentleness are also contrasting qualities of the human mind is a very slight extension beyond the mere literal sense. The theme is a common place and also a fact of supreme human importance. The focus of sharp psychological conflict in individual minds and of unending theological and philosophical

discussion. What this fine poem does is to let us contemplate the facts in their emotional intensity and conflict, and to share his complex attitude of awe, terror, admiration, near bafflement, and attempted acceptance or reconciliation of the Lamb and the tiger (of the forgiveness and punishment of Evil).

The critics extended interpretations sacrifice Blake's combination of a very general, complex meaning with a vivid phrase-embodied symbol. It is important for an understanding of Blake as a poet (rather than a teacher in parables) to see that he presents the fierceness of nature not through a symbolic object a tiger but through that object embodied is particular language. The description 'burning' for instance has important uncertainties of meaning: we may (in view of the second stanza) think primarily of the two burning eyes in darkness, but the phrase itself makes the whole tiger a symbol of a 'burning quality' wrath; passion, ardour perhaps; but then again die word 'bright' modifies the kind of burning suggested: it may convey incandescence, white heat and it brings a sense of light, something glorious and shining in the quality symbolised. It is important to recognise how the symbolic language stimulates rich, associations, strong feelings, and attitudes.

Similarly extended interpretation along a well-defined line of thought raises doubts and conflicting opinions. Take, for instance, the fifth stanza of the poem. The words have a wide range of echoes and half allusions in the mind. Blake asks whether the Creator smiled with satisfaction in what he had made when in fact its ferocious strength was so appealing that even the stars abandoned their armed formidability (the spears suggested by their steely glitter) and broke down in tears. The critics elaborate far beyond this. Gardener suggests that the stars symbols of material power, cast aside the instruments of strife and take on pity and the Creator now becomes the God of Innocence, smiles upon the 'the triumph of the Lamb.' He amplifies by saying: 'The stanza of the Lamb is die only one in which not only the tiger of wrath and rebellion is brought to harmony but the universe of stars and might as well. 'The tiger lies down with the lamb'. Wrestled goes further. He thinks the theme is the carnation of the stars symbolising 'the hard cold realm of Reason and war, that held the earth before compassion came with Christ. At the end of his long commentary', after the convincing suggestion that the tiger is nothingless indeed than the Divine speak, the fierce struggling individuality. He concludes, 'And yet when we ask ourselves, is it good to be alive and bum with quenchless desire, with love half realised and with purpose even superfectly fulfilled' the incarnate heart of Deity in ourselves responds, with the smile of daybreak, that the spirits which discern and divide and conted in labour and agony are but glimpses of the Great Light that shall unite and heal in strength and tenderness and joy.

But this criticism is untenable firstly because that imparts into the poem intellectual meanings that are two remotely and indirectly derived from the words, if they can claim to derive from them at all, and secondly that the parish-magazine equality of sentiment it expresses is totally foreign to the strength of the state of mind Blake makes us to share.

The compelling images of the poem are self- explanatory, and we have an immediate, overwhelming impression of an awful power lurking in the darkness and forcing on us questions which pierce to the hearts life. Like the poem about the lamb in Songs of innocence the one about the tiger in Songs of Experience poses more frightful questions. The lamb and the tiger are symbols for two different states of the human soul: when the lamb is destroyed by experience, the tiger is needed to restore the word. Limited minds appreciate the lamb but are appalled at the tiger element in the universe.

Power and energy are not to be scorned but are to be revered and carried to their highest point of lumtment.

The impressive octosyllabic stroxes make the poem one of the most technically successful lyrics in matures.

After this detailed discussion of the poems prescribed, let us now turn to Blake's symbolism.

**4.3.5 Blake and symbolism:**

The word symbolism is derived from the latinsymbolous or symbolism meaning a sign by which we know or infer a thing. Symbols are signs for expressing the invisible by means of visible or sensuous representatives. For instance to a **Christian,** the cross is a symbol of salvation because it is connected with the crucifixion to Christ the circle is a symbol of extremely too many inutics, because it has neither beginning nor end like wrnus. The symbol is a means of remembering the spirit through the association of ideas.

Blake lived in his own world of visions spiritual visions, which were unintelligible and inexplicable in the ordinary, everyday language of the mortals. He, therefore, had to get together visible symbols of invisible realities that he saw through his strange vision. Thus, through his concrete and understandable symbols Blake presents the Reality behind the appearance of Nature. The symbols employed by hint may be very simple (as in The Clod and the pebble, where the clod represents selflessness and the pebble selfishness).Often the symbols are obscure and enigmatic. Mostly the objects of nature such as the sun the moon, the stars, mountains, flowers etc. are imbued with spiritual meanings. On the whole his symbols kindle the imagination and arouse a curiosity for a world unknown. Blake also turns to the Bible for his symbols and he makes use of such familiar figures as The Good Shepherd and the Lamb of God, especially in the *Songs of Innocence. In Songs of Experience* the symbols are more abundant and complex and the poems are, thus, liable to more meanings than one (of The Tiger).But in both kinds of song Blake anticipates the poets of a hundred years hence who made their own symbols to express something almost inexpressible in the absence of adequate words for the unnamed powers of a super-natural world.

The symbol is a means of remembering the Divine Spirit (God) through the association of ideas and it is a step towards the realization of the Absolute. The spiritual seeker moves from a lower stage to a higher one with ever-increasing awareness. The soul and God are conceived as different symbols.

Commentators on Blake have consciously and unconsciously adopted very much the psycho-analytic method in interpreting further and further the possible implications of phrases, associations and symbols. They may use the traditional symbolic meaning attached to an idea or they may concentrate on Blake's private symbolism. This method is carried to extreme lengths in the attempt to understand the long symbolic writings (the so-called prophetic books). In these books Blake's communing with himself about problems of his own personality is on a vast literary scale. The personal issues with which he wrestled seemed to him to be also the salient problems of human life. They included questions of the proper place of intellectual control in the total economy of the personality. The place of impulse the relations between authority and those it controls (and therefore between elders and children) the relations of the sexes the folly of moral generalities (one law for the lion and the ox) the poison of jealously, and the over wheeling importance of forgiveness.

The parallel between the prophetic books and Blake's struggle to understand and harmonise features of his own personality is illustrated from the letters to Hayley of October 21, 1804, quoted by Sloss and Wallis and compared with passages of *Jerusalem and The Four Zuas.* Other passages in The Four Zoas and the opening pages of jerusalem refer to the same struggle with the "Spectre' (by which Blake seems to have meant some-thing like dependence upon abstract, analytic reasoning). An early and unfinished symbolic book in Tiriel (composed 1789).

The causes of Blake's relative failure in the prophetic books were multiple and can only he guessed at. The influence of Ossisa may have led him to rely too readily on the acceptability of an outlandish mythology. Boehme and Swedenborg suggested the possibility of new mystical and religious systems, and seemed to sanction extreme obscurity of utterance.

Above all stands the fact of Blake having had no adequate reading public like many who are unappreciated, he seems to have been divided between defiant justification of the obscurity of his work and the belief that people of unspoiled intelligence would find none. He wanted to be understood, but not at the cost of trimming down his meanings to the assimilative capacity of conventional minds. Blake represents a tremendous opportunity in English literature that was largely wasted owing to the reading public's restricted capacities for response; and the combination of greatness and failure in his work is a reminder that a literature consists not of writers only but of their readers too.

And now a word about Blake's handling of language, his extraordinary fine handling of language is a more distinctive feature of his poetry than either his vast mythopoeia, cosmologies or brief and clear-sighted statements or basic psychological problems. His rhythms deserve special attention. In his best work they are at the same time forceful and supple, some based on ballad metres, some metrically free and influenced by the Bible, but all returning again and again to the rhythm of speech. Notice the style of folk rhyme and meantation (Double, double toil and trouble) in Blake's poem about being dogged by his 'Spectre'.

"He scents thy footsteps in the snow,

Where so ever thou dost go

Thro' the wintry hail and rain,

When will thou return again ?"

In the later stanzas of the poem is supple variety in what is deliberately repetitive and might have become mm + 10m

"Seven more loves weep night and day

Round the tombs where my loves lay,

And seven more loves attend each night,

Around my couch with torches bright,

My transgressions, great and small.

In the short poems an outstanding quality is the immense compression of meaning, some times of a simple kind-as in the *Marriage Hearse of London*— and sometimes far more complex. A closely related feature of his writing, often a means of compression contrasting with the contemporary practice of his time, was the trust with which he launched himself into imagery and ideas that carried symbolic implications scarcely susceptible of reasoned exposition, and that gained their coherence and ordered effect through inexplicit associations and incompletely formulated reference:

"Never seek to tell thy love

Love, that never told can be

He took her with a sigh."

Similarly, his lines to the God of the churches refer to the same characteristics;

"Why art thou silent and invisible.

Father of Jealousy?"

These lines have been interpreted differently by different critics. The fact of the matter, however, is that this poetry is obscure and its obscurity in T. S. Eliot's words is due to die suppression of "links in the chain, of explanatory and connecting matter, and not to incoherence, or to the love of Cryptogram". "Such selection of a sequence of images and ideas," he continues, "has nothing chaotic about it. There is logic of the imagination as well as logic of concepts".

Blake can be seen suppressing expository links m a simple way in *The Tiger*. The exclamation now on its own as the end of a stanza-

"And when thy heart began to beat

what dread hand and what dread feet

-was in the early draft the opening of a sentence that went on:

"Could fetch it from the furnace deep

And in thy horrid ribs dare steep"

As Blake revised, the broken sentence seemed to convey the meaning far enough, besides preserving the full exclamatory force.

A more complex and extremely fine example of his method is provided by the "Introduction" to Songs of Experience and *Earth's Answer*; which follows it.

All in all Blake's handling of language is distinguished for skill and subtlety.

By way of summing up Blake we might remark that he anticipates Wordsworth and Coleridge in their simplicity of diction, and, communion with the earthly spirit; he anticipates Byron in his escape from conventional restraints and his democratic ideas; he anticipates Shelley in his urge of social reform and in his dream of a Millennium. He also anticipates Freud in his sex theories especially in modem times and his interchangeability of such terms as God and the Devil. Eminent modem interpreters such as W.M. Rosseti & W.B. Yeats have praised Blake's greatness.

Blake was together a pictorial and a literary artist and his work is to be considered in conjunction with his illustrations. His drawings and poetry form an indivisible unit, each reinforcing and clarifying the other.

According to Carl Jung, the distinguished psychologist. Blake was an intuition introvert i.e. a man dominated by imagination and one construction an imaginative picture of reality from his own soul. He is never really talking about the outer world of the senses; all his mythology in an exclusive talk about the violent forces warning within the individual human being. He made an unprecedented exploration of his own psyche (soul), and his process of self-analysis falls into three divisions:

(i) First period (1789-93) when the conflict within his inner being was the duel between Inspiration and Reason.

(ii) Secondly (1793-97) the conflict continues as the previous duel.

(iii) Lastly (1797-1820) when the conflict broadens to become fourfold with four personified elements-Inspiration, Reason, Limitation, and Senses-all warring with each other.

His profound probing of his own psyche, convince him of what kindred mystics proclaim- that the moral, governance of die universe is beyond good and evil. Thus, unlike Wordsworth, there is not much of an ethical element in Blake.

## A. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION

How many poems are there in "Songs of Experience'?

a. 12 b. 15

c.19 d. 13

## 4.4 SUMMARY

*Songs of Experience* is a poetry collection of 26 poems forming the second part of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience.* The poems were published in 1794. Some of the poems, such as "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found", were moved by Blake to *Songs of Innocence* and were frequently moved between the two books.

## 4.5 GLOSSARY

**Wand** **:** a long, thin stick or rod

**Hum** **:** make a low, steady continuous sound like that of a bee.

**Beguile** **:** charm or enchant (someone), often in a deceptive way.

## 4.6 QUESTIONS

1. Write a short note about symbolism in Blake's poetry.

2. Give the theme of "Chimney Sweeper".

## 4.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION'S ANSWER

A) 19

## 4.8 SUGGESTED READING

*Songs of Innocence and of Experience by William Blake.*

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# Lesson-5
# COLERIDGE (1772-1834)

**STRUCTURE**



## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (October 1772 - 25 July 1834) was an English poet, literary critic, philosopher and theologian who, with his friend William Wordsworth, was a founder of the Romantic Movement in England and a member of the Lake Poets. He also shared volumes and collaborated with Charles Lamb, Robert Southey, and Charles Lloyd. He wrote the poems *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, as well as the major prose work *Biographia Literaria.* His critical work, especially on William Shakespeare, was highly influential, and he helped introduce German idealist philosophy to English-speaking culture. Coleridge coined many familiar words and phrases, including suspension of disbelief. He had a major influence on Ralph Waldo Emerson and American transcendentalism.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge possessed one of the most extraordinary intellects of his generation. In his mental explorations he touched nearly every shore of light. He pioneered the fields of metaphysics, politics, religion and profoundly influenced his epoch by great, original poetry. He was endowed with an acute susceptibility to sense- impressions, a tenacious memory and unique kind of detached and delicate visionaries. It was from a combination of these faculties under the stimulus of opium that the most strikingly original creation of his genius was produced.

Coleridge was a poet and philosopher by calling and, largely by circumstance, "a journalist, preacher, lecturer and play-wright. His main work to transform the mechanistic psychology of the 18th century to initiate a reaction against it. He set out to explore the unconscious workings of the mind- ***"the terra incognita*** of our nature" for poetry. More than any other of the English Romantics, he brought about the revolution in literary thought that consists in regarding the imagination to the sovereign creative power, expressing the growth of a whole personality.

Early verse of Coleridge was nourished on dreams of love, revolutionary Zealand the abstractions of meta-physics and theology. The rarest magic of the wonder years 1797-1800 is to be found in the 'Rime of the 'Ancient Mariner: 'Christabel,' and 'Kubla Khan'- three poems sufficient in themselves to rank their author among the very greatest of English poets. Many features of strangeness and wonder were drawn from

the poet's capacious memory, abundantly stocked with manner of miraculous things gathered from his omnivorous reading. Professor Lower has brilliantly demonstrated in *The Road Xandu* Coleridge's fabulous coverage of scientific and pseudo-scientific lore and travel literature. He has shown also in his book how Coleridge's memory tenaciously fastened upon numberless details, and how from the poets subconscious mind a thousand ideas and images welled up and how memory after memory was controlled and directed by the stimulating mind and active imagination to shape the poem.

Coleridge is essentially a poet of supernaturalism. His imagination and genius was best in giving supernatural an air of reality. Referring to his choice for the supernatural poems in ***The Lyrical Ballads*** : "It was agreed that my endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural or at least romantic yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith". There is little doubt that Wordsworth and Coleridge planned Lyrical Ballads as a joint venture and that the plan fully recognised their basic agreement concerning the nature of poetry and the differences in their creative attitudes. Coleridge was to concentrate on poems concerning persons and characters supernatural and romantic and Wordsworth decided to undertake writing of poetry with the charm of novelty to things of everyday and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us.

We cannot rank Coleridge as one of the first poets to deal with the supematuralism. The Gothic romancers of the eighteenth century-Mrs. Radcliff, Horace Walpole, Mark Lewis, Beckford, had reveled luxuriously in the presentation of supernatural scenes and characters in their novels. But their handling of the super-natural was gruesome and grim, horrible and blood-curdling. It was Coleridge's supreme efforts to procure an air of refinement and awaken a sense of mystery in the minds of readers. The art of reality is imparted by the poet skillfully blending natural and supernatural phenomena and to him it is a symbol of mystery in life. The poet achieves great success in presenting suitable atmosphere for his supernatural happenings. The Middle Ages were a store house of legends, therefore we find all the elements of medievalism. The ancient castles feudal lords, superstition, mystery and terror. In fact, Coleridge's great contribution to English Romanticism was the imaginative recreation of the weird spirit of the Middle Ages.

The imaginative faculty of Coleridge was at a great height when he-escaped from reality into the mystic world of dreams and it was out of such dreams that he conceived his masterpiece 'Kubla Khan', 'Christabel', and 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner. F.L. Lucas in his book *"The Decline and Fall of Romantic Ideal"* has quoted Coleridge as saying that he wanted to live ever in a world of dreams, sleeping at the lotus flower, like the Indian Vishnu, in the sea of milk, awakening after a thousand years only to know that he was going to sleep again. It is really true that the supreme strength of Coleridge lay in his marvelous dream faculty, one might profitably add that the dream faculty lay at the root of his greatness, as a poet and his weakness, as a man.

Ifor Evans in *A Short History of English Literature* comments on the skill of writing of Coleridge in the following words: "A poet cannot write the poetry he wants to write but only the poetry that is within him. Within Coleridge there was a strange territory of memory and dreams, of strange birds, phantom ships, Arcticseas, caverns, the sound of unearthly instruments and of haunted figures, flitting across a scene where magic reigned in a world beyond the control of reason. Some have sought for a moral in "The Ancient Mariner' and for such as must have been there props, Coleridge attached a lesson at the end of the narrative, but the poem itself is like Arabian Tale where all move in a weired and unexpected sequence. 'Kubla Khan'

though some-times judged as a fragment is best considered as a complete poem, and almost as a definition of Coleride's poetry. It presents a number of sensuous images; the bright-gardens, the incense of bearing trees laden with sweet blossoms, the sunny spots of greenery, a woman waiting for her demon lover, the dream of the Abyssintan maid playing on a dulcimer and singing a sweet song. References to distant lands and far-off strange places emphasize the romantic character of this poem. Xanadu, Alph, Mount Abora belong to the geography of romance and contribute to the romantic atmosphere.

'Frost at Midnight' is one of the finest short poems in the language. It is much loved and appreciated but it is doubtful whether it is considered as a perfect piece of art which it is. It clearly shows that meditative and reflective quality which marks so many of Coleridge's poems. It contains a compact expression of Coleridge's creed of Nature and shows the influence of Wordsworth in shaping Coleridge's attitude to nature. Under Wordsworth's influence Coleridge began to believe in the Divine Spirit behind the object of Nature as also in the moral significance and die educative value of nature exhibiting his Pantheism in full splendour.

Another poem presented in your course 'Dejection: An Ode' which can be summed up as a lament on the decline of Coleridge's creative imagination. It pathetically mourns his spiritual and moral losses. A deeply personal and autobiographical poem, this ode conveys his mental state at the time and records a fundamental change of his life.

## 5.3 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

We will get acquainted with Samuel Taylor Coleridge in this chapter.

**5.2 Kubla Khan Summery**

**Or**

**A Vision in a Dream**

The following fragment is here published at the request of a poet of great and deserved celebrity, and afar as the Author's own opinions are concerned, rather as a psychological curiosity, than on the ground of any supposed poetic merits.

In the summer of the year 1797, the author, then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farm house between Porlock and Lipton on the Exmooe confines, of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentences, on words of the same sentence, in 'Purchas's-Pilgrimage' : Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto and thus ten miles of fertile ground were enclosed with a wall. The author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen ink and paper instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock; and detrained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found to his no small surprise and mortification that though he still retrained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone had been cast, but alas ! without the alter restoration on of the latter.

The entire *Kubla Khan* is an edifice of a dream, an emanation from a dream-socked imagination on procession of poetic images coloured in rainbow tints.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan

A stately pleasure dome decree:

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran

Through caverns measureless to man

Down to a sunless sea.

Such beautiful and enchanting images but beyond possible human imagination could only exist in a dream. It will not be wrong to describe 'Kubla Khan' as a masterpiece of another, and, 1 think, far higher order, though 'masterpiece' is probably too conscious a word to describe rightly so unconscious a poem. There is no valid reason to doubt Coleridge's own account of its composition. It is true that most of us, if we write anything in dreams, write unpublished doggerel. But take a man with as peculiarly associative a mind as Coleridge's, a man with an adequate training in poetic technique, and a man in whom the sub-conscious was so-much less for below the threshold of consciousness than with most of us; put this man under opium, and there is no reason why the outcome should not be ***'Kubla Khan'*** the most perfect of all records of dream-experience, with the coherent incoherence of a dream. One may or may not admit it; it is fanciful; it is intangible; it has no relation to life as ordinary men and women live it; but none who is not deaf to the music of poetry, and blind to the images of poetic fancy, can deny that in its own kind it is beyond criticism; storing in one ml all the sorceries of 'Romanticism', distilled by a process of which only Keats and Coleridge fully knew the secret.

The precision and clarity of the opening part are the first things to mark even in the order of landscape. In the centre is the pleasure-dome with its gardens on the river-bank: to one side is the river's source in the charm to the other are the "caverns measureless to man" and the "sunless sea" into which the river falls Kubla in the centre can hear the "mingled measure" of the fountain of the source from one side, and of the dark caves from the other. The river winds across the whole land-scape. Nobody need keep this mere geographical consistency of the description prominently in mine as he reads though once established it remains clean and constant. It should be noted that within this main landscape too there is a pervasive order. The fertility of the plant is only made possible by the mysterious energy of the source. The dome has come into being by Kubla's teeree the dome is stately, the gardens are girdled found with Walls and towers. The dome rises above an unthnal paradise, ten mile in diameter, including both luborale gardens and ancient forests. And these for things from which a fountain suddenly bursts part earthquake, part geyser. 'Moment' the underground river is forced up and runs five miles above ground until it reaches the caverns again and sinks with great tumult down to a *'blejess ocean'* that is to enterable nothingness, 'death'. Kubla Khan interpreted these sounds as the voices of ancestors warming him to be prepared for war. Therefore the succeeding has (12- 30) bring images for fear enchantment violent and uncontrollable energy, oblivion and death and loatadings of strife Kubla hears prophecies of war. The ancestral voices suggest that dark compulsion that binds the race to its habitual conflicts and is related by some psychologists to unconscious ancestor worship, to parental and preparental authority.

Kubla and we can visualize the following phenomena, intimately associated, the dome (with sunlight upon it), the dome's shadow floating midway upon the waves of the seething, force-up river; the fountain geyser with its hurling rocks, just next to the dome: and the exposed icy caverns beneath, from which the fountain has momentarily removed the covering earth. The effect is apocalyptic, for what is revealed is a natural miracle.

It was a miracle of rare device,

A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice.

The river, now raised again, is scared. The chasm is holy and enchanted and is associated with waving moonlight. The river coups up as the fountain before it settles down again, and so the fountain is sacred too and the fragments of earth, flung up in it take on the orderly associations of the sacred; they are caverns rocks. The exposed caverns are icy; the dome is sunny what is exposed is holy, what was built for exposure is representative of a perfect pleasure, the dome being necessarily & perfect hemisphere.

The second half of the poem depicts the most characteristic dream-feature. The poet has a vision of an Abyssinian maid singing of Mount Abora. If the poet could revive in his imagination her song, he, himself could build the magic pleasure-dome as Kubla has done, and he himself could become what Kubla was, a figure of power, of mystery and enchantment. Thus what underlies the poem is the theme of poetic inspiration. Alph, the sacred river, is surely the river of the Muses, the poetic imagination itself is threatened with conflict and extinction. Could Coleridge recapture at will the vision of it and of the paradise through which it flows, then, all his dream of poetry would get written and he would become a inspired magical prophelbard.

A casual reader would feel that there is no logical connection between the first part of vivid, sensuous and suggestive imagery and the second part with its vision of a damsel with a dulcimer. The critic Humphry House, however, finds the second part a logical extension of the first. The second part, in his opinion, described the act of poetic creation and the ecstasy of imaginative fulfillment. In the first part the poet, presents the dome and the river with all its setting and in the second he talks about the creative power of poetry which can build such a dome in the air. The whole poem is thus about the possibilities and potentialities of the creative power of a poet:

Could I revive within me

Her symphony and song,

To such a deep delight would win me,

That with music loud and long, I would build that dome in air.

Thus we can conclude by saying that the poet starts with a pleasure dome with its earthly environment and gradually moves on to human fears and struggles. This dome is transformed in the vision. The dome become a damsel singing on her dulcimer; and the music which has replaced the earlier dome gives place in its turn to the dome of poetry. The poet dreams of blissful words.

The poem transports us out of the world of everyday life into a world of enchantment: The caverns measureless to man, the deep romantic chasm, the intermittent burst of water from the fountain, the sunless sea they all create a world of spell-bound wonder, charm, and magic. The atmosphere of strangeness and mystery have effectively and skillfully been created in this immortal poem 'Kubla Khan'.

## 5.4 FROST AT MIDNIGHT

The poem was written in 1798 and painted in the same pamphlet with ***Fears in Solitude and France: An Ode*** in a reminiscent and meditative strain and reflecting a mood of serenity, shows Wordsworth's influence in molding Coleridge's attitude to nature.

The poem is the picture of an evening spent by the poet by his fireside on a frosty night. There is a perfect hush all around. The absolute stillness of the night is broken occasionally only by the owlet's cry. The poet is sitting in his room although all other members of the family have retired to bed. His son is peacefully asleep in a cradle by his side. The poet finds himself alternated from use outside world which he says is as 'inaudible as dreams".

The only unquiet thing in the room is fluttering flame from the fireplace. Its sound is the movement of thoughts and feelings m his own mind and therefore be feels a kinship with it. It establishes a bond of 'dim sympathies' with the poet who interprets its flickers and flaps according to his own fancies. It was a strong behalf of Coleridge that it is the human mind which colours the external objects. The human spirit seeks only an image of itself in the objects of nature.

The second stanza of the poem is reminiscent and autobiographical. The poet recalls the memories of his sweet birth place, the old church and the pleasant sound of its bells. While at school, he often used to look intently at the bars of the grate in order to catch sight of the fluttering flame which foretold the arrival of some relative or friend, and to this superstition he clung most tenaciously. He often felt unhappy at school and waited eagerly for somebody to come who would take turn away from the bondage of school and thus rid him of the monotony. The picture of his school days comes before his mind's eye in all its vividness:

And so I brooded all the following mom,
Awed by the stem preceptor's face, mine eye
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book;
Save if the door hall opened, and I snatched
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
For still I hoped to see the stranger's face,
Town is man, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike.

The human mind that can link a film with the arrival of a stranger can also label the film, a 'stranger' and associated it with the music of church bells. In his case, the association of the bells with the film is derived from their common bond with moments of anticipation. The bells were also presageful and cast a spell on him as a child just like the film at school. They gave him a 'wild pleasure'. Although the bells were the poor man's only music, this music was not poor in its effects on him for he could bear 'articulate sounds of things to come' when the bells rang. Perhaps this refers to the sound of his poetry or the poetry of others he was to hear, but it uses the idea of music as a language of us own to foreshadow these sounds, yet it is the babe young Hartley to whom these promises are transferred through the power of the poet's imagination.

After having given us glimpses of his school days, the poet projects the ideas forward to the future or his child. He is sure that he will bring up and educate his child in completely different surroundings. Like Wordsworth he also behaves here that natural can mould the spirit of man. The poet nourishes a father's fond hope that his son will be brought up in more whole-some environment, where he will grow under the fostering care of nature, drinking deep from her internal fountain of knowledge he also desires that the great Universal Teacher who is eternally preaching this message to mankind through the symbolic language of nature, who, manifests, himself in every object and in whom all things of this universe exist and have their being, that Great Teacher will shape and soul of his son. The lines:

So shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.

Assert the belief that behind nature we perceive the presence of God or the divine spirit. The creed expressed in these lines is known as 'mystical pantheism'.

In closer association with nature, there will be images of sight and sound which the child's active mind can turn into companionable forms much as the poet did with the films and bells. These images are 'shapes and sounds intelligible' to the receptive mind of the child, who can perceive an 'eternal language' coming directly from God. The Aeolian harp metaphor is clearly in the back of Coleridge's mind in this passage. These 'shapes; sound intelligible' come from God much as the music of the harp comes from the 'intellectual breeze', and the mind moves sagaciously from shape and sound in a continuous effort to find echoes and mirrors of itself. Finally, it is the child's understanding of the language of natural and the question that he asks to bring him into harmony with seasons:

Therefore all seasons shall be
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
of Mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thow:

All seasons are sweet and all sounds are sweet. The red-breast singing on a bare branch can be turned into poetry as easily as the fall of die cave-drops heard in the 'trances of the blast' and where silence too can become a kind of music and a language. In contrast to the alienating silence at the beginning of the poem, the silence of the icicles, 'quietly shining to the quiet moon' is overwhelmingly attractive and laden with deep meaning to the poet.

The whole of last stanza is pictorial and exquisite and delightful word-pictures of nature like earth clothed with greenness, the red-breast sitting and singing between the tufts of snow of the near branch of a mossy apple-tree, the secret working of the frost and above all the silent icicles quietly shining to the quiet moon are simply superb. The poet is, finally, such that having been brought up in close contact with nature, the child will learn to love all seasons of the year.

## 5.5 DEJECTION: AN ODE SUMMARY

In its original form it was a verse-letter to Sara Hutchinson in which Coleridge was finally able to reveal to himself why he lacked the inner influence from within. It answers fully to the ideal of poetical completeness that Coleridge came to define in *Biographia* as a condition of 'judgement ever awake and steady self-possession" as well as 'enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement', and paradoxically *Dejection* is one of the outstanding records of the *ennui,* the loss of enthusiasm, which was the tragic malady of the Romantics. When he wrote it in April 1802, Coleridge knew that his marriage was near collapse, and he was also afraid, like Wordsworth, that the poet in him was also dying. It was partly a response to Wordsworth's *Ode on Childhood* and echoed in turn in *Resolution and Independence,* so that the three poems together form a kind of dialogue, Coleridge at that time fell that his inborn gift of imagination was decaying and that his interest was shifting to philosophy in other words, be found that he was becoming more and more of a philosopher or a thinker.

The published version of *Dejection* has less hope but also less self-pity than the private letter written initially; it contains of remarkable effort at self-therapy. Seldom has grief found such tragic expression as in this poem which has been called the poet's dirge of infinite pathos over the grave of creative imagination."

Many cities find this ode as the most extended of the conversation, specially the first version which was sent to Sara, whom he had loved hopelessly for more than two years. It demands some justification to all it a conversation poem. It is, of course, a Pindaric Ode, like the Immorality *Ode* that Wordsworth had begun writing a few days before, and both poems reveal the irregular rhyme-pattern and the interspersing of long short lines, which the neo-classical age, not very accurately had associated with Pindar, whereas the characteristic metre of the conversation poem is blank verse. Especially in its first and longest form, as a poetical letter of 340 lines, it is a very private poem. In the ensuring months it was trimmed to less than half its original length, purged of most of its private reference and set forth upon the world as a private poem of an unhappiest married poet, cast into the public form, the neoclassic, Pindaric. The language swirls upwards and downwards from a studiously conversational opening (Well; it the Bard was weather-wise...) to passages of grave sublimely that Coleridge had scarcely ever achieved. It is by this starting contrast of the formal and the informal that the poem lives, and for just this reason there can be no doubt of the superiority of the final version, where the original 340 lines have been reduced to a tight-packed 139. On the whole, it is surely clear the reduction of the ode to its present familiar form is a continuous triumph of critical acumen. It may be mentioned also that originally the poem was addressed to William Wordsworth but later, on account of an estrangement Coleridge removed the personal references, substituting "lady" for "William".

O Lady in this wan and heartless mood,
To other thoughts by yonder throstle wooed,
All this long even so balmy and serene,
Have I been gazing on the western sky,
And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
And still I gaze-and with how blank an eye
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give away their motion to the stars,
Those stars that glide behind them or between,
How sparkling, now bedimmed but always seen
You crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
in its own cloudless, starless lake of blue,
I see them all, so excellently fair,
I see, not feel how beautiful they are !

'I see not feel' is like Wordsworth's regret for vanishing glory or the Mariner's apathy before he blesses the water-snakes. But here Coleridge is searching for relief within himself, and he finds it in the rhythm of his stanza as he rises through images of solemn calm and friendly movement to contemplate the perfect self centeredness and self illumination of the lotus-like moon. More continuously than any other writer. Coleridge had admired Milton, the poet whose 'self- possession' enabled him to attract all emphasis on 'seeing' is a tribute to the great invocation in Book III of Paradise Lost, where Milton in his blindness prays for a 'Celestial high' that may.

Shine inward, and the mind through all him irradiated -

With Million behind him, Coleridge can resist on despair. The poem proceeds with an ever deepened: sadness each stanza charged with heavy gloom. Sadder lines than these were never written perhaps by any poet in description of his own feelings.

At the very outlet the poet sits waiting for the storm to affect his mood from without. As in "The Aeolian Harp', Coleridge has placed the harp near him hoping that its music will inspire him. But in this poem, all he can hear is the

Dull sobbing draft, that drones and rakes

Upon the strings of this Aeolin lute

Which better far were mute.

The poet's heart is benumbed by pain. The pain is like a drug or narcotic which seems to paralyze the poet's heart. The poet welcomes the expected storm because he 'thinks that the storm would awaken his dull pain, and give it some kind of movement of break the sluggish monotony of life. In fact it is his absence from Sara Hutchinson and his domestic problems copied with his general lack of creative energy which seem to cause this profound dejection. The poet's only hope is that the storm might quickly, stimulate his dejected mind. He also realizes that he cannot hope to derive a lasting source of creative energy from nature or even from human fellowship. Ultimately, his problem originate from a lack of inner strength:

I may not hope from outward forms to win

The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

Second stanza depicts poet's dull, drowsy and unimpassioned grief and finds that there is no outlet for it. He has been gazing at the beauty of the sky and stars all evening without being able *to feel* that beauty. The first four lines describe the nature of poet's grief and the second part contains a detailed and beautiful picture of the skyscraper late in the evening.

The first words of the third stanza are the words of *Samson Agonistes* but the rhythm is the triumphant rhythm of the *Nativity Hymn :*

My genial spirits fail;

And what can these avail.

To lift the smothering weight from of my breast ?

If were a vain endeavour

Though I should gaze for-ever

On that green light that lingers in the West.

I may not hope from outward forms to win

The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

The poet complains that he has lost all happiness and joy and that his spirits are now drooping. To try to obtain any comfort or consolation from the beauty of nature would be a futile effort. The heart itself is the real source of happiness, animation, excitement etc. When the inner source of passion in life has dried up, he cannot experience any stir of the feelings of any animation of the heart by gazing at the beauty of external objects. The stanza implies a positive statement within its negation.

O Lady ! we receive but what we give.

And in our life alone does Nature live :

Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud !

For the poet, here, Nature does not have any feelings or emotions of its own we tend to transfer our own feelings in Nature and see a reflection of our own moods. If we want to see nobility and sublimity in nature, our own souls must send forth a light, a luster or a radiance to envelop the objects of nature. All the sweet sounds that delight the ear and all the beautiful sight that delight the eyes flows from the joy in our hearts. These lines express the disillusionment of the poet and seem to contradict Wordsworth's philosophy of nature according to which there is a divine spirit in all the objects of nature.

Stanza five emphasizes on the joy which is like the music in the soul, which is the light, the glory and the fair luminous mist is bestowed only to the pure hearted. This light or the glory which radiates from the heart is not only beautiful but enables a man be create beautiful things. Joy is the essence of life and issues forth from the vitality of human beings. It enable them to see a new earth and a new heaven which the vain, the arrogant cannot even dream of.

In stanza six Coleridge takes us down the memory lane when there was 'joy within him' and 'hope grew found' leading to 'dreams of happiness'. It is important to note that the poet has gained a new insight into the Imagination, which he identifies here for the first time with the creative and governing spirit of poetry. In an earlier poem Coleridge had claimed 'Energic Reason and a shaping mind'; but the muse he invokes before 1802 in neither Reason nor Imagination but Fancy a 'wild' of as 'idle'. Fancy in the manner of another romantic poet Collins. *In Defection* he took a long stride forward towards a new view of poetry, as he began to consider the imagination as both a state of inner harmony in the poet and the power that shapes the whole-world of his poetry from within. He is grief stricken at the thought that his interest in abstractive research was crushing his poetic talent.

In the last two stanzas the poet dismisses the depressing thoughts that have been haunting his mind and turns his attention to the various sticking, groaning fearful sounds that the raging storm has been producing outside. Stanza seven again takes us to confront the dark distressful dream of Sarah returning and Coleridge turning his attention to the outside storm where he considers the wind a reckless musician playing upon a flute. The sounds produced by the wind make the poet imagine that the devils are howling and shrieking in a malicious glee. Later he addresses the wind as an actor and a mighty poet who can reproduce all kinds of tragic sounds like the panicky retreat of a defeated army or trampled man groaning in pain. The outward stimulation of the storm startles him to life, but it is life of agony rather than joy. The violence in this description is emphasized not only in the 'fitter instruments' but also in the nightmare visions that the music brings to mind.

The poet ends the poem with a note of tenderness and a prayer for his beloved. May she rise with a light heart, gay fancy and cheerful eyes after a peaceful slumber and enjoy perfect happiness. The last stanza lightens the heavy gloom; of the whole poem to some extent thus taking the poet away from deep dark depressing dejection in which he had been submerged.

## A. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Coleridge is chiefly a poet of:

a. Poor people

b. Nature

c. Love

d. The Supernatural

## 5.6 GLOSSARY

**Decree** **:** an official order that has the force of law Cavern: a large cave or chamber in a cave.

**Sinuos** **:** having many curves and turns.

## 5.7 QUESTIONS

1. Critically appreciate "Kubla Khan".

2. Describe the theme of "Frost at Midnight".

## 5.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION'S ANSWER

B) Nature

## 5.9 SUGGESTED READING

*Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.*

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# Lesson-6
# THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

**STRUCTURE**



## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (originally *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere)* is the longest major poem by the English poet Samuel Taylor Coieridge, written in 1797-98 and published in 1798 in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads.* Some modern editions use a revised version printed in 1817 that featured a gloss. Along with other poems in *Lyrical Ballads,* it is often considered a signal shift to modern poetry and the beginning of British Romantic literature.

Of all modem poems *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (hereafter referred to as the *Ancient Mariner* in this note) comes nearest to achieving an impossible, the impossibility for the modem writer of writing a genuine ballad. Written to defray the expenses of a tour *The Ancient Mariner* is surely the most sublime of "pot-boilers" to be found in all literature.

Before dealing with the poem in detail it would be of interest to discuss its genesis. According to the MS note's left behind him by Wordsworth. "Mr. Coleridge, my sister, and myself started from Alfoxdox to visit London and the valley of stones:... and our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expenses of the tour by writing a poem.... Accordingly we set off, and proceeded along the Quantock Hills towards Watchet, and in the course of this walk was planned the poem *The Ancient Mariner*, founded on a dream as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend, Mr. Cruick Shank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention, but certain parts I suggested for example, some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwords delegated to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings I had been reading in Shelvockes *Voyage*, a day or two before that while doubling cape Horn they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet. 'Suppose' said I, you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to, avenge the crime. The incident was suggested the composition together. The Ancient Mariner grew & grew till it became too important for our first object. "It was, therefore, not Coleridge who had been reading Shelvockes Voyages, but Wordsworth."

A further reminiscence of Wordsworth records, *"The Ancient Mariner* was founded on a strange dream which a friend of Coleridge had, who fancied he saw a skeleton ship with figures in it. The Ancient

Mariner was intended for a periodical... I had very little share in the composition of it, for I soon found that die style of Coleridge and myself, would not assimilate".

In his *Biographia Literaria,* Coleridge gives the following account. In the *Lyrical Ballads* my endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows, of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.... With this view I wrote *The Ancient Mariner* and was preparing, among other poems, the *Dark Ladie,* and the Christable to which I should have more nearly realised my ideal than I had done in my first attempt.."

Such then was the singular and even prosaic form of *The Ancient Mariner*, a poem in seven parts. Its argument as published in *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) was "How a ship having first sailed to the Equator was driven by storms to the cold country towards the South pole : how the Mariner cruelly and in contempt of the laws of box-vitality killed a Seabird and how he was followed by many strange judgments; and in what manner he came back to his own country".

## 6.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This chapter focuses on the poem The Rime of Ancient Mariner.

## 6.3 THE RIME OF ANCIENT MARINER: SUMMARY

In broad outline the story of the poem is as follows :-

An ancient Mariner meets three gallants bidden to a wedding feast, and detains one of them. The wedding guest is spellbound by the eye of the old seafaring man and constraints to hear his tale. The Mariner tells how the ship sailed south-ward with a good wind and fair weather, till it reached the line. The Wedding Guest hears the bridal music; but the Mariner continues his tale. The ship was driven by a storm towards the South Pole, the land of ice and fearful sounds where no living thing was to be seen. Then came through the snow fog a great sea bird called the Albatross which was received with great joy and hospitality as a bird of good men. It followed the ship as it returned northward through dog and floating ice. The ancient Mariner inhospitably killed the bird. At this his shipmates cried out against him for killing the bird of good luck, but when the fog cleared off they justified his act, and thus made themselves accomplices in the crime. The fair breeze continued the ship entered the Pacific ocean, and sailed north-ward till it reached the line. Then all of a sudden the ship was becalmed and the Albatross began to be avenged. A spirit, one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angles, had followed them the ship-mates in their sore distress, threw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner, in sign where they hung the dead seabird round his neck. The ancient Mariner saw a sign in the element a far off, which at its nearer approach seemed to him to be a ship, he tried his speech from the bounds of thirst at a dear ransom. This sent a wave of joy through all of them. But soon followed horror because it seemed to be the skeleton of a ship coming onwards without wind or tide. It's only crew the Specter-woman (Death) and her Death-mate (life-in-Death) diced for them, and the latter won the ancient Mariner. There was no twilight within the courts of the Sun, and with the rising of the moon all his ship mates dropped down dead one by one. But life-in-death began her work on the ancient Mariner.

At this stage the wedding Guest feared that it was a spirit who was talking to him. The ancient Mariner, however, allayed his fears and assure him of his bodily life. He related the story of his horrible penance, and how he despised and envied the creatures of the calm who should live while so many lay dead. They all cursed him with their looks. In his loneliness and tiredness he cast his eyes towards the journeying

Moon and the Stars in the sky. By the light of the Moon he saw God's Creatures, their beauty and their happiness, and blessed them in his heart. At this the spell began to break and by the grace of the holy Mother, the ancient Manner is refreshed with rain. He hears sounds and see strange sights and commotions in the sky and the elements. The bodies of the ship's crew are inspired and the ship begins to move on, though not by a blessed troop of angelic spirits, sent down by the invocation of the guardian saint. The lonesome spirits from the South Pole carried the ship in obedience to the angelic troop. But she still requires vengeance, the Palor spirit's fellow, deamons, the invisible inhabitants of the element, take part in his wrong. Two of them relate, one to other that long and heavy penance for the Mariner has been accorded to the Polar spirit who returns Southward. The Mariner has been cast into a trance for the angelic power causes the vessel to drive northward faster than human life can endure. The open natural motion is retarded. The Mariner awakes and his penance begins anew. The curse is finally expiated and the ancient Mariner beholds his native country. The angelic spirits leave the dead bodies and he appear in their own forms of high. The Hermit of wood approaches the ship with wonder. The ship sinks but the ancient Mariner is saved in the Pilot's boat. The Mariner's experience is akin to that of people who, coming from a life lived in isolated existence in the forest, full of hardships, eventually seek refuge, in God and His creation, the Pilot's boy had gone mad on seeing the Mariner. The Hermit has been given importance because he is an epitome of God in the poem. The Mariner earnestly entreats the Hermit to relied him the penance of life falls on him. Throughout his life an agony tortures him to travel from land to land, he is like a man who has been burdened by various hardships and unless this burden is passed on to another life, it would remain a big strain. The ancient Mariner has also to teach by his own example love and reverence for all things that God has made and loves.

He prayeth well, who loveth well

Both man and bird and beat

He preyeth best who loveth best

All things both great and small

For the dear God who loveth us

He made and loveth all.

These lines sum up the moral of the poem.

As to the *morality of the poem* Coleridge said in his *Table Talk* (May 31, 1830) : Mrs. Barbauld once told me that she admired *The Ancient Mariner* very much, but that there were two faults in it, it was improbable, and had no moral. As for the probability, I owned that, "that might admit some question; but as to the want of a moral, I told her that in my own judgements the poem, had too touch and that the only, or chief fault, If might say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly of speech, from land to land. This is the actual supernatural, the Spiritual power in the poem, not allegorical not subjective. And this it is which after all give it its deepest strangeness. All the wonders are made truly-spiritual by it."

The profound psychological insight of Coleridge makes a hundred delicated touches and subtle hints convincing to the reader. Note the masterly skill with which we are prepared for the spritual horror:

Down dropt the breeze the sails dropt down,

The silence of the Sea :

(Lines 107-110)

The nerves are wrought by the dreadful silence then comes the physical strain of the parched system:

Water, Water everywhere,

Nor any drop to drink

(lines 119-122)

The stagnant waters, the intolerabic waiting for the calm to break and then, when mind and body were broken down, the appearance of the phantom ship. As the spectral horrors multiply, the poet reproduces for us with the imaginative fidgety of the great artist, those little pictures of Sun-rise and Sun-set and the quiet beauty of Moonlite night, that give additional power to the strange and fearful sights :

The Suns rim dips, the stars rush out:

At one stride comes the dark;

(Lines 199-200)

The moving Moon went up the sky,

And a star or two beside

(Lines 263-266)

Nowhere in English literature the benison of sleep, to the tired, racked spirit is suggested with shore moving power than in the lines.

Oh sleep : it is a gentle thing,

That slid into my soul. (Lines 292-296)

During sleep the spell is broken, and the long hoped-for thing comes to pass :

And when I awoke it rained,

The pliqntas-magoria melt away; the elements at tune the weather to the welcome change, while the very boat shares in the peaceful aftermath:

On the reader and as a principle or cause of action in a work moral than the Arabian Nights' tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well, and throwing the shells aside: and a genie starts up, and say he must kill the aforesaid merchant, because one of the date shells, had, it seems, put out the eye of the geniets son.

God is love, and there is no garrulity without love, and none which is not founded on the forgiveness of sins. Surely few men have ever loved mankind more than this large hearted creature. Compassion and love for animals secures in the heart compassion and love for man and God.

*The Ancient Mariner* is a revelation made by Coleridge of what he believed to be always the case in the spiritual world. That world is on the side of pity and love and men who violate these are punished by hardness of heart. They cannot pray, they cannot be wise, they cannot bless the living creatures of the land, sea and sky. Nature to them is dead and if there be powers bound up with nature, there are their enemies till they change their hearts. And Coleridge imagined the lone-some Spirit of the South Pole who loved the Albatross, and his fellow-demons the invisible inhabitants of the element and the great Ocean that always look at the Moon and tire Sun and the moon, who act with the Polar Spirit, and Death, and life-in-Death the spiritual power which execute the sanctions of the law of pity.

To support this atmosphere in which the laws of the spiritual world take form as living beings, all the things of Nature mentioned in the poem are impersonated and have a life and will. The storm Blast which drives the ship southward is alive, the "Dark" itself comes like a giant with one stride over the sea. The water-snakes, the creatures of the calm, are full of happiness in their own beauty. The Ocean breathes and

moves and acts like one vast spirit. The Moon and the Stars 'have their own being' and Coleridge puts the thought into his commentary.

Yet to save the poem from becoming too allegorical Coleridge gives it a base psychological mystery which he loved. The Ancient Mariner himself has a spiritual power which enables him to know the man to who he must tell his tale, and who most listen to him. On this mission he wanders, with strange power.

the sails made on

Singeth a quiet tune.

(Line 367-372)

The wild story, with its medieval superstitions and irresponsible happenings is not only made actual and vital to our imagination by its faithful picture of nature, and its psychological insight, but by the simple humanity with which it is saturated "Inter-woven with the strange and the recondite" remarks a critic" are the primal emotions of love, bate, pain, remorse and hope".

Thus the words, "He prayeth best..." are no mere moral tag at the case of a fine descriptive poem, but the summing up in a few lipes of the spirit with which the entire poem is charged, an intimate kinship with all "happy living things".

Let us now turn to *The Ancient Mariner* as a feature poem of the supernatural. A Love of systacy was a dominant feature of romantic story-telling from Horace Walpole and Mrs. Radcliffe down to Sir Walter Scott. It had its earlier votaries into the dim recesses of medievalism with its wealth of superstition and stirrings adventures. But there is a marked difference between the super naturalism of Mrs. Radcliffe and Walpole and that of Coleridge. The earlier romances did not present delicate and suite picture of mystery even though in was genuine, they gave their mysteries a "local hd .. tion and a name". Coleridge on the other hand invested it with indefiniteness which is at the source of the magic, and created the atmosphere by subtle suggestion not by crude description. The scenery of the *Mariner* is laid in the mysterious seas and imeval solitudes where have things to dream of, not to all or in the midst of the untraveled seas, or in the wep forests of romance. It is supernatural but of the indent, common, simple kind which belongs to all mankind, is universal. It is made up of the expectation of the possibility of marvel and horror, of mysterious sins and their forgiveness, and of the chance of meeting some forgotten spiritual life which, was before man came on earth. With wonderful but unconscious skill Coleridge, keeps this sea-poem, within the limits of subjective feeling, the supernatural in it is the translation into form of the unconscious emotions of the lonely Manner; but , all the time, in order to actualize the poem the scenery is kept extraordinary true to Nature.

Medievalism, its mysteries and its spells which constitute an indispensable element of the supernatural, is not employed by Coleridge as a mere stage property, but it is first eschewed by the poet and then distilled and presented as so many common-place things of everyday life. *The Ancient Mariner* is no less comprehensive than imaginative in its comment. Every phase of land-scape, sea-scope, and cloud-scope is touched upon, from the quiet scenery of an English woodland to the scenery of the tropics. Every phase of life at sea is touched with equal power and beauty, the ship flying before the freshening gale, the torrid fierceness of the stagnant waters, the freezing cold of the Arctic region, the horrors of the becalmed passage the blessedness of the welcome rain, the clear sky. The Storm cloud, the great sea fog. 'The incarnate fury of the storm, the soothing peace of the temperate seas, the loneliness of the great ocean, and the welcome sight of familiar landmarks once again as the Mariner views the peaceful English Barbour.

Even when describing simple ordinary things, Coleridge throws over them the veil of strangeness and remoteness. His art is artless, so simple and spontaneous are its methods, he blends and harmonizes reality and imagination. By giving us occasional glimpses of the wedding feast to which the Mariner had been bidden, he writes a battad within a ballad. How effective is the contrast between the innocent merriments of the bridal feast from which the wedding Guest has been detained and the tragic languish of the mysterious Mariners tale:

The Sun came up upon the left,

……

The bright-eyed Mariner (lines 25-40)

Further the whole poem is wrought with the colour and glamour of the middle Ages. From the quaint embroideries of the "merry minstrelsy" to the central pattern of the catholic idea of penance, everything is efical with the spirit of medieval is in, e.g. the fateful cross bow, the vesper bell, the starving hermit, the invocation to "Mary queen". Yet there is not slavish attempt to reproduce another age. The voyage itself is not such a voyage, as mediaeval mariners were to make. Whatever use the poet may have made of Shelvocke-***Voyages,*** with its story of a black albatross, the voyage is in essence created out of "Such stuff as dreams are made of. It is the ethereal and subtle fancy of a great poet, the baseless fabric of a vision." We, do not know if the weird scenes that the Mariner describes are actual occurrences or mere phantas-magoria, the product of his lieated fancy. The poet leaves it splendidly vague, as it should be left. All we do realise is the spell of the story, the horrors of the lonely seafare, the dreadful effect on the Mariner of the ghostly sights and sounds. The Mariner himself gathers into his person the elements of romance, mesmeric haunting, mysterious and awe-inspiring in essence. His glittering eye, his skinny hand, his arresting voice, and the spiritual misery that drives him to speech into ease big tortured soul all intensity the weired effect of the tale.

Coleridge's supernaturalism is, in short, distinguished for being refined, suggestive and psychological. He creates beauty out of horror and throws a veil of 'naturalness' and conviction ("Willing suspension of disbelief') over things weired, mysterious and the other worldly. This he does, as pointed above, by tempering the entire atmosphere so remote and strange with occasional touches of ordinary, everyday things surrounding us. Secondly the marvellous sound and colour effects charging the astrictive captivate the mind and fascinate the reader more than scare him away. The poet exploits various stock-in-trade devices to produce music in verse, e.g, onomatopoeia:

The ice …….

It cracked and growled cracked and

howled. (Line 61 -62)

Colour effects:

The water, like a witch's oils

Burnt green and blue and white.

Within the shadow of ship (Line 126-130)

……

was a flash of golden fire (Lines 277-2gl)

All in a hot and copper sky.

No higher than the Moon. (Lines 111-114)

Alliteration:

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,

……..

the furrow followed free;

We were the first that ever burst

into that silent sea. (Lines 103-106)

Alone, alone, all, all alone,

……

My soul in agony (Lines 232-235)

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,

……

On me along it blew. (Lines 460-463)

The mariner, despite his "skinny hand" and his being "long and lank, and brown like the ribbed sea-sand" holds the wedding guest spellbound with his "glittering eye" who listens to him like a three-year old child. The tale, unlike other tales of the supernatural, of ghosts and other-worldly beings does not make out flesh creep. It does not scare us away, rather engages attention and fascinates like a dream-picture.

The tale leaves so much to our imagination, it conceals more than it reveals. It excites our curiosity to know more about this undiscovered world, to delve deeper into the realms of the mysterious.

Again, by making the story a type of psychic study of the hero, it is brought within the range of ordinary human experience. The Mariner unburdens himself emotionally by sharing his adventure with another human being. The tale is headed with a moral; it impresses upon all the Christian principles of love and piety towards all creation. A moral is possible only in the world of humans, not in the world of ghosts.

The *Ancient Mariner* is thus unique as a poem of the supernatural. It may be more apt to call it a poem of the natural supernatural.

And now we turn to the technical beauty of the poem, with its simple clarity and artless art, the two qualities which characterise *The Ancient Mariner* more than any of Coleridge's earlier work. Among all the beauties of his earlier landscapes we can hardly reckon that of intense and convincing truth. He seems seldom before to write "with his eye on the object" and to display any remarkable power of completing his word-picture with a few touches. In The *Ancient Mariner* his eyes seem never to wander from his object, and the scene repeatedly starts out upon the canvas in two or three strokes of the brush. The skeleton ship, with the dancing demons on its deck; the setting sun seeing through its ribs, as if through a dungeon- grate", the water snakes under the moon-beams, with the "elfish light" falling off them "in hoary flakes" when they roar; the dead crew who work the ship and "raise their limbalike lifeless tools" everything seems to have been actually seen, and we believe it all as the story of a truthful eye witness. The details of the voyage too, are all chronicled with such order and regularity, there is such a diary-like air about the whole thing, that we accept it almost as if it were a series of extracts from the ship's log.

Then again, in addition to this imagery and super word-pictures the execution is marvelously equal throughout, and it is a great thing to be said of so long a poem. The story never drags even for a moment; its felicities of diction are constant, and it is no-where marred by a single weak-line. The instantaneous descent of the tropical night could not have been described:

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:

At one stride comes the dark.

The "cracks and growls" of the rending iceberg could not have been imagined with greater weirdness than that they sounded like noises in a sound." How beautiful is the passage that follows upon the cessation of the spirit's song:

It ceased yet still the sails made on

Singeth a quite tune... (267-372)

Then after the ship has drifted over the harbour-bar;

And I with sobs did pray

O let me be awake, my God

Or let me sleep always (lines 469-47%)

With consummate art we are left to imagine the physical traces 'which the mariner's long agony leaves behind it by a method far sporp treble than any direct description, i.e. the effect which the sight of him produces upon others :

I moved my lips, the Pilot shrieked

And fell down in a fit:

And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars; the Pilot's boy

The Devil knows how to row (Lines 560-569)

The homely diction of mediaeval balladry is reproduced with a skill greater than even that of Scott.

Day after day, day after.

We stuck ……

Upon a painted ocean. (Lines 115-118)

The Sun came up upon the left.

Went down into the sea; (Lines 25-28)

I moved and could not feel my limbs

And was a blessed ghost (Lines 305-308)

The post used all the resources of the old ballad metre; for instance the effective medieval rhymes combined with the trick of alliteration:

The fair breeze blew, the while foam flew,

We could not laugh or wail

And cried, A sail : A sail:

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked, Agape they heard me call: (Lines 157-163)

The Seraph band each waved his hand,

It was a heavenly sight: (Lines 492-493)

The Seraph band each waved his hand,

No voice did they impart. (Lines 496-497)

Lastly Coleridge gives-albeit with finer instinct an occasional archaism to preserve the medieval atmosphere : “Estsoons his hand drop the” “And, by the holy rood”. “And, now all is my own country”. “A certain shape, I wish”. Thus the poet imparts to the poem all the simple beauty of the old ballad without the extravagances. At the same time he blends its modem spirit with medievalism so as to convey a more moving magic to the reader today.

Coleridge, like Shelley, was master of poetic harmony. He sang, often as the winds go, and the clouds sail, and when he sang thus, he was one with the life of nature, and not with the life of man. According to a entice the unique music of his verse and his material movement at its best is like a dance of the elemental beings of Nature, now as of Satrayrs wild round Plan, now as of Nymphs, graceful, gay, and light as summer leaves in the “wind, ‘now as of embodied rivers and books in full and rushing joy; and now as of Ariel and spirits footing it freely to and from as the printless winds.”

Whenever Coleridge rises into the exquisite melody in its perfection, he also rises into that “imaginative world of thought, half- supernatural” which pervades *The Ancient Mariner:* The music and the sphere of the poem are partly beyond the world of ours. The words form the poem in telling of the harmonies of air, and earth, and then of the forest brook, image also the sounds which delight and hurt not.

Before we close this discussion, a word about Coleridge’s use of Nature in this poem would not be out of place. In the *Ancient Mariner* there is passionate description of Nature, but the natural scenery is never alone. It is thrilled through and through, with that subtle wanderer, Coleridge. In it his imagination rises to its highest peak, and commands humanity and nature and the most delicate music of both. This is the world also of *Kubla Khan.* This is the world of those descriptions of sky and sea in storm and calm and mist, of the rising moon and the setting sun, of moonlight on the charmed sea, which are each complete wholes, true to nature, yet alive with being above Nature, and which imagination itself can never forget. They are chosen for their strangeness, and a certain spiritual mystery.

In this class of poem human feeling is strongly felt. For instance the extremity of fear was never better pictured:

We listened and looked sideways up;

fear at my heart, as at a cup,

my lifeblood seemed to sip. (Lines.203403)

Similarly, the joy of sleep cannot be more simply, yet intensely given:

O Sleep; it is a gentle thing

That slid into my soul. (Lines 292-296)

And loneliness, the solitude of man in sorrow has chosen the soul as its best expression the cry of this restless Mariner :

O Wedding guest this soul hath been

Scare seemed then to be. (Line 597-600)

Nor is the exquisite job of his return home less close to the heart of man.

In fact the extreme simplicity of the description in *The Ancient Mariner* heightens the effect of mystery which none can mistake.

## 6.4 TEXT SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. 1772-1834

**Kubla Khan**

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills
Where blossom'd many an incense-bearing tree;.
And here were forests ancient as the bills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.
But O, that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedam cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon were haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain moment was forced;
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up moment the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and date the sacred river ran,
Then reach'd the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And amid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!
The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.

It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!
A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she play'd,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me,
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight would win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there.
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?
The bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And Tam next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
Meyst hear the merry din.
He holds him with his skinny hand,
"There was a ship," quoth he.
Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!
Eftsoons his hand dropped he.

He holds him with his glittering eye
The Wedding-Guest stood still,

And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.
Higher and higher every day,
Mover the mast at noon
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

"And now the storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

With stopping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by.
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send, a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken –
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a sound!

At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariner's hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moonshine."

'God save thee, ancient Mariner,
From the fiends that plague thee thus!
Why look'st thou so?' - With my crossbow
I shot the Albatross."

**Part II**

"The sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!

And 1 had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay
That made the breeze to blow!

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

Down dropped the breeze, the sails dropped down,
‘Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!
All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, stimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch’s oils
Burnt green, and blue, and white.
And some in dreams assured were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung."

**Part III**

"There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye –
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
1 bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:

Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And ett at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

See see (1 cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame,
The day was well nigh done!

Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the sun.

And straight the sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With bioad and burning face.

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the sun,
Like restless gossameres?

Are those her ribs through which the sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that Woman's mate?

Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,

The Nightmare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thick man's blood with cold.

The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
The game is done! I've won! I've won!
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip -
Till climb above the eastern bar
The horned moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

One after one, by the star-dogged moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

The souls did from their bodies fly,-
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my crossbow!"

**Part IV**

I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand so brown.
“Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropped not down.
Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide-wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The mariy men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie;
And a thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

1 looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky,
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.
The cold sweat melted from their limbs,

Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw dial curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving moon went up the sky,
And nowhere did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside -

Her beams be mocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt always
A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:

A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

The selfsame moment 1 could pray,
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank-
Like lead into, the sea."

**Part-V**

"Oh sleep! it is a gentle tiling,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from heaven,
That slid into my soul.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

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

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light -almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come a near;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

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

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;

And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the moon
The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all up rose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up blew;
The mariners all ‘gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools-
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and 1 pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me."

I fear thee, ancient Manner!
"Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

For when it dawned -they dropped their arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their months,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one!

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,
New like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,

That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe;
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.

The sails at noon left .Off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she ‘gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion –
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a sound.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

‘Is it he?’ quoth one, ‘Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,

With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do."

**Part VI**

**First Voice**

But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing –
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?

**Second Voice**

Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the moon is cast –

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.

**First Voice**

But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?

**Second Voice**

The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.
"I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the moon did glitter.

The peng, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapped: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen –

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;

Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring –
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,

Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze -
On me atone it blew.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The lighthouse top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own country?

We drifted o'er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray –
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

A little distance from the prow
Those enmson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck –
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart –
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon 1 heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Deer Lord in heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

1 saw a third -I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood."

**Part VII**

"This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with mariners
That come from a far country.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve-
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
'Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?'

'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said –
'And-they answered not our cheer!'
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf s young.

‘Dear Lord! It hath a fiendish look –
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a feared’ - Push on, push on!
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

Under the water it rumbled on.
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.
Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot’s boat.

Open the whirl where sank the ship
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips -the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars; the Pilot’s boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
‘Ha! ha!’ quoth he, ‘full plain I see’,
The Devil knows how to row.

And now, all in my own country,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!
The Hermit crossed his brow.
'Say quick,' quoth he 'I bid thee say –
What manner of man art thou?'
Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched

With a woeful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns;
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me bums.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are;
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemed there to be.

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!

To walk together to the kirk.
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone; and now the Wedding Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wise man
He rose the morrow morn.

**A. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION**

The Rime of Ancient Mariner is about

A) a perilous adventure in the sea
B) the accidental killing of an octopus
C) the curse of a sea God
D) the guilt and expiation of the Ancient Mariner

## 6.5 GLOSSARY

**Kirk** : is a Scottish word meaning "church", or more specifically the Church of Scotland.

**Mast** : tall upright post, spar, or other structure on a ship or boat, in sailing vessels generally carrying a sail or sails.

**Prow** : the pointed front part of a ship; the bow Sheen: a soft lustre on a surface.

**Aver** : state or assert to be the case.

## 6.6 QUESTIONS

1. Give the theme of The Rime of Ancient Mariner.

2. Describe The Rime of the Ancient Mariner as a nature poem

## 6.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION'S ANSWER

D) the guilt and expiation of the Ancient Mariner

## 6.8 SUGGESTED READING

*Lyrical Ballads, with a Few Other Poems by William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.*

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# Lesson-7
# JOHN KEATS'S ODES-I

**STRUCTURE**



## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

John Keats was born in London on 31 October 1795, the eldest of Thomas and Frances Jennings Keats's four children. Although he died at the age of twenty-five, Keats had perhaps the most remarkable career of any English poet. He published only fifty-four poems, in three slim volumes and a few magazines. But over his short development he took on the challenges of a wide range of poetic forms from the sonnet, to the Spenserian romance, to the Miltonic epic, defining anew their possibilities with his own distinctive fusion of earnest energy, control of conflicting perspectives and forces, poetic self-consciousness, and, occasionally, dry ironic wit.

John Keats was born in London in 1795. The son of a livery-stable keeper, he was apprenticed at fifteen to learn surgery. But he broke his indentures. After studying medicine in the hospitals in London and passing his medical examinations, he gave up the profession for poetry, Leigh Hunt introduced him to a literary circle where his germinating talents found hope and encouragement. In 1817 he published a little volume of verse, most of it crude and immature enough, but containing the magnificent sonnet, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," which reveals one source of his inspiration. His imagination had turned to the old Greek world with instinctive sympathy; and he now chose as the subject for a long narrative poem the story of Endymion, the Latmain shepherd loved by the moon-goddess. Endymion was published in 1818. The exordium of the poem, the Hymn to Pan in the opening episode, and a myriad other lines and short passages, are worthy of Keats that was to be; but as a whole-Endymion is chaotic; and cloyed with ornament. None knew this better than Keats himself, as is indicated both by his letters and by the proudly humble preface in which he described the poem as a "feverish attempt rather than a deed accomplished," and hopes that "while it is dwindling I may be plotting and fitting myself for verses fit to live."

To what purpose he plotted, the wonderful volume published two years later in 1820, shows. It was entitled *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems:* besides the pieces named, it contained the

great odes, “On Melancholy,” “On a Grecian Urn,” “To Psyche,” and “To a Nightingale,” and the heroic fragment, “Hyperion.” The two years had done wonders in depending and strengthening his gift : he had learned the lessons of artistic calmness and severity, without sacrifice of the mellow sweetness native to him.

Before the 1820 volume was published, Keats was attacked by consumption, and had warning that another winter in England would prove fatal. In September of that year he sailed for Italy under the care of his faithful friend, Joseph Severn. Early in the spring of 1821 he died in Rome, and was buried in the Protestant cemetery by the Aurelian wall, where Shelly, also, was soon to be laid. On his tomb are carved, according to his own request, the Words: “Here his one whose name was writ in water.” In a hope fuller time and in a mood of noble simplicity he had said; “I think I shall be among the English poets after my death.”

The essential quality of Keats as a poet is his sensitiveness to beauty, and the singleness of aim with which he seeks for “the principle of beauty in all things.” he worships beauty for beauty’s sage, with none of the secondary moral intentions of Milton, Wordsworth, and Shelley, but with the- unreasoning rapture of a lover or a devotee. He tells of the “dizzy pam” which the sight of the Elgin marbles gave lum, of the “undescribable feud” which they brought round his heart. He opens his second volume with the memorable line, “A thing of beauty is a joy forever”; and in his last volume, at the close of the ode “On a Grecian Urn.” he declares that tseauty is one with truth. In this taxi instance he attempts for once to rationalize his instinctive devotion; but it is an overmastering instinct, not as a philosphic conception, that we loved the worship of beauty everywhere operative in his work.

It is this passion for beauty, working through an aesthetic organism of extraordinary delicacy and power, which gives to Keats’ poetry its sensuous richness, and which makes it play magically upon all the senses of the reader. The pure glow of his colour remmds us of the Italian painter. Giorgione; and the music of his best verse has a wonderful mellowness and depth, as if blown softly through golden-trumpets. In the early poems the richness is indeed too great, the ornament excessive; put this is merely the eager lavishness of youth rejoicing in its abundance; and not yet dubbed “disciplined” by good taste. From the very first his poetry had extraordinary freshness, energy, and gusto. He revived old words, coined new ones, and put current ones to a new service, with a confidence and success unequalled by any other English poets except Chaucer, Shakespeare and perhaps Spenser.

The sense of form, which is so conspicuous in Keats’ later work, was a matter of growth with him *Endymion* is formless, a labyrinth of flowery paths which lead nowhere. But the great odes, especially the “Nightingale” and the “Grecian Urn,” and the later narrative poems, “The Eve of St Agnes” and “Lamia,” have a wonderful perfection of structure, a subordination of part to part in the building up of a beautiful whole, which is the sign of the master workman. This is particularly true of “The Eve of St, Agnes,” that latest and perhaps most perfect flowering of the old Spenserian tree. The story of Madeline’s dream on the haunted eye, of its magical fulfillment through young Porphyro’s coming, and of them flight from the castle, is set in a framework storm and cold, of dreary, penance, of spectral old age, of barbarous revelry and rude primeval passion, which by a series of subtle and thrilling contrasts heightens the warm and tender radiance of the central picture; than when the illusion of reality is at the height, the whole thing is thrown back into the dim and doubtful past by the words.

And they are gone; aye, ages long ago

These lover fled away into the storm.

Keat's strength, which we see in "The Eve of St. Agnes." "Lamia," and the odes, working in the service of perfect grace, tempted him in "Hyperion" to attack a theme of epic dimensions, the overthrow of the old Titan sun-deity Hyperion by the new sun gold Apollo. The subject proved too large for his undeveloped powers, and he threw it aside, on the ground that there were "too many Miltonic inversions in it." Payable the deeper reason was that he felt as yet unequal to the task of imposing form upon his stupendous matter, and his artistic sense would not-longer permit him to be content with formlessness. As the poem stands it is are superb fragment, an august portal to a temple which will never be built.

Allthough the body of Keat's work is apparently unconcerned, with prosaic human interests, it is a serious mistake to think of him as indifferent to human affairs. His wonderful letters, with their spirited humor, their quick human sympathy and solicitude, their eager ponderings upon life and clear insight into many of its dark places, show a nature vitalized at every, point, and keenly alert to reality. In many of his later poetry especially the great odes, the poignant Human undertone suggests that if he had lived he might have turned more and more to themes of common human experience. Dying as he did at twenty-five, after only three or four seats of opportunity, he yet left behind him a body of poetry which is in its kind unexcelled.

Six of the great odes of Keats are prescribed for our detailed studies. *John Keats: The Odes,* edited by A.R. Weekes, contains useful material on the nature of odes in general. The word ode is a Greek one, meaning a "song." Originally, this term was meant to specify and Greek poem of the type of a musical composition that could be sung to the accompaniment of the "lyric". Hence, the term "lyric" verse. Thus, we may conveniently assume that infancy of the form concerned was nothing more than a lyric song of any type "from a dirge to drinking-song." In 700 B.C. the Greek odes were written for solo musical performance. The internal structure concerned was always simple look two hundred years to take on certain elaborate pattern; Pindar, in 500. B.C., was the chief composer of this more fascinating type of odes.

The Greek tradition has gone into oblivion now. "The idea of the local accompaniment has been lost; Milton's ***Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*** could not well be set to music, yet it is an ode while the much-sung lyrics of Bums are not odes. On the other hand, the name of ode is now applied to one type of lyric poem only. Thus the definition has both widened and narrowed. It may be re-stated as 'a lyric poem of elaborate metrical structure, solemn in tone, and usually taking the form of an address' very often to some abstraction or quality.

English odes are mainly of three categories: regular and Pindaric, regular and simple, and irregular. The Pindaric originally meant for a choir, is not adopted by Keats in the strictest sense of the term. Mostly, his is a form which is a mean between the second and the third types mentioned above. However, sometimes, as in "To Fancy," it is of the first variety-regular and simple. "His most characteristic form consists of a group of stanzas of highly complex structure, but regular, or nearly regular, in their resemblance to one another." It seems that Keats follows often the metrical involved rhyme-scheme, and trimeter literer occurring at rate intervals to break their normal pentameters, just as in the ode To a Nightingsle' and "To Psyche." "The stanzas of Spenser resemble each other exactly, and this characteristic is evident in "To a Nightingale." In the other odes of Keats their metric a variations, front stanza-to stanza are noteworthy.

## 7.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

John Keats' Odes will be the center of study in this chapter.

## 7.3 ODE TO PSYCHE: SUMMARY

The "Ode to Psyche" was written in the fourth week of April 1819. It is the first of Keats's five spring odes of 1819. This ode formed a part of a letter written by Keats to George and Georgiana. Keats in April the same year. He confessed in that letter that the poem concerned was "the first and the only one." with which he had taken "even moderate pains". He had composed it "leisurely." He hoped that it would "encourage" him to "Write other things in even a more peaceable and healthy spirit." In that letter he asserted : "You must recollect that Psyches was not embodied as a goddess before the time of Apuleius the Platonist, who lived after the Augustan age and consequently, the Goddess was never worshipped or sacrificed to with -any of the ancient fervor and perhaps never thought of in the old religion. I am more orthodox than to let a heathen Goddess be so neglected."

The legend concerned was told by Apuleius in *The Golden Ass* Which was translated by Adlington, an Elizabethan scholar. Aphrodite became jealous on noticing the exquisite beauty of Psyche, the daughter of a Greek king. Cupid was given a mean assignment—-his mother told him to inspire Psyche to fell in love with a fellow of base character. However, in the bargain, it was Cupid himself who fell in love with Psyche. Psyche was carried by him to picturesque valley where he visited her every night in total, darkness. Finally, in order to have a better look at him, the curious psyche in a lamp. Psyche was able to identify Gle God of love. Accidentally, a drop of hot oil from the lamp fell on the shoulder of Cupid who got up in anger and fled. Later on Psyche was trapped by Aphrodite's power and was enslaved. She was treated without any mercy and was told to do some difficult jobs which she successfully completed with the help of birds and ants. That warmed the cockles of the heart of Aphrodite who forgave Psyche and allowed her to be reunited to Cupid, As a bonus, she was timportalized ! A.R. Weekes correctly points out that the legend, "typifies the purification of the human soul by passion and suffering."

For some pictorial details in the ode, Keats drew on Apuleius's Cupid and Psyche (in Aglington's, translation of *The Golden Ass*, as pointed out above) generously. His "peaceable and healthy spirit" is revealed in the happy mood of the poems thus the emphasis is laid at first on Psyche's rention with Eros (strophe I) and later on the tranquil "region of my mind" (strophe 4). His "pains" over composition are reflected in his devising for the poem a loose Pindaric form- consisting of irregular verse-paragraphs with lines of varying length-based on his recent experiments with the. sonnet, Keats divides the poem into three verse-paragraphs in his letter and four, in 1820. Style and diction are as usual affected by Keat's reading of the Elizabethans, but Million and Wordsworth influence the poem's second and third strophes.

## 7.4 ODE TO NIGHTINGALE: SUMMARY

"Ode to a Nightingale" was written in May 1819. It is probably the second of his spring odes. Miriam Allou opines that the "position of the poem in the sequence of Keat's odes is conjectural, but the metrical evidence suggests that it follows to *Ode to Psyche* and precedes the other odes the regular tenline stanza, consisting of one quatrain form a Shakespearean sonnet followed by the sestet of a Petrarchan sonnet, is used again in the remaining 'Spring' oddest but without the shortened line which was a feature of the irregular strophes in the *Ode to Psyche.* A date at the beginning of May be suggested by the parallels in the second stanza with Keat's letter to Panny Keats of I may 1919." Charles Brown gives an interesting firsthand account of the authentic origin of the poem "…… In the Spring of 1819 a nightingale had built her nest in my house. Keats felt a continual and tranquil joy in her song; and one morning he took a chair from the breakfast-table to the grass-plot under a plum-tree where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house. I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting

behind the books. On inquiry, I found these scraps, four to five in number, contained his poetic feeling on the song of the nightingale. The writing was not well legible; and it was difficult to arrange the stanzas on so many scraps. With his assistance I succeeded, and this was his *Ode to Nightingale*, a poem which has been the delight of everyone." In this context, Mirtairi Allot remarks: "If Brown's account of the four or five scraps of paper is accurate, the only known manuscript in Keat's hand, which is on two sheets of writing paper, is a later draft, and its corrections and cancellations are those of a second stage of composition. It is at least as likely that Brown's memory is at fault and that Keat's holograph which has minor differences from the texts printed in ***Annals*** and 1820, is the first and only draft of the poem."

The nightingale was regular and favourite subject for adoption by pre-Romantic and Romantic poets, but Keats's style of treatment of the subject is quite individual. The poem traces the inception, nature and decline of the creative mood and expresses Keat's attempt to understand his feelings about the contrast between the ideal and the actual, and the close association of pain with pleasure. "Poems on 'the nightingale probably familiar to him include Charlotte Smith's *To a Nightingale* and *On the Departure of the Nightingalein her Elegiac Sonnets (1784)* and Coleridge's To *the Nightingale (1796) and The Nightingale. A Conversation Poem (1798).* The suggestion of Colerdige's influence is strengthened by Keat's recent encounter with him on Hampstead Heath (11 April 1819), as the 'thousand things' broached by Coleridge during their two-mile walk included 'Nightingales, Poetry-on Poetical sensation.' Keats's thinking in the poem, especially in the two concluding stanzas, also points towards a recent re-reading of Wordsworth and Hazlitt. Style and diction show traces of these influences, but are chiefly notable for their condensation under the pressure of personal feeling of passages from Keat's earlier work recalled by association in the process of composition."

## 7.5 ODE ON A GRECIAN URN: SUMMARY

"Ode on a Grecian Urn" was also supposed to have been written in May 1819. It probably follows the "Ode to a Nightingale" fairly closely since- it shaies with that ode both a preoccupation with the difference between ideal and actual experience and a poetic structure based on the flight from everyday reality and a return to it, yet metrically is closer to the remaining stanza odes in its abandonment of the shorter eighth line found in the 'Nightingale' stanza. Its position in 1820 suggests that Keats may have intended it to provide an answer to the questions raised at the end of the "Ode to a Nightingale."

Keats probably had no single urn or vase in mind, but Miriam Allot suggests that : "(I) Wedge vood reproductions of classical urns were fashionable at the time; (2) Keats made a drawing of the outline of the sosibios vase then in the Musee Napoleon in Paris, probably from the engraving in Henry Moses's A Collection of Antique Vases Altars, Paterae....etc... (1814) : see Noel Machin's 'The case of the empty-handed maenad', Observer Colour Supplement 28 Feb. 1965; (3) Keats' interest in Greek Art, the Elgin Marbles in particular, was always enthusiastic."

## 7.6 ODE ON MELANCHOLY: SUMMARY

"Ode on Melancholy" was probably written in May 1819. The month is suggested by the references to spring and early summer in stanza and by the correspondences in the poem with ideas expressed in the "Ode to a Nightingale" and the "Ode on a Grecian Urn." The poem is a characteristic Keaisian statement about the necessary relationship between joy and sorrow. True Melancholy is not to be found among thoughts of oblivion, death, and gloom (stanza 1); it descends suddenly and is linked with the perception of beauty and its transience (stanza 2); it is associated with beauty, joy, pleasure and delight, and is felt, only by those who can experience these intensely (stanza 3).

## 7.7 ODE TO AUTUMN: SUMMARY

The ode. "To Autumn" is Keats' lest of major 1819 odes. It was written on 19 September. Its origin may be tragedy in Keats's letter dated 21 September 1819 written to Reynolds' from Winchester : "How beautiful the season is now- How fine the air. A temperate sharpness about it; Really, without joking, chaste weatlyer—Dian skies-I never liked stubble fields so much as now— Aye better than the chilly green of the spring. Somehow a stubble plain looks warm this struck me so much in my Sunday's walk that I composed upon it." The Sunday in question fell on 19 September. In a letter dated 21-22 September 1819 to Woodhouse, Keats copied out the poem with the comment ; "You like Poetry... so you shall have some I was going to give Reynolds."

"To Autumn" differs from the spring 1819 does in mood. In stanzas 1 and 3 'ripeness is all' and Autumn is therefore a boundary between summer and winter, between growth and decay, The personification in stanza 2, which suggests drowsiness and repose lends some support to the theory that Keats added this stanza later. Metrically, the ode resembles the four odes of May 1819, but Keats adds an extra line to his earlier ten-line stanza, stanza I rhymes ababcdedcce; stanzas 2 an 3 rhyme ababcdedce. "To Autumn" is usually seen as one of Keat's most poised achievements, expressing a mood of calm acceptance-although there is a characteristic sense of the movement and processes of time at work throughout the poem.

## 7.8 TEXT

**John Keats (1795-1821). The Poetical Works of John Keats. 1884.**

**Ode on a Grecian Urn**

**1**.

THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who const thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What strugglelo escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

**2**.

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,

Though winning near the goal-yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!
3.
Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
For ever panting, and forever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.
4.
Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.
5
O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!

When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shall remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty" that is all
Yet know on earth, and all ye need to know.

**Ode to a Nightingale**

MY heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
This not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

2.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

3.

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and specter-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

4.
Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his parts,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.
5.
I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eyes.
**6**.
Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,

To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain
To thy high requiem become a sod.

7.
Thou was't not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien com;
The same that oil-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.
8.
Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toil me back from thee to my sole self.
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:-Do I wake or sleep?

**Ode on Melancholy**

1.
No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolfs-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

2.
But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Imprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.
3.
She dwells with Beauty-Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while die bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veil'd Melancholy has her Sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might;
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

**Ode to Autumn**

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease;
For Summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.
Who hath not seen the oft amid thy store?

Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watches the last oozings, hours by hours.
Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a willful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river-sallow's, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies

## A. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION

John Keats wrote many of what kind of poem?

a) Epics

b) Odes

c) Sonnets

s) Elegies

## 7.9 GLOSSARY

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Tyrian** | **:** | purple or crimson dye. |
| **Aurorean** | **:** | belonging to the dawn, or resembling it in brilliant hue. |
| **Dryad** | **:** | a tree nymph or tree spirit in Greek mythology. |
| **Lethe (pronounced: lee-thee)** | **:** | one of the five rivers in Hades, the underworld in Greek mythology. |

## 7.10 QUESTIONS

1. In “Ode to Psyche”, what does Keats offer to build for Psyche?
2. What devices does Keats use to describe the season in “To Autumn”?
3. How does “Ode on Melancholy” reflect a paradox?

## 7.11 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION’S ANSWER

B) Odes

## 7.12 SUGGESTED READING

*The Odes of John Keats by Helen Vandler.*

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# Lesson-8
# JOHN KEATS'S ODES-II

**STRUCTURE**



## 8.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The remaining Odes of the previous chapter are to be studied here.

## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

While all of Keats' poetry has his signature spunk, many scholars argue that due to thematic similarities and psychological development among other things, his odes seem to form a group together. The odes do not exactly tell a story-there is no unifying "plot" and no recurring characters-and there is little evidence that Keats intended them to stand together as a single work of art. Nevertheless, the extraordinary number of suggestive interrelations between them is impossible to ignore. However, anyone can read one of the odes and see how well they stand on their own.

The great odes are by nature suited to the kind of close analysis that was the critical innovation of the New Criticism in England and America and has become the prevailing mode of critical exegesis today In recent years they have been steadily enriched by a series of sensitize and revealing explications, and it can be fairly said that they have benefited more from modem elucidation than the poet's other verse. At the same time there are aspects of the odes that have been unduly neglected by its very method the new criticism was dedicated to the reading of each poem individually, within the context it alone created. Despite some notable exceptions, recent attempts to establish a basis for reading the odes as a group, for understanding the ways in which they interrelate with and qualify each other, have never been as successful as individual readings. Equally important has been the tendency to consider the odes in relative isolation from the poet's other work and the course of his career. The methods and techniques of the New Criticism have never been as successful with the long poem as with the lyric, and interpretation of Keats's narrative poetry has notably lagged behind the modem reappraisal of the odes. The result has been that the odes have come to seem to us today the centre of Keats's achievement.

Ultimately, the odes have the maximum to tell us when they are taken not only together as a group but as an integral part of Keats's total achievement. The fact that the odes employ a strong measure of paradox and irony has hardly gone unobserved in modem criticism. The shift that takes place, for example, in the conception of death at the climax of the "Ode to a Nightingale," the more obvious turn upon the word

"forlorn," or the revelation of a wealth of quietly mocking implications in such words as "shape," "attitude," "brede," "marble," and "overwrought" at the beginning of the final stanza of the "Ode on a Grecian Urn"- these and a number of other device that we recognize as "ironic" have been examined by a host of critics to elucidate the parabola shape of these poems, the rising and falling movement of imaginative engagement and disengagement they embody.

The spirit of irony, in this lesson is derived from the recognition that those concerns and questions that matter most to us, however present and however tenthly we pursue them, are ones that cannot be brought to any final determination. Although it has antecedents at least as far back as Socrates, it is a spirit that finds- its fullest expression in Romantisim. It finds its purest expression in the great odes of Keats, for it arises through what is most central to the ironic sense- through the poets involvement with process, and more specifically the creative process.

Since one intention of this lesson is to bring the odes into closer relationship to each other; a preliminary indication of the pattern they collectively assume may prove useful even at the risk of some anticipation. In a nutshell, the "Ode to Psyche" can best be taken as a general introduction to the problem examined more specifically in the odes that follow it, for it is here that Keats broadens out from a sense of his own dilemma to a consideration of the position of the modem poet generally in his relation to the conflicting forces of mythology and history and the relatively somber prospects for poetry that lie ahead in the "Ode to a Nightingale" lie tests the possibilities and limits of the creative imagination by confining his attention lo a single image in the effort to endow it with a fullness of identity and the permanence of art. In the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" one already endowed with an enduring form, in the attempt to determine the meaning of identity such a work can possess for a later age or state of human development. The process for inquiry is collateral to that of the former ode but moves in the opposite direction. However, in the concluding stanza of the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" the central paradox is crystallized with an energy and succinctness that carry the art of Romantic irony to its extreme. In the "Ode on Melancholy ," the most tangential of the series, he takes up subordinate aspect of the paradox by returning to his old fascination with "intensity" as the essence of poetical experience and its ability to dissolve the most basic oppositions in human feeling. Given its different perspective and, emphasis, each of the spring odes actively involves is in a process of imaginative intuition that leads to a cumulative recognition of what, within the terms of art and human experience, such a process can and cannot achieve.

## 8.3 ODE TO PSYCHE: SUMMARY

The "Ode to Psyche" can readily be divided into three sections or movements between which there are total differences that are more pronounced than in any of the odes that follow. This customary division must be qualified in one respect, for the poem is given a kind of circularity by its opening lines, which both prefigure and complete the irony of its conclusion. Thus the point at which the action begins is preceded by a brief apostrophe that raises a series of implicit questions that can be answered only through an understanding of the whole poem. Such questions are dispelled amid the wonder and amazement of the vision suddenly resisted the poet of the goddess and her lover, Cupid. What "Keats renders in the scene is the wonder of discovery-in one of its many versions-of the primal story, the primal myth. It is as if whole relationship between the two divinities, the mystery of their love, were in a moment revealed and rendered timeless, full of its infinite implications and possibilities for further discovery. The question of whether the vision is dreamed or actually seen ever intrudes upon his present sense of awe. For, in the mythopoeia mode of apprehension there is no division between past and present, sleep and walking, the image and its content,

sensation and thought. What the scene distills is the wonder: of that kind of apprehension that constitutes the essence of myth, in which everything is given implicitly and at once, even if the poet may not at first recognize the identity of the goddess herself. For the loss of such understanding and the prospects for a poetry that would advance without the hope of recovering it are the ode's major preoccupations.

The shift in tone between the first and second stanzas among the most remarkable in all the odes, comes as a modulation to rapt elegy for the past. Fundamentally, the change is from a mythopoeia conception of experience, that most genial, to art, to an historical one. For if myth seeks to gather up and universalize human experience in terms of the images it creates, history continually intervenes to unravel them by defining each acts. It scrutinizes as a particular and unique event, and the paradox of this antagonism is a major theme throughout the odes. Thus we proceeding the opening vision of the lovers, which seems, in its timelessness and openness to contemplation, almost unrelated to the Cupid-Psyche myth conceived as an account or story, to an awareness of the completed legend, the events that in "I Stood Tip-toe" Keats had compressed to a few couplets :

The silver lamp, the ravishment,—the wonder

The darkness-loneliness-the fearful thunder

Their woes gone by, and both to heaven up down,

To bow for gratitude before Jove's throne.

(147-50)

Yet the process of temporal or cultural elaboration as we find it represented in the ode is even more far-reaching, for not only has Psyche been deified and canonized but she has outlived the cult of her worshippers :

O brightest! though too late for antique vows,

Too, too late for the fond believing lyre.

When holy were that haunted forest boughs,

Holy the air, the water, and the fire.

(36-39)

Not only have her wonder and mystery been formalized as ritual but the secrets of her rites have been all but lost; and the fact that she was "not embodied as a goddess before the time of Apuleius the Platonist" and therefore too late to be "worshipped or sacrificed to with any of the ancient fervour," as Keats explained to George and Georgiana, only makes the irony of her involvement in history more complete. From the timeless domain of the first stanza, the realm of "Flora, and old Pan" with its rapt discovers and wide-eyed contemplations, we are transported to a world where mythology has been swallowed up by history. The delicately winged and breathing creature has withered to a mere historical abstraction.

The task, then, is the necessary one of cultivating the poetic garden, of re-exploring the Psyche story and the kinds of possibilities it offers from a new stand point, that of the modem age. The prospect the last stanza unfolds is hardly one of unqualified optimism. The wild and steeply rising mountains, reminiscent of some of the poet's descriptions of northern scenery during his walking tour the preceding summer, from an ominously brooding background for the idyllic region of soft zephyrs and streams that enclose the "rosy" sanctuary," a landscape where the creatures of classical mythology are happily repopulated only to be "lull's to sleep," Fancy, the gardener, cultivates a cerebral trellis where exotic buds in infinite profusion burst into

thought "with pleasant pain." The emphasis on thought, which grows throughout the stanza, remains to the last but the importance of the qualifying adjective "shadowy" is obvious. For what such kind of thinking can finally "win" remains, at best problematical. The delights over which Psyche presides are undeniable and unceasing, for she represents the spirit of perpetual creativity and unconscious generation. Yet the kind of awareness she fosters is closest to what Keats habitually means by "speculation" the kind of "reasoning" that still "map be fine." As patroness of "shadowy thought", the goddess will at least be forever welcome to the poet, and there is even the hope that the early love of Cupid and Psyche can actually be reborn within the poet's consciousness. The casement of the mind stands fully open to "let the warm Love in", suggesting, as Harold Bloom has noted, the continual accessibility of the poetic imagination.

## 8.4 ODE TO NIGHTINGALE: SUMMARY

In the "Ode to a Nightingale" and the "Ode on a Grecian Urn" Keats concentrates more narrowly on the poetic symbol. Each symbol provides the focus for a new and searching test of the nature of the creative process and now especially, to return to a central preoccupation, of the king of identity it can and cannot impart. For the task in both the odes is to create or preserve for the object each considers a higher or essential reality without destroying its quality and uniqueness as inexistent being or thing. The problem for Keats is that of the creative process itself. In the first case the task is to invest the nightingale with values that are permanent without losing the sense of its living reality for the present.

In the second instance the poet begins not with a living object but with a work of art created at a distant time and by a different artist—one working, perhaps, with expectations similar to his own—in the attempt to define its identity for his own generation. The "Urn" moves from the world of mythic oneness in the effort to engage the concerns of the present. The "Nightingale" works from a point in history, the stand-point of the speaker in his heartache and loneliness, in the effort to regain the word of timelessness and myth. The myth in question is not, of course, any single legend like that of Psyche with its different emphasis, but the archetypal myth of Plato's realm where antinomies are resolved and values are perceived as one. The thrust of the one ode is complementary and reciprocal to that of the other. As a record of intense imaginative experience a "voyage of conception," each concludes in a form of recognition that is profoundly ironic.

Since its primary concern is for synthesis, that is, for the creation of the bird as an evolving symbol, "Nightingale" more directly confronts the problem of the creative process. The process begins gradually and through a sustained play of association the poem takes shape within that familiar, shadowy world of vague and confused sensation but in a mood troubled by discontent and longing. The bird, sinrdag in its case and immunity from pain, draws the poet into that act of imaginative identification that is the beginning of poetic activity. The mere voice in its simplicity becomes the focus about which a rich tram of associations starts slouty together. "Throat" suggests wine, and "vintage" leads on both to Flora, suggesting the primal world of "Flora and old Pan." and "the country green," the homely, familiar world of common place actuality. The longing for the "warm South" leads backwards to the Province of the medieval poets and then to classical antiquity and the fabulous Hippocrene that will permit the poet to "fade away" to join the bird within its forest haunts. Already the progression has begun to suggest a wealth of subtly different implication and at tire same time that kind of attenuation that is to overtake the whole poetic effort.

The impulse to imaginative escape that flies in the face of the knowledge of human limitation, the impulse fully expressed in "Away ! away ! for I will fly to thee," is typically Keatsian. However, the process is far from an unthinking one. The third stanza openly confronts those "disagreeable" the imagination must somehow deal with-sickness, sorrow, age, and finally death. For it is, of course, the recollection of Tom's

last days that lends a special poignancy and also a kind of weakness to the stanza. The burden of such tragic knowledge steeps deadening and inescapable. In the face of it the poet car only "dissolve." The poet is transported "on the viewless wings of Poesy." The stanzas that immediately follow gain much of their extraordinary intensity from the conscious and willful exclusion of knowledge.

Thus the illusion of recovering the primal garden of external spring is only the more compelling for the unobtrusive hints of change that underlie it, the fading violets and coming musk rose, just as the beauty of the regions is the more seductive because it cannot be seen :

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,

Nor what soft incense upon the boughs.

But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet

Wherewith the seasonable month endows

The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild.

(41-45)

The elimination of the primary visual suites intensifies the other; in Keats's phrase, it leaves "so much room for Imagination." The loss only gratifies the imagination- in its desire to enlarge the frilliness of the season in a way that outruns the power of the senses, as the extraordinary effects of synasthesia partly suggest. In this region of half-lights and shadows the poet is for a time able to control the flow of associations that surround the bird so that the process of imaginative assimilation, whatever the hints of contradiction that subtly run counter to it, maintains unity and momentum. The process reaches its climax in the sixth stanza. For now the poet daringly returns to the idea of death, the chief among the besetting evils of the third stanza, to pursue its connotations further but m such a way as actually to reinforce the notion of the bird as an ideal of tranquility and permanence. For a moment death, conceived of as an eternal present the prolongation of the ecstatic moment, is reconciled with the other values love, beauty, enjoyment- that the bird expresses.

But for a moment only. The various, different connotations of death cannot be long suppressed, nor is the bird, in its evolution as poetic image, able to assimilate them as they now gradually re-emerge to consciousness. The poet is gradually forced to recognize the bird as something no longer natural but essential, as per early a work of art, a symbol, a value that exists in separation from the world of man:

Thou must not born for death, immortal Bird !

No hungry generations tread thee down.

(61-62)

Rather than uniting the earthly and the eternal, the bird now serves to emphasize the gap between them. The point is, however, that the bird, first as suggestive image than as symbol, cannot be isolated from the whole poetic process that creates it and inevitably out-runs it. For the process, taken as a kind of speculation, a form even of "thinking;" is one that exceeds any means the poet can set up to gontain it. The controlled inter-play of associations that swells the bird into reality, that gives it value and identity. The same tirhe inexorably exposes it to an ever-widening circle of human experience, a kind of complexity the bird cannot subsume, The very process that creates the bird inevitably rejects as in adequate, just as any image poem, or thought is inadequate, to express, the complex sum of human real, mattort in the transformation it undergoes the bird is thus the symbol of the poem's achievement but also of termination.

The recognition is not instantaneous. To some degree it is latent from the very start in the way the imagination of the poet proceeds to operate on its materials. Nothing, in fact is more characteristic of the ode than the way in which the central realization is restrained almost voluptuously and only gradually permitted to in-filtrate awareness. The poet's conviction of identification with the, bird, the illusion of his hold Upon, its values as poetic image, is slowly dissipated. The voice he hears heard "by an infinity, of others", by "emperor and n," and will be heard again by future generation he will never know, it has heralded the opening of endless vistas into "fairy lands," but it has also sungio the biblical Ruth at a specific moment in time. Such diversity of experience exceeds the imagination's capacity to distill and unify. The illusion of mythic oneness is dissolved in the awareness of change and human history as the voice of the bird recedes.

The poet of the whose experience is driven home by the closing lines and the questions they pose:

Wax it a vision, or a waking dream?

I led is that music : Do I walk or sleep'

(70-80)

For the questions only arise when the poem itself considered as a vital process of unfolding, has ended. They ensue from a standpoint outside it. The poet awakes to reflect on his experience, to contemplate as a vision or dream. But the very form of its questions and the distinctions they demand are ones to which poetry as a primal state of consciousness, has never needed to submit. The questions seek to reduce the life and potentiality of the verse, its continuity and infinite suggestiveness, to the value of a logical abstraction by forcing on it the aben methodology of "either/or". Their very map-appropriateness, or irrelevance; serves to emphasize the change that gradually has taken place within the poet's consciousness. They dramatize the replacement of one kind of comprehension by another that is more familiar, the kind of busy common sense.

## 8.5 ODE ON INDOLENCE: SUMMARY

"You will judge of my 1819 temper," wrote Keats to a friend in the summer of that year, "when I tell you that the thing I have most enjoyed this year has been writing an Ode on Indolence." In the same letter he says "I have been very idle lately, very averse to writing; the form the overpowering idea of our dead poets and from abatement of my love of fame. I hope I am a little more of a philosopher than I was, consequently, a little less of a versifying petulant." Keat's letter makes it clear that on 19 March 1819, he was only in the exact mood of 'On Indolence' but could almost paraphrase the poem in prose : "This morning I am in a sort of temper indolent and supremely careless... In this state of effeminacy the fibers of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of enticement and path no unbearable power. Neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any deftness of countenance as they pass by me; they seem rather like figures on a Greek Vase- a man and two women whom no one hut myself could distinguish in their disbursement. This is the only happiness, and is a rare instance of the advantage of the body overpowering 'the Mind." The very little indicates that this is an ode on languor expressing a mood of laziness and lethargy when the activities of life do not seem tube worth-while. It can be compared to "Tennyson's *The Lotus Eaters* and to Robert Bridge's Indolence. While Keats affirms that neither love, nor ambition, nor poetry has charm enough to tempt him from a mood of exquisite indolence, he wishes to be left alone to dream way his idle hour.

In the poem Keats imagines himself lying on a lawn half-asleep. His mind is blank conscious of nothing but its own vacuity. There appear before his eyes three figures which pass and re-pass as if they were carved on the sides of an urn which turned & turned round. They are described as stepping one behind the

other, and looking serene "in placid sandlas and in white robes graced." Each of the figure is fully individualized. Twice they move by him, and he does not recognize them so deep is he sunk in indolent quiet; the third time they turn their heads, and he know's them to be Love, Ambition and Poesy or the worship of art. Love is described as fair mind; ambition is pale of cheek and "ever watchful with fatigued eye", and Poesy as a "maiden most unmeck," the sight then wakes there away watcher to a momentary restlessness he wants wings to follow them :

They faded, and forsooth ! I wanted wings.

Oh folly! what is Love ? And where is ill ?

And, fore that poor Ambition-it springs

From a man's little heart's short fever-fit.

For Poesy ! No she has not a joy-

At least for me-so sweet as drowsy noons,

And evenings stooped in honeyed indolence.

The temptation is, of course, to pursue the three shapes, to give them identity to bridge the gap between their abstractness and the world of human concern, to rediscover the old polarities for one more journey of imagination. The temptation now is in some ways even greater than before, for the figures personally the three commanding passions of the poet's life. But he checks himself because he realised that his desire to follow them was foolish. Love is something that really does not exist. Ambition is a result of short lived excitement that man experiences in his little heart and Poesy may have its pleasures but none of them can put them in that mood of bliss which he experiences at the time of drowsy noons full of sweet languour. The motive for fresh poetical adventure, however, is no sooner rediscovered than rejected. There is the sense of gambit declined, a game no longer worth playing. The poet refuses to be lured again from the world of his shadowy visions. Therefore, when the figures return the fourth time, he bids them be gone. He loves indolence better than ambition, or passion, or even the artist's creative energy. Reluctant to face labour and strife to which they call that; he sinks back and relapses into dreams of which he has still an ample stock. He has no desire town admiration from the masses by writing poetry. He wants the three shadowy ghosts to fade away from his eyes and be one more in masque-like figures on the dreamy urn instead of lingering to rouse him to the work of life, which was sure to bring suffering and tears.

Farewell! 1 yet have visions for the night

And for the day faint visions there in store.

Vanish ye Phantoms, from my idle sprite

Into the clouds, and more return.

Beneath the mood of languor lies a sense of repentiouness and predictability. The relaxation and detachment of the ode. Its celebrate, withdraw from the kind of situation that, over the past few weeks, has proved so compelling, may represent merely a natural reaction to the strain of intense imaginative involvement. Nevertheless one suspects Keats had come to see the limits of a kind of experiences whose possibilities he had, in fact, virtually exhausted. The final stanza seems more, than a rejection of the opportunities of the passing moment, it contains overtones of a farewell, if only a temporary one, to a mode of poetical composition.

One of the critics has summed up the mood of the poet in the following words ; "This Ode represents one side of Keats' gems its sensuous, dreamy, pleasure-loving element." Keats owned to having an exquisite appreciation of the, beautiful, and here be declares himself willing to yield to it even at the expense of manly

energy and resolve: It is a mood only, and a mood to which bodily weakness probably contributes something, for Keats had not at that time the stock of venality natural to a man of three and twenty. At no time night to the very end does Keats seem really to have given way to the passionate longing for rest which he here expresses.

The poem contains a number of pictures which are vividly depicted and, which bear witness to Keats's gift of concrete imagery. A lovely picture of a cloudy morning when the air smells of coming rain is beautifully described in stanza five in the following lines :

The mom was clouded, but no showers fell,

Tho's in her uds hung the sweet tears of May:

The mood of indolence is successfully and effectively built up in the poem and is at times so infectious that even the reader seems desire to follow the three figures, but the very next moment he, 'realizes the futility of the pursuit' and returns to his original mood of "honied indolence."

The poem was not included among the Odes published in 1820 and it has been suggested that the reason was that it contains many phrases reminiscent, of the other poems Beautiful as it is in places, if falls short of their level of workmanship; it is nobel verse but not Keats at his noblest.

## A. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION

The speaker compares his lazy soul to a …… covered in ……..

a) Forest/Snow

b) Ice cream cone/Sprinkles

c) Fields/Daisies

d) Lawn/Flowers

## 8.6 GLOSSARY

**Serene** : calm, peaceful, and untroubled; tranquil.

**Muffled** : (of a sound) not loud because of being obstructed in some way; muted.

## 8.7 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the themes in "Ode to Indolence".

2. Describe the form of "Ode to Nightingale".

3. Comment on the use of diction in the "Odes of Keats".

## 8.8 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION'S ANSWER

A) Lawn/Flowers

## 8.9 SUGGESTED READING

*Bate, Walter Jackson. Negative Capability: The Intuitive Approach in Keats. New York: Contra Mundum Press, 2012.*

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# Lesson-9
# VICTORIAN AGE

**STRUCTURE**



## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the background lesson on the Victorian Age. I will deal with the general tendencies and characteristics of the Age.

There has been a revival of interest in Victorian Age after world war II, and it has boon felt that the Victorians are very much our contemporaries, and their problems-political, religious, cultural and educational are very much our own, Macaulay, the great trumpeter of Victorian progress stressed the multidimensional nature-mechanical, scientific, medical etc. of this progress, yet, as L.H. Myers pointed out, a deep seated spiritual vulgarity lies at the heart of our civilization. At the beginning of the nineteenth century Wordsworth had directed attention to "a multitude of causes, unknown to tormer times" which were "acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertion," to reduce it to a state of almost "savage torpor". From another angle D.H. Lawrence reviewing the age in retrospect described it as "ugliness which easily betrayed the spirit of man in the 19th century," The wrote that the great crime which the moneyed classes and promoters of industry committed in the palmy days was the condemning of the workers to ugliness, ugliness, ugliness: meanness and formless, and ugly surroundings, ugly ideals, ugly religion, ugly hope, ugly clothes, ugly furniture, ugly houses, ugly relationship between workers and employers. The human soul needs actual beauty even more than bread (Carlylo and Ruskin turned to criticism of the "dismal science") of political economy and the statistical fiction of economic man. The age was on one hand, the diminishing of the stature of man in comparison with impersonal forces over which he had little control and on the other of social orderliness out of inevitable chaos.

However, it is a mistake to suppose that the 19th century stands only for one accepted set of beliefs and principles. Most of our modem revolutionary ideas (e.g. On liberty by Mill) were know to them. But an age must have certain inner convictions by which it lives and which seem to make life worth-living. Without this, life becomes "a tale told by an idiot full or sound and fury signifying nothing". Men cannot go on living

or suet, forms; they cannot "find some supreme value which is worth living for. This inner most conviction about what is of supreme value generally finds expression in same particular form in such an age a key word or idea or ideal. The Victorians constantly used the words 'spirit and' spiritual in this way. By this they meant the capacity of the individual to grow, to become more and more perfect, to entertain and satisfy noble aspiration. In this way they reassured themselves that life was not in significant and futile but could correspond to man's desires and could fill him with great emotion.

The Victorian age was also an era of great practical activity which is evident from the marvelous and epoch-making industrial and economic achievements of the period. It way therefore in the realisation of the ideal, its adjustment to the actual that the spirit was supposed to fulfil itself. In 1829 Carylyle in Signs of the Times wrote: "Were we required to characterise this age of ours by any single, epithet, we should be tempted to call it, not an Heroical, Devotional, Philosophical or Moral Age, but, above all others, the Mechanical age: Men are Crown, mechanical in head and heart, as well as in hand".

But the spiritual adventures and experiments are the chief inspiration and material of the literature of the Victorian Age. Its writers were generally supported by the recognition of powers higher and greater than man, from whom the inspiration came; but the nature of this power of powers was variously and not always clearly conceived. For instance, Newman, Ruskin, Carlyle, Arnold all believed in God in their own way and entertained their own mystical views of life and the universe.

What most impresses the student of 19th century literature is the apparent confidence of its writers in the future, however much they may agree in their disapproval of the present. The Romantic poets were all visionaries, and so were the Romantic writers of Victorian era indeed the humanist (liberal) must a confident that his vision can be realised are the world shaped according to his ideal or he would condemn himself as a mere dreamer.

It was precisely on this that the 19th century idealism same to grief. The Victorians started with a legacy of three centuries of tradition, a legacy which came to them from Bacon and Shakespeare (Swinburne's "Glory to man in the highest..." express the Victorian conception).

This is the Renaissance idea of Narrow, Shakespeare *(Hamlet),* and Shelley *(Prometheus unbound).* This gave them a faith to live by. Got in the upshot the vision was not realized. The truth is that the outer world was changing too rapidly and becoming less and less adapted to the activities of the 'spirit'. The individual's "better nature" seemed unable to expand in the new civilization. Fresh ideas kept pouring in. The old sense of human grandeur and permanence could find nothing to nourish it and withered at the roots, (of Keats in Hyperion with Ruskin). The ideals of Wordsworth, Keats etc. were transmitted to their successors, but they were not successfully expressed. "Wandering between two worlds, one dead and the other powerless to be born" (Matthew Arnold) gave expression to this sense of conflict. The expressions of Carlyle Ruskin and others were identical.

The problem now was : how to regain and recover the old confidence, the conviction that life was worth living. There are always at least two answers to this question : Men may either turn back to the past or they may immerse themselves in the present. From about 1830 to 1880 the Victorians unanimously sought help end inspiration in the past, and exhausted every artistic response and literary appeal in the allots to make their answer convincing (the Pre-Raphaelites, the influence of classics, especially in Arnold. Newman and the Oxford Movement) but their very anxiety and emphasis betrayed them suggesting as it did that they were really shouting to keep up their courage. So they hastened the change.

This change is heralded by John Stuart Mill (1806-73), who asserts the individual's right to absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment and of their expression including "the right to be wrong". He assailed the belief of the former generation that the thinker must not be also wad to weaken the bonds of society. Educated people, be said must have no unexamined loyalties. This was welcomed by the younger generation, who thought that this would give them unlimited power to remake the human mind and to control the work outside it. However, they could not reach the limits of Bertrand Russell and Aldous Huxley in modem times. The truth was that culture has become so complicated that men's opinions on most subjects were inevitably second hand. This "education by hearsay" has remained one of the great problems of civilisation (Arnold's essays on that 'problem' such "Culture and Anarchy". "Sweetness and light" expose all this superficiality). Mill attempted to persuade men that the duty of thinking and judging for themselves was of the first importance. In the heyday of the great romantic writers there was no need to much persuasion. Their philosophers (Kant. Goothe etc.), supported the conviction of the poets that the mind is no photographic place. Mind is conditioned not only by the past, but by the future also. Mind is an active creative thing they argued. (Compare Carlyle emphasis upon the mind and spirit of man. Look within seemed to way Carlyle. Such a convention that were emphasizing against a mechanizing environment).

## 9.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this chapter we will discuss some major characteristics of the Victorian Age.

## 9.3 VICTORIAN AGE

Thus, the Victorians were not paralyzed by the wickedness and weaknesses of the world outside them because they believed themselves have discovered an inexhaustible source of strength, and goodness within. But if so man's first aim should be to get to know this spirit within i.e. man must study himself. So they began to study themselves. But when they did look seriously within they began to discover all kinds of things which were anything but lovely and noble. (D.H. Lawrence, Froude Aldous Huxley are. Modem psycho analysists discovered the beyond within) Thus neither the world without nor the world within was found to provide adequate support for the philosophy of the Romantic Movement; it ended as a battled quest. The tradition lingered on in Tennyson, Browning, Arnold and other late Victorians as a sense of obligation to seek for such a faith rather than as a definite belief. But as the voice of the past grew more alien to the other world a sense of aimlessness took possession of man (Arnold's "Scholar Gypsy" is the best illustration).

But if the writer is to fulfil himself he must have a central philosophy which is not only an intellectual conviction but an enthusiasm absorbing all his personality which unites him to the intellectual and moral strength of the great inspirits of the past and which creates faith in the future. This means that he must have a sense of value. It was this faith that the later Victorians lost. As they attempted to us the new knowledge which kept pouring in to illuminate the old convictions, the light began to reveal unexpected cracks in the building.

### 9.3.1 SCIENCE

At first science spooned fond support to the romantic belief in the life of the spirit. In the early 19th century the conception of Nature as a machine was disappearing before the new study of living nature and the organic theories which took growth and cooperation as their central ideas. The nature and the soul were manifestations of the same life (Wordsworth especially), there was nothing to prevent the faith that man while a kin to nature (Shelley, Meredith in all his later poetry) is himself a higher manifestation of creative life in unlimited powers of development. Did not science itself provide an evidence of design, and life and intelligence?

But now science, itself war to un lermino the whole basis of belief in an ordering and benevolent intelligence, it began with geology. Lyell in his Principles of Geology (1831-33) demonstrated that the causes active in changing the earth's surface now are just the same as those which have always operated. This established fee idea of continuity and development. There is no break, only steady operation of cause and effect, and interaction between environment and the immediate effect was to bring science into conflict with fee story of creation in the Bible i.e. with the continuation of special creation and the clear separation of living from inorganic matter, of mind from matter. (Huxley's essay of "Physical Basis of life"). But its ultimate effect was far more profound, "It altered the tone of one's mind" wrote Darwin. He also advocated change of outlook and feelings. Two effects deserve special notice in this new scientific thought : (i) it proved far stronger than the old rationalism of Mill the elder Recardo, Bentham, Etc., which rested on intellect, reason and of which complete expression was in Godwin, because it appealed to the imagination and (ii) It was empirical through and through i.e. it went straight to the sense experience ("direct evidence of Huxley). Its method was experiment, and for the rest it relied on logic i.e. on what can be directly inferred from this "direct evidence". Darwin (1809- 82) was the embodiment of the new scientific out-look. His imagination and human sympathies were as event as his power of classifying facts and organizing evidence for it. He did not attack religion but quietly shrugged his shoulders and said : Well, what am I to do in the light of all this evidence. What was this evidence? Darwin following the lines opened up by Lyell, turned to the study of life. And he found that the evidence pointed to a common, descent, of all species of living creatures, including man. This was not a new idea, but no one had previously found the same kind of principle of explanation of all the facts such as Newton had supplied to physical science in the law of gravitation. This is what Darwin supplied in biology. He look the main idea from Malteus' Theory of Population. Malteus argued that the means of subsistence food etc.) are limited: the population increases faster than the food supplies therefore only a limited number can survive; the rest must be xilled off by starvation, plague war etc. Darwin, in the *Origin of Species* (1859) applied this theory to fee whole evolution of life. In each generation there are far more individuals than can survive there is, therefore, a sturgeon for existence, each individual inherits differences as well as common characteristics ; those survive whose differences (variations) are better suited for adaptation to environment survive who are best adapted to their surroundings, not the morally best. If circumstances change then the ability to adopt yourself is the criterion (Huxley found his hope in this argument Can we produce such environment? He argued that by means of science we could invent means of a better living and thus could achieve progress). Having established this general principle Darwin proceeded to apply it in detail to the various species, from man to worms.

The effect was devastating. Not only did the theory seem to disprove that man was a special creation and seemed to trace his descent through animal ancestors to the common origin of all living species ("putting man back in nature"-Huxley's favorite phrase), but the principle of evolution revealed conditions which appeared irreconcilable with belief in God. Natural selection is too clumsy and too wasteful for an omnipotent intelligence. If we are to hold to a ballet in God, we seem driven to abandon either the belief in His goodness or the belief in His Omnipotence. So what is tell of religon?

Of course Darwin did not deny in gross; on the contrary, the evidence for evolution plainly reveals development. But the development was due to a combination of impersonal, mechanically- working causes and effects. Now it so happened that this theory exactly fitted the prevalent social and industrial tendencies : in fact Darwin adopted his theory from Malthus's theory of Population. The appeal was to experience and what did social experience reveal? The mew industrial civilization had dentistry removed God from the

scene. The political economists had firmly placed the Christian God outside their economy i.e. a tendency towards individualism injected by the intellectualists like Mill, Bentham, Ricardo and others. Enlightened self-interest" was the law of social order and the condition of progress. And now here were the biologists justifying them from the evidence of science in banishing benevolence and God. No doubt, Victorian era was an age of hoplite reform. But the profounder cricks unkindly out that the middle class triumphs of which they were so proud were won by self-aggrandisement, imperialism and the enslavement of the masses. Thus the welfare of the capital owning classes depended on the degradation of the majority, and only ignorance prevented this majority from realising how much it had been deprived of and could regain. All this is relevant to the struggle of the various political parties in the nineteenth century and all the parliamentary reforms this gave rise to the Novel of purpose - the social Novels of Dickens, Trollope, Thackeray. Bronte etc. in the mid Century.

**9.3.2 Socio-Economic Scene:**

Carlyle and Dickens dominate the first half of Victoria's reign and their work reflects the interaction of literature and society of the period. One chief concern of their work is the description and analysis of the 'Condition of England'. Secondly, it is in examination of the prevailing economic doctrines concerning poverty, population, and the scope of public responsibility. Thirdly, it is an attempt to suggest more handsome and humanitarian saltamatives, to those doctrines - a work in which they had the assistance of those who were influenced by the aspirations of the, earlier Romantics especially of Coleridge, and by the revived of religious feeling and speculation about a more Christian order of society.

The later Victorian period dealt with the question of education, the debate about the content of English culture and resistance to the standardizing effects of machines. After the second Reform Bill (1887) and the Trade Union Act (1871) which enfranchised the working classes in the towns, the workmen no longer depended on humanitarian sentiments. They were now the masters. This led to the development of Socialist idealism. Ruskin wrote in *Crown of Wild Olive* (1866), "Rough work, honourable or not, of a Marx or Owen in labour theory of value," the theory that "labour is the source of wealth".

*Philosophically the whole literature of the Victorian Ago was permontod with a two-fold current of thought* ; (i) There were various forms of rationalism carrying on the characteristic and dominant thought of the 18th century - in particular the powerful school of the Utilitarian's, disciples of Jeremy Bentham (or Hume?), phavicist positivists (French colouring) scientific evolutionists (Herbert Spencer, Darwin), the agonistic tendencies of the biological evolutionists in harmony with the scopticism of the school of MiH, and (ii) transcendentalism.

Theologically the Victorian era was distinguished by the coexistence of a powerful school of rationalism, the inheritor of the deistic spirit of the 18th century and the Catholic reaction which manifested itself in century and whose influence was not yet exhausted.

At the opening of nineteenth century P-nonalist seemed to win an early and complete victory (Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire). The Goddess of reason seemed to rule. But then Catholic reaction (The Oxford Movement) gave birth to Romanticism, revival of Gothic architecture, the change in the spirit of poetry (the supernatural in Coleridge, the sensuousness of Keats, the spiritual feeling or Shelley. Also imaginative sympathy with the Middle Ages in Scott).

**Literary Scene:**

Talking in brief of the literary scene of the Victorian Age we might remark generally that nearly all Victoriana "wrote copiously and had little regard for eighteenth-century ideals of terseness and epigrammatic point". Both poets and prose-writers were aware of a taste for propaganda in its various forms, and this explains the bulk of Victorian writing and its repellitveness. At one time the Victorian period was considered to be one of literary decline, derivaligeriese, and disintegration, and its literature was condemned for its "sentimentality and sanctimoniousness". Now however, it is acclaimed as a time of great achievement in literature, even as the greatest in English literary history.

The thoughtful reader is conscious of the weaknesses as well as the unusual achievements of the Victorian literature. The most conspicuous of its weaknesses is the is the absence of an "unquestionably major poet", a towering figure to compare, for instance with Blake ("Songs of Experience") Wordsworth ("The Prelude"), Crabbe ("Tales in Verse"), or Byron ("Vision of judgment"). Victorian poetry, by and large, depends for its effect on impressiveness of manner and tone, and expresses a melancholy which is, "endemic rather than personal". Its tone and manner are often those of the public. Pessimism was strong insarly Victorian times and certainly influenced poetry. Victorian poetry was, derivative and its vague emotionalism and impressiveness passed for significant and profound experience. Notwithstanding its bulk and the very large amount of interesting miscellaneous reading-matter in the form of biography and autobiography, history, criticism, books of travel and books for children, and periodical Victorian literature-and especially poetry "Philistine" complacent and inimical exemplifies Oscar Wilde's anti-Victorianism is in fact, only philistinism turned inside out; it retains the same primitive dualism.

It is impossible to separate completely those elements in the Victorian period known as Oxford Movement, Pre-Raphaelitism, the Ritually Movement, and the "Naughty" Nineties. They stand for something unsatisfactory about the inner life of the period (referred to in the beginning of this. note). Thomas Hardy, G.M. Hopkins, Emily Bronte and perhaps Christina Rossetti are the poets, who, consistently find their inspiration not in, 'the spirit of the age', but in the stress of personal experience. In W.B. Yeats we can follow the entire process of self extrication from Aestheticism and 'Celtic Twilight' and of making poetry out of strong convictions and real experience.

The Victorians, especially the non, tended to be overburdened with opinions and ideas - about revelation, evolution, determinism, nature, and, other large public themes. Mills Autobiography records one form of this mental imprisonhient, and Clough's early poetry records another.

The novelists were more free, mainly because their aims were more limited allowed a pragmatic approach. There was great demand for their work, for entertainment and edification. "The age demanded reassuring patriarchs and matriarchs and writers wied with Preachers and statesman in" providing this reassurance;" "Women novelists, who had played a considerable" part in the evolution of the 18th century novel, now found more abundant opportunities. The novel, like Elizabethain drama served a popular need; in the base for influences which would soiten and make intelligible the harsh conditions of Victorian life. George Eliot wrote: "My artistic bent is directed not at all to the presentation of eminently irreproachable characters, but to the presentation of eminently irreproachable characters, but to the presentation of mixed human beings in such a way as to call forth tolerant judgment, pity and sympathy."

Summarily, it can be said that the Status of the English language changed in the course of the nineteenth century. And this was a rather, unexpected result of Arnold's age of expansion.

## A. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION

When did Queen Victoria become Queen?

a) 1837

b) 1842

c) 1841

## 9.4 SUMMARY

## 9.5 GLOSSARY

**The Victorian Compromise:** The period was a time of contradiction, often referred to as the Victorian Compromise. On the one hand there was the progress brought about by the Industrial Revolution, the rising wealth of the upper and middle classes and the expanding power of Britain and its empire; on the other hand there was the poverty, disease, deprivation and injustice faced by the working classes.

On the *Origin of Species* (or, more completely, On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life): published on 24 November 1859, is a work of scientific literature by Charles Darwin which is considered to be the foundation of evolutionary biology.

## 9.6 QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the scientific attitude of the Victorian Age.
2. Explain the social condition of Victorian Age.
3. Discuss the literary features of the Victorian Age.

## 9.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION'S ANSWER

a) 1837

## 9.8 SUGGESTED READING

English Literature: Its *History* and Its Significance for the Life of the English- Speaking World, by *William J. Long*


1. J.H. Suckely *The Victorian Temper; A study in Literary Culture.*
2. Oliver Elton *A Survey of English Literature* 1830-1860 (2 Volume).
3. G.M. Chesterton : *The Victorien Age in Literature.*
4. B. Willey : *Nineteenth Century Studies.*
5. G.M. Young : *Victorian England.*


**Note :** Apart from these books, students are recommended to study specialised books of criticism on Victorian poetry:


*1. Cambridge History of English Literature.* Vol. XTO Chapters II, III, VI, V, VI, VII.
2. Hugh Walker : *The Literature of the Victorian Era.*
3. E.D.H. Johnson : *The Allen vision of Victorian Poetry.*
4. O. Hugh : *The List Romantics.*
5. F.R. Leavis : New Bearings in English Poetry.
6. W.L. Cross: The Development of English Novel.


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# Lesson-10
# ROBERT BROWNING

**STRUCTURE**



## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

The English poet Robert Browning is best known for his dramatic monologues (dramatic readings done by only one character). By vividly portraying a central character against a social background, these poems explore complex human motives in a variety of historical periods.

## 10.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson we will learn about Robert Browning's poems prescribed in the syllabus in some detail.

## 10.3 LOVE POEMS

This first lesson on Robert Browning will be devoted to a discussion of the poems described for detailed study.

"Men & Women", published in 1855 in two volumes, is a dedication to Elizabeth Barrett Browning for her "Sonnets from The Portuguese", and contains fifty one poems. It is unquestionably the very flower of his genius. There is not one of its poems which the World will let die willingly. In Mr. Symon's words, "their distinguishing feature is the monologue brought to perfection. Such Monologues as "Andrea del Sarto," or "The Eplstte of Karshish" never have been, and probably never will be, surpassed on their own ground, alter their own orders." The book is the best collection of Browning's short poems and best illustrates the character and variety of his powers. It also represents a critical phase in his personal and literary career, in his literary fortunes it masks a turning point; before it he had failed both as a playwright and as a poet. "Sordello". (1860), which was meant to be "more popular than "Paracelsus" (1835) was ignored or badly reviewed by the crillies' "Sordello". It was written as "a first step towards popularity for me." The reviews and reception of the volume by the critics were, however, mixed. The book is also the first important product of Browning love-affair reflecting it in a new understanding of the problem involved in real, as opposed to imagined, sexual relationships.

By far the largest number of the poems in the books are poems of love, and some of the best among them are “Evelyn Hope”, “Love Among the Ruins.” “A Lover’s Quarrel”, “A Woman’s last world”, “By the fireside”. “Any wife to any husband”, “Mosmerism”, “a Serenade of the Villa”, “Love in a Life”, “Life in a Love”, “The last Ride Together”, “One Word More”.

Of Browning as a poet of love it may be remarked that it is another evidence of his curiously dramatic instinct that whilst his own love ran a smooth and fortunate course, he should have explored so often the eddies and backwaters, and torrents in the current of love. It is not sufficient for him to pen “descriptions of the fairest weights”, or to find exquisite diction and imagery to figure forth a mood, such as the song for Marianas : “Take, O take those lips away”; nor does he, like Donne pry into the weird secrets of the past:

“I long to talk with some old lover’s ghost.

Who died before the god of love was born”.

He treats of actual passion and he stays at whatever moment in its courage promises to distil its richest significance. He seems almost the first to realize that those moments are not necessarily those of the rapture of possession and enjoyment, or the fierce bitterness of rejection, but may be any one of the scores of episodes in the long chronicle. Hence, the novelty of the situations in his love poetry. And again he stands apart because romance and passion rarely came singly to him; his questioning examining intellect led him to segregate all the strands of the mood; to trace it back to its origin and to peer forward to its outcome, if he portrays failure as a “Christina” or, “The Lost Mistress” or “The Last Ride Together”, it is not an occasion “either for some times focus outburst of grief or for the airy persiflage of suckling; but rather for the manliness of temper which gathers strength out of defeat, weaves the experience into the fabric of character and imbues its resignation with new thought and resolve for other ventures.” The tragedies of love are for Brownian’s Women rather than for his men. The inconsistency of pictures is that dreaded by a wife after her husband’s death as in Two in the Champagne, or of one who is constantly endeavoring to seize the hem of the garment of fidelity but in vain as in “Any wife to any Husband”. No poet falls so rarely into the sentimentalism which Meredith describes as “Adding harmonies on the strings of sensualist”. Browning is not always the poet of love filtering of baffled. He can pipe as melodiously as any Elizabethan song in praise of beauty:

Nay but you who do not love her,

Is she not pure gold, my mistress?

Holds earth aught - speak truth — above her?

……

But cannot praise, I, love so much !”

He can find words too for the splendid glow of youthful passion in the opening of “In a Gondola” :

I send my heart up to thee, all my heart. In this my singing.

For the stars help me, and the sea bears part.

The every night is clinging

closer to Venice streets, to leave one space.

Above me, whence thy face

May light my joyous heart to then, its dwelling- place

But the triumphs of love are sung in poems of wifehood and motherhood. The heroine of "The inn Album" says;

"Womanliness means only motherhood."

## A. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

All love beings and ends there, - roams enough, But, having run the circle, rests at home'.

"The Last Ride Together" has been interpreted as an allegory of Browning's relations with his muse (True/False).

## 10.4 DISCUSSION

Pompilla in 'The Ring and the Book', drawn as Swinhume says, "with piercing and overpowering tenderness", is the masterpiece in Browning's gallery of women characters. In such poems his own marriage enriched both his imagination and emotion. The story of Browning's marriage in September, 1847 is an off told tale; the marvelous prelude to it is the theme of the "Correspondence of E.B.B. and R.B.", one of the supreme love stories in literature. The tenacity of will displayed against the tyranny of Elizabeth Berrett's father, a the clear sighted impulse and decisive action which swept her from an imprisoned and anemic inactivity to the open air and sky of Italy, and his strong faith in her especially for the manifold concerns of home and motherhood, were a thousand times justified in the unclouded felicity of a union in which intellect, and parenthood were equally powerful strands.

And now we pass on to a detailed examination of some of the poems in the list.

The exquisite poem "Love among the Ruins" is like a land space my Poussin in words it is melodious and something as befits the subject. It is a study of two young lovers among the rains of the imperial city against pastoral landscape. But from the wreck of the ages, and the scattered memorials of a forgotten metropolis, there came a golden-haired girl with eager eyes of love, and embrace which extinguishes sight and so, speech, so that whole centuries of folly, noise, and sin are not to be weighed against that moment we recognise that love is best. The alternate stanzas compare the past with the present, the pomp of a royal city with a piece of pastoral landscape and the glory, gold and shame and vanity of empire with the triumph of love :

"Oh, heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!

Earths returns

For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!

Shut them in,

With their triumphs and their glories and the rest.

Love is best!

"A Lover's Quarrel" studies paradoxically the warmth of love in winter in contract with the chill in spring caused by a hasty other word, while like a "shall from the devil's bow" has divided two lovers who before were the entire world to each other. The lover, however, comforts himself with the assurance that though in summertime's warmth heart cart dispense with heart, the first chills of winter and the first approach of the storms of life will drive the loved on to his arms :

In the worst of a storm's uproar -

I shall pull her through the door -

I shall have her for ever more!"

"A Woman's Last World" is an extension of almost the identical theme.

"By the Fireside" is strongly autobiographical, especially in the sentiment of wedded intimacy and fidelity on which theme then are quite a few poems by browning. A middle-aged person addresses his wife and looks forward to his old age and prophesies how it will be passed. He will pursue his studies; but deep as he will be in Greek, his soul will have no difficulty in finding its way back to youth and they, and he will light to reconstruct the scene in his imagination where he first made all his own the heart of the woman who blessed him with her love and became his wife. "With whom else", he asks his wife, "dare he look backward or dare pursue the path grey heads abhor?" Old age is dreaded by the young and middle-aged : but the speaker dreads it not, he has a should-companion of his moment's irrevocable union he can face the bounds of life updaurded. "The moment one and infinite", to which both their lives had tended, had wrought this happiness for him. "How the world is made for each off' everything tending to a moment's product, with its infinite, consequences the completion, in this case of his own small life, whereby Nature won her best from him in fitting him to love his wife. The lines "great brow.

And the spirit small hand propping it". Refer to Mrs. Browining, the whole poem, though its incidents are imaginary, is without doubt a confession of his love for her, and its influence on his own spiritual development.

However, it must not be thought that this moment of revelation in Browning's own life occurred amid the scenes portrayed. These scenes (prescribed in the poem) are composed of memories partly of the chestnut woods about the Baths of Lucca in Tuscany, and partly of Alps about the Laises in Lombardy. The scene of Browning's courtship was No. 50 Wimpole street, in London.

The two companion pieces "Love in a Life" and "Life" in a Love" are beautiful people compositions on the theme of love as adventure. They are allegories, perhaps, of the pursuit of the unattainable, but apparently connected with the fantasies of unsatisfactory love which Browning had contrasted with his happy relationship with Elizabeth Browning.

"Love in a Life" is the glory of two lovers inhabiting the same house yet; ironically enough, the beloved eludes the lover. This whole house is haunted by the perfume of her presence, and he is always promising his heart that she shall soon be found, yet the day wanes with the fruitless quest, for, as he enters she goes, and twilight comes with.

"Such closests to search, such alcoves to importune." Thus do our ideals ever evade us.

In a letter to Elizabeth, April 5, 1846, Browning wrote : "Oh how different it all might be! In this House of Life - where I go, you go - where I ascend, you run before..... Now one might have a piece of Ba……and make it up into a lady and a Mistress..... How different with us! if it were not, indeed what a mad folly would marriage be!" The house imagery echoes Browining's reaction to the news the Elizabeth Barrett had for the first time walked, instead of being carried, downstairs.

"Life in a Love" asserts a man's invincible faith in his capacity to spend his whole life on the chance that the woman, whose heart he pursues will one day cease to elude him. When the old hope is dashed to the ground a, new one springs up and Ses straight to the same mark. And what if he be foiled in his purpose here? How can life bp better expended than in devotion to one worthy ideal?

"One Word More", "Lyric Love", and "Prospice" can be placed side by side with "By the Fireside" in point of subject matter.

"One Word More", written in the months just preceding the marriage of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett in 1846 address us to the intimacies of devotion and affection which existed between he two. It is a splendid tribute based on Browning's fanciful interpretation of the minor artistic activities of Raphael and Dante. He imagines them by employing these secondary talent in ingenious efforts to converse, with their lovers in a language different from the emphatic speech in which they want to address their wider audience; for the career car of the world demands these stirident tones, and will not permit divergence from the role in which in most readily recognize its homes.

"Never cares the man put off, the prophet". Browning lacking that versatility which made Dante poet and painter and Rateal painter and post, adopts a graceful subterfuge :

….. a semblance of resource avail us-

Lines! write the first time and the last time"

In of a poem in dramatic gaine, such as those in Men and Women, he writes one which glows with the undisguised warmth of personal emotion:

"This of verse alone, one life allows me,

Verse and nothing else have I to give you

……..

Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrow?

Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving :

I am mine and yours — the rest be all man's

Few poems express so much feeling with so much historical fusion and nostalgic imagery. The fragrant memory of these "larenowned brides of ancient song" mingles with the incense of the poet's worship, whilst he invokes the mystenoul light of that unseen face of the moon to grace the secret ceremony. The two phases of the moon suggest to the poet the purpose of the meanest of God's creatures who can boast of "two soul-sides, one to face the world with, one to show a women when he loves her". His wife is his "moon of poets".

"To my star" is considered to be a tribute to Mrs. Browning. To an observer a beautiful star may appear in iridescent colours unobserved by others: Just as by looking at a prism from a certain angle, we catch a play of rainbow tints which they might miss by adapting a different point of view. Where stangers see a world the singer obtains access to a should which opens to him all its glory, as the prism reveals the constituent colours which combine to make the cold white ray of light.

"Mesmerism" and "A Serenade at the Villa" can be taken together.

In "A Serenade the Villa", a lover serenades his lady on a sultry summer night, and the burden of his song is that as he watches through the dark night at her villa so he vows to watch through life ever her path and shield her from danger and serve her in secret devotion, as lie sings to her now while she sleeps. The lady dreamed of music but slept on, though "the earth bumod in her sleep in pain". Earth has heard many serenades and many vows made only to be broken. The iron gate which ground its teeth to let the serenade passed seemed to be disputing the lover's protestations: and one fears that if his mistress was like the earth, and "turned in sleep" too she would derive little satisfaction from his music.

"Mesmerism" is the description to an influence one mind upon another which in modern medical partance would be termed fluid which escapes from the mesmeriser's body, but by the fact that the subject

has been induced to form a fixed idea that he is being hypnotized. Braid asserts that the imagination of the subject is an indispensable element in the success of the experiment and that the most expert hypnotizer will expert himself in vain unless the subject is aware of what is passing and surrenders himself body and soul.

The incidents of the poem may all be accounted for by the doctrine of expectant attention. At night when all is quiet except the noises peculiar to mohours of darkness, the mesmeriser of the poem desires that the woman under the influence of his will-power shall forth with make her way to him through the rain and mud straight to his house. In due time she enters without a word Recognizing the wonderful influence which one mind may exercise upon another. The operator prays that he may never abuse it and be effects that one day God will call him to account for its exercise. The speaker's prolonged concentration is conveyed by the syntax : a single sentence from stanza 2 to stanza 1.

It is noteworthy that while Elizabeth Barrett believed in Mesmerism which was practiced by her friend. Harriet Martineau, Robert Browning's attitude was.... "1 do not disbelieve in Mesmerism - caly object to insufficient evidence being put forward as quite irrefragable. I keep an open sense on the subject-ready to be instructed.

Probably the poem is inspired by the fact that in 1852, within three years of his wife's death. Robert Browning's father was successfully sued for breach of promise by Mrs. Von Muller.

A dying wife finds the bitterest thing in death to be the certainty that her husband's love for her which they could retain (would life but last) will fade and wither when she is no longer present to tend it;

"Men's love is of man's life a thing apart:

Tis a woman's whole existence. 1

The great pure love of a wife is a reign of love Woman's love is more durable, and pure than man's, and few men are enlist worthy of being the object of that love. Mr. Nettleship commenting on this poem remarks, "The real love of the man is never born until the love of the woman supplements it". The wife of the poet feels that there would be no difficulty in her case about being faithful to the memory of her husband; but she foresees that his love will not long survive the last of her personal presence. This will be to depreciate the value of his life to him love will come back to her again at last, back the heart's place kept for him, but with a seam upon it he love will be received, reissued from the mint and given to spend a last with some allay as well as with a new image and subscription. She foresees that he will dissipate his soul in the love of other women, he will excuse himself by the assurance that the light loves will make no impression on the dee-set memory of the woman whose immortally his bride : he will have a Titian's Venus to desecrate his wall rather than leave it bare and cold, - but the flesh- love will not impair the should love.

"Evelyn Hope" is about the gentle and reticent passion of a main of middle-age for a dying girl of sixteen linked with a confidence that in some remote age of state his unspoken affection will find requital. The leaf is a simple token of his unshakable faith that "God creates the love to reward the love."

Although Robert Browning often expresses the idea het present failure Implies future success this poem should hardly be seen as expressing "one of his deepest convictions". It is a rather a dramatic monologue presenting non-satirically a possible human reaction to hopeless love. There is no need to accuse the speaker of necrophilia, "wish for a Hambert-Lolita kind of relation-ship" or murder. His worst crime is a failure to face facts.

The three short lyrics, "One way of love" and its sequel "another way of love" and "Two in the campagna" shed more light on Browning's manifold treatment of love. The first two contrasting poems, like

“Women and Rosed” use traditional imagery, but end on a realistic rather than traditional note. “One way of love” is a song of unrequited love. The lover has strewn the month’s wealth of June roses on his lady’s path : she passes them without notice. For months he strived to learn the lute : she will not listen to his music. His whole life strives he was teamed to love and he has lost. Let roses lie let music’s wing be folded, he will not say how blast are they who wla her. It is certainly a noble, dignified way of accepting defeat in love!

In “Another way of love”, however, the roses of June are actually tiresome to whom they are offered. The woman in the first poem did not notice her roses, the main in this present poem confesses himself weary of their charms. His lady is satirical at his expense, and does not mind his going as she will be recompensed if June mind the bower which his hand has ruffled. June may also bestow her favours on a more appreciative or deserving recipient. She may also revenge herself by the lightening she aires to clear away insects arid other rose bower spoilers.

“Two in the Campagna” was probably written in May 1854, when the Brownings were in Rome, and spent “some exquisite hours on the Campagna (the plain surrounding Rome, dotted with the ruins of ancient Latin cities). The poem has been called purely dramatic, and also considered autobiographical expressing alienation from Elizabeth Barrett through loss of faith in her judgement about Napolean III, spiritualism, bringing up their son etc. It is best regarded a dramatic monologue suggested by, but not necessarily describing a mood experienced by her Browning.

To the reflective mind, this ghost of old Rome is deeply suggestive : it fills the mind with a sweet sadness, which readily awakens the longing for the infinite spoken of in the poem, the key me of which is undoubtedly found in the lines.

“One I discern

infinite passion, and the pain

Of finite hearts that yearn”.

According to Pascal the “infinite void can only be filled by an infinite and immutable object - that is to say, only by God Himself”. The speaker in die poem says to the woman, “I would that you were all to me.” As pleasure, learning, wealth, have failed to satisfy the soul of man, so not even love, the holiest passion of the soul can satisfy the human heart, which can rest in God alone. Dr. Medineausays that “all finite loves are only human, wondering in a poor twilight” unknowing of their peace and power till they lie within the encompassing and globeling love of God”. The restful music, the anocyne for the pain of yearning hearts, comes from no earthborn love, however pure.

Last but not least, is “The Last Ride together”, though by many nineteenth century critics (e.g. Berdoe) “the noblest of all Robert Browning’s love poems.” More recently is has been interpreted as an allegory of his relations with his Muse. The word ride has been given a range of symbolic meanings, including, the fulfilment of God’s purpose for man in the simple process of living’s, and even, incredibly, sexual intercourse.

The poem is unequalled for dramatic Intensity, for power for its exhibition of what Mr. Raleigh has aptly termed Browning’s “tremendous concentration of his power in excluding the objective world and its relations”. It is a poem of unrequited love in which there is nothing but die noblest resignation, a compliance with the decrees of fate, but with neither a shadow of disloyalty to the ideal, nor despair of the result of the dismissal to die lovers own soul development.. In spite of rejection the lover will cherish the ideal forever. On his test request being not in vain the lover feels deified:

"Who knows but the world may and tonight?'

It is a line which no poet but Browning over could have written. The force of the hour, the value of the quintessential moments as factors in the development in the soul: have never been set forth, even by Browning with such startling power.

The gives Browning occasion to propound his philosophy: juxtaposing the present and die past, imagination, endeavor and achievement he mentions some hard facts which are just poetic half-truths. But they magnificently reinforce his point. Finally, he consoles himself that if here he missed perfect bliss, still there is the life beyond, and it is better to have a bliss to die with described—

"Earth being so good, would heaven seem

best?"

And the climactic not is struck with words:

the instant made extremity. -

And Heaven just prove that I and she

Ride, ride together, forever ride?"

The momentary glory of the lover's possession is intoxicating. His spiritual exultation is enduring.

The rhythmic beat of the verse is a fitting accompaniment to the movement; thought and mood of the poem.

(Note: The second part of this, study of the poems follows in the next lesson).

## 10.5 GLOSSARY

**Dramatic Monologue** : a poem in the form of a speech or narrative by an imagined person, in which the speaker inadvertently reveals aspects of their character while describing a particular situation or series of events.

**Allegory** : a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.

**Muse** : a person or personified force who is the source of inspiration for a creative artist.

## 10.6 QUESTIONS

1. What are the salient features of Robert Browning's dramatic monologues?
2. Comment on Robert Browning's philosophy of love as expressed in his poems.
3. Define if Robert Browning is a poet of optimism.

## 10.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION'S ANSWER

True

## 10.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. Armstrong, Isobel: *Victorian Poetry: Poetry. Poetics, and Politics.* Routledge. London, 1993.

2. Browning, Robert: *Selected Poetry and Prose.* Routledge, London, 1991.

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# Lesson -11
# ROBERT BROWNING-II

**STRUCTURE**



## 11.1 INTRODUCTION

Dramatic monologue is a type of poetry written in the form of a speech of an individual character. M.H. Abrams notes the following three features of the *dramatic monologue* as it applies to poetry:

1. The single person, who is patently *not* the poet, utters the speech that makes up the whole of the poem, in a specific situation at a critical moment.
2. This person addresses and interacts with one or more other people; but we know of the auditors' presence, and what they say and do, only from clues in the discourse of the single speaker.
3. The main principle controlling the poet's choice and formulation of what the lyric speaker says is to reveal to the reader, in a way that enhances its interest, the speaker's temperament and character.

## 11.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson we will learn about Robert Browning's poems as examples of dramatic monologue.

## 11.3 BROWNING'S POEMS AS DRAMMATIC MONOLOGUES

In continuation of the previous lesson, let us examine other poems in "Men & Women" especially with reference to the question of dramatic monologue.

Robert Browning so excelled as a writer of dramatic monologues that it may filly be called a novelty of his invention. The dramatic monologue is distinguished from the soliloquy in which the speaker delivers his own thought uninterrupted by objections or the propositions of other persons. The dramatic monologue (for which the nineteenth century term was 'monodrame') has been recently defined as a single discourse by one whose presence is indicated by the poet but who is not be poet himself. The discourse normally describes feeling, thoughts and events coalem poraneous with the speaking of the discourse (or the writing of if, when it takes the form of a letter); and there is often an audience of one or more people, whose reactions, comments, replies or objections are expressed or implied by the monologue speaker. Any story that the dramatic monologue has to tell is usually told indirectly through quasi-stage direction's inserted into the text of the speech itself. Obviously the dramatic monologue gains over the soliloquy in that it allows the artist greater

room in which to work out his conceptions of character. The thoughts of a man in self-communion are apt to run in a certain circle, and a assume a monotony. The supposed second person of the dramatic monologue serves to draw out the speaker and to stimulate the imagination of the reader.

As a form, the dramatic monologue is extremely ancient. "Idyll" of Theocntes (third century B.C,), spoken by a girl practicing witchcraft to bring back her unfaithful lover, is an early example of the spoken variety and so is the "Heroides" of Ovid (43 B.C. to 18A.D.) written by mythological females to their lovers of the epistolary type. In English literature the form had been used by a large number of poets (including Tennyson - "St. Simon Stylites" 1833) before Browning perfected it. He took an individual line in avoiding traditional monologue situation (death betrayed woman, exiles etc.), and shifted the focus from melodrama and exploitation of emotion to 'Psychological subtlety'. He developed a brilliant technique for conveying, through natural speech, a whole range of oblige information about the speaker's situation, environment, and audience, and above all about his character. Much of this character-revelation is made to appear in voluntary. The speaker maybe trying to defend or justify himself, to project an image of himself that will win his audience's approval; but through his very words and allusions he unconsciously betrays what he is really like. This ingenious technique of apparently unconscious self-revelation by contradiction between a speaker's intentions and the impression that he actually makes on the reader may be regarded as a sophisticated extension of dramaticirony.

## A. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION

What poetic form is Robert Browning most known for

a. Elegies

b. Pastorals

c. Epics

d. Dramatic Monologue

## 11.4 DISCUSSION

Browning chose to write dramatic monologues because he had too complex a personality to be satisfied with expressing any single view of life :

I cannot chain my soul: it will not rest
In its clay prison, this most narrow sphere
it has strange impulse, tendency, desire,
Which no wise I account for nor explain.
But cannot stifle, being bound to trust
All feeling equally, to hear all tides
("Pauline", LI 593 8)

The dramatic monologue may also have served Browning as a device for freeing his moral judgement from the rigid code of ethics under which he had been brought up; for he often used the form to defend apparently indefensible characters "Sordello" states this theory:

..... ask, moreover, when they prate
Of evil men past hope, 'Don't each contrive'
Despite the evil you abuse, to live?
…….
(Lines -786 ff)

Browning's first attempt to express the conceal of truth, the subjective view of the world which justifies an evil man to himself was the early dramatic monologue spoken by murderer (Porphyria's Lover 1836). The climax of moral aerobatics is reached in the two great monologues of the wife-murderer: Guido in 'The Ring and the book', and Bishop Blougram's 'Apology'. In all these case Browning, like Shakespeare in Shylock appears to condemn, even while doing, his utmost to defend. Thus, the form gave him scope to express his own ambivalence, "but talking out of both sides of his mouth simultaneously".

Browning himself insisted that his poems were "always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of many imaginary persons, not mine", and denied ualetter to Ruskin that he ever consciously expressed himself through his characters. In fact he felt some difficulty in expressing himself directly. To Elizabeth Abe wrote : "you do, what I always wanted, hoped to do, and only seem now likely to do for the first time. You speak out, you -I only men and women speak - give you truth broken into prismatic hues, and fear, the pure white light, even it is in me ; but I am going to try These scenes and song scraps are such more and very escapes of my inner power, which live in me like the light in those crazy Mediterranean phases ……"

Browning suffered from excessive fear of self-exposure, the 'madi prudery' which prevented him from shading a bedroom with his wife, and had made him, as a small child, edge his way along his. Bedroom wall because he was not fully clothed and his reflection in the glass could otherwise have been seen through the partly open door. His first publication, "Pauline", though part of scheme for multiple impersonation was recognised as autobiography by John Stuart Mill, who had been asked to review. It was probably his embarrassment at this involuntary self-betrayal which frightened him into adopting the mask of the dramatic monologue from then on. The mask served a further strategic purpose when Browning wished to 'attack: contemporary orthodoxy, as in Fra Lppi's vindication of grass' i.e. the value and significance of flesh'.

"What would men have? Do they like grass of not

……..

You find abundantly detestable".

Lippi gave Browning a useful able for this bold assaulte on the Victorian attitude to sex.

And now a discussion of the dramatic monologues.

"Bishop Blougram's Apology" is an abdicable example of a dramatic monologue where Mr. Gigadibs, the critic of Bishop Blougrani, is the silent second person. There is no doubt that Browning based his character study upon Cardinal Wiseman, and he maintained, as Gaven Duffy reports, that his treatment of his model was generous. Though this cannot be easily admitted from any impartial standpoint, still we can see how the poet, with his "rest for all forms of activity, would be attracted by a figure of so many and brilliant gifts, literary, social, controversial and administrative" (Wisemen re established the Roman Catholoc hierarchy in England in the teeth of much opposition in the year 1850). The urbanity of the Cardinal may be judged from the fact that he wrote a review (January 1856, "The Rambler") acknowledging the brilliance of the poem and deploring only the subversive influence. It might be expected to exercise upon the Christian faith.

Gigadibs puts the case for the direct outspoken truth, the "grand simple life",' he calls it. The Bishop's reply is on lines of common sense : we must conform to our present environment. If we have ideals that are unseaworthy they must be jettisoned. For the purpose of debate they agree upon abandoning dogma : then in three different lines of argument the Bishop shows the impossibility and the uselessness of this step : First (LI 173-212) entire unbelief is non-existent; emotions, intuitions, and memories may at any moment fret the

string we had resolved should never vibrate; Second (LI 221-270), we cannot put belief and unbelief upon an equal footing for belief implies activity, which is the principle of waking life, unbelief implies inactivity and steep. The man without faith labels, himself as bed-ridden; Third (Lines 270 340), once we admit the superiority of belief it is important to ergpasise it before the world. Hence he pronounces on the Roman Catholic faith, and in reward receives dignity comfort, and success. Blougram meels the accusation that the attainment of rank and dignity can only be called success because his motives and standards are low. His replies ere other evasions or sophistries. Firstly (Lines 340-361), he says in effect, if he is a man of low standards than he will at least make the best of his case in the way of comfort. Secondly, (Lines 362-430) he shows, how mistaken Giggadibs is in supposing that the dozen men of sense out of the million of the common held are likely to pronounce him forthwith either a foot or a knave. Having refined and discriminating judgements they will not pass there: dogmatic sentences ; they know there are a thousand alterative shades between fool and knave. Moreover, his acknowledged teaming and prominent Office set him above all contempt in, professing his belief. He becomes thereby one of those whose paradoxical characters exalt them to the "dangerous edge of things" where they challenge the notice of the universe.

Then there is a subtle turn in the argument by which Bleugram begins "to be the apologist, not for himself as an unbelieving Bishop, but for the recognition of some kind of faith. He invites Giggadibs to exemplify his ideal of the great man without faith. Shall it be Napoleon? If Napoleon were in truth without any belief and aim beyond his immediate activities, how inhuman and how paltry his achievements were. Shall it be Shakespeare? True, he could imagine a universe, yet he sought not imaginary towers and palaces, but the possession of "the trimmest house in stratford town". "If this life's all", then Blougram who keeps his semi-royal state clearly wins the game. Taking it for granted then that some force of faith is essential, the Bishop adds a corollary that it must be enthusiastic. If we do not accept the enthusiasm of Author with its dynamic power, we fall upon the chill negations of Strauss, with the bare chance that they may not only be cold but wrong.

By another of the swift modulations which make the poem so actual, it develops into a sincere and eloquent defence of doubt. First (Lines 599- 646), he insists there is no other possible form of it. The more wish that Christianity should be true avails to exalt man from indifference to belief. Secondly (Lines 647-67), an absolute faith is inconceivable, time and earth are designed by God to conceal himself last we should be struck blind with exposes of light. Faith needs to be perpetual stimulated by the menace of unbelief. A parenthesis follows (lines 676-92) showing that even in the middle. Ages of unquestioning faith, belief in future punishment and reward was not sufficient to ensure correct moral conduct. Thirdly (Lines 693-712), he resumes the apology for doubt, and demands impossibilities for faith to exercise itself upon. Fourthly (Lines 724-64), he replies to Giggadibs' request to delete some of the grossed tenets in his profession. He will not abandon a single miracle, recognizing that where one goes all must sooner or later follow. Here the apologist returns to his own case. In lines 781-806, he ridicules the premature preparation for the next world which sacrifices anyone of the amenities of the present. In lines 807-23 he attacks the inconsistency of Gigadibs to Gigadibs' reply that he retrains in consideration of his fellowmen, the Bishop responds (Lines 824-970) with a pointed comparison of what each receives from his fellows : Gigadibs a guff enmity, a bare tolerance, Blougram obsequious reverence and social estimation.

It is necessary to call attention to the confidential after dinner atmosphere, the luxurious surrounding, the flavour of subtle talk which pervades the blank verse, invests its polemics with all the care and lucidity of prose, and the astonishing mental agility of the poem. This may be best seen in the clear expression of the

successive reflections and retractions of the truth; The thread of sophistry and truth are so subtly interwoven that Mrs. Worldly Wiseman, Mr. Byends, Mr. Facing both ways, and Christian himself might each appropriate a section of this astounding Apology The student might find another interest in determining how much of it is actual poetry.

"Blougram has been variously interested...., as a morally ambiguous figure ironically presented to suggest that religious faith to still possible in Victorian England, and can be justified even by a man who may be either a scoundrel or a saint. The thin facility of style and imagery may be intended to suggest the inadequate quality of his religious faith". The philosophical scheme of the poem was possibly suggested by Emerson's, Montaigue or the Skeptic in "Representative Men".

In "An Epistle containing the strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician", Browning sets forth not as in "Blougram" and Calibert the ambigiuities of truth but truth itself in an unfamiliar and arresting light. It is mirrored in the mind of Karshish, the Arab Physician, by whose two prepossessions it is for a moment amicably distorted. For, first he is an Arab therefore, almost impervious to this conception of the incarnation, (it should be noted however, that the common element of too Arabic and the Christian belief, the unity of God makes the transition at the close more credible and natural). And secondly being a physician, he diagnoses the case in familiar terms and endeavors to range it, finally under a well-known category : it is a "case of mane sub induced by epilepsy. Through both these obstacles the light breaks though get is only a light reflected in the resurrected feature of, a Jewish artisan : its glow irradiates the traveler's mind so that he is driven to the almost involuntary confession of his post-script.

The broad historical background is a lawless Judea in perpetual dread of the legions of Vespasian. The foreground is the village of Bethany beneath a rocky epur of Motint Olivet, the scene 35 years earlier of the miracle recorded in St. John Ch XI just preceding the events in which the Nazarene leech "perlehed in a tumult". Here the two are confronted: Karshish alert, observant rather tolerant for has time of novel ideas, and Lazarus, physically refreshed, mentally an inhabitant of some other province of experience.

Apart from being a historical reconstruction of a contemporary attitude to the rise of Christianity, the poem is also a psychological study of conflict between desire and inability to believe in miracles, and a parable of the Victorian dilemma.

Inno poem - even of Browning's is the distribution of detail so earning and so appropriate, nor, the cumulative effect both of picture and of thought so rich and so convincing.

The form of the radiate monologue is, however, nowhere, more brilliantly utilized than in "Andrea del Sarto". The current and addles of speech, unchecked by any conventionalizing audience, expose to view memories aspirations, momentary impulses and actions, fears and desires, each reflecting some facet of underlying personality: With instinctive skill, too, the fresh and illuminating point of view chosen : Andrea is the infatuated husband, but for the poem he is ab unfortunate painter whose spiritless temperament is both cause and effect of his moral and artistic failures, Again, as the poem presents him, Anderea seeks no liberation from these fetters: the reader wishes it for him against the painter's desire. The environment, too, gas beauty of twilight, and the sense of diminished vitality in the autumn evening in Florence harmonises with the wistful fatalistic disposition of the man. His ineffective soul is reflects in picture which, technically flawless though they may be, are yet devoid of the fiery untrained spirit which in his contemporaries broke through the bond of rules by the sheer force of inspiration. No passionate energy drives him to reach beyond the draughtsman's skill which has always been easily with his group. This same listlessness permits him to stoop to mean theft from his patron, to countenance his wife's open infidelities. And to proffer an insincere

defense for filial delinquency. His moral and artistic debasement to the shallow minded wife, whose sole interest in his art is for its monetary gains, to whom his more presence is irksome, and whose influence in his life has been uniformly disastrous is absolute. Nevertheless the situation appears pathetic rather than contemptible, and stirs sympathy rather than revulsion. Why? It is, because we know that Andrea's life is a long purgatory of remorse. Those aspirations from which he shrinks.

"Upto God, all three",

are the measure of the anguish for which neither his apathy nor his infatuation is an effective opiates.

The genesis of the poem is curious. In response to Kenyon's dart and for a copy of the painting. "Andrea del Sarlo', Browning wrote the poem and sent it to him. The main outlines of the story are drawn, from Vasari's Livers of the illustrious Painters, etc.

"Fra Lippo Lippi" (like "Andrea del Sarto"), is also derived from Vasari's Lives of the Painters. Even there Brother Lippo Lippi figures as what Chaucer would have called "a fish that is waterless." Browning makes him an irrepressible jesting scope-grace — tonsured Falstaff, with an opposite for the delights of the palate and, the senses, and an artist with that inborn leaning towards realism, which in such hearty natures turns to genial caricature. He is impatient of the distorting pressure of piety upon art, and equally of any ideal beauty beyond that sensible to the eye, being convinced that this world, it grasp it with both hands, "means intensely and means good". In the poem he is characteristically enough pouring out his beliefs, his escapades, and his ambitions, with a plentiful admixture of irreverence to the captain of the water who has apprehended him upon his equivocal night expedition.

Another brilliant dramatic monologue is "A Grartimarian's Funeral". The 'greimmarian' is Jacobus Milichius, a German humanist - physician of the early Renaissarice rather than the Italian as has often been suggested. That the scene of the poem does more closely resemble one of the castle- crownedhill-encircling cities of Southern Germany is matter for individual judgement.

In this poem a life's accomplishment is measured by two different standards: accordingly as we take into account or ignore the life hereafter. The Grammariah, never doubting that "Man has forever" has been content to forego everything else in the painful pursuit of the minutia of Greek syntax. Born with the grace of Apollo, he has become shrunken, leaden eyed, subject to torturing disease and premature death, if a man's life, like that of "dogs and apes"; has no endurance beyond death, then it is clear that this has been a paltry and grotesque existence. If, on the other hand, the lofty belief which he has inspired in these disciples is warranted, then this funeral procession becomes a pageant of victory. The cortege winding its way in the dawn steadily up the mountain-side until it achieves the summit with its unlimited panorama, becomes a symbol of a life spent in unrelaxing effort until it attains that infinite expansion of the designs and talents of men, which the scholar anticipates with such subline faith. Are we then to suppose that Browning singles out for special commendation a life devoted, with almost ludicrous heroism, to the scientific detail of philology? No more than we are to assume his approval of crime contemplated in "The Statue and the Bust".

Not the quality of the ambition, but the energy and sincerely displayed in the pursuit is here, as there, the object, of judgment.

"Master Huguesat Saxe-Gotha" is about an organist in a church where they have just concluded the evening service. He determines to have a colloquy with the old dead composer Master Hugues as to the meaning of the compositions known as fugues for which he was celebrated. (A fugue is a short, complete melody which flies (hence the name) from one point to another, while the original part is continued in

counterpoint against it. The beginning of this art form dates from very primitive times. Probably Bach's fugues are meant in the poem).

The imaginary composer's name was doubtless chosen to rhyme with fugues. The great organist-T fugues composer J.S. Eaph (1685-1750) was born in Saxe - Weimar, adjoining Saxe - Gotha Robert Browning said he was thinking, however, not of the glorious Bachi But of one of the dry as-dust imitators who would elaborate (an uninteresting five-note phrase) for a dozen pages together. The speaker is not Browning, though he could play the organ, but a church organist who has just played the voluntary after-evening-service. Browning said that he "had no allegorical intent in his head when he wrote the poem: that it was composed in an organ loft and was merely the expression of a fugue. The construction of which he understood because he had composed fugues himself it was an involved, labyrinth of entanglement lading to nothing — the only allegory in it was possible reflection of the labyrinth of human life. That was all But it may also symbolize the superiority of intuition to intellect in perceiving religious truth. The five-line stanza reflects the five voiced fugue, and the more fantastic rhymes, whittle supporting the humorous tone also represent the ingenuity displayed in fugue composition.

The second poem of music is "A Tocatta of Gaiuppi's". Baldass Gulluppi (-1706-85) was a celebrated Italian composer, who was the son of a barber with a taste for music. The Tecatta as a form of composition is not the measured, deliberate warring out of some central musical thought, as is the Sosiata or sound piece, where the trained ear can follow out the whole process to its delightful end orderly consummation, where the student marks the introduction and development of the subject, its extension through various forms, and its whole sequence of movement and meaning to its glorious rounding off and culmination spiritually noting each stage of the climbing structure and acknowledging its perfection with the inward silent verdict, "It is well": The Tocatta, in its early and pure form, possessed no decided subject made such by repetition but bore rather the form of a capricious improvisation or "impromptu". It was a very flowing movement in notes of equal length and a homogenous character. Galuppi produced a further advanced development of this particular form of musical composition with chords freely introduced and other important innovations. The main features of his operas are melodic eleganca and lively mid spirited, comic forms : but they are rather thin and weak, in their execution.

In the words of Mrs: Alexpnder Ireland "A Tocatta of Gallupi's" touches on deep subjects with a more feather touch of light and capricious *suggestiveness* interwoven with the graver mood, with the heart-searching questionings of man a deep nature and my *sterious spirit.* The poem deals with two classes of human beings - the mere pleasure takers with their balls and masks (stanza iv) and the scientists (st. xill) with their research and their gologies. The Victorians belong to the former category against the other class ahmersed in the passion for knowledge. Yet even this class surely dissipates its energies and misses the true end of life if it has nothing higher to live for than "physics and geology".

"Saul" also is about music. The foundation of the poem to the narrative in Samuel xvi, 14-23.

Possibly Browning's choice of the subject-war, a consequence of his life-long admiration ode Christopher Smart's "Sang to David' (1783). It was also suggested by Smarts preface to his "Ode to Music" on saint Cecilia's Day's which mentioned 'David's playing to King Saul, what he was troubled with the evil spirit, as a fine subject for such an ode.'

The earlier adoptions of "Saul" define the themes of Devi's music: at first pastoral and idyllic, then a poem in praise of strength and velour and the power to command men, then a song of the powers and statesangtship of Saul himself. All his Kenyon compared to "Hornets shield of Achilles thrown into typical

whirl and life." But the king is scarcely..,tired from is over whelming lethargy. Then in section xvil, in the fashion a little reminiscent of Beethovpn's Choral Symphony, David breaks into prophecy in place of sang. His own tremulous love for Saul gathers force and broadens into a torrent of a passionate reasoning in which he perceives the 'infinite Care' and divines, in a flash of vision, the figure and purpose of Christ. The thrill of the night and the awe of the dawn composes a marvallous epilogue in the closing Noc-tume.

The grandest and most beautiful of all Browning's religious poems, "Saul" is a messianic oratorio in words. The influence of music in the ours of diseases has long been a subject of study by physicians.

"Clean" was possibly suggested Matthew Arnold's 'Empedocles on Etna'. Empedocles like Cleon, is a desplicit reference to the religious difficulties of Victorian intellectuals. It may be meant to show that even a pagan philosopher is driven by the human condition towards a kind of spirituality skin to Christianity, it possibly hints at Inadequacy of Positivism, the Religion of Humanity of a Comte which regarded humanly itself as the only supreme Being, and rejected the idea of a conscious after-life. But the poem can be read without special reference to religion or philosophy, simply as a psychological study of intellectual arrogance and blindness. Man is the only creature in whom here is failure, it is called advance that man should climb to a height which overlooks lower form of creation simply that, he may perish there. Our vast capabilities of joy, our craving souls, our struggles only serve to show us that mail is inadequate to joy, as the soul sees joys. "Man can, use but a man's joy while he see God's".

## 11.5 GLOSSARY

**Epistolary :** a literary work in the form of letters. Grotesque: comically or repulsively ugly or distorted.

## 11.6 QUESTIONS

1. Write a critical note on Browning's dramatic monologues
2. Situate Robert Browning within his historical and literary context.
3. How do you identify a dramatic monologue?

## 11.7 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION'S ANSWER

(d)

## 11.8 SUGGESTED READING

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# Lesson- 12
# ROBERT BROWNING-III

**STRUCTURE**



## 12.1 INTRODUCTION

Browning had established his career first as a poet and then as a playwright. His unique ideas added a lot to the literary world. His works won global recognition marked by allusive imagery, symbolic structures, dramatic monologue, a blend of dark humor and Irony. His early works: "Pauline" and Paracelsus" brought him to the center of criticism, and his later masterpieces earned him a reputable place among literary circles. He successfully used dramatic monologue techniques which enabled the readers to see an event using the character's lenses. Moreover, he explored the beauty of the real-world using artistic techniques in his poems, "Fra hippo Lippi" and "Pictor Ignoyus". The recurring themes in most of his poems are loss. love, the relationship between arts and mortality, politics, religion, and society.

## 12.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson we will learn about Robert Browning's poetic style.

## 12.3 SUMMARY

In this final lesson on Browning I take up the question of Browning's poetto style.

First the form and style of his verse:

The one charge most frequently laid against Browning's poetry is its obscurity? This alleged obscurity may be the result of sheer sloventines on his part, as also his impatient, disinclination for revision of thus, agreeing to put up with the second best. According to Milford: Browning is one of the most careless of poets pouring himself torrentially over anything -syntax, scansion, euphony that stand in his way. Many of his lyrics are spoilt by heedless tortuosities of lazy obscurities of thought or expression; and his thought is not often profound. Or it may be a natural impediment of thought which made it hard for him to construct even an intelligible telegram or his inability to put himself in his reader's position and discover how difficult he was being. For instance, about "Sordello" - that monument of obscurity -he commented to a friend that he had written something clear at last.

But, perhaps 'enigmatical' better describes Browning's style than the more customary epithet 'obscure'. When Browning was introduced to the Chinese Ambassador as a fellow-poet he asked him in what kind of poetical composition he was most adept. The ambassador after, a moment's consideration replied "the enigmatical. Browning acknowledged the kinship of heir gifts. That there is no obscurity of thought is finally demonstrated by Swimbume's classic digression in the essay on George Chapman :

"He (Browning) is something too much the reverie of obscuse; he is too brilliant and cubilo for the ready reader of already miles to follow, with any certainty the track of an intelligence which with such incessant rapidity or even to realize with what under like swiftness and sagacity his building spirit leaps and light to end fro and backward and forward He never thinks but at full spee".

Browning enabled persons who like puzzles to suppose that they liked poetry and persons afraid of real thinking "to fancy themselves in tell actual". He was fond of putting 'middles' and even his love letters to Mrs. Browning were "whirls of incoherence" He was one of those writers who treat language not as a musical instrument needing delicacy no less than power in its handling, but "rather as an iron bar which they are to twist and tangle in exhibition of their powers as professional strongmen". The unpleasant element of his style to rooted deeply into an unpleasant element of his personality. As Tennyson remarked, "He flourished about: and loved to brag about lack of breeding by lack of manners". And this tendency was made worse by his love of the grotesque found also in other contemporary works of the age e.g. Pickwick Papers add Sartor Resartus.

In fact, the difficulties one encounters in Browning are mainly those of diction. Of these three things may be said : First, he sought his subjects in many remote regions, and his allusions drawn from many little-known sources so that one must lead, for instance. "Sordello" in clause proximity to a particularly minute encyclopedia. The harsh dissonance of this poem cut through the turgid harmonies of a decadent romanticism. In the words of a writer this poem, like Richard Wagner's music "sent the critics scurrying through for shelter with their hands clapped over their ears". The allusions in Brownings ease asc nmily biblical ("Rabbi Ben Ezra"), mythological or drawn from ancient history - especially Florer time history ("One Word More") At places, they are the invention of *his fancy* ("Fra Randolph). Clans of Innsbruck in "My last Duchess" are names of fictitious artists. Browning is also fond of giving orphic titles to his operas e.g. "The Ring and the Book", "Bells and Pomegranates" or trifles suggestive of Comparatively less known historical or artistic characters e.g. Pra Lidppo Lippi, Abt Vogter : Bishop Bletsgram. Caliban and Selbes, Galumppi, Saxo Gotha, Andrea def Sarto etc.

Secondly, Browning's use of words is unique and peculiarity his own. Tennyson, it is said, tried to give to English the ventures of Italian : Browning seemed to rejoice in the inherent defects of English : he liked It to be English to a fault. As duff in remarks, "When you have said shaggy urban virile, (in Dante s classification) you have said all that needs to be said about Browning's diction". Again in T.S. Eliot's words, "we may say that the duty of the poet, as a poet, is only indirectly to his people: his direct duty is his language, first to preserve and second to intend and improve".

Browning reacted strongly against the practices of the Romantic poets of the nineteen century and he rejected what he consklored their faulty use of worm-out pectic machinery especially that derived from classical mythology. His objection to it was, in brief. That it served only to "Push back reality" leaving the reader to "catch the sense at ***two removes***". That Browning, in fact, brought to his fresh and unconventional subject matter a - machinery equally modem and unhackneyed is not in dispute, but it is not always conceded that his diction was notably direct and contemporary; and not will is landing his fondness for congestion of monosyllables or consonants, he is one of the monsters of natural English verse.

According to Thomas Gray, "The language of the age is never the language of poetry". The Victorian poets in general eschew any forms of language which suggested ordinary speech unless they were deliberately writing comic or light verse, which was extremely popular. Of the major Victorian poets Browning alone alternated to use consistently in serious verse the vocabulary and speech patterns of the ordinary middle-

class English man Borrowed Groom observes avoid Browning's diction his inner life was so robust that he delighted to rub shoulders with the outer world - the world of ideas and words, no less than the world of man and women. Hence his work reflects many aspects of the language of his line; it is a magazine of colloquial phases. "His of polloquint English for the impose lyric". Substituted the street with the green blind for the laded garden of Watteau, and the "blu spirit of a lighted for the monotony of the evening star". Mr. Groom concentrates on Browning's singularities : "his verbal faults" archaisms and compound words.

Browing differs from grey by rejecting the idea of an elevated super English which alone is suitable for poetry but he also differs from Wordsworth science he refuses to limit his possible vocabulary to conform to any previously determined standards of poetic propriety. Thus he leaves himself free to choose any word he feels necessary for his poetic effects even though it would have been to mean for Gray or too entotic for wordsworth. He claims for himself in other words the right of a man in ordinary conversation to use the most just word, whether it happens to be vulgar (e.g.) pullo-hauly or technical (e.g. monolach or abduct) or) newly coined (e.g. collotypes) or old fashioned (e.g. quoth or requisition), familiar (e.g. dirt-cheap) or unfamiliar (e.g. accorded shoulder blades), prosaic (e.g. bunghota or gingemop) or fanciful (e.g. roajacynth). This freedom, by its nature, is not susceptible to statistical treatment as for example by Miss Milas's analysis, of a thousand lines of Browning. Browning uses such strikingly 'unpoetical' nouns as shrub-house, window-pane, silk-winding, flesh bunch, weey, green line; flaphal, rocket-plan, rubbish, choose dry-not and many others. Yet the oneself conscious use of these words simply because they are the normal way of referring to the things they name is one the distinctive features of Browning's total idam. Miss Miles's laborious totaling up the common words constitutes to be really memorable elements of his vocabulary.

The forms Browning prefers are often conversational Mr. Groom draws attention to his fondness for compound adverbs of which the first element is the promotional prefix a - as in a drift. Far more important are his colloquial contractions not the clipped prepositions and articles, the contractions which represent the normal elisions of informal speech Quite especially there are many examples of this in the dramatic monologues : e.g. in '"Mr. Sludge,- 'The Medium' we find He's this man for much', To like to know,' till try is answer you', 'I can't pretend to mind your smiling', and it don't hurt much, and also you've you'r, it's five, isn't. But they are equally frequent where Browning is not creating a specific imaginary speaker; e.g. in "Apparent Failure" we find No Brilon's to be Bauked, 'Their sin's alone', You've gained and also the forms I'll, it's and can't Similarly, Browning omits the relative in the accusative case, as is common in familiar conversation, but uncommon in verse, e.g. I hunt the house through, we inhabit together' ('Love in a lite'), or in 'Apparent failure', A screen of a glass were thankful for," where the preposition at the end of the sentence would hardle be admitted in formal prose.

These colloquat licence are common everywhere in Browning except where he wishes to produce an effect of solemnly as, for example, when he is discussing his deepest intuitions about the nature of God and man in the "Epilogue to Dramatic Personal". They are one of the more obvious ways in which Browning deliberately discards a rhetorical sentence structure in favour of a much less ceremonial and balanced way of putting his sentences together, full of loose qualifying phrases, (of "Christmas Eve', "Two Poets of Croisic". "The Lost Mistress", "Old pictures in Florence").

Another function of contemporary klom and speech patterns is to suggest the logically of a particular monologue. Thus Fra Lippo Lippi, in spite of a light scattering of Zooks. God wot and Florentine local colour, speaks recognizably in the language of 19$^{th}$ century London :

I was a baby when my mother dies

The wind doubled me up and down I want'

(LL. 81-87)

Sometime Lippo's accents are close to those of Sludge:

Welt, Sir, I found in time, ou may be sure,

'I was not for nothing - the good bollypd,

Lord they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!

(LL. 102-105)

The swift, slangy, diction apply suggests the Lippo as a man of his time but also, I think, helps the order to see that what Lippo has to say about the business of the artist is true of the 19th century is well as of the Quattro cento.

Browning's ability to write verse in current English is put to many other uses : it is particularly effective as a touchstone of the heroic attitude. A good example is "Prince Hohenslite Schwargan."

Elsewhere Browning usually remembers more consistently the imaginary listener to the monologue, and in consequence main numerous poems of Browning's which are a conversation or half a conversation between a man and a woman liking about their relationship We need only name, 'A Woman's last word', 'Love Among the Ruins', 'A Lover's Quarrel, 'By the line Side', "Two in the Campagna', 'James Lee's wife, Too late', 'Youth and Art', A Serenade of the Villa', 'the Last Ride Together', 'St. Marlin's Summer', and many of the lyrics in ' Asolando'. 'Any wife to Any Husband' one of his most moving poems has a certain archaic diction, especially the second person singulars. However, it is instructive to compare the first three and the last three lines of stanza XIX. These are characteristic of Browning's love poetry; they all depend to a greater or loser extent on recapturing the speaking voice so that emotion, whether of ardent love of grief for love lost is always tested. against the language of the real world. "Hodonontade (brastful bragging) is impossible, and so is the kind of love poetry which depends on substituting for a real women an abstraction build up of conventionally charming caches. The end of 'By the Fire Side' is a good example of this. Here the speaker describes himself as one born.

……. to watch you sink by the fireside now

……

Yonder, my heart knows how!

So, earth has gained by one men the more,

……..

One day, as I said before'.

The failing rhythm is as important here as syntax in giving the feeling of quiet conversation at close quarters.

For further examples of Browning's deliberate use of the full range of the language including, that is, colloquialism and not literary kiloms we may refer to the obvious man of the world stangy diction of "A Likeness" or to the careful detail and quiet matter of lack compassion of "Apparent Failure" or to "Confession".

Browning wrote in this way when he was supplying words dramatically appropriate to an imaginary character. But even when he is not creating a dramatic situation he very often speaks in the language of, say,

his letters, (of poems from "Asolando" such as 'Development' and 'inapprehensiveness', Writing of this kind owes, nothing to the conventional diction of poetry indeed it is not poetry at all but merely "crippled prose". The obvious contrast is with Tennyson ("idylls of the Hearth" "Enoch-Arden") whose distinctly elevated diction effects a crucial difference in tone, a difference analogous to that between the novel and the novel and the novelette. Normally, when Browning chooses the ordinary word he gives the impression that what he is saying is too important for him to treat in 'poetic' language. Occasionally this abjuring of the poetic results in pathos, but more often operates with wonderful precision. Compare "Pippa Passes".

"Sebald, as we lay,

Rising and falling only with our pants....

The poem "How it Strikes a Contemporary" aptly illustrates the subtlety and delicacy of the effects Browning was able to achieve by these means. It is notable no less for its cleanliness of language than for the idea it gives of the poet's function in the world. The diction of the poem is controlled by the well-known passage from "King Lear"

"(we'll) take upon's the mystery of things

As if we were God's, spies".

This passage is celebrated for its simplicity and directness. The deliberately unpoetic language of the poems emphasises the fact that the poet is a man wist lives among men, looking the world "full in the face end ties him down to the world of stucco cabbage an sadishes, lemons, coffee and bold-print posters." Similarly, the imagery is kept in a low key The idiom in willah is Writes rather than the incidents he selects is what established so memorably in the poem Browning's conception of the Poet as Hero is of a person unorganized, unrewarded, living in a city and sharing in its life, 'trying a martyr's temper between the chinks, "doing the king's work all the dim day long"

Thus the total idiom of Browning's best poetry is based on "Conversation between educated equals".

In a very interesting essay — Browning and the Grotesque' Style", Isabel Aanstrong looks at Browning's diction from a completely different angle. For description of the style is admirable rightly emphasising the essential element of theatricality. Browning is deliberately drowning attention to his own linguistic despair: language has become a posture, a self-consciously exaggerated manner". The element of grotesque, strictly defined in Browning's diction, is not great, and, where it is found the excessive energy which it generates and which is its most "annoying characteristic is often justilable on dramatic grounds. "Master hugues of Saxe- Gotha" is grotesque in many obvious ways - it is about an organist alone at dusk in the organ-loft of a great medloval church, playing, a fugue of Gothic complexity : one of the main images in die ciaborately curved church roof; at another point the speaker imagines that he can see the dead composer's made up of musical symbols - yet the language. Browning uses is grotesque (in Mrs. Amv strong's sense) in Stanzas XI1-XVI11 where Browning tries to create the verbal equivalent of a fugue. The last stanza ties the whole edifice of speculation firmly down to earth in a burst of simple energetic verse.

It will be observed that Browning's use of a vocabulary and syntax which might equally well be encountered in a novel or a newspaper does much to diminish the sharp distinction between poetry and the rest of literature which was such a prominent feature of 19th century letters. Browning's poetry, however, was different from that of his contemporaries, and this is noticeable in no other manner than in his determination to use, as the staple of his poetry the common language of Victorian England, plain Queen's English.

Though it would be grave error to suppose that drowning entirely eschewed grace, sweetness and melodic variety to challenge attention by oddities and novelties, yet his diction and rhythm have the quality of aggressive, pungent, singularity oftener than that of exquisite beauty, it is worth noting that a apprenticed himself to poetry by a careful study of Johnson's dictionary. As for his rhythm, possibly like Donne he was a purposeful iconoclast. Browning sometimes breaks in harshly upon the sweet rhythmical cadences, it is easy modulations, the unmusically perpetual tunefulness of much lyric verse from Spencer to Swinburne. Like Donne, though with less obvious disdain, he moks and astonishes rather than gratlies contemporary taste, having a special fondness for prosaic rhythms among those of poetry. His grotesque rhymes are perhaps part of the same defiance of convention, Sometimes they are barbaric outgrowths; they are almost intolerable in "A Grammarian's Funeral;" sometimes they are the product of more enthusiasm of skill like the medieval gargoyle. The classic instances are in "the Pied Piper of Hamelin". Sometimes as in "Rabbi Ben Erza" the poet deliberately inverts and perverte spelling for the sake of rhyming e.g. involve, soul things.

Browning's obscurity may, in fact, result from sheer indolence on the part of the readers to accustom themselves to him; in his case both extensive and intensive study of poems is a prerequisite of clear understanding. His poetic style can be best applauded if we appellate the fact that his language is an intense element in his total intention.

To sum up we may remark that Browning's interests were vast and varied. He enlivens reader's interest, carries them with him, and this despite his being careless, uncritical, and sometimes lacking in taste. His distinction ties, in the words of PM. Jones, in raising "Colloquiatism to lyrical intensity. The very lines seem-to fight or fence or ride. They jostle and hustle each other in just the way a crowd moves and forms and reforms, the words and the meanings packed tight, a story in two or three stanzas or many characters and stories pushing and edging each other in one poem." F.L. Lucas has brilliantly summed up his style:" His poetry seems to me like the dry bed of an alpine torrent down which a flood of vast, untamed energy has roared and loamed itself away, leaving a desolation of dead and bleaching stones; yet with here and there a narrow channel where a rush of waters still spis and dances, bright and living, towards its eternal goal".

And to conclude it may be noted that the initial reaction of dislike to his verse on grounds of obscenity is now giving way to a proper appraisal of it - possibly due to the quality of verse by T.S. Gliot.

**Robert Browning (1812-1889)**

**Evelyn Hope**

Beautiful Evelyn Hope is dead!
Sit and watch by her side an hour.
That is her-book-shelf, this her bed;
She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
Beginning to die too, in the glass;
Little has yet been changed, I think:
The shutters are shut, no light may pass
Save two long 'rays thro' the hinge's chink.
Sixteen years old when she died!
Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name;
It was not her time to love; beside,

Her life had many a hope and aim,
Duties enough and little cares,
And now was quiet, now astir,
Till God's hand beckoned unawares,
And the sweet white brow is all of her.
Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope?
What, your soul was pure and true,
The good stars met in your horoscope,
Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
And just because I was thrice as old
And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
Each was naught to each, must I be told?
We were fellow mortals, naught beside?
No, indeed! for God a novels great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love:
I claim you still, for my own love's sake!
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
Thro' worlds I shall traverse, not a few:
Much is to learn, much, to forget
Ere the time be come for taking you.
But the time will come, at last it will,
When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
In the lower earth in the years long still,
That body and soul so pure and gay?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
And what would you do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.
I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me:
And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope!
What is the issue? let us see!

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while!
My heart seemed full as it could hold;
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,
And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.
So hush,-I will give you this leaf to keep:
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand!
There, that is our secret: go to sleep!
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

**NOTE**

The lover denies the evanescence of human love. He implies that in some future time the love will reappear and be rewarded. Browning's optimism lays hold sometimes of the present, sometimes of the future, for the fulfillment of its hope. Especially strong is his "sense of the continuity of life." "There shall never be one lost good," he makes Abt Vogler say. The charm of this poem is more, perhaps, in its tenderness of tone and purity of atmosphere than in its doctrine of optimism.

**My Last Duchess**

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf s hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Fra Pandolf' by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy, She had
A heart-how shall I say?-too soon made glad,

Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, I was all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace-all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,-good! but thanked
Somehow-I know not how-as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill in speech-
(which I have not)-to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"-and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
-E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence's ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object? Nay we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

**Summary**

This poem is loosely based on historical events involving Alfonso, the Duke of Ferrara, who lived in the 16th century. The Duke is the speaker of the poem, and tells us he is entertaining an emissary who has come to negotiate the Duke's marriage (he has recently been widowed) to the daughter of another powerful family. As he shows the visitor through his palace, he stops before a portrait of the late Duchess, apparently a young and lovely girl. The Duke begins reminiscing about the portrait sessions, then about the Duchess herself. His musings give way to a diatribe on her disgraceful behavior: he claims she flirted with everyone and did not appreciate his "gift of a nine-hundred- years- old name." As his monologue continues, the reader realizes with ever-more chilling certainty that the Duke in fact caused the Duchess's early demise: when her behavior escalated, "[he] gave commands; Then all smiles stopped together." Having made this disclosure, the Duke returns to the business at hand: arranging for another marriage, with another young girl. As the Duke and the emissary walk leave the painting behind, the Duke points out other notable artworks in his collection.

**THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER**

SAID-Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seem'd meant for, fails,
Since this was written and needs must be—
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,-
And this beside, if you will not blame;
Your leave for one more last ride with me.
My mistress bent that brow of hers,
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fix'd me a breathing-while or two
With life or death in the balance: right!
The blood replenish'd me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night?
Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosom'd, over-bow'd

By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once—
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
Thus leant she and linger'd—joy and fear!
Thus lay she a moment on my breast.
Then we began to ride. My soul
Smooth'd itself out, a long-cramp'd scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So nrght I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.
Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
We rode; it seem'd my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new.
As the world rush'd by on either side.
I thought,-All labour, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
I hoped she would love me; here we ride.
What hand and brain went ever pair'd?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
We ride and I see her bosom heave.

There's many a crown for who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My ridmgas better, by their leave.
What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you express'd
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you-poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turn'd a rhyme?
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.
And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown gray
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend?—
'Greatly his opera's strains intend,
But in music We know how fashions end!
I gave my youth: but we ride, in fine.
Who knows 'What's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being-had I sign'd the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland found my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!

I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.
And yet—she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturn'd
Whither life's flower is first discern'd,
We, fix'd so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two
With life forever old yet new, Changed not in kind but in degree, The instant made eternity,
And heaven just prove that I and she
Ride, ride together, forever ride?

**Rabbi Ben Ezra**

GROW old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in his hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid"!
"Not that, amassing flowers, Youth sighed",
"Which rose make ours,
Which lily leave and then as best recall?
"Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned", "Nor Jove, nor Mars;"
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!
"Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years",
Do I remonstrate: folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.
Poor vaunt of life indeed, Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find a feast:
Such feasting ended, then As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw- crammed beast?
Rejoice we are allied

To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of
His tribes that take, I must believe.
Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!
For thence,-a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks,-
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail:
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me:
A brute I might have been, but would not sink the scale.
What is he but a brute Whose flesh has soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
To man, propose this test-Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?
Yet gifts should prove their use:
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn:
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and learn"?
Not once beat "Praise be thine!
I see the whole design,
I, who saw power, see now Love perfect too:
Perfect I call Thy plan:
Thanks that I was a man! Maker, remake, complete,
I trust what Thou shalt do!"

For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest:
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute,-gain most, as we did best!
"Let us not always say," Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!
"As the bird wings and sings",
Let us cry, "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than
flesh helps soul"!
"Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term:
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a God though in the germ.
And I shall there upon Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new:
Fearless and unperplexed, When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armor to indue. Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold:
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame:Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.
For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the gray:
A whisper from the west
Shoots— "Add this to the rest,
Take it and try its worth: here dies another day."
So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,

Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
"This rage was right I, the main,
That acquiescence vam:
The Future I may face now I have proved the Past.
"For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act to-morrow what he learns to-day:"
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.
As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age: wait death nor be afraid!
Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own, With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.
Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned, Were they, my soul disdained
Flight? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last! Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me; we all surmise,
They this thing, and I that: whom shall my soul believe?
Not on the vulgar miscalled "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;

O’er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice:
But all, the world’s coarse thumb And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man’s amount:
Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.
Ay, note that Potter’s wheel, That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,-
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
“Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize to-day!”
Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time’s wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.
He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, would fain arrest:
Machinery just meant To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.
What though the earlier grooves,
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup, The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The master's lips aglow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with earth's wheel?
But 1 need, now as then,
Thee, God, who mouldest men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colors rife,
Bound dizzily-mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:
So, take and use Thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk, What strain o' the Stuff, what warping past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

## A. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION

What is the Duke arranging in "My Last Duchess"?

a. The Duchess's funeral

b. The painting of the Duchess s portrait

c. A new marriage for himself

d. The sale of his art collection

## 12.4 GLOSSARY

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Fra** | **:** | a prefixed title given to an Italian monk or friar |
| **Munificence** | **:** | extremely liberal and generous of spirit |
| **Penury** | **:** | extreme poverty; destitution |
| **Sepulture** | **:** | burial; interment |
| **Vespers** | **:** | a service of evening prayer in the church |

## 12.5 QUESTIONS

1. Why is Browning so interested in the Renaissance? Consider Browning as a love poet.

## 12.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION'S ANSWER

c. A new marriage for himself

## 12.7 SUGGESTED READING


1. Litzinger. Boyd and Smalley. Donald (eds.) *Robert Browning: The Critical Heritage.* (Routledge. 1995).
2. Woolford. John and Karlin. Daniel. *Robert Browning.* (Longman. 1996).


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# Lesson-13
# TENNYSON

**STRUCTURE**



## 13.1 INTRODUCTION

Tennyson began writing poetry as a child. At twelve he wrote a six-thousand-line epic (a long poem about a real or fictional heroic figure) in imitation of Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832). Other models were Lord Byron (1788-1824), and Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822). In 1827 there appeared a small volume entitled *Poems by Two Brothers.* The book, despite its title, included poems by three of the Tennyson brothers, a little less than half of them probably by Alfred. That same year he entered Trinity College, Cambridge University. Tennyson's undergraduate days were a time of intellectual and political turmoil in England. He belonged to a group called the Apostles. The institutions of church and state were being challenged, and the Apostles debated these issues. He also took up the cause of rebels in Spain.

Those who knew Tennyson as a university student were impressed by his commanding physical presence and his youthful literary achievements. In 1831 his father died, and Tennyson left the university without taking a degree.

## 13.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this lesson we will learn about Tennyson and the features of his poetry.

## 13.3 DISCUSSION

In this first lesson we introduce you to the poet.

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-92) commonly calls up a picture of the grand old man who had the magnificent presence of a heroic bard. He was the uniquely famous Poet Laureate who become a national institution, the uncrowned king of England and of poetry in the Victorian age.

Alfred's father George, Tennyson was a disinherited and embittered son whose temperament, situation and alcoholic consolation led to fits of insane violence which at times made the sensitive, young Alfred to long for death. Tennyson had a religious background and a temperamental strain of mysticism but was also all his life an eager student of science who felt its increasing pressure and biblical criticism. His first elaborate statement was the poem originally entitled 'Supposed confessions of a Second Rate Sensitive Mind not to Unity with itself'. The question was brought home to him with crushing force by the sudden, untimely death (September' 1833) of his beloved friend and the brightest star in the galaxy of the Cambridge "Apostles), Arthur Hallam. The extinction of a young life of goodness and promise raised the religious, ethical and metaphysical problem; as there a purpose a reality, "behind the flux of life? Is the world a divine order or is

it a meaningless chaos under the sway of blind nature?" With two centuries of scientific skepticism it was difficult for young Tennyson to write in a tone of positive affirmation: he was, therefore, torn between faith and doubt. The lyric "Break, Break, Break" Written after, Hallam's death was one of his early uttetences. "The Two Voices" is a moving presentation of the alternatives, it is a dialogue between himself, and his soul upon the merits of suicide; and in "Ulysses" the poet is seeking to rise above his grief and face life with resolution. Even "In Memoriam" did not end his questionings which appeared in his posthumous volume of 1892.

Hallam's death seembd to shatter Tennyson' whole life and he weighed to die and possibly he; editary factor predisposed him to melancholia. Poems written-before the desperate loneliness he was always prone to feel ad the craving for oblivion to which it constantly led. The brutal attack by the reviews of his poems of 1833 hurt Tennyson deeply and he lapsed into the ten years 'silence' as a writer. The thwarting of his intense passion for Rosa Bearing in 1834 and the suspension of his marriage with enily, sellwood till 1850 with whom he was engaged in 1838 further added the his mental frustrating.

These few biographical details point to certain sources of the melancholy which finds expression in one after another of Tennyson's poems. In the two voices he 'confronts the case for escaping the weariness, the fever and the fact of life by suicide.'

In addition to personal and family troubles and religious problems Tennyson early, encountered another question; what is the role and function of the poet in the modem world. The great poet's of the preceding generation, the romantic poets had asserted - the supremacy of the poetic imagination end intuition even in the face of the industrial revolution, the whole-sale application of science and the mechanized civilization. But with the rapid advance of scientific knowledge and achievement in the age of Tennyson the spirit of poetry and myth entered to the desiccating spirit of science and civilization. In Tennyson while we find celebration of the cloistered imagination in the fashion of Coleridge and Hesperides, as the theme of isolation as in "Marina" of fascination for a life of un heroic lassitude as in "The Lotos Eaters", we get also a first a position of the worlds of seclusion and actuality as in "The lady of Shallot" aesthetic detachment contrasted with higher claims' of social responsibility as in "The Palace of Art". In later Tennyson (1842) poems the claims of responsibility won, his early poems were radically revised and greatly improved and the new poems had less of pretty fancy and more of ethical and social seriousness. Tennyson was by far the most popular poet of the Victorian, a poet of superb achievement the most representative poet of his age. He was in the words of Queen Elizabath I "more English in touch with the general movement of thought of the age in which he lived in politics, in science, in religion, and representative of it no less in his doubts than in his affirmations." He was fond of domestic themes. In face he was practical in his interests unlike Browning his contemporary, who was more continental; he was patriotic he distrusted excess. He was able to speak for the great, new middle class which had just come into prominence and was acclaimed during his life time as the national, poet, in a save in which no English poet has ever been since Shakespeare. Tennyson's poetry gives expression to the feelings and tendencies of his generation such as "Moderation in politic refined culture religious liberation chequered by doubt, a lively interest in the advance of scientific discovery coupled with alarm lest it might lead us astray, attachment to ancient institutions, larger views of the duty of the State towards 'Its people, and increasing sympathy' with poverty and distress all salient features of the national character in the direction of political ideals the 'imperial conception-realizing the British Empire's unity in multiplicity was proclaimed in his verse.' The revival and spread of profound Veneration for the throne, as the common centre and head of a scattered dominion was another outcome of the same idea promoted by the Laureat's stately verse. The future historian can safely draw inferences from his verse as to the intellectual and political tendencies of the nineteenth century.

Tennyson's youth coincided with great changes in the temper of the times: the thunderous echoes of long war against France had died away, the reform bill (1832) had become law and the era of space in Europe and comfortable prosperity in England in the middle of the nineteenth century had just set in. All this is reflected in his poetry: the wild and stormy element has disappeared, his impressions of the earth, sea and sky are mainly peaceful, melancholy, mysterious; he is looking on the happy autumn fields or listening in fancy to the ripple of the brooks or the Splash of a quiet sea. Length of life, maturity of experience, abundant treasure and domestic happiness were other factors which imparted charms of balance self-restraint and exquisite finish to the best of Tennyson's poetry.

Tennyson was far from being a dogmatic Christian religious doubt, as was to be expected in the age of Darwin, Lyndall and Herbert Spencer, was very much a part of the intellectual climate of the time and Tennyson was as sensitive to it as any man. All his life he followed like Shelley the progress of scientific thought and research with passionate interest and deep understanding, welcoming its achievements as much as he dreaded the possible misuse of them. With him, however, as perhaps with all profoundly imaginative men, tile advance of science into the physical world did not diminish but deepened the mystery of life. Like most poets, Tennyson was essentially religious, he had the faith of the mystic that reason in spite of all her triumphs if taken as in sole guide to truth might lead to Hill. "In Memoriam" sum up all his doubt, all his ultimate belief. In it he expresses his sense of the blind waste and inexorable cruelty of nature red in tooth and claw with ravin, and of the littleness of the individual life in the vast, impersonal scheme of the universe, yet the scientists of the Victorian age who read it bailed Tennyson as one of themselves despite the religious mysticism and Christian dunking of the poem.

After his period of pure romance Tennyson wrote much which bore directly upon contemporary events and problems. During his long life he witnessed changes in English life brought about by the industrial Revolution; he saw the rise of a powerful new riddle class, men who 'made fortunes from cottorbmills and coalmines to challenge the supremacy of the old landed aristocracy; he saw the coming of the, railway, steamships and the telegraph along with the swift advance of physical science the Darwinian theory of Evolution and rationalist criticism of the Bible.

To all these things he was alive and sensitive. Intellectually he was in sympathy with speculative thought in the same way as he approved, in theory, of the progress of democratic ideals; but emotionally he was conservative. Devoted to his Country, he clung with passion to the old traditional virtues of loyalty, patriotism, service and faith and was haunted by the fear that the new scientific materialism might, lead to the supersession of the virtues by a skeptical and self-regarding cynicism. The expression of this fear was more and more to occupy his poetry as he grew older.

Tennyson spoke for the English conscience of the Victorian age. His poetry held the minor to the age in all its moods and tendencies, "In Memoriam" '(1850) was welcomed by the Victoriana is an assuring reconciliation of science and religion. "The Palace of Art" is an open parable of aesthetic detachment in an age of stark materialism; "The Princess' (1847) a brilliant tour de force deals with the spiritual equality of men and women; the theme of "Maud" (1865) his little "Hamlet" was anything but remote or romantic; it was almost violently contemporary, alive to social evils, Tennyson had nothing but scorn for the worship of money and the growing materialism of the age: …… who but a fool would have faith in the tradesman's ware or his word?

The "Idyll of the king" symbolize 'the essential mobility of the ideals of patriotism and domestic honour (Maud).

The tendency to return to the divine and heroic myths of ancient Greece or the Medieval Age begun by Keats was continued by Tennyson who, however, angliclyed-nay Victorianised the ancient themes and folklore. The concrete and sculptured figures of the sallque legend or fable in "Ocnone", Ulysses and "Tilhones" were endowed with warmth and fresh oslour by their becoming "the impersonations of the impulses and affections of modern life- love unrequited, Isilude, restlessness, the roaming spirit, the adventure spirit, the ennui of old age, philosophic or serently."

'To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" "(Ulyases") was a typical Victorian sentiment in an age of solence and ceaseless activity. In reaction to life feveitsh restlessness of the age of Action is the craving of human heart for peace, rest and leisure.

"Surely, surely, slumber is more sweeter than foil. The Lotos Caters"

The Arthurian legend of "Morste'd Arthur" appealed to Tennyson not so much for its romance but for its allegorical uses and the sermon on the abuses of the times that could be preached through its medium.

"The old order changeth yielding place to now" was a characteristic feature of Tennyson's age of evolution, scientific endeavored how discoveries.

Tennyson was moody and morbid throughout his life. A shadow of despondency and gloom, a sense of the Incompleteness and failure of life, darkened his meditations on the condition and prospects of the human race, and his later poems show how he long, retained his cloudy out-look upon the world. In 1884 he wrote an unpublished epigram upon "lbmea- surable Sadness" and his dramatic monologues dwell more and more on the unhappiness of mankind especially the day monologues.

But besides his brooding over subjects of human misery sorrow suicide and death he was an optimist in religion, holding a firm belief in the divine wisdom and goodness as summed up in "In Memoriam". Also, unlike many poets he was a happened in marriage, children and friends.

Tennyson, like Wordsworth, was a lover of nature in all its beauty and solitude, in all its fomte, and knew it with a scientist's exactitude. As a child he would often walk, all night, hardly conscious of his body, and rapt in the mystery of darkness and starred sky. Water he always loved, his poetry is full of it. And there was the sea, the delight of his boyhood as of his old age "Crossing the Bar" written in his eighty-first year is, unique for the beautiful fidelity and truth of its sea-images.

Notable for his descriptive power born of exquisite and faithful observation of nature Tennyson, in keeping with the scientific temper of his age, viewed, Nature as a destructive agent of the Evolutionary process "red is tooth and claw (in Memoriam). This gave rise to doubt for a while about the ultimate designs of god and Nature", Age god and Nature them at strife? There is, however, no pantheistle strain in his attitude to nature.

In tracing Tennyson's poetic development one is conscious, in reading his best and most characteristic verse-especially his early verse - that unlike his great predecessors his poetry was not so much that of a man as of a mood. His object was to fashion some small thing which would be beautiful. But lie soon realized that he must soon leave the 'Lordly pressure House' (as he says in the "Palace of Art") for from that isolation and withdrawal he feared corruption would come. Beauty alone was not enough, divorced from her sister's Goodness and Knowledge; and "He that shuts love out in turn shall be shutout from love, and on her threshold lie flowing in outer darkness".

He was thus impelled to extend the scope of his poetry to include themes of common life. The poet must also be a man amongst men. A friend accounted of the popularity of his poetry by saying that it was the most 'human' ever written. "He remained inalienably himself, and the true business of his poetry was to express that self through its varying moods."

Tennyson was much more than a mere polished mirror of Victorian England; he was in there in a great artist, very often, a great poet. Tennyson was endowed with pure, lyrical gift which he possessed in an eminent degree and it is by virtue of "the speech, the secret and indefinable beauty of words and tune-as sense of all great poetry - that Tennyson, more than his message, ranks amongst the great English poets, sweh as Spenser, Shakespeare, Burns, Shettey and Swinburne. Most evident in his early work, right through to the end is present a magical utterance haunting sometimes, and apparently his unpreme-ditated as bird-song, e.g. In "Break, Break, Break" "Tears, idle Tears" or "Come Down, O Maid". He kept up this lyrical gift right up to the time of Sun-set and evening star. Less constant than in his youth and middle years; the old music, "Sometimes in graver harmonies" remained upon his Lips up to the end: "Crossing the Box" was his swan-song in this respect.

A consummate artist Tennyson brought to the making of his verse a trained and accurate eye, and a very fine ear 'for verbal music. The society and variety of his tunes were only equalled by Shelley. He was an extremely careful and conscientious artist and knew the nature of the file in patiently polishing and improving his verse in order to attain greatest perfection. Tennyson is un-surpassed in the choice, deployment, and manipulation of his material forms, and in his "metrical virtuosity." He is also distinguished for the mastery and vanity of his rhythms. He is a master of harmonies produced by the judicious use of alliteration and onomatopoeia. In "Maud" he enforces the sense of alone by its sound.

"The shrill-edged shriek of a mother divides the shuddering night."

And out he walked when the wind like a broken wording waited"

Tennyson is also distinguished for his naturalness and simplicity of diction in his pastoral poems in which the language is purely poetical to the exclusion of dialect or rustic talk. His blank verse ("The Idylls") is exquisitely jontribed: "subtly varied in movement it is at once mellow and light like a black bird's' song." After Milton's and Shelley's, Tennyson's blank verse is the "most accomplished and musical in the English language. At suits his monologues best with its march, flowing toward with its sonorous rhythm. Tennyson is endowed with the gift of description. Cut off by both science and religion from Words-worthian "mysticism", and a much better observer than Words worth he declined the nature that his acute senses and human emotions gave him Even in his saddest lyrics he makes "the too much loved earth- more lovely, and even his beautiful lyrics of love do not well up from the depths of his being."

Tennyson is also supreme in his pictorial power the art of filling up a picture with profusion of accurate detail, the rare power of giving atmosphere to a poem suggesting the correspondence and interaction between the mind and its surroundings, between the situation and the subjective feelings. According to Bagehot Tennyson's poetic style is associated with the ornate, although he is a master of many styles.

Tennyson was the Virgil of the 19th century: "Thou majestic in thy sadness at die doubtful doom of human kind" he had a deep strain of Virgilian mood. Many of his finest lycles such as "Tears, idle Tears" are variations on the simple universal theme of mortality and the remembrance of things past such lyrical poems range from the early "Song:

A spirit haunts the years last houra" to poems written fifty years later.

Finally we may sum up Tennyson, as a poet, in the words of Douglas Bush "in the essential nature of his idealism and his disillusioned melancholy, his pervading sense of irreparable loss, he is very much our contemporary, the poet of an age of anxiety".

## A. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION

Which university did Tennyson attend as an undergraduate'?

a. Oxford

b. Cambridge

c. Harvard

d. Yale

## 13.4 GLOSSARY

**Chancel** : the front part of a church including the altar, separated from the congregation

**Charnels** : places where bones are buried

**Copse** : a group of trees

**Garrulous** : wordy, talkative

**Goad** : something that provokes action

**Grange** : farmhouse

**Inosculated** : joined, united

## 13.5 QUESTIONS

1. In what ways can Tennyson be considered a poet of the past?

2. What are the characteristics of Tennyson's poetry?

## 13.6 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION'S ANSWER

b. Cambridge

## 13.7 SUGGESTED READING

*T ennyson and the Princess: Reflections of an Aye* By John Killham The Athlone Press. 1958.

*Anglo-American Antiphony: The Late Romanticism of Tennyson and Emerson* By Richard E. Brantley University Press of Florida, 1994.

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# Lesson-14
# TENNYSON-II

**STRUCTURE**



## 14.1 INTRODUCTION

**First:** Tennyson is essentially the artist. No other in his age studied the art of poetry so content or with such singleness of purpose; and Swinburne rivals him in melody and the perfect finish of his verse.

**Second:** like all the great writers of age. The is empathetically a teacher, often a Leader. In the preceding age as the French Revolution, law lessens was more or less common, and individuality was the rule in literature.

**Third:** Tennyson's theme, so characteristic of his age, is the reign of order - of law in the spiritual world, working out the perfect man. 'In Memoriam'. 'Idylls of the King'. 'The Princess', here are three widely different poems; yet the theme of each, so far as poetry is kind of spiritual philosophy and weighs its words before it utters them, is the order

## 14.2 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The present lesson undertakes a detailed discussion of poems prescribed in the syllabus.

## 14.3 THE LADY OF SHALLOT

And now Tennyson's poems First "The Lady of Shallot".

"The Lady of Shallot" appeared in the 1833 volume of Tennyson's poems along with "The Miller's Daughter "Ocnone". "The Mary Queen" and" The Lotos-Faters". And what was hinted and tried in 1830 comes to super consummation in 1833 with "The Lady of Shallot. The poem deals with the Arthurian legend glad thus for shadows the life-long interest of its author in the Round Table which culminated in "The Idylls of the king".

In its revised form "The Lady of Shallot" is a perfect blending of eight and sound and is concerned with the problem of artistic isolate. As usual with Tennyson, the scene is set before the protagonist is introduced: Shallot characteristically is an island Paradise that Tennyson also uses in "The Lotos-Eaters and

"The Hesperides" and Other poems as a symbol of haven for the poetic imagination. The outside world is dull, consisting of great fields of barley and rye, but in Shalott there are only lilies, symbols of the purity of the poetic mind. Along the banks of the shier, itself a symbol of life, there is almost motionless existence: Already in the land there is an awareness of the Lady but the people know her only by her song they do not see her as a person, they know her only as an artist. In fact, the reapers who, because they toil, are characterized as weary, emphasize the un-reality of the Artist as a person calling her "the fairy Lady of Shalott.

Part II explains that the Lady is forbidden under pain of a course to look down from her isolated tower on to Cane lot, which apparently represents reality. She known not the nature of the course. She knows not even its source ("she has heard a whisper say"): yet she accept cheerfully her isolation having little care for the world or anything else other than her work. Hers is the pursuit of what a critic has called the romantic image; a timeless and deathless image insulated from social-infect all human concerns having as its solo and its own being, "She weaveth steadily" because her only desire is for the perfection of the image.

She knows the real word only by reflections in the mirror at which she looks, and what she sees is shadows. Her art, therefore, is not the mirror held up to nature, rather it is the shadow of a shadow. This seems to be the poetic theory of Tennyson himself. Life is to be used as bit the vaguest referred for communication, in practice Tennyson had written, as in the "Recollections of the Arabian Nights", 'poetry of dream, poetry which yields its core of meaning 'only at greater and greater removes from reality.'

A strong contrast is indicated between the life of external reality and the existence in Shalott. The inhabitants of the outside world lead passionate; active, colourful lives; but the Lady is content to remain simply as a spectator. She knows of love, religion, nature, the court and knightly adventures, as symbolised in the third stanza of part II; but she herself is uncommitted ("she hath no loyal knight and true"). Her art is, she feels, adequate compensation for that which she is missing in life. But suddenly she realises when she sees reflected a funeral and a wedding in her mirror that she is divorced from the life cycle, and limed by the-real world, she begins to tire of her isolation: "I am half sick of shadows."

But her assertion is qualified "half sick." This is because she has so long lived as a sensually absorbed spirit that she is incapable of making an unqualified/emphatic assertion about the nature of external reality or of her own existence.

She speaks fully only in song; "factual statement (like her first in the poem) for her demands equivocation;" for having been removed from the world of fact she does not understand her position in relation to it. Hers is "what might be called the late Romantic assertion", for its is, exactly the kind of statement made by Keats in his "Ode to Nightingale" ("I have been half in love with easeful death") and by all other late Romantics when assertion is required vis-a-vis external reality.

Having begun to tire of her situation; she then seen Sir Lancolt, who represents life in all its mamfoldand most attractive aspects. The images relating to him are those of youth, vigour, fertility, passion, chivalry, romance; the verbs used in connection with him are those of action, all of which are antithetical to the Lady's existence. Only when he appears on the scene the scene of course reflected in the mirror is there any action concerned with Shalott: "a boarded meteor trailing light/Moves over still shalott," a symbolic action foreshadowing the Lady's movement. In spite of his attractiveness venese, however, she has been able to resist the temptation to submit to life. But when he sings "Tirra Lirra" and she realises that song is possible in the outside world the call of the world becomes irresistible capite of herself she leaves her web looks down on come lot, and as foretold, the curse takes effect the web disappears and the mirror, cracks: heart is test as well as the means by which she was able to live and create. She now becomes aware of the consequences of her action.

Prior to her action the outside world had been described in terms of gay, passionate colours- red, crimson golden, silvery, blue. Now when she tries to partake of that life, the gay colours disappear, and nature takes on a different aspect.

"In the stony east-wind straining,

The pale yellow woods were waning.

The broad stream in his banks complaining,

Heavily the low sky raining.

Over toward Comelot".

Life is not what she had expected it to be. When seen through reflection and when heightened by art the world had been beautiful because it had been an ideal world. When seen in reality, the world is nothing like what she thought it would be. Art had improved on nature. She desires an identity with this life of which she is now a part but which she does not comprehend in order to recognised an artist, so Known here -to fore, she writes here name on the psow of the beat. Knowing not what she does or what she must do, "Like some bold seen in a trance" looks with uncomprehending eyes to Camelot and starts hear journey. Wrapped in a snowy white robe which symbolies her shround and her innocence of the worlds she floats down the river singing her last song, symbolic of her death as artist. She undergoes an awful transformation; her song changes to a mournful carol, for she cannot sing of that, which she does not know, and before she reaches the "first house by the water is in Camelot she dies: "singing in her song she died". Even before actual contact with reality, comes her demise, the loss of artistic isolation in itself results in death. In the words of E.A. Francis "Noonly does the weaver-singer die outside the protective towers of artistic isolation, she, forms her death in doing so, making a visual representation of her meaning - By the time she reaches lot she is an artifact of herself, a visual icon of the song that can-be heard. All that remains of the voice and its history is the colourful representation the singer has made' - A" fairy" or romance-voice of the beginning of the poem -she becomes a "See" or prophet as she moves, here words and their meaning in accessible to those who hear her from the river bank, "The Lady of Shallot" is, among other things, about the nature and limits of artistic representation.

"The Lady of Shalott" is an allegory and Tennyson himself hinted at its allegorical nature: "The new-born love for something, for someone in the wide world from which she has been so long secluded takes her out of the region of shadows into that of realities,". Hallam, Tennyson also wrote in the Memoir that the poem is a moral tale of "the inadequacy of an isolaced existence" and the dangers to which an isolated individual exposes himself in the world of reality. The real moral of the poem seems to be that the self- absorbed spirit- no matter how much it desires to enter into the life of other men-may be unable to face reality and thus be destroyed by the attempt.

We could trace an analogy between the Lady of Shalott and the poet: Tennyson, was happy in his isolation and realised the dangers attendant upon leaving it, but he was help made to feel the necessity of mixing with the world, and so was weighing the possibilities of what the consequences would be if he attempted to reorient his art.

The Lady of Shalott is enigmatic form but its conclusion is template and predetermined. It is in this respect, a fated and a suicidal poem. The self- imposed poverty of its rhyme words ("lie", "ry", "sky", "by"- Ll. 1-4), their diminution in number from four to three ("go" "below"- 1.6-8), to two ("Camelot", "Shalott"- LI. 509) the quick descent of each stanza to the stability of the refrain - all these features are designed to

secure the conclusiveness of the outcome. The separation of the private and public worlds in the first three stanzas of the poem leading to their destructive coming ling in Part-IV points to the suicidal completion of the poem's design. All the energy of Tennyson's parable is directed toward. Its own termination. The Lady's cry "The course is come upon me" (1.116) echoes the shriek of Blake's.

The poet if sensation, Tennyson is not merely narrating a story of unrequited love in "the Lady of Shalott" but gives a general representation of the process of dying into nature, of trying to acquire a stable human from He was engaged in a life-long search, like the Lady of Shalott, to make his world human, to find a resolution to his' uncertainties oncoming the function of a poet. And this he found in "The Princess" written in 1847 in which he was moved to belief in the poet as a spokesman to humanity at large and his age from a belief in the poet who sings only for the joy and beauty of song.

"The Lady of Shalott" can also be looked upon as a poem of the age, of after rather than sheer reflection which ultimately proves fatal.

The poem can in fact be experience by each reader at his own level of experience or at several levels. It is "like a stone thrown, into a pond "crossing over-going circles of meaning to go out from the "centre," "There is more in the poem than "skills lovely -pageantry" truth can and does see herself in the fairy miner before it cracks.

"I am half sick of shadows", said the Lady of Shallot so all sit before their mirror, so all see life in its "silver foiled deception" rolling by: so all grow weary of shadows and so favor all, when eyes are turned from the shadow to that which fast it, the minor is split so that none will ever look in its fraudulent face again. "The Lady of Shalott" has everything that die most experience poet could have learnt - "rhyme that flowers from the lino a bud from a rose bush, a scansion that is as sweet as bells and never cloys, and a sense all the time of beauty powering in like light through a stained glass window."

The Lady of Shallot is a brilliant example of Tennyson's poetic renderings of natural phenomena, of his pictorial artistry Patient and sensitive observation is supplemented by his supreme skill in the handling of words by what Walt Whitman called his "finest verbalism". In the use of rich, deliberate, and incantatory language (as in "The Lady of Shallot") as also in the recreation of medieval dream-world Tennyson followed the tradition of John Keats and other nineteenth century and painters.

"The Lady of shallot" is in short a symphony of auditory arid visual effects and ranks with the greatest ballads in literature such as "The Ancient Mariner" and "Charistabel".

## 14.4 THE LOTUS EATERS

Now "The Lotus Eaters".

"The Lotus Eaters", along with other poems such as "The Lady of Shallot", "Mariana in the South", "the Palace of Arts." etc., belonged to the second volume (1832/33) of poems by Tennyson on different themes, romantic, domestic and descriptive.

"The Lotus Eaters" was 'written of the stage of poetic development when Tennyson was puzzled by the question as to the role and function of the poet in the modem world. Was a poet to celebrate the "cloistered imagination" and was, poetry to dual with the theme of Isolation and aesthetic detachment or was it to be the nouns her of men's real life, the leader and teacher of humanity, and fulfil the higher claims of social responsibility? Tennyson write poems dealing with both sides of the of the question. "The Lady of Shallot" through a miniature romance shows a weaver of dreams drawn from seclusion into the world of actuality; Ulysses leaving civic duties are social responsibilities to his son, rouses himself to heroic enterprise; the lotos-eaters weary of action and hardship embrace unheroic lassikade.

It is worth nothing that this mental conflict which affected Tennyson and his contemporaries was a sign and symbol of the Victorian age, the age of conflict and compromise, Tennyson 1842 volume of poetry contained new poems but it also included revised and greatly improved versions of the old such as "The Lady of Shallot", The Lotus Eaters" etc where there was lots of poetic fancy and more of ethical and social seriousness.

A reworking of "The Sea-Fairies"(1830)", "The Lotus Eaters" is more of a dramatic poem it is of course, based on the ninth book of "Odyssey? by Homer. Homer however, took no interest in describing the acedia of lotos land, for the incident is but rarely mentioned, instead the delighted in relating the adventures of the great Ulysses, Tennyson, on the other had took, what was but a brief mention in Homer and, omitting almost entirely the restless here, characteristically described the lethargic joys of those who had eaten the lotus.

The scene of the poem is characteristically the Island of Shallot, the Island-Paradise. The poem opens with Ulysses orging his men forward promising that the waves will soon bring then to shore. On that same afternoon they come to a land which is a kingdom where langur reigns. Here the very landscape reflects the apathy of the inhabitants: There is neither sharp sunlight nor a clear noon, only the haze of seemingly, perpetual afternoon: the air itself is languid and the stream, not full and reshing but slender and slow, seems to pause in its half from the cliff. In other words nature reflects the condition of those that eat the lotus. There are many streams but all flow out-ward to the sea from the inner land the suggestion being, that the departing water indicates flowing out of vitality from the land of the louts-eaters.

In lotus-land things never change but always seem the same. It is the perfect world where all is as one would have it: To those who eat the each anted flower there is no longer any heed to concern oneself with reality; one wants-only to dream and forget the cares of the world beyond. All desire for action is obliterated absence of energy becomes perfection. And so the men seduced by the offers of the flower and the fruit and the magic lotus and determine never more to roam.

The poet this has built up the atmosphere of dreamy langour pervading the land of the lotus with repeated use of expressions such as "weary" "languid air didi mean" "pause" silent pinackes" "linger'd" "dark faces-pale against that rosy flame", "mildeyed melancholy" "For away did seem to mourn and save" thin voice as "voices frosh the grave" deep asleep "yellow-and" which all are suggestive of ennui and disinterestedness.

## 14.5 THE CHORIC SONG

Then follows the Choric Song, which the mariners follow to its source unlike Hauno ("The Hesperides") who hears the strange song of the Hesperidean maidens while navigating the African coast. In both the poems the land is an island, represented as a haven of refuge for the poetic imagination which must be reached by eneans of the sea.

The Choric Song is dramatic in conception, and it makes brilliant use of contrasts: for example for every stanza that is descriptive there is a following stanza that is rhetorical in which then men question and nationalize their situation. One is led to suspect that Tennyson is here aiming at dramatic objectification of his own problem, of artistic isolation. In the odd- numbered sections the mariners are lyrical about the delights of the Island. Paradise; while in the even stanzas-their thoughts for the moment projected beyond the enchanted Isle-they- speak of "heaviest and "distress" of death and war and evil. The Choric Song is not a pure lyric, it stresses the relevance of rational, imagination and reaffirms "the assertive, unstilled desires

of the human heart. The even-number sections celebrate". As they sing the stanzas of their song begin to grow longer and longer - from eleven lines in the first section to twenty nine in the last - thereby implying the true effects of the lotus, which allows them to forget the world and drowsily sing of their release from reality.

The central images of the poem are also contrasting the images of land and sea are contrasted in the first strophe and are carried throughout to the last section, and they are associated, with colours. The land is always described in terms rosy yellow the colour of the lotus, and the sea is described by dark blue. Furthermore, the adjectives nouns and verbs used in connection with land are those of stillness.

"In the hollow, Lotus-land to the and lie recined" while the words referring to the sea are those of turbulent motion:

"Surge was seething", "gushing of the wave", surrounded by sweet music and cool mosses, among the delights of sound and sight the men sing, why should we the "roof and crown of things" forever toil and find so little rest, while all other things of nature have rest and while our inner spirit tells us that calm in the only joy? Death we know is the end of life, so why labour all our life away? What we do today matters not, because tomorrow it will be part of the past. All we want is.

"To lend out hearts and spirits wholly.

To the influence of mild-minded melancholy"

The tone of melancholy preemies "The Lotus Eaters" tor their joy is not in living but in abnegation of life they sing not of verbal gladness but of autunnat sadness:

"Lol sweeten'd with the summer light,

The full-juiced apple, waxing over mellow,

Drops in a silent autumn night All its allotted

length of days.

The flower ripens in its place,

Ripens and fades, and falls, and falls, no toll, Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

This is the condition of nature to which they aspire, and they long for "long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease." Like the Lady of Shalott, they have become self absorbed spirits, and they know that they must suffer in any attempt to enter again the outside world. They resolve, therefore, to remain in the lotus-land and they surrender unreluctantly their will to act: "We have had enough of action" they sing and vow "to live and lie reclined on the hills gods together, careless of mankind."

The Epicurean gods, which were probably suggested to Tennyson by the third book of Lucretius, were introduced into the poem in the revision of 1842 in his review of the 1842 volume, James Speeding wrote that the introduction of the gods added "touches of deeper significance" and instead of a sense of "Sensual ease and luxuries repose, with which it originally ended: a higher strain is substituted which is meant apparently to show the effect of lotus-eating upon the religious feelings" *(Memoirl).* In other words Tennyson sought by the revision of section VIII to indicate that abandonment to sense perception contributes to the decay of man's moral and religious nature.

However, Tennyson has not fully succeeded in his in this respect. As in "The Palace of Art" the whole force of the poem works against the didactic intention: by far the greater part is dedicated to the delights of sensuous indulgence and the moral, such as it comes only in the last section of the poem we do

not see the harmful effects of lotus-eating on the mariners because we do not see in the beginning of the poem that they believed in some other kind of gods: there has been so far as the reader can tell, no change. The introduction of the Epicurean deities shows only how the effect of the lotus has been to remove the men's minds from the mundane world of care to the caretoss repose of the gods. Since in the world or reality one cannot know this carelessness and this repose, the state of the gods serves as a metaphor for the condition, of those who hate eaten the enchanted flower. In the previous sections of the poem men have asked why they should toil. Now their reflection on the condition of the gods gives then their answer: freedom from labour and care is the divine law; it is the gift that Hera offers to Paris in "Denonc" as the only way to happiness.

The Epicurean gods of "The Lotus-Eaters" appear also in "Youth" part IInd. This frequent use of the figure of gods leads to the suspicion that the figures like the phantasms, formed part of Tennyson's storehouse of symbols and that he was attempting to set them up as meaningless images, whatever be the meaning. The beginning of "The Lotus-Eaters" introduces the voice of negation which (as in "The Two Voices") presents the argument that he is nothing, and because he is miserable, it would be better to die, find the rest from weariness that death brings.

The "Lotus - Eaters" best demonstrates Tennyson ability to refine sensations through thought. Ulysses men decide to escape into a charge less World from the formant of "ever climbing up the climbing save". But the lotos-land is non paradise. The mariners will have to return to their oars and the sea in order that their ambition comes full circle it is one of the marvels of the poem in the way the chorus, no less than the introductory-part, foreshadows the mariners' return sea even as it celebrates their life on land. The poem presents a paradox of how the mariners are temperamentally unsalted 'to a life of ease: if the habitants of lotus-land are incapable of action they could not be roused to sing their hymn. Their analytic intelligence - intellectual power - is constantly at worked. Secondly their indictment of the gods "Gods together, careless of mankind" as also their oath of renunciation is a parody of the traditional religious yearning for divine union. Thus what begins as a prayer of praise and thanks-giving for the pleasure of mankind ends as a denunciation of man's "endless anguish". The illusion of the mariners union with the gods because the certainty of separator and the simile finally opposes the cruel indifference of the gods to the struggles of all mankind and not just of the lotos- eaters.

"The Lotos-Eaters" is not a trick poem that saves its best thought for the end". It is in the words of Rober Frost "a series of revelations, as much for the poet as the for the reader."

The sea voyage was a common Metaphor in Tennyson for spiritual adventure; it was used, to name only a few poems in "Recollection, of the Arabian Nights", "The Hesperides", "The Lady of Shalott" and "The Lotus Eaters". The boat which the characters board is called a shallo.

As in "The Lady of Shalott", The poet's in-ward listening ear ought the "Very music for his mood" in "The Lotus-Eaters" although the latter is a poem of "ampler-harmonies" in which "the luxury of dreaming is stirred by a touch or two from the wings of thought", but only lightly, and the dream is not broken. In no other poem is Tennyson's "impudent artistry of verbal music" more triumphant:

"Music that gentler on the spirit lies

Then tried eyelids upon tired eyes;

Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies...

In which by his cunning liquids and falling Chythms he makes the very thing he speaks of, Or, again,

"Through every hollow cave and alley lone

Round and round the spicy downs the yellow lotos - dust is blown ....."

Where the thing itself takes from "in the softly-swirling movement of the lines, and the sound of them is as sweet as the noiseless noise of summer," which Dorothy Wordsworth heard on the Westmorland hills. Tennyson worked at his poetic effects with the absorbed patience end loving care of a medieval painter compounding his colours.

"The Lotus-Eaters" is a superb achievement in the art of blending harmoniously subject and style.

## 14.6 ULYSSES

"Ulysses" forms part of the 1842 volume of Tennyson's poems; and for it true narratives such as "The Odyssey" and the "Iliad" by Homer are once again it unsurpassed models. However, the idea of Ulysses Western voyage, though hinted at in the Odyssey (xi, 119-37) is not Homeric, and Tennyson's "romantic" version through based on the twenty-sixth canto, 90 off Dante's Inferno: is of interest, in view of the emotional origins and theme of the poem. But Tennyson evidently had in mind a soliloquy of Hamlet's (iv. 32-66).

The dramatic monologue carries further there solution and determination that mark the end of "Locksley Hall". Tennyson himself gave the interpretation of the poem as a "striving" poem which was written soon after Arthur Hallam's death, and gave my feelings about the need of giving forward and braving the struggle of life perhaps more simply then anything in "In Memoriam." It was written at a time when "I was so utterly miserable, a burden to myself and to my family, that I said; is life worth anything?" (Memoir. 1) And certainly this questioning might be expected to inform the poem. Again on comparing "Ulysses" with in Memoriam" he remarked "there is more about myself in 'Ulysses" and that despite sense of loss "life must be fought out to the end".

The first part of the poem presents Ulysses, the old warrior who embodies the spirit of heroic n "entire in the primitive world" and, whose manhood had been spent in twenty year's war and travel in justifying his proposed abandonment of his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus and his countrymen. The opening is dramatic. Ulysses is restless suffering from a "chafing and clipped impatience". He still has an appetite for life; he does not wish to remain as "Idle king" meeting and doling "Unequal laws into a savage race" who "know not me" and from whom he is estranged. No, he will not rest from travel but will drink life to the less. Yet no sooner does he express this desire for action which recalls the line in "Locksley Hall" where the speaker vows, "I myself must mix with action, lest I with her by despair" than he realizes that he is actually an old man whose desire perhaps lacks potency. He wants to experience everything, seemingly for the irresponsible joy of the experience itself; yet.

"All experience is an arch wherethro'

gleans that untraveled world whose margin fades forever and forever when I move".

And he knows, though he will not admit it, that drinking life to the less is not possible. He is an old man who inspire of all his carryings, cannot help rusting unpunished and not shining in use; his is the meaning of "this gray spirit" who desires.

"To follow knowledge like a sinking star beyond the utmost bound of human thought". The simile "like a sinking star" suggests his own condition and what it is that he is looking for: his is the yeaning to know at, to go beyond the limits of mortality; his is the desire for death.

The second part (Lines 33-43), with an equally dramatic opening, is apparently addressed to an audience, although we cannot be sure who the audience is. We can almost see the gesture by which he points to his son, Telemachus and we cannot fail to catch the note of condescension. Telemachus is the opposite of his father; he works by reason and law, admonishing his rugged people to live by self-reverence, self knowledge, self- control. And Telemachus is not attractive. Ulysses refers to him as "blameless" and "decent", as one who will not fail in offices of tenderness" and will pay.

"Meet adoration to my house hold gods when I am gone". He will lead a proper life, doing all that is expected of him, but, Ulysses implies, he will and can do no more, he is almost completely colourless possessed of none of die heroic emotions of his father. "He works his work, I mine" says Ulysses but his way is certainly not that of the father.

Again opening on a dramatic note the last part of the poem is addressed to the mariners. Here Ulysses speaks somewhat like the Byronic wanders of Tennyson's earlier poems. "There gloom the dark, broad seas" he tells his old followers; the journey is to be feared for it is a voyage into the unknown. This is the symbolic sea-voyage in quest of a new experience, the voyage of death, which is the only experience possible for old men. Resorting to the Tennysonian device of memory, Ulysses recalls the days that were happier that the present, but the realises that these can be recaptured only in memory, for "You and I are old". For us, he says, night comes on and the darkness beckons:

"The long day wanes, the slow moon climbs: the deep Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends. It's not too late to sock a newer world".

Better to seek the newer world of death than to remain stagnant here in a kind of death-in- life. My purpose, he says unequivocally is.

"To sail beyond the sunset, and the paths of all the Western starts, until I die".

There can now be no doubt that it is death which he seeks, we find here not only the metaphor of sunset used for instance in "Crossing the Bar" as the close of life but also the symbol of the Western Stars. According to Robert G. Strong, the West, for Tennyson, is "a place of twilight, of rest, of warmth and secrecy", "and furthermore, that "Tennyson connects the West with images of the sea, of growth, and paradoxically, of death."

This is to be a voyage, says Ulysses, to both the old and the new perliops they shall see the Happy Isles and also find again the great Achilles, the brave warrior, with whom they can be reunited in death.

Since, as Tennyson tell us, "Ulysses" was written soon after the death of Hallam we can equate Achilles and the poet's dead friend, in seeking for death Ulysses. Tennyson was hoping to find reunion with his beloved-Hallam whose death and caused him to question the value of living. There is, however, no certainty on the part of the speaker to find Achlites-Hallam: the assertion is qualified (like so many statements in early Tennyson poems) with "may be". And yet a possibility of life beyond the grave was only a hope. Nevetheless the speaker view to undertake the voyage, although with a sense of diminished strength, as the last thing possible:

"We are not now that strength which in old days moved heaven and earth; that which we are". He chooses the voyage without physical strength, but with the strength of will.

"To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield". The utterance echoes the sentiment that has inspired Ulysses throughout his life and will lead him in future.

Ulysses is presented in line with the epic heroes in Homer, as a man of firm determination whose roving heart and freedom-loving spirit feels cribbed and claimed with the private life which he gives afair trial on return from his adventures. He is the primeval type of the indefatigable rover for whom.

"All experience is an arch wherethro'

gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades Forever and forever when I more".

Ancient myth, medieval epic, popular ballads retain and hand down the figures of such men as they were stamped on the imagination of the times.

As point of minor criticism it may be noticed that in taking Ithaca instead of Circe's island, as in Homeric Ulysses, as the place of departure of Ulysses on this final voyage. Tennyson may have forgotten that before Homer's hero landed in Ithaca, a solitary man, every one of his companions with whom he left Troy had perished by sea or land during the long wandering. But fidelity to the original tradition is of no account in a poem that is independent, of time and place. Tennyson may have felt that he was touching a chord in the heart of the restless Englishman-especially of his Age-who is seldom content with delsure ease after many years of working and wandering abroad. Whether they are chiefs of a pretty Greek island or citizens of a vast empire whose frontiers are constantly advancing for them.

"All experience is an arch whereto"

"Tennyson's poem gives us the persistent character blended with and accorded to modem feelings". How sculptured figures of the antique legend of fable in Ulysses and Tilhonus become the impersonations and spokesmen of the impulses and affections of modem life fasslude, resgessness, me roaming spirit, the ennui of old ago.

It is interesting to view "Ulysses" as a poem evincing feelings that are ambiguous or paradoxical. According to Christopher Ricks "Ulysses is old, he stands upon the shores of life. The poem conveys a dragging sense of inertia of *ennui,* strangely matched with the vocabulary of adventure and enterprise..."

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks.

"Tis not too late to seek a newer world".

The rhythm and diction (long, slow) are "narcotically oppressive". Ulysses yearns to believe that his life is not, just a past, that it still has a future. But that, this is a yearning, not a confident assurance, is stressed by avoidance of the use of future tense except at two points "I will drink/life to the less"; and "It may be that the gulfs will wash us down. Elsewhere there are ambiguous equivalents such as may be to follow for the future: Even the last line is mere "To strive, to seeks, to find, and not to yield" while its spirit is emphatic determination. The same critic finds Telemachus passage "This is my son ... faulty wooden rather than dramatically revealing". And finally the critic tends fault with the close of Tennyson's poem which he says is "up on the brink of disaster, Ulysses future may be read but it is desperately brief unlike the close of the canto of Dante's inferno which follows hard upon Ulysses speech to his mariners."

To conclude, we may remark that notwithstanding the different readings of the poem, "Ulysses" triumphs as a great poem of the classical myth seen through the prism of the poet's age refracting variegated colours it is unequalled in the beauty of its blank verse marked by the even flow and Hermonious helpnoe. Here the lines are "Swift or slow, rise to a correspond with the dramatic movement showing that the poet has extended and perfected his metrical Resources" (Lyell).

## 14.7 TEXT

**Alfred Lord Tennyson**

**The Lady of Shalott**

**First published in 1833.**

This poem was composed in its first form as early as May, 1832 or 1833, as we learn from Fitzgerald's note of the exact year he was not certain ('Life of Tennyson', i., 147). The evolution of the poem is an interesting study. How greatly it was altered in the second edition of 1842 will be evident from the collation which follows. The text of 1842 became the permanent text, and in this no subsequent material alterations were made. The poem is more purely fanciful than Tennyson perhaps was willing to own; certainly his explanation of the allegory, as he gave it to Canon Ainger, is not very intelligible: "The new-born love for something, for someone in the wide world from which she has been so long excluded, takes her out of the region of shadows into that of realities". Poe's commentary is most to the point: "Why do some persons fatigue themselves in endeavors to unravel such phantasy pieces as the 'Lady of Shallot'? As well unweave the ventum textile". 'Democratic Review', Dec., 1844, quoted by Mr. Heme Shepherd. Mr. Palgrave says (selection from the 'Lyric Poems of Tennyson', p. 257) the poem was suggested by an Italian romance upon the Donna di Scalotta. On what authority this is said I do not know, nor can I identify the novel. In Novella, Ixxxi., a collection of novels printed at Milan in 1804, there is one which tells but very briefly the story of Elaine's love and death, "Quiconta come la Damigella di scalot mori per amore di Lancealotto di Lac," and as in this novel Camelot is placed near the sea, this may be the novel referred to. In any case the poem is a fanciful and possibly an allegorical variant of the story of Elaine, Shalott being a form, through the French, of Astolat.

**PART I**

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the world and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott. [1]
Willows whiten, aspens quiver, [2]
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers

The Lady of Shalott.
By the margin, willow-veil'd
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
Skimming down to Camelot.
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott? [3]
Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to towar'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "Tis the fairy Lady of Shalott". [4]

**PART II**

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay [5]
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the 'curse' may be,
And so [6] she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she.
The Lady of Shalott.
And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls, [7]
And the red cloaks of market girls,

Pass onward from Shalott.
Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.
But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights,
And music, wept to Camelot: [8]
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
"I am half-sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott. [9]

**PART III**

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A redress knight forever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.
The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy. [10]
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to [11] Camelot:
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung.

And as he rode his armor rung,
Beside remote Shalott.
All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Bum'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot. [12]
As ouen thro the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott. [13]
His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot. [14]
From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror,
"Tirralirra" by the river [15]
Sang Sir Lancelot.
She left the web, she left the loom;
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily [16] bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

**PART-IV**

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning.
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower'd Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat

Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
'The Lady of Shalott.' [17]
And down the river's dim expanse –
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing sli his own mischance –
With a glassy countenance
Did she look, to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.
Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right-
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot;
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott. [18]
Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly, [19]
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot;
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.
Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale [20] between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,

Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
'The Lady of Shalott'
[21] Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot [22] mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott". [23]

**The Lotos-Eaters**

First published in 1833, but when republished in 1842 the alterations in the way of excision, alteration and addition were very extensive. The text of 1842 is practically the final text. This charming poem is founded on 'Odyssey', ix., 82 seq.'

"On the tenth day we set foot on the land of the lotos-eaters who eat a flowery food. So we stepped ashore and drew water... When we had tasted meat and drink I sent forth certain of my company to go and make search what manner of men they were who here live upon the earth by bread... Then straightway they went and mixed with the men of the lotos-eaters, and so it was that the lotos-eaters devised not death for our fellows but gave them of the lotos to taste. Now whosoever of them did eat the honey-sweet fruit of the lotos had no more wish to bring tidings nor to come back, but there he chose to abide with the lotos-eating men ever feeding on the lotos and forgetful of his homeward way. Therefore I led them back to the ships weeping and sore against their will... lest happy any should eat of the lotos and be forgetful of returning."

(Lang and Butcher's translation.)

But in the details of his poem Tennyson has laid many other poets under contribution, notably Moschus, 'Idyll', v.; Bion, 'Idyll', v.; Spenser, 'Faerie Queen', II. vi. (description of the 'Idle Lake'), and Thomson's 'Castle of indolence'.

"Courage!" he said, and pointed toward the land,
"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.
"In the afternoon they came unto a land,
In which it seemed always afternoon;
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon; [1]
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.
A land of streams! Some, like a downward smoke,

Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow [2]
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow, [3]
Stood sunset-flush'd: and, dew'd with showery drops,
Up-lomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.
The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
In the red West: thro' mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Border'd with palm, mid many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;
A land where all things always seem'd the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.
Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whose did receive of them,
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.
They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Father-land,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then someone said, "We will return no more"
And all at once they sang, "Our island homeis far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam".

**CHORIC SONG**

**I**

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

**2**

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toils who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown:
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep on brows in slumber's holy balm;
Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
There is no joy but Calm!
"Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?"

3

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,

The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days,
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

4

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea. [1]
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labour be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave? [2]
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave [3]
In silence; ripen, fall and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

5

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each other's whisper'd speech:
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those [4] old faces of our infancy

Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

**6**

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd change;
For surely now our household hearths are cold:
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else fee island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel Sings
Before them of the ten-years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle? [5]
Let what is broken so remain.
The Gods are hard to reconcile:
'Tis hard to settle order once again
There 'is' confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labour unto aged breath,
Sore task to hearts worn out with [6] many wars
And eyes grow dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

[7]

But, propt on beds [8] of amaranth and molly,
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)
With half-dropt eyelids still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine-
To watch [9] the emerald-colour'd water falling
Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.

**8**

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak: [9]
The Lotos blows by every winding creek:
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone:
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is blown.
We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge was seething free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam- fountains in the sea.
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd
rarbelow them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curl'd
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world:
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships and praying hands.
But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
So the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
Till they perish and they suffer-some, 'tis whisper'd-down in hell
Suffer endless anguish, others, in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;
Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more. [10]

**"Ulysses"**

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I meet and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Next the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unbumish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the scepter and the isle,
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail. In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,

When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me-
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads-you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

**A. SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION**

The Lady of Shalott does not leave her tower because

a. She hates the world outside
b. There is a curse on her
c. She fears the world outside
d. She physically cannot

The sailors who eat the lotos plant

a. never want to go home

b. want to return home immediately

c. want to keep journeying forever

d. want to die

## 14.8 GLOSSARY

**barren** : providing no shelter or sustenance hoard: save up as for future use

**lees** : the sediment from fermentation of an alcoholic beverage

**vex** : disturb, especially by minor irritations

## 14.9 QUESTIONS

1. What is Ulysses searching for in "Ulysses"?

2. How does Tennyson portray women in his poetry?

## 14.10 SELF ASSESSMENT QUESTION'S ANSWER

b, c.

## 14.11 SUGGESTED READING

*Tennyson in America: His Reputation and Influence from 1827 to 1858* by John Olin Eidson. The University of Georgia Press, 1943.

*Classical Echoes in Tennyson* by Wilfred P. Mustard. The Macmillan Company, 1904.

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# ASSIGNMENTS

**Attempt any three questions. Each question carries 5 marks (5x3 = 15)**

**Assignment No. 1**

Critically analyse the themes of Blake's 'Songs of Innocence' or the 'Songs of Experience.'

OR

The 'Songs of Innocence and of Experience' are the poems of a person with a profound interest in human emotions and a profound knowledge of them. The emotions are presented in as extremely simplified abstract form Elucidate.

**Assignment No. 2**

Write the critical appreciation of Kubla Khan or The Rime of the Ancient Mariner as a supernatural poem.

OR

Discuss the 'Ode of Dejection' as a dirge over the grave of creative imagination.

**Assignment No. 3**

Give a critical estimation of any one ode of the Odes of Keats Prescribed.

**Assignment No. 4**

State in your own words what Wordsworth says about childhood in the "Immortality Ode." Do you agree with him?

OR

What was Wordsworth "Philosophy of Nature" ? Illustrate your answer from the poems you have read.

**Assignment No. 5**

Discuss Browning's handling of Domestic Monologues.

OR

Give a critical appreciation of any of the poems of Browning prescribed for you.

**Assignment No. 6**

Discuss Tennyson as a poet of Victorian thought and sentiment with special reference to the poems prescribed.

**Assignment No. 7**

Tennyson is unrivalled as a poet of lyricism. Discuss.

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# Contents

*M.A. English Semester-II*

*Course : VI*

# *Romantic and Victorian Poetry*

*Lessons 1- 14*

*International Centre for Distance Education & Open Learning*
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